

Stakeholders in Social Development

Social Development

Introduction

Development, be it social, economic and environmental, has to be understood as an inherently political process of people claiming basic rights to manage the resources their lives depend on. In principle, everyone should be involved. Managing the inherent complexity requires a process of comprehensive engagement and negotiation with a broad range of stakeholders and the conscious and strategic acknowledgement of their divergent values and interest, needs and expectations.



Dialogue and negotiation among stakeholders are the vehicles through which sustainable social development projects are established, implemented and monitored. Bottom-up development project which emanate from the grassroots level and closely involve community members are more successful than those that are developed top-down.



Definitions

- ▶ People or organizations that are concerned about, effected by, have vested interest in, or involved in some way with the issue at hand.
- ▶ Stakeholders are all those who need to be considered in achieving goals and whose participation and support are crucial to its success.



Who can be categorized as stakeholders

- ▶ The range of stakeholders relevant to consider varies according to the complexity of the reform area targeted and the type of reform proposed and, where the stakeholders are not recognized the incentive to include them. Stakeholders can be of any form, size and capacity. They can be individuals, organizations or unorganized groups. In most cases, stakeholders fall into one or more of the following categories:



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- ▶ International actors (e.g. donors)
 - ▶ National or political actors (e.g. legislators, governors)
 - ▶ Public sector agencies
 - ▶ Interest groups
 - ▶ Commercial/ private for profit, non-profit organizations.
 - ▶ Civil society members and users/ consumers.



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- ▶ Stakeholders can also be categorized by their powers and salience importance according to the following attributes:
 - ▶ Promoters: Stakeholders who attach a high priority to the reform policy and whose action can have an impact on the implementation of the policy.
 - ▶ Defenders: Stakeholders who attach a high priority to the reform policy but whose actions can't have an impact on the implementation of the policy.
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- ▶ Latents: Stakeholders whose action can affect the implementation of the reform policy but who attach a low priority to this policy.
 - ▶ Apathetics: Stakeholders whose actions can't affect the implementation of the reform policy and who attach a low priority to this policy.

Understanding of stakeholders, their positions, influence with other groups and their interest in a particular reform provide an idea of the impact of reform on political and social forces. Depending on




the attributes of the stakeholders (e.g. their level of influence, their salience on the issue), strategies may be tailored to address their concerns.

For example:

- ▶ Maintain or increase power of reform supporters through building coalitions, and providing information and resources.



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- ▶ Convert opposition into support through negotiation, information and/ or coalition building, including offering trade offs.
 - ▶ Offset or counter powerful and not so powerful opponents.
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Engagement of stakeholders

Stakeholder support is needed to create and sustain winning coalitions and ensure the long term viability of organizations, policies, plans just to name a few. Different types of stakeholders should be engaged in different ways in the various stages of the development project, from gathering and giving information, to consultation, dialogue, working together and partnership.



Using an inclusive, transparent approach during project development and implementation will help and build ownership and commitment. If it is not possible or realistic to have all key stakeholders involved from the outset, then a process for gradual involvement may be required.

Appropriate strategies and approaches for stakeholder engagement must be adopted.



If the stakeholder is marginalized e.g. women, indigenous people, ethnic minorities or other impoverished or disenfranchised groups lack the recognition or capacity to participate in collaboration efforts on equal basis, and particular effort must be made to ensure and enable their participation.

Stakeholder participation:



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- ▶ Gives people some say over how projects or policies affect their lives.
 - ▶ Is essential for sustainability.
 - ▶ Generates a sense of ownership if initiated early in development process.
 - ▶ Provides opportunities for learning for both the project team and stakeholders themselves.
 - ▶ Builds capacity and enhances responsibility.



Key Points

The increasing and ambition of many project require a commitment to dialogue and collaboration with diverse range of stakeholder. Dialogue that is open and transparent is critical to long term success.

- ▶ The goals of any collaboration venture must be clarified before engaging stakeholders. Goals help identify and target those interest that need to be represented in collaboration processes, and those that can be left out.



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- ▶ It is fundamental that enough time be budgeted to explore stakeholder views, values and perspectives so that an understanding of the human and institutional landscape can be established.
 - ▶ All key stakeholders must be involved in the design and implementation of policies and projects if successful results are to be achieved.



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- ▶ Collaboration process will always be relevant to project outcomes and to their sustainability.
 - ▶ It is important that stakeholder participation not be exclusive or controlled or dominated by any one group.
 - ▶ All stakeholders will come to the process with their own biases.



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- ▶ Stakeholder collaboration is a process that requires the opportunity and space for participants to listen and to learn from one another. It is important to create spaces for stakeholder to come together to develop and share their visions and agendas.
 - ▶ Monitoring and evaluating the nature of the collaboration is as important as measuring specific project outcomes.
 - ▶ Review of the process is important to assure the usefulness of the results and to gauge the likelihood of acceptance and sustainability.

