Participatory project design
Ideally, a humanitarian response which has been designed in a participatory way should be better adapted to the needs, culture and capacities of the affected population. Participatory design ensures that existing knowledge, ideas, and experiences are taken into account, and that the operational choices make sense.

It is particularly difficult and even inappropriate to do a participatory design if you have not engaged with the people to reach a common understanding of the situation and problems to be addressed. If your assessment was not participatory, it is important to at least go over the conclusions with all the relevant stakeholders so that they have an opportunity to validate or question them.

Even where a participatory assessment has taken place, be aware that project design is an iterative process. You may have to look again at potential solutions when discussing targeting, or modify your objectives as you discuss the resources needed. You may even find that you have to refine the analysis made during the assessment, to help you and the people you are working with make decisions on the future programme.

There are certain risks involved in carrying out participatory design. Involving members of the affected population in decision-making processes, particularly regarding priorities and targeting, can increase social tension and the risk of dispute, since different parties will have different interests and priorities. As an external stakeholder, your organisation may have to play the role of mediator.

When decision-making is delegated to certain individuals or structures within the population, this may put them at risk or expose them to threats from other discontented members of the population. The type of activities chosen can de facto exclude certain groups, and favour others already privileged in some way (e.g. training programmes with written materials can exclude illiterate individuals). However, the participation of population members in programme design can help ensure the programme does not create risks for them, but rather reinforces their protection.

When analysing and choosing among potential solutions, be careful not to be manipulated by specific interest groups (local companies, suppliers, parties to the conflict). Choices made, in terms of priority interventions, targeting, selection of partners, recruitment of staff, and even donors, can compromise your impartiality, independence and neutrality, or how these are perceived. A project which targets a marginalised group can result in further stigmatisation of its members.

This chapter will help you to understand the risks of participatory project design, and the processes to be used to ensure that it is beneficial for the people affected by the crisis and for other stakeholders, including the aid organisation.

The project design phase involves turning the priority problems identified during the assessment into potential programme objectives. It is a very straightforward exercise in which each ‘problem statement’ is turned into a ‘solution statement’ as illustrated in Figure 6. Do not forget to refer to the problem tree that was established during the assessment! The two exercises (problem tree / objective tree) can be done at the same time. For further guidance on turning problems into objectives, see resources on project cycle management outlined in Part 3.
Identifying potential project objectives and solutions is likely to raise expectations, so make sure that you continually remind participants that the programme is unlikely to respond to all the objectives listed!

Some “objective trees” may undermine participants’ motivation, if the objectives presented seem too ambitious. This may indicate that you are working at an inappropriate scale by tackling problems which are too general. Try to focus on more specific, approachable issues. Transforming problems into specific and achievable objectives is likely to mobilise participants and encourage them to take part in the project as it allows them to look ahead to an improved situation in the future.

**VIII.1.1 Prioritising Solutions**

There is seldom only one way of solving a problem or achieving an objective. The prioritisation exercise will analyse a range of possible solutions in a given context, and identify the options that can most effectively address the stated objectives with the greatest positive impact.

The success of the project largely depends on this step, since the project objectives and implementation strategy will be defined according to the analysis made here. Choosing an inappropriate solution can lead to many difficulties in later stages. Analysing and prioritising a range of solutions collectively can help prevent this from occurring.

**Prioritising solutions involves:**
- obtaining a range of potential solutions
- analysing and comparing each solution in the light of several criteria (presented below)
- collectively establishing priorities among the potential solutions that could be retained for the project.
- identifying potential solutions
Collectively establishing a list of potential solutions is a useful way to ensure that the project is relevant to real needs. The failure of many aid projects can be attributed to the use of imported solutions that are determined by the agency mandate and expertise, rather than by a careful analysis of needs, opportunities and constraints on the ground.

You can share ideas starting with the following elements:
- solutions that people are familiar with, some of which may have been used in the past but are no longer implemented;
- solutions that have been used by other organisations to tackle similar problems;
- solutions you have used previously;
- solutions suggested by participants;
- solutions based on an alliance of traditional and modern expertise, local and foreign techniques, etc.

A great deal of local technical and organisational knowledge is often overlooked by aid organisations. Aid actors often arrive in the field with pre-packaged sets of activities and standard programme content, particularly in fast-onset emergency contexts. Showing these kit-based approaches in focus groups or any other group session can bias participants’ inputs or even discourage them from sharing their ideas. Furthermore, affected populations have the most accurate knowledge of their situation. So be modest, be curious, and listen!

Sometimes addressing one problem entails working on another one. Or the problem of one population group can entail working with another population group. Try to keep a holistic view of problems and objectives when seeking solutions. The branches of the problem and objectives trees should help you in this regard, by illustrating the relationships between objectives.

Analysing potential solutions
Having established a list of solutions, you should analyse and compare them so as to select the most appropriate way to address the problem. Sometimes members of your team or members of the affected population would like to implement ideas that they have heard about or have seen in local newspapers or during visits to other areas. But the solutions may prove poorly adapted to the population’s situation. Your organisation can play a role in weighing up the potential effectiveness of solutions with participants.

Feasibility
The first element to consider is if the solution being discussed is feasible in the light of available resources, and in the given context.

This entails estimating:
- the resources needed to implement the solution, including time, money, expertise, materials and management capacity.
- The resources that can be mobilised by the stakeholders involved (population members, aid organisation, partner institutions, etc.).
- The characteristics and constraints of a given environment.

Complementarity with local knowledge, practices and techniques
Failure to take into consideration local strategies and techniques, know-how and resources can lead...
to duplication, undermining of these strategies, loss of effectiveness, poor sustainability, and lack of interest on behalf of the population.

Collectively projecting what the potential impacts of the solution may be can contribute to the anticipation and reduction of negative impacts, and the maximisation of positive impacts.

When envisaging solutions that entail beneficiary participation in the implementation phase, be careful not to exclude those who are not able to contribute their time or labour to the programme, such as widows, single mothers and the elderly, and others (mainly women and girls) who can only contribute a limited amount of time, due to other household and caring responsibilities. It is possible to find ways in which they can also benefit from, and contribute to the project.

**Sustainability of the solution**

All too often, projects end up with broken and abandoned equipment (e.g. hand pumps) or buildings (e.g. empty clinics) that can lead to public health or security problems and a feeling of disappointment on all sides.

For some projects, especially those concerning water or health, sustainability rests on cost-recovery mechanisms, whereby the users contribute to the running costs of the service by paying a small fee. When envisaging a cost-recovery system, it is important to assess whether people have the means to pay, whether they are interested enough to pay for this service, and what amount of money they are willing to pay. Working with stakeholders who already have responsibilities and experience in these services (especially in education, water and sanitation, infrastructure and health) can provide insights on how to best ensure project sustainability.

**Prioritising solutions**

Once you have carefully analysed each solution according to the criteria, the next step is to prioritise them by bringing together all the elements that were discussed, and weighing up the different criteria in relation to them. To avoid problems in later stages of the project, it is essential for this decision to be taken collectively. However, different groups will have different priorities. So do not be surprised if, at the end of the process, you find a range of priority actions, corresponding to the different population groups. At this stage, do not choose between specific groups or needs; but establish different priorities for each group, as illustrated below.

The priorities established by the population may differ from those perceived by the agency. Be ready to leave the solutions you had in mind aside.

**VIII.1.2 Defining the project**

Once a list of priority solutions has been established, the project strategy can be determined collectively. This step is one of the most delicate stages in the project cycle, and can be difficult to do in a participatory manner, as this is when you clearly define your commitments vis-à-vis the population.

Defining the project entails clarifying:

- the project objectives, i.e. the problem(s) that will be addressed by the project
- the results or outputs of the project
- the target group
- the activities that will be put in place to achieve the project results
- the resources needed to put these activities in place

In Afghanistan, villagers collectively manage the rehabilitation and maintenance of kareze (underground water channels dug in the sides of mountains to procure water for irrigation networks), irrigation systems and roads. In areas where aid agencies repeatedly engaged in cash-for-work or food-for-work programmes, involving the rehabilitation of kareze, irrigation networks and roads, villagers would no longer carry out this work spontaneously but would wait for an agency to propose an arrangement of this kind. In one village, an elder complained: “Why do NGOs always support us in building canals. We have been doing this for centuries! They should help us in other areas for which we do not have the knowledge. Now the youth has become lazy. They do not do the work unless they receive their 50kg of wheat.”
Involving crisis-affected populations in this process is a powerful team-building exercise and an effective way of mobilising participants. It is essential that each party’s contribution (families, leaders, local structures, NGOs) is established early in the design phase through negotiation and dialogue. In the case of a participatory project, this also includes determining how the population and local stakeholders will participate in the project implementation, and who implements what.

Humanitarian projects need to be flexible and responsive to often fast-changing situations. This is particularly the case in a participatory project, when inputs from various stakeholders can make project implementation a very dynamic process. Try to allow for flexibility in the project design, to facilitate adjustments and to avoid being tied to fixed operational methods. You may wish to discuss with participants how the situation might evolve over the next few months, establish different hypotheses and scenarios, and different strategies accordingly (e.g. plan A, plan B).

**Defining objectives and results**

The project **objective**, or its key aim, is what that project intends to have achieved by the end of its implementation. For example, that people affected by an earthquake in region X have their basic needs covered for 6 months.

The **results** are what has been achieved once the activities have been carried out. For example if a water point is set up, the **result** might be that people have adequate safe water or if tents, plastic sheeting, mats, and blankets are distributed, the **result** should be that people have adequate shelter, even if providing particular inputs will not necessarily result in the expected outputs and results. The population’s basic needs are met when a certain number of such results are achieved.

It is important, first, to decide what the objectives of the project are, then, what results are necessary to achieve this objective, and finally, what activities will give the desired results. This is called the project logic, and more information about this planning process can be found in resources on project cycle management in Part 4. One of the reasons for planning in this way is to make sure that organisations do not repeat the same standard activities in each situation regardless of actual needs. The participation of affected people is one way of ensuring that this is achieved.

Defining objectives and results involves selecting one or more of the priority solutions. This should be done with a broad range of stakeholders. Given that different population groups will have different priorities and will benefit differently from each solution, defining the project’s objectives and results is also a way of choosing the target group. This point is discussed in the next section.

By defining the project’s overall and specific objectives, you are making a form of commitment. Expectations therefore need to be managed with care and you need to be clear about the limits of what you are able to do. Explain that there are still numerous procedures to follow before the project can be implemented and many constraints to overcome to achieve the stated objectives.

Specific interest groups may attempt to influence the formulation of objectives and results. Be careful about who participates in the project design. Analysing and prioritising potential solutions in a systematic way (as described in the previous section) is one way of protecting the design phase from such manipulation.

Often there is a loss of momentum between the assessment/design phases, when there is collective enthusiasm, and the implementation stage, when the challenges to be overcome and the commitments to be made become reality. It is important, therefore, to be both realistic and pragmatic.

In addition to the services rendered to the population, your project may have other objectives, such as protecting women who are at risk from violence, or setting up a base in an area
where human rights are regularly breached. If, for whatever reason, you are unable to mention these objectives in the project description, your team must be made aware of them, so that they can take these issues into account when defining project objectives and results. If you cannot be completely transparent, you should at least be able to justify this to yourselves.

Choose the design team carefully: when identifying solutions in the previous step, you may have identified stakeholders that could play a key role in the project. Be sure they participate in the design process.

**VIII.1.3 Targeting**

Related to the definition of objectives and results, is the definition of the **target group** - the group who will directly benefit from the project. 'Macro-level' targeting (such as the choice of provinces or villages) will already have been done much earlier in the process, often before the assessment has even taken place.

Targeting is one of the most sensitive steps in the project cycle, one where the cross-cutting issues of security and protection, discrimination, and the humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence must be carefully taken into consideration.

It is therefore important to share with the population, local authorities and other stakeholders the four main considerations that lie behind the targeting process:

- the need to be as efficient as possible in alleviating suffering (to have a real impact with available assistance);
- the need to work within resource constraints;
- the need to ensure that the most vulnerable people are assisted; and
- the need to make sure the aid does not have any distorting effects

Participatory targeting aims to ensure an optimal level of culturally acceptable equality and to limit possible security incidents, while trying to respect the overall programme objective.

Targeting also involves addressing the difficult question of coverage. Will you aim to cover as large a group or area as possible, or focus on a smaller group but improve the quality of the service provided? This question can be discussed collectively, by clearly explaining to participants the limits of your capacity.

**The targeting process involves two steps**

1. The participatory definition of targeting criteria
2. Communicating about the targeting process

**Participatory definition of targeting criteria**

The identification of criteria is a complex and very sensitive exercise. The vision and experience of an aid agency may not correspond to potential beneficiaries’ understanding of aid. Defining the targeting criteria can, therefore, create a great deal of tension between the agency and the population. Transparency and communication are the best tools to avoid this. Bringing people together to make decisions on prioritisation and targeting can be an effective way of resolving this challenge openly, thus preventing tension and disputes.

**Physical targeting**

Many humanitarian projects, notably in health and nutrition, target groups defined by physical criteria, such as children whose weight-for-height is under 80% of the median, or pregnant and lactating women, etc.

Population members usually have little say in the definition of these criteria, which

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- **Example**

  Targeting is often not socially acceptable, especially in societies where the social contract is based on the notion that those who have should share with those who don’t. In such contexts, it is not unusual to see people sharing what they have received a few hundred meters from the distribution site. Socio-cultural sensitivity is therefore crucial in this exercise.

**Example**

In Colombia, an aid organisation started distributing hygiene kits in a village of Bojaya, without having communicated its targeting criteria to community members. Furthermore, they failed to include a group of vulnerable families in the distribution (notably elderly people). The population considered the organisation’s behaviour disrespectful and refused its assistance.

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are generally determined by fixed health protocols. In such cases, it is important to explain the rationale behind the criteria or to review the targeting process when the criteria are socially unacceptable. This would be necessary, for example, if malnourished children were being targeted for food rations in contexts where food was usually shared amongst all the members of a family. Another example would be to target pregnant women for nutritional assistance in contexts where women and girls are expected to eat after male members of the family. Balancing respect for local norms with effective programming in such contexts is by no means simple. Involving men in setting the targeting criteria is one way of getting them to ‘buy into’ it.

**Economic targeting**

Economic targeting involves the establishment of criteria on the basis of economic vulnerability. Wealth-ranking and proportional piling exercises can be useful for this. Be sure to take into account local criteria for wealth and vulnerability, as they are likely to differ from your perceptions and definitions.

**Social targeting**

Another way of proceeding is to target particular social groups, such as single women with children. But this is also a sensitive matter. Social targeting may lead to resistance from powerful members of society and cause difficulties for the targeted group. It is important, therefore, when targeting a specific social group, not to isolate it, but to work with other groups with which it is in contact. Working with children, for instance, involves co-operating with parents, teachers and religious and community leaders.

Failing to establish criteria with the population can lead to discontent and even to security problems for the aid organisation. But experience has shown that handing over the process entirely to the affected population can cause serious problems. As an external actor, the most appropriate role for you in a participatory targeting process is that of mediator and facilitator.

Targeting marginalised groups can further stigmatise them. When marginalised people are due to be targeted by a programme, they should, at the very least, be consulted about how this should be done.

The targeting process can have major consequences for social relations: it can increase the relative importance of a group, it can increase the legitimacy of leaders involved in the project vis-à-vis the beneficiaries or it can increase targeted people’s sense of responsibility in relation to project implementation.

If you are working with the same population you worked with in the assessment phase, you can use the results of exercises carried out during the assessment (e.g. wealth-ranking, proportional piling, mapping) to support the definition of targeting criteria.

**Communication about the targeting process**

The targeting process should be highly transparent; the selection criteria and details of who will benefit from the programme should be circulated widely using various means. Redress and sanction mechanisms should also be discussed and established as part of the participatory process.

In some situations, once actual beneficiaries have been selected, social control mechanisms can be used in the project implementation phase to ensure that targeting procedures are respected. Such mechanisms, which function on the basis of peer pressure, require that beneficiaries and members of the
population know what they are entitled to and why, and how they are supposed to go about getting it. This information can be shared using a variety of channels:

- Notice boards
- Public meetings
- Distribution of leaflets
- Posters
- Public media: radio shows, newspapers, magazines etc.

Your choice of information sharing mechanisms (including the language(s) used) is the key to ensuring transparency. It is vital that information is not controlled by only a few individuals or groups. You should expect some claims and complaints as even the most effective targeting process will exclude some potential recipients.

VIII.1.4 Defining activities and identifying the resources needed

Activities are the tasks that should be carried out to produce the desired results and therefore achieve the stated objectives. A project work plan should be defined with the relevant stakeholders. This should specify the resources required to implement each activity, who provides which resources and who does what.

Coordination with other organisations and local initiatives is particularly important at this stage, especially when defining the kind of participation which will take place during the implementation phase. This is both to ensure you do not undermine others’ activities, and that your project will not be weakened by others’ strategies.

Participatory activities, such as capacity building, also require resources such as time, training and specific skills. This is true for both population members and aid workers. Do not forget to plan for these.

Defining who does what and who contributes what

How the affected population and local stakeholders will participate in project implementation should be decided during the design phase. Questions to be addressed include:

- Who will participate in the implementation of the project?
- Will members of the affected population such as the project’s direct beneficiaries, people close to the target group (e.g. parents of targeted children), local leaders or representatives designated by beneficiaries participate directly?
- Will participation be indirect, via organisations that represent the affected population in some way: local NGOs, CBOs, government institutions, etc.?
- Will participation take place through existing committees, or will new committees be established? Who will sit on them, and how will they be managed?
- Will external stakeholders participate, such as service providers and sub-contracted organisations, and what will their role be?
- Which activities will be carried out by whom?
- What will be the material contributions of each stakeholder?
- Who will participate in decision-making processes and how?

Make sure that population members and stakeholders have a genuine will and desire to participate. In some cases, their participation is almost imposed upon them by the aid organisation – or can be perceived as such – particularly if people feel the aid is conditional on their acceptance. During the process, ask yourself who really decides how people will participate?

In Guinée Forestière, an NGO had been running a project to create paddy fields, where the land was prepared by members of the population. When other organisations arrived in the area and started carrying out the same activity, but without the population’s participation, the project fell through.
A habitat project implemented in El Salvador had as its objective the rebuilding of houses damaged or destroyed in the 2001 earthquake. The project also aimed to encourage the population to participate in the workshops, building activities and sourcing of building materials. However, these activities were scheduled at harvest time, which led to delays and prompted some participants to withdraw.

Do members of the population and local stakeholders have the capacity (in terms of time, material resources, know-how, etc.) to participate? What effects will participation have upon them, what sacrifices will they have to make with regard to their other activities, notably economic and social activities?

Individuals play a key role in determining the success of operations. But it is often the same individuals who are involved in several initiatives. Be careful not to overburden those who are already most active in the community!

How will the timing of the project affect the ability of the population to participate and what will be the consequences for their own activities?

When planning to work with committees for project implementation (e.g. refugee committees, water committees, etc.) make sure not to impose a structure that is foreign and which will not be embraced by the participants. It is important that these committees have good relationships with and strong legitimacy among the target group.

If you are working in partnership with another organisation, it is essential to manage this process together. It may be preferable to work with a small group and then communicate the decisions made and their rationale to other population members.

The implementation strategy should specify how project implementation will be managed and the mechanisms which will ensure effective collaboration between stakeholders.

Decision-making and project management

It is important to specify who will have decision-making power. If members of the population are expected to participate in decisions throughout the project, how will this be done?

The project design should stipulate who is responsible for overall project management and which organisations are to be closely involved. For instance, it may be necessary to work closely with local authorities. It is necessary to establish how this relationship will be maintained while the project is being implemented.

In some cases, setting a joint steering committee composed of various stakeholder representatives may be an effective way of ensuring joint management.

Defining responsibilities

Central to collaboration is regular communication, between all stakeholders (affected populations, partner organisations, local authorities, etc.). Defining lines of communication (who communicates what to whom) and communication mechanisms (regular meetings, village assemblies, notice boards, etc.) is therefore an essential aspect of project management.

Having defined who does what and who will contribute what, and having assigned specific responsibilities, it is important to make sure the agreement is clear to everyone involved. This can take the form of a contract. Contracts can be oral, in which case it is important to have witnesses, but putting an agreement in writing can help avoid or solve future disputes.

Setting up the monitoring system

In the design phase, you also need to design your participatory monitoring system. You should first clarify the purpose of monitoring and then define criteria and indicators, monitoring methods and ways of integrating feedback into the project design. At a later stage you may need to make some adjustments to your method, timetable, etc. especially if considerable time has lapsed between the design and implementation phases. This also provides an opportunity to remind everyone of the purpose of monitoring.

The monitoring process must be explained to the population, including the purpose of the exercise, who is responsible for monitoring the different aspects of the project, what
monitoring activities will be carried out, how these results are integrated into the project design and the impact that this may have on project activities and beneficiaries.

For details on participatory monitoring, see Chapter 9.

**VIII.1.5 Closing the design phase**

The last step of the design process includes the following:

- Presenting and validating all the choices made concerning the future project with affected population members and relevant stakeholders
- Writing up and finalising the project document
- Communicating about the next steps to be taken before the implementation phase, notably the resource mobilisation process.
- Creating a forum where all elements of the programme can be presented and discussed with a broad section of the affected population.

It is rare for an aid organisation to present a project design to the people affected by a crisis in a public forum. However, this has been shown on several occasions to be a powerful tool which helps to create a sense of common purpose and establishes mutual respect between the agency and the affected population and mobilises participants for project implementation.

Participatory design processes require transparency. At the end of this phase, you will have generated expectations, even more so than during the assessment. Be sure to keep population members and other stakeholders informed about the resource mobilisation process, notably when long drawn-out procedures with donors are underway.

It is important to make sure that participants (including the aid organisation) who were involved in the design phase and made a commitment to participate in the project are fully aware of what this implies!

If you need to leave the field to seek funding and mobilise resources, be sure to communicate to the population the amount of time this will take and the constraints you might encounter. All too often, humanitarian organisations come across populations that feel let down because they are still waiting for a response from another project that failed to materialise and that failed to communicate sufficiently as to why resources were not forthcoming.

If the project document is written, it can be useful to show or provide a copy of the document to population representatives and to go over it with them. This can be useful for future reference, notably when initiating the implementation phase, as proof of the terms of agreement and commitments that were made by the various parties.

If you are working with partner organisations that are now in direct contact with the population, you need to ensure that they have the tools and capacities to communicate correctly and transparently about how the fund raising situation is evolving and the steps to come.

It is important to review how participation has worked at each stage of the project cycle. The purpose of these periodic reviews is to reflect on your original motivation and objectives for using a participatory approach and to make any necessary adjustments in order to achieve these objectives.

**Who participated and how?**

The following table will help you to describe how the participatory assessment was conducted, by recording who participated and how for each step of the assessment process.
In addition to describing what has been done, it is essential to consider whether those who took part felt they were genuinely consulted, that they were able to express their concerns, that the appropriate environment was provided so that they could speak openly and that they were genuinely able to participate.

This can be assessed by consulting a small sample of those who participated in the assessment. This should preferably be done by someone who did not facilitate the process (as this would bias responses).

Was participation successful?
- Were participants, other stakeholders, or other population members exposed to risks as a result of the participation process? What measures did you take to ensure participants were not exposed to risk?
- Were you able to be independent, neutral and impartial, by being careful about who you engaged with and the manner you communicated with them?
- Did people understand your principles and mandate, and did they help you to identify ways of integrating and respecting these in the project design? Do you feel that people understand who you are, what you have come to do and what you can and cannot do?
- Were you able to gain access to minorities, hear unrepresented groups and work with them without stigmatising them further or creating security problems for them?
- Does the project aim to support local strategies and capacities? If so, which ones, and how? How have you incorporated capacity building in the project objectives and activities? Have you, through the design process, contributed to strengthening the capacity of local stakeholders in the preparation of a project design?
- What measures are being taken, in the project, to avoid or reduce potential negative impacts? Did participation help address protection and security issues during the design phase? How will they be taken into consideration in the project?
- Has the input of local people helped to ensure project relevance, by taking into consideration context-specific issues, needs and their origin, and local strategies and priorities?
- Has the input of local people helped to find ways of overcoming constraints that could affect project effectiveness? How will local knowledge and resources improve project effectiveness?
- Do you feel you have been able to establish a relationship based on mutual respect with population members and/or local stakeholders? Is this feeling shared among all concerned?
- How will the project be integrated in local strategies and networks? Is there potential for synergy and, if so, how will this be incorporated into the project? How will the project avoid undermining or duplicating existing interventions?
- Have you reviewed or adapted your priorities in accordance with the perceptions and priorities of the population? Has input by participants helped to identify ways of making the project flexible?
Does the project allow for flexibility during implementation, so that adjustments can be made in response to changes in the context and stakeholder feedback?

How will local stakeholders contribute to the project during its implementation (e.g. expertise, time, local knowledge, experience)? Were they involved in defining the project strategy in order to increase their motivation? Have you ensured that they have the capacity to contribute effectively?

How will responsibility for project management be shared? How are each partner’s strengths and weaknesses combined to achieve optimal project management?

Have participants’ inputs helped to identify ways of improving project efficiency (e.g. time-effectiveness, cost-effectiveness), for example, by identifying resources and techniques that can be mobilised or purchased locally?

Was the participatory design been able to draw on lessons learned by the population and aid agency from previous aid projects?

Did the project design phase involve mutual learning (e.g. when collectively analysing potential solutions)?

Have participants’ contributions helped to find ways of protecting the future project from potential manipulation?

Did you implement the participation strategy as planned? If not, why not? Are the objectives of participation being met? Why/why not?

How can you review the strategy and communication techniques accordingly for the next project cycle phase? What means could you put in place to help improve participation in the next phases (e.g. training, change in team composition, etc.)?

Chapter 8 summary
Participatory project design

1. Participatory project design can help make projects more effective, efficient and appropriate.
2. Projects are more relevant when crisis-affected populations help define the solutions to their needs and when their own actions and capacity is taken into account.
3. Aid organisations cannot meet everyone’s needs. Defining targeting criteria with the affected population itself helps reduce potential conflict and increases transparency and accountability.
4. Participatory monitoring of a project not only ensures that it is being implemented properly, but also that it can be adapted in response to changing situations.
5. Implementing a participatory approach requires regular reviewing of how participation has worked at each stage of the project cycle.