



**In Their Own Voice: Inclusive and Victim-Centered Documentation and
Memorialization of Forced Displacement**

Achieving Meaningful and Equitable Participation of Forcibly Displaced People

Participation of forcibly displaced people in processes that affect them is crucial to better answer their needs, give them agency on issues that affect their lives and leverage their unique expertise and perspectives. But forcibly displaced people, especially groups who are the most marginalized and silenced in society, including women, LGBTQI+ communities, disabled, children, ethnic and religious minorities, and people living in refugees and internally displaced camps (IDP) face many challenges and barriers that hinder their self-agency and ability to fully participate in processes and policies that affect them directly. It is important to create the conditions to best engage forcibly displaced people to develop their own agenda without external imposition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure Security and Safety

In many contexts of forced displacement, particularly internally displaced people (IDPs) who are still in conflict zones or people living under repressive regimes, the lack of security and safety is the main barrier to participation. People are scared of speaking up and sharing their experience for fear of retaliation or because of the social stigma and negative stereotypes which creates prejudicial conditions. To ensure the security of participants, it is crucial to identify the risks they face, constantly assess them and develop mitigation strategies adapted to each context.

Mitigate Restrictions on Freedom of Movement

Freedom of movement restrictions affect the ability of forcibly displaced to participate in processes and policies that affect them directly. Many forcibly displaced are living in IDP or refugee camps in neighboring countries without freedom of movement. Even those who get asylum and residency permits in host countries struggle to get a visa to travel to participate in forums of discussion on topics that affect them. It is crucial to facilitate access to visas and develop effective communication methods and channels adapted to each context.

Provide Financial Support and Social Programmes

The dire situation faced by forcibly displaced people leads them to prioritize their basic needs. They are not privileged to sit and talk about their trauma and experience. Forcibly displaced organizations often lack financial resources to participate in decision-making forums because of the difficulties in navigating the aid system and meeting donor requirements. It is crucial to provide financial support to forcibly displaced organizations and build alliances with other organizations that can provide assistance, resources and support services.

Create Safe Spaces

Most forcibly displaced people have suffered violence in their country of origin and struggle with poverty, lack of psychosocial support, violence and marginalization in their transit and host communities. Trauma makes forcibly displaced people extremely vulnerable, hindering their trust and preventing them from participating in the very processes that most concern them. Therefore, it is crucial to rebuild trust and work with communities to identify and create suitable and safe spaces, whether physical or virtual for their engagement. Gaining trust requires investing time in building equal relationships in which the knowledge, experience and capacity of those who have been forcibly displaced is recognized and valued. It is also important to consider their wide diversity of experiences, cultural and social codes, situations and challenges; practitioners must work with communities to determine the most appropriate timing for engagement and manage their expectations.

Strengthen Capacity and Build Equal Relationships

The participation of forcibly displaced people is often hindered by the lack of access to relevant information, network and resources. Providing capacity-building training relating to human rights, trauma and mental health and psychosocial support, documentation and truth-telling approaches, and communication and advocacy is crucial to equipping forcibly displaced people to engage in activities effectively. It is also important to support the establishment of forcibly displaced-led associations and provide them with financial and technical support. Coordination between forcibly displaced groups and relevant actors, including governments/authorities and donors should be facilitated to avoid duplication, promote complementarity, fill practice gaps and exchange knowledge. It is important to identify existing structures and processes in forcibly displaced people groups that could be strengthened rather than seeking to impose new structures or processes.

Establish Inclusive Spaces of Engagement

To ensure the participation of all groups, it is important to establish procedures that facilitate the inclusion not only of elites or those with power, but also members of marginalized groups, including youth, women, LGBTQI+ communities, older populations, differently abled, etc.). Think about intersectionality and consider everything and anything that can be a barrier to participation, including gender, race, class, sexual orientation and physical ability. Work to understand and identify unconscious and deep-rooted biases and other discriminatory practices; always employ gender/ethnic/racial/religious/etc. sensitive approaches. Language and cultural differences are also strong barriers to participation, so it is important to adapt to the group's language, social codes, values, knowledge and structures as it can operate on the basis of a different set of values, norms and practices. Ensure that there are a wide range of facilitation techniques available to choose from to promote participation and inclusion of diverse individuals and groups.

Establish Co-creation Practices

Enabling forcibly displaced people to play an active and influential part in decisions which affect their lives means that people are not just listened to but that their voices shape outcomes. Meaningful participation goes beyond consultation and collaboration. It means engaging forcibly displaced people in collaborative decision-making and co-creation processes. It requires setting up an equitable multi-party decision making structure and establishing co-creation practices at all levels of the work from designing plans and strategies to implementing activities and assessing impacts.