The Gold Standard

A/R Guidelines
Local Stakeholder Consultation (LSC)

Applicable for	A/R Requirements
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Local Stakeholder Consultation (LSC) Process

The steps in the LSC process are outlined below. More detail on each step is given in the following sections.

Step I: Prepare
Go through all the steps and consider how they fit into your entire project cycle. Make a rough plan for the month in which you would like to implement each step. Organise the LSC meeting when you have formulated your project idea and laid out the first design but are still genuinely open to comments that may require project changes. Realise that the project will be better accepted if you involve people that are affected by it. The main topic of consultation is your project design and the corresponding social and environmental impacts. In order to consult local people on this you first want them to understand what your project idea is, therefore you prepare a non-technical summary in the most appropriate language. Secondly you want to consult local people on their view of the local social and environmental impacts your project may have.

Step II: Hold consultation meeting
Plan the meeting at a convenient date and time so that people who are affected by your project can attend. Think of planning the meeting in such a way 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. You do not necessarily need to organise just one meeting, you can also organise smaller meetings for specific groups if you feel that these will be more successful. Think of the best way to reach people and invite them in advance. Also take into account that you will have to invite local officials and non-governmental organisation representatives, including *Gold Standard NGO Supporters*. You must also invite The *Gold Standard Regional Manager*[1] located nearest to the project as they can provide useful inputs. 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 social and environmental impacts. This can be accomplished by using the questions from the 'Do-No-Harm Assessment' and by going through the blind exercise. Note that you can adapt or simplify the questions to a level that meets the stakeholders understanding – the key objective is to identify the issues that stakeholders have with a project from their perspective.

Step III: Follow-up
Take minutes at the meeting and, if you can, take pictures or even better record a video; these will be useful for your LSC documentation. Assess the comments made by stakeholders. Any comments/suggestions that are serious, reasonable and proportional must be taken into account and the appropriate changes will need to be made to your project design to address these accordingly.

Your judgment is key to this stage and will ultimately determine the final project design. However, you must be able to explain why you did, or did not, consider any comments or suggestions. Compare your own assessment of the 'Sustainable Development (SD) Matrix' with the resulting matrix of the blind exercise with your stakeholders. Analyse the differences and consolidate your final matrix. If one or more indicators are still considered negative, you are requested to revisit your sustainability assessment with an independent party.

Step IV: Confirm
You have to give feedback to the stakeholders on how their comments have been taken into account. Therefore you will have to organise a *Stakeholder Feedback Round*.

[1] Gold Standard Regional Managers http://www.cdmgoldstandard.org/contact

Detailed process of the different steps

Step I: Prepare

Key Project Information
To allow stakeholders to better understand what the project is about you have to provide them with the 'Key Project Information' of your project. This is a short summary, which is understandable for lay people and is no more than four pages long. During the meeting the 'Key Project Information' has to be presented in an appropriate local language to allow stakeholders to understand the project.

Invitations
You are requested to pro-actively invite stakeholders from different categories for comments. Send invitations via email, mail or by hand if necessary, including available (non-commercially sensitive) project documentation such as the non-technical summary. You may also wish to send other project information if available – but consider that your stakeholders may neither understand nor be interested in the information in these documents, so consider what information is necessary and appropriate for each stakeholder group. If stakeholders do not respond to the invitation for comments via e-mail or letter, pick up the phone and give them a call. The table below outlines the required categories of invitees. You cannot deny a stakeholder access to the consultation. Note that you are not required to disclose confidential commercial information.

Category code	Category of stakeholder	Contact details
A	Local people impacted by the project or their representatives	
B	Local policy makers and representatives of local authorities	
C	*Designated National Authority (DNA)* or *National Focal Point*	https://cdm.unfccc.int/DNA/index.html http://maindb.unfccc.int/public/nfp.pl
D	Local NGOs working on topics relevant to the project	
E	The *Gold Standard Regional Manager* located closest to the project	http://www.cdmgoldstandard.org/contact
F	International Gold Standard NGO Supporters and Gold Standard NGO Supporters located in the host country of the project	See list of Gold Standard NGO Supporters: http://www.cdmgoldstandard.org/our-supporters/ngos International Gold Standard NGO Supporters are highlighted in yellow.

You can chose the method of invitation based upon what you think will work best. Think also of using, for example, notices in newspapers or on the radio or television advertisements. In the invitation, the objective of the consultation needs to be mentioned together with the feedback process for those not able to attend the physical meeting e.g. feedback via email, post or by other means.

Tracking invitations
You are requested to track all the invitations you send out by filling out the table in the LSC documentation. Also archive your invitation text or newspaper advertisements whenever possible.

DNA or National Focal Point
You are obliged to notify the *DNA* or the *National Focal Point* about your project. This should happen at the same time as inviting your stakeholders for the LSC.

Step II: Hold consultation meeting

After notifying all stakeholders through an LSC invitation, sent together with the non-technical summary, you will need to prepare the agenda, the draft 'SD Matrix', the participant list and the evaluation forms for your LSC meeting.

Make sure that your consultation meets the following criteria:

- All stakeholders understand – adapt to the abilities of the stakeholders present
- All stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved
- The meeting is well documented
- The meeting is in line with host country requirements

Appoint someone in advance to take minutes. Consider appointing someone to take photographs as well, or even better record a digital video. (See example of a photograph below).

Local Stakeholder Consultation of Afforestation Project TOGO

As the facilitator try to engage all people present, avoid allowing a single person or group of people to set the atmosphere, preventing others from being able to speak up. Especially encourage women to voice their opinions and if this is not possible given local customs, consider conducting several separate meetings e.g. a separate consultation for women only.

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

1. Opening of the meeting
Introduce yourself and introduce (groups of) people in the audience. Explain the goal of the meeting and encourage feedback and suggestions for improving the project from all of the people gathered. Ask people to fill-in the participant list (see example in table below), on which they register their name and contact details, job or position and sign to indicate they were present.

LSC Meeting Participant List				
Date and time:				
Location:				
Name participant, job/position in the community	Male/Female	Signature	Organisation (if relevant)	Contact details

2. Explanation of the project
This is to check stakeholder understanding of the non-technical summary and explain in more detail what the aim of the project is. This includes its exact location, information about the initiators/implementers and their motivation, who else is involved and the project phases and timelines. You can use your non-technical summary as a basis for this. Make sure there is a focus on the practical implications the project has for stakeholders.

3. Clarify that stakeholders understand the project explanation
Arrange some 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 them if necessary. If no questions come, consider asking the audience questions in order to check understanding.

4. Blind 'SD Matrix' exercise

Explain the three categories of sustainable development: environment, social and technological & economic and their possible indicators. Make sure you explain categories, indicators and your expectations of the exercise in a way that can be understood by the stakeholders who are present. This may require simplification, using examples taken from a local context and the use of non-technical language. Ask which indicators they think are relevant to the project. Note this is a blind exercise, the stakeholders are not aware of the results of your sustainability assessment yet. List the indicators mentioned and ask the audience to score them 'positive' 'neutral' or 'negative'.

Discuss the negatively scored indicators first. Enquire into how these impacts can be mitigated. Ask people about their concerns and how these concerns could be adequately 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) and whether the indicators score neutral or whether they still remain negative.

Follow with the positive impacts: ask people whether they think the project is doing too little/enough/too much for every impact and ask them to give their reasoning. Consider prompting people by asking them first to think in terms of their priorities and day-to-day reality and then of the priorities of future generations. Try to reach consensus on the scoring of the 'SD Matrix' 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 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 'SD Matrix' later in your LSC documentation.

A 'blind' exercise means that you have completed the SD matrix yourself and have an opinion, but you do not share this with the stakeholders until they have done the exercise as well. This is done to encourage open and unbiased thinking. Two examples of a blind exercise are for instance:

- Analogue to the famous story by Ryszard Kapuscinski[2], if someone was to confront local people with the hypothetical situation that a hole was going to appear in the road between their village and the next town. If that person then asks: "What will happen?" and "Is that positive or negative?" people will come up with all kinds of things that will, or are likely to, happen. Think of: broken down cars, traffic jams, new employment in mechanical businesses, crude oil leaking in the environment, the possibility of opening a tea stall or other businesses near the hole, the need for education, the start of a school, etc. If you structure the brainstorm by asking people what will happen and continue asking whether this is positive or negative, you should be able to build a comprehensive summary on the impacts of your project.
- If you ask people whether they think a zebra is a black horse with white stripes or a white horse with black stripes the answer will depend very much on their perspective. In principle there is no right or wrong answer. If you ask them "why?" and to explain their opinion you will understand their thinking. It will also facilitate debate in the group.

5. Discussion on 'Input & Grievance Mechanism'

You are required to seek input from stakeholders on the best methods for continuous input and the expression of grievances. At the LSC meeting, the methods should be explained and discussed to ensure that stakeholders agree that the selected methods are the most appropriate. See chapter ' Input & Grievance Mechanism' for details on how to implement the grievance mechanism in your project.

[2] 1998 Ryszard Kapuscinski, title: Heban

6. Discussion on monitoring sustainable development

Raise the subject of monitoring the sustainable development indicators. Do people have ideas on how this could be done in a cost effective way? Are there ways in which stakeholders can participate in the monitoring? Again, consider the abilities and capacity of your stakeholders and do not ask too much from them.

7. Closure of the meeting

Ask people to fill out the evaluation form (see example in the table below). Explain what the follow-up will be and how people can obtain the minutes of the meeting. Give an indication of when and how you want to organize the *Stakeholder Feedback Round*. Close the meeting.

LSC Meeting – Evaluation Form	
Name:	
What is your impression of the meeting?	
What do you like about the project?	
What do you not like about the project?	
Signature:	

Step III: Follow-up

The evaluation forms filled in by the stakeholders will allow you to gain an overall perspective of stakeholder opinion on your project. The following steps will guide you on how to follow up after the meeting.

1. Analyse your evaluation forms and state your analysis and conclusion in your LSC documentation. If you received many negative comments through the evaluation forms, you will need to revisit your sustainability assessment.
2. 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, The Gold Standard does expect that all stakeholder concerns are addressed, and accounted for, in the LSC documentation.
3. Record minutes of the meeting. Include these in the LSC documentation as soon after the meeting as possible; 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.
4. Discuss all comments received and assess how serious, reasonable and or proportional they are. Decide which ones have to be taken into account for the development of the project and which ones can be discarded with an appropriate and convincing justification. Define any alterations that will be made to the project.
5. Finalise your 'SD Matrix' based on your LSC.
6. Finalise your *LSC documentation*.
7. The *LSC documentation* must also document any comments, criticisms or improvements that were made to the input and grievance expression methods discussed at the LSC meeting.

Integrate outcome of LSC to project design

After consideration of comments from stakeholders raised during the first consultation meeting you can decide whether to change or amend the design of your project. Changes to the project design generally increase local ownership of the project and enhance sustainable development.

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 can report changes in the project design resulting from the LSC meeting in the respective section of your project documentation.

Obtain Gold Standard 'listed' status

The *LSC documentation* is reviewed as part of the Pre-Feasibility Assessment. With a successful *Pre-Feasibility Assessment Report,* the project will obtain 'listed' status in The Gold Standard Registry.

Step IV: Confirm

The Gold Standard process includes two rounds of stakeholder consultation. The first, the LSC, you have already executed - this consultation must include a physical meeting and other means must also be used to reach out to stakeholders who cannot be physically present at the meeting. The second consultation is the *Stakeholder Feedback Round*, which may also include a physical meeting although this is not mandatory.

The *Feedback Round* covers all issues raised in the LSC meeting and how due account was taken of all stakeholders' comments. All stakeholders invited to participate in the LSC have to be included in the *Stakeholder Feedback Round*.

You should make the *LSC documentation* and any revised project documentation available for the stakeholders, who should be encouraged to comment on them. You can publish all information on a website and on The Gold Standard Registry, but this might not be sufficient to obtain the 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. The documentation needs to be open for comments for a period of at least two months before the Initial Certification of your project is finalised.

You can perform the *Stakeholder Feedback Round* in parallel to the Initial Certification process but the contracted auditor must be able to take feedback received into account to complete the Initial Certification.

You report on the *Stakeholder Feedback Round* in your project documentation. You have to report how it was organised, what the outcomes were and how you followed up on the feedback.

LSC Checklist for Auditors

Purpose

This checklist provides guidance on how to assess the issues that resulted from the LSC. Auditors must investigate these issues during Initial Certification and in particular during the project *field visits*.

Review

The auditor must read through the updated *LSC documentation* that was made public on The Gold Standard Registry and identifiy any CARs, FARs or OBSs raised in the *Pre-Feasibility Assessment Report* prepared by The Gold Standard. An opinion on how these have been addressed must be provided in the report of the Initial Certification. Action taken and the auditor's opinion will be assessed by The Gold Standard Secretariat during the review period.

Checklist

1. The auditor shall review the relevant CARs, FARs or OBSs from the *Pre-Feasibility Assessment report* in detail to check if any action was required.

2. The auditor shall validate the 'Do-No-Harm Assessment' risk analysis and the scoring for the 'SD Matrix' based on both a *desk review* AND *interviews* with relevant stakeholders during the *field visit*. The auditor shall also check whether the 'Do-No-Harm Assessment' risk analysis and the scoring of the 'SD Matrix' in the project documentation are consistent with the final version presented in the *LSC documentation*. If there are any changes in the assessment of safeguarding principles or scoring of SD indicators, then relevant justification should be provided in the project documentation and the auditor should discuss these as part of the *Initial Certification report*. The auditor shall discuss the 'Do-No-Harm Assessment' and the 'SD Matrix' scoring and provide an opinion on how sensible they are in the *Initial Certification report*.

3. The auditor shall check to make sure that all indicators that scored (+) or (-) are discussed under the 'Sustainability Monitoring Plan' of the project documentation. This must also be done for indicators that scored (0) after being neutralized with a mitigation measure. If the score of any indicator differs in the project documentation from the *LSC documentation,* so that it no longer requires monitoring, then proper justification must be provided in the project documentation and the auditor shall provide an opinion in the *Initial Certification report*.

4. The auditor shall check that due account has been made for all relevant comments raised during the LSC, and that these have been appropriately integrated and discussed in the 'Sustainability Monitoring Plan' (if applicable).

5. The auditor shall check whether the approved/selected methods of input and grievance mechanism from the *LSC documentation* have been implemented on site and discussed in the project documentation.

History of this document

Version	Date	Nature of revision
0.9	August 2013	Initial publication