



Photo by Indonesia's UN-REDD National Programme

The UN-REDD Programme has prioritised stakeholder engagement in recognition of the critical role Indigenous Peoples and other forest-dependent communities play in the sustainability and effectiveness of REDD+. A key component of what constitutes effective stakeholder engagement and consultation is the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Although procedures for FPIC have previously been designed and implemented mainly for projects, for example in the mining and oil palm sectors, the scale of FPIC required for REDD+ is much larger, thus the procedures are more complex.

Following a series of extensive consultations with broad stakeholders, including indigenous and local communities, the UN-REDD Global Programme developed FPIC guidelines to support partner countries who are at various stages of designing and implementing FPIC. Indonesia and Viet Nam, for instance, gained direct experience piloting FPIC that have since undergone independent evaluations. While Indonesia developed FPIC guidelines at the onset, Viet Nam decided to do so post-implementation.

The Programme developed the Asia-Pacific FPIC Repository on the UN-REDD global website. The site, which aims to facilitate knowledge and experience exchange, contains various FPIC materials that were developed by partner countries and REDD+ practitioners.

Principles of FPIC

The right of people to give or withhold their consent to measures that may affect them is an expression of the right to self-determination. For Indigenous Peoples, this right is enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The UN-REDD Programme recognizes that the right applies to local communities, irrespective of their ethnicity. In this context:

Free refers to a process that is self-directed by the community or group from whom consent is being sought, unencumbered by coercion, expectations or timelines that are externally imposed.

Prior refers to a period of time in advance of an activity or process when consent should be sought. It also refers to the period in-between when consent is sought and when consent is given or withheld.

Informed refers to the type of information that should be provided prior to seeking consent and during the process. Such information should be accessible, clear, consistent, accurate, and transparent; be delivered in suitable language and format; be objective, complete and delivered in a manner that strengthens and does not erode indigenous or local cultures; and should reach the most remote, rural communities, women and the marginalised.

Consent refers to the decision made through customary decision-making process. Consent must be sought and granted or withheld according to the unique formal or informal political-administrative dynamic of each community or group. Consent is a freely given decision, including the option to reconsider if the proposed activities change or if new information emerges. It may be given or withheld in phases, over specific periods of time for distinct stages or phases of REDD+.

THE UN-REDD PROGRAMME

The UN-REDD Programme is the United Nations Collaborative Initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). It builds on the convening role and technical expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Programme supports developing countries prepare and implement national REDD+ strategies.

Lesson 1: Review existing consultation processes when preparing national FPIC guidelines. One of the problems using the new and unfamiliar term “FPIC” is that people sometimes assume it is a completely new and foreign concept. Some countries, however, may already have requirements for consultation in relation to natural resource management that they can draw on to develop FPIC processes for REDD+. Reviewing existing consultation and participation frameworks is an important step to ensure a functional and robust FPIC process for REDD+.

Lesson 2: Allow adequate time for awareness raising and consider using a range of approaches to communicate REDD+ to communities with low literacy levels. Repeated awareness raising events need to be organized to focus only on issues that are essential for communities to understand. Local communities may not need information about global impacts of climate change, but rather examples relevant to the local contexts, in order to be fully informed of the activities that affect them through REDD+. Using different approaches such as role-playing, drama, puppet shows, cartoons, animation, films, TV programs, and radio programs, can better help communicate a complex concept such as REDD+ to low literacy communities.

Lesson 3: Select and train suitable FPIC facilitators. Training facilitators takes time and money as they are unlikely to be familiar with REDD+ to start with. Communicating complex issues is even more difficult when speaking another person’s second language. Communication in a person’s first language is therefore essential, and this will normally mean that it is necessary to recruit facilitators from the local area who can communicate without the need for translators.

Lesson 4: Documentation of FPIC processes is important but be mindful of sensitive issues. Documenting the whole FPIC process including ideas, questions and concerns raised makes it possible to review the process in the event that a grievance arises. However, documenting sensitive issues can be difficult. The community or group should be asked what is sensitive and what is not, and what it is permissible to document.

Lesson 5: Local decision-making processes need to be respected. The means by which local stakeholders reach a decision, including the time taken and internal processes of debate need to be respected. External engagement, other than to clarify issues of uncertainty, and only upon request, should be avoided. A community or group may refuse permission to engage in consultations, as happened with one of the villages in Indonesia. Where this occurs, the decision must be respected.

Lesson 6: The cost of doing FPIC can be high, but the cost of not doing FPIC is higher. The cost of doing FPIC will differ significantly from country to country. Depending on the FPIC model that is adopted, the cost can be significant, especially when working with remote communities or groups, due to high travel costs. However, the cost of not doing FPIC can result in high risks and conflicts, which threaten the reputation, sustainability or financial viability of a national REDD+ programme. Addressing concerns before any REDD+ activities begin is likely to be more successful and cost-effective than responding to opposition or conflicts later on.

Lesson 7: Establish effective grievance mechanisms at the appropriate level. Grievance mechanisms for FPIC processes for a national REDD+ programme will differ from mechanisms for a project approach such as in the mining sector. The former necessitates institutionalization while the latter is project-specific.



Photos by Viet Nam’s UN-REDD National Programme

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