REDD+ Social & Environmental Standards℠

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Information Note on Multi-Stakeholder Processes

by The Proforest Initiative

This information note is complementary to the Guidelines for the Use of REDD+SES at Country Level which include mandatory guidelines and good practice suggestions on how to use REDD+SES at country or state level. This note provides additional guidance about how to work with multi-stakeholder groups involved with decision-making around social and environmental standards for REDD+. In particular it is designed to help with forming and managing country level Standards Committees.

Implementing a multi-stakeholder approach is at the heart of using the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards at country level. The multi-stakeholder process should engage government, civil society, Indigenous Peoples and local communities and private sector in the development, review and approval of country-specific indicators and of reports assessing performance of the REDD+ program against the indicators.

The reason for using a multi-stakeholder approach is to:

- Create a platform for building consensus and trust between diverse stakeholders including women and marginalized and/or vulnerable groups
- Enhance the quality and credibility of the multi-stakeholder self-assessment
- Promote shared ownership by government and civil society
- Increase transparency and accountability.

Using multi-stakeholder consultation in developing the indicators and the assessment process:

- Ensures the standards and assessment process are relevant and meaningful
- Builds understanding and ownership of rights holders and stakeholders.

STAKEHOLDERS *are those who have an interest in a particular decision, project or organization; they are people or representatives of organizations that have an influence on the decision, project or organization and/or are affected by it.*

Based on definitions in Hemmati, M. 2002. *Multi-stakeholder Processes for Governance and Sustainability: Beyond Deadlock and Conflict*. London. Earthscan

What are Multi-Stakeholder Processes?

The term multi-stakeholder processes describes processes which aim to bring together all key stakeholders to communicate about (and sometimes make decisions about) a particular issue. They are based on democratic principles of transparency and participation, and aim to develop partnerships and strengthen networks among stakeholders (Hemmati 2001).

There are lots of different types of Multi-Stakeholder Processes: Some important differences

A multi-stakeholder *consultation* process.

This refers to a process which aims to consult widely, and maximise opportunities for engagement. However, while stakeholders' opinions will almost certainly influence decision-making, the final decisions are made during processes in which they are not necessarily directly involved.

E.g. Governments may carry out multi-stakeholder consultation on REDD+ policy or law to understand concerns and interests. The consultation informs their decision-making. The decision is usually made in a legislative assembly or equivalent body.

A multi-stakeholder *decision-making* process

This refers to a process in which representatives of key stakeholder groups come together in a mechanism which allows them to make decisions using democratic processes: ie. it goes beyond expressing an opinion.

Eg. a group of representatives from different sectors (civil society, industry, farmers, finance, government) is formed to agree on a set of voluntary principles for sustainable agriculture to be used in a voluntary certification scheme. The group is empowered to make a decision on the principles.

Combining the two

It is often the case that both types of processes are used together within the same project, ie. a multi-stakeholder *decision-making* process frequently also employs multi-stakeholder *consultation* processes to make its work more effective.

E.g. Governments and civil society groups working together in a national level committee to implement REDD+ safeguards systems using the REDD+ SES standards and following the REDD+SES Guidelines will use both types of processes. They will generally set up their committee as a multi-stakeholder decision-making process, and use multi-stakeholder consultations when seeking opinion on draft indicators, and monitoring reports.

Some key elements for running multistakeholder processes for a REDD+ program or Safeguards Information System

Facilitation teams and lead organizations (eg. governments, NGOs)

Setting up your work

- Be clear about the **objectives** of your process: what are you trying to achieve?
- **Clarify roles and responsibilities** from the start: who is doing what?
  - Write them down. You can modify it later as the process evolves.
- **Ensure transparency**, circulate information using appropriate means of communication: make it public.
- Discuss and **involve other stakeholders early on** in the design of the process.
- Make sure that the objectives and activities are in line with the resources available.

Stakeholders

- Carry out an initial **stakeholder mapping**: identify the key groups who should be approached to be involved
  - This is preliminary only: keep the door open to others.
- **Consult with groups of potential stakeholders** to assess their interest and for them to have input to the design of the process from early on.

Inputs

- **Prepare drafts** of Terms of Reference (ToRs), group norms on decision-making, roles, structure and membership, for the core decision-making group (i.e. Standards Committee or equivalent)
  - **Be flexible**: the group itself should further refine and approve these.

> "Try to identify who are the stakeholders that will be affected by REDD+, such as Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and Smallholders, and those that may have economic interest in REDD+, such as timber companies, large scale agricultural producers, consulting companies involved in project development, certification organizations, banks, law firms etc. In addition, identify and include in your list of stakeholders other organizations, such as higher learning institutions and research institutes that may have technical information useful to the process."
>
> Brazilian Civil society REDD+Safeguards publication

Decision-making or decision informing groups (e.g. a multistakeholder Standards Committee)

A key element of using REDD+SES is the formation of multi-stakeholder committee to oversee and support the use of REDD+ SES in the country. Their decision-making functions include defining country-level indicators, and approving reports on social and environmental performance of the REDD+ program.

Participation and representation

- **Inform & explain:** stakeholders need to understand what the process is about, why it might matter to them and what the commitment would be, in order to decide whether to get involved. A simple document outlining objectives and proposed process will help.
- **Transparency:** To build trust, people need to understand the process for getting a seat at the table, making decisions and how their input will be used.
- **Legitimacy:** the legitimacy of groups involved and their representatives at the table directly affects the legitimacy of the process.
  - Interest groups should self-select representatives
  - Representatives should coordinate their input and feedback to the people they represent.
- **Inclusivity:** No relevant stakeholder group should be excluded from participating if they express an interest to participate.
  - In cases where a lot of people from a particular stakeholder group want to be involved, subgroups or 'consultative groups' can be created that nominate a representative or representatives to be on the country-level committee.

Full and effective participation

- Capacity Building may be needed: don't assume people have training or knowledge of the process or concepts
- To allow diverse groups to engage fully in the debates, they may need more than one representative to be present: especially if they are new to these kinds of processes, or do not speak the language in which the process is being conducted (if it comes to voting, they can have one vote between them)
- Keep non-participating stakeholders informed and engaged:
  - Consider giving groups that don't want to join the formal process a mechanism to share their views on the issues (eg. separate facilitated meetings)
  - Consider tasking the core group with helping find ways for interest groups to express views and opinions in different ways.

Setting up the decision-making group

- Group size should be kept manageable (the maximum recommended is 25)
  - Develop ideal group composition (balance between sectors, geography etc.)
  - Develop criteria to select the right individuals:
    - They voice the views of stakeholders in their sector & will feed back to them (2-way communication)
    - Willing to commit to the process
    - Openness to listen, contribute, debate constructively
- Adaptive management: don't close the door. Be open to expand the group if additional important stakeholders are identified and want to join.

Starting to work with the group

- At the start of your process the committee members should agree to:
  - The mandate for the committee - Terms of Reference, roles, and structure
  - A decision-making procedure - even if you hope to make all decisions by consensus
  - A conflict resolution mechanism - to be used if things don't go smoothly
- The committee should revisit the stakeholder mapping, and add to it if necessary.

Practical Issues for meetings and dialogue

- **Use neutral, trusted facilitator(s)** to guide the process
- **Consistency of participation** is important
  - Ask participants to commit to coming to meetings and to name a single alternate for those occasions when they can't.
  - Ask them to take responsibility for fully briefing their alternate in advance of the meeting, and getting an update from the alternate after his/her participation.
- Consider communication needs
  - Offer simultaneous translation if this will enhance inclusivity and transparency
  - Use a variety of ways of communicating to engage people (eg. visual, oral, active, passive)
- Take into consideration time and mobilization needs/constraints (e.g. Stakeholders travelling from a distance for a meeting).
- **Make outputs from meetings and consultations available** to participating stakeholders, non-participating stakeholders and the public.

" When putting together the Multi-stakeholder Committee, **try to balance the number of representatives of each sector** to prevent a minor group from being side-lined during discussions. Moreover, the sectoral imbalance in the construction of the document might become a serious limiting factor for the final product's credibility and legitimacy."

Brazilian Civil society REDD+Safeguards publication

A good way to promote feedback is for the members of the multi-stakeholder committee to be responsible for disseminating the draft among their own sector, and soliciting feedback on it.

Decision-making Mechanisms for a Core Group (eg Committee, or Working Group)

Most groups aim to make decisions based on consensus. But defining and agreeing rules for an alternative decision-making mechanism at the start of the process is a crucial safety net, in case consensus turns out to be impossible. Such a mechanism should be organized to be as fair as possible: i.e. that no single group can dominate and no stakeholder group can be marginalized. A system of 'voting by sectors' has been shown to be effective in other multi-stakeholder processes.

- **Consensus**: a decision is reached when no party involved registers a persistent or serious objection, i.e. all parties are willing to 'live with' the decision (see ISEAL definition, below).
- **Majority voting**: a decision is reached when a pre-defined proportion (e.g. 50% or 75%) of group members in favour.
- **Voting by sectors**: the members of the group are organized by sector (i.e. interest groups organized into chambers, constituencies, or other groupings). For a decision to be approved there must be a defined proportion of all members in favour (e.g. 60% or 75% of total voting power) *plus* a defined threshold (eg. a 'simple majority' of 51%) in each of the sectors.

CONSENSUS "General agreement, characterized by a) the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and b) a process seeking to take into account the views of interested parties, particularly those directly affected, and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. NOTE - Consensus need not imply unanimity"

ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards, 2006. Based on ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004

Wider multi-stakeholder consultation: informing, engaging, seeking input

Transparency

- Create effective and transparent mechanisms for feeding comments into decision-making processes. E.g. organize comments in tables by theme, and leave a column to allow decision-makers to note down how they responded to the comment.
- Track and keep statistics of who was consulted (comments, numbers, gender, categories).

Inclusiveness and Equity

- Support and capacity building for may be needed effective engagement
- Take the process to the people:
  - respect local time constraints and ways of engaging (e.g. some communities may meet infrequently, or may need to agree their comments through an internal hierarchy)
  - hold local and regional workshops
  - don't rely only on web-based or document-based consultation
  - use participatory methodologies and appropriate language: not too technical.
- Provide means of input that do not imply endorsement
- Include those who may be opposed
- Remember the myth of 'homogenous communities':
  - don't just consult the leadership
  - women and men will engage differently: consider separate meetings
- Consider special sub-groups for 'marginalized and/or vulnerable groups' to ensure their voices are heard

Effectiveness and Legitimacy

- Two-way communication: feed information back to stakeholders about how the comments were used.

A broad buy-in to the process and end-result are more likely if you've **engaged a wide range of stakeholders**

Useful resources

Developing Social and Environmental Safeguards for REDD+: a guide for bottom-up approach. 2010 Experiences and suggestions from a Brazilian NGO initiative to develop safeguards. Available in Spanish, English, Portuguese and French from www.imaflora.org.br

Joint UN-REDD and FCPF DRAFT Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement in REDD+ Readiness: With a Focus on the Participation of Indigenous Peoples and Other Forest-Dependent Communities DRAFT – May 18, 2011Available in English, French and Spanish from www.forestcarbonpartnership.org

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This factsheet was developed by The Proforest Initiative (www.proforestinitiative.org). To learn more about the REDD+ SES initiative go to www.redd-standards.org or contact the international secretariat

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March 2013