

# GOLD STANDARD FOR THE GLOBAL GOALS STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT PROCEDURE, REQUIREMENTS & GUIDELINES

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## GOLD STANDARD FOUNDATION VISION & MISSION

**OUR VISION:** Climate security and sustainable development for all.

**OUR MISSION:** To catalyse more ambitious climate action to achieve the Global Goals through robust standards and verified impacts.

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## 1.0 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELIENS

Stakeholder Consultation provides a critical opportunity for a Project Developer to engage with stakeholders in a gender sensitive manner and to share and promote understanding about and a sense of ownership of the Project. This may include exchanging views on risks (and mitigation), impacts, benefits and opportunities. It provides a valuable entry point to improve the Project design and outcomes and help the Project Developer to identify and control external risks.

Stakeholder Consultation process shall comprise of a minimum two rounds of consultation. The first round of Stakeholder Consultation shall include a physical meeting. Where necessary, other means shall also be used to reach out to stakeholders who may not be physically present.

The second consultation is the Stakeholder Feedback Round. This covers all issues raised in the 1<sup>st</sup> round of consultation meeting and how due account was taken of all stakeholders' comments and suggestions. It may also include a physical meeting although this is not mandatory.

Both consultations shall consider different gender relationships and roles. Women and men typically fulfill different roles and responsibilities depending on the context and the country. Virtually no role is always exclusively performed by just women or men. Because women often are assigned lower societal status relative to men, women tend to have lower confidence, less influence and less involvement in the design, decisions and engagement with Projects. In developing a Project, "taking gender issues into account would require that local stakeholder consultation processes reach a wide range of community representatives in ways that ensure equal and effective participation of women and men in consultation, and that gender issues are fully factored into comprehensive social and environmental impact assessments."<sup>[1]</sup> Project Developers are referred to the Gold Standard [Gender equality requirements guidelines](#) and Gold Standard [Gender Policy](#).

## 2.0 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROCEDURE

There are five key steps to the Stakeholder Consultation process as follows:

1. Prepare
2. Hold a consultation meeting
3. Document
4. Incorporate feedback
5. Provide feedback

### STEP 1 – PREPARE

1. It is important to review the Gold Standard for the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#) and Project Certification Cycle and prepare a clear workplan. As part of this it is useful to prepare a formal "Stakeholder Consultation plan" that considers:

- What is the purpose of consultation?

- What is the process (in line with this document)?
- Who are your stakeholders (both directly and indirectly affected)?
- Are you including everyone? Who is missing?
- How will you engage them? What is the most appropriate format?

Be alert to social and other barriers that may prevent participation in community consultations.

(a) Examples of obstacles<sup>[2]</sup> to women's participation in public meetings and decision making can include:

- Ignorance and illiteracy including ignorance of rights.
- The mockery, criticism, and other attitudes that confront women who speak out.
- Distrust from development workers and other members of the community.
- Traditional roles and power divisions.
- The higher control by men over information and resources relative to women.
- Meetings are organised in places and at times not suitable for women.
- Meetings are conducted in a non-local language.
- Lack of access to or control over financial resources.
- Lack of solidarity among women or conflict within the community.
- Lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem.

These issues and the social contexts should be carefully considered while preparing for the Stakeholder Consultation.

(b) Consider the following questions that relate to gender equality in Stakeholder Consultation planning:

- What measures and actions need to be put in place to ensure equal gender participation in Stakeholder Consultations. How should inputs and insights from women and men be sought out, listened to, considered, addressed and documented?
- Is it necessary to make any specific arrangements to ensure that all constituencies are engaged in the consultation? (for example, speak to women and men separately; have focus groups for women and focus groups for men before gathering them together to ensure their meaningful

participation; adapt timing schedule to men's and women's working schedules)?

Examples of gender-sensitive consultation approaches are:

- FAO: [SEAGA](#) (Socio-economic and Gender Analysis): An approach based on an analysis of socio-economic patterns and participatory identification of women's and men's priorities. The objective of the SEAGA approach is to close the gaps between what people need and what development delivers.
- CARE Canada: [Stakeholder and institution mapping](#).
- USAID: [When to use a Gender stakeholder analysis](#). Integrating Gender into climate change projects ENERGIA: Elizabeth Cecelski; Soma Dutta (2011); Mainstreaming Gender in Energy Projects: A Practical Handbook

2. The scope of consultation is the Project design and the corresponding economic, social and environmental impacts (both positive contributions and potential risk). In order to present this and to seek stakeholders' opinions the Project Developer shall share the details of the Project concept, what potential economic, social and environmental impacts the Project may have and how communities can improve the Project's reach, relevance and impact. This is carried out via the preparation of a "Key Project Information" note. This note shall be delivered in the most appropriate language(s)/ format to the stakeholders and present a set of questions or options for stakeholders to consider.

### 3. Key Project Information

(a) The 'Key Project Information' is a short summary, which is understandable for a lay-person and should ideally be no more than four pages long. During the meeting the 'Key Project Information' shall be presented in a format and appropriate local language(s) that is readily understandable and tailored to the target stakeholder group to allow them to understand and engage with the Project.

(b) Points to consider in determining what form this information should take and how it gets presented include: level of technical detail; local language and dialects; cultural sensitivity; and the roles of women and men, including the impact of the project on gender relations, ethnic composition of communities, literacy levels, community leadership structures, and local methods of disseminating information within stakeholder groups.

(c) Key Project Information shall include:

- Details of the Project and its design
- Its proposed timetable (so far as is known)
- Social, economic and environmental benefits and impacts

#### 4. Stakeholder identification

(a) The critical step in the process of Stakeholder Consultation is stakeholder mapping to determine who the Project stakeholders are and their key groupings and sub-groupings. The table below outlines the non-exhaustive list of required categories of invitees. In all cases, at least the stakeholders mentioned in the table below shall be included and invited.

(b) You are obliged to notify the relevant government officials/department or the national focal point about the Project. This should happen at the same time as inviting stakeholders for the Stakeholder Consultation. Note that Project Developers are not required to disclose confidential commercial information.

(c) You are also obliged to notify all stakeholders who hold land tenure for any area directly affected by the implementation of the Project (i.e., within the Project boundary). Records must be kept of unanswered notifications.

(d) Where it is not appropriate to engage with indigenous peoples as affected stakeholders, the Project shall make provision to engage with their legitimate representatives (this may include community leaders, regional or national political groups and NGOs). In these circumstances the Project owner shall demonstrate that they have sufficient and appropriate experience and advice as required.

(e) Stakeholder mapping is one effective way to explore gender gaps. Gender-sensitive stakeholder mapping is considered emerging good practice and complements good sex-disaggregated census data. Findings from the stakeholder mapping should be documented.

##### Suggested Guiding Questions

- Who are the local stakeholders? Do they include women, men or both? Do they include different socio-economic groups? Who are the external stakeholders?
- Are there stakeholder groups from which women or men are excluded?
- Which ones? Why? What do they lose through non-participation?
- Are there stakeholder groups composed of women exclusively or men exclusively? If so, what is the focus of these groups? What do women/men gain from them?
- What project activities are men and women involved in and when and where do these activities take place?
- Who is most dependent on the resources at stake (women or men)? Is this a matter of livelihood or economic advantage?
- Who has access to and control of resources and services and decision making? How are decisions made?
- How do target groups interact with project owner?

- What are the constraints to access and participation?
- Who has the capacity to contribute to gender equality in the project?
- Who has the capacity to hinder efforts at gender equality in the project?

All information should be clearly documented and reviewed/analysed. If an issue is presented it should be addressed.

Category Code	Category
<b>A</b>	<p>i. Local people directly or indirectly affected by the project and their representatives*. For activities involving large construction (renewable energy for example) or land-use change then all stakeholders with land-tenure rights within or adjacent to the project must be contacted for e.g. dwellers of informal settlements/slum dwellers.</p> <p>ii. Other affected stakeholders not local to the project, for example, those in line of sight of large construction.</p> <p>iii. Larger businesses/businesses operating in the area that could be affected or who may also be supporting local initiatives.</p>
<b>B</b>	<p>i. Local policy makers and representatives of local authorities.</p> <p>ii. Any regional authorities such as parks authorities.</p>
<b>C</b>	National government officials or National Focal Point.
<b>D</b>	Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on topics relevant to your project.
<b>E</b>	A Gold Standard representative at <a href="mailto:help@goldstandard.org">help@goldstandard.org</a>
<b>F</b>	Relevant international Gold Standard NGO Supporters with a representation in your region and all Gold Standard NGO Supporters located in the host country of the project.

*\*A – Legitimate stakeholder representatives could be, but are not limited to: elected representatives of regional, local, traditional representatives, such as leaders (chairmen, directors) of local cooperatives, other community-based organisations, local businesses/business groups, local NGOs, and local women’s groups, politicians and local government officials, school teachers, and religious leaders.*

## 5. Invitation

(a) You are required to proactively invite stakeholders from different categories for comments. The Project Developer shall not deny a stakeholder access to the consultation AND shall select an invitation method most appropriate to the

context. Send invitations via email, mail or by hand. If stakeholders do not respond to the invitation for comments via email or letter or follow up by phone. In many cases, where phone numbers are unknown, visits to the area to hand deliver invitations will be required. This is particularly important where you have identified a risk to a particular group or authority as you will need to justify how they were consulted. Consider using, for example, notices in newspapers or on the radio or television advertisements, displays in information centres etc. Contact local women’s groups and/or NGOs. Post invitations to attend the consultation in areas frequented by the community, for example, health clinics, community centres, post offices, municipality offices, religious centres and schools and learning institutions. In the invitation, the objective of the consultation shall be mentioned together with the feedback process for those not able to attend the physical meeting, for example, providing feedback via email, post or by other means. Also archive your invitation text or newspaper advertisements whenever possible.

(b) Project Developers shall track all the invitations sent by completing the table in the Stakeholder Consultation documentation.

CATEGORY CODE	ORGANISATION (IF RELEVANT)	NAME OF INVITEE	MODE OF INVITATION	DATE OF INVITATION	CONFIRMATION

For those people who are unable to attend, provide an email address or physical office where stakeholders can submit their concerns and/or questions and get project information.

## STEP 2 – HOLD A CONSULTATION MEETING

It is important to organise the stakeholder consultation meeting(s) when you are still genuinely open to comments that may require changes in Project Design. Depending on the nature of your Project and the affected stakeholders you may need to arrange several meetings in different locations to ensure that all may participate. In some cases, a women’s only meeting may be required in order to register their concerns and insights.

Plan the physical meeting at a convenient venue, date and time to make it easy for Project stakeholders to attend. Schedule the meeting so that it does not conflict with their work arrangements or require them to travel far. Think especially about how to enable women and marginalised groups to attend. Provide evidence on how this was addressed. Consider organising focus groups or smaller meetings for specific groups if one big meeting is insufficient.

When inviting attendees, think of the best way to reach people and invite them in advance. Also consider that you will invite local officials and non-governmental organisation representatives, including Gold Standard NGO Supporters, and allow sufficient time for them to make arrangements. Bear in mind that power relations will play a part in who may or may not voice an

opinion or concern. For example, a senior government official and a female widowed farmer may have different perspectives and positions of power, which might affect their contributions.

It is vital to make sure that everyone will be able to understand what is said during the meeting; arrange for interpretation if more than one language is used. Keep the agenda of the meeting clear, focusing on the explanation of your Project and the potential SDG impacts. This may be accomplished by discussing the default impacts from the SDG Framework for your specific Project type and asking simplified questions for the Safeguarding Principles and Requirements. This can be done as a blind exercise as explained below.

Adapt or simplify the sustainable development assessment and Safeguarding Principles and Requirements to an appropriate level that meets the stakeholders' understanding – the key objective is to identify the issues that stakeholders have with a Project from their perspectives.

After notifying all stakeholders through a stakeholder consultation invitation, sent together with the 'Key Project Information', prepare the agenda, self-assessment of 'Sustainable Development', participant list and evaluation forms for your physical Stakeholder Consultation meeting.

Identify a respected local facilitator or facilitators to assist with engaging all people present and avoid allowing a single person or group of people to set an atmosphere that prevents others from being able to speak. Encourage women to voice their opinions and if this is not possible given local customs, consider conducting several separate meetings, for example, a separate consultation for women only.

Agenda of the meeting: Gold Standard recommends the following agenda points and approach for the physical meeting. You may deviate from the agenda but all points here should be covered. Please refer below to the discussion of the principles behind each agenda point.

(a) Opening of the meeting: Introduce yourself and introduce (groups of) people in the audience. Invite stakeholders to introduce themselves. Explain that the goal of the meeting is to share and gather feedback and suggestions for improving the Project from all the people gathered.

(b) Explanation of the Project: This is to check stakeholders' understanding of the 'Key Project Information' and explain to them in more detail the aim of the Project. This includes its exact location, information about the initiators/implementers and their motivations, who else is involved, and the Project phases and timelines. You may use your 'Key Project Information' as a basis for this. Make sure there is a focus on the practical implications the Project has for stakeholders.

Arrange time for people to ask any questions to further clarify or understand the Project idea. Check if stakeholders have had any experiences with similar Project types and check whether prejudices exist. Correct mis-perceptions if necessary. Consider asking the audience questions in order to check their understanding. Provide paper and pens for people to write down questions and / or concerns and encourage people to do so.



(c) Sustainable Development Exercise: Explain the Project and its sustainable development impacts. Make sure to explain the expected project impacts in a way that may be understood by the stakeholders. Ask which impacts they think are relevant to the Project. [Note this is a blind exercise, the stakeholders are not aware of the results of your self-assessment yet.] List the potential positive impacts of your Project type and invite the audience/stakeholders to provide their feedback in the format presented in the Stakeholder Consultation Report. You may also include other potential impacts that you think are relevant or ask the stakeholders if they think there are other impacts of the proposed Project. In addition, seek audience opinions on the Safeguarding Principles.

Discuss the risks of the Project. Inquire how these risks may be mitigated. Ask stakeholders about their concerns and how these concerns could be addressed. Ask if there are suggestions to improve the mitigation measure(s). Try to reach a consensus among the people regarding the final proposed measure(s), whether the risks may be neutralised or whether there are still risks to be managed in time.

Follow with the positive impacts. Invite stakeholders to consider if the Project is doing too little/enough/too much for every impact and invite their reasoning. Consider prompting people by asking them first to think in terms of their priorities and day to day realities and then of the priorities of future generations. Try to reach consensus on the assessment of the impacts during the discussion before continuing to the next agenda item. However, remember the exercise is challenging, so take care not to confuse and ask too much of your stakeholders. Simplify as much as possible and as necessary.

Gather as many comments as possible to improve and balance the Project’s impacts. Concerns and comments raised by participants should be carefully noted down with full reasoning. These will be presented as part of the ‘Sustainable Development assessment’ later in the Project stakeholder documentation.

(d) Discussion on ‘Input & Grievance Mechanism’: Project Developers are required to seek inputs from stakeholders on the best methods for continuous consultation, input and the submission and resolution of grievances. At the physical meeting, the complaint procedures and protocols should be explained and discussed to ensure that stakeholders agree that the selected methods are the most appropriate. The details shall be recorded in the following format.

	<b>Method Chosen (include all known details e.g. location of book, phone, number, identity of mediator)</b>	<b>Justification</b>
<b>Continuous Input and Grievance Expression Process Book</b>	Mandatory	
<b>Telephone access</b>		

<b>Internet/email access</b>		
<b>Nominated Independent Mediator (optional)</b>		
<b>Other</b>		

Particular attention shall be paid to feedback received from women or women's groups or other groups who are marginalised or fearful to come forward with a complaint.

(e) Discussion on monitoring sustainable development: Raise the subject of monitoring the sustainable development impacts. Do people have ideas on how this could be done in a cost-effective and participatory way? What are the most appropriate ways for stakeholders to monitor the project? Again, consider the abilities and capacity of your stakeholders and be reasonable in expectations.

(f) Closure of the meeting: Invite stakeholders to complete the evaluation form (see example in the table below). Explain what the follow-up will be and how people may access the minutes of the meeting. Give an indication of when and how you want to organise the Stakeholder Feedback Round. Close the meeting and collect Stakeholder Meeting Evaluation Forms as follows:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Written response:</b>
<b>Gender – Male/Female:</b>	
<b>What is your impression of the meetings:</b>	
<b>What do you like about the Project?:</b>	
<b>What do you not like about the Project?:</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	

### STEP 3 – DOCUMENT

Take minutes at the meeting and, if you may, take pictures or if appropriate record a video; these will be useful for the Project Stakeholder Consultation documentation. It is also important to let attendees know how their comments are recorded and how they may find out how they were taken on board (see Step 4).

Appoint a trusted individual (for example, a community nurse or school principal) in advance to record the minutes of the meeting. Include all the comments/ suggestions raised by the stakeholders in the consultation documentation immediately after the meeting as delays make it more difficult to recall exact comments and their context. Keep the meeting minutes short and

focus on comments received during the meeting. List all comments received as positive, neutral or negative.

Invite stakeholders to fill-in the participant list (see example content below), to register their name and contact details, job or position and sign to indicate they were present.

Date & Time		Location		
Name and Position of Participant (e.g. community roles etc)	Gender <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Other</li> <li>• Prefer not to state</li> </ul>	Contact Details	Organisation (if relevant)	Signature

## STEP 4 – INCORPORATE FEEDBACK

Assess the comments made by stakeholders. Any comments/suggestions that are serious, reasonable and proportional shall be taken into account and the appropriate changes made to Project Design accordingly. Your judgment is key to this stage and will ultimately determine the final Project Design. *For example, if women provided feedback on the design of a cookstove, it is important to consider and understand the reasons behind the feedback, assuming that women are the primary cooks.* You shall be able to explain why you did, or did not, consider any comments or suggestions. Compare your own sustainable development assessment and Safeguards with the outcomes of the exercise with your stakeholders.

Analyse the differences and consolidate your final assessment. If one or more aspects are still considered negative, revisit your impact assessment with an independent third party.

Feedback evaluation

The evaluation forms filled in by the stakeholders will allow you to gain an overall perspective of stakeholder opinion on your Project. Be sensitive to those stakeholders who are unable to read, write, see or hear and provide assistance to them. The following steps will guide you on how to follow up after the meeting.

(a) Analyse your evaluation forms and state your analysis and conclusion in your Stakeholder Consultation documentation. If you received any negative comments through the evaluation forms, you will need to revisit your sustainability assessment or escalate the discussion to the next level.

(b) Evaluate and list all the comments from the stakeholders. Include the list of the comments in your documentation. If some stakeholder concerns seem

unwarranted, make a case as to why this is so. While negative stakeholder comments are not necessarily a reason to stop a Project's progress, Gold Standard does expect that all stakeholder concerns are addressed and accounted for or justified, if not done. This should be discussed in the Stakeholder Consultation documentation. Make sure to document individual differences<sup>[3]</sup> as they relate to priorities, concerns and potential impacts (positive or negative). These should be categorised and evaluated separately.

(c) Discuss all comments received and assess how serious, reasonable and/or proportional they are. Decide which comments should be considered for the development of the Project and which ones may be unnecessary with an appropriate and convincing justification. Define any alterations that will be made to the Project Design. Applying a gender lens to the comments may highlight unintended risks or harms.

(d) Finalise your sustainable development assessment based on the consultation document.

(e) Finalise the Stakeholder Consultation documentation. The Stakeholder Consultation documentation shall also document any comments, criticisms or improvements that were made to the input and grievance expression methods discussed at the physical meeting.

Integrate outcome of Stakeholder Consultation into the Project Design

(a) After consideration of comments from stakeholders raised during the first consultation meeting, decide whether to change or amend the Project Design. Changes to the Project Design generally increase local ownership of and interest in the Project and enhance sustainable development.

(b) Stakeholder comments have to be considered in terms of how reasonable they are; therefore not all comments have to result in a change to the Project Design. You may report changes in the Project Design resulting from the Stakeholder Consultation meeting in the respective section of your Project documentation.

## **STEP 5 – FEEDBACK**

You are required to give feedback to the stakeholders on how their comments have been taken into account in the second round of consultation called a Stakeholder Feedback Round.

During the Stakeholder Feedback Round all stakeholder comments are captured alongside clarification of how they were responded to/incorporated. The Stakeholder Feedback Round remains open for a minimum of 2 months before Validation is finalised to allow time for stakeholders to review and comment.

The second consultation is the Stakeholder Feedback Round, which may also include a physical meeting. The Stakeholder Feedback Round covers all issues raised in the first Consultation and how due account was taken of all

stakeholders' comments. All stakeholders invited to participate in the first consultation shall be invited to the Stakeholder Feedback Round.

The Stakeholder Consultation documentation and any revised Project documentation shall be made available to the stakeholders, who should be encouraged to comment on them. You may publish all information on a website and on the Gold Standard Registry, but this might not be sufficient to obtain stakeholders' feedback. As well as publication on a website you should consider making several hard copies of the documentation available at, for example, the local post office or municipality office, library, community health centre, or nursery or primary school.

You may perform the Stakeholder Feedback Round in parallel to the Validation process but the contracted auditor must be able to take feedback received into account to complete the Validation. The Stakeholder Feedback Round is reported on in your Project documentation. You have to report how it was organised, what the outcomes were and how you followed up on the feedback.

## Endnotes

[1] Cotula and Blackmore (2014:51).

[2] <https://www.icimod.org/resource/1288>

[3] Are responses different or are there similarities across gender lines?