PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BIOSAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING

Key Concepts, Good Practices and Lessons Learned

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Public participation

- Who is the public?
- What is public participation?
- Why is public participation important?
- What are the basic Principles of Participation- the Rules
- What are the conditions for Effective Participation
- Strategies for Participation and Choice

Meaning of public participation

- Public = People/citizens in general or affected communities and entities with specific interest
- Public participation encompasses a group of procedures designed to:
  - Inform, consult and involve the public likely to be affected by a decision; facilitate them to have ***input*** into that decision.

Why public participation?

- Ensure that decisions that reflect public interests
- Enhanced cooperation and sustainability
- Improved democracy and enhanced citizenship
- Empowerment to the public to plan and think
- Long-term capacity to solve and manage challenging social issues
- Conflict avoidance

Why public participation?

- Trust-building between stakeholders
- Increased awareness of ongoing/planned activites
- Increased visibility and appreciation of initiatives
- Common ground for developing solutions

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Basic principles of public participation

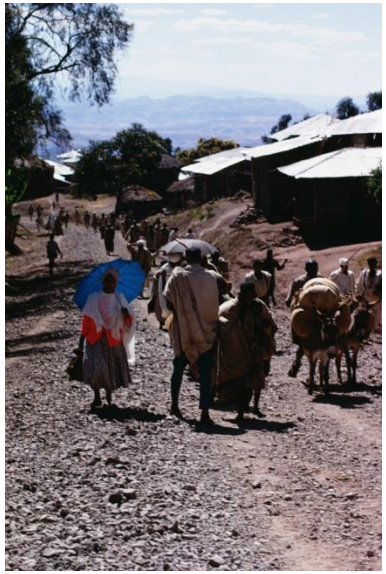
- Early notification
- Accessible information
- Shared knowledge
- Sensitivity to community values
- Reasonable timing
- Appropriate levels of participation
- Transparent results

Conditions for achieving effective public participation

- **Clear purpose and goals**
- **Clear structure and process**
  - well-defined rules about how public participation will be conducted and how the decision will be made
- **Actual opportunity for influence**
  - the real opportunity for public input to be considered in making the decision

Conditions for achieving effective public participation

- **Staff commitment to public participation process**
- **Inclusive and effective representation**
  - reaching out to representatives of the full range of relevant stakeholder interests.



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Public engagement techniques

What techniques would you use if you wanted to engage and involve the public in decision-making?

A range of techniques to allow for Public Participation

- Workshops, focus groups or stakeholder meetings
- Public hearings
- Consensus conferences
- Advisory panels and committees
- Surveys and polls
- Comments/response sheets

- Posters/flyers
- Radio and TV
- Website
- Journal articles

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What engagement techniques have you used and for what purpose

Clearly spell out any particular strengths/ weaknesses of the engagement technique

Selection of techniques

The choice of engagement techniques depends on:

- Required/desired level of engagement/ participation (depending on the cases)
- The audiences to be involved
- Time available
- Resources available

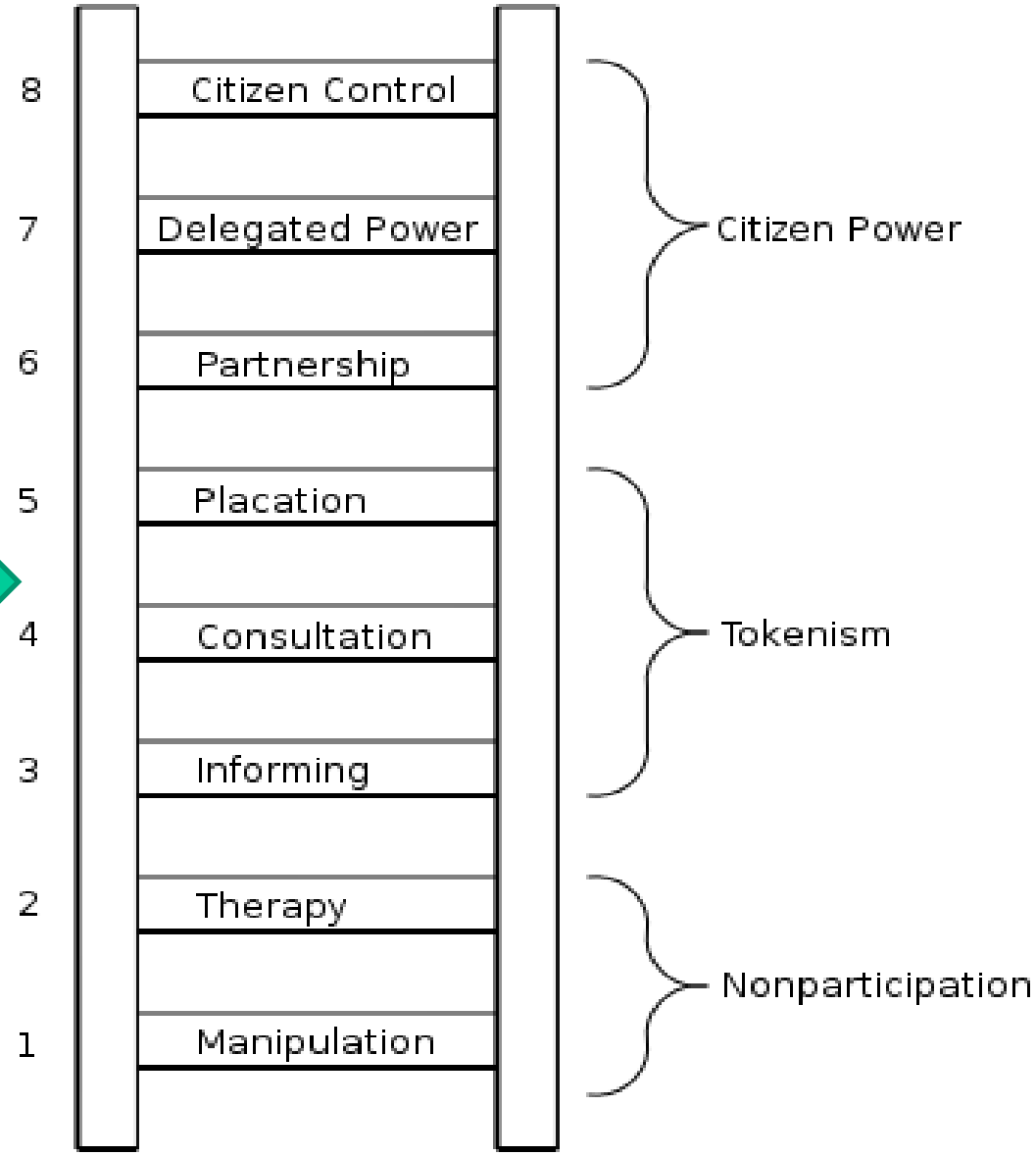
Levels of engagement

Levels of Public Participation

The Ladder of Citizen Participation
by S.R. Arnstein, 1969.

Levels and Degrees of public participation

8 rungs on the Ladder of Citizen participation



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Source: "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" by S.R. Arnstein, 1969.

Levels and Degrees of public participation

- The lower two rungs are **non-participatory** participation.
  - Methods: public / neighborhood advisory committee or boards with no authority or power in controlling projects/programs i.e. don't take part in controversial issues

- Next three rungs signify **degrees of tokenism**.
  - Methods: posters, surveys, meetings, public hearings, and placement of citizens on powerful boards.

Levels and Degrees of public participation

- Final three rungs symbolize degrees of **citizen power**.
  - Methods: public authority, full citizen power and authority to prepare and implement a plan/program.

Information: methods

- Legal notices, media announcements
- Magazine or news articles & press releases
- Background information material
- Exhibits or displays
- Dissemination of technical reports
- Websites
- Field trips
- Press conferences
- Radio or talk shows
- Briefings

Consultation methods: examples

- Public meetings
- Public hearings
- Open days/ open house
- Central information contact number of person
- Comments and response sheets
- Surveys, questionnaires and polls
- Interviews
- Telephone hotlines
- Electronic democracy
- Participatory rural appraisal

Source: DEAT

Collaboration: examples

- Workshops, focus groups or key stakeholder meetings
- Advisory pannels and committees, involving public representatives
- Task forces
- Citizen juries
- Townhall meetings
- Consensus conferences
- Participatory rural appraisal

Source: DEAT

Empowerment/citizen control: examples

- Opinion polls
- Referendum
- Citizen committees
- Opinion leader advisory committees

Source: DEAT

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Empowerment: methods

Strategies to build the public's capacity for participation

- Providing guidance documents to the public
- Training stakeholder representatives in PP and communication skills
- Providing experts to mentor community groups/leaders
- Involving the public reps in planning the PP process to create a sense of ownership

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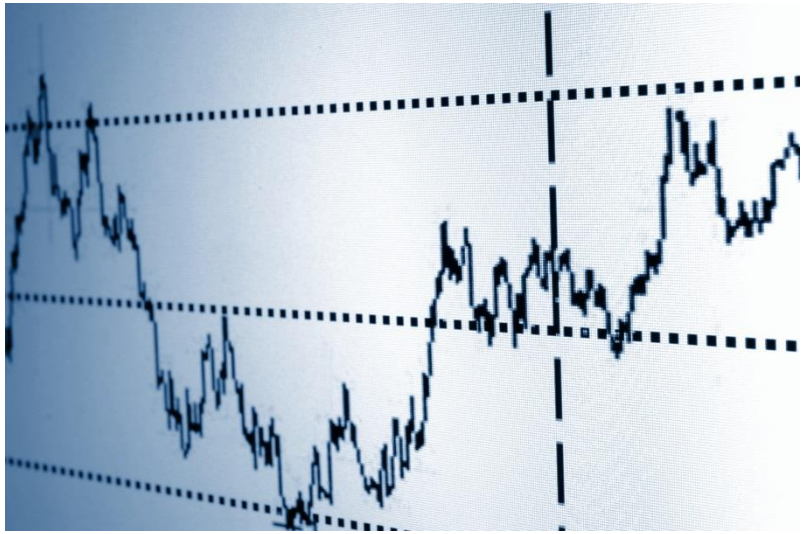
Empowerment: methods

Strategies to build the public's capacity for participation

- Using deliberative forums that encourage more active forms of participation
- Providing technical assistance to the public/community groups to help them understand technical information relevant to the decision



Good facilitation is crucial to ensure equal input from all participants?

What facilitation skills have you used before to ensure equity is participation?

Allow Participants to do it themselves

Analyze, plan, learn, implement, reflect and monitor activities

Be a good listener

- Engage in active listening
- If you hear somehing you disagree with, do not respond by arguing
- Engage in effective questioning
- Periodically summarise what you have heard
- Reframe where appropriate
- Acknowledge what you have heard
- Tell them what you have heard

Overview:
Why do you need to develop a plan

A Public Participation Plan

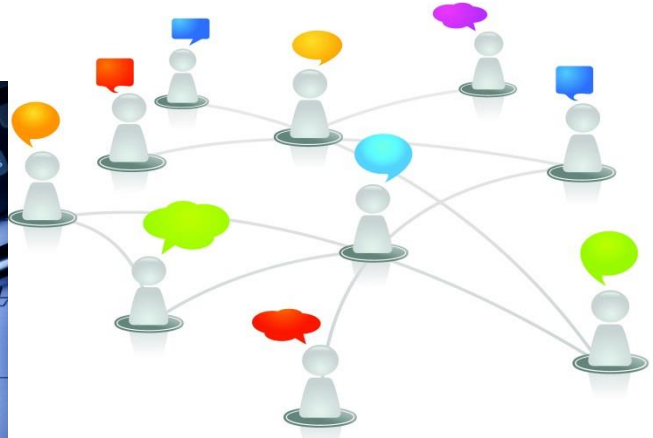
- Sets a roadmap of what will be done, when, with whom, by whom and where

- Serves as an implementation guide
- Serves as a reference of the steps, activities and resources needed
- Helps to ensure transparency and create a common understanding of the objectives and the process so everyone involved has similar expectations

Why do you need to develop a plan

A PP plan can help you to:

1. Set strategic objectives that are clear, feasible and measurable;
2. Establish a team and identify decision makers;
3. Identify resource requirements and set a budget;
4. Identify likely participants, their needs and expectations;



Why do you need to develop a plan

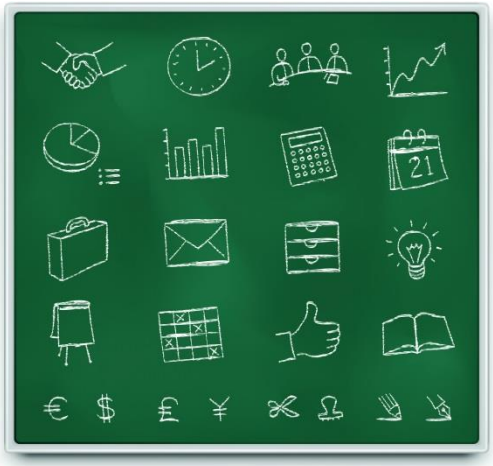
A PP plan can help you to:

5. Anticipate potential challenges and identify possible solutions;

6. Identify your organization's approach and expectations

7. Develop suitable time lines;

8. Identify areas for coordination within your org



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Why do you need to develop a plan

A PP plan can help you to:

9. Establish criteria for evaluation;

10. Identify methods to document contacts, issues discussed and key dates; and

11. Share information about the public participation with key stakeholders and interested parties

Steps Involved in Developing a PP Plan
1. Set goals/objectives of the PP process

- To develop clear, achievable objectives, start by answering questions, such as:
  - What do you want to achieve as a result of the PP process?
  - Why is public participation important in the proposed activity (LMO application)
- Each objective should link the role of the public with the intended outcomes of the public participation process

1. Set objectives of the PP process

- **Primary goals of the Participation Plan could be:**
  - **To establish a transparent participation process with a broad spectrum of stakeholder participation**
  - **To create an enabling environment to disseminate information, consult/engage, identify problems and reach consensus on possible solutions**

1. Set objectives of the PP process

- **Secondary goals could be to:**
  - **Identify stakeholders: directly affected by the project, who have vested interests, and those involved by virtue of their statutory role/position.**
  - **Formalise stakeholder participation from an early stage.**
  - **Consult stakeholders about an application**
  - **Provide stakeholders with sufficient information in a language that they can easily understand**

1. Set goals/objectives of the PP process

- **Secondary goals (*cont'd*):**
  - **Identify all positive and negative aspects perceived by the stakeholders, including environmental, economic and social effects.**
  - **Establish areas of common agreement and understanding to forestall future conflicts between the developers and the stakeholders.**
  - **Undertake a commitment to stakeholders in several regards: listen to their opinions and bear them in mind in the decision-making process**

2. Develop a PP Strategy

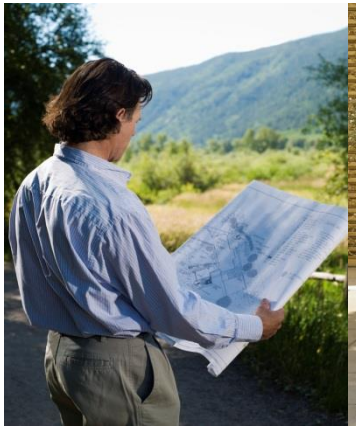
After setting objectives for the PP process, develop a strategy to provide direction on:

- **Who may be involved in the process**
- **What activities should be undertaken**
- **When to start and complete the PP process**
- **What level of participation would be required**

2. Develop a PP Strategy

After setting objectives for the PP process, develop a strategy to provide direction on:

- **What PP activities will be carried out and when**
- **What resources would be required**
- **What team would be responsible for conducting the PP process and their responsibilities will be**
- **How the process will be monitored and evaluated**



3. Develop a PP Operational Plan

Your plan should provide:

- Clear scope, objectives and rationale for the public participation process
- A description of the planned activity in plain language
- Information on the responsible authority and applicant (proponent)
- Description of any other parallel consultation processes and coordination requirements;
- Potential issues and challenges, and how they may be addressed;
- Key stakeholders/ interested parties to involve
- Level of public participation desired

3. Develop a PP Plan

- Detailed plans for implementing each public participation activity
- Time lines for participation activities, including significant milestones;
- Financial and human resource requirements;
- Procedures for documentation;
- Procedures for providing feedback to participants;
- Indicators and procedures for evaluating the process; and
- Any other information necessary to ensure adequacy of the public

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What key points or considerations should be taken into account in choosing appropriate methods for public participation?

- How can you ensure broad stakeholder representation and inclusiveness in the public participation process?

- What capacities (knowledge/skills, institutional capabilities and systems) are required in your country/agency to ensure effective public participation?

For Further Information Contact:

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