



# Introduction to Public Participation in Transboundary Waters Management

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# Benefits of Public Participation

- ◆ Empowerment – allows understanding of the issues, builds capacity & increases ownership – contributing to long-term sustainability.
- ◆ NB role in integrating info from various sectors (silos) – to promote synergies & trade-offs – improves decision making.
- ◆ Purely gov to gov initiatives are not sustainable – involving stakeholders enhances cooperation and sustainability.
- ◆ When involving stakeholders you create a common ground for developing solutions (eg Chad Basin experience) – incorporating the values of stakeholders.

## Benefits Cont'd

- ◆ Population is aware of what is happening – increased visibility and appreciation of the programme by local community, incl private sector and NGOs.
- ◆ Builds trust between communities – up and downstream – clearing misconceptions etc.
- ◆ Helps to avoid conflicts after the project. If communities are brought on board during planning stages many of the problems can be avoided.

# Challenges

- ◆ Who in the community ends up participating? Need access to information.
- ◆ Can be difficult to identify structures for participation and implementation on the ground. In Ghana the 220 District Assemblies have the mandate now to interact with stakeholders & distribute information etc.
- ◆ Possible that an external agenda is imposed on the stakeholders – most likely due to capacity or information constraints. Representivity NB.
- ◆ There needs to be more decentralization – villages and other communities.
- ◆ Necessary for the population to have concrete action for them to implement.

# Challenges

- ◆ How do you sustain the benefits of public participation beyond the life of the project? EG: Communities may see wetlands as a problem – how to reconcile this with the outside desire to protect wetlands after the life of the project?
- ◆ Budgetary constraints – not all activities can be implemented. Need to look at other mechanisms to bring stakeholders and the pvt sector on board eg BOT schemes.
- ◆ Public participation promises can raise expectations of communities to unrealistic levels.

# What is Public Participation?

- ◆ A process in which stakeholder and public concerns, views, and values are incorporated into decision-making and implementation of water resource management.
- ◆ NOT a single event or process...rather an ongoing commitment to building and maintaining relationships to effectively co-manage the resource

# Spectrum of Participation

Informing → Consulting → Actively Engaging

Increasing level of stakeholder involvement in  
planning, decision-making, and implementation of  
water resource management

# Informing

- ◆ Providing clear and unbiased information to help stakeholders understand water-related issues, potential impacts, and solutions
- ◆ Access to information is the basis of meaningful engagement – but not “participation”
- ◆ Promise: We will keep you informed...



# Consulting with Stakeholders

- ◆ Asking for stakeholder feedback on decisions, alternatives, or proposals:

Two-way flow of information

- ◆ Examples:

- ◆ Comments on draft project documents
- ◆ Surveying communities to assess priority water issues

- ◆ Entails promise to keep SH informed, listen to and acknowledge ideas and concerns and provide feedback on how SH input influenced outcomes

# Actively Engaging

- ◆ Involving SH as partners in defining water management issues, and in determining how to prioritize and address those issues cooperatively
- ◆ Examples:
  - ◆ Identifying and implementing pilot projects in cooperation with communities
  - ◆ Creation of stakeholder advisory forums with a seat on decision-making bodies
- ◆ Promise: to ensure that SH goals and concerns are reflected to some extent in plans, decisions and activities

# How?

- ◆ No blueprint...highly contextualized, but:
  - ◆ Process tools to plan and implement P2 strategically
  - ◆ Lessons learned in one context can be adapted to apply in different contexts – you are the experts!