

KNOWLEDGE AND LESSONS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: FREE, PRIOR INFORMED CONSENT

UN-REDD ASIA-PACIFIC WORK ON FREE PRIOR INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC)

As the first UN-REDD country programme to begin implementation, the Programme in Viet Nam had to address the issue of seeking the free prior informed consent of local communities in its pilot province of Lam Dong. Although procedures for FPIC have been designed and implemented at the scale of a project, for example in the mining sector, and even for an oil palm project in Indonesia, the scale of FPIC required for REDD+ is much larger, and therefore the procedures are more complex.

A series of awareness raising events were organized, starting at the central level, and proceeding to the province, districts, communes and villages. These were supported by various communication materials, brochures, posters, and videos, which were "field tested" before being widely used. Local facilitators, fluent in local languages, were recruited and trained, and the facilitators are responsible for contacting village heads and organizing village FPIC consultations. An equivalent process is currently being prepared for the UN-REDD programme in Indonesia.

Principles of Free Prior Informed Consent

The right of people to give or withhold their free, prior informed 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** implies no coercion, intimidation or manipulation;
- **Prior** implies consent has been sought sufficiently in advance, and in respect to time requirements of those being consulted;
- **Informed** implies that information is provided that covers (at least) the reason, nature, duration, size, pace, and reversibility of any proposed project or activity; the locality of areas that will be affected; an assessment of economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts; personnel likely to be involved; and procedures that may be required; and
- **Consent** implies that consultation and participation are crucial components of a consent process. Consultation should be undertaken in good faith, and local communities should be able to participate through their own freely chosen representatives. The inclusion of a gender perspective is essential. This process may include the option of withholding consent.

