Strategic Approaches to Stakeholder Involvement

based on lectures delivered by Maria Partidario

Convention on Biological Diversity

SUSTAINABLE OCEAN INITIATIVE

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Contents

Introduction 4
The Concept 5
The IAIA 6
Stakeholders 7
Levels of Participation 8
Giving information 8
Consultation 8
Interactive participation 8
Spectrum of stakeholder engagement 8
Stakeholder Involvement Techniques and Practices 9
IAP2 9
SAS2 10
The Round Table Approach 10
SEA 11
Loulé Municipality Sustainability Strategy 12
Project Confish 13
Changing Thinking to Improve Practice 14
Key Messages 15
References 15

Photo by Maria Partidario

Introduction

Welcome to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) training guide on Strategic Approaches to Stakeholders Involvement. This training guide aims to provide an overview of the concept of stakeholders namely what are strategic approaches and what may be involvement techniques.

This guide has been created in support of marine biodiversity and the sustainability of marine resources and should supplement CBD training sessions and workshops. As not all the skills learned in a CBD training session can be implemented based on memory alone, this guide will help training participants pull through their new skills into real world work scenarios.

It is important that readers use this guide as a reference when putting strategic approaches to stakeholder involvement into action. To get the most from this guide, readers should aim to draw upon the guide directly when planning, preparing, or practicing, or to use it as a base for the creation of their own training sessions or workshops.

This module is based on lectures delivered by Maria Partidario during Sustainable Ocean Initiative capacity building workshops, coordinated by the CBD Secretariat.

The Concept

Strategic approaches to stakeholder involvement is about how stakeholders are involved, based on the recognition that stakeholders can help understand problems, find solutions, have important aspects to add and should be partners in decision-making.

It is very important to start exploring strategic approaches to stakeholder involvement by examining the concept of stakeholders; what is a stakeholder, and are there more than one kind?

A stakeholder is anyone that has a particular interest on an issue, a situation, or a decision.

Underlying the notion of stakeholder is the concept of public, and public concerned, well defined in the UNECE Aarhus Convention (1998):

> **"The public"** - one or more natural or legal persons, and, in accordance with national legislation or practice, their associations, organizations or groups.

> **"The public concerned" -** the public affected or likely to be affected by or having an interest in the environmental decision-making.

However, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) does not define the term "stakeholder".

The IAIA Stakeholders Concept

The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) defined public participation in their 2006 international best practice principles on Public Participation. (IAIA, 2006)

> **"Public participation"** may be defined as the involvement of individual and groups that are positively or negatively affected by, or that are interested in, a proposed project, program, plan or policy, that is subject to a decision-making process.

They go on to describe stakeholder as follows:

> **"Stakeholders"** include the proponent, public, decision-maker(s) and the regulator.

As you can see, there are several kinds of stakeholder.

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Public Participation

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
International Best Practice Principles

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MAY BE DEFINED AS THE INVOLVEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS THAT ARE POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY AFFECTED BY, OR THAT ARE INTERESTED IN, A PROPOSED PROJECT, PROGRAM, PLAN OR POLICY THAT IS SUBJECT TO A DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.

Introduction

This IAIA *Public Participation Best Practice Principles* document aims to promote a meaningful practice of public participation (PP) amongst impact assessment (IA) practitioners.[1] It:

- Defines the prerequisites for an effective and appropriate public involvement in IA.
- Identifies the conditions required to make the participation process credible and to maximize interest and commitment from the stakeholders.

This document collates the principles for a state-of-the-art public participation practice. It is primarily designed for reference and use by those involved in public participation in IA. It is built on the experience in PP of many IAIA members, and has been written for IAIA members from different backgrounds and IA domains to improve ethics and quality in their practice. Accordingly, the principles presented here are broad, generic, and non-prescriptive. They emphasize PP as a pillar of IA, and are intended to be applicable at all levels and types of planned interventions (including at the strategic level), and with respect to the constraints of time, information and resources.

Public participation, as well as IA generally, is expanding in use all around the world. This evolving context enables more and more IA practitioners from the humanities, medicine and social sciences, and applied and natural sciences to get involved or even to coordinate public participation. IAIA hopes that these principles will be used for improving the practice of PP in IA, as well as to stimulate discussion between stakeholders that will result in better projects, better development, collaborative governance and ultimately a more sustainable world.

This document comprises three main sections which:

- Define the concept of public participation.
- Emphasize PP objectives in IA.
- Provide principles of PP best practice.

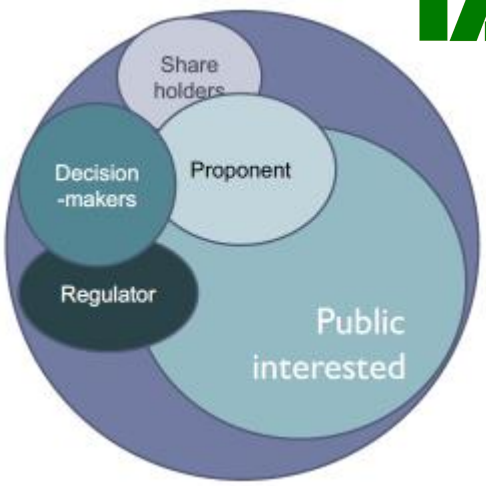
What is Public Participation?

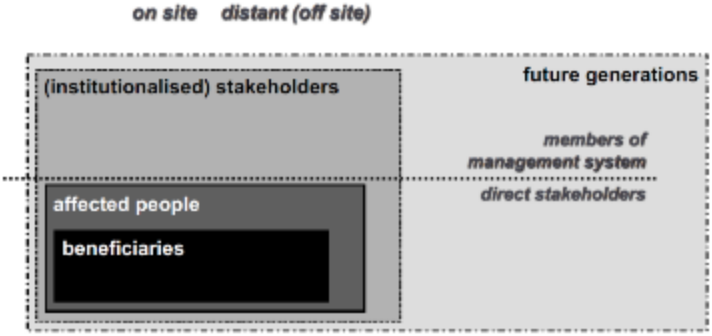
Public participation may be defined as the involvement of individuals and groups that are positively or negatively affected by a proposed intervention (e.g., a project, a program, a plan, a policy) subject to a decision-making process or are interested in it. Levels of participation in IA vary, from passive participation or information reception (a unidirectional form of participation), to participation through consultation (such as public hearings and open-houses), to interactive participation (such as workshops, negotiation, mediation and even co-management).[2] Different levels of PP may be relevant to the different phases of an IA process, from initial community analysis and notice of the proposed intervention, to approval decision making, to monitoring and follow-up.[3]

IAIA Public Participation, International Best Practice Principles, 2006 (www. iaia.org)

Stakeholders

The above categories all contribute to the definition of the term stakeholder. It is important to note that their collective values cannot be thought of as equal to the sum of their individual values.





Based on Slootweg

Levels of Participation

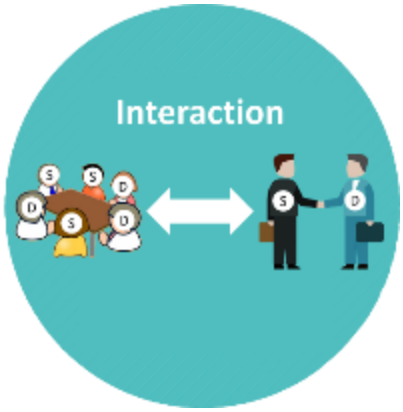
There are several levels of participation which indicate the way in which decision-makers and stakeholders interact with each other.

Giving information

The first level of participation is “giving information”. This is passive participation by the stakeholders and involves a unidirectional transfer of information from decision-makers to stakeholders.

Consultation

The second level of participation is “consultation”. This is more active participation by the stakeholders, involving bidirectional transfer of information between decision-makers and stakeholders. Examples of consultation include public hearings and open houses.

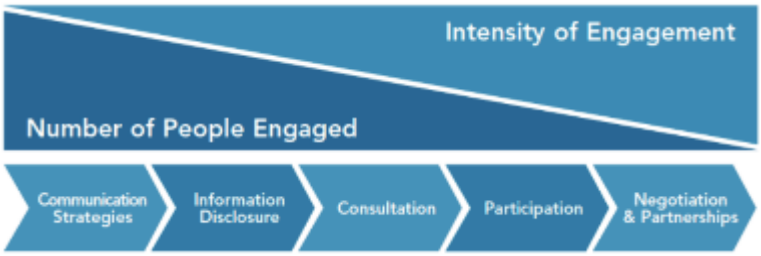


Interactive participation

The third level of participation is “interactive participation”. This involves asking for views for creative development and mutual learning – in other words, working together. Examples of this include multidirectional workshops, negotiation, mediation and co-management.

Spectrum of stakeholder engagement

The figure below shows the spectrum with which levels of stakeholder engagement can be determined.



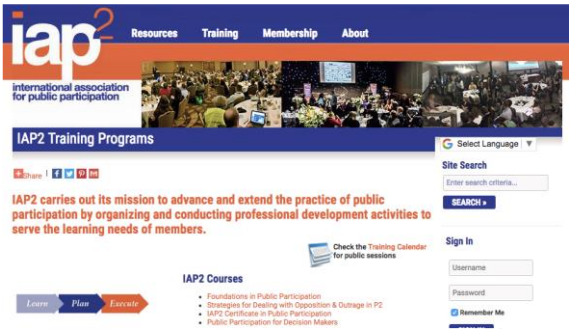
Strategic approaches to stakeholder engagement require going beyond consultation, or giving information, it requires interactive participation.

Stakeholder Involvement Techniques and Practices

There are multiple techniques and practices for achieving effective stakeholder involvement.

IAP2

The International Association for Public Participation (iap2.org) provides training courses aimed at advancing and extending the practice of public participation.

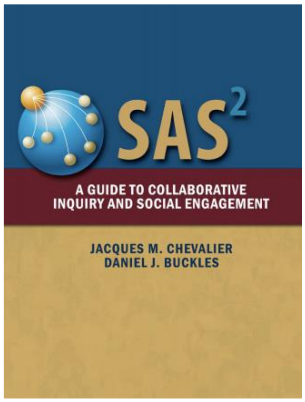


https://www.iap2.org/

According to iap2, the practice of public participation might involve public meetings, surveys, open houses, workshops, polling, citizen's advisory committees and other forms of direct involvement with the public.

SAS2

Social Analysis Systems (SAS2.net) offers instruction on participatory action research, planning and evaluation:



http://www.sas2.net/

The Round Table Approach

The Public Participation Manual, found on iadb.org, advocates for the “round table approach”:

Details on the “round table approach” can be found here:
http://www20.iadb.org/intal/catalogo/PE/2008/01760.pdf

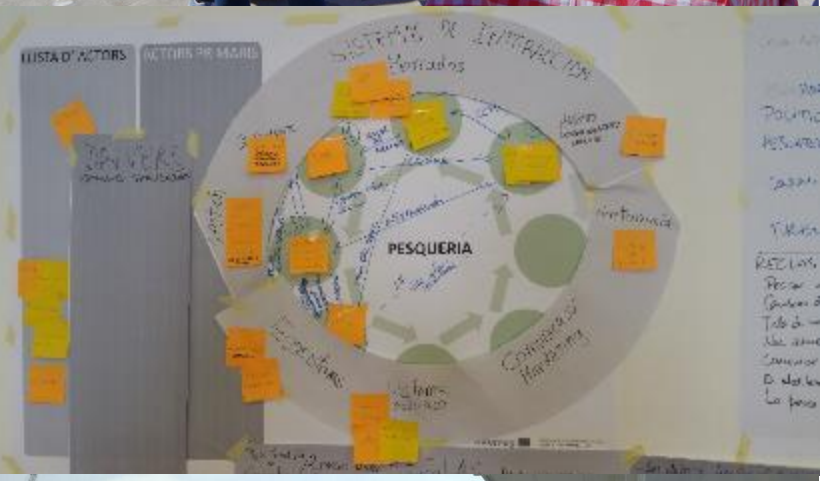
SEA

Sea (science, environment, arts) Communications Ltd is a social change design agency. Examples of their work are in the images on the left and below:

Loulé Municipality Sustainability Strategy

Another good example, or case study, of strategic stakeholder involvement is the Loulé Municipality sustainability strategy which took place from 2005 to 2006 in Portugal. The project was led by the Instituto Superior Técnico and the Strategic Approaches to Environment and Sustainability research group (IST – SENSU) in collaboration with the municipality (images on right).

Loulé interactive sessions with stakeholders (photos by Maria Partidario)



Project Confish

Last, engagement techniques are increasingly being used to capture stakeholder's perception and aspirations regarding future development. The attached images represent events engaging fishing communities, as the stakeholders in Project Confish, in Croatia, Sicily and Barcelona.

CONFISH Project

https://confish.interreg-med.eu/

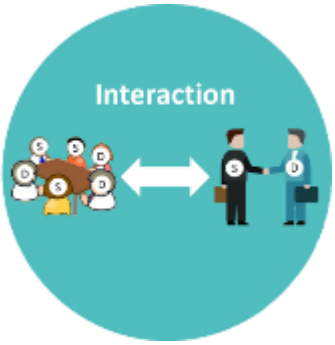
Photos by the Confish Project team at Instituto superior Tecnico

Changing Thinking to Improve Practice

The takeaway message of this guide is a simple objective: to change the thinking around stakeholder involvement and communication in order to improve its practice.

Our aim is to go from this kind of thinking:

To this kind of thinking:



To achieve this, we must change our mental model around public engagement. Adhering to official legislation and regulation is only the minimum standard to aim for – remember, there is no limit to improvement!

Public engagement **is not** only for validating proposals.

Public engagement **is** mostly for providing ideas on priorities and possible solutions to problems.

Public engagement **is** for providing mentoring.

Public engagement **is** an excellent mechanism to create champions for change.

Key Messages

This guide was designed to give an overview of the concept of stakeholders, illustrating engagement and involvement techniques relevant to strategically engage, or involve stakeholders in decision processes.

Successfully involving and communicating with your stakeholders in a strategic manner can be a key step towards ensuring future proposals are socially acceptable.

Here are 3 key messages to take away from this guide:

1. Don't tell people what you want them to know – ask people about their views from early stages
2. Work together – Make the public part of the solution
3. Respect their views – Build their views on the decision process - always interact

References

André, P., B. Enserink, D. Connor and P. Croal 2006 Public Participation International Best Practice Principles. Special Publication Series No. 4. Fargo, USA: International Association for Impact Assessment.

Slootweg, viewed 2019, https://slootweg.com/home-en

Iap2, viewed 2019, https://www.iap2.org/

SAS2, viewed 2019, http://www.sas2.net/

IADB, viewed 2019, http://www20.iadb.org/intal/catalogo/PE/2008/01760.pdf

CONFISH Project (2016-2018) - Connectivity among Mediterranean fishery - stakeholders and scientists resolve connectivity of fishery populations, Programme Interreg MED. https://confish.interreg-med.eu/

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 172 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and to date has been ratified by 124 Parties.

Convention on
Biological Diversity