

# Public Participation in Environmental Decision- Making Processes: Experiences and Lessons Learned from Asia



Presentation to:

Asia-Pacific Regional Training  
Workshop on Public Awareness,  
Education & Participation  
Concerning the Safe Transfer,  
Handling & Use of LMOS

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# Public Participation

## Why is Public Participation Important?

**Public Participation can influence decision-making in many ways. Diverse and meaningful public input helps decision-makers integrate environmental, social & economic concerns into decisions and produce decisions that are more fair, legitimate, and environmentally sound.**

# Public Participation

Public Participation Topics Include:

1. Law – The national legislative and judicial frameworks
2. Process – Approaches to public participation
3. Effectiveness – Does participation affect final decisions – Is it cost-effective?

# Scales of Public Participation

1. Formulation of Legislation
2. Policy Making
3. Regulatory Decisions
4. Project-level Decisions
5. Enforcement of Existing Frameworks

# Issues for decision-making

- Site/location selection
- Choices of technology
- Choices of Investment
- Management/operation form
- Monitoring & Evaluation

(Video show on public participation in waste management)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aj17wFZGAFU>

# Traditional Dev. Model

Development Oriented

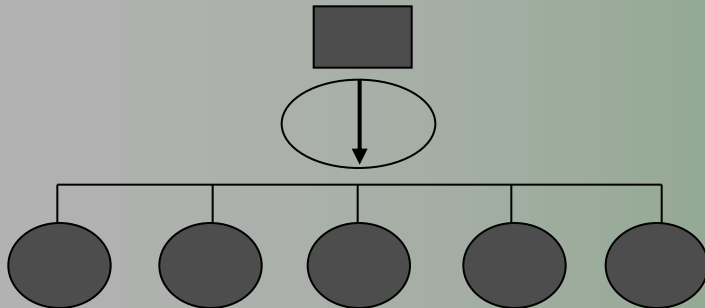
-Beneficiaries

-Target Groups

Community Involvement

Experts Know Best

Top - Down



# Participatory Dev. Model

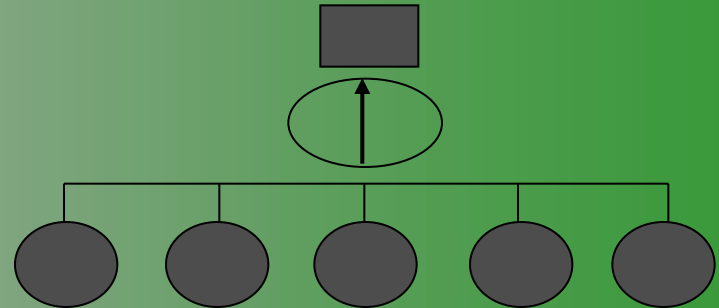
Socio-economic Needs

Stakeholders → Partners

Community Participation

Facilitators

Bottom - Up



# Why Public Participation?

1. To obtain & share information: From both project proponent & community

- Community Needs

2. To discuss technical Issues

- Agree on common information base

3. To Identify win-win outcomes

- Can use technology, e.g., sensitivity analysis

## Why Public Participation? (2)

4. To Agree on Project ‘Targets’ and ‘Priorities’

5. To Agree on ‘Project’ Content

- Shared responsibilities

- Acceptance of the Project

6. To Win Trust



# What is 'Public Participation' ?

Participation is a process through which stakeholders **influence outcomes of development initiatives** and the decisions and resources which affect them, improving the quality of the initiative.

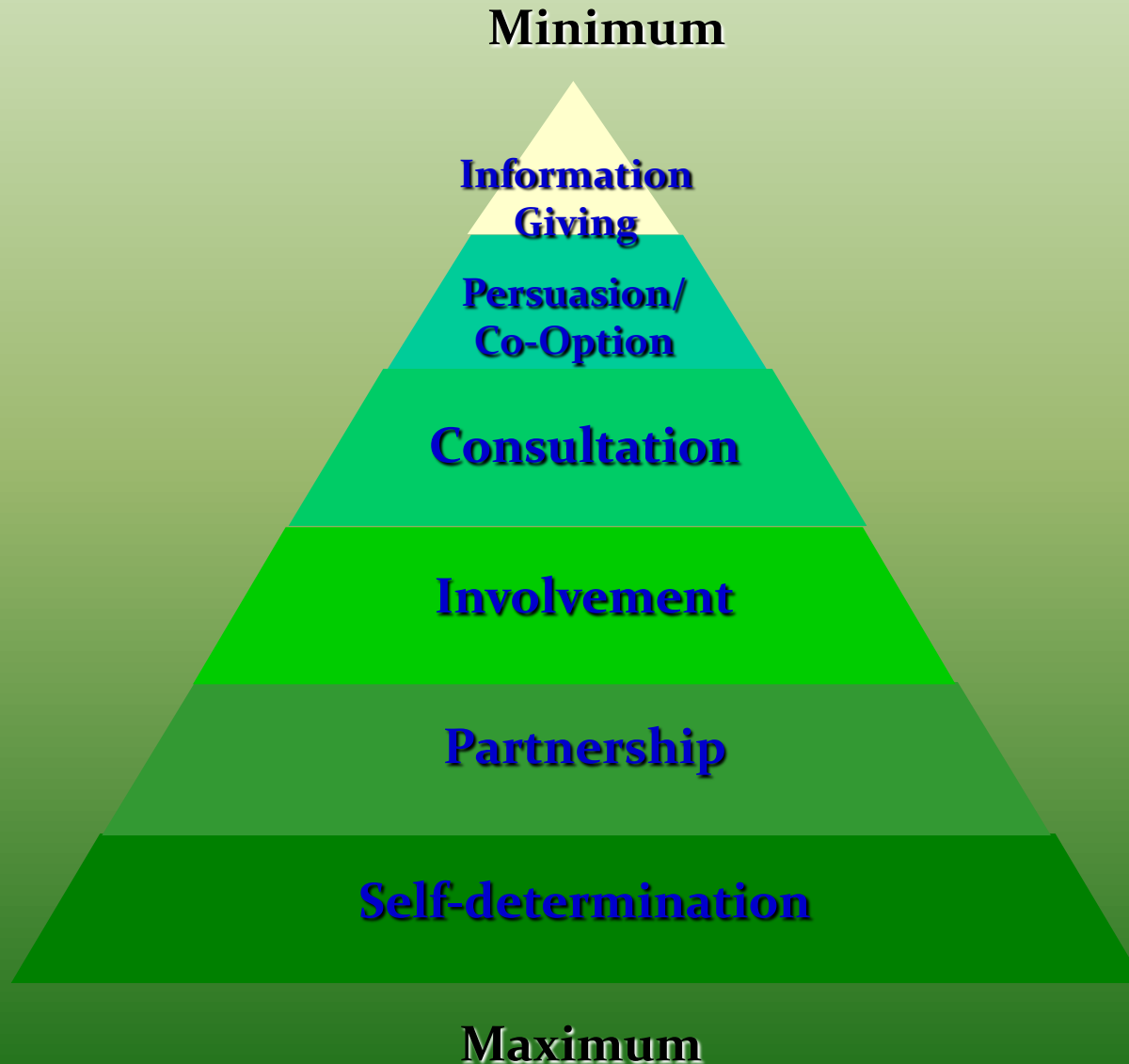
# Stakeholders

- Beneficiaries
- Affected People (directly + indirectly)
- Implementation Agencies (public sector)  
/Proponents (private sector)
- Public Agencies (Government) / Regulators
- NGOs, People's organizations
- Experts / Academics

# Intermediaries

- NGOs
- People's organizations
- Community-based organizations
- Economic & Professional Associations
- Civil society groups
- Religious leaders
- Community well-respected persons

# Public Participation Pyramid



# Techniques/Tools (1)

- Conduct Background Study – Evidence Based (Beneficiaries, Affected People, Proponent)
- Round table Discussion / Focus Groups
- Questionnaires
- Citizen Advisory Group
- Public Meetings

# Techniques/Tools (2)

- Workshops: Exploring Alternatives
  - Physical Models, Simulation Programs (e.g. SimCity), Sensitivity Analysis (Economic Analysis)
- Internet / Social Media Sites / Micro Blogs (Especially China)
- Formal involvement in drafting laws, legislation (Participatory Legal Drafting)
- AN EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS MIXES/MATCHES DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES

# Findings from 10 Asian countries (37 cases)

- 16 out of 37 cases saw public involvement occur at **a later stage of project** initiated by the authorities without legal requirement.
- Almost all cases, there were **consultations of the public organized by the authorities**.
- **Only one third** offered a procedure for clarifying the rules of participation and the dialogue between stakeholders and developers.

# Findings from 10 Asian countries (37 cases) (2)

- The technique most commonly used was **survey methods** (14 cases), appointed citizen committees/panels (12 cases), group work techniques with selected groups (9 cases).
- **Local level** was regarded as the most important involvement (10 cases), regional and district level (10 cases), national (in federal states) (9 cases) and provincial (in federal states) (8 cases).



# Findings from 10 Asian countries (37 cases) (3)

- Most institution involvement occurred when **detailed planning was already taking place** (18 cases), after the preliminary decisions on the implementation of the activity/project had already been made (13 cases).
- **Only 7 out of 37 cases**, the public were invited to get involved when the detailed plan were ready.

# Findings from 10 Asian countries (37 cases) (4)

- **Public opposition** to the project was found in virtually all countries.
- The opposition came from local people, fishermen whose livelihood would be impacted by the project, NGOs, alternative energy groups, students and academics.
- Form of opposition: demonstration or protest (9), expressing opposition via mass media (5) and filing petitions (3). Violence is rare in this region.

# Findings from 10 Asian countries (37 cases) (5)

- Authority's response to the oppositions?
  - The Project was halted after the opposition
  - The participation process was extended to all more dialogue.
  - Authorities ignored the opposition and the project continued
  - Only one case, the gov. modified the spatial plan, but the implementation of the decision was not done.
  - High incidence of public support for the project.

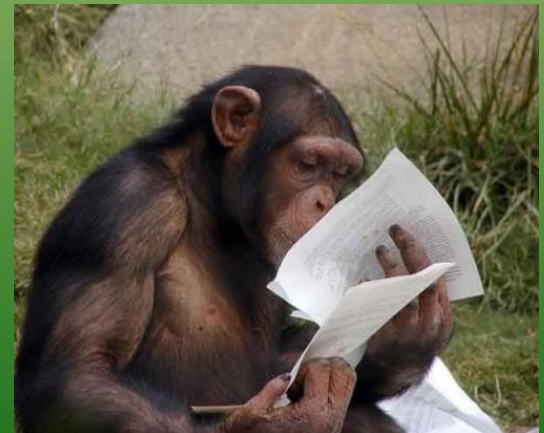
# Lessons from Asia – TEI (1)

## Benefits

- PP leads to better project preparation, easier proposal acceptance, better project management & innovative solutions
- When objections are heard early, solutions can be sought, & the problems settled by discussions, negotiations and information exchange
- Local people can most benefit from a project when they participate in design
- Peoples participation can prevent potential conflict, building trust & a sense of ownership
- Negotiated settlements through PP are faster & less costly than legal settlements

# Lessons from Asia – TEI (2)

- Local people, through local knowledge, can improve project design (exploring alternatives; customization) increasing local benefits, profitability & sustainability
- Peoples participation, through local knowledge, can improve project management, making (their) labor more productive & satisfying to the workers, e.g., forestry harvesting modes



# Lessons from Asia – TEI (3)

## How-To

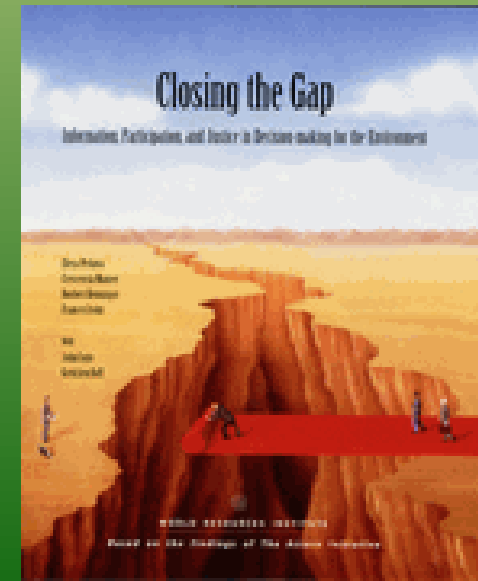
- The authorities should first drop their 'authoritative' attitude and adopt a cooperative approach instead.
- Survey can be also be used to get answers regarding worries, fear and the culture of local people.
- Efforts to educate and inform people , esp. to pose problems to them directly and as early as at the leavel of project idea formulation
- Baseline studies may be necessary.

# Lessons from Asia – TEI (4)

## NGOs as intermediaries for participation

- NGOs should play the role of intermediaries.
- NGOs have to take **an active role in mediating** and decreasing tension between local people and local policy makers.
- **Media** helps attract the attention of the gov. and inter. Org.

They can thus help to initiate public participation.



# Lessons from Asia – TEI (5)

## Institutional support

- Policy shift from top-down to a decentralized and democratic process helps facilitate the participation process and contribute to enhancing local governance of policies and plans.



# Conclusion (1)

- Participation is a 2-way process. It needs to be continuing and begins before the project starts.
- The mix of techniques and forms of participation can be adjusted at different stages of a project.
- Public participation processes can be expensive (TEI Study: \$700- \$133,000) but benefits usually outweigh costs

# Conclusion (2)

- Principles promoting people's participation:
  - All stakeholders share the benefits & costs
  - Targeted people must have meaningful involvement & sense of ownership in projects
  - Guaranteeing the integrity of the public participation is one key concern.
  - Agencies need to respond to people's opinion
  - People need to thoroughly understand the technical language of impact assessment and benchmarks and standards that need to be upheld in conducting process.

# Conclusion (3)

- Effective participation reduces chances of community resistance & post-project compensation demands
- Effective participation can speed implementation, benefiting all parties
- People' s participation is a 'means' not an 'end'

## For More Information



### Visit:

[www.accessinitiative.org](http://www.accessinitiative.org)

[www.pp10.org](http://www.pp10.org)

[www.tei.or.th](http://www.tei.or.th)

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