Public Participation and Community Engagement as a part of EIA – A review

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Abstract: The successful execution and development of any proposed projects rely upon the level of participation of the community. Public participation is the basic principle of our democracy and has become one of the important conditions which are essential for the implementation of programmes and projects. Without the public participation, No success for any of the developing projects. Hence, ascertaining the level of Participation is a basic element of EIA. The public participation helps to promote informed decision-making by making detailed information concerning significant environmental impacts available to both agency leaders and the public. It also encourages the communication and cooperation between all the actors involved in environmental decisions, including government officials, private businesses, and citizens. The current article focuses on the steps need to be followed for conducting the public participation.

Keywords: Community engagement, Governance, Spectrum, Stakeholders

1. Introduction

Public participation is the process by which an organization consults with interested or affected individuals, organizations, and government entities before making decision. Public participation involves with "Two-way communication" and "Collaborate problem solving". With the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions and Without PP, Development action fails. The main functions of public participation include:

    i)   To encourage the public to have meaningful input into the decision –making process.

    ii)   PP thus provides the opportunity for communication between 'Agencies' making decision and 'Public'.

Community engagement is a dimension of Public participation and a core element of any research effort / project [2]. This helps to address various issues affecting the well-being and comfortable enjoyment of community). It is a process of inclusive participation that supports. This comprises of varying levels of involvement of the local community. It may range from the contribution of cash and labor to consultation, hangs in behavior, involvement in administration, management and decision-making [1]. It is a process of inclusive participation that supports. The main characteristics of community engagement include the following:

- mutual respect values (Good Understanding)
- Strategies
- Actions
- Power sharing
- Maintenance of 'equity (Investment / Technical/Financial)'
- Flexibility in pursuing the goals, methods and time frames (to fit the priorities, needs, and capacities within the cultural context of community).

Decisions are more implementable and sustainable because the decision considers the needs and interests of all stakeholders and stakeholders better understand and are more invested in the outcomes [3, 4]. As a result, decisions that are informed by public participation processes are seen as more legitimate and are less subject to challenge. Decision-makers who fully understand stakeholder interests also become better communicators, able to explain decisions and decision rationale in terms stakeholders understand and in ways that relate to stake holders values and concerns. It is wise to begin consulting with the community right from the start. This helps to bring trust, understanding and support for the group. If the project proceeds too far before community are informed there may be problems with rumors and the spreading of misinformation. To build community support for any of the proposed projects, there is need to ensure that the community is well informed and ideally, part of the initial planning for the project. Inviting the public to express their views and concerns about the project can help to enhance community support and ultimately the success of the project. The community participation process must communicate to participants how their input affected the decision[4]. Feedback is the essential exercise in this

regard. Development agencies should create conducive platform which would enable communities to air their views. The community participation process provides participants with the information they need in order to participate in a meaningful approach. Reaching the poor requires working with them to learn about their needs, understanding how development decisions are made in their communities, and identifying institutions and mechanisms that acquire opportunities and resources.

Social Factors and Public Participation in Project Development: Oakley and Marsden (1991) state that community participation in the context of rural development is not concerned in the first instance with how to achieve a totally participatory society but we are more concerned with how to bring about some significant participation in the improvement of the rural sector on the part of those who depend on that sector for a livelihood [4]. One of the first steps is to identify the individuals and organizations in the community who will be affected by the project. There are many barriers to participation in society; poverty, literacy levels, disability, age, race and ethnicity are some of the characteristics that often marginalized people. A healthy community embraces diversity and recognizes that all community members have right to be heard and participate in processes that affects their lives [3, 4].

Governance and Public Participation in Project Development: According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997) good governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented. Good governance has eight major characteristics: it is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law.

Public Participation in Project Development: Participation is a rich concept that varies with its application and definition. The way participation is defined also depends on the context in which it occurs. For some, it is a matter of principle; for others, practice; for still others, an end in itself. For people to effectively participate in any project there is need for them to understand when, how and why they have to participate. For this reason it is important to first determine the understanding of the locals and their perception to participation in development processes. Public participation is not simply a nice or necessary thing to do; it actually results in better outcomes and better governance. When done in a meaningful way, public participation will result in two significant benefits: 1) Sponsor agencies will make better and more easily implementable decisions that reflect public interests and values and are better understood by the public. 2) Communities develop long-term capacity to solve and manage challenging social issues, often overcoming longstanding differences and misunderstandings.

2. Steps followed for Public Participation

Step-1 Describe the Project

The first step in developing the public project plan is to provide a "clear project description" to lay the foundation for the successful and achievable PP process within the timeline, Geographic area, Staff and Budget limitations of the overall project.

Step-2 Access the Level of Public Concern of Interest

Public will become involved according to their perception of seriousness of the project proposal. Hence, it is important to anticipate the public's level of interest or concern regarding the proposal activity.

The "Spectrum of Public Participation" (Figure 1) was developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP$_2$) to help clarify the role of the public (or community) in planning and decision-making, and how much influence the community has over planning or decision-making processes.
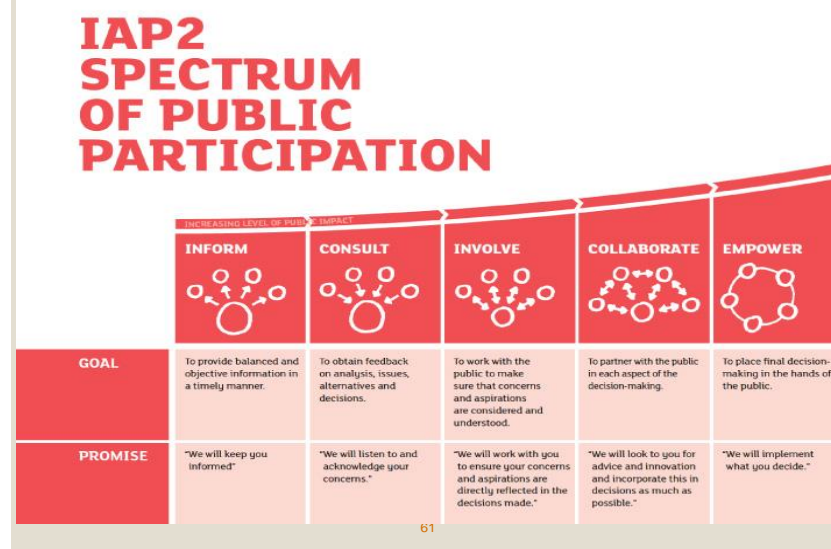
Figure 1: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Step-4 Identify PP Goals
　　　Gather the Public Feedback
　　　Gather the realistic expectations
　　　Disseminate the Public Input → Ultimate Decision Making

Step-5 Identify the Stakeholders
　　　With the Goals and PP levels, it's easier to identify the Stakeholders based on what Level of Public Outreach is needed. For example, the Top Management (President of the company, Vice-presidents, Directors, Division managers), Community Advisory Committee, Employees, Government, Shareholders, Suppliers and Unions are the common Stakeholders.

Figure 2: Common Stakeholders

Five Major Types of Stakeholders:
　　1. Project Manager
　　2. Project Team
　　3. Functional Management

4. Sponsors
5. Customers

Step-6 Select Tools
• Planning Commission
• Board of Supervisors
• Field Trip Opportunity for the Committee…
• Public Workshops to analyze the existing conditions and to generate the ideas
• Meeting with the Master Plan Committee…

Step-7 Create Schedule / (Work Plan)
        Project scheduling (Figure 3) is a mechanism to communicate what tasks need to get done and which organizational resources will be allocated to complete those tasks in what timeframe.

Step-8 Identify the Roles and Responsibilities
a. Identify everyone who has a role and responsibility in the planning, program development and decision making process.
b. Identify the "Ultimate Decision Makers" for the proposed activity.
c. Select the Project managers, Board of Supervisors, Staffs etc.

Step-9 Gather and Disseminate the Inputs and Results
For example, "Major revisions" will be communicated with the community

Step-10 Evaluate Effectiveness
        This step is important as it helps to improve the project activity and helps to monitor and evaluate the 'outcomes' of PP throughout the project life and make 'Revisions' as needed. The evaluation could be done with the help of Questionnaire survey, or Informal Feedback.

Phase	Work Description	Jan - 2020	Feb- 2020	March- 2020	April - 2020	May- 2020
Public participation						
Base map, Vector map preparation						
Data Collection and Interpretation						
Methodology part / Testing						
Preparation of EIA report						
TOR submission						

Figure 3: Sample Work Plan on the Proposal Activity

3. Data Analysis Concept

a) 400 Questionnaires will be prepared and dispatched to the Households of the selected study area. Out of these, 384 will be distributed to the ordinary members while the remaining 16 will be distributed to the members of government sectors. The 'Return rate of the study' will be carried out in the following format as shown in Table-1.

Table 1: Return rate in %

Category	Issued	Returned	Return rate %
Households			
Country officials			

b)   Demographic data of the respondents:

The data on the age, gender, number of households, employment status and the income level of the respondents will be shown for the distribution of the respondents. The poverty and its behavioral consequences of the respondents can be of very strong constraints for the inducement of the public participation and community engagement for any of the proposed projects. Hence, the household frequency, the distribution of the respondents by their age, the distribution of the respondents by their education level, and the distribution of the respondents by their employment status must be identified and tabulated as shown in Tables-2, 3, 4 and 5.

Table-2 Size of the Households of the Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
<6		
7-10		
11-15		
>15		

Table-3 Distribution of the Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
17-25		
26-45		
>45		

Table-4 Distribution of the Respondents by Education level

Education level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary		
Secondary		
Diploma		
Degree		

Table-5 Distribution of the Respondents by Employment status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Employed		
Unemployed		
Self employed		

c)   Training and Public participation in the project development – To identify the level of training for the individuals those who have directly influenced by the proposed projects.

d)   Decision process and Public participation- to ensure the practice, experience and diligence for the effective use

e)   Communication and Public participation – When the agency staff not interacts with the public, the normal public hearing fails.

f)   Social factors and Public participation – Identification on the selection criteria and procedure for the staff selection etc.

g)   Jobs and Public participation - The participation of local people in the proposed projects rely on the level of job opportunities must be examined.

h)   Accountability and Public participation - Budget allocations are used after the discussion with the stakeholders of the proposed projects.

i)   Training on the application of GIS (Geographical Information System) could help the organization (Company / Government) to store and retrieve their collective data / information upon the public participation and in turn, helps to identify the major issues of the proposed project with the help of the thematic maps [6,7,8].

Table-6 Distribution of the respondents by their Income level

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
<20000		
20000 - 40000		
40000 – 60000		
>60000		

Conclusions

1. Communications help to identify and portray the information that the public requires in order to participate meaningfully in the process of project development.
2. The proposed findings of the article will help to establish the influence of training on participation in any of the project development.
2. The current review could help the Leaders to focus on good governance through accountability in their processes and systems to build public trust and confidence through streamlined policy issues that adequately address community problems which enhance efficient exchange of material flows by productive entities.
3. The current review could help the government to concurrently focus on product and process by use of policy instruments, financial and economic analysis for the right mix of resources to enhance project sustainability.

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