

RAEIN-AFRICA EXPERIENCES WITH PUBLIC AWARENESS & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

PRESENTED BY

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AT THE AFRICA REGIONAL CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP
FOR PUBLIC AWARENESS, EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION
CONCERNING THE SAFE TRANSFER, HANDLING AND USE OF
LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS, KAMPALA



Talk Format

- RAEIN-Africa's Experiences with PA&PP under Biosafety & Environment Programme (BEP)
- Experiences and Lessons under ISP-TEESA

Experiences under BEP

- **May 2006:** Public Awareness, Education and Participation Workshop held in Gaborone, Botswana:
 - brought together 40 participants from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe amongst them scientist, media practitioners and civil society organization representatives.
 - Discussed techniques, status of PA&PP, challenges and progress

Experiences under BEP cont.

- **2006-2007:** RAEIN Africa supported PAPP initiatives in five partner countries
 - Botswana,
 - Mozambique,
 - Swaziland,
 - Zambia and
 - Zimbabwe.
- Interventions aimed at enhancing public awareness on biotechnology and biosafety amongst a broad range of stakeholders as defined by national priorities e.g.
 - Science teachers, extension and customs staff in Swaziland;
 - Local communities in Namibia

Lessons from BEP initiatives

- Linear/one way methodologies e.g. newspaper articles, brochures etc. are useful for reaching a large number of people within a short time,
- But when used as a once-off activity with no follow up the message cannot be reinforced hence change of attitude and behaviour required for participation is unlikely.
- Similarly, once-off community workshops and visits are not likely to lead to effective participation.
- When there are too many messages that are uncoordinated or even contradictory the public is left confused.

Our PA&PP interventions founded on

- Principle 10 (Rio declaration)
- Article 23 (CPB)
- PP principles from International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

Public awareness & public participation in MEAs



- **Rio Declaration: Principle 10**

“Environmental issues are best handled with **participation of all concerned citizens**, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have **appropriate access to information** concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and **encourage public awareness and participation** by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.”

Three Pillars of the Rio Declaration



Provisions for Public Awareness & Public Participation in CPB

Article 23: Public awareness and Participation:

1. Parties (to the Protocol) shall:

- (a) Promote and facilitate public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms in relation to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health. In so doing Parties shall cooperate, as appropriate, with other states and international bodies;
- (b) Endeavour to ensure that public awareness and education encompass access to information on living modified organisms identified in accordance with this Protocol that may be imported.

2. The Parties shall, in accordance with their respective laws and regulations, consult the public in the decision-making process regarding the living modified organisms and shall make the results of such decisions available to the public, while respecting confidential information in accordance with Article 21.

3. Each Party shall endeavour to inform its public about the means of public access to the Biosafety Clearing House.



Requirements of Article 23

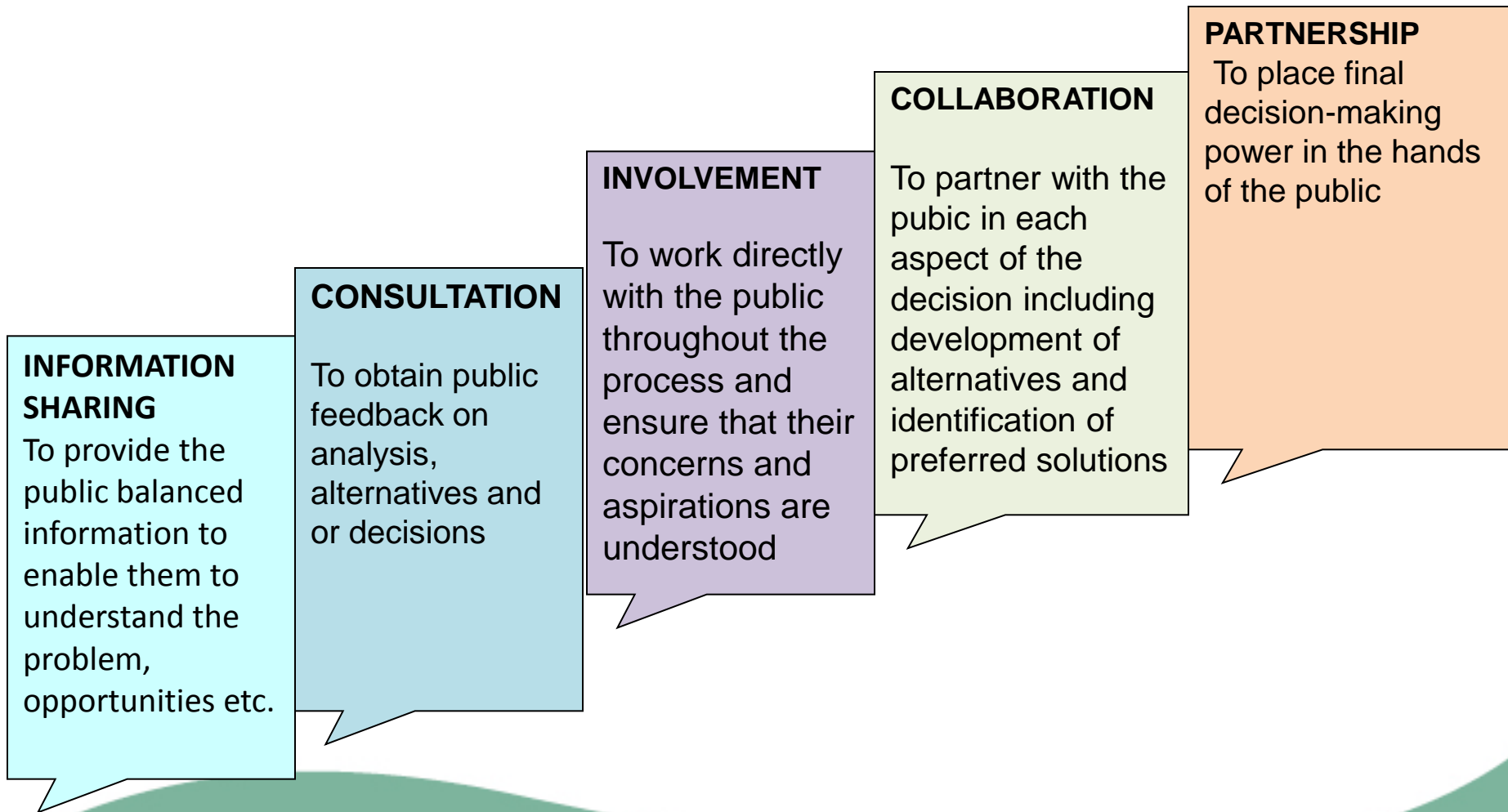
Requires parties to:

- (a) Promote and facilitate public awareness, education and participation on the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs in relation to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity
- (b) Facilitate access to information on LMOs
- (c) Consult the public in the decision-making about LMOs

Our understanding of Public awareness & participation

- **Public awareness:** The processes of informing the general population, increasing levels of consciousness about e.g.
 - The technology
 - Risks and how people can act to reduce / minimize potential adverse impacts
 - Benefits etc.
- **Public participation:** All types of activities designed to include the public in the decision-making process, **prior to** the decision being made.
 - **Public awareness is a prerequisite for public participation in decision-making**
 - **Information is an essential ingredient for awareness**
 - **Information must be accessible to the end user**

Ladder of Participation



Challenges for public participation in environmental decision-making in southern African context

- Capacity constraints within government institutions
- Political interference which limits independence and integrity of e.g. environmental assessments
- Lack of awareness of participation rights
- Poverty and conflicting personal priorities
- Budgetary constraints and lack of prioritization of participatory processes therein
- Traditional values

(Modified from common ground (2005). Calabash – a One Stop Participation Guide (A Handbook for Public Participation in Environmental Assessment in Southern Africa)

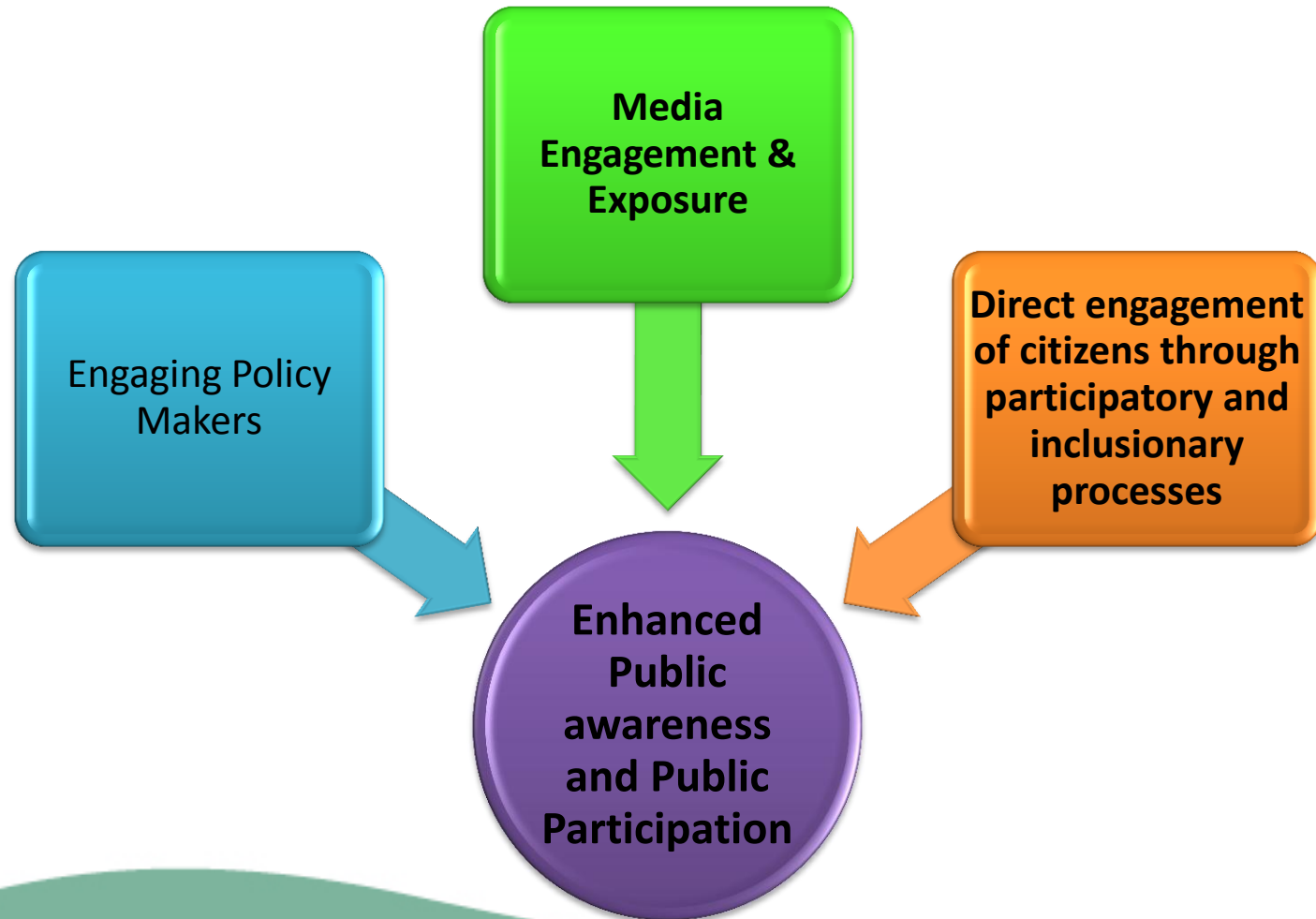
Challenges for participation of citizens and farmers in southern African context

- Highly complex nature of biotechnology
- Polarisation of debate at all levels
- Multiple languages in most countries
- Poor culture of participation in environmental decision-making in general in most areas
- Lack of legislation around access to information in many countries
- Poor prioritisation of biosafety vs competing national /personal interests
- Poor access to ICT

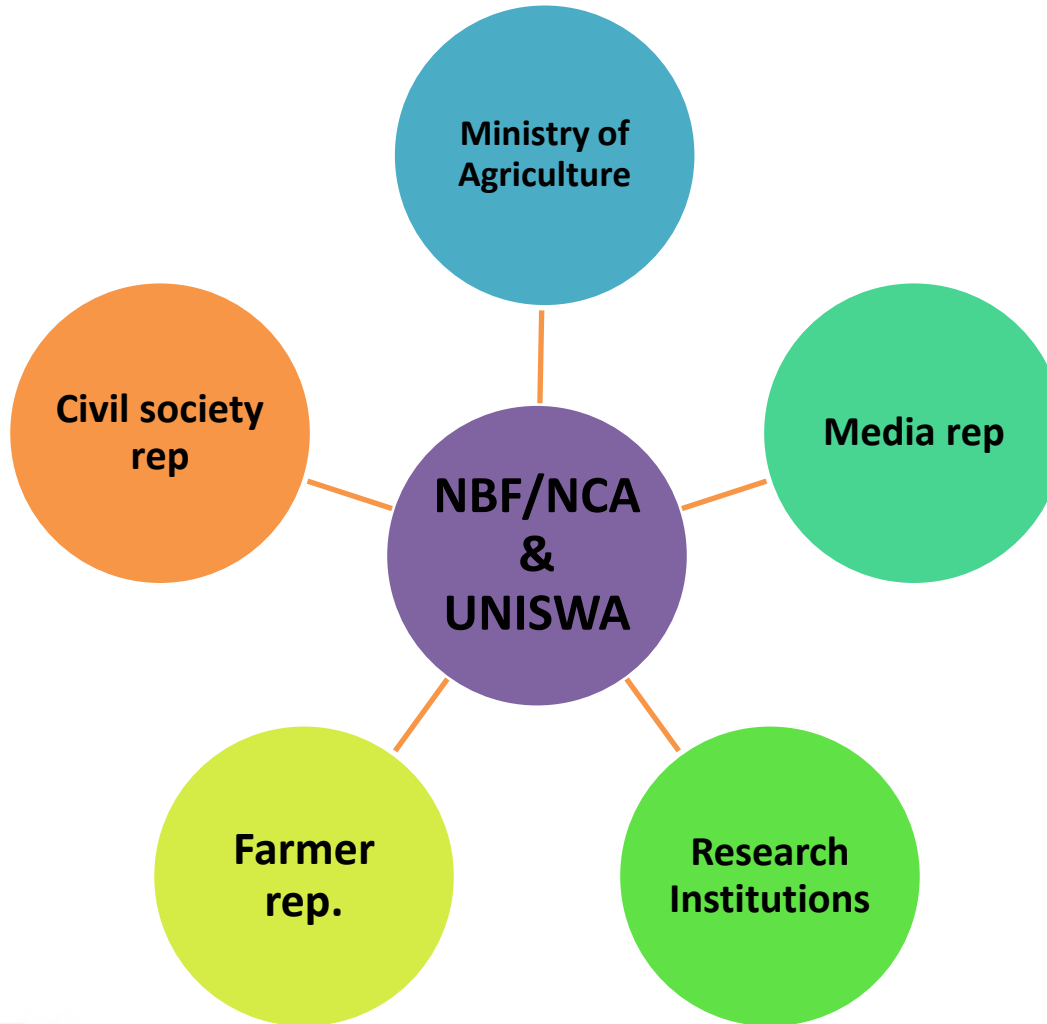
RAEIN-Africa experiences with Public Awareness and Public Participation cont.

- 2009-Present Using ISA approach
- 2009: Developed curriculum based on CTA and others and 150 partners in 8 countries trained on the ISA
- 2010: Further in-country training targeting potential platform actors and establishment of platforms

Swaziland Biosafety Public Awareness Innovation Platform



Swaziland Platform actors



Lessons and experiences

- Biotechnology is by nature a complex and multi-faceted issue and as such differences in opinion will always exist.
- For effective PAPP it is important to facilitate processes towards developing a shared understanding amongst key stakeholders before attempts to engage the general public are made.
- There cannot be a one-size fits all approach as each stakeholder group has different interests, abilities and information needs thus the message must be appropriately crafted and packaged.
- Initiatives that are small and focussed with a ripple out/multiplier effect may be more effective than larger but shorter-term interventions.

Thank You