GOLD STANDARD FOR THE GLOBAL GOALS

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES

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GOLD STANDARD FOUNDATION VISION & MISSION

OUR VISION: Climate security and sustainable development for all.

OUR MISSION: To catalyse more ambitious climate action to achieve the Global Goals through robust standards and verified impacts.

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1. SCOPE AND APPLICABLITY

1.1.1   This document provides a step-by-step guide to help conduct a stakeholder consultation in an effective and meaningful manner. It also presents guiding questions to audit and validate the stakeholder consultation process. This guidance document refers to Gold Standard Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements, however, where any conflict appears the 'Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements' supersedes the guidance document.

1.1.2   Stakeholder Consultations provide a critical opportunity to engage stakeholders in a meaningful manner to improve project design and its outcomes. It also enables projects to identify, avoid and minimise adverse impacts and establish ongoing communications with relevant stakeholders

1.1.3   Involving the relevant stakeholders at an early stage of the project cycle helps them to understand the project, participate in decision-making and exchange views and/or concerns regarding the project impacts and opportunities. This generates a sense of ownership and helps to improve the long-term results for the project..

2. PLANNING FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

2.1.1   It is important to review the Principles & Requirements and Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements to prepare a formal "Stakeholder Consultation plan". Careful planning will help ensure a successful consultation and Project Developers should consider the key elements while planning for these consultations.

2.1.2   A list of suggested guiding questions for the preparation of stakeholder consultations are:

   (a)   What are the objectives of the stakeholder consultation?

   (b)   Who are your relevant stakeholders? Are you planning to involve everyone? Who else is missing?

   (c)   How will you engage them? What is the most appropriate format?

   (d)   Have you identified the potential impacts and risks of the project?

   (e)   Have you prepared the mitigation plan to avoid and minimise the adverse impacts of the project?

   (f)   Have you prepared an appropriate communication plan to share project information with stakeholders before and after the consultations?

2.1.3   The Gold Stakeholder consultation process comprises of at least two rounds of consultation. The project should consider different gender

relationships and roles in the project area while preparing for consultations. Women and men typically fulfil different roles and responsibilities, depending on the context and the country. Virtually no role is always exclusively performed by just women or men. Because women often are assigned lower social status relative to men, women tend to have lower confidence, less influence and less involvement in the design, decisions and engagement with projects. In developing a project, "taking gender issues into account" requires that local stakeholder consultation processes reach a wide range of community representatives in ways that ensure equal and effective participation of women and men, and that gender issues are fully factored into comprehensive social and environmental impact assessments."[1] Project Developers are referred to the Gold Standard Gender Equality & Requirements Guidelines and Gold Standard Gender Policy.

2.1.4   In addition, to the above questions, the Project Developer should consider the following questions to ensure gender equality while planning for Stakeholder Consultations:

(a)   What measures and actions need to be put in place to ensure equal gender participation in Stakeholder Consultations?

(b)   How should inputs and insights from women and men be sought out, listened to, considered, addressed and documented?

(c)   Is it necessary to make any specific arrangements to ensure that all constituencies are engaged in the consultation? (for example, speak to women and men separately; have focus groups for women and focus groups for men before gathering them together to ensure their meaningful participation; adapt timings to fit with men's and women's working schedules)

A few examples of gender-sensitive consultation approaches are:

- FAO: SEAGA (Socio-economic and Gender Analysis): An approach based on an analysis of socio-economic patterns and participatory identification of women's and men's priorities. The objective of the SEAGA approach is to close the gaps between what people need and what development delivers.

- CARE Canada: Stakeholder and institution mapping.

- USAID: When to use a Gender stakeholder analysis. Integrating Gender into climate change projects ENERGIA: Elizabeth Cecelski; Soma Dutta (2011); Mainstreaming Gender in Energy Projects: A Practical Handbook

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[1] Cotula, L. and Blackmore, E. (2014) Understanding agricultural investment chains: Lessons to improve governance, Rome and London: FAO and IIED. https://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/12574IIED.pdf

2.1.5   While preparing for the Stakeholder Consultation, the Project Developer should also carefully consider the social and other barriers that may prevent participation in consultations. Examples of obstacles[2] to participation by women in public meetings and/or decision-making include:

- Ignorance and illiteracy, including ignorance of rights.
- The mockery, criticism, and other attitudes that confront women who speak out.
- Distrust from development workers and other members of the community.
- Traditional roles and power divisions.
- The higher control by men over information and resources relative to women.
- Meetings are organised in places and at times not suitable for women.
- Meetings are conducted in a non-local language.
- Lack of access to or control over financial resources.
- Lack of solidarity among women or conflict within the community.
- Lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem.

3.   IDENTIFY THE STAKEHOLDERS

3.1.1   Identification of relevant stakeholders is a critical step for a successful consultation. The Project Developer should identify the stakeholders in a transparent manner, ensuring that all relevant (both affected and interested stakeholders) are provided with an opportunity to participate in consultations. A list of required stakeholders who shall be invited to the consultation is provided in Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements and included here for reference.

(a)   Local people, communities and or representatives[3] who are directly or indirectly affected by the project

(b)   Stakeholders with land-tenure rights for any area directly affected by the implementation of the project (i.e., within the project boundary)

(c)   Local policy makers and representatives of local authorities

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[2] Guidelines for a Gender Sensitive Participatory Approach
https://www.icimod.org/resource/1288

[3] Legitimate stakeholder representatives could be, but are not limited to: elected representatives of regional, local, traditional representatives, such as leaders (chairmen, directors) of local cooperatives, other community-based organisations, local businesses/business groups, local NGOs, and local women's groups, politicians and local government officials, school teachers, and religious leaders.

(d)   National government officials or National Focal bodies responsible for the project in the host country, for example, Designated National Authority (DNA)[4]

(e)   Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Women Groups working on topics relevant to the project or working with communities who are likely to be affected by the project

(f)   Relevant international Gold Standard NGO Supporters[5] with representation in your region and all Gold Standard NGO Supporters located in the host country of the project

(g)   A Gold Standard representative at help@goldstandard.org

3.1.2   The Project Developer should ensure all stakeholder groups are engaged, particularly the stakeholders that are often marginalised, including women, youth, the poor informal sector workers, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, disabled or elderly people, and members of the LGBTQ community.

3.1.3   Where it is not appropriate to engage with stakeholder groups, for example indigenous peoples, the project should make provisions to engage with their legitimate representatives (this may include community leaders, regional or national political groups and NGOs).

3.1.4   Stakeholder mapping is one effective way to explore gender gaps. The Project Developer should ensure that gender-sensitive stakeholder mapping is conducted, and the selection of stakeholders is complemented with sex-disaggregated census data, where available.

3.1.5   Suggested guiding questions:

(a)   Who are the local stakeholders? Do they include women, men or both? Do they include different socio-economic groups?

(b)   Are there stakeholder groups from which women or men are excluded?

(c)   Which ones? Why? What do they lose through non-participation?

(d)   Are there stakeholder groups composed of women exclusively or men exclusively? If so, what is the focus of these groups? What do women/men gain from them?

(e)   What project activities are men and women involved in and when and where do these activities take place?

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[4] List of DNAs is available at https://cdm.unfccc.int/DNA/bak/index.html

[5] List of Gold Standard NGO Supporters is available at https://www.goldstandard.org/about-us/ngo-supporters

(f) Who is most dependent on the resources at stake (women or men)? Is this a matter of livelihood or economic advantage?

(g) Who has access to and control of resources and services and decision making? How are decisions made?

(h) How do target groups interact with the project developer?

(i) What are the constraints to access and participation?

(j) Who has the capacity to contribute to gender equality in the project?

(k) Who has the capacity to hinder efforts of gender equality in the project?

4. DECIDE TIME AND PLACE FOR PHYSICAL MEETING

4.1.1 To schedule the physical meeting, the Project Developer should take into account the stakeholder's work arrangements, accessibility, cultural or religious sensitivities. Particular attention should be given to women and the needs of marginalised groups to ensure their participation.

4.1.2 The Project Developer should ensure that the physical meeting(s) is organised in an atmosphere that allows all participants to express their views and concerns freely.

4.1.3 When one meeting is not adequate due to social, cultural, logistics and other barriers, the Project Developer should consider organising focus groups or smaller meetings for specific groups. For example,

- A women's only meeting may be required in order to register their concerns and insights

- In some communities, power relations play a part in who may or may not voice an opinion or concern in a meeting. Therefore, excessive representation of a hierarchy in a physical meeting could be intimidating for particular stakeholder groups. For example, a senior government official and a female widowed farmer may have different perspectives and positions of power, which might affect their contributions in the meeting. In such cases, the developer may need to organise several meetings in different locations to ensure that all stakeholders can participate and contribute to the discussion and share their views.

5. MEANS FOR INVITING STAKEHOLDERS

5.1.1 When inviting stakeholders for physical meetings, the Project Developer should ensure that all stakeholders are invited proactively and well in advance to allow sufficient time for stakeholders to make arrangements to participate.

5.1.2   The invitation should clearly state the objectives of the consultation, physical meeting date, venue along with details on how feedback can be submitted for those who are unable to attend the physical meeting. The Project Developer should provide an email address, postal address, contact details of a local representative, which stakeholders can use to submit their concerns and/or questions and get project information.

5.1.3   The Project Developer should select an invitation method taking into account local and national circumstances, including appropriate language and measures to ensure a gender-sensitive communications process, using adequate and effective means.

5.1.4   The invitations should include both oral and written invitations – for example door to door announcements, announcements in newspapers, radio or television, emails, announcements in public meetings, phone messages and calls, announcements at places which stakeholders visit frequently, for example, community centres, cultural centres, health clinics, post offices, municipality offices, schools and places of worship (churches, shrines, temples, mosques, etc.).

5.1.5   The Project Developer should also use alternative means of invitations considering the local context. For example, the written notice is not a useful mode of communication with an illiterate group of stakeholders. In cases, where the majority of stakeholders are illiterate, the Project Developer should use oral means – like radio announcement or hand-delivered invitation in the local language.

5.1.6   Project Developers should track all the invitations sent out. If stakeholders do not respond to the invitation, the Project Developer should follow up via email, letter or by phone. In many cases, where phone numbers are unknown, visits to the project area may be required. This is important for cases where a Project Developer has identified a potential risk to a particular stakeholder group or local authority, as a justification will need to be provided on how they were consulted.

6.   INFORMATION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO STAKEHOLDERS

6.1.1   The scope of the stakeholder consultation is to engage affected stakeholders and and to discuss potential environmental, social and economic impacts (both positive contributions and potential risks) that projects may have during design, planning and implementation, and to establish an ongoing mechanism for feedback.

6.1.2   In order to provide adequate and timely information to the stakeholders, the Project Developer shall share the following information in the local language, prior to a consultation.

(a)   A non-technical summary of the project, including information on project design, technology, objectives, scale, duration and

implementation plan (so far as known) tailored to the target stakeholder group to allow them to understand and engage with the project

(b)   Summary of the economic, social and environmental impacts of the project as per Safeguarding Principles & Requirements

(c)   Contact details to get further technical detail and project information, should any stakeholder be interested

(d)   Other relevant information to help stakeholders understand the project

6.1.3   The Project Developer is not obliged to disclose confidential commercial information.

6.1.4   The Project Developer should consider some key points to decide the format in which project information should be prepared and presented to stakeholders - level of technical detail; local language and dialects; cultural sensitivity; and the roles of women and men, including the impact of the project on gender relations, ethnic composition of communities, literacy levels, community leadership structures, and local methods of disseminating information within stakeholder groups.

7.   CONDUCT CONSULTATION

7.1.1   The Stakeholder Consultation should comprise of a minimum of two rounds of consultation.

7.1.2   For a successful consultation, it is crucial to ensure that participants understand the information shared during the physical meeting. Therefore, the Project Developer should consider common issues and plan accordingly. For example

(a)   arrange for an interpreter if more than one language is used in the project area

(b)   keep the agenda of the meeting clear

(c)   explain the project and its potential impacts and risks in a simplified and easy to understand manner

(d)   include a discussion on potential adverse impacts that a project may cause and how the Project Developer will address these

(e)   should include a question and answer session to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to seek more information or raise any questions about the project

(f)   should be sensitive to those stakeholders who are unable to read, write, see or hear and provide assistance to them

7.1.3   The Project Developer should identify a respected local facilitator(s) to assist with engaging all stakeholders present and avoid allowing a single person or stakeholder group to set an atmosphere that prevents others from sharing their views and concerns. Particular attention should be given to encourage women to voice their opinions and if this is not possible given local customs, consider conducting a separate meeting, for example, a separate consultation for women only.

7.1.4   To conduct the physical meeting, following an agenda and discussion points are recommended. The Project Developer may deviate from the agenda; however all elements listed below should be covered to ensure a meaningful consultation.

(a)   Opening of the meeting with an introduction of the Project Developer and stakeholders and objective of the meeting i.e., share project information and gather feedback and suggestions from all stakeholders to further improve the project.

(b)   Explain the project in non-technical terms, providing project details including the location, project technology, implementation timelines, etc. Also, it is good practice to disclose relevant information about the Project Developer, implementers and other parties involved in the project.

(c)   Arrange a question and answer session to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to ask questions to understand the project. Provide pen and paper for stakeholders to write down any questions and/or concerns, and encourage people to do so.

(d)   Explain the expected sustainable development impacts of the project, both positive and negative, in a simplified manner and invite the stakeholders to provide their feedback. The Project Developer should ask stakeholders if they think there are any other relevant impacts of the project.

(e)   Discuss any potential adverse risks of the project, asking obvious questions for the Safeguarding Principles Assessments. Invite stakeholders to discuss their concerns and how these concerns could be addressed. Discuss the mitigation plan to address the risks and ask if there are any suggestions to improve the mitigation measure(s). Try to reach a consensus among the stakeholder regarding the final proposed measure(s) to mitigate or minimise the risk in time.

(f)   Follow the discussion with the positive impacts and invite stakeholders to provide views on project contributions; if the project is doing too little/enough/too much for identified impact and invite their reasoning. Consider prompting people by asking them first to think in terms of their priorities and day-to-day realities and then of the priorities of future generations. Try to reach consensus on the assessment of the impacts during the discussion before

continuing to the next agenda item. The exercise is challenging, so take care not to confuse and ask too much of your stakeholders. Gather as many comments as possible to improve and balance the project's impacts.

(g) Discuss the monitoring plan for sustainable development impacts by inviting stakeholders to share ideas on how this could be done in a cost-effective and participatory way. What are the most appropriate ways for stakeholders to monitor the project? Again, consider the abilities and capacity of your stakeholders and be reasonable in expectations.

(h) Discuss the mechanism for input and grievance with the stakeholders to decide what are the best methods to raise concerns and/or seek recourse for impacts that occur during the project implementation. At the physical meeting, the Project Developer should discuss potential options, such as those listed in the table below, for filing a grievance and the associated procedures and protocols to ensure that stakeholders agree with the selected grievance mechanism.

(i) Particular attention should be paid to feedback received from women or women's groups or other groups who are marginalised or fearful to come forward with a complaint.

Table 1 Recommended Methods for Grievance and Input Mechanism

	Method Chosen (include all known details e.g. location of book, phone, number, identity of mediator)	Justification
Continuous Input and Grievance Expression Process Book	Mandatory	
Telephone access		
Internet/email access		
Nominated Independent Mediator (optional)		
Other		

(j) At the end of the meeting, invite the stakeholders to complete the evaluation form. Explain the follow-up action plan and how stakeholders can access the minutes of the meeting. It is also important to let attendees know how their comments are recorded and how they may find out about the follow-up actions to address the comments. Also, share the information on the Stakeholder Feedback Round. Close the meeting and collect Stakeholder Meeting Evaluation Forms using the following format.

Table 2 Stakeholder Feedback Form

Name:	Written response:
Gender – Male/Female:	
What is your impression of the meetings?	
What do you like about the Project?	
What do you not like about the Project?	
Signature:	

7.1.5   The Project Developer should record the minutes at the meeting and gather evidence as pictures or if appropriate record a video; these are useful for the Stakeholder Consultation documentation. Keep the meeting minutes short and focus on comments received during the meeting. The developer may appoint a trusted individual (for example, a community nurse or school principal) in advance to record the minutes of the meeting.

7.1.6   The Project Developer should record the participant list (see example content below), to register their name and contact details, job or position and sign to indicate they were present.

Table 3 Participants Details

Date & Time		Location			
Name and Position of Participant (e.g. community roles etc.)	Gender • Male • Female • Other • Prefer not to state	Contact Details	Organisation (if relevant)	Signature	

8.   CONSIDERATION OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

8.1.1   Feedback evaluation and follow up actions are a crucial part of the consultations process. The following steps provide guidance on how the follow up actions and feedback should be shared after the meeting.

8.1.2   All the comments/suggestions raised by the stakeholders in the meeting or via evaluation forms or other means must be documented by categorising as positive, neutral or negative.

8.1.3   The Project Developer should consider all the comments and identify the comments that are serious, reasonable and proportional and therefore should be taken into account.

8.1.4   The Project Developer should compare its own sustainable development and safeguarding assessment with the outcome of the stakeholder consultation meeting. All the differences should be identified, and the project documentation should be updated accordingly.

8.1.5   If one or more aspects of the project are considered negative and consensus could not be reached in the meeting, the Project Developer should revisit the impact assessment with an independent third party.

8.1.6   The Project Developer's judgment is key at this stage and will ultimately determine changes to the final Project Design, implementation and other relevant aspects. For example, if women provided feedback on the design of a cookstove, it is important to account and understand the rationale behind the feedback considering that women are the primary user of the technology.

8.1.7   If some stakeholders' concerns seem unwarranted, make a case as to why this is so. Negative stakeholder comments are not necessarily a reason to stop a project's progress, however, all stakeholder concerns should be addressed and accounted for or justified.

8.1.8   It may highlight unintended risks or harms from a gender perspective. Make sure to document individual differences[6] as they relate to priorities, concerns and potential impacts (positive or negative). These should be categorised and evaluated separately.

8.1.9   After assessing the comments, the Project Developer should decide whether to change or amend the Project Design. Changes to the Project Design generally increase local ownership of and interest in the project and enhance sustainable development.

8.1.10   The Project Developer shall document any alterations that will be made to the Project Design resulting from the Stakeholder Consultation meeting in the respective section of the project documentation.

8.1.11   The Project Developer should document any comments, criticisms or improvements that were made to the input and grievance expression methods discussed at the physical meeting.

9.   STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK CONSULTATION

9.1.1   The Stakeholder Feedback Round (i.e., the second round of consultation) covers all the issues raised in the first round of consultation (i.e., physical meeting). The Project Developer should provide feedback to the stakeholders on how comments from the

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[6] Are responses different or are there similarities across gender lines?

physical meeting have been considered and provide another opportunity to seek comments from stakeholders.

9.1.2   All stakeholders invited to participate in the first consultation should be invited to the Stakeholder Feedback Round.

9.1.3   The Stakeholder Consultation documentation and revised project documentation should be made accessible via a website or online platform. In addition to publishing the project documents via a website, the Project Developer should consider providing hard copies of the documents available at community places; for example, the local post office or municipality office, library, community health centre, or nursery or primary school.

9.1.4   The Stakeholder Feedback Round remains open for a minimum of 60 days.

9.1.5   If the physical meeting was not organised in the first round of consultation, the Project Developer should organise a physical meeting with stakeholders following the steps mentioned previously.

9.1.6   During the Stakeholder Feedback Round, all stakeholder comments should be captured and addressed.

9.1.7   The Stakeholder Feedback Round can be conducted in parallel to the Validation process but the validating VVB must take into account the stakeholders' feedback to conclude the Validation opinion.

9.1.8   The Project Developer should document the Stakeholder Feedback Round and how it was organised, what the outcomes were and how the feedback was followed up.

10.   ONGOING MONITORING

10.1.1 The Project Developer should monitor and record concerns and feedback that have been identified and raised by stakeholders during the stakeholder consultations and implementation and the mitigation measures put in place to address those.

10.1.2 The Project Developer should record and address any feedback given by stakeholders as part of the project's grievance mechanism and include in the monitoring report.