



STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION COURSE

MODULE 3A: ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES: INTRODUCTION

Module 3a discusses the range of engagement techniques that can be used in SP processes. The different techniques may be more or less suitable for the different levels of participation required—from informing to consulting and collaborating—and need to be selected based on the audience as well as the purpose and stage of the SP process.

The notes presented for this module are drawn from:

[1] ELI, 2007. Public Participation in International Waters Management—A Handbook. Draft for Review. Environmental Law Institute.

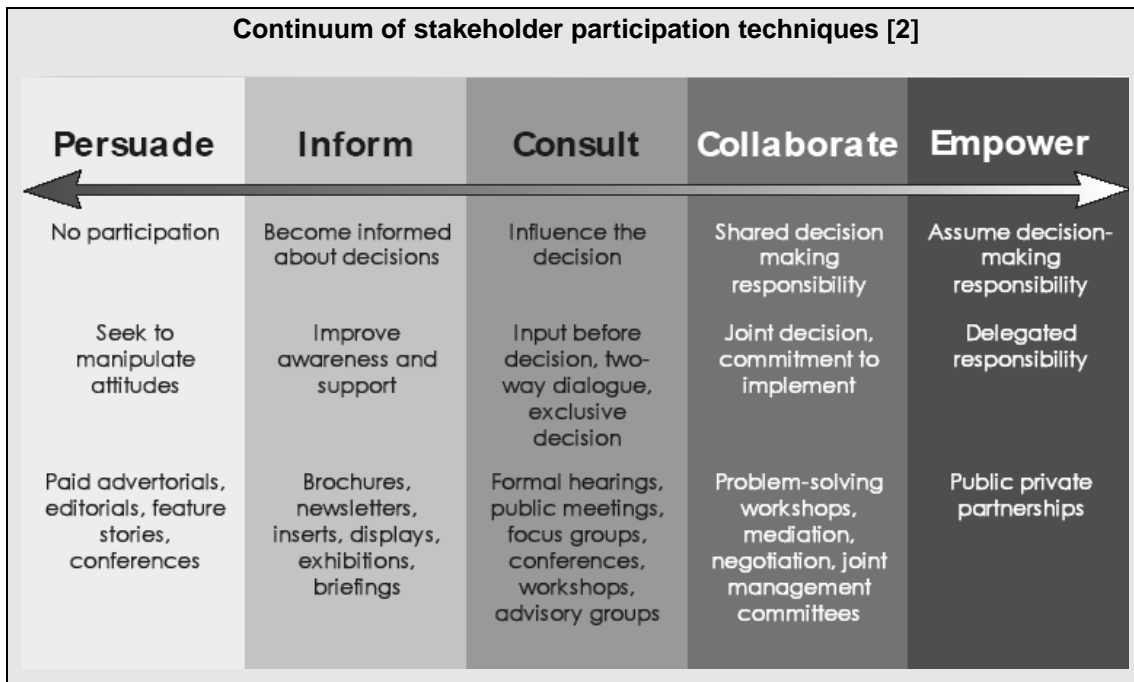
[2] DEAT, 2002. Stakeholder Engagement, Integrated Environmental Management, Information Series 3, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), Pretoria.
http://www.environment.gov.za/Services/documents/Publications/eia_info_series_stakeholder_engagements_24062003.html

[3] SAIEA, 2005. A One Stop Participation Guide—A Handbook for Public Participation in Environmental Assessment in Southern Africa. Prepared by Commonground. Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment (SAIEA).
<http://www.saiea.com/calabash/handbook/index.html>

[4] Bessete, G., 2001. Facilitating Stakeholder Participation Through Communication in Participatory Natural Resource Management Research—A Guide to Participatory Development Communication For Research Teams and Practitioners. International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

RANGE OF TECHNIQUES

There is a wide range of engagement techniques or approaches available, and often a mix of different techniques will be used in a stakeholder participation process. These techniques will help initiate, sustain, document and publicise dialogue with participant groups, and should hence be in relation with what we want to do and the people we want to work with [4].



DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

This section presents more detail about specific engagement techniques, classified below into information, consultation and collaboration techniques [2] [3].

A) INFORMATION

Advertisements/ legal notices: Paid advertisements in newspapers and magazines to inform stakeholders and the public of a proposal or activity and the opportunity for stakeholder engagement. They are often a legal requirement in environmental assessment processes. Give clear information on the process, its objectives and focus. Give a clear indication as to how, where, and when the public can be involved.

News articles and press releases: Feature stories or articles to provide information about the proposal or activity. They must be accessibly written in a professional journalistic style and also well laid out. Consider including a public response sheet or tear off section in the insert. A good press release should generally be one page in length, written in plain language and avoiding technical jargon, with short paragraphs and a catchy and compelling beginning. It is good practice to include several statements from one or more key individuals. The release must contain the contact details for a point of contact, so that the media can follow up and obtain more information.

Background information materials: Fact sheets, newsletters, brochures or information flyers which can be distributed along with monthly utility bills, through mail drops, sent by direct mail, or left at accessible public locations in order to provide feedback and regular

updates on progress. Write the materials in plain and accessible language. When preparing brochures, do not put too much information into a brochure; rather produce a series of brochures if there is a lot you want to communicate. When you need to communicate with a diverse range of interest groups, rather tailor the material by producing a range of brochures that cover the same concept, but which will appeal to different language, culture or social groups. Consider including a tear-off response strip in your brochure that stakeholders can use to provide feedback. In long and complex projects it may help to issue a regular newsletter, where you can even create opportunities for stakeholders to give their opinions through articles that they can contribute.

Exhibits and displays: Information provided in an accessible location to help raise stakeholders' awareness and understanding of a plan or assessment. Posters, signs and banners can be a simple effective means of advertising an upcoming event or raising awareness of an issue.

Technical reports: Specialist studies report research or policy findings, which are made accessible to stakeholders and the public. Copies of reports are generally made available at public libraries, directly to key stakeholders and/or electronically for stakeholders to comment.

Websites: Worldwide websites that contain project information, announcements and documents. Interactive websites allow the stakeholders to provide their views. Attention must be given to the fact that a limited proportion of the public has access to this means of communication. Information should be regularly updated.

Field trips: Provide site tours to inform key stakeholders, elected officials, advisory group members and the media. Use field trips as a useful way to deepen their understanding of physical locations, processes and issues. They also give you an opportunity for extended informal discussion between stakeholders, or between stakeholders and the SP team. Field trips are ideal when you need to inspect a site or when practical examples can be shown to participants to help their understanding of the issues. They are information sharing activities and must not be seen as decision making forums. Consider involving stakeholders in planning the field trip and preparing support material to distribute before or during the trip.

Press conferences: Question and answer session for the media to obtain information about a proposal or activity. Projects can select a location for a press conference that helps to illustrate the relevant issue and make use of banners, charts, or other visual aids to add interest to the presentation and make a stronger impression.

Radio/ TV talk shows: Radio or TV presenter aims to elicit information about a proposal or activity on behalf of the public through questions posed to the proponent. You can also advertise your process or event through announcements on the radio or TV, get your story onto the local news by sending a media release to the news editor, or attempt to get someone from your team interviewed. Radio can be a powerful tool for reaching people in rural places, and is particularly valuable as a way of communicating with community members who cannot

read or write. Local radio is broadcast in local languages and dialects, therefore reaching a broad segment of the population who, through lack of access to ICTs, illiteracy, lack of computer literacy, and language barriers are not readily accessing other media. It is also a medium that can be interactive and responsive to local community needs through adapting programming to local issues.

Expert panels: Public meeting at which the experts/specialists provide information and stakeholders are then given an opportunity to pose questions. Alternatively, a selected media panel may pose questions to the experts and stakeholders sit in as a passive audience.

B) CONSULTATION

Public meetings: Formal meetings where the proponent meets with a wide range of stakeholders in a public place. These meetings are open to all, although some stakeholders may be specifically invited. Generally the public meeting involves scheduled presentations by the proponent, followed by a question and answer session, or the opportunity for stakeholders to raise issues or to comment. They are good for delivering information, asking and answering questions, and drawing tentative conclusions. Use them to communicate information and hear general observations from stakeholders, but not to take decisions. Advertise widely and well in advance of the meeting. Think through the possible conflicts and points of dispute that may come up in a public meeting and use a skilled facilitator to run them. Draft and distribute a record of the meeting.

Public hearings: Similar to a public meeting, except that these are more formal and structured and usually require a written transcript of the proceedings. These do not promote dialogue between stakeholders, but it is an approach by which the lead authority may obtain information from interested and affected parties and the proponent.

Open days/ open house: A combination of an exhibition of information about the process, as well as a place where stakeholders can enter a dialogue with members of the stakeholder leadership. One possibility is for stakeholders to be given the opportunity to tour the site/facility at their own pace. Another option is to set up information and displays at an accessible and convenient public location for a day to make information accessible to stakeholders and the public. Both involve exhibits/displays being set up with relevant information and members of the project team being available to provide additional information.

Briefings: Regular meetings of social and civic clubs and organizations are used to inform, educate and consult with special interest groups. You can use their own regular meetings or organise special briefing sessions. You can also organise a “road show” which repeats a similar format of briefing sessions in different places with different groups of stakeholders.

Central information contact: Designated contact persons are identified as official liaisons for stakeholders, the public and the media.

Field offices or information centres: Offices established with prescribed hours to distribute information and respond to enquiries. Usually established in communities where a project or issue has the potential for significant impact or where there is a need for close contact with local stakeholders. Designed to encourage information interaction with the community, and staffed with people who are able to answer questions and solicit opinions.

Comments and response sheets: Forms included in information sheets, with technical reports, or at public meetings and open days to gain information on stakeholders' concerns and preferences and to identify key issues.

Surveys, questionnaires and polls: Standardized survey or questionnaire for collecting very specific information from a statistically representative sample of a population. This refers to both random telephone surveys and polls, questionnaires that respondents complete and return themselves, as well as questionnaires and surveys carried out in person by the researcher.

Interviews: One-to-one meetings with stakeholders to gain information on concerns and perspectives and/or for developing or refining the stakeholder engagement process. Generally semi-structured interviews that include open-ended questions and allow for following up unexpected information. Provide valuable information and insights.

Telephone hotlines: Easy-to-remember telephone numbers that stakeholders and the public can call to obtain information and provide views. Normally manned by staff with appropriate skills and knowledge about the project, but information could also be pre-recorded.

Electronic democracy: The internet, websites, tele-voting and on-line dialogue provide an opportunity for a larger group of stakeholders to engage in the process.

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) / Participatory learning and action (PLA): Refers to the process that builds capacity for people to conduct their own analysis and often to plan and take action. A range of creative, low-infrastructure, low-cost techniques are available to facilitate this process (e.g. semi-structured interviews; focus group discussions; mapping, diagramming and modeling; seasonal and historical diagramming; and direct observation, walking transects, participation in activities). The term is somewhat misleading and the techniques can apply equally in urban situations. It is important to be flexible in the use of techniques that are appropriate to the particular development context, use local materials, and include marginal and vulnerable groups.

C) COLLABORATION

Workshops/ focus groups/ key stakeholder meetings: Small-group meetings in which members of a particular stakeholder group, or representatives from different stakeholder groups, come together in an groups/key stakeholder interactive forum to share and provide in-depth information about a particular topic and to discuss key issues. Meetings may be

preceded by a presentation. You can use workshops to provide information, discuss and debate issues, and reach conclusions. They can provide a forum to reach conclusions if there is a representative sample of relevant stakeholders and legitimate representatives. Module 3b provides more detail about workshops. Hold focus groups when you have a need to explore issues with stakeholders, understand different perspectives, as well as gather information from the participants. Individual meetings are particularly useful at the outset of a process to convey information to stakeholders and enable in depth discussion of issues.

Advisory committees/ panels: A group of stakeholders assembled to advise the decision-maker, and debate specific issues. Often composed of community leaders, NGOs and scientific experts. A multi-stakeholder forum or committee may provide the basis for a collaborative problem solving approach. Consider conducting initial consultations with the participating stakeholder groups to ascertain their views on the structure and how best it might operate. Each stakeholder group should elect its own representatives.

Task force: A group of representative stakeholders or experts that is formed to develop or implement a specific proposal.

Citizen juries: A small group of ordinary citizens that are brought together to learn about an issue, cross-examine witnesses and make a recommendation. This is non-binding and has no legal standing, but provides an insight into public preferences.

Charrettes/ consensus conferences: Meetings or workshops that have the express purpose of reaching an agreement or resolving conflicts on a particular issue in a short period of time.

Imbizo: Style of interactive governance aimed at building an active partnership between government and other stakeholders in the implementation of government initiatives. Any sphere of government may be involved in direct interaction with communities and sectors of society to build relations and create opportunities for stakeholder engagement around the implementation of programmes of action.

Indaba: Forum for open and frequent dialogue between stakeholders to identify and address critical issues of common concern and interest.

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) / Participatory learning and action (PLA): see above.

SELECTION OF TECHNIQUES

Depending on which stakeholders are being targeted and for what purpose, a variety of places, times, and methods may need to be used for engagement. It is important to tailor the methods of engagement to the targeted stakeholders, taking into account the specific objectives of participation as well as the level and range desired for engagement, the type of

audience and existing mechanisms used by stakeholders to receive information, and resources available.

Criteria to select appropriate communication tools [4]

- Whenever possible, rely on the tools already in use by the participant groups for exchanging information and points in view.
- Consider the cost of using the tools, the time needed to prepare materials and the technical environment in which they are to be used (availability of electricity, appropriate premises, accessibility to participants etc.).
- Select tools in light of the different uses to which they will be put.