

# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BIOSAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING**

**KEY CONCEPTS, EMERGING GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

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# Public participation

- **Who is the public?**
- **What is public participation?**
- **Why is public participation important?**
- **What are the basic Principles of Participation- the Rules**
- **What are the conditions for Effective Participation**
- **Strategies for Participation and Choice**

# Meaning of public participation

- The Public is people in general or people in a particular community/country
- Public Participation is any process that involves public input in decision making
- It encompasses a group of procedures designed to consult, involve, and inform the public to allow those affected by a decision to have an ***input*** into that decision.

# Why public participation?

- Better decisions that reflect public interests
- Enhanced cooperation and sustainability
- Improved democracy and enhanced citizenship
- Empowerment to the public to plan and think
- Longterm capacity to solve and manage challenging social issues
- Conflict avoidance

# Why public participation?

- Trust building between stakeholders
- Increased awareness of project activities
- Increased visibility and appreciation of projects/  
initiatives
- Common ground for developing solutions

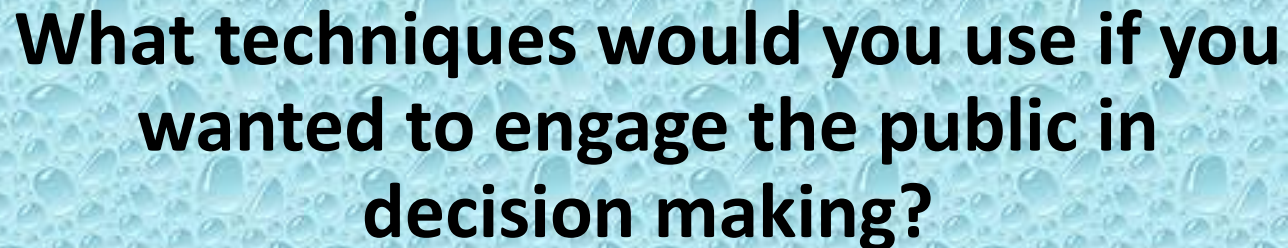
# Basic principles of public participation

- Early notification
- Accessible information
- Shared knowledge
- Sensitivity to community values
- Reasonable timing
- Appropriate levels of participation
- Transparent results.

# Conditions for achieving effective public participation

- **Clear purpose and goals**
- **Clear structure and process**
  - well-defined rules about how public participation will be conducted and how the decision will be made
- **Actual opportunity for influence**
  - the real opportunity for public input to be considered in making the decision
- **Staff commitment to public participation process**
- **Inclusive and effective representation**
  - reaching out to representatives of the full range of relevant stakeholder interests.

# **Engagement techniques with the Public.**



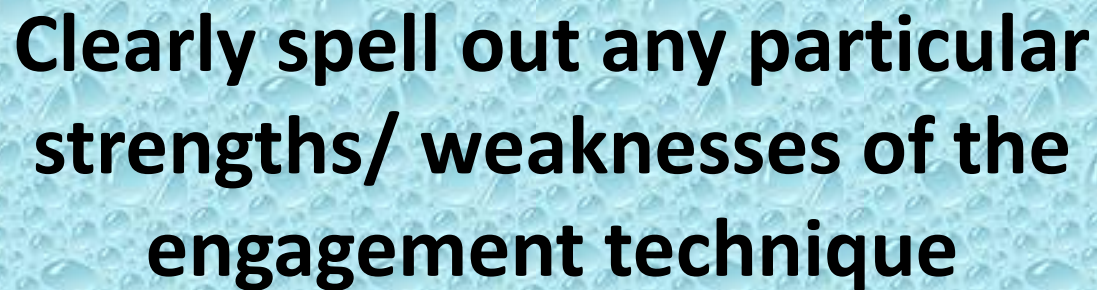
**What techniques would you use if you wanted to engage the public in decision making?**



# A range of techniques to allow for Public Participation

- Workshops, focus groups or stakeholder meetings
- Public hearings
- Consensus conferences
- Advisory panels and committees
- Surveys and polls
- Comments/response sheets
- Posters/flyers
- Radio and TV
- Website
- Magazine articles
- Activity – e.g. tree planting

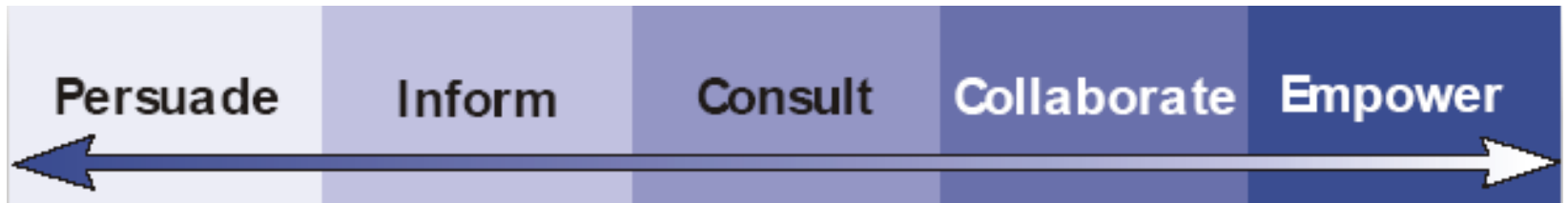
With a colleague, discuss an engagement technique that you have used and for what purpose



**Clearly spell out any particular strengths/ weaknesses of the engagement technique**

# **Selection of techniques**

# Consider the level of engagement desired



# Information: examples

- Legal notices
- Advertisements
- Magazine or news articles & press releases
- Background information material
- Exhibits or displays
- Technical reports
- Websites
- Field trips
- Press conferences
- Radio or talk shows
- Expert pannels

# Consultation: examples

- Public meetings
- Public hearings
- Open days/ open house
- Briefings
- Central information contact number of person
- Field offices or information centres
- Comments and response sheets
- Surveys, questionnaires and polls
- Interviews
- Telephone hotlines
- Electronic democracy
- Participatory rural appraisal

Source: DEAT

# Collaboration: examples

- Workshops, focus groups or key stakeholder meetings
- Advisory pannels and committees
- Task force
- Citizen juries
- Consensus conferences
- Participatory rural appraisal

# Empowerment: examples

## **Strategies to build the public's capacity for participation**

- Providing guidance documents to the public
- Training stakeholder representatives in PP and communication skills
- Providing experts to mentor community groups/leaders
- Involving the public reps in planning the PP process to create a sense of ownership
- Using deliberative forums that encourage more active forms of participation
- Providing technical assistance to the public/community groups to help them understand technical information relevant to the decision



# But also...

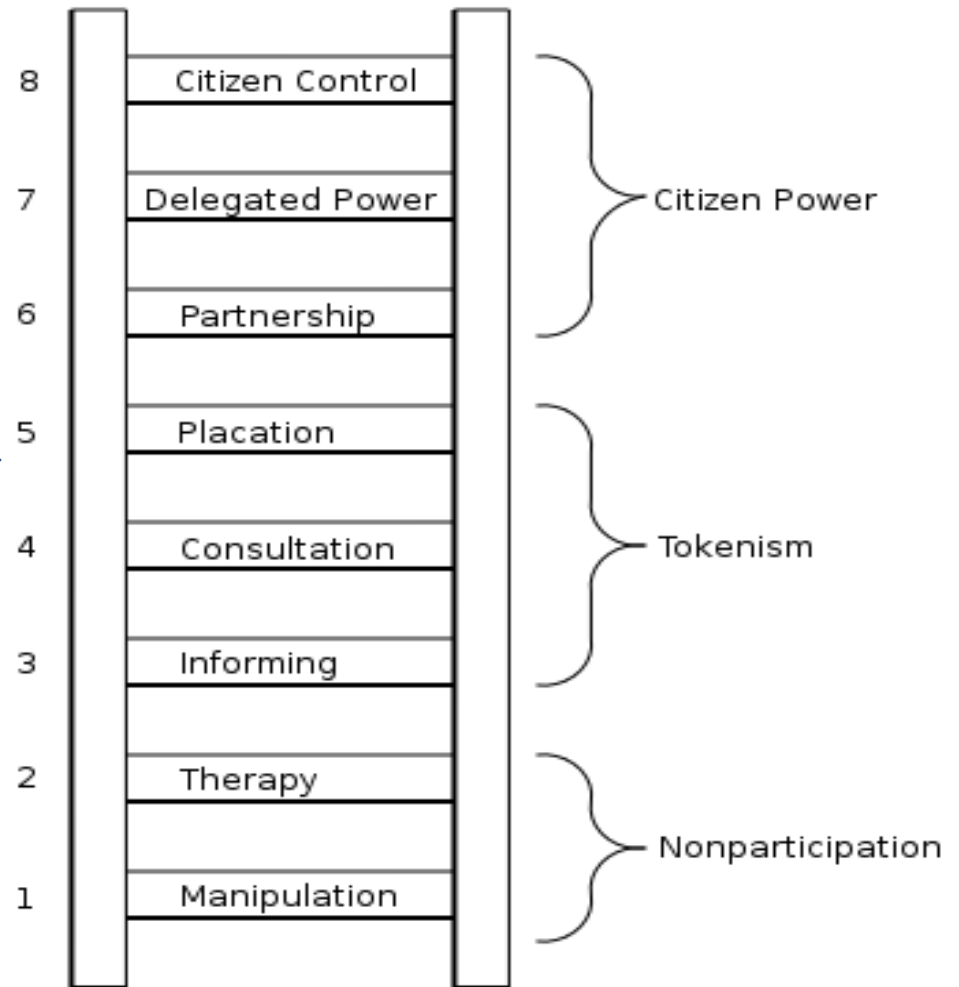
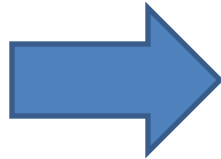


- **Range:** Number of stakeholders who should get involved and their geographical distribution and availability of communication media
- **Resources:** Amount of time, resources and expertise available
- **Audience:** Level of education (literacy level)
- **Objectives:** Proposed objectives, outputs and impacts of the project/initiative

**The Ladder of Citizen  
Participation” by S.R. Arnstein,  
1969.**

# Levels and Degrees of public participation

**Eight rungs on the  
Ladder of Citizen  
participation**



**Source: “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” by S.R. Arnstein, 1969.**

# Levels and Degrees of public participation

- The lower two rungs are **nonparticipatory** participation.
  - E.g. public / neighborhood advisory committee or boards with no authority or power in controlling projects/programs i.e. don't take part in controversial issues
- Next three rungs signify **degrees of tokenism**.
  - E.g. methods like posters, surveys, meetings, public hearings, and placement of citizens on powerful boards.
- Final three rungs symbolize degrees of **citizen power**.
  - E.g. public authority, full citizen power and authority to prepare and implement a plan/program.

**Good facilitation is crucial to ensure equal input from all participants?**

What facilitation skills have you used before to ensure equity is participation?

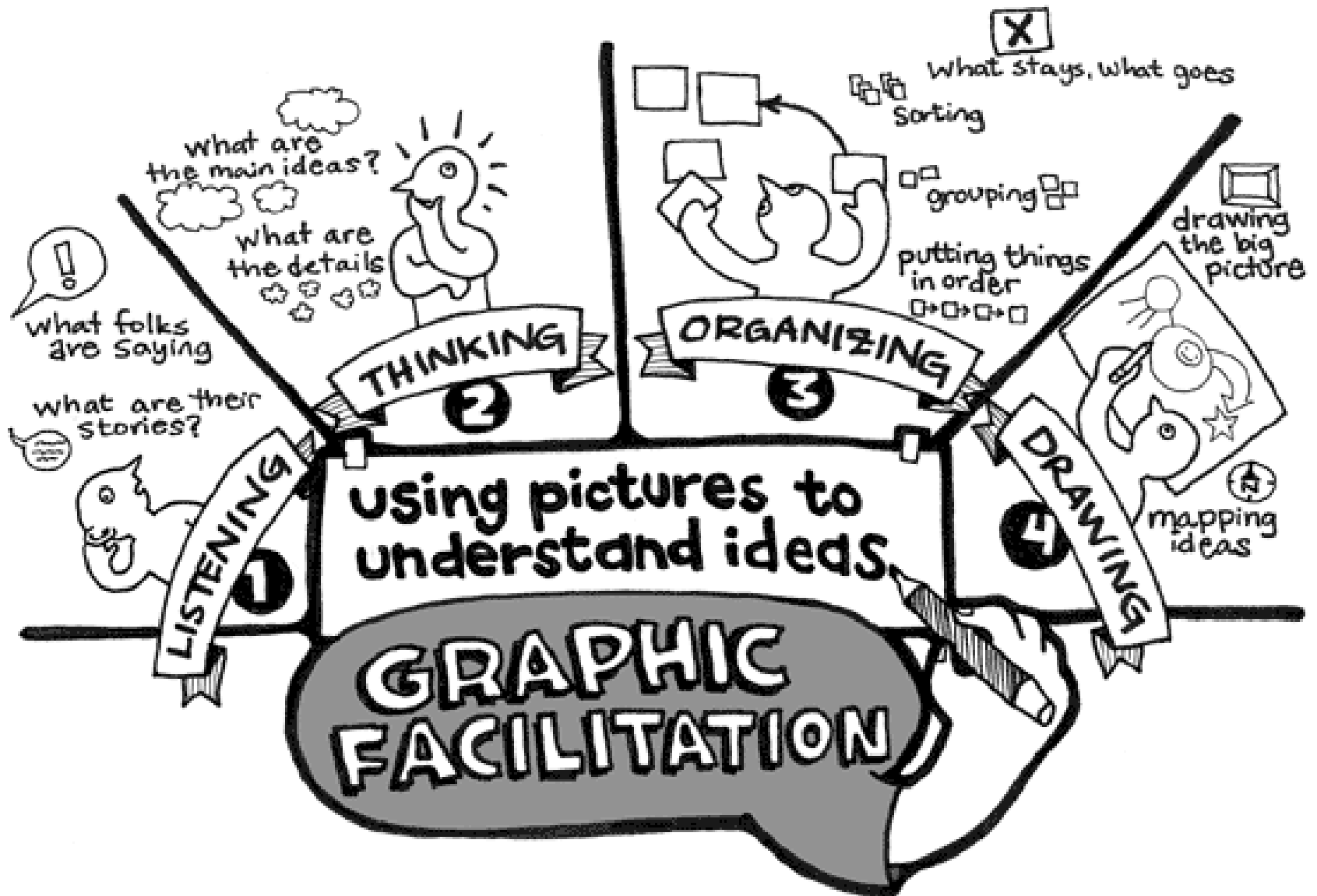
# Allow Participants to do it themselves



Analyze, plan, learn, implement,  
reflect and monitor activities

# Your Role as Facilitator

- Creative Visualization
- To be an active listener

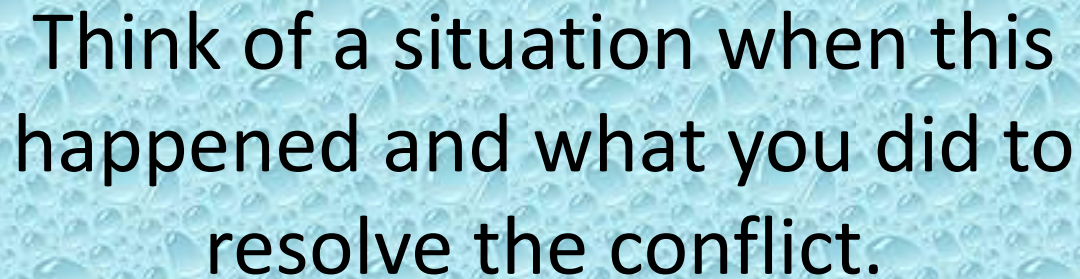




# Be a good listener

- Engage in active listening
- If you hear something you disagree with, do not respond by arguing
- Engage in effective questioning
- Periodically summarise what you have heard
- Reframe where appropriate
- Acknowledge what you have heard
- Tell them what you have heard

# **What do you do when different views are aired or conflict situations arise?**



Think of a situation when this happened and what you did to resolve the conflict.