

## Beneficiaries participation and accountability

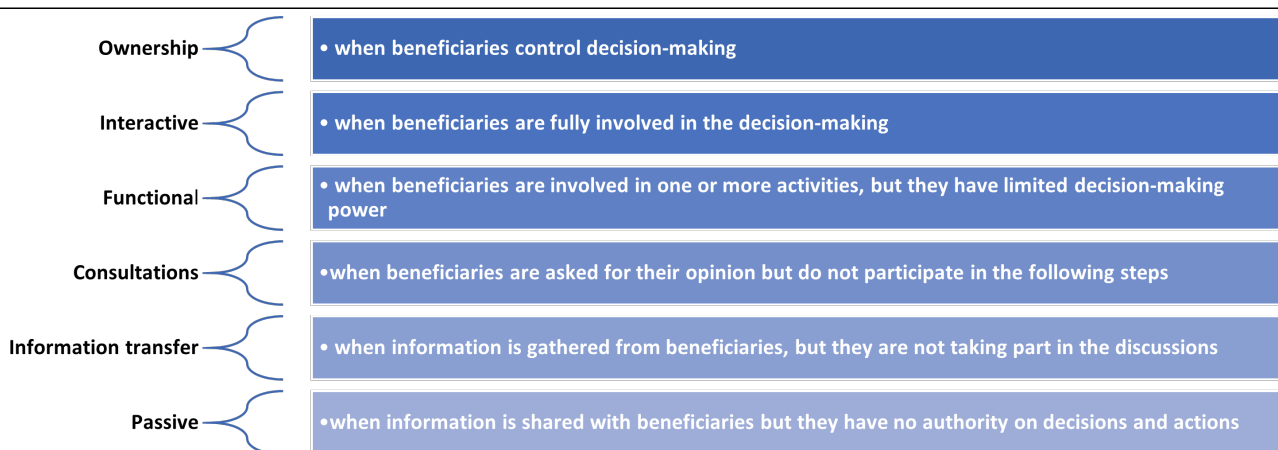
### Beneficiaries' participation

**Beneficiaries' participation** in decisions regarding protection and assistance services received in migrant centres is an important application of their rights. The **inclusion of beneficiaries in the management of the facilities** is key to identify priority needs and take them into account in program implementation, thus contributing to improve the quality and effectiveness of assistance.

Furthermore, participation reduces the feeling of dependency often experienced by beneficiaries. It contributes to establish a sense of ownership and it increases beneficiaries' confidence by restoring a sense of normality and dignity after traumatic experiences. Participation shall ensure that beneficiaries are heard and take part in the interventions and decisions affecting their life. It shall not only allow beneficiaries to identify their needs, but also give them the opportunity to actively support in the management of the facilities by contributing to the search for improvements and solutions.

It is a process that may take many forms and the level of involvement, responsibility, and power of beneficiaries may vary depending on the context and the circumstances. Factors that may influence the degree of participation include the level of security, the relations among the different groups of beneficiaries, funding or time restrictions, beneficiaries' state of mind, and the level of emergency.

Possible **degrees of participation** are:



The most common way to promote participation is through the **establishment of committees** composed of beneficiaries who carry out specific tasks and assignments within the facilities. Typical issues in which the committees may be involved are health and hygiene, food and NFIs distribution and waste management but specific groups can be established according to the services provided by each migrant centres. Representatives of the committees shall meet on a regular basis, possibly by participating also in relevant internal coordination meetings, and they can contribute to disseminating information to the other beneficiaries and to providing feedbacks on the issues raised with the management. Participation can also be promoted through **representational groups**, usually formed of persons who have a common characteristic (e.g. gender, age, nationality, language, ethnic group). Usually less formal than the committees, this form of association can also facilitate the interaction between the personnel and the beneficiaries. *Community leaders* may derive authority from being self-appointed, from tradition or faith or they may be charismatic people who came forward within their group and are an important asset for the facility's staff.

#### Best practices from the field

In IOM Niger transit centers, a migrant of each nationality hosted in the facilities is appointed by their compatriots to represent them. The representatives meet regularly with the center's management staff and play an active role in coordinating food distribution, participation to social activities, as well in mediation and conflict management. IOM staff does not intervene in the selection of the representatives, but ensures that each group feels represented.

Personal **behaviour, communication style and skills of facilities managers** and their staff significantly impact the extent of beneficiaries' engagement. Special attention must be paid to ensure that all groups are able to participate, including those with specific needs and/or who are marginalised. Regular **focus groups discussions** shall be facilitated by migrant centre staff, whose role is to collect feedback from beneficiaries on their experience on a specific issue or service. In case of unexpected or urgent matters that may arise in the facilities, beneficiaries may be involved in *task forces* set up for a temporary period with a specific objective. Last but not least, beneficiaries participation can be strengthened through trainings or awareness-raising activities on various topic, as for instance protection issues, constructive expression and exchange of opinion, conflict resolution, hygiene and sanitation etc.

#### Beneficiaries' accountability

A positive outcome of participation is the establishment of **self-regulation schemes** among beneficiaries. Nevertheless, it is important for migrant centre practitioners to set standard operating procedures to define how beneficiaries are held accountable in case of (attempt of) fraud, multiple requests of assistance in case of one-time services, misbehavior towards IOM staff, partners and

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other beneficiaries and physical damages to migrant centres including theft. Guidance on suspension of assistance in these circumstances must balance the need to avoid the misuse of IOM assistance while ensuring minimum protection standards of assistance taking into account the level of vulnerability of the beneficiary concerned. Because of this reason, a one-fit-for-all directive may be difficult to put in place. Nevertheless, clear vulnerability assessment criteria shall be set in order to ensure accountability to partners and donors. In case of fraud or misbehavior, protection staff shall always carry out a vulnerability assessment before a decision on the provision of assistance is made based on the above mentioned criteria (see also [this entry](#)).

In order to prevent **fraud and misbehavior**, comprehensive rules shall be communicated to all beneficiaries in the reception phase and reminded throughout the assistance process (see [this entry](#) for further guidance on communication and information sharing). **House-rules** shall be presented verbally and displayed in multiple languages in posters hanged in key locations. It is recommended to include visual materials such as symbols, signs or drawings to ensure that the messages are understood by all beneficiaries. If feasible, house-rules shall also be printed in different languages and handed out to beneficiaries for their signature for formal acceptance. Any behavior that goes against the rules may be subject to sanctions such as verbal warning, written warning, temporary suspension of assistance and exclusion from assistance. Sanctions shall be proportionated to the gravity of the fact, on the vulnerability of the beneficiary and on their recidivity.

#### **Typical rules subjects include:**

- Safety and security
- Opening/access times
- Obligations of beneficiaries with respect to maintenance and cleaning of the premises
- Waste management
- Hygiene rules
- Prohibitions related to the use of drugs or other substances
- Rules on smoking
- Prohibition of sex work
- Prohibition to host visitors
- Respect of personnel working in the facility
- Respect of the other beneficiaries
- Prohibition of verbal or physical violence
- Prohibition to write on doors and walls, provision of fake personal information that may impact assistance of other beneficiaries
- Respect of IOM properties (beds, common spaces, equipment).

If beneficiaries are found **damaging or stealing IOM properties**, they will be held accountable and may face suspension of assistance. Beneficiaries shall be informed that they are responsible of their personal belongings and that IOM will not be responsible for any loss. Depending on the type of facilities, lockers shall be made available to store valuable items.

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## References and Tools

- [WFP Participatory techniques and tools](#)
- [ANALP Participation handbook for humanitarian field workers](#)
- [IOM, NRC and UNHCR Camp Management Toolkit \(Chapter 3: Community participation, p. 46\)](#)
- [IOM and UNHCR Collective center Guidelines \(Chapter 4: participation and community involvement, p. 17\)](#)
- [Procédures opérationnelles standard centre d'accueil et d'orientation pour migrants. \(Règlement MRC, p. 30\)](#)
- [Poster on IOM Niger transit centers rules EN \(Niger\)\\*](#)
- [Poster Règles du centre de transit \(Burkina Faso\)](#)
- [Internal regulation – VOTs shelter in Zinder \(Niger\)](#)
- [TC SOPs \(SSA\) Annex 6. IOM Rules and Regulations, Check-in, Check-out and beneficiary agreement, p. 54](#)
- [Exemples droits du résident et règles du centre \(Maroc\)](#)
- [Poster Rules \(Niger, EN\)](#)

Category

