



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## **Piloting the E2E Toolkit to empower frontline staff and enable community participation**

A case study from the  
DRC and Iraq



Working children earned this mural for World Day Against Child Labour.

14th JULY 2021

The children and staff of the International Rescue Committee's Direct and Working Children Program worked for the color and paint themselves, which provides children a chance to play, dream, and heal.

We would like to thank the Municipality of Asaf for their support in encouraging the use of the community wall as a building for children to express their dreams, and discuss a vision for their future.

بنتو العالم اطفالنا هذا mural في اليوم العالمي ضد عمل اطفالنا  
 14 تموز 2021

نحن نود ان نشكر بلدية اساف على دعمهم في تشجيع استخدام جدار المجتمع كمنصة للابناء للتعبير عن احلامهم، ومناقشة رؤيتهم لمستقبلهم.

هذا mural الذي بنته اطفالنا هو اشارة الى املهم في المستقبل، والى رؤيتهم لحياتهم المستقبلية.

# Executive Summary

This case study examines how the Empower to Enable (E2E) Toolkit supports the frontline staff of humanitarian organizations to enable the participation of affected people in humanitarian operations. The case study documents the piloting of seven tools in Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and includes the outcomes achieved and good practices for future use of the tools.

During the five-month pilot program, the E2E Toolkit proved its ability to implement the strategic changes identified in the [E2E Learning Report](#)<sup>1</sup>. The three **strategic changes** necessary for humanitarian organizations to empower their frontline staff to enable the participation of affected people are:

1. Systematically engage frontline staff in decision-making.
2. Strengthen the understanding of participation and how to put it into practice.
3. Integrate participation within organizational culture and strategy.

The organizations and country programs that participated in the pilot program reported a number of **benefits** from using the E2E Toolkit. A summary is listed below, along with the relevant tool:

- **Improved program relevancy and effectiveness:** including the ability to identify areas of potential overlap and duplication (*Engaging Frontline Staff in Proposal Design tool*).
- **Enhanced leadership understanding of community needs through increased interactions between leadership and frontline staff** (*Senior Management Team Field Visit Form tool*).
- **Increased leadership support for and prioritization of participation** (*Country Program Leadership Self-Assessment tool*).
- **Increase the quality of FGDs conducted by frontline staff and increase the confidence of frontline staff in facilitating FGDs** (*Focus Group Discussion Guidance for Frontline Staff tool*).
- **More effective allocation of staff time and resources and increased frontline staff demand for skills-development** (*Community Engagement Responsibilities and Skills Self-Assessment for Frontline Staff*).

E2E Toolkit Pilot Program also revealed several **other steps** that the humanitarian sector must take to support frontline staff's vital role in community engagement:

1. Prioritize translating tools into local languages for frontline staff accessibility and inclusivity.
2. Offer more professional development opportunities for frontline staff to enhance their ability to lead community engagement activities.
3. Ensure internet access for frontline staff to overcome connectivity barriers.
4. Facilitate frontline staff access to the internet to increase their connectivity and improve their ability to contribute effectively to humanitarian efforts
5. Adequately resource community engagement and capacity-building for both frontline staff and organizational leadership to ensure the uptake of participatory practices.
6. Inter-agency knowledge sharing around best practices.

<sup>1</sup> The E2E Learning Report presents research into the role of frontline staff in enabling the participation of affected people. It outlines the key building blocks that can support frontline staff to strengthen participation, the barriers that are holding them back, and the necessary strategic changes to enable the building blocks and address these barriers.

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# Acknowledgements

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We are sincerely grateful to the teams from IRC's DRC and Iraq country programs, including but not limited to Janvier Mulumeorderhwa, Halkad Mawlood, as well as colleagues from the Baghdad Women's Association (BWA), the Justice Center in Iraq, Solidarité féminine pour la paix et le développement intégral (SOFEPADI) et la Ligue pour la solidarité Congolaise (LSC). Their efforts in co-creating and piloting the Toolkit were instrumental in ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of the tools.

Many thanks to Tendayi Nyanhete, Valentina Shafina, and Nicolas Seris at the IRC, all the members of the E2E Project Advisory Committee (Viviana Salsi, Cica Dadjo, Bashdar Kareem, Assem Saleh, Albert Kadha, Walter Brill, Sofia Malmqvist, Benjamin Noble, Jonas Habimana, Lusenge Julienne, Adnan Gorani, Zahraa Abdulkhaliq Saleh, and Noor Ibadi), and BHA for supporting, reviewing, and providing valuable feedback on this report.

# Glossary

AAP - Accountability to Affected People

BWA - Baghdad Women's Association

BHA - USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs

DRC - Democratic Republic of the Congo

E2E - Empower to Enable

FGD - Focus Group Discussion

INGO - International Non-Governmental Organization

IRC - International Rescue Committee

JD - Job Description

LNGO - Local Non-Governmental Organization

PAC - Project Advisory Committee

SOFEPADI - Solidarité féminine pour la paix et le développement intégral

SMT - Senior Management Team

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

# Why frontline staff and why another toolkit?

## Background and rationale

In the aid sector, frontline staff<sup>2</sup> are the linchpin connecting humanitarian organizations to the communities they serve. While the meaningful participation of crisis-affected people has increasingly been enshrined in global commitments<sup>3</sup> and standards<sup>4</sup> as a priority area of improvement, the pivotal role of frontline staff in achieving this has seen less attention.

Recognizing this missed opportunity, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) launched the Empower to Enable (E2E) project, supported by USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA). The project's goal was the creation of practical resources for organizations to empower frontline staff to enable the participation of affected people.

The E2E project initially conducted research into the critical role of frontline staff in enabling the participation of crisis-affected people. The resulting [E2E Learning Report](#) outlined the key building blocks that can support frontline staff to strengthen participation, as well as the

barriers that are holding them back. The Learning Report identified three strategic changes that the humanitarian organizations must make to empower frontline staff to facilitate the participation of affected people:

1. **Systematically engage frontline staff in decision-making;**
2. **Strengthen the understanding of participation and how to put it into practice; and**
3. **Integrate participation within organizational culture and strategy.**

While there exist multiple AAP toolkits, none of them focus on frontline staff<sup>5</sup>. As a result, the E2E project developed seven tools to fill this gap and help enact the strategic changes identified by the Learning Report. The project acknowledges that while engagement of the frontline staff does not replace direct community engagement, it can be a useful proxy, and help to build an organizational culture of inclusion and valuing community feedback to inform humanitarian work.

Participation takes many forms, with the level of community participation possible often dependent on the context. Typically, participation is presented as spectrum<sup>6</sup> with 'informing' and 'consulting' at the lower end – whereby the community have no decision-making power, which are the most common forms within the sector. Whilst, at the higher end, decision-making and ownership is held by the community with support from the organization.

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
The community receives information to help them understand who you are, the problem and the solutions.	The community is asked about their needs and priorities, provides feedback and is kept informed.	The community works directly with your organization, provides input to key decisions and receives feedback.	The community and your organization enter into a partnership, planning and deciding things together.	The community has final decision-making power and implements their plans.

The tools were co-developed with the E2E Project Advisory Committee, frontline staff from IRC Iraq and DRC as well as their local partner organizations (BWA, the Justice Center, and SOFEPADI). Individual tools were subsequently piloted in the IRC's DRC and Iraq country programs, BWA and the Justice Center. During the pilot, the E2E Toolkit was tested to answer the key question: *does the E2E Toolkit help you empower frontline staff to more meaningfully enable the participation of affected people?*

During the piloting, the E2E project team used monthly surveys and check-in meetings to collect feedback about the tools' performance, which enabled revisions to improve relevance and effectiveness. Additionally, a series of 10 focus group discussions were conducted with tool users, including the IRC's and local partners' frontline staff and country program management teams, to gather a more in-depth exploration of their experiences using the E2E Toolkit.

- 2 *Frontline Staff – humanitarian staff and volunteers who interact directly with clients in the delivery of humanitarian assistance from international and national organizations.*
- 3 *[IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) and [Grand Bargain 2.0](#) launched during the WHS in Istanbul in May 2016, is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organizations who have committed to get more means into the hands of people in need and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian action.*
- 4 *The [Core Humanitarian Standard](#) sets out nine commitments to ensure that organizations support people and communities affected by crisis and vulnerability in ways that respect their rights and dignity and promote their primary role in finding solutions to the crises they face.*
- 5 *[The E2E Learning Report](#)*
- 6 *For more information, see the [IRC's Organizational AAP Framework](#) and the [IFRC's Guide to Community Engagement and Accountability](#).*

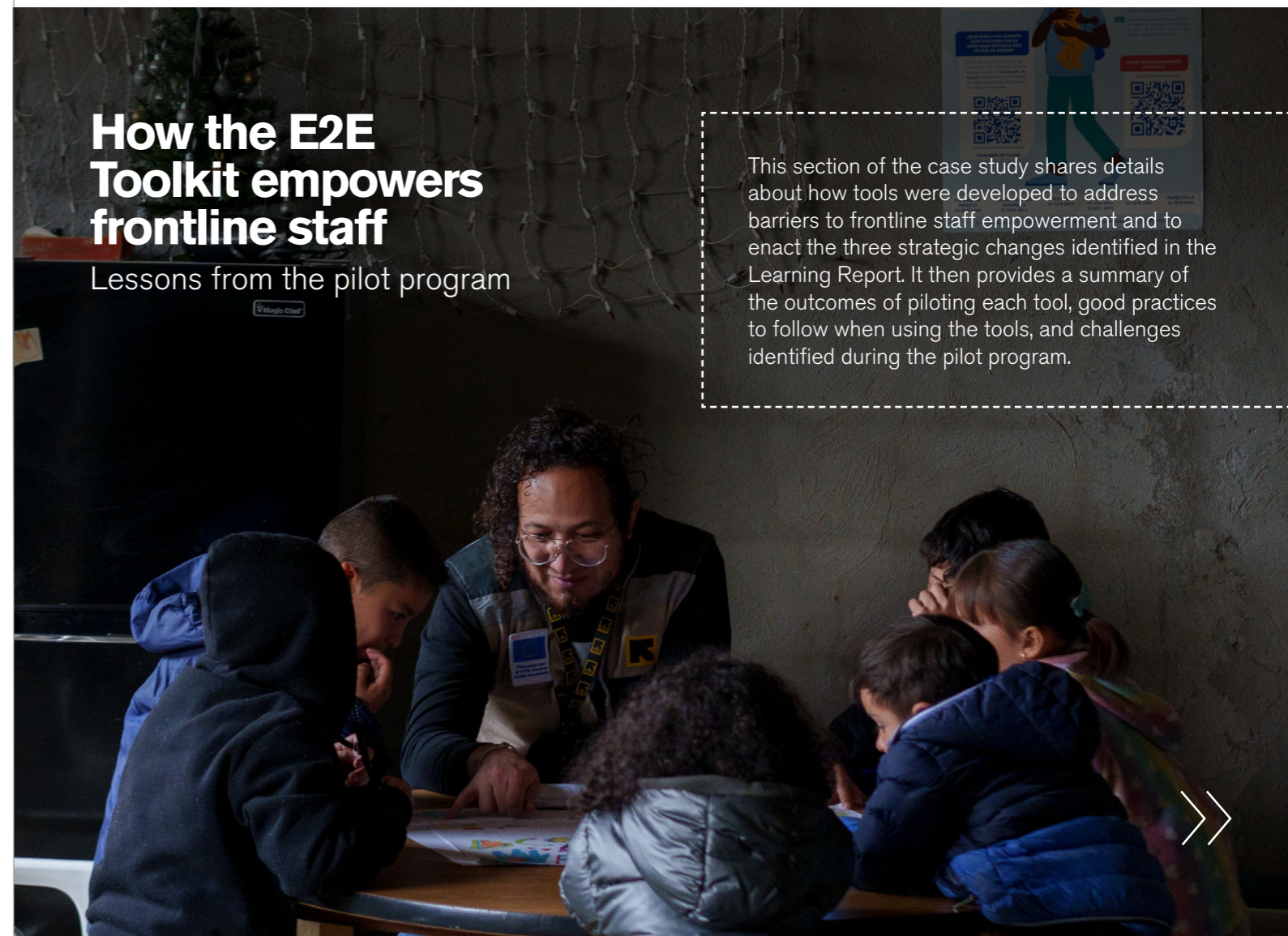
Click or scan to access the E2E Toolkit



## How the E2E Toolkit empowers frontline staff

### Lessons from the pilot program

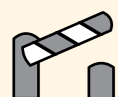
This section of the case study shares details about how tools were developed to address barriers to frontline staff empowerment and to enact the three strategic changes identified in the Learning Report. It then provides a summary of the outcomes of piloting each tool, good practices to follow when using the tools, and challenges identified during the pilot program.



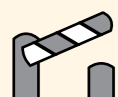
## STRATEGIC CHANGE 1:

# Systematically engage frontline staff in decision-making

Two interlinked barriers to this strategic change were identified in the Learning Report:



**The exclusion of frontline staff from decision-making**



**Frontline staff's limited influence to make changes to programs based on community feedback**

To overcome these barriers two tools were developed:



### Engaging Frontline Staff in Proposal Design

Objective: To facilitate the systematic involvement of frontline staff in the proposal design process, ensuring their knowledge of communities' capacities, views and preferences is integrated into proposals and projects.



### Senior Management Team Field Visit Form

Objective: To facilitate organizational leaders interacting directly with frontline staff during field visits, enabling frontline staff to share feedback and knowledge about community needs and preferences, and thus affect future programmatic decisions.



Strategic Change 1: Systematically engage frontline staff in decision-making

## Tool: Engaging Frontline Staff in Proposal Design

Both IRC DRC and IRC Iraq followed a similar process to pilot the tool:

1

**Introductory meeting** to explain the tool and answer any questions, held virtually (1 hour)

2

**Proposal consultation** during which facilitators shared general programming ideas of the proposal and donor requirements. They asked frontline staff about past program successes and failures, contextual information, and programming ideas for the relevant sector (2-4 hours)

These meetings were held either virtually or in-person and included frontline staff from multiple sectors and sites in order to ensure a diversity of perspectives.

## Outcomes of piloting the tool

### OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

### COUNTRY PILOT EXAMPLES



**Proposal Design systematically informed by frontline staff and local partners.**

Before the pilot, both IRC DRC and IRC Iraq engaged frontline staff in the design of some proposals or projects but the process lacked a structured framework or specific tools to guide it. For example, both were only inviting frontline who were local to the central offices to participate in proposal design meetings.

Both IRC offices reported that the tool helped organize and systematize their approach to consulting frontline staff. One proposal design lead shared that the tool provided *"more clarity on how to implement this [consulting frontline staff] more effectively."* IRC Iraq reported that *"starting with frontline staff helped us design a project from the ground up, instead of handing it down."*



**Richer information on context and community needs shared by frontline staff.**

The piloting encouraged IRC DRC to involve frontline staff from multiple sectors and from local partners in the proposal design process. The DRC proposal design lead reported that the information received from cross-sectoral frontline staff consultations was *"richer"* and that it helped them *"explore how to integrate a project with other sectors."*



**Improved program relevance and reduced duplication**

In Iraq the proposal design lead shared that including frontline staff from multiple sectors informed how to implement projects in hard-to-reach locations. Additionally, it helped avoid designing projects that duplicated existing activities of other sectors or organizations. They said *"if one sector is implementing a project and can't reach certain locations, another sector or organization might be able to implement complementary activities in that location."*



**Frontline staff contributions encouraged and valued.**

The tool helped proposal design leads recognize the value of the information shared by frontline staff. Frontline staff felt more motivated to share knowledge and ideas once they saw their ideas being taken seriously and integrated into proposals. For one frontline staff in Iraq, it was his first time being consulted on proposal design. He said that after the consultation, the proposal design lead *"took our ideas and we soon saw it reflected in the decisions they took. We were happy about that."* Frontline staff told us they were excited to continue participating in proposal design.

**"We found so many gaps and needs in the community during the meeting we conducted with frontline staff... They are our source of information about the community"**

IRC Iraq proposal design lead

**"Frontline staff have very concrete ideas that really do help with the proposals; to help inform what direction the project will take."**

IRC DRC proposal design lead

## Good practices and challenges

Some of the good practices and challenges identified during the pilot program were:

### GOOD PRACTICES

- +** **Introduction and orientation** – was key for both frontline staff and leadership to understand the value of frontline staff involvement. Sharing donor requirements and programming ideas before the consultation gave frontline staff adequate time to prepare their answers/ideas.
- +** **Open call for proposals or advance notice for submission** – this allowed the time for the consultations.
- +** **Trainings on how to effectively present feedback and advocate for clients** – to build frontline staff confidence in sharing their knowledge and ideas.
- +** **Active leadership support** – senior management buy-in was critical to enable the time and resource to be allocated to the consultations.
- +** **Interpretation and translation** – enabled easier communication in the local languages of the frontline staff (e.g. French, Swahili, and Kurdish).

### CHALLENGES

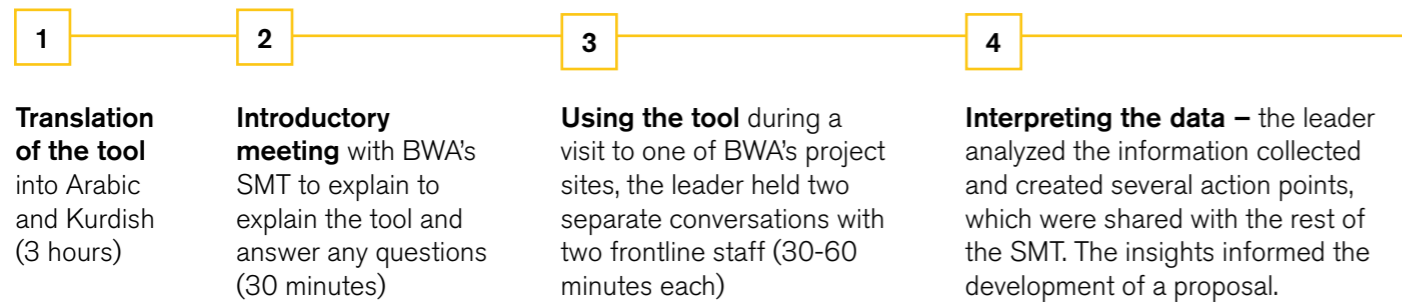
- \** **Limited time for consultations** – some proposals are developed within short timeframes, which made it difficult to do in-depth consultations.
- \** **Budget limitations** – meant prohibitive expense of bringing frontline staff to the central office for the proposal design meetings. However, online consultations were possible.



Strategic Change 1: Systematically engage frontline staff in decision-making

### Tool: Senior Management Team (SMT) Field Visit Form

IRC's local partner, BWA followed this process to pilot the tool:



"Frontline staff shared amazing ideas that we hadn't thought of before."

BWA focal point

## Outcomes of piloting the tool

### OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

### COUNTRY PILOT EXAMPLES

- ✓** **Improved leadership understanding about community needs and perspectives.** The Field Visit Form helped frontline staff share with leadership their ideas around programmatic changes to respond to community feedback. This allowed frontline staff to better advocate for the communities they support. For example, during the field visit, frontline staff shared that community members appreciated BWA's current psychosocial support and vocational training programs. However, they also shared that what the community really needed were job opportunities – particularly for women and girls who had already acquired skills but had limited access to income-generating opportunities. This new information was shared with all BWA's SMT, prompting them to reconsider their project design. These community insights were rapidly integrated into planning for future projects.
- ✓** **Strengthened organizational culture of accountability and responsiveness.** When the feedback from frontline staff was shared with the rest of BWA's SMT, they reported feeling surprised that they had previously been unaware of community feedback. The SMT indicated that they would continue using this tool in order to improve their connection to frontline staff and thus the connection to the community. The leader who used this tool shared, "I'm thankful this tool reminded us to be closer to the community and to frontline staff, as I myself was quite distant from them."

## Good practices and challenges

Some of the good practices and challenges identified during the pilot program were:

### GOOD PRACTICES

- +** **Translation into local language** – BWA reported that it was critical to translate the tool into Kurdish for its use with frontline staff.
- +** **Active leadership support** – senior management buy-in was vital to ensure the findings and action points being integrated into future project design.

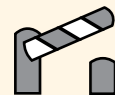
### CHALLENGES

- \** **Lack of funding** – the leader who piloted this tool was located very close to the program site. However, using this tool consistently for all of the SMT would require funding for regular field visits.

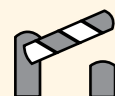
## STRATEGIC CHANGE 2:

# Strengthen the understanding of participation and how to put it into practice

Two interlinked barriers to this strategic change were identified in the Learning Report:



**Participation is not widely understood**



**Limited leadership support and prioritization of participation**

To overcome these barriers two tools were developed:



### Focus Group Discussion Guidance for Frontline Staff

Objective: Increase the quality of FGDs conducted by frontline staff and increase the confidence of frontline staff in facilitating FGDs in order to enable meaningful participation of affected communities.



### Country Program Leadership Self-Assessment

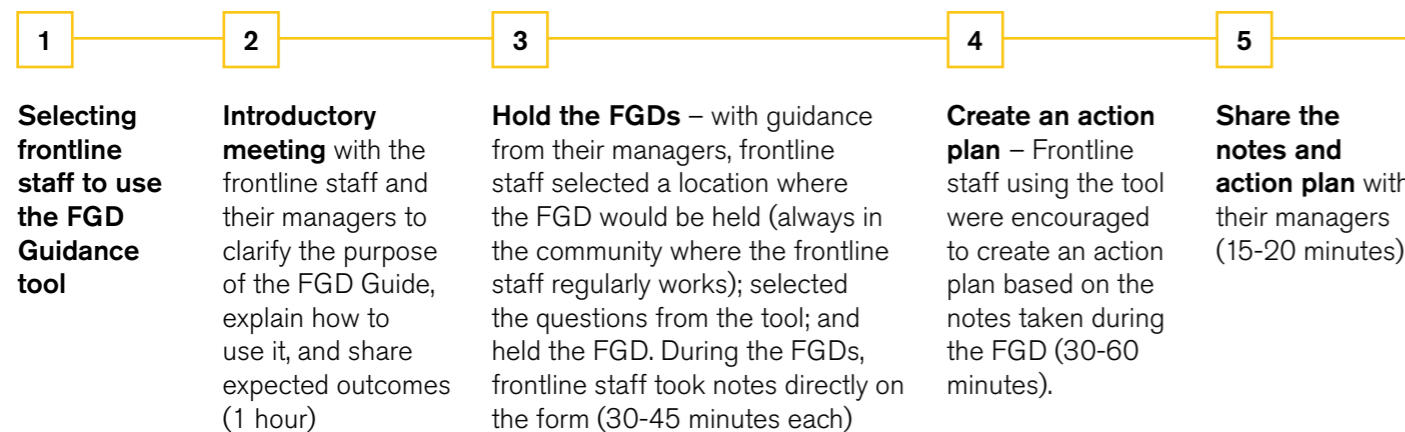
Objective: Increased leadership support for and prioritization of participation of affected people through reflection and action planning.



Strategic Change 2: Strengthen the understanding of participation and how to put it into practice

## Tool: Focus Group Discussion Guidance for Frontline Staff

BWA and IRC DRC followed this process during the piloting:



**“This tool is important. There are a lot of needs where we work. It improves the IRC’s work when we all know what [affected peoples’] needs are, what they expect from us, and how they perceive our work.”**

IRC DRC frontline staff

## Outcomes of piloting the tool

### OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

### COUNTRY PILOT EXAMPLES



**Enhanced frontline staff understanding of and capacity for community engagement.**

Frontline staff at BWA shared the information collected from this FGD with the SMT during a field visit, which resulted in the findings detailed under the Field Visit Form outcomes. A staff member at BWA shared: *“In previous FGDs, participants weren’t encouraged to speak their needs. Using this one, they were able to share their needs.”*



**More responsive programming when informed by community feedback collected during FGDs.**

Many frontline staff noted that the tool is most effective during the design process, as insights can inform project design. Following the structured format of the guide, frontline staff reported that they were able to gain a better understanding of community inputs and their importance to ensure project relevance and effectiveness. One frontline staff member stated: *“We should be trying to do this always before the start or design of a project, so that the projects actually respond to real needs. Otherwise, we have to go ask these questions after the community is given an already-designed project and the clients weren’t consulted. They won’t like it as much.”*

## Good practices and challenges

Some of the good practices and challenges identified during the pilot program were:

### GOOD PRACTICES



**Orientation meeting for frontline staff** – frontline staff shared that they preferred live guidance (a virtual or in-person meeting) over reading the instructions on the tool.



**Designating a note-taker** – frontline staff highlighted the importance of good notes and this was much easier when a designated note-taker accompanied the FGD facilitator.



**Time limited FGDs** – frontline staff shared that affected people were happy when the FGDs are under 45 minutes. For longer FGDs, they recommend providing remuneration or reimbursement for travel expenses.



**Providing snacks and drinks** – frontline staff highlighted the importance of providing at least drinks and ideally snacks, to ensure that FGD participants are comfortable.

### CHALLENGES



**Relevance to projects during implementation** – frontline staff noted that the guide might be difficult to use with affected people who were not currently enrolled in any IRC-projects.



**Frontline staff limited time** – many of the frontline staff did not complete the action plan. They reported that they were not given sufficient time to complete the action plan.



**Security context** – security concerns impeded the use of the guide, as some staff members were unable to lead FGDs because of the security situation.



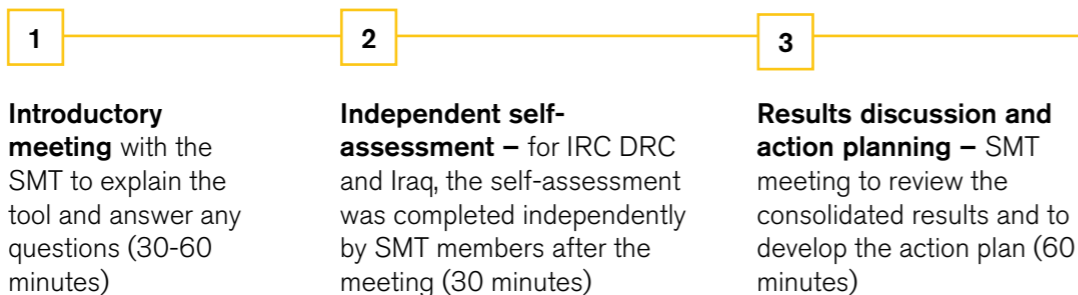
**Perception of FGDs as MEAL activities** – frontline staff struggled with understanding the guidance’s plan of action, and some perceived it as more suitable for MEAL activities. Compounding the fact that IRC managers selected all MEAL staff to participate in the pilot.



Strategic Change 2: Strengthen the understanding of participation and how to put it into practice

## Tool: Country Program Leadership Self-Assessment

All the piloting programs followed a similar process to pilot this tool:



### Outcomes of piloting the tool

#### OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

#### COUNTRY PILOT EXAMPLES

✓ **Enhanced leadership engagement with AAP.**

Though all the pilot country programs were already performing many of the practices listed in the Leadership Self-Assessment, this tool helped make their implementation of such practices more systematic and make their practice of AAP more concrete. The Justice Center's SMT reported, *"the Justice Center is already doing a lot of the tasks, but this tool is the first thing that puts them in the same place on one document."* IRC Iraq's SMT also shared that creating the *"action plan/road map they keep us accountable and puts us on track."*

More specifically, both the Iraq and DRC SMT reported that before the pilot, they only discussed community feedback during their weekly meetings when it was needed, but not regularly. Using this tool encouraged the SMTs to make discussing community feedback a standing item on their weekly meeting agendas. The Iraq SMT even quantified that 10 minutes of every other SMT meeting would be dedicated to discussing frontline staff and community feedback.



**"This will improve the relationship between the frontline staff and the SMT, and thus with the community."**

Member of IRC DRC's SMT

#### OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

#### COUNTRY PILOT EXAMPLES

✓ **Increased prioritization of AAP activities among the SMT of all the pilot programs.**

As a result of regular engagement with different aspects of AAP during the pilot program, all three SMTs began making or planning to make improvements to their AAP initiatives. The Justice Center made plans for their SMT to participate in specific trainings to address areas of weakness identified by the self-assessment. Some members of the IRC Iraq SMT actually attended a UNHCR training on AAP during the pilot, prompted by the weaknesses they identified in the self-assessment. The Deputy Director of Programs in the DRC reported that the office is planning to add engaging with frontline staff and capacity-strengthening to the country's annual strategic plan.

✓ **Improved planning to enable frontline staff community engagement.**

IRC DRC's SMT noted the tool provided them with a systematic process to improve the support for frontline staff. They explained, *"This tool helped us identify, plan, and put together a sort of fact sheet to keep track of identified weaknesses and our progress on addressing them."*

After completing the self-assessment, IRC Iraq's SMT realized there was a disconnect between the SMT and frontline staff. As a result, they increased funding for more opportunities for SMT engagement with frontline staff. IRC Iraq's SMT said: *"We already had these ideas but they were not organized. This tool managed to give us step-by-step instruction on what they missed and how to do more."*

### Good practices and challenges

Some of the good practices and challenges identified during the pilot program were:

#### GOOD PRACTICES

- + **Active leadership support** – critical to the self-assessment and implementation of the action plan. The support of senior leadership support encouraged other SMT member's commitment.
- + **Collaboration of leaders from all departments** – the tool covers multiple sectors (HR, programs etc.) and requires a high level of collaboration to use.
- + **Development of tangible, multi-step action plans** – based on the assessment results allowed progress monitoring.
- + **Scheduling regular meetings of the SMT** – integrating the tool and progress updates.

#### CHALLENGES

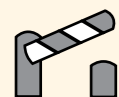
- \ **Time constraints** – the SMTs had difficulty finding time to discuss the tool regularly, due to their full SMT agendas. Their suggestion was to have quarterly progress updates.
- \ **Operations in contexts with short-term projects** – the Justice Center works primarily on short-term projects. This means their leadership team and priorities are regularly change making long-term planning difficult.



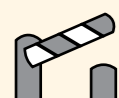
## STRATEGIC CHANGE 3:

# Integrate participation within organizational culture and processes

Two interlinked barriers to this strategic change were identified in the Learning Report:



**Frontline staff have too many competing priorities and limited time**



**Participation is not adequately resourced**

To overcome these barriers two tools were developed:



### Community Engagement Responsibilities and Skills Assessment for Frontline Staff

Objective: To enable frontline staff and their managers to allocate the time, resources, and skills-development necessary to carry out community engagement activities



### Budget Template for the E2E Toolkit

Objective: To ensure that frontline staff have the resources needed to use the toolkit to enable the participation of affected people



Strategic Change 3: Integrate participation within organizational culture and processes

## Tool: Community Engagement Responsibilities and Skills Assessment for Frontline Staff

IRC DRC and Iraq followed similar processes to pilot the Community Engagement Responsibilities for Frontline Staff:

1

**Introductory meeting with HR** – to explain the tool, answer any questions, and increase communication about upcoming job openings or reviews (30-45 minutes).

2

**Regular communication with HR** to add community engagement responsibilities to job descriptions (JDs) when possible.

IRC DRC and Iraq followed similar processes to pilot the Skills Self-Assessment:

1

**Introductory meeting** – to explain the tool and answer any questions (30-45 minutes).

2

**Assessment** – IRC Iraq's AAP Senior Officer read through all the listed practices and asked frontline staff for their responses (60 minutes), the results of which were then presented to the managers of frontline staff (30 minutes). In IRC DRC frontline staff completed the self-assessment individually or with their manager's assistance (45 – 60 minutes).

3

**Compilation of results** – shared with country program leadership.

## Outcomes of piloting the tool

### OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

### COUNTRY PILOT EXAMPLES

- ✓ **Increased time allocated for frontline staff to engage with communities.**

In IRC Iraq, the language about his community engagement responsibilities for the frontline staff JDs was added to a MEAL officer's JD when his contract was being renewed. His manager reported that the language provided a way to hold supervisors accountable to give staff adequate time for these tasks: *"because it's written in the JD, the supervisor knows it needs to be introduced to the staff and followed up on. This way, it should become a part of their daily responsibilities."*
- ✓ **Fostering a culture of accountability within the organization**

The piloting of this tool helped IRC Iraq's and IRC DRC's SMTs to fully understand the critical role that frontline staff play in engaging with the community. A leader in IRC Iraq said *"this project helped increase the idea that frontline staff are very important component of our organization and partners."*
- ✓ **Frontline staff managers recognized the importance of professional development for their staff**

Seeing the results of the Frontline Staff Self-Assessment helped leadership identify areas where their frontline staff needed additional training or skill strengthening. In Iraq frontline staff were encouraged to complete an IRC training on feedback mechanisms. In the DRC, frontline staff were enrolled in an UNHCR training on ethics when working with communities.
- ✓ **Frontline staff increased interest in self-improvement and skill strengthening**

Frontline staff demonstrated a willingness to engage in self-reflection and many openly communicated their desire to use the learning resources that accompany the self-assessment tool. In Iraq, a frontline staff reported that she was inspired to seek out online resources about the areas she identified weaknesses in. Leadership in the DRC also reported, *"we saw a notable display of motivation of the frontline staff in seeking trainings."*



**"This tool is important. There are a lot of needs where we work. It improves the IRC's work when we all know what [affected peoples'] needs are, what they expect from us, and how they perceive our work."**

IRC DRC frontline staff

## Good practices and challenges

Some of the good practices and challenges identified during the pilot program were:

### GOOD PRACTICES

- + Translation into local languages** – many frontline staff were not comfortable completing the activity in English or Arabic and preferred French, Swahili, or Kurdish.
- + Skill development** – to address identified weaknesses, improve skills and conduct refresher training sessions on tasks listed in the self-assessment.
- + Tool orientation for frontline staff** – to introduce the tool's purpose and how to use it ensured clarity and understanding from the outset. Most frontline staff needed live guidance (a virtual or in-person meeting) to complete the tool, which they preferred to reading the instructions on the tool.
- + HR involvement** – ensured the systematic integration of AAP tasks into JDs.
- + Reviewing compiled results** – helped identify common weaknesses, enabling training initiatives to benefit all frontline staff, thereby enhancing organizational capacity.

### CHALLENGES

- \ Limited internet connectivity** – staff in remote areas face challenges accessing online tools, sharing their results, and accessing online learning resources.
- \ Initial frontline staff resistance** – due to skepticism, fear of repercussions, or a lack of understanding about its benefits, posing barriers to engagement.
- \ Lack of local language resources for learning** – prevented some frontline staff from addressing identified weaknesses.



Strategic Change 3: Integrate participation within organizational culture and processes

### Tool: Budget Template for the E2E Toolkit

During the pilot program it became clear that finding the budget and resources to fund activities in the Toolkit was often an afterthought. IRC DRC, IRC Iraq, BWA, and the Justice Center listed budgeting as a challenge to using many of the tools. For example, the consultations that IRC Iraq carried out using the tool Engaging Frontline Staff in Proposal Design were all virtual, as Iraq did not have the budget to support any travel for this tool's piloting.

As a result of the E2E Toolkit pilot program, the Budget Template was created to help organizations to realistically plan and allocate the resources needed to effectively use the tools. The input of the piloting organizations guided the creation of the Budget Template, ensuring that it accurately reflects the expenses related to the use of the toolkit. By outlining specific budget categories such as travel, equipment, and supplies, the template ensures that essential resources are allocated to the activities needed to use the E2E Toolkit.

## How to continue empowering frontline staff to enable the participation of affected people

### Next steps

The E2E Toolkit Pilot Program demonstrated the catalytic potential of frontline staff to help organizations implement their commitments around improving accountability to affected people. However, the pilot program also made it evident that frontline staff need systematic support to be empowered to enable the participation of affected people. To deliver on their promises, the humanitarian sector – including the UN, INGOs, NGOs and donors – must resource and support frontline staff to be able to fulfil this critical role. The E2E Toolkit offers the necessary practical resources to provide that support; but the pilot program also made clear a number of other actions that the humanitarian sector must take in order to support frontline staff's important role in community engagement:

- 1. Prioritize the translation of tools into local languages:** ensures accessibility and inclusivity, enabling all staff members to fully engage with the toolkit and understand its contents. This step will help ensure that frontline staff are able to effectively use the tools.
- 2. Offer frontline staff more opportunities for professional development:** organizations should allocate resources for training frontline staff to complement the toolkit's resources and further empower staff members. By offering these learning opportunities, organizations can enhance their capacity for implementing participation strategies and engaging with affected populations, ultimately improving the quality and effectiveness of their interventions. All frontline staff should receive comprehensive orientation and/or training on AAP topics upon hiring. This foundational education will ensure that all frontline staff have the necessary knowledge to effectively implement participatory activities and engage with affected people.
- 3. Facilitate frontline staff access to the internet:** connectivity challenges faced by frontline staff serve as an additional barrier to engaging with organizational decision-making and enabling the participation of affected people. By prioritizing solutions to improve connectivity and ensure accessibility, organizations can improve the ability of frontline staff to contribute effectively to humanitarian efforts.
- 4. Adequately resource staff empowerment and community engagement:** donors and organizational head offices should proactively support capacity-building initiatives for both frontline staff and organizational leadership to ensure the long-term and systematic adoption of participatory practices.
- 5. Accelerate the adoption of participatory approaches across the sector:** share best practices and lessons learned with peer organizations to promote collective learning and innovation. INGOs can incorporate AAP requirements into partnership criteria with LNGOs and providing guidance and technical assistance to facilitate the adoption of the E2E Toolkit.



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**Piloting the E2E Toolkit  
to empower frontline  
staff and enable  
community participation**

A case study from the DRC  
and Iraq