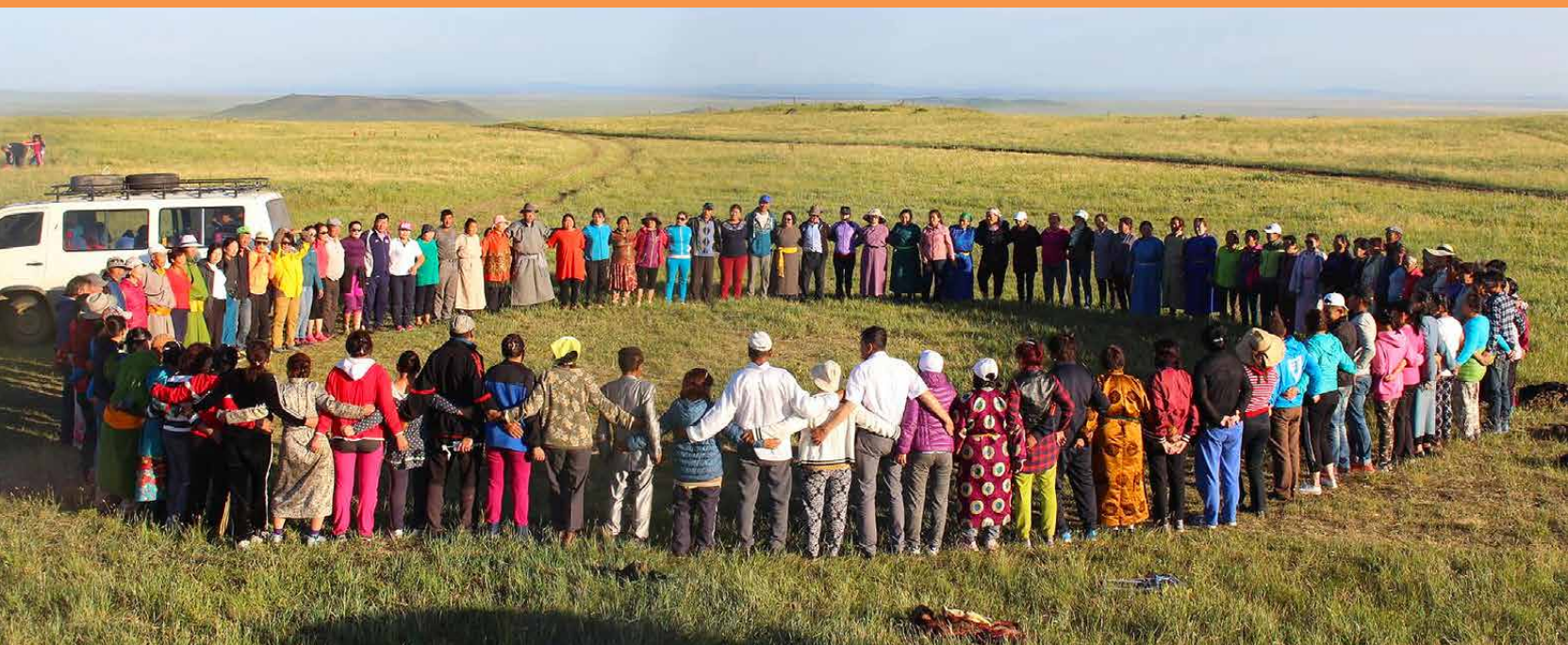


ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE THROUGH PARTICIPATION

A closer look at how Inclusive Engagement can achieve Environmental Outcomes



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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AsiaDHRRA	Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas
BFAR	Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
CFC	Community Fishery Committee
CHRD	Centre for Human Rights and Development
CI	Conservation International
COMFA	Coalition of Municipal Fisherfolk Association
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCT	Fisheries Coordination Team
GDS	Grameen Development Services
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KGMC	Kapunungan sa mga Gagmay'ng Mangingisda sa Concepcion

LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer/questioning
MFF	Mangroves for the Future
NCB	National Coordinating Body
NERSWN	North East Research & Social Work Networking
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSPL	Naireeta Services Private Limited
PAD	People Action Development
PGS	Participatory Guarantee System
PKMT	Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek
RECOFTC	The Center for People and Forests
RSC	Regional Steering Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPC	The Pacific Community
TROSA	Transboundary Rivers of South Asia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDMC	Village Development Management Committee
WMCIP	Western Mindanao Community Initiative Project
WWUG	Women's Water User Groups

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Introduction



Photo credit: Stockholm Environment Institute. Photo taken by: Van Kien Nguyen

“This is what participation looks like, should look like, needs to look like: Different voices being heard, different interests made visible, different opinions expressed. Without harassment, without lawsuits, without any climate of fear. [...] Participation is democracy in action. It is a goal in itself. But it is also a necessity for the kind of development of our societies that will keep us within the planetary boundaries.”

Staffan Herrström,
Swedish Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand, to Lao People’s Democratic Republic
and to Myanmar

Environment-related sustainable development goals such as ending hunger (Goal 2), protecting life below water (Goal 14), and life on land (Goal 15) have shown the least progress across Asia-Pacific countries. Negative trends are reported for responsible consumption and production (Goal 12), and at the target level, biodiversity protection, water security, and sustainable food production, are regressing. Looking forward, targets related to forest areas, and water are predicted to regress the most among all goals by 2030, compared against 2015 projections (ESCAP, 2019).

In tandem, regional reports, civil society and the news call attention to the increased vulnerability and marginality of specific groups of people in society – such as those exposed to climate change, migrant workers, or those affected by air pollution. The livelihoods of many of the people considered vulnerable or marginal are directly dependent on the continued flow of ecosystem services. These ecosystem services also support national policy priorities such as economic development, food security, health and well-being and poverty reduction.

An informed and motivated public is the best partner any government has when it comes to ensuring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development becomes a reality, and that no one is left behind. There are several positive examples of engagement of diverse stakeholders across the Asia-Pacific region. Among these examples, the public has been engaged in strengthening responses to air pollution by providing access to information in China. In Indonesia, community and private sector investments have been brought together to make renewable energy available to rural communities. In the Marshall Islands, indigenous forms of knowledge have been applied to community learning. Tourism operators and hydropower and water utility companies have been engaged in watershed protection in Viet Nam, and farmer field schools have enabled farmers to teach each other about the importance of integrated pest management in Pakistan.

Despite these positive examples, more understanding is needed regarding the engagement of marginal and vulnerable groups who lie at the frontiers of environmental change. While poverty, vulnerability and environmental degradation are highly correlated, the knowledge base around their engagement, beyond participatory field research, remains limited.

The objectives of this report are to identify the factors that lead to impactful engagement of vulnerable groups around environmental issues, to highlight some successful cases of engaging these groups from the region and to present recommendations for moving forward on participation in environmental decision-making in Asia and the Pacific, at both policy and practice levels.

The report is delivered under a joint initiative by ESCAP and the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok, under a project of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. It draws on discussions from the regional workshop “Empowering People for a Sustainable Future” held on 25-26 March 2019, in Bangkok¹, a review of literature and an analysis of 112 initiatives from the Asia-Pacific region. The report contributes to the knowledge and evidence base of the impact of increased participation and engagement on enhanced environmental outcomes.



Photo credit: Gökhan Süsler

¹ See <https://www.unescap.org/events/escap-embassy-sweden-second-regional-workshop-empowering-people-sustainable-future>

What is meant by stakeholder engagement and participation?



Photo credit: Shailendra Yashwant

Engagement refers to the diverse ways different stakeholders work together to identify problems and influence decisions that affect people's lives. Stakeholder engagement can be thought of a process intended to shape decisions and outcomes in relation to a problem or opportunity.

The decisions, problems and opportunities impacting the environmental sphere are, for the most part, originating in other sectors – for example those relating to intensive food production systems, energy investment, and migration. For this reason, there are many types of organisations that might consider themselves stakeholders, or which might have an interest in engaging the public in decision-making projects that impact environmental outcomes.

Externally-driven engagement initiatives are those led by individuals or institutional stakeholders (such as regional or national government, national or international non-governmental organizations or researchers) who are seeking to engage local stakeholders. In the context of environmental management, local stakeholders are individuals or groups (generally place-based) who either directly impact on the specific targets of resource management or conservation action (e.g. indigenous landholders, farmers, fishers, local non-governmental organizations, or local researchers), or who are impacted by policies and environmental changes.

Self-organized engagement efforts are led by groups that have some influence over natural resources and their management, such as indigenous leadership councils and citizen action groups. Self-organized indigenous peoples and local communities are important leaders in biodiversity conservation efforts, overseeing a significant proportion of the world's biodiversity and carbon stocks (Kothari, 2013, Walker et al., 2014). Other public and citizen "movements" which are not, in the traditional sense, "organized" also play an important role in shaping awareness, understanding and political commitment to action.

Both approaches provide social and economic value in terms of resources and stakeholder motivations, and a focus on only one approach can be problematic. The literature suggests that bottom-up, self-organized processes with significant power asymmetries are more likely to suppress the interests of vulnerable groups than top-down

processes in which power dynamics are perceived to be more effectively controlled, especially when introduced by formal institutions (Larson and Lach 2008; Zeitoun et al. 2011). At the same time, purely top-down processes are unlikely to benefit from stakeholder ownership and interest; a balance of power is needed.

This report recognizes stakeholder engagement as a means of enabling, and of exercising, the right to participate in public life – a universally-recognized human right to participate in decision-making. It focuses attention on the steps taken to create a “constructed” space for specific target groups to be able to exercise this right (see Box 1).

The Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership of ESCAP, Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme also proposes that “participation and voice” is one of four synergistic elements of policy action for empowering and including people to promote more equal societies (Figure 1). Participation and voice strengthen progress under each of the other policy areas, and in turn is also enhanced when each of the other three areas are boosted through strengthened governance and investment.

Figure 1 Participation and voice – one of four elements of policy action on empowerment, inclusion and equality



Source: ESCAP, ADB and UNDP (2019)

Box 1. Environmental rights and the right to participation

One of the most powerful catalysts to ensuring public participation in environmental decision-making is the recognition of the human-rights to live in a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Recognized by over 150 countries worldwide, this right includes substantive elements such as the right to clean air, clean water, sanitation, healthy and sustainably produced food, a non-toxic environment to work, live, and play, a healthy ecosystem and biodiversity, and safe climate. The recognition of this right empowers people to engage in environmental decision-making.

The achievement of the right to live in a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment depends on the effective protection exercise of other human rights, such as freedom of association, freedom of expression, the right of access to environmental information, and the right to access to justice and remedies when people's rights have been threatened or violated. Environmental human-rights defenders play a key role on environment protection and states are being called to protect them.

Summary of remarks by Mr. David R. Boyd, United Nation Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment at the regional workshop "Empowering People for a Sustainable Future" held on 25-26 March 2019

What outcomes do we seek when we engage?



Photo credit: Conservation International. Photo taken by: Tangkor Dong

The reasons to engage vary. We may wish to change the behavior and practices of stakeholders by providing information and knowledge (e.g. we may wish to motivate consumers to adopt solar energy solutions by providing information on green technologies). Or the intention may be to develop new solutions in which stakeholders take ownership and take ideas forward (e.g. where a community engages its members to develop scenarios for land use planning).

When stakeholders are effectively engaged, especially in ways in which they have higher levels of influence in the decision or project, the potential for transformative outcomes are higher. The International Association for Public Participation's "Public Participation Spectrum"² provides a useful tool for linking the objectives of engagement with the appropriate levels of influence that stakeholders are provided in a formal process with a defined engagement leader who is not from the stakeholder group (Figure 2).

² <https://www.iap2.org.au/About-Us/About-IAP2-Australasia-/Spectrum> (used with permission).

Figure 2 IAP2 Spectrum



IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

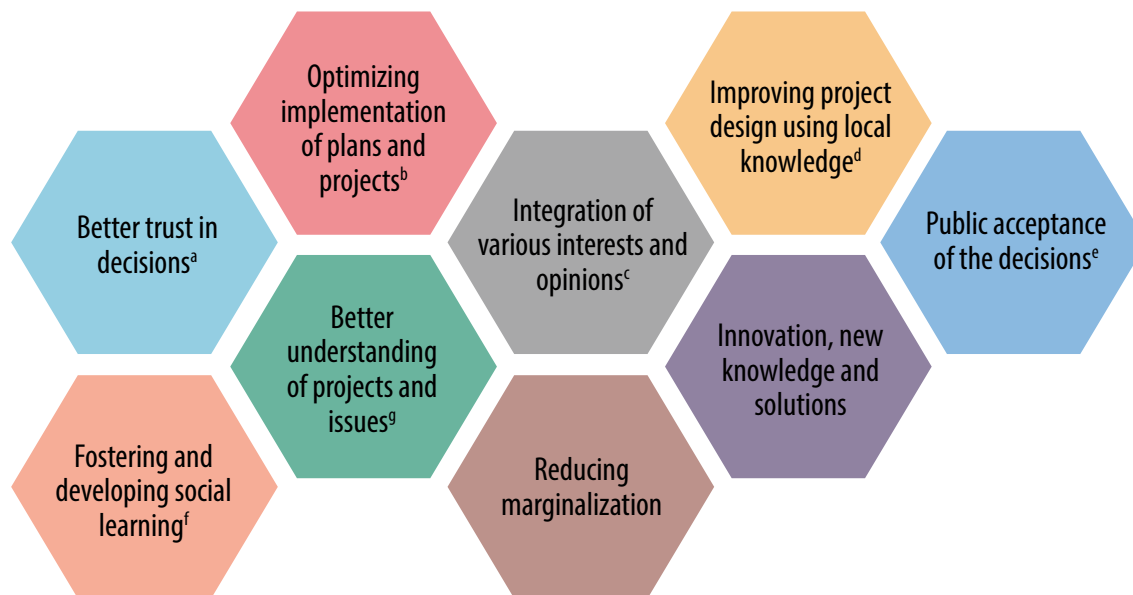
Co-productive (collaborative) approaches to engagement, where engagement lies at the right end of the IAP2 spectrum are found to be more likely to achieve beneficial outcomes.³ Recent studies in environmental governance show that cooperative approaches, for example coproduction of knowledge and evidence, have longer-lasting effects on stakeholder relationships, social learning, and implementation of environmental legislation (Armitage et al. 2015).

Pragmatic arguments for stakeholder engagement include 1) the possibility that increased diversity in decision-making bodies may lead to higher quality decisions better adapted to the local social-cultural and environmental situations, 2) stakeholder ownership may increase support and successful implementation, and 3) therefore, the potential for reduced implementation costs (Richards et al., 2004, National Audubon Society, 2011). These benefits may often be quantified in terms of tangible economic values.

Effective engagement can also create intangible social value that contributes to aims related to equity and citizen centric governance (see Figure 3), such as: 1) reducing marginalization of those underrepresented in decision-making, 2) increasing stakeholder trust in and ability to act on decisions, 3) accounting for diversity of values across stakeholders, 4) promoting social learning where stakeholders learn from each other and build new knowledge and capacities while developing new relationships, and 5) community building, trust building and reduced conflict (Reed, 2008, Fritsch and Newig, 2012, Young et al., 2013a, Birnbaum et al., 2015).

³ Bass, S, Reid, H., Satterthwaite, D., & Steele, P. (Eds.). (2005). *Reducing Poverty and Sustaining the Environment: The Politics of Local Engagement*. Routledge.

Figure 3 Benefits of stakeholder engagement in environmental projects



Source: Luyet, 2012

Notes:

a. Richards et al., 2004; OECD, 2001; Beirle, 2000, b. Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Konisky and Beierle, 2001, c. Griffin, 1999; Creighton, 1986, d. Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Habron, 2003; Beierle and Cayford, 2002
e. Reed, 2008; Junker et al., 2007, f. Blackstock et al., 2007; Junker et al., 2007; Pahl-Wostl, 2002; Beierle and Cayford, 2002, g. Duram and Brown, 1999

Good engagement creates the potential for innovation. The literature is rife with examples of local innovation in low (agricultural) productivity and environments which have led to environmental improvements (Bass et al, 2005). Examples include local innovations in irrigation technology, reforestation, seed selection and mechanism for resolving conflict over resource use. It is a misconception that marginal groups lack technical knowledge for resource management, that the marginal are too poor to invest in the environment, or that poverty necessary leads to environmental degradation (Zehra, 2005).

The literature also shows that engagement that brings local and scientific knowledge together may empower communities to monitor and manage environmental change. Literature suggests that a combination of local and scientific knowledge provides an enhanced knowledge base for local communities to better respond to environmental challenges (see, e.g. Stringer and Reed, 2007; Reed et al., 2007, 2008). Hybridizing these types of knowledge may make it possible for local communities and technical experts to collaborate and produce more relevant and effective environmental policy and practice (Forsyth, 1996; Nygren, 1999).

A well-designed engagement strategy is critical



Photo credit: Golden Agri-Resources. Photo taken by: Joni Jupesta

Evidence from the literature is that that bottom-up engagement processes do not always lead to better outcomes. For every engagement process that has led to tangible environmental and social benefits, there are examples of processes that failed to meet the goals of those processes, or the expectations of those who participated (see for examples, Lane and Corbett, 2005; Scott, 2011; Staddon et al., 2015).

Engagement has also been documented to produce unintended consequences such as deepening existing conflicts of interest or eroding trust in engagement processes (Emery et al. 2015). Engagement is a complex system, with multiple purposes, interactions, meanings, degrees of involvement, methods and solutions that are specific to each context and project (Luyet et al., 2012). The literature suggests that engagement strategies should be shaped by the interplay of “political society, state-society relations, and civil society, and the roles that cultural norms, global factors and the prevailing political settlement play on civic engagement” (Reed et al., 2018, p. 11; also see Fox, 2015).

Greater investment in engagement design and planning is needed to manage the complexity and risks that can arise (see Figure 4).

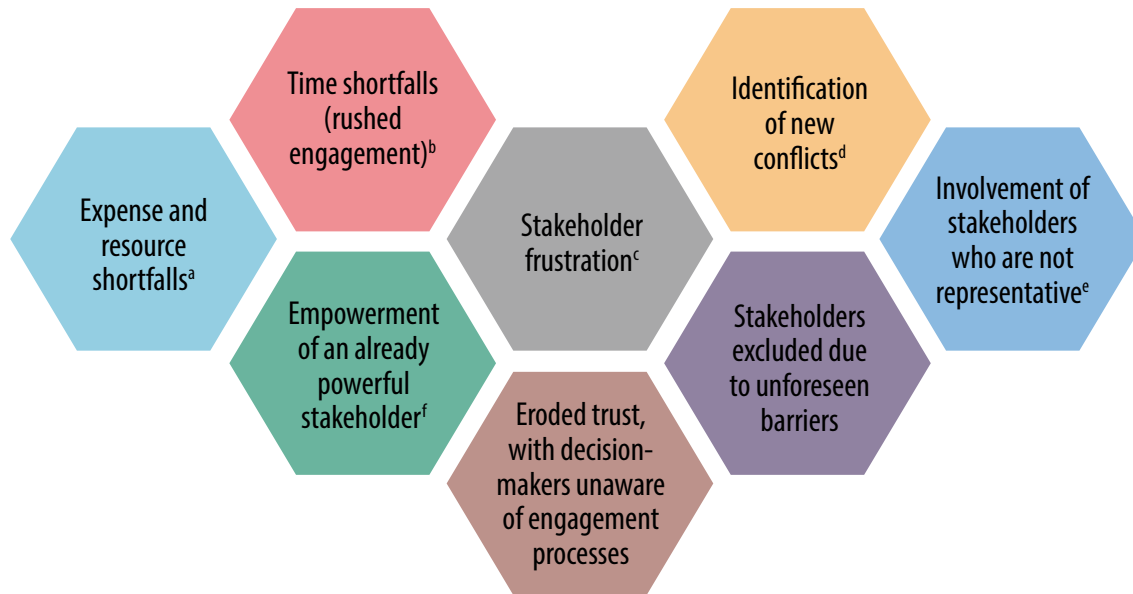
There is little work done to consolidate local experiences of stakeholder engagement in environmental management to understand how and why engagement sometimes works, and sometimes fails to achieve objectives or produces unintended consequences. However, the research to date points to the importance of effective, quality processes.

One comparative study of participatory projects across two different scenarios⁴ found that process variables (such as ensuring true stakeholder representation, professional facilitation, and dissemination of information to all participants) were more important than a project’s context for successful outcomes (de Vente et al., 2016).

⁴ One scenario included 11 projects with minor variation in local context but very different design while the other scenario included a range of social-cultural contexts across 13 similarly designed projects.

Similarly, another analysis shows that environmental projects can succeed despite challenging socio-economic and political circumstances and unfavorable features of the local and national socio-political and economic context, when there is has been emphasis on process design. Other research shows that carefully managed process design can produce well-aligned and successful social, economic and ecological outcomes (Brooks et al., 2013; Brooks, 2016).

Figure 4 Some risks of poorly designed or planned stakeholder engagement in environmental and other projects



Source: Adapted from Luyet, 2012 and author

Notes:
a. Mostert, 2003; Lawrence and Deangen, 2001; Vroom, 2000, b. Luyet, 2005; Smith Korfmacher, 2001; Vroom, 2000, c. Reed, 2008; HarmoniCOP, 2005; Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Germain et al., 2001
d. Kangas and Store, 2003; Germain et al., 2001; Cooke and Kothari, 2001, e. Reed, 2008; Junker et al., 2007; Smith Korfmacher, 2001, f. Buttoud and Yunusova, 2002

To ensure the durability and quality of decisions, projects and initiatives, engagement should be considered right from the outset; from concept development and planning, through implementation, to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes (see, e.g., Chess and Purcell, 1999; Estrella and Gaventa, 2000). To manage the complexity of engagement processes it is helpful to identify the key elements of process during design (see Box 2).⁵

Providing space for learning plays an important role in good engagement design. The adaptive management literature emphasizes the need for iterative learning in long-term participatory processes, where participants experimentally monitor the outcomes of their decisions and adapt them accordingly (Gunderson and Holling, 2002).

Box 2: Some key elements of an engagement process

- An engagement lead and/or facilitator (formal or informal)
- A purpose for engagement – a clearly defined outcome (which may be adapted over time)
- Specific stakeholders who may be individuals, groups, organizations or political entities with a specific stake in the outcome of a decision or group initiative
- Development of an engagement plan or strategy (ideally documented and designed with stakeholders that have a stake in the outcome)
- Specific sequence of interventions broadly around 1) Building engagement mandates and readiness to engage, 2) Activating stakeholders – getting stakeholders interested in, and ready to participate, 3) Structured or semi-structured activities in which stakeholders participate that lead towards the engagement purpose, 4) Analyzing outcomes, implementing the results and other follow up⁶
- Governance structure for the engagement process (formal or informal)

⁵ Adapted from ESCAP (2019). Training Reference Material. Effective stakeholder engagement for the 2030 Agenda.

⁶ Adapted from the IAP2 Australasia Engagement Methods training material.

Taking a closer look at engaging vulnerable and marginalized groups



Photo credit: Sevalanka Foundation & The Pacific Asia Resource Center Interpeoples' Cooperation.
Photo taken by: Ajith Tennakoon

"If poverty and environmental problems persist, it is, in large part because poor people and environmental concerns remain marginalized by – and from – sources of power. Poor people are unable to access resources, services and political processes; in effect, they are excluded from the institutions and benefits of wider society. Public environmental goods are appropriated to serve the interests of more powerful private individuals and companies, who keep environmental interest groups on the political margins." Bass et al., 2005, p. 1

Government officials acknowledge and understand that it is important to engage vulnerable or marginal stakeholders – but they observe that such groups do not have the capacity to participate, or they are not interested in participation.

While economic factors have influenced motivation, non-monetary benefits such as enhanced community confidence (Bhatt, 2003; Salafsky et al., 2001), personal well-being (Hobbs, 2012), consideration for future generations (Blackmore and Doole, 2013) or the provision of a public environmental good (Blackstock et al., 2012) have also been important motivators for stakeholders to participate, regardless of whether from marginalized groups or not.

History and context play an important role in stakeholder motivation and interest. In some instances, stakeholders have been unmotivated to participate because of previous negative experience with conservation or government agencies (Gonzalez and Jentoft, 2011).

Stakeholder engagement processes can fail to interest stakeholders when the engagement strategy and choice of engagement methods and tools do not recognize the barriers faced by stakeholders. It is not enough to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to participate, but they *actually* need to be able to participate. Barriers to engagement can be particular to vulnerable groups and are different for different stakeholder groups. The diversity of barriers that particularly affect vulnerable groups means that engagement methods should be appropriate from cultural and other perspectives, demonstrating cultural sensitivity and responsiveness.⁷ As an example, where the project

⁷ ESCAP/IAP2 Planning and assessment tool and indicators of quality engagement processes, forthcoming.

context is highly technical, information necessary for meaningful engagement may need to be “translated” and communicated in accessible formats.

Factors that make vulnerable groups “hard-to-reach” in engagement terms, are the same as those that contribute to marginalization, and can include literacy, language, religion, ethnicity, disabilities, geographic remoteness, socio-cultural norms (related to gender, age and other), economic/financial factors, education levels, physical or cognitive disabilities, language, or issues related to feelings of safety. Peer pressure is also considered an important barrier for stakeholder engagement, particularly if stakeholders are skeptical of an initiative at its onset (Cooke et al., 2012; Gurney et al., 2016). Opportunity cost of time has also been found to be a disincentive to participation.

Engaging with vulnerable groups will require particularly close attention to power dynamics. It has been noted that “what we perceive as ‘man’s power over nature’ turns out, invariably, to be the power of some people over others, with nature as its instrument” (C.S. Lewis, cited by Bass et al., 2005, p. 1). Emphasis should also be placed on the learning of stakeholders – and also learning *from* stakeholders.

Virtually all measures to reduce poverty and improve environmental management will conflict with the power base and interests of particular individuals, political interests, enterprises or institutions.⁸ Often, those whose interests are threatened will seek to prevent or subvert measures to level the playing field using legal, political or bureaucratic measures to do so.

Legislative interventions will often be needed to protect or open space for participation and engagement, and others, access to information can help mitigate power differences. Self-organization is also an important means of levelling the playing field, and a natural stakeholder response to perceived power differences and the need for individuals to exercise a stronger voice.

In addition, there are several tensions between local needs and external needs. Political systems (and engagement design) need to broker these in ways that do not mean that powerful external groups benefit while local poor groups become marginalized or impoverished (Bass and others, 2005).

⁸ Bass, S, Reid, H., Satterthwaite, D., & Steele, P. (Eds.). (2005). *Reducing Poverty and Sustaining the Environment: The Politics of Local Engagement*. Routledge.

Box 3: Recognizing the important role of culture in engagement

The Regional Rights Resource Team at the Pacific Community (SPC) faces two main questions “How do we work with other communities in the Pacific, CSOs, private sector?” and “How do we work with our scientists in fisheries and agriculture to make them put pacific peoples at the center of their worlds?”.

In response to these questions, they have adopted a people-centered approach that explores the relationship between people and their environment, looking from a rights-based approach, gender mainstreaming, education, and climate change perspective. They try to understand what human rights means in the context of the pacific communities.

This involves cultural mapping, “what has been the story telling the Pacific over the years?”. This work has already had multiplier effects throughout the region, underlining that development processes should be centered on the local culture – developing understanding of people’s perspectives, valuing the local history and myths, adapting processes to the local languages and symbols, and developing an engagement agenda according to local events and seasonal calendars.

This being said, the role that tradition and culture can play in reinforcing cultural norms that work to marginalize and exclude certain groups from participation in decision-making has also been discussed.

From a practice perspective the role of culture and tradition in society needs to be recognized, whether they promote full participation or not. Culturally-sensitive engagement methods and strategies can ensure a voice for the marginalized and vulnerable. In place where speaking out is not considered “normal”, anonymous means of engaging will be useful, for example.

Based on remarks at the regional workshop “Empowering People for a Sustainable Future” held on 25–26 March 2019, Bangkok and the “International Forum on Public Participation and Stakeholder Engagement for the Sustainable Development Goals” held on 29 April to 1 May 2019 (organized by IAP2, ESCAP and the School of Government and Public Policy, Indonesia)

A profile of the case studies

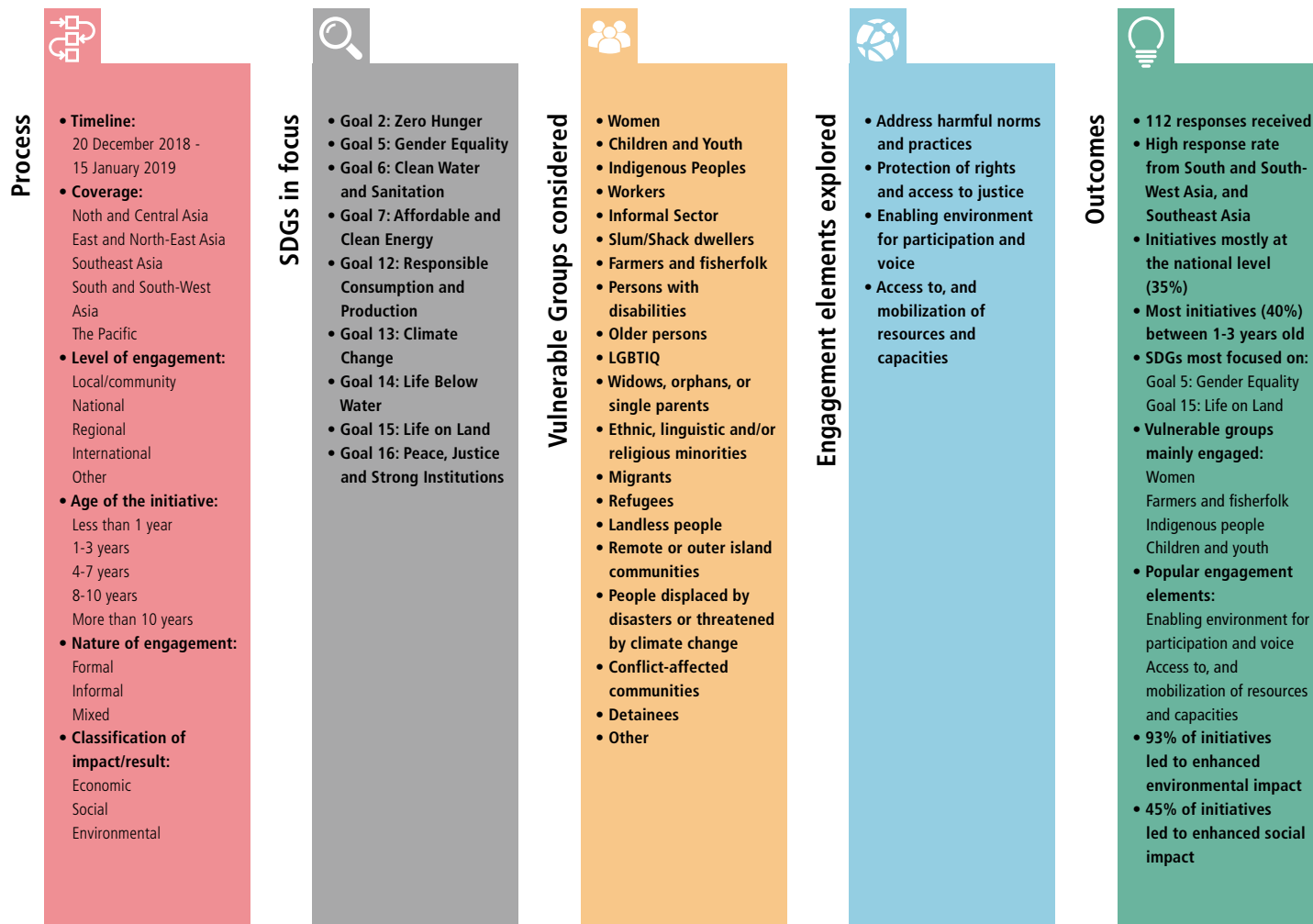


Photo credit: Conservation International. Photo taken by: Kriya Sith

In December 2018, a call for case studies was launched to gather a series of successful examples demonstrating the value of engagement in Asia and the Pacific to achieve the SDGs (Figure 5). One of the key objectives of the call was to capture data on who the vulnerable groups in the region are, which elements of empowerment, inclusion and equality are used to engage with them, what type of results have been achieved and what factors were considered conducive to achieve those results.⁹

⁹ The primary limitation of this approach is that it relies on self-reporting and does not verify the stated outcomes of engagement strategies by partner organizations.

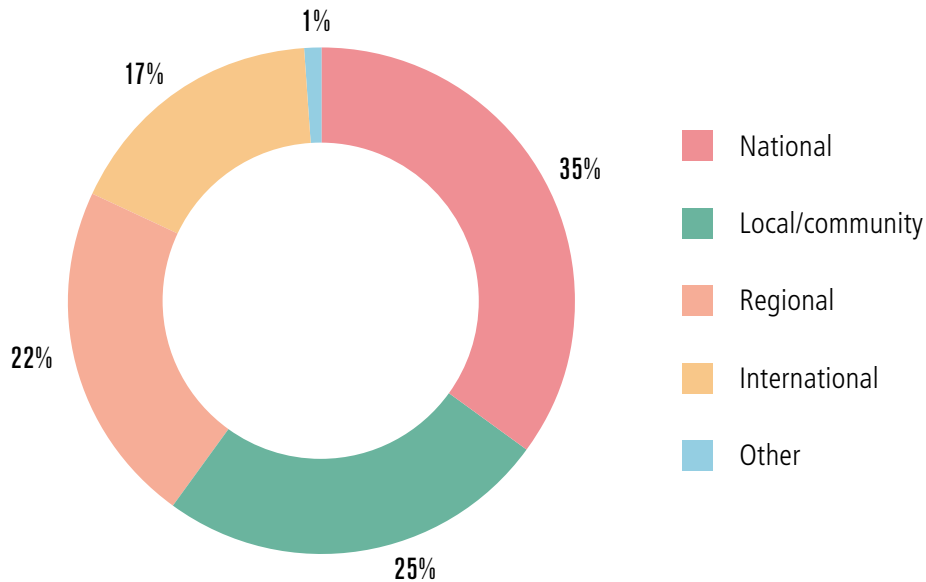
Figure 5 Call for case studies



A total of 112 case studies were received from the entire Asia-Pacific region with the highest representation from South and South East Asia.

Initiatives operate mostly at the national level (Figure 6) and almost 40% have been operational for 1-3 years. 94% of the initiatives have an engagement element and 92% indicated the engagement element is **important** for achieving its objectives. However, the nature of the engagement element is a **mix of formal and informal**.¹⁰

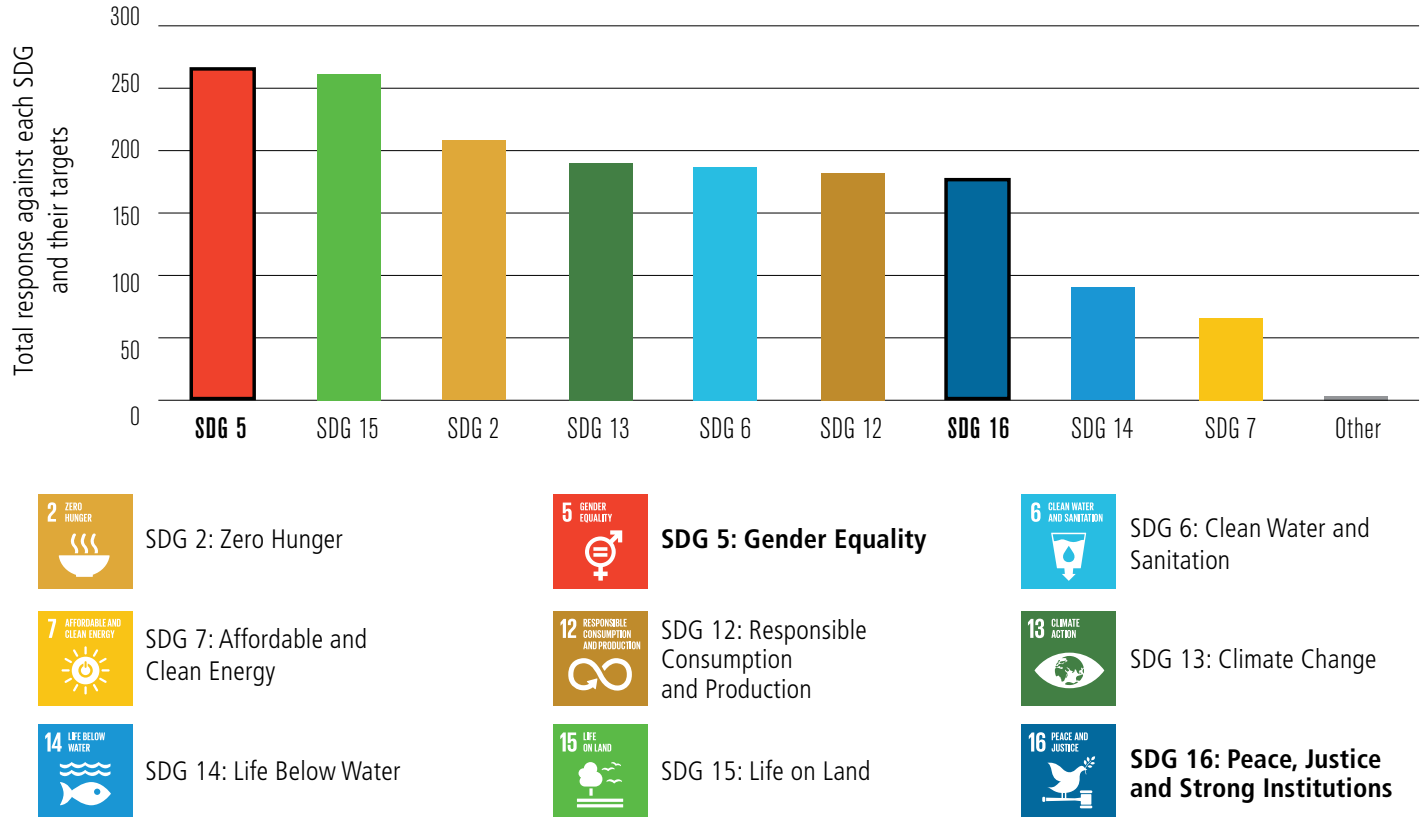
Figure 6 Governance level of engagement



¹⁰ Formal engagement elements refer to planned programmatic activities such as public hearings with decision makers. Informal engagement elements refer to ad-hoc consultations that were conducted beyond the initial scope of an initiative.

The initiatives respond to a wide range of SDGs (Figure 7).¹¹ Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 16 on peace and justice, were the two “non-environmental” goals which received the highest responses indicating that environmental practitioners within the surveyed context see that their activities’ most frequent interconnection with these two SDGs.

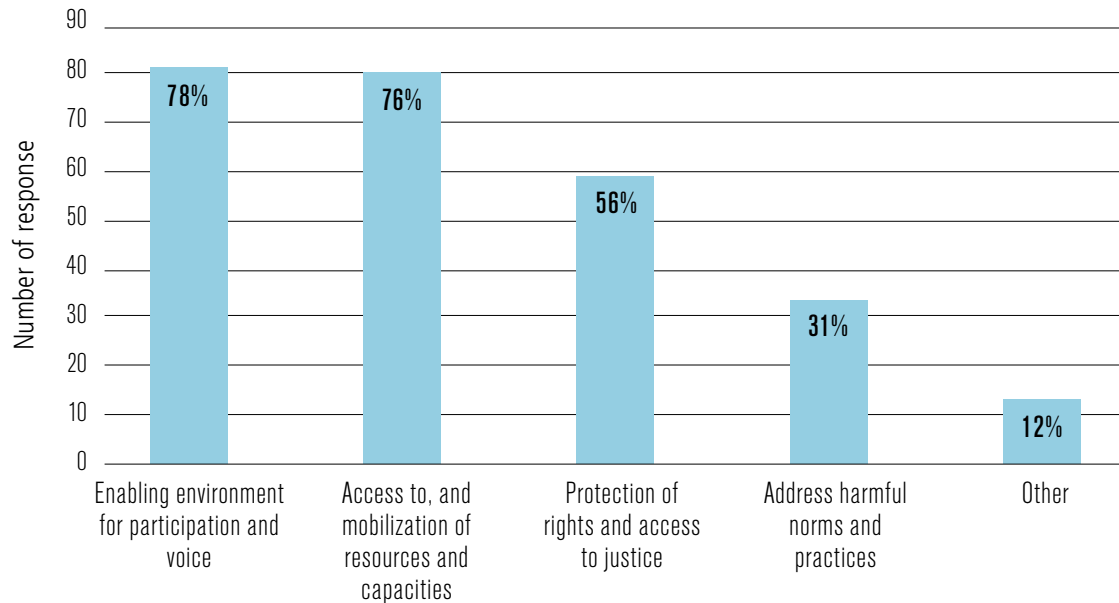
Figure 7 SDGs in focus



¹¹ From a limited set of Goals and targets, respondents chose the most relevant options based on their initiatives.

Engagement with a broad spectrum of vulnerable groups is present, but most common groups reported are women, farmers and fisherfolk, indigenous people, and children and youth. Similarly, different engagement elements have been deployed with priority given to those that contribute to the creation of **an enabling environment for participation** and enhance **access to resources** (Figure 8).

Figure 8 Elements of empowerment, inclusion and equality employed by respondents

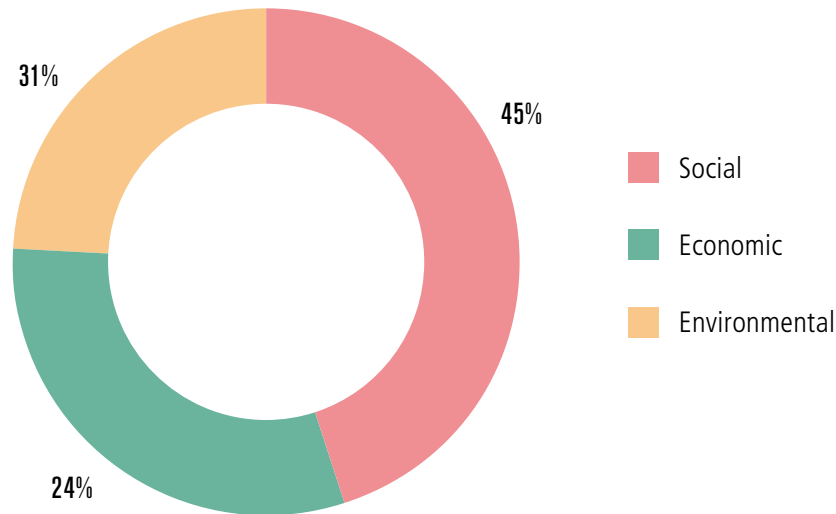


45% of initiatives resulted in self-declared **enhanced social impact** (Figure 9) and 93% of cases engaging marginalized groups were assessed as **leading to enhanced environmental impact**. Improved environmental outcomes is **both a main objective (57%) and a co-benefit of the initiative (42%)**.

Environmental change through participation

One example of enhanced social impact comes from Bangladesh where community engagement to identify nature-based solutions to increase climate adaptation and resilience has resulted in women's improved access to safe potable water. In India, increased engagement with government officials have enabled women to voice their demands more confidently and take up leadership roles in their communities around water-related decision making. In Thailand, adoption of an inclusive business model based on organic farming and fair trade has led to improved soil conditions and restored farming ecosystems while ensuring higher income for farmers and other stakeholders.

Figure 9 Impact of engaging marginalized groups



A closer look at the case studies

The call for case studies was designed as a survey. The responses were analyzed in two stages. First, based on a review of the case studies, a set of secondary questions were identified (Box 4) as a basis for preliminary analysis combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to take a closer look at the themes addressed and the content of the cases. Second, each analytical inference emerging from the case study analysis was then contextualized and corroborated with relevant insights from existing literature and from discussions at the regional workshop “Empowering People for a Sustainable Future,” Bangkok, 26-27 March 2019.

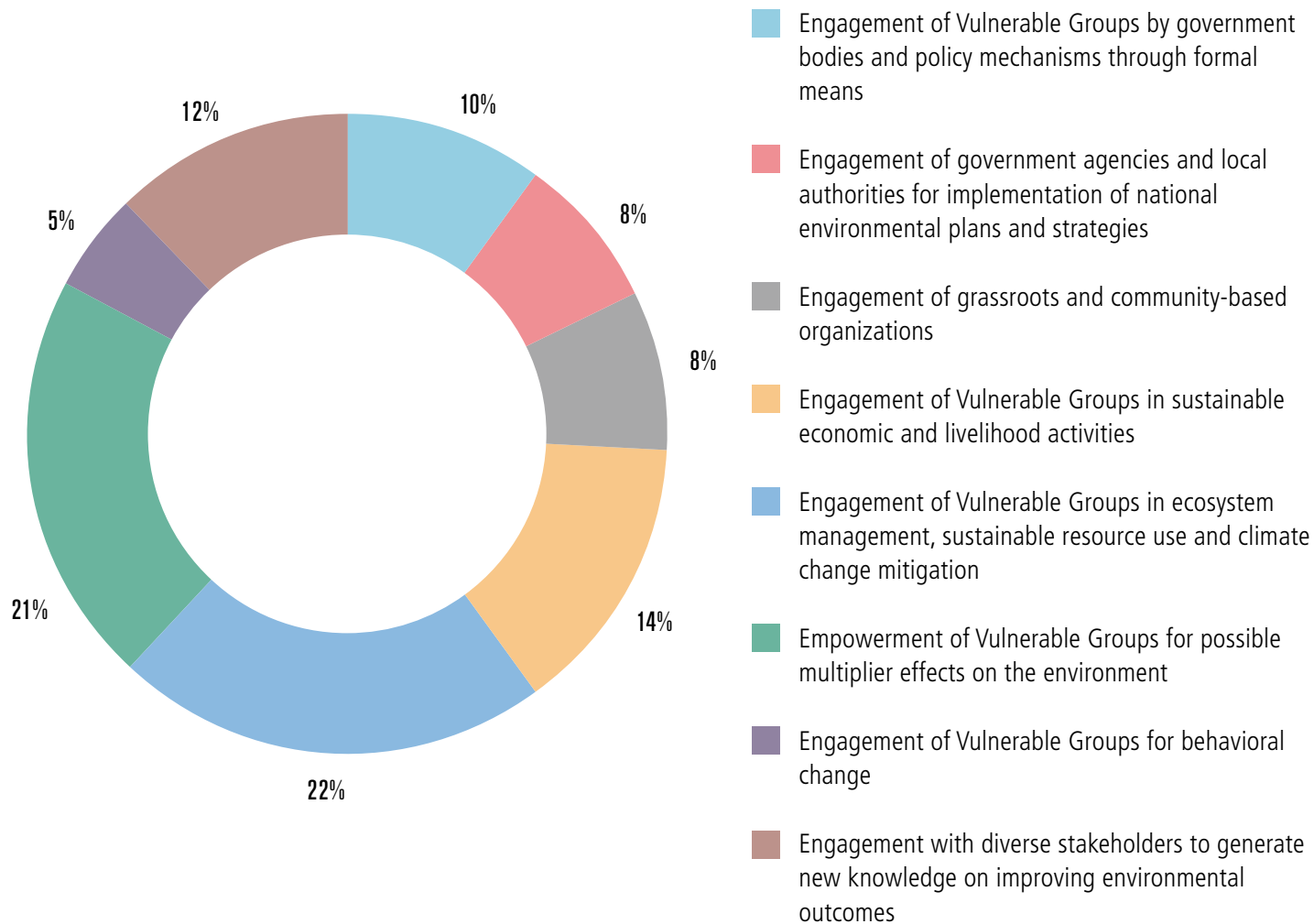
Box 4. Preliminary case study analysis

The following questions supported preliminary analysis of the cases submitted:

- What are some broad types of engagement elements utilized?
- Which type of engagement element was used most commonly for which type of empowerment and inclusion strategy?
- Which engagement elements were most used in engaging specific vulnerable groups?
- Which engagement elements may lead to enhanced environmental impacts?
- Which empowerment and inclusion strategy leads to enhanced environmental outcome?
- How can the interconnections of the social, economic and environmental be elaborated?
- Which type of engagement strategy may contribute the most to achieving environmental outcomes as a co-benefit?
- Which dimensions of empowerment and inclusion may contribute the most to achieving environmental outcomes a co-benefit?
- What were some incentives for behavioral changes that led to improved environmental outcomes?
- Perceptions

Case studies included in this compendium use specific engagement strategies and demonstrate broad environmental impact. The interventions are grouped together according to the broad nature of engagement strategies used (Figure 10).

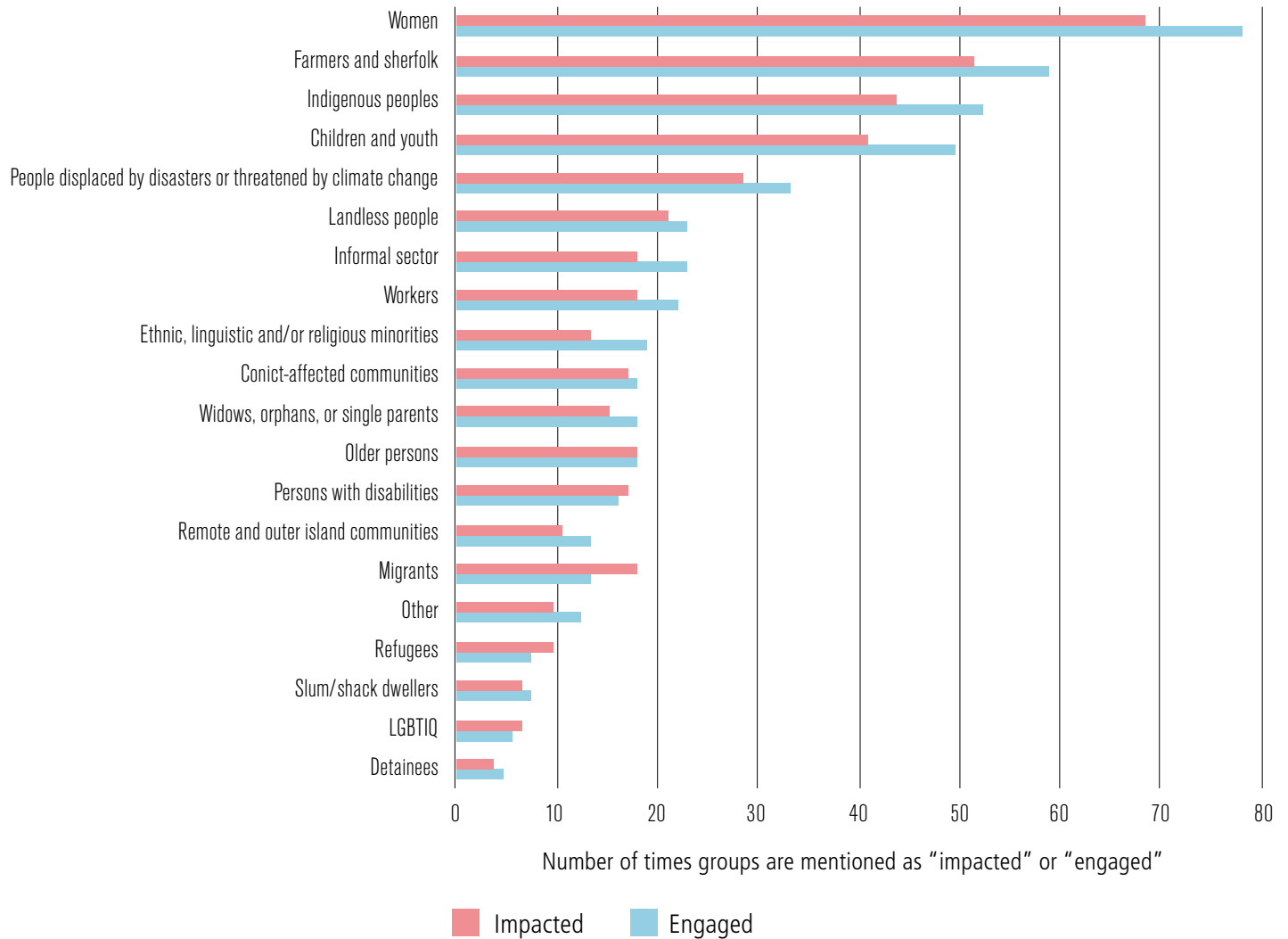
Figure 10 Broad nature of engagement strategies used



What do the examples of engagement tell us?

1. The case studies point towards the contextual nature of engagement. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution nor is engagement a magic bullet, it seems that the robust and sustained involvement of vulnerable groups within the design, implementation and monitoring of ecosystem management interventions, resource use and climate change mitigation strategies can enhance environmental outcomes.
2. The participation of vulnerable groups in the areas outlined above is more likely to be ascertained when they are linked with sustainable livelihoods. For a significant percentage of successful environmental interventions, social and economic gains were instrumental in securing environmental benefits.
3. The multiplier effects of empowerment and inclusion of vulnerable groups should not be undermined even if direct environmental impacts cannot be immediately ascertained. The case studies suggest that each of the four dimensions of empowerment and inclusion: rights and justice, resources and capabilities, participation and voice, and norms and institutions (see ESCAP et al., 2019 for an elaboration of each) have the potential for enhancing environmental outcomes even if they explicitly do not focus on the environment. In other words, the generalized empowerment of vulnerable groups seems to have a correlation with improvements in environmental outcomes.
4. Impacted and engaged groups tend to correspond but some of the least engaged are highly impacted (Figure 11). This means that even the minimal engagement of least engaged vulnerable groups can lead to enhanced outcomes. This opens up further avenues to consider the accumulative and multiplier effects of engagement.
5. The case studies highlight the interconnections of the social, the environmental and the economic. In other words, we cannot afford to consider the environment in isolation, especially for the most vulnerable. This is necessary for effectively combatting the all-consuming consequences of climate change which simultaneously affects all domains of life.

Figure 11 Those who are impacted are not always engaged



6. The case studies highlight a range of incentives that encourage the engagement of vulnerable groups for accelerated environmental impact. Most commonly reported incentives include:
 - i. Access to knowledge and capacity building
 - ii. Improved or added livelihood opportunities, economic empowerment (particularly for women)
 - iii. Opportunities to participate in the monitoring of local development projects
 - iv. Meaningful involvement in decision-making, policy formulation and resource governance
 - v. Provision of resources including technical and monetary support.

Some of the most innovative and impactful examples of engagement found among the case studies are highlighted on the following pages.

COALITION OF MUNICIPAL FISHERFOLKS ASSOCIATION

Zamboanga Sibugay, The Philippines

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing causes financial losses and decline in fish catches, harms biodiversity, facilitates transnational crime and threatens human security. The Coalition of Municipal Fisherfolk Associations (COMFAS) was formed by fishers' organizations to tackle illegalities and degradation of natural resources. COMFAS works closely with the Xavier Agriculture Extension Service Foundation Inc. and mobilizes support from the Philippine Tropical Forest Conservation Foundation, AsiaDHRAA and local governments for its coastal conservation mangrove reforestation activities.

In partnership with non-governmental organizations and other institutions, COMFAS has helped develop technical skills of fisherfolks, and expanded their knowledge around social enterprise and access to finance. Capacity building in organizational development, finance, trade, social protection, aquaculture and environmental conservation has also been delivered.

Over the years, with the support from municipal, provincial and national governmental agencies, COMFAS's action has reduced illegal fishing; established fish and marine sanctuaries covering over 9,000 hectares of mangrove forests; and rehabilitated more than 15,000 mangrove forests in Sibugaey Bay. Massive mangrove rehabilitation has helped regeneration of biodiversity in the bay. This has already provided positive benefits to fishers along the strip of municipal waters in Buug to Tungawan municipalities, which have reported an increase of approximately 30 per cent in the average fish catch per trip over 12 years.



Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (AsiaDHRAA)

<https://www.facebook.com/Coalition-of-Municipal-Fisherfolk-Associations-of-Zamboanga-Sibugay-2321764441442586/>

Jenny Rose G. De Guzman, AsiaDhrra: asiadhrra@asiadhrra.org



Photo credit: Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas

TRANSFORMATIVE WOMEN LEADERSHIP FOR INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY WATER MANAGEMENT

Transboundary rivers of Mahakali, Saralbhanga and Brahmaputra Basins, India

Unregulated infrastructure development, unsustainable land use practices, and conflicts over natural resources cause poverty and marginalization of riverine communities, with women being adversely affected by how water resources are managed, having to deal with flash floods, temporary displacement and other water related shocks, including water scarcity in summer months. The women in these villages have no voice, platforms, organization or unions to influence the decision making at the local or state level. The Transboundary Rivers of South Asia (TROSA) is a five-year (2016-2021) regional programme that, embracing a gender and human rights-based approach, facilitates communities' participation in water governance by helping them advocate for their rights and shape decision making..

The initiative promotes inclusive trans-boundary water governance, allowing women, youth, and marginalised groups to partake in decisions and policy making processes undertaken by Government and the private sector. Women have been educated and organized into groups such as Women's Water User Groups (WWUG); Village Development Management Committee (VDMC); Women led Citizen's forum, to identify water related issues, find solutions and participate in planning processes. Outreach and training activities have also been organised around International Women's Day, Water Day, River Day. Selected representatives were also given further exposure to knowledge exchange platforms and trainings, on how to improve access to information and government schemes and programs.

Increased participation, improved strategizing and clarity on how to engage with Government officials and vocalizing their demands have made women more confident to take leadership roles in their communities around water-related decision making. The initiative also helped influence political leaders to put an embargo on the boulder mining for flood protection and river ecology. In the Saralbhanga basin, improved dialogues led by women and CSOs resulted in revival of a traditional indigenous irrigation system, benefitting around 15,000 farmers, safeguarding ecosystem services for riverain communities.



**Oxfam, People Action Development (PAD), North East Research & Social Work Networking (NERSWN)
Grameen Development Services (GDS)**

<https://www.oxfamindia.org/programdetails/5093/transboundary-rivers-south-asia-trosa>

Animesh Prakash, Oxfam India: animesh@oxfamindia.org



Photo credit: Shailendra Yashwant

CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY AND BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Tonlé Sap, Cambodia

Most villagers around the Tonlé Sap lake rely on fishing activities to make a living and they depend heavily on the seasonally flooded forests for fresh water, food, fuelwood and other essential natural resources. Overfishing and extreme weather conditions eroding the forests are threatening the survival of these communities, who are at risk of further marginalization.

Since 2007, to stem overfishing, fisherfolks have received trainings on how to use fish catch monitoring methods and improve their fishing practices. Communities were also trained on how to process fish following standardized hygienic practices to increase the commercial value of their product. Capacity building and support helped to establish Fisheries Coordination Teams (FCT), which facilitate engagement of fisherfolk with the provincial government, by providing a platform for discussion. Whilst the FCT's primary function is to address fisheries issues, they can also discuss matters regarding to education, health and other community needs. While the management of the local community fisheries is the responsibility of the Community Fishery Committees, through the FCT mechanism committees lobby the government to provide support to their activities. Through an FCT, community issues are raised and collaboratively solved via technical assistance and funding from relevant stakeholders supporting community fisheries management. FCTs engage members to meet regularly and come up with an action plan, detailing roles and responsibilities for moving forward, to which members are held accountable.

Through collaborative engagement, the overall management of community fisheries has improved tremendously. Increased levels of environmental protection and restoration driven by the local communities have resulted in protection of 6,000 ha of fish sanctuary area; preservation of 25,000 ha of flooded forest; and re-establishment of fish stocks. Illegal fishing has decreased thanks to enhanced engagement of community committees in governance. Economic resilience of target communities and especially of women has also increased, thanks to collective action and cooperation.



<https://www.conservation.org/projects/Pages/tonle-sap-lake-conserving-cambodia-fish-factory-mekong.aspx>

Conservation International

Nicholas Souter, CI: nsouter@conservation.org



Photo credit: Conservation International. Photo taken by Tangkor Dong

BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION IN THE MINING SECTOR THROUGH PARTICIPATION

Ulaanbaatar City, Mongolia

The mining sector in Mongolia has expanded dramatically over the past 30 years, bringing along environmental and social consequences impacting the livelihoods of local communities and herders. While examining land rehabilitation cases, the Mongolian Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD) found that there were no guidelines to assess environmental damage. In 2005, CHRD started to use public interest strategic litigation in the context of mining focusing on: the process of mineral licenses; Environment Impact Assessment (EIA); land rehabilitation.

CHRD engaged local governments, lawyers, communities, and herders affected by mining, in conducting fact-finding missions, organizing trainings and publishing manuals. The awareness raising and capacity development activities shed light on international and national standards, as well as gaps in existing regulations. Overall, it empowered affected communities and provided them with a tool - public interest strategic litigation, to advocate for justice and accountability. The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) has supported these initiatives by connecting CHRD with a broad network of Asian environmental and human rights organizations, as well through capacity building and joint advocacy activities at the national and international levels.

CHRD advocated for the adoption of a regulation providing public participation in the conduct of EIA processes. Public interest litigation has also been instrumental in supporting advocacy activities, empowering local Governments and communities and increasing their knowledge of existing regulations. The regulation was adopted by the Ministry of Environment and Nature on 6 January 2014. From 2015, CHRD has supported the Dornod local government establishing protected areas, by conducting advocacy and lobby activities with government and parliament, including collecting signatures from 3,032 residents calling for the recognition of such areas. In May 2019, a parliamentary resolution declared 9 locations within 6 different local districts in Dornod protected areas, where natural resources, unique animals and plants will be preserved.



Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development Forum Asia (Forum-Asia)

<https://www.forum-asia.org/uploads/wp/2018/03/FORUM-ASIA-Working-Paper-Series-No.-3-Online.pdf>

<http://mongolia.panda.org/en/?uNewsID=346744#>

Lorenzo Urbinati, Forum-Asia: lorenzo@forum-asia.org



Photo credit: Centre for Human Rights and Development

THE SAMPRAN MODEL

Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

High reliance on agrichemicals poses several threats to farmers and food systems: health problems, caused by prolonged exposure to the chemicals and residuals in food; financial uncertainties, due to rising prices and due to the fact that farmers mostly depend on middlemen who decide on the price; and environmental degradation, from accumulation of chemicals in the soil and run offs into rivers.

The Sampran Model started in 2011 as an inclusive business model based on organic social movement and fair trade. The project is managed by the Bliss Foundation, with funding from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation and the Thailand Research Fund. It facilitates collaboration among stakeholders through a learning platforms, using mechanisms such as Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) and Social Movement Marketing. PGS ensures that members of the organic farming group agree on the conditions on how their farming activities are conducted. By fostering collective leadership, farmers are empowered to become entrepreneurs, middlemen are encouraged to embrace principles of inclusive business, and consumers are engaged to be more active. All stakeholders are invited to take part in the PGS by participating in the farmers' group meetings organized regularly at their farms.

Organic farming has promoted a more sustainable food system, while reducing health hazards for farmers and consumers. Shifting to organic farming has improved soil conditions and restored farming ecosystems, and enhanced community resilience. Fair trade practices ensure higher income for farmers and relevant stakeholders.



Sookjai Foundation

<https://sampranmodel.com/en/>

Arrut Navaraj, Sampran Riverside: arrut@sampranmodel.com



Photo credit: Benjarat Sinsanguan

MANGROVES FOR THE FUTURE (MFF) INITIATIVE

Shyamnagar sub-district, Satkhira district-near Sundarbans, Bangladesh

Mangroves, a key component of coastal ecosystems, are threatened by climate change, putting at risk the survival of communities, whose lives depend on ecosystem services. The Mangroves for the Future (MFF) initiative, co-chaired by IUCN and UNDP, focuses on ecosystem restoration and livelihood diversification, promoting sound coastal resource management policies and practices, strengthening resilience of coastal communities in 11 countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region. A Regional Steering Committee (RSC) provides strategic guidance and a National Coordinating Body (NCB), with representatives from government, CSO and private sector oversees implementation in each country.

At the national level, policymakers, CSO and private sector were engaged through the NCB, chaired by the Secretary of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to create a space for effective policy dialogues. A participatory resilience analysis process carried out at the field level promoted a common understanding of the site-specific context, allowing extensive dialogues among community members, youth, local leaders, NGOs, and bolstering local actions through MFF grant facilities. By identifying key issues and priority action areas, communities contributed to define the best nature-based solutions and strategies to increase climate adaptation and resilience.

Over 400 hectares of mangroves have been rehabilitated and the ecosystem has bounced back, with enhanced fish catch for villagers. In addition, the re-excavation of a canal transformed the landscape and life of the marginal indigenous community, improving their connectivity and increasing the cultivated area from 6 to 120 acres. By practicing climate-smart agriculture using the water stored in re-excavated canals and ponds, more than 1,200 marginal farmers could cultivate a second or alternative crop, like wheat, contributing to a 60 per cent rise in agriculture production. Addressing drinking water issues also resulted in better opportunities for women, reducing their time spent in fetching water and providing more than 750 families access to safe potable water.



International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

<https://www.mangrovesforthefuture.org/countries/members/bangladesh/>

Raquibul Amin, IUCN: raquibul.amin@iucn.org



Photo credit: Raquibul Amin

REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS THROUGH COMMUNITY FORESTS AND SUSTAINABLE BIOMASS ENERGY Kabul, Afghanistan

While innovation and technology can accelerate climate change mitigation and curb greenhouse gas emissions, levels of acceptance of new ways of doing things remain low among traditional societies. A user-centred design approach can be useful in raising acceptance of a new technology, as the needs of the user are considered throughout the design process. The initiative started in 2017 and is part of a Global Environmental Facility (GEF) funded project, jointly implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the two international non-governmental bodies, Welthungerhilfe and Madera. To augment acceptance of renewable energy technologies such as energy efficient cooking stoves, women, who oversee food preparation, were asked for feedback on the design.

The participatory element is the user-centred design of energy efficient technology that was part of the implementation. Instead of allocating the new devices in bulk, Welthungerhilfe distributed small batches, encouraging users, primarily women, to share their opinions on the new tool. Their feedback was integrated into the design of the following batch. Furthermore, women were offered trainings on how to best make use of the apparatus and they were also involved in the design and installation of other machineries, such as bread ovens, heaters and biogas digesters. Local tin smiths were trained too on how to produce the improved stoves to ensure its sustainability.

Ensuring an efficient use of biomass fuels, improved cooking stoves can help minimize the pressure on forest resources. During the first two years of the project implementation, the savings of different fuels for 10 communities in total have been calculated and monetarized, showing very positive results. It can thus be implied that this is also helping to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, even though the fuel savings data have not been converted into greenhouse gas equivalents. Through the intervention of another project partner, a Forest Management Association was set up, so that the savings in fuel wood could be backed-up by better forest management.



Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e. V.

<https://www.welthungerhilfe.org/our-work/countries/afghanistan/>

Julia Broska, Welthungerhilfe: julia.broska@welthungerhilfe.de



Photo credit: Stefanie Glinski

SUSTAINING LIVES AND LIVELIHOOD: FIGHTING CLIMATE CRISIS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Lahore, Pakistan

Floods highly impact rural communities, especially those living on river banks whose livelihood is highly dependent on agriculture and farming. In addition, modern farming practices relying on hybrid seeds urge farmers to purchase new seeds each season, increasing the costs of food production. In 2010, many farmers lost their lives and crops in a massive flood event and many then decided to abandon seeding during the monsoon season fearing further economic losses. The Climate Justice Programme started in 2014 to create awareness among communities about climate change and foster a political understanding of climate justice and its connection with food sovereignty.

Roots for Equity and Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek (PKMT) - an alliance of small and landless farmers, engaged local farmers, including women with many of them soon becoming PKMT members. Farmers were provided one acre of land each in which they could select their own crops and were taught how to preserve the seeds. Agroecological practices relying on indigenous knowledge and crops that could be sown during the monsoon months were identified and promoted.

This led to enhanced food security, as farmers could gradually increase their yield every year at a reduced cost, thanks to the absence of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Sustainable agriculture methods increased soil fertility and biodiversity and farmers were able to save seeds for the next season's planting, allowing them to be independent for future.



Roots for Equity

http://rootsforequity.org/?page_id=130

Wali Haider: walikh@yahoo.com



Photo credit: United Nations Development Programme

In conclusion



Photo credit: Conservation International. Photo taken by: Tangkor Dong

1. The review of the case studies, existing literature and dialogue between different kinds of stakeholders in the region point to increasing interest in effective, meaningful engagement of all stakeholders as a foundation for ensuring that non-one is left behind and for dealing with the challenges of sustainable development.
2. While there are many good examples of engaging different kinds of stakeholders in environmental issues across Asia and the Pacific, a closer look is needed at the requirements for effectively engaging vulnerable stakeholders – those most likely to be left behind.
3. Engaging with vulnerable and marginalized groups on environment-related issues and projects requires specific attention to power dynamics and imbalances, knowledge gaps, barriers that can make engagement difficult – factors such as geographic remoteness, socio-cultural norms (gender, age and other), economic/ financial factors, education levels, physical or cognitive disabilities, language, or issues related to feelings of safety. It also means that engagement methods should be appropriate from cultural and other perspectives, demonstrating cultural sensitivity and awareness and building capacity as needed.
4. More investment is needed in reaching the groups which are most vulnerable, marginalized and “left behind.” These cases are under-represented among the sample of cases of engagement considered
5. Effective stakeholder engagement is value and principle-based, and the right to participate is a recognized human right within the human rights framework. As such, principles of empowerment and equity and good governance provide important guidance to effective engagement practice, with the goal of ensuring that participation is not tokenistic. Participants voice and influence must be meaningful.¹²
6. Effective stakeholder engagement needs good design that includes key aspects of stakeholder analysis, understanding of context and history, effective methods and for vulnerable groups in particular, a huge investment in relationship building. While there is evidence that stakeholder participation can enhance the

¹² See also the IAP2 Core values of engagement at <https://www.iap2.org/page/corevalues>.

quality of environmental decisions by considering more comprehensive information inputs, the quality of decisions made through participation is strongly dependent on the nature of the process leading to them.

7. Successful environmental interventions go hand in hand, in the majority of cases with progress in the social and economic spheres. The generalized empowerment of vulnerable groups seems to have a correlation with improvements in environmental outcomes.
8. Dealing with the increasing complexity and urgency of the environmental issues requires stepping up engagement ambitions. The case examples (where there is a clearly-defined, external engagement lead) rarely refer to engagement via collaboration or partnership. Consultation seems to be the norm. Where synergizing actions in the environment, economic and social is critical for sustainable development, more work will be needed to bring diverse stakeholders together to align and reconcile the different (and often narrow) agendas of the different actors.¹³ As well as to engage in social dialogue around the more fundamental policy and other changes needed to advance the global aspiration toward sustainable development.
9. Stakeholder engagement should not be carried out as a one-time event, it should become a normal part of the way that institutions do business.

¹³ Bass, S, Reid, H., Satterthwaite, D., & Steele, P. (Eds.). (2005). *Reducing Poverty and Sustaining the Environment: The Politics of Local Engagement*. Routledge.

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Based on literature reviews and analysis of more than one hundred initiatives across Asia and the Pacific, *“Environmental change through participation: A closer look at how inclusive engagement can achieve environmental outcomes”* identifies the factors that lead to impactful participation of vulnerable groups around environmental issues. Using selected case studies, the report illustrates successful and innovative processes in the region and suggests conclusions for moving forward on participation in environmental decision-making.