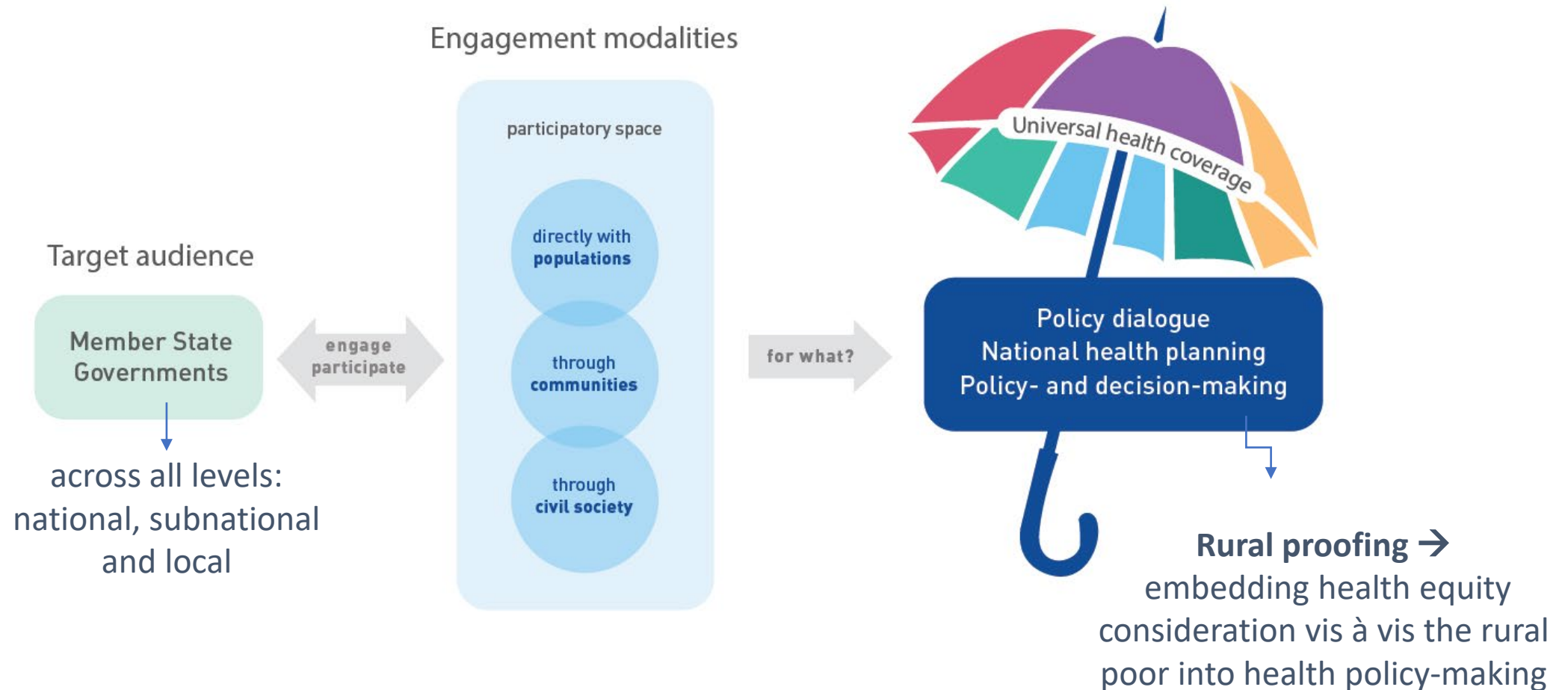


A group of people, including men, women, and children, are sitting on the ground under the shade of a large, ancient tree in a rural, dry landscape. Some individuals are wearing traditional red and white patterned clothing. The scene is peaceful and suggests a community gathering or meeting.








The WHO Handbook on Social Participation for UHC – reflections on how it can be used to support community engagement in rural proofing

Handbook on Social Participation for Universal Health Coverage



Handbook outline



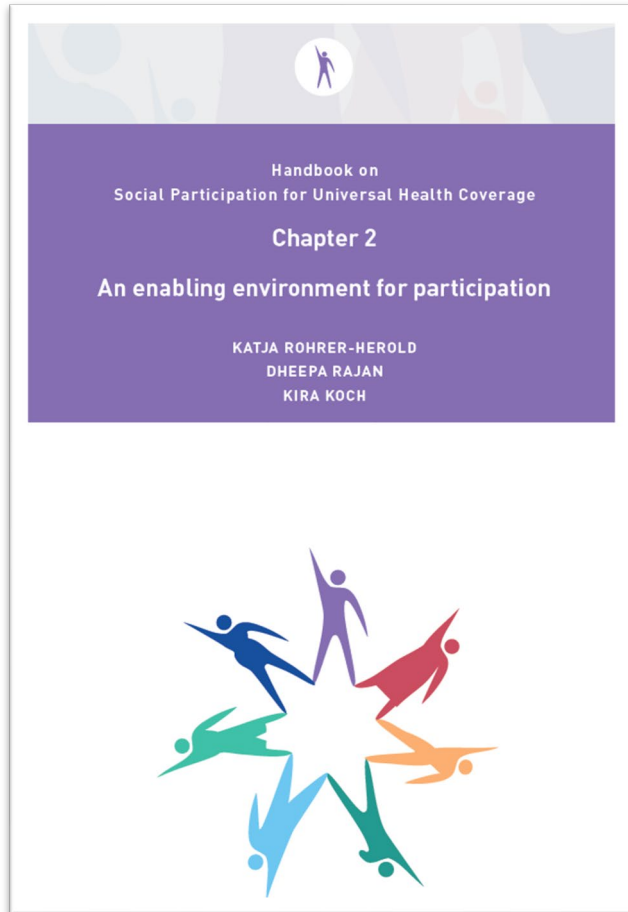
-  Chapter 1: Participation: a core instrument for **voice, agency and empowerment**
-  Chapter 2: An **enabling environment** for participation
-  Chapter 3: **Representation** in participation
-  Chapter 4: **Capacities** for meaningful government engagement with the population, communities, and civil society
-  Chapter 5: From population engagement to **decision-making**
-  Chapter 6: **Legal frameworks** for participation
-  Chapter 7: **Sustaining** participatory **engagement over time**

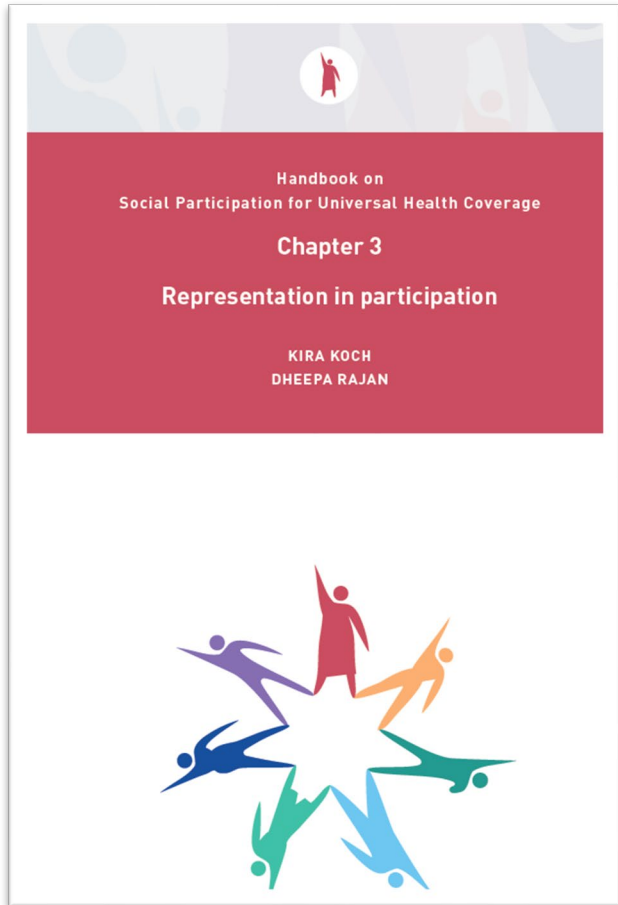
Power dynamics create unequal conditions for participation of the rural poor

- structural barriers to participation, e.g., low digital connectivity, participatory process often in bigger towns/capital → investment to take time off + opportunity costs

Selected key messages

- enabling environment for participation → evening out the playing field with the aim of empowering those who are weaker and less powerful
- A participatory space → potent tool to minimize power asymmetries **if** designed in a way that counters formal and informal barriers for equal participation.
- Social participation → transformative potential
 - challenges societal conventions of whose **voice** should be heard
 - who should have **agency** over their own health
 - who should be **empowered** to meaningfully contribute to policy-making.





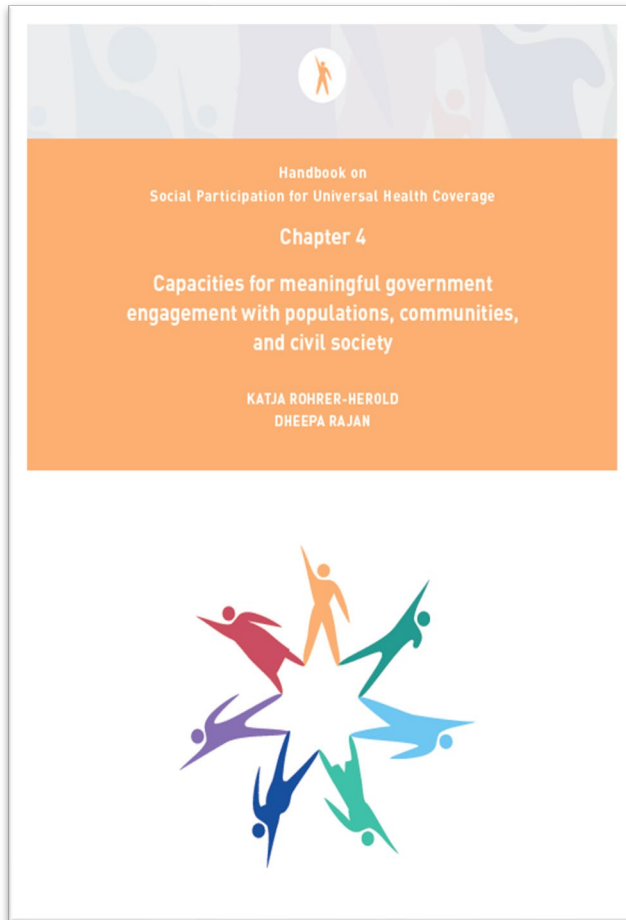
Challenges in finding the ‘right’ representatives:

- Rural communities have different needs ≠ homogenous group
- Considered legitimate + able to represent a constituency, idea, and/or their own individual experience

Selected key messages

- Format & design of participatory processes influence the ability to effectively take on representation roles
- Balanced and transparent selection strategy
- Format which lends legitimacy to participants
 - Neutral facilitator
 - Homogenous focus groups
 - Meeting location – rural/urban; online/offline
 - Speaking time
 - Preparatory material
- Statistical vs qualitative representation

Recalibrating the balance of power which is rooted in expertise, knowledge, and speaking skills



Selected key messages

- Quality of exchanges → determined by the competency and capacities of the participants
- Level playing field →
 - stakeholders/participants on an equal footing
 - more frank and fruitful discussions
 - policy influence
- **Recognition** is the most fundamental dimension of capacities for equal interaction but is the most difficult to build
- **Communication** depends on **exposure to participatory spaces**
- A lack of technical skills impedes the participation process, but governments can ensure that **technical skills can be compensated for** if lacking

Thank you

