



# Community Engagement in Data Processes in Displacement Contexts

Technical Brief with Key Considerations and Case Studies Based on JIPS' Country Support



# Acknowledgement

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# INTRODUCTION

This Note helps decision makers and practitioners working on forced displacement to understand the **spectrum and value of approaches that can be applied to engage displacement-affected communities in collaborative efforts to design, collect, analyse and use data on forced displacement**. Linking the theory to practice, it draws on both concrete experiences and lessons learnt from JIPS-supported exercises (including in Greece, Myanmar, Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine) as well as existing literature from areas such as public participation and collective intelligence.<sup>1</sup>

This document further discusses key considerations when planning and implementing such an undertaking. Importantly, it stirs critical reflections and **challenges current ways of working and communicating about Community Engagement**. **Emphasising the need for more transparency** around the challenges of meaningful community participation, it concludes with a critical reflection on areas where more thinking and innovative approaches are required to move beyond current practice for the predictable and systematic inclusion of communities in the processes that concern them.

The document comes accompanied by a poster-size **Canvas – an easy-to-use and effective tool for understanding, structuring and effectively planning a Community Engagement strategy as part of a collaborative data process in displacement contexts**. The Canvas simplifies Community Engagement into fundamental levels, and provides targeted questions to guide decisions for each level and at every stage in a data process. These tools can be used in conjunction with JIPS' other tools available on the [JIPS Essential Toolkit](#), including JIPS' [Technical Brief on Joint Structured Analysis Techniques \(JSAT; 2021\)](#) and [Joint Analysis Guide \(2021\)](#), as well as the related [Facilitation Sheet on Community-Based Validation & Prioritisation Using Pairwise Ranking \(2022\)](#).

## What is Community Engagement?

Community “can be described as a group of people that recognizes itself or is recognized by outsiders as sharing common cultural, religious or other social features, backgrounds and interests, and that forms a collective identity with shared goals. However, what is externally perceived as a community might in fact be an entity with many subgroups or communities. It might be divided into clans or castes or by social class, language or religion. A community might be inclusive and protective of its members; but it might also be socially controlling, making it difficult for sub-groups, particularly minorities and marginalised groups, to express their opinions and claim their rights.”<sup>2</sup> Engagement describes a participatory process of two-way interaction and communication between entities.

1 This includes: the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2; 2018), [Spectrum of Public Participation \(20181112\\_v1\)](#); Arnstein, S. R. (1969): A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216–224. doi:10.1080/01944366908977225; and [The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership of Facilitating Power](#).

2 UNHCR. A Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations; UNHCR: Geneva, Switzerland, 2008.

Community Engagement shifts the focus from the individual to the collective “with the associated implications for inclusiveness to ensure consideration is made of the diversity that exists within the community.”<sup>3</sup> It is an intentional process that can be framed by principles and structured by objectives, tools, and strategies to ensure success. In the case of a collaborative data exercise, this process takes place between individuals from different stakeholders relevant to the project, including the displacement-affected communities.

**Together, this Note and the accompanying Canvas contribute directly to recent global policy commitments.** The UN Secretary-General, in his recent [Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#) (2022), reiterates that “action to address internal displacement must recognize the rights and agency of IDPs and host communities and ensure their active and informed participation in decision-making”. He further emphasises that they should be supported by cross-cutting efforts of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors as well as government authorities for increased protection, self-reliance and reduced displacement-induced vulnerabilities to achieve Solutions. This inclusive approach also applies to the data and analysis processes that inform those decisions. Here, engaging communities – both displaced and local communities – is not only essential to ensure the findings accurately reflect their lived realities and perspectives. But it is also critical to enable them to make their own uses of the analysis being jointly produced, and to access the strategizing and decision-making processes on responses to challenges due to displacement.

**“IDPs are citizens and residents of their country, and States have the primary responsibility to protect their rights and respond to their needs. [...] Action to address internal displacement must recognize the rights and agency of IDPs and host communities and ensure their active and informed participation in decision-making. Approaches should be guided by the knowledge of local communities and address the specific needs of people of different ages, genders, abilities and diversities, including by promoting gender equality and the best interests of the child.”**

*– United Nations Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement*

However, the answering of the questions of **who, when, how, and for what** to concretely engage often-diverse community groups in joint data processes remains a persistent challenge in forced displacement contexts. Community engagement means different things to different actors, and definitions and practices differ across countries and studies.

While acknowledging the diversity of perspectives and approaches to community engagement, **this Note and Canvas chart a pathway to strengthen inclusive approaches and to unlock transformative solutions for and with displacement-affected communities – systematically.**

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<sup>3</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM; 2020), [Community Engagement in Preventing and Responding to Gender-based Violence and Trafficking in Persons. Training Guide.](#)

# CANVAS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN DISPLACEMENT DATA PROCESSES

The Canvas captures the different steps in the community engagement spectrum and how they can come into play at each of the stages in a collaborative process for the design, collection, analysis, and use of data (see Figure 1).

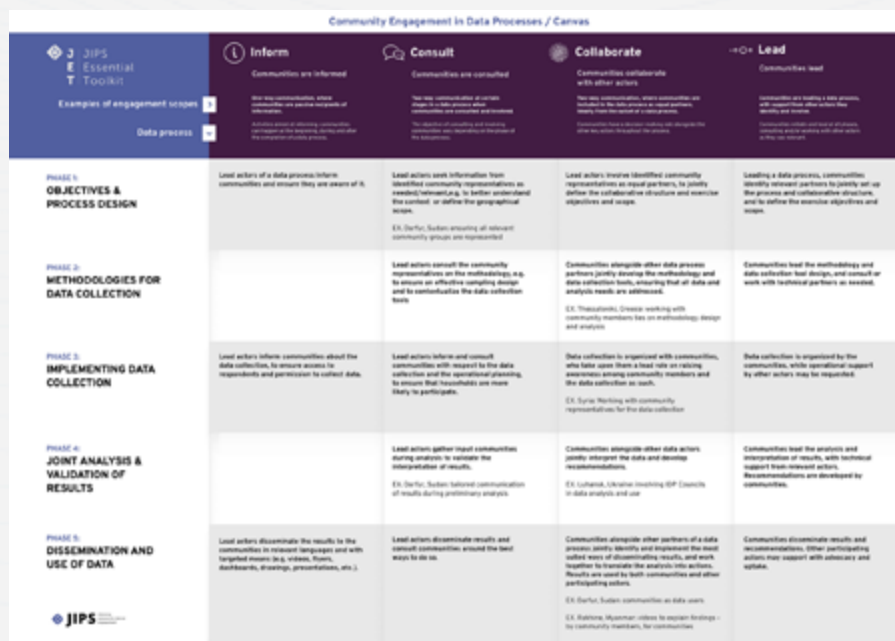


Figure 1: Canvas of the Community Engagement spectrum along the different steps in a collaborative data process in displacement settings.

The spectrum ranges from one-way communication, where data actors inform communities, to different degrees of two-way communication, where data actors involve communities in the data process or collaborate with communities as key stakeholders of a data process. The six key stages in a data process include: objectives and process design, methodologies for data collection, implementation of data collection, joint analysis and validation of results, dissemination and use of data, monitoring and evaluation.

Together with this Note, the Canvas can support actors to better understand opportunities and entry points for engaging communities and help them identify suitable approaches for their data process. It can guide planning for Community Engagement, which is ideally done at the very beginning of a data process to ensure a meaningful implementation and that sufficient resources, preparation, and time are factored in.

**The Canvas can also be used for training and capacity building efforts.** For this purpose, you can use the complete version illustrated below and walk your training or workshop participants through each stage in a typical data process considering the levels of community engagement. Alternatively, you can start off with the empty canvas template and jointly populate it, either drawing on the collective experience and knowledge to help you see the relevant components at-a-glance or working through an example or concrete project.

# MEANINGFUL AND IMPACTFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND CASE STUDIES

Designing collaborative data processes with displacement-affected communities at the heart is not only recognising their basic human rights, but also their critical agency in effectively addressing the displacement situation. It is a game-changer towards people-centred Solutions with lasting impact.

**“The key to closing equity gaps and resolving [...] vulnerability is direct participation by impacted communities in the development and implementation of solutions and policy decisions that directly impact them.”**

– *Facilitating Power (2021)*. **“The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership”**

While there is wide agreement<sup>4</sup> on the importance of ensuring that communities can adequately participate in decisions that affect them, how do we, as practitioners, design and implement engagement with communities in data processes?

Additionally, communities’ willingness to actively participate in research exercises cannot be taken for granted. During interviews conducted in the context of a Durable Solutions analysis implemented in Darfur, Sudan, in 2020-2021, communities repeatedly expressed a lack of trust and confidence in data collection activities as well as survey fatigue as a major roadblock. Participating in research may also reduce people’s time to engage in income-generating or care activities.

**“They ask us detailed questions about our living conditions, what we do, and make promises to help us. However, after they collect the information, they leave us without any change to our situation.”**

– *A head of household in Tawila reflecting on the interviewers he had received*

Building on JIPS’ experiences from supporting collaborative Durable Solutions analyses in Greece (2016-2019), Myanmar (2016-2017), Sudan (2016-2022), Syria (2018-2019), and Ukraine (2018-2020), this section discusses five critical elements that should be considered when designing and planning for Community Engagement along a collaborative data process, namely:

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<sup>4</sup> See UN Secretary-General’s [Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#) (2022), the [Global Compact for Migration](#) (2019), and the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (2018), among others.

## KEY CONSIDERATION

# 1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS NOT ALL OR NOTHING, NOR A ONE-OFF ACTIVITY

Community engagement should be seen as a process where different levels of engagement can be adopted at different stages of a data process. Therefore, it is helpful to understand community engagement as a spectrum of different degrees.

### Inform

One-way communication where communities are passive recipients of information.

Activities aimed at informing communities can happen at any stage of a data process.

### Consult

Two-way communication at certain stages in a data process when communities are consulted and involved.

The objective of consulting and involving communities vary depending on the phase of the data process.

### Collaborate

Two-way communication where communities are included in the data process as equal partners, ideally from the outset of a data process.

Communities have a decision making role alongside the other key actors throughout the process.

### Lead

Communities are leading a data process, with support from other actors they identify and involve.

Communities initiate and lead at all phases, consulting and/or working with other actors as they see relevant.

Each of the levels in the spectrum are essential to build meaningful collaboration with communities as part of a participatory data process. While informing communities about a data collection exercise is critical, **deeper collaboration can be unleashed, together with “unprecedented capacity to develop and implement the solutions to today’s biggest crises” through truly inclusive approaches.**<sup>5</sup>

For instance, the expert knowledge of communities is often stated as a key contribution during the analysis phase – where we often seek so-called ‘validation of results’ by the communities. However, the engagement of communities is not typically considered for the design of the methodology or the identification of objectives. **Working with affected communities to plan and design a data process helps ensure greater relevance of the data process, as well as better contextualisation and local ownership in further processes.** This includes objectives that are closer to the priorities of the communities; a methodology/approach that is more contextualised; indicators and data collection tools that are more meaningful to the targeted communities and places and sensitive to their realities.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Facilitating Power, . The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership.

<https://movementstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/The-Spectrum-of-Community-Engagement-to-Ownership.pdf>.



“ The issues in Darfur are very context specific, and therefore, solutions need to be tailored specifically to the Darfuri context. Involving communities in crafting solutions [the Action Plans resulting from the analysis] not only guarantees contextualised, concrete and relevant response, but also establishes communal sense of ownership and accountability towards programming; hence more sustainable interventions.”

- The office of the Wali, Central Darfur, in an interview conducted by JIPS in August 2021.

Working with communities throughout the data process more broadly speaking, further helps increase **shared ownership, acceptance, interest in and uptake of the results** later on. It contributes to data quality and enhances the accountability of the process.

Nevertheless, depending on the context and stakeholders, engaging communities from the outset of an exercise may not be possible. This can be linked to several issues, such as community engagement not being prioritised by partners, lack of resources, lack of adequate planning at the beginning of a data process, lack of identified community structures or representatives to work with, security issues that hinder access to communities, and more. The technical nature of a data process may also pose challenges to the meaningful and sustained engagement of all actors, and require dedicated efforts to ensure that all stakeholders are able to contribute, including the non-technical partners and communities. Therefore, **different approaches and tools can be used to bring communities on board at different stages of a data process and the various levels across the spectrum.**



Blue Nile, Sudan.

# Thessaloniki, Greece: Working with community members on methodology design and analysis (2016-2019)

## BACKGROUND

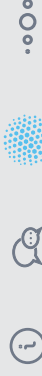
Following the influx of people via the Greek-Turkish land border in 2015 and early 2016, and against the backdrop of a lack of information about the urban refugee population residing in the greater area of Thessaloniki, the city's Municipality together with UNHCR and the wider humanitarian community decided to conduct a comprehensive urban profiling exercise. The exercise looked at two specific population groups:

- i) Refugees and asylum seekers who arrived in Thessaloniki after January 2015 with the aim in order, to develop a demographic profile and analyse progress towards their local integration; and
- ii) Third-country nationals not registered with the asylum service in Thessaloniki, to understand their demographic profile and analyse key challenges that they face, such as legal documentation and homelessness.

JIPS provided technical support throughout the exercise.

## MORE ABOUT THE EXERCISE →

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT:



COLLABORATE

PHASE IN THE DATA PROCESS:

SET-UP - DESIGN - COLLECT - ANALYSE - USE

## WHAT?

Community representatives were identified from and by the different ethnic refugee communities and other population groups included in the study, i.e. recognised refugees, asylum seekers, and third country nationals not registered with the Asylum Service. It is important to note that community representatives did not participate from a formally recognised or legitimised position (such as spokespersons for their communities), but rather as randomly selected representatives of their communities. This means their input could not be generalised to be representative of all community members; this limitation was acknowledged in a transparent manner.

These community members participated in the development of the analysis approach to measure local integration of recently arrived refugees and migrants. This then formed the foundation for the indicator selection and tool development. It also framed the later joint analysis process, where communities were again involved to validate and interpret the findings.

## HOW?

During the methodology design phase, community members participated in focus group discussions on the topic of local integration, to ground truth the methodology and inform the analysis framework. Community members from the different target groups – refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants – were divided in subgroups by ethnicity and sex. They first explored what local integration meant to them, and then

prioritised the most important factors for local integration to be included in the analysis approach. Visual cards and different interactive methods were used to bridge language barriers and generate these reflections.

During the analysis phase, the same community members were invited again to participate in joint analysis sessions. Their review of the key findings and interpretation thereof as well as the recommendations they put forth fed into further discussions between the exercise actors and informed the final report. Additionally, during the joint sessions community members proposed ways to disseminate results in their respective refugee communities in the city.

## SO WHAT?

The input received from communities is directly reflected in the topics and indicators that were prioritised for the study. Some factors initially prioritised by the lead exercise partners to measure local integration (such as social integration and civic participation) were given less importance compared to other factors, such as access to basic services, housing and legal status. This ensured a more relevant analysis approach. Furthermore, the insights provided by the community representatives during the analysis phase were presented to all exercise partners and informed the final report. For instance, communities highlighted the importance of the informal/black job market for migrants' (including irregular ones) and refugees' livelihoods in the city, something that the survey had not captured.

Unfortunately, the engagement with the communities did not extend into the dissemination and use phase as the profiling process got stalled by the changing administration in the municipality. This meant that the communities who were at the centre of the study, were not necessarily made aware of the results and thus unable to benefit from them or use them for their own purposes. This is also a lesson learnt for JIPS when it comes to engaging communities as data users (also see key consideration 4 on this aspect).



# Syria: Working with community representatives for the data collection (2018-2019)

## BACKGROUND

Since its outbreak in 2011, the Syrian conflict has had a devastating impact on the country's population and cities, leading to large-scale and protracted forced displacement as well as significant damage to infrastructure, including in urban areas. This called for longer-term interventions – and analysis to inform them – that considered both the population needs and the capacities of critically-affected cities to provide for those needs. Against this background, the Urban Analysis Network Syria (Urban-S) project, implemented in 2018-2019, produced area-based urban profiles that provided a snapshot of the physical and social conditions from a conflict and displacement context. The project was funded by the European Union and implemented through a collaborative approach, led by iMMAP with JIPS, Mercy Corps' Humanitarian Action Team (HAT), and the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC).

## MORE ABOUT THE EXERCISE →

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT:



COLLABORATE

PHASE IN THE DATA PROCESS:

SET-UP - DESIGN - **COLLECT** - ANALYSE - USE

## WHAT?

Due to restrictions by the Government of Syria on international organisations' work in the country in 2018-2019, it was difficult to access communities to conduct sample-based household surveys that could feed into the joint urban profiling analysis. The Urban-S thus used an alternative approach that relied on surveys with 'community focal points'.

## HOW?

Selecting the community focal points required devising a process and defining transparent criteria to identify the 'right' community members for the data collection. The selection strategy relied on a mixed methods approach that involved chain referral (snow-balling) and connections with social groups. It focused on assessing the extent to which they were informed of the situation of their wider community, primarily by analysing the reputation and influence of a member on the broader community (community leads, religious leaders etc.), as indicators of their ability to speak to the situation of the wider community. This also involved looking at aspects such as motives and potential biases; years living in the area to ensure contextual and situational awareness; ability to describe general boundaries of the area of concern, to ensure understanding of the geographical location/coverage; and self-reported strength of social connections in the area of concern.

## SO WHAT?

Though communities had not been involved from the outset in the data processes under Urban-S, the engagement with community members during data collection and the efforts put in identifying 'representative' members to speak on behalf of the wider communities made space for a two-way information flow between the research teams and the communities.

## 2. DEFINING ‘COMMUNITIES’

‘The notion of ‘community’ is unbound, emergent and constantly in the making. Therefore, for any national and international agency or NGO, it will be very hard to draw a boundary around a local ‘community’.<sup>6</sup> And while communities are often defined as having a shared identity based on common features such as language, culture, religion, and geographic location, it is important to highlight that a **community is not a homogeneous group of people with shared interests**. Rather, communities are composed of diverse subgroups, including minorities and marginalised groups. In data processes aimed at analysing the displacement situation and obstacles to Durable Solutions among IDPs, ‘target populations’ and hence communities are typically defined based on their displacement status.<sup>7</sup> Such separation between displaced and non-displaced (local) populations and communities allows for a comparative analysis approach that identifies displacement-related vulnerabilities and needs linked to displacement from broader issues affecting all population groups and thus requiring a development response.<sup>8</sup> However, applying a definition based on the displacement status often falls short of capturing the more diverse experiences, perspectives, challenges, and dynamics relevant to Durable Solutions interventions that consider all displacement-affected communities and the places they inhabit. Meaningful engagement and representation – not only as ‘target communities/populations’ (i.e. the communities to be studied) but importantly as participating actors in the process – thus start with a context-specific identification of the relevant communities in a displacement situation and a critical unpacking of which subgroups and diverse interests they encompass.

It is equally important to be transparent around the limitations of a chosen approach to community engagement, and to acknowledge that the community groups identified may not be fully representative of all the diverse characteristics in a population. This may also require that we adjust how we communicate about community engagement in data processes, for example by nuancing statements such as that ‘research results have been validated by communities’ by clearly stating which groups provided validation and how this was achieved.<sup>9</sup>

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6 A Titz, T Cannon, and F Krüger (2018), “Uncovering ‘community’: Challenging an elusive concept in development and disaster related work”. *Societies* 8 (3), 71, 2018.

7 Often they are also defined based on their physical location or residency, for instance camp vs. out-of-camp or urban settings, etc.

8 For more on the comparative analysis approach to Durable Solutions see: Interagency Durable Solutions Analysis Guide (2018), available on <https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/resources/>.

9 A Titz, T Cannon, and F Krüger conclude that it “would be more honest and more helpful to speak of ‘people-centred’ rather than ‘community-based’ approaches or, better still, to state exactly with whom and where one works”. Source: A Titz, T Cannon, and F Krüger (2018), “Uncovering ‘community’: Challenging an elusive concept in development and disaster related work”. *Societies* 8 (3), 71, 2018.

# Darfur, Sudan: Ensuring all relevant community groups are represented among stakeholders to the process (2017-2022)

## BACKGROUND

In 2017, the Government of Sudan and the international community agreed on the need to collectively support Durable Solutions for displacement-affected communities to address the country's protracted displacement. Accordingly, the Durable Solutions Working Group (DSWG) identified a shared evidence base and a collaborative approach as priorities. A pilot exercise was implemented in El Fasher in 2017-2019, and then scaled up in 2020-2021 to 18 more localities in Darfur, funded by the Peacebuilding Fund (2020-2021) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (2021-2022)

**MORE ABOUT THE EXERCISE** →

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT:



CONSULT

PHASE IN THE DATA PROCESS:

SET-UP - DESIGN - COLLECT - ANALYSE - USE

## WHAT?

In Darfur, the Durable Solutions analysis focused on defining communities based on their displacement status (i.e. displaced and non-displaced), to allow for a comparative analysis of these two groups. However, this distinction of community groups proved early on to be too highly aggregated and generalised.

Consultations with experts of the local context showed that other criteria also needed to be considered, including communities' livelihood strategies and the age cohorts. It became clear that in order to capture important dynamics of the conflict and the displacement situation, farmers and herders/nomads had to be included as distinct communities, both in the analysis and as stakeholders in the data process. Additionally, youth had to be approached as an additional community group with distinct experiences, interests, and positioning in the conflict and peacebuilding dynamics.

## HOW?

Once the relevance to the analysis of these two additional groups – nomads and youth – became clear, it was important to specify a definition. Nomad communities were defined based on their livelihoods strategies and it was further specified that those residing in the so-called damrahs (temporary settlements) would be included in the data process. These groups already had representative structures in the form of local leaders, who participated in different stages of the data process.

Defining the youth appeared to be more challenging: the standard age-based definition used for the production of official statistics (15-24 years of age) was applied in the household-based quantitative analysis. However, during the qualitative data collection it became clear that this definition was inadequate in the context in Darfur, where youth was regarded to include persons up to 35 years of age. This was an important specification to ensure that this group was properly represented in the analysis as well as through 'youth group' representatives.<sup>10</sup>

## SO WHAT?

A situational analysis in the early stages of planning a data process is crucial to define which communities are relevant for a certain analysis and how to capture their perspectives as part of a data process. This is critical both for the selection of 'target groups' for the analysis, for the identification of community groups to engage with in the process, as well as to define in which ways each group needs to be involved (from 'inform' to 'lead', see the Canvas).

In Darfur, the analysis of aspects relevant to Durable Solutions and peacebuilding and the subsequent action planning would not have been as relevant to the context and the communities themselves if nomads had not been included as a distinct group alongside the IDP communities and the non-displaced (mostly farmer) communities, and if youth had not been included as a separate group. Why? Because the in-country dynamic of peace and reconciliation is highly dependent on conflict resolution mechanisms that at the time of the exercise excluded youth, and conflict dynamics derived from the livelihood strategies.

10 Margharita Lundkvist-Houndoumadi and Oia Samarah (JIPS),

"Does Disaggregation Equal Inclusion? Reflections on Producing Disaggregated Analysis for Inclusive Durable Solutions", in: Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) 2021



## KEY CONSIDERATION

### 3. ENSURING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION – AND ITS LIMITATIONS

**Just as ‘communities’ are not homogenous groups, they are also not a single actor.** Instead, they are typically represented by individuals, interest-based groups, community-based organisations, and other entities. All these need to be carefully identified, considering their ability and limits to effectively represent their communities’ experiences, views and interests.

Community representatives may include local leaders (e.g. traditional and tribal leaders, religious leaders, elected political leaders, etc.) and/or representatives/advocates of interest-based groups (e.g. women’s groups, youth groups, IDP groups). Local (government) authorities can play a crucial role in identifying relevant stakeholders who would need to be included in the processes. In some cases, however, it may be less obvious to define who can best represent a community or a subgroup in a data process, so that random community members are invited to play such roles; nevertheless, they may have a limited ability to speak on behalf of a group.

**Identifying the ‘right’ community representatives that will be engaging in the data process is thus a complex undertaking** that requires: a good understanding of the community structures and dynamics; any existing representation structures in relevant community groups and their legitimacy; an overview of subgroups that may not be represented in the ‘mainstream structures’ and their potential spokespersons or representative bodies; civil society and other structures that can speak on behalf of communities (or subgroups thereof), etc. A mapping of the aforementioned structures and groupings is an important step to navigate this process. Local actors working directly with IDPs (including local authorities, civil society organisations, academia, as well as international actors working in the field) can also provide valuable input on how to best identify focal persons who can represent the relevant community groups in a data process. Equally important is to work with established community representatives to ensure that their knowledge of the community contributes (to the extent possible) to inclusive and diverse representation.

It is important to distinguish between the role of community members who engage in a data process as respondents, key informants, and in focus group discussions, as well as the role of community representatives who participate as actors alongside other stakeholders. Even when community representatives are included in a collaborative data process alongside other stakeholders, involving different community members and representatives with diverging interests through qualitative methods, for instance to validate results, is still very important.

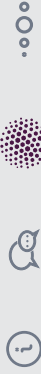
# Luhansk, Ukraine: Involving the IDP Council in data analysis and use (2018-2022)

## BACKGROUND

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) together with the Social Protection Department of the Luhansk State Administration and international actors, implemented a profiling exercise in Luhansk Oblast, Ukraine, in 2018-2022. The project focused on the urban displacement situation and specifically the local integration of Internally Displaced Persons. It informed a more coordinated and evidence-based local-level planning and humanitarian response.

## MORE ABOUT THE EXERCISE →

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT:



COLLABORATE

PHASE IN THE DATA PROCESS:

SET-UP - DESIGN - COLLECT - ANALYSE - USE

## WHAT?

Around the time when the profiling process entered the analysis phase, a so-called IDP Council was established within the Regional State Administration of the Luhansk Oblast, who was one of the lead actors of the exercise. The IDP Council was mandated to promote IDP participation in planning and management of Durable Solutions and the nation-wide democratisation process. This included monitoring the challenges faced by IDPs in Luhansk, promoting their rights, advocating for regional policies, and communicating with executive bodies and other local self-government bodies on displacement-related issues.

## HOW?

The Council was identified by the profiling partners as the ideal body to represent the IDP community in the collaborative data process. The Council focal persons, as the legitimate representatives of the IDP community, ensured IDPs' perspectives and interests fed into the validation and interpretation of results, as well as the joint development of recommendations. Moreover, they were able to follow up on the use of the results in their role as advocates and mediators within the Local Administration, which also positioned IDP communities as data users.

## SO WHAT?

This example illustrates the value of engaging with established bodies with a formal mandate to represent displacement-affected communities. In the case of the profiling in Luhansk, it not only helped enhance the analysis but also informed evidence-based advocacy by the IDP Council. This subsequently led to improvements to the local employment support programmes.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, often there are no such formally established bodies with a legitimate mandate to represent and advocate on behalf of IDP communities. Additionally, even where such bodies exist, it is still critical to acknowledge possible limitations to their representativity, such as regarding potential conflicts of interest or the inclusion of marginalised sub-groups, and be transparent about these.



<sup>11</sup> See JIPS (2021), "Working with cities to deliver solutions for displacement: what we can learn from urban profiling practice".

## KEY CONSIDERATION

# 4. THE ART OF ‘ENGAGING’

Communication plays a central role in enabling meaningful and impactful community engagement at different stages of a collaborative data process. This, however, requires investing time and effort to tailor communication and dialogue (two-way communication) as well as to build and sustain trust between different actors throughout a collaborative data process.

This typically involves **adjusting the communication approach** to the specific contexts in terms of language, channels, means, and visuals, which requires awareness of local dialects, cultural norms, literacy levels, existing infrastructure and means of communication. For example, in remote areas with limited access to phones or the internet, alternative means should be used to facilitate a two-way flow of information and dialogue. It also requires tailoring dissemination activities to communities, and ideally involving them in sharing and advocating for the results with their community members.

It also involves **managing expectations** at the beginning and at each step of the data process, to ensure that communities understand the purpose of their involvement, the end goals, and how the outputs from a data process will be used. When communities are not involved or well-informed of the uses of the information they provide, this can impede their active involvement and trust in a data collection exercise, or even survey fatigue in contexts with repeated or multiple data collection exercises. This in turn can affect the credibility of the data provided by them, and thus make the whole data process less relevant.<sup>12</sup> Putting in place adequate procedures for meaningful engagement – already early on in a data process – can help restore communities’ faith in data and data collection activities. This can subsequently support the process of **trust building** and two-way communication, not only between communities and responding actors but also between subgroups with diverging views or interests within a community.

In this way, inclusive approaches to data collection can also contribute to trust building between populations and government authority in support of peace processes, in addition to informing responses to a displacement situation. This is critical as local authorities are typically first in line as ‘responding actors’, and play a key role in creating enabling – or on the contrary, hindering – environments for Community Engagement and Solutions to displacement more broadly speaking.

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<sup>12</sup> Margarita Lundkvist-Houndoumadi and Ola Samarah (JIPS), “Does Disaggregation Equal Inclusion? Reflections on Producing Disaggregated Analysis for Inclusive Durable Solutions”, in: Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) 2021



Finally, meaningful engagement may need to be underpinned by **capacity development** efforts, in addition to adjusting the way things are communicated. One aspect is the importance of basic data literacy and knowledge of data collection methodologies, as prerequisites for a meaningful contribution to the data process. Investing time and effort in ensuring that communities and their representatives can engage with the other partaking actors throughout a data process, can support their meaningful engagement as well as prepare the ground for subsequent initiatives by the communities to lead or engage in data processes as well as use the results.



# Darfur, Sudan: Tailored communication of results for joint analysis (2017-2022)

## WHAT?

During the analysis phase, a series of working sessions were organised with communities, together with the exercise partners, to discuss the preliminary findings and conclusions from the durable solutions analysis implemented under the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Sudan. The sessions also served to prioritise key obstacles to solutions and foster a better and more nuanced understanding of the different community groups' vision for a future when they would have overcome displacement-related challenges and reached Durable Solutions.

## LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT:



## PHASE IN THE DATA PROCESS:

SET-UP - DESIGN - COLLECT - **ANALYSE** - USE

**A crucial element in the success of these sessions was the in-depth preparation** with significant support from JIPS to develop the qualitative and interactive tools and train the facilitation team of the Sudanese Development Agency (SUDIA), who was then in charge of facilitating the community sessions with support from UNHCR and funding from UNDP. **Importantly, a tailored communication approach and materials on the analysis' results were developed**, adapted to the context and the data literacy level of the community members.

## HOW?

Community sessions were held with members from each of the target population groups separately – i.e. representatives of Internally Displaced Persons, (non-displaced) local populations, IDP returnees and nomads. During the sessions, the groups were split into subgroups for men, women, and youth, to ensure that their diverse perspectives were captured. Key preliminary results relevant for each of the different target groups were identified, and visualised on sets of cards with contextualised depictions and language adapted to the local context. This helped ensure that the results were understandable at a glance and could generate a meaningful discussion.

## SO WHAT?

The careful tailoring of how the study results were presented – using visuals relevant to the context, adjusting the presentation of data to the expected literacy level in the rural areas, and applying participatory methods – made it possible for the community members to engage meaningfully in the conversation around these results.

Importantly, **meaningful and effective engagement** requires more than simply inviting communities to participate in different meetings such as joint working sessions, workshops, or consultations. The subject of engagement – in this case information about the collaborative data process and the preliminary analysis – needs to be made accessible, understood and relevant to the communities. Time, resources and expertise need to be dedicated to ensure that an effective communication with communities is created.

**MORE ABOUT THE ACTION PLANNING PROCESS** →

**JIPS' TOOL ON COMMUNITY VALIDATION AND PAIRWISE RANKING** →



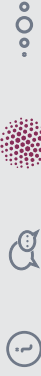
# Rakhine, Myanmar: How IDPs used videos to explain profiling findings to their communities (2016-2017)

## BACKGROUND

The profiling exercise in Sittwe, Rakhine State in Western Myanmar, conducted in 2016-2017, explored the displacement situation in and around the city, where ethnic violence had displaced more than 121,000 people since 2012. Led by the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, coordinated in Myanmar by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and UNHCR, the exercise specifically examined the situation of four population groups: displaced Muslims living in camps; displaced Rakhine residents living in relocation sites; non-displaced residents of Muslim villages, and non-displaced residents of Rakhine villages.

## MORE ABOUT THE EXERCISE →

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT:



**COLLABORATE**

PHASE IN THE DATA PROCESS:

SET-UP - DESIGN - COLLECT - ANALYSE - USE

Shortly after publication of the profiling report, widespread violence against Muslim populations in Rakhine State broke out again, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee across the border into Bangladesh. This had a significant impact on the planned use of the profiling results, although they still provided useful information to the humanitarian response in Bangladesh, such as data on population and household characteristics, on former camp structures, as well as data for return planning purposes.

## WHAT?

Upon the completion of the profiling exercise, local communities participated in the dissemination of the analysis. This helped ensure that communities themselves had access to the findings and hence, contribute to the response. Following a joint session with partners, communities created a video to explain the profiling process and its outcomes to their wider communities.

## HOW?

Consultations with staff based in the camps brought forward the idea of using a video to generate two-way communication. “This is something DRC has never done before in the camps, and not something I have seen other organisations do either”, explains Sophie Everest, then Coordinator of the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster in Rakhine and the focal point to the process.

## SO WHAT?

Two elements triggered the idea for making a film: first, evidence from the profiling report showed that the literacy level is relatively low in the IDP camps around Sittwe Township. Second, the workshop organised by JIPS and CCCM with participation from enumerators from the IDP camps indicated which methods and channels of communication communities trusted and used most regularly.

Building on this knowledge, profiling partners realised that their current way of communicating with communities – mostly relying on printed materials, such as leaflets and posters – was inefficient in both getting their messages out to concerned populations, and in obtaining their feedback. In fact, only about half of the camp-based populations were able to read and understand printed documents.

## LEARN MORE →



## KEY CONSIDERATION

# 5. COMMUNITIES AS EQUAL STAKEHOLDERS

In a collaborative data process, key stakeholders typically include national and/or subnational government entities (including national statistical offices), international and national humanitarian, development and peace actors (including UN agencies and non-governmental organisations), civil society actors, and academia. Importantly, they should – but not always adequately do so – include displacement-affected communities themselves. However, community members have an interest in using generated evidence about their displacement situation for their own planning and advocacy purposes. This in turn can contribute to more inclusive and transformative solutions.

**A key element of meaningful community engagement thus requires moving beyond seeing displacement-affected communities as mere beneficiaries or data points, and instead engaging with them as data users.** For a collaborative data process, this means that communities need to be included alongside the other stakeholders in the early planning stages of a data collection exercise, where the data needs are being outlined and the objectives agreed upon. This helps ensure that the results are equally relevant to the communities.

“ *This is my first time that I attend such a brainstorming and knowledge-exchange workshop [...] People discussed issues directly relevant to Jebel Moon locality [a locality in West Darfur] that had been significantly affected by conflict [...]. We indeed hope that these workshops take place more often for communities to benefit and participate in the joint planning processes.*”

*– Comment from a female community service supervisor during an action planning workshop conducted in October 2021 in West Darfur, as part of the Durable Solutions Analysis in Sudan*

Such participatory processes can further establish and strengthen accountability to the participating communities as well as the actors involved in the data process, by jointly translating the evidence and analysis into agreed-upon action plans. Accordingly, engaging communities in data processes is a first crucial step towards ensuring meaningful community participation in the decision making processes that inform interventions and longer-term development planning to respond to a displacement situation.

# Darfur, Sudan: Communities as data users (2017-2022)

## WHAT?

During the last phases of the interagency Durable Solutions studies in Darfur, multi-stakeholder workshops were organised to collaboratively draft action plans at the Locality level. Participants included representatives from State and Locality-level authorities, displacement-affected communities (including IDPs, IDP returnees, non-displaced, and nomads), UN agencies, and NGOs.

## HOW?

The joint workshops brought participants together to craft action plans for their localities, based on the analysis results and the priorities as identified by the communities. The workshops provided a space for two-way communication between community groups, authorities, and international actors. The engagement of communities in these workshops gave the resulting Action Plans more relevance and local ownership.

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT:



COLLABORATE

PHASE IN THE DATA PROCESS:

SET-UP - DESIGN - COLLECT - ANALYSE - USE

The success of these workshops encouraged local and [national] State authorities “to take responsibility and better plan for the State. [...] Such collaborative workshops] allow [the different actors and communities] to meet, exchange ideas and benefit from the survey results and the analysis. If we all work together as a team we can understand each other’s needs and make progress [towards solutions]” (Ministry of Finance representative, East Darfur Action Planning Workshop).

The workshops provided a platform for discussion and joint efforts across the international, political and social structures in Darfur, which reportedly has not happened frequently. Participants were encouraged to explore synergies across the suggested activities, which ranged from policy-level interventions to construction and rehabilitation work, capacity building, and other types of responses.

## SO WHAT?

These workshops allowed communities to engage in the process as data users, who have a vested interest in the evidence produced and a say not only in the process of an exercise but also in the usage of results and the next steps, such as setting priorities for subsequent interventions. Furthermore, the dialogues fostered during the workshops helped enhance trust in the local planning process among the different community groups. The positive community attitude towards collaborative and inclusive planning was explicitly expressed by a community leader from East Darfur, who reflected on the importance of his community’s participation in the workshops giving their reasons for attending as “to discuss Solutions with other community groups” and “to tell them we are open to peace and shared solutions.”

**LEARN MORE** →



## WHAT'S NEXT FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN DATA PROCESSES IN DISPLACEMENT SITUATIONS?

Community Engagement is not 'all or nothing' nor is it an activity that only happens once in a data process. This document together with the Canvas and other tools that can be found on JIPS' website<sup>13</sup>, provide practitioners with a **better understanding of both the richness and complexity of engaging with communities. They offer critical considerations, a practical tool, and hands-on examples** to help strategically and effectively plan for Community Engagement from the outset and throughout data collection efforts, factoring in the time, resources, and specialised expertise as required.

In this sense, **this Note and Canvas chart a pathway not only to strengthened Community Engagement in data processes, but also to truly inclusive and transformative Solutions.** Such approaches can support communities' agency and ensure Accountability to Affected People (AAP)<sup>14</sup>; underpin more inclusive governance processes; help localise and tailor global frameworks to a specific displacement context; and fast-track more inclusive short-term responses and longer-term development processes at the national and subnational levels.

**“By engaging IDPs and affected communities as their own agents, alongside local organisations and civil society, to achieve locally-led Solutions, data processes contribute critically not only to IDPs' ability to claim their rights and to participate in and influence political processes, but also to elevate our accountability. They can thus pave the way towards more equitable systems, creating environments that are conducive to Solutions.”**

*– Charlotte Slente, Danish Refugee Council, at the JIPS-Norway high-level event on the UN Secretary-General's expected Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, on 14 June 2022*

Moving forward, this Note and Canvas also point to areas where more work needs to be done to elevate current practices amongst the diverse actors working on displacement data. They contribute to the broader policy discussion on **how we can better deliver on working 'for and with' communities throughout the data value chain.** A possible next step could entail the elaboration of commonly agreed principles for engaging communities in displacement data processes.

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<sup>13</sup> See JIPS' [Technical Brief on Joint Structured Analysis Techniques \(JSAT; 2021\)](#) and [Joint Analysis Guide \(2021\)](#), as well as the related Facilitation Sheet on [Community-Based Validation & Prioritisation Using Pairwise Ranking \(2022\)](#). For more visit [www.jips.org/publications](http://www.jips.org/publications).

<sup>14</sup> JIPS (June 2022), [JIPS-Norway high-level event on the UN Secretary-General's expected Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#).

Further topics that need to be explored include critical reflection on how to define communities in settings of displacement and conflict; the extent to which we can consider working with communities only towards the later stages of a data process (e.g. during the analysis or data use) as ‘collaborative’; the ethics of engaging communities;<sup>15</sup> the human side of data interoperability (or the ability to join up not only data, but also to make people work together);<sup>16</sup> and more. We also need to explore forward-looking approaches from other sectors, such as on Collective Intelligence, that can provide useful avenues and tools to level up current work and enhance the voices of communities in collaborative data processes, alongside governments, humanitarian and development actors.

JIPS will continue its efforts to improve the ways communities are included and engaged in displacement studies we support. We will emphasise openness and transparency in our communication around the approaches used and the limitations and challenges to effective and meaningful participation encountered along the data process. We will also continue our efforts to work with other actors to jointly enhance current practice.

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15 V. Squire et. al. (2022), “Data and Displacement: Assessing the Practical and Ethical Implications of DataDriven Humanitarianism for Internally Displaced Persons in Camp-Like Settings, Final Project Report”, [www.warwick.ac.uk/datadisplacement](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/datadisplacement)

16 Steven Ramage, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (25 August 2021), “[Data that powers sustainable and equitable development. Why people are essential in data interoperability](#)”.



**J** | JIPS  
**E** | Essential  
**T** | Toolkit