



Who changes?

A novel two-dimensional metric to evaluate
community engagement

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What is Community Engagement (CE)?

“Epidemics cannot be managed by technological interventions alone. Experiences from previous outbreaks have shown a rather paternalistic view of how to affect human behaviour mainly through providing instruction. We have since come to realize that community understanding of diseases and their spread is complex, context dependent, and culturally mediated. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all response is not enough. There needs to be an understanding of how a community understands disease before developing effective strategies intended to affect behaviour.”

(WHO, 2010, p. 6).

International Standards of CE

- Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS Alliance, 2014, p. 4) include
 - “Avoid negative effects” (Standard 3)
 - “Communication, participation, and feedback” (Standard 4)
 - “Complaints are welcomed and addressed” (Standard 5)
- UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee mandates “Accountability to Affected Populations” (IASC, 2013)
 - Involve population in needs assessment, interventions, and feedback
- WHO’s Social Mobilization guide: communities should be involved in “shaping the intervention” and be allowed to “trade off the benefits and burdens of engagement” (WHO, 2010, p. 6)
- UNICEF Communication for Development (C4D) Standard 4: “bidirectional communication and feedback between communities and power-holders” (UNICEF, 2020, p. 52)



Key CE points

Understand cultural context & meaning

- Including community's own perception of its risks

True CE means that the community:

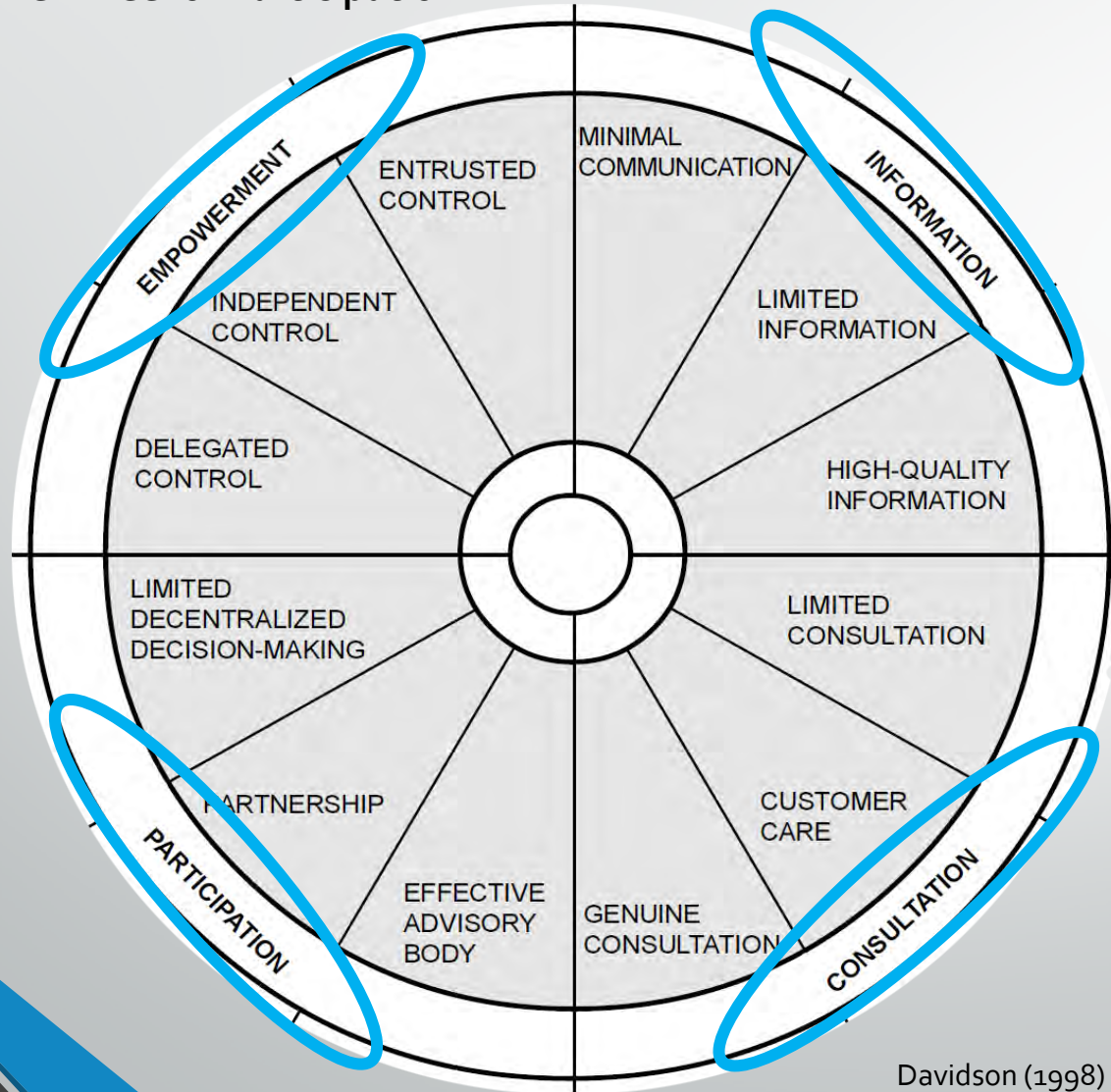
- Is involved in assessment of problem
- Is able to provide feedback before, during, and after intervention

CE is meaningless unless **WE** actually listen and act on community input

But how do we measure this?

Assessing CE Dimension 1 – Taxonomy

The Wheel of Participation



Four Domains of Engagement:

Information Provision

Consultation

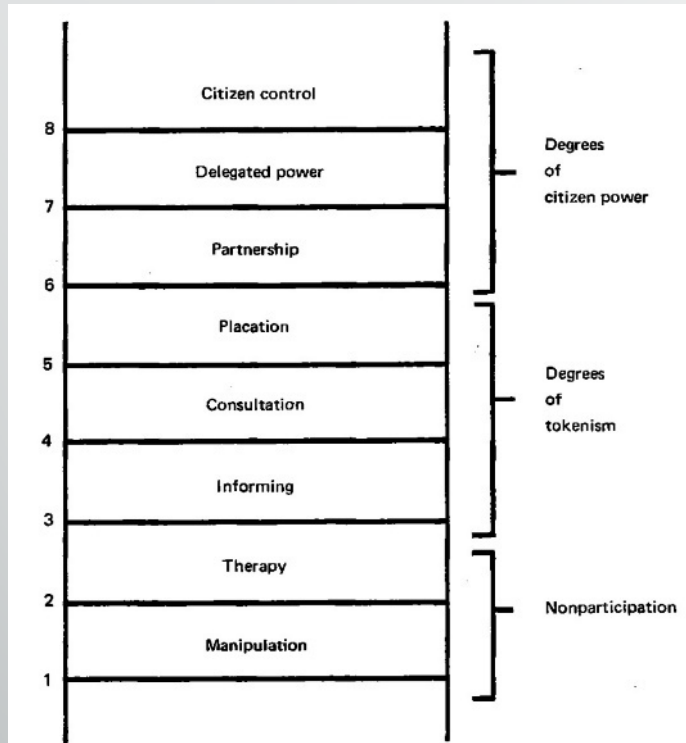
Participation

Community Empowerment

Davidson (1998)
as reproduced in WHO (2002)

Assessing CE Dimension 2 – Empowerment

The Ladder of Participation
(Arnstein, 1969)

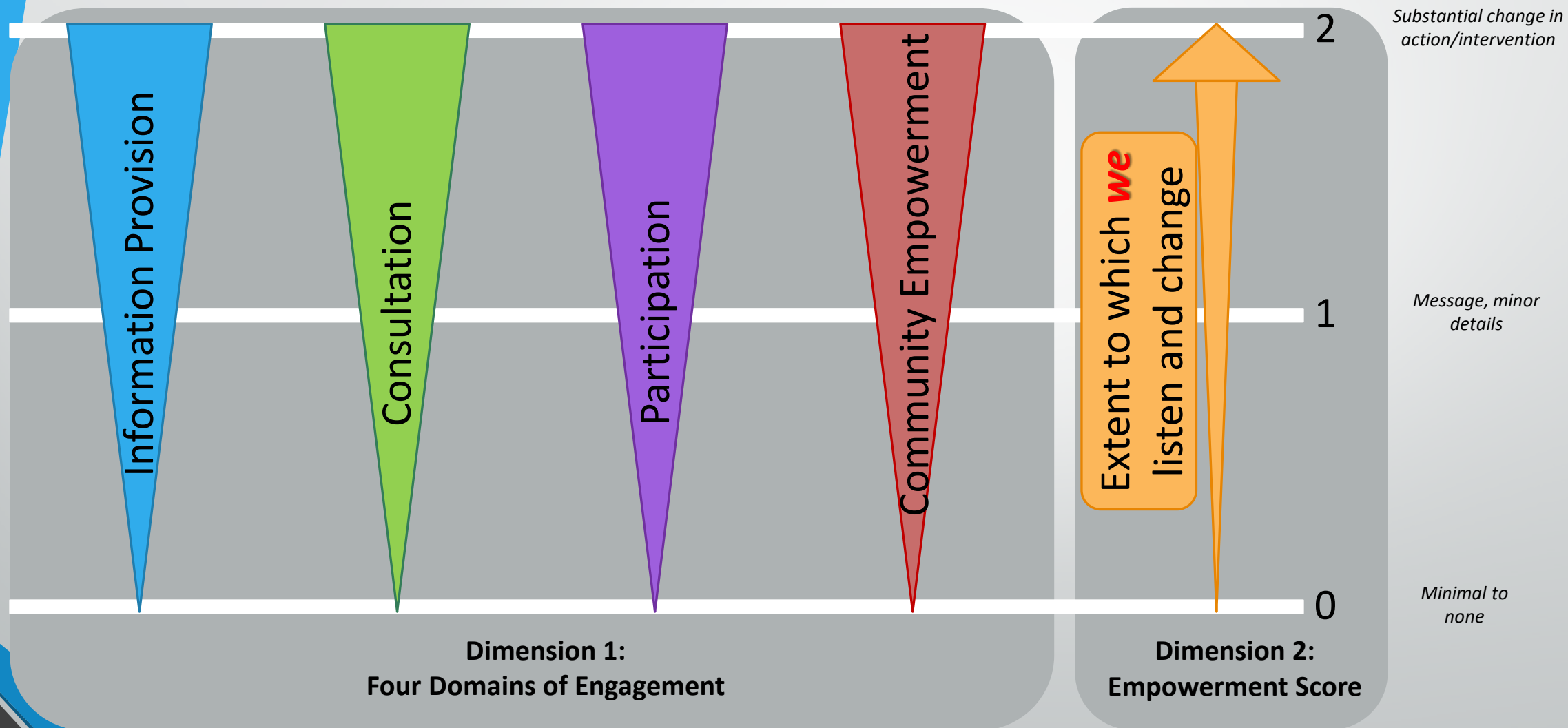


(Arnstein, 1969, p. 217)

- Empowerment does NOT mean getting people to do what we want
- If a community is empowered, input from them MUST result in changes on our part
- ***Note:** Full empowerment is not necessarily the goal ... or even appropriate*

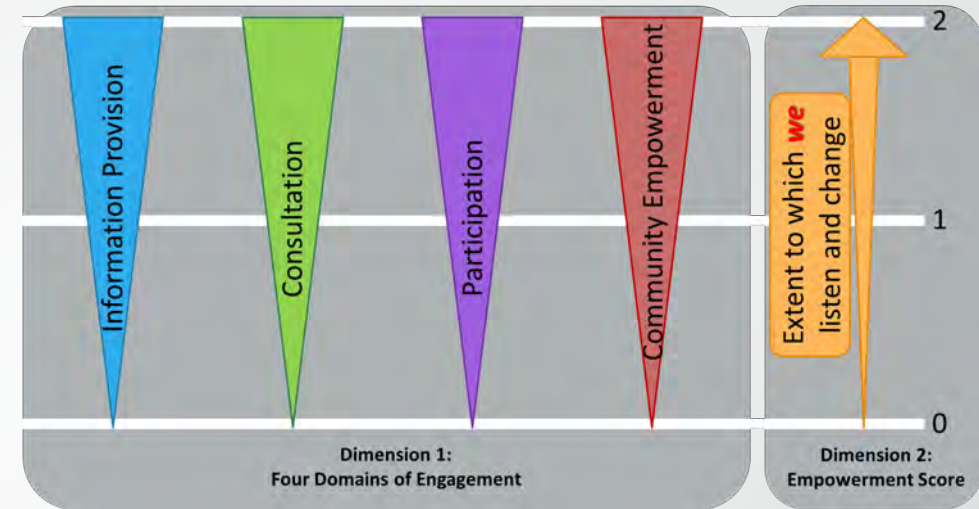
**But we must be
candid about
empowerment level**

Community Engagement: a new metric



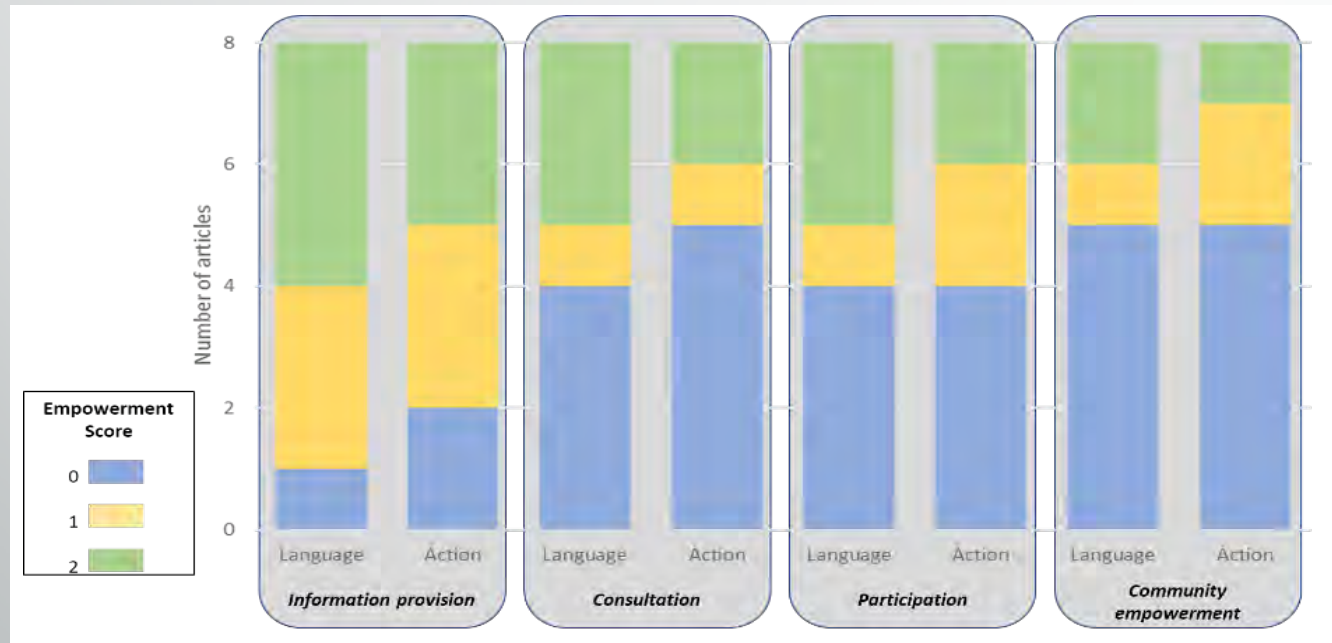
Important Considerations

- The domains have overlap
- The Empowerment Score measures program receptivity, not how “good” it is
- A higher Empowerment Score is not always “better”
- Sum of scores across domains is meaningless



Sample application of CE metric

Summary of 8 Community Engagement/Emergency Response articles by engagement domain and Empowerment Score



- Differing empowerment score across domains
- Discrepancy between language and action
- A true feedback-response would require a score of 2 in at least one non-information domain

What next?

- 4 Domain/Empowerment Score metric can help us understand – and characterize – CE activities
 - Planning, real-time feedback, evaluation
 - Does our walk match our talk?
 - Equity, Inclusion, Access
- How might you use or adapt this metric?

HUMILITY

Thank You!

For further information/discussion:

Martin, Daniel W., "Community Engagement in the International Emergency Response to Ebola, 2014-2016." Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2023.

doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/33880282>

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