

The role of participation in food security interventions

The humanitarian system has made few gains in improving accountability and performance through enhanced participation of affected populations. There is still a challenge to be met in ensuring that food aid and other food security interventions are in line with affected people's own priorities and will strengthen their own livelihoods. How well do we permit the priorities of food-insecure people to enter our calculations? And how active can their participation be in verification of our analysis or our decision-making?

François Grünewald (Groupe URD) made a presentation to set off a discussion. Agencies seldom use participatory approaches in crisis. While it is not easy to do, there are also often excuses made for not trying. Assumptions are made but not checked with people affected about all sorts of things, from who needs what to security and protection conditions. And there are also examples of good practice.

In relation to elements of food insecurity and responses to it:

- it is important to analyse coping mechanisms, and this can best be done in conjunction with the people affected themselves;
- nutritional surveys need to be explained to the people who, and whose children, will be surveyed;
- when there are limited resources, it should be understood that people will re-allocate them between themselves.