

Environmental Assessment Sourcebook 1999

CHAPTER 7

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND THE ROLE OF NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

WORLD BANK POLICY

1. "The Bank expects the borrower to take the views of affected groups and local NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) fully into account in project design and implementation, and in particular in the preparation of EAs" (see World Bank's Operational Directive 4.01, Annex A: "Environmental Assessment," October 3, 1991, [para 19]). The purpose of taking the views of the affected people into account is to improve project viability. The Bank has found that where such views have been incorporated in the design, the projects are more likely to be successful. The Bank has not found community participation to be an impediment to project execution. On the contrary, projects in which affected people's views have been excluded suffer from more frequent delays and poorer quality.

2. The Environmental Assessment Operational Directive (EA OD) clarifies Bank policy, which for more than a decade has encouraged community participation in Bank-supported projects. Sociological considerations had been added to the Bank's operational manual statement on project design and appraisal in 1984 (OMS 2.20), specifying that when effective project implementation requires the beneficiaries' full commitment, appraisal should verify that they were involved in project identification and preparation. More recently, instructions about participation have been added to guidelines on, for example, cultural property (OD 4.50), rural development (Briscoe and de Ferranti 1988), and monitoring and evaluation (OED 1985).

3. The operational directive on collaboration with nongovernmental organizations also urges Bank staff "as a matter of Bank policy" to develop contacts and operational collaboration with NGOs (OD 10.70). The directive defines NGOs as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, or undertake community development."

4. At identification of EA category A projects, or as soon as the project becomes a category A, borrowers declining to consult local NGOs, to seek the informed views of the affected people, and to release relevant EAs, are not complying with this policy. It seems unlikely, in such cases, that the Bank would accept the invitation to continue with that project. EA requirements should be reviewed with the government in a general way well in advance of any project, and to seek a general agreement with the principles outlined in the EA OD, and in the two "Instructions to Staff" from the Senior Vice President for Operation of 10 April 1990 and 21 November 1990, on Borrower's consultations with affected groups, and the release of EAs to Executive Directors.

5. The EA OD's provision for public consultation reflects a larger trend. Many forces are converging to make both governments and development agencies more interested in popular participation. In some countries, the change has been motivated by a shift to democracy. Experience and literature on "people-centered" development are growing and winning respectability and attention. The theme is repeated in statements by the Bank's senior management and emphasized in Bank reports, such as *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Development* (1989). Public participation has also emerged as an important theme among U.N. agencies and at meetings of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6. This chapter offers practical guidance for all involved in the EA process: Bank staff, especially task managers (TMs), affected people, local NGOs, and members of the EA team. Since borrowing member governments are responsible for EA, and for taking the views of affected groups and local NGOs fully into account, government's EA specialists will find this chapter important. This chapter may be usefully handed out early in the consultation process to government, potentially affected people and NGOs. TMs should ensure that the Bank's requirements are followed, and should be aware of what the EA team is doing. Training courses for EA in general and for community involvement in particular are often essential. These can be arranged through the REDs, Sociology Advisor (AGR), ENV, POPTR or EDI.

7. The Bank's primary responsibility is to appraise project proposals and to supervise project implementation, including the community involvement aspect of EA. However, because EA and its public participation requirements are new and sometimes sensitive, Bank staff should be more active in providing advice than in other aspects of project preparation and implementation. Bank staff also need to be involved in EA to assess its quality and to learn from it. In countries where the government engages consultants to carry out the EA, it is important that the Bank ensures that the short-listed consultants have the knowledge and experience necessary to deal adequately with community involvement requirements. Governments may request the Bank to assist with the preparation of TOR for the EA, and with selection criteria for EA specialists.

8. The Bank relies heavily on the good sense and judgment of the individual TMs and the officials with whom they work to ascertain how best to involve people from different cultures and backgrounds, and from countries with varying degrees of commitment to the full participation of its citizens, in what are often very technical EAs. The Bank and its member governments are gaining experience and developing procedures in this difficult and important subject for which there are few absolutes and little written history. Innovation and flexibility are essential. The next few years will be a learning experience in how best to involve affected communities, in evaluating which approaches work well and which do not. Later editions of this Sourcebook will reflect the results of that experience.

9. The Borrower's primary responsibility in this regard is to arrange for the EA to be carried out as is the case with the feasibility study of which the EA is normally an integral part. Thus, the Borrower draws up TORs, selects the EA team, and provides the means for the team to undertake the EA. The Borrower ensures that national laws, regulations and Bank procedures are followed by the EA team. Although some parts of a feasibility study can be accelerated if necessary, this is much less so for the social aspects of the EA. Therefore, the social and cultural aspects of the EA should be started as soon as possible. The other two major parts of the EA -- physical and biological -- are preferably synchronized with the social components. And all three should maintain close collaboration with the feasibility study of which EA is an integral part. The Borrower submits the final EA to the Bank, together with or as part of the feasibility or detailed design study, to enable the Bank to appraise the project.

10. It is essential for the EA team to gain quickly a working knowledge of the area and of the people possibly to be affected. For all projects requiring an EA, the team should know most of the answers to the questions listed in Table 7.1 about the affected community early during preparation. General answers can be sought from the project agency and by on-site observation of the affected area itself, in order to be able to assign the appropriate EA category for the IEPS, and more comprehensively by the EA team as soon as the EA process starts.

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

Two Levels of Public Consultation

11. Informed public participation in the environmental review process encompasses consultation with those both directly and indirectly involved. In the first case are the groups that would be directly affected by the project, for example fisherfolk downstream from a dam. It is important to remember that the most critical effects may occur some distance from the project itself, that the informed views of the potentially affected

communities should be taken into account in the pre-design stages of the project, and that these communities should be involved in the EA.

12. The second group to be involved in public consultation consists of those who, because of their particular concern or expertise, may have relevant information regarding the nature, scope, and particulars of potential environmental effects. Obvious examples are societies of consulting engineers, experts on cultural property, environmental NGOs, or grassroots organizations concerned with environmental quality. Less obvious, but frequently important because of the perspectives they can bring, are educators or human rights, anti-poverty or religious groups.

13. The distinction in the groups cuts across two axes: one is the degree to which a group will be affected by the proposed project; the other is the kind of knowledge the group can bring to the EA. Local and external groups at various points along these axes should be consulted in the EA process. By far the most important point here is that such consultations have to start very early on if they are to be meaningful and in order that such views can influence decisions which will affect their lives. The views of the potentially affected people and the local NGOs should be solicited no later than the start of the scoping process. This information helps the Bank in assigning the project to the appropriate EA category. This means that at least preliminary contacts are best begun before the IEPS is finalized. This is easily accomplished by a reconnaissance of an experienced social scientist during the identification mission.

Table 7.1. General Social and Cultural Aspects

- (a) Who are the people who might be affected by the project? (Number and size of families, dwellings and villages.)
- (b) What are the broad social group structures (communities, classes, castes, tribes, etc.) through which the people organize?
- (c) What are the authority structures of the groups? Is the authority based on kinship, seniority, consensus, or democratic voting?
- (d) Which of the groups are responsible for access to or management of environmental resources (e.g., grazing rights, water and fishing rights, forest extraction rights)?
- (e) What is the annual cycle of activities? When and where do groups assemble? How are decisions reached?
- (f) Are there sacred sites or important archaeological or historical sites that might be affected by the project?
- (g) Which of these groups are aware of the proposed project and of any problems that might be associated with it?
- (h) What proportion of the affected community can read? Do they have access to radios, newspapers, or other media? Do they speak the national language?
- (i) What grassroots organizations exist in the areas to be affected by the project?
- (j) What NGOs are already in direct contact with the affected people and what is the nature of their relationship? Have the local NGOs adequate resources to undertake the roles expected of them in the EA process? Are the NGOs strong enough to be effective?
- (k) How negotiable is the project concept (e.g., by how much can the dam site be moved or the dam height lowered, and can the project be cancelled)?

14. In many cases during the identification phase, it is advisable to have some preliminary contacts with affected people. Most work on public participation begins as part of the EA, at the start of preparation, and at the same time the feasibility study begins. The EA lasts about as long as the feasibility study of which it is an integral component. Public participation is usually fostered by the social scientist members of the EA team, although the other two EA disciplines -- physical and biological -- cooperate fully, as needed. Where social impacts are large in scale or severity or where they are particularly complex, a locally resident social science team may be required at several intervals over the period of project feasibility and preparation studies. Where a few people are affected, a single social scientist can in most instances reside in the area for a few months total time spread over a year, so studies will encompass the full annual cycle.

Although the bulk of the work is during preparation, there is still a great deal of social input needed during construction, less during operation and thereafter. The affected people and local NGOs and the public at large should participate in monitoring during operation and assist in post hoc evaluation.

A Challenging Task

15. It is rarely easy to "take the views of affected groups...fully into account...." as the Bank enjoins. For example, rural people may be unable to offer informed views about a proposal because of unfamiliarity with the technical terms or processes involved: they may not know what a hydroproject is, much less its implications for them. Therefore, much of the challenge is in developing effective communication in order to apprise people fairly about their role in decisions that will affect them.

16. Ensuring that the EA OD mandate is met requires new expertise in both the Bank and the project agencies. It also requires significant effort and the budgeting necessary within the Bank and project agencies to support it.

17. Consultations with affected people and local NGOs can take several forms and involve different approaches and methods. Suitability will vary with the social and cultural context. Where public officials and ordinary citizens are accustomed to interacting freely and having their statements and opinions challenged and debated, the process of consultation can take place in open public meetings. However, in many of the Bank's member countries, public meetings of this kind are unfamiliar or uncomfortable for both citizens and public officials. In such settings, public meetings may produce counterproductive results, such as passive hostility, or the appearance of unanimity where none exists.

18. Moreover, even in countries with democratic political processes, there may be social groups that are not free to participate in public meetings on sensitive issues. For example, ethnic, religious and racial boundaries may make it difficult, if not impossible, for members of traditionally antagonistic social groups to interact in public. Members of political, racial or religious minorities may be restricted in opportunities to express their views publicly. In some countries, women are powerless and excluded from participation. Indigenous, tribal and lower caste people may lack the necessary language skills and knowledge of the dominant culture to express themselves publicly without feeling shame or guilt. Finally, in some countries, NGOs or local social groups which express opinions that are at odds with those of government officials may arouse suspicions of disloyalty or subversion, sometimes with severe consequences.

19. Informed views of diverse segments of the affected population are critically important to the EA process because different groups use and are familiar with different parts of the environment and will be affected to different degrees by the project. For example, men are usually ignorant of environmental resources women use for income or domestic purposes. The rich are usually ignorant of the environmental resources upon which the poor and powerless depend for their livelihood. Shopkeepers, farmers and traders in contact with indigenous people may appear knowledgeable to an outsider, but only the indigenous people themselves have accurate information about social changes which affect them and the natural resources they use.

20. Where open public meetings are not appropriate, participant- observation study, open-ended interviews with key persons, and structured small-group discussions can be used to obtain the views of affected groups. All these methods generally require an experienced anthropologist or sociologist who speaks the language of the group whose views are sought. Also, each requires investment of several months of field work to ensure that accurate and representative information is gathered throughout a broad area of project impact. Scheduling months for their completion, rather than weeks, is critically important to allow time for the anthropologists or sociologists to establish rapport with different social groups and NGOs who may be initially reticent to share their opinions and knowledge with unfamiliar outsiders. In general, the more sensitive the environmental and social issues in a region or community, the greater the time needed for fieldwork.

21. Social scientists (anthropologists, sociologists, social workers, etc.) from the borrowing country, have a great deal of expertise regarding their own people, languages, and cultures. These professionals should be consulted in their areas of expertise on how best to involve people. In countries where social science may not be sufficiently developed to play this kind of expert role, the EA team may need internationally experienced anthropologists or sociologists with knowledge of the affected cultures. In the unlikely event that neither indigenous nor international expert social scientists can be found, the informed views of the affected people may be impossible to ascertain.

22. Questionnaires can be useful instruments in orienting an EA team to demographic and social variables (see Table 7.2). They are less useful for eliciting in-depth views of diverse groups. Questionnaire surveys have most practical use if they are conducted after the interviews with key persons, structured small-group discussions and/or participant-observation studies have elicited how local people define the issues and have identified their general social context.

Consultation at the Community Level

23. A community may be large or small. It could be defined by easily recognized geographical boundaries in either an urban or rural area, or it may encompass scores of villages over a large area. The people of an affected area may be homogeneous, that is, they may speak the same language, be at roughly the same economic level, share the same customs and values and make their living in similar ways. Conversely, they may be highly differentiated in language, culture, occupation and income levels. If the community is far-flung and the people heterogeneous, the consultative process will be particularly demanding.

24. Public consultation is now accepted as an essential part of the EA process in industrial countries, but the EAs performed there provide little guidance for involving local communities in developing countries. The premise of public consultation in most industrial countries is: (a) if the citizens are informed about a project and the opportunity to discuss its environmental implications, those citizens most interested will respond; (b) most citizens have access to newspapers, radio and television and can read and understand notices; and (c) citizens who participate are accustomed to the frank give-and-take of democratic discussions, and do not run major personal or political risk in questioning proposed government actions. In many developing countries, an EA team cannot operate on these premises. Therefore, it cannot function in the reactive, responsive stance suitable to industrial countries, but must take a proactive, initiatory approach to encourage and to promote citizen participation. This means sharing whatever information is available about the project so that informed views can be obtained.

25. In the urban areas of many Bank member countries, such as India, Thailand, and Eastern Europe, the print and electronic media are important in providing effective information and influencing opinion. Even in rural areas of many developing countries, people have access to radios. The EA team should use whatever media are available. The team and the implementing agency can, in many cases, form working relationships with the media throughout the EA process.

26. Although the extent of consultation should be commensurate with the expected degree of impacts of a project on different communities, it should be initiated no later than the end of the identification phase. For a

major infrastructure project, for example, there needs to be intensive consultation with communities which may be affected by resettlement -- particularly how to avoid or minimize the necessity for relocation. The Operational Directive on "Involuntary Resettlement" (OD 4.30, June 1990) specifically reminds TMs that moving the dam or lowering its height may be essential in this regard. After consultation with the affected people, where relocation has been determined to be necessary and is fully justified, their views should also be sought on how to minimize the numbers of people affected, how to carry out the resettlement, and how to prevent, mitigate or compensate for impacts.

27. A primary objective of consultation with a community is to encourage people to air all issues and concerns. To this end, the challenge is to provide means that are congruent with local cultures and customs and that provide safe and comfortable settings for them to voice the issues as they see them. If the sociologists or anthropologists attached to a multi-disciplinary team are expatriates, the team will need members from the country who are very familiar with the people and language of the affected area. In many cultures, women specifically will be needed to talk with the women involved.

28. Selecting team members in this way, who speak the language and are culturally acceptable to the communities is crucial to the project's success. Advice on recruitment can be sought from local staff of development agencies or from NGOs with long experience in the area. The recruits may be researchers from colleges and universities, staff of local NGOs, or social workers or extension workers with ties both to government ministries and to the communities.

29. Exploration at the community level should not be rushed. The TM should be involved at various stages, including the early step when the official and informal leadership of the communities -- all the key figures in the authority structure -- are briefed on the project and invited to participate and express their views (see para 39). The sociological members of the EA team should live in the area while gathering information. Often, this is the only way to achieve reliable consultation.

30. Large meetings are sometimes inappropriate forums for public consultation at the community level. A number of small meetings and some individual interviews could be more useful, although it is important to avoid the appearance of "divide and conquer." All communities have social groups through which they normally organize activities, such as work groups, savings societies, schools or cooperatives, or small enterprise groups. Groups that primarily involve women should be sought out. Religious groups may also provide useful forums. The structure of the small meetings will vary according to country and culture; but in general, new organizational forms with which people are unfamiliar (e.g., committees) should be avoided in preference for existing social groups within which people feel comfortable.

31. A major difficulty in consulting with people who may be affected is the inability of many either to understand how their world can be different from what it is, or to envisage realistically what their real needs might be when the project materializes. Where feasible, graphic illustrations should be used to clarify the issues; scale models of the area showing villages and the project are generally better understood than speeches alone. Videotape can be useful in presenting this sort of information. Posters, illustrated pamphlets and cartoons also have proved effective in literate communities; they can be displayed at schools, religious buildings, shops, clinics, cooperatives and other centers of community activity.

32. Directly involving the public means being responsive to local values. For example, one society may place great value on a sacred or historical site, while another may not; one community may be socially cohesive, while another is not. In these examples, costs and benefits are functions of the social and cultural values of the people affected (Ahmad and Sammy 1988). Clearly, it is important for the EA team to understand relevant social and cultural values. The procedure used to learn the views of the community must be developed within that context in order for the resulting data to reflect them adequately.

33. Involving affected people, especially the poor, often requires additional expenditures. The costs include travel and subsistence for attendance at meetings, translations, expert advice the community needs to help in formulating a response to the proposal, etc. Such costs should be systematically budgeted. The EA team

must be sure that issues raised in affected communities are communicated to the other participants in the EA process, including various public agencies and NGOs that may be involved in the larger process of public consultation (para 34-37).

34. As the EA proceeds, the people in the affected area should be kept informed routinely and systematically. Written material must be translated into local languages. Where many are unable to read, oral discussion and visual presentations sessions (often, by the resident social promoters or facilitators) should be used. Throughout the EA process, the project agency should continue seeking views from and providing feedback to the affected community.

35. Should involuntary resettlement be required by the project, the Bank's operational directive on involuntary resettlement (OD 4.30) will apply. Resettlement requires extensive and long-term investment of time and effort by both the Bank and the government. The Bank's Sociological Advisor (AGR) is a major resource in this regard.

36. The answers to the questions listed in Table 7.3 provide basic information useful for both the community-level consultation discussed above and for the broader public consultation in the EA process discussed in Annex 7-1. These questions have to do with the national setting for an EA process.

37. The Bank's Regional Environmental Divisions (REDs), supported by the Environment Department (ENV), and by the office of the Sociological Advisor (AGR), may be able to provide information about the current government organization and legislative authority and how they may affect environmental review and its public consultation aspect. These units may also know of work that has already been done with NGOs active on environmental issues. The country officer and resident representative often are familiar with others. The Bank's International Economic Relations Division of the External Affairs Department (EXTIE) has overall responsibility for the Bank's relations with NGOs and maintains a library of NGO directories, and a database on NGOs around the world.

38. Some resident missions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) collect information on NGOs. The government, NGO coalitions (national, international and regional), and other UN agencies and bilateral agencies are also sources of information on NGOs and community groups. Aid agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), whose programs bring them into frequent contact with villagers are useful sources for both information and counsel.

39. Public participation should be as systematic as possible. Experience shows that participation between identification and final EA decreases tension and grievances later. A firm schedule, linked to the project cycle, is necessary (see Table 7.4). Five key participation events in the EA process have been found to be useful in many projects: information sharing before identification ends; the scoping session as the EA process begins; public comments on the draft background EA studies; a comprehensive outreach process to obtain comments (written and oral) on the draft EA itself (both on its adequacy and on the project design); and hearings and comments to be included in the final EA. The results of such public participation should be routinely transmitted to the Bank. TMs should attend enough key events to ensure that the process has been reliably followed, and to become familiar with the contents of the EA, so as not to be faced with evaluating voluminous final EA reports in a rush just before appraisal.

40. The early interagency meeting recommended in the EA OD should normally be held in the affected community, but some meetings may be arranged in the capital city where the relevant ministries are located. In such cases, there should be later meetings in provincial centers and towns in the affected area. About five general public meetings during the EA process have been found to be effective in many cases. These are usefully synchronized with the five key events noted above. Some details of the process of consultation in affected communities are outlined in Annex 7-1.

41. Financial and institutional support should be provided for in the EA budget in order to facilitate the process. Public participation needs resources if it is to be meaningful, and should be budgeted for in advance. In some cases, the proponent has successfully set up a modest fund for such purposes. For example, in Canada, "intervenor costs" are mandated by federal legislation and paid by proponents. Most countries are less formal in this regard. Grievance resolution mechanisms should be built in from the start, and not added when the first grievance occurs. Proponents are responsible for facilitating due process -- which of course varies from country to country. The right to appeal to an impartial third party should be available.

42. The consultation process should remain open throughout project preparation and implementation. It should include continued feedback to those consulted, with particular attention to discussing choices and tentative conclusions of studies and EA drafts, explaining how they are being incorporated into project feasibility design and implementation plans. The first six months or so after IEPS is the best time for community inputs. Any "no-go" conclusions from the EA team need to be communicated as early as possible, and certainly no later than three months or so after EA begins. The next year or more, until the completion of the EA and feasibility study, is mainly for the necessary studies, mitigatory designs and iterative checking that public views have indeed been accommodated. Individuals and groups who have involved themselves in the EA need to see that they are being heard, that their participation is making a difference. Generally, feedback to those consulted is best accomplished by systematic distribution of the list of background studies and then their drafts, and the latest EA drafts. In addition, the project planning and design process may provide mechanisms for ongoing consultation (for example, a standing review committee that includes local NGOs and community representatives). The most effective role for local NGOs in some countries is to intermediate between the proponents and the affected communities. In other countries, the NGOs should be consulted for their special knowledge such as expertise in social organization, indigenous technology etc. The Bank resident mission should be involved in continuing discussions.

43. Over time, project EAs should help to develop a network of institutions, governmental and nongovernmental, that can interact with increasing ease and effectiveness to raise and resolve environmental issues and facilitate consultation with affected communities. For example, the Bank maintains country lists of experiences with community involvement in previous projects to increase government awareness and encourage other communities to participate (especially the office of the Sociological Advisor; see also Cernea 1988, 1991). UNDP intends to provide technical assistance to help develop such networks. Just as project EAs should generate and be supported by sectoral EAs and national environmental plans, the public consultation process for individual projects should encourage the development of institutions to maintain public consultation routinely and on a widening scale.

MAXIMS AND CAVEATS

44. There is danger in applying this policy so zealously that conflict is created where none existed before, or in assuming that the authoritarian nature of a given country makes it impossible to listen to certain groups or to adopt an open process.

45. TMs should be aware that if community participation was not part of the earliest conceptualization and design phase of a project, the EA will be more difficult. It is one thing to ask people to comment on the environmental effects of a proposed large infrastructure project; it is quite another to ask if they think there should be such a project in the first place. The less participatory the government of the country involved, the less likely it will be that the public has been consulted early and, therefore, the greater will be the importance of consultations during the EA. Conversely, the more participatory the country, the more likely it will be that the press and public are aware of plans for the project, and the easier it will be to maintain open participation and communication throughout the EA process.

46. However useful the input of national and international NGOs may be -- and indeed, of various public and private voices in a country's capital -- none of these should substitute for time and effort in eliciting the fully informed views of people in the areas affected and integrating these views into project design.

47. Some NGOs in the industrial countries have strong ties to local NGOs, and may be effective as outside advocates for the poor, and for people who cannot speak freely within their own countries. However, some actions by international NGOs may not be beneficial to local NGOs; governments may hold the local NGOs accountable, and penalize them, for views expressed by their international colleagues. Although some NGOs take a negative view of the Bank, TMs will find that many NGOs are neither negative nor positive. Most have never been asked to comment on a proposed development project.

48. International NGOs with projects in the country also can be useful sources of information and advice. Environmental NGOs in industrial countries should be respectfully heard. In addition, they may be utilized in preparing EAs and in monitoring projects. The Bank operational directive on NGOs states that "staff should be responsive, and encourage governments to be responsive, to NGOs that request information or raise questions about Bank-supported activities...."

49. In some countries, NGOs are going to involve themselves in EAs whether or not they have been invited to participate. TMs are advised to take an inclusive, open stance and establish good relationships with all who express interest. It should be kept in mind that the Bank has declared the doors of its headquarters and its resident missions open to NGOs. "We hope new partners for development, new allies against poverty, will come to see us.... The Bank and NGOs must work together." 1/

50. During the EA process, proponents should not in the interim undertake any major action which could prejudice the ultimate decision of the EA or the feasibility study.

Footnotes

1/ Moeen A. Qureshi, Senior Vice President for Operations, "The World Bank and NGOs: New Approaches," (Speech, April 22, 1988).

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ANNEX 7-1

Public Consultation in the Environmental Assessment Process

1. In the literature and practice of EAs, the term "scoping" is used worldwide to describe a quick and cost efficient way to identify the range and magnitude of environmental topics that need to be addressed in the EA. The main aim of scoping is to agree upon the issues and alternatives that will be examined in detail and, simultaneously, those that will receive less time and attention. The expectation that scoping will be open to the public has become an important part of the term's definition. The EA OD suggests that an initial interagency meeting be expanded into a "forum" or "scoping session" with representatives of affected groups and relevant NGOs. If the basic facts have been gathered, the EA team will know whom to invite to this session.

2. The "right-to-know" of any community that may be affected by a project should be respected. The overall objective of the proposed project is the first item to be clearly stated. For example, the projected national electricity demand will exceed supply in six years time, and measures have been taken to reduce demand. The objective of the project is to help meet that demand. Coal, gas, nuclear and hydro are alternatives. The government has concluded that hydro is the least environmentally and financially costly, and that the next hydro site is somewhere on river X, but neither the site nor the dam height have been ascertained. The feasibility study and the EA are designed to determine the dam site, height etc. in consultation with the people.

3. People likely to be affected also need information on the project cycle (see Table 7-4), on the decision-making process, and on national and other laws. They need to know how and when they may intervene, and how they can influence the project cycle. Everyone invited -- whether government officials, community representatives, affected people or local NGOs -- should all receive the same basic information about the project. This has to be received well in advance (30 days or so) in order to be able to participate effectively. Because the project has only just been identified, such information may be scanty. However, this is greatly preferable to providing final designs too far advanced to be influenced by the people who will be affected by them. Normally, a team member will hold individual conversations with many key participants before the first session, to brief them on the process and to get a preliminary idea of their views.

4. It is not always easy to share whatever information is available. Publication in the Federal Gazette or equivalent, while mandatory, is inadequate. Some projects have found that widely disseminating a de-tailed poster for all schools, clinics, post offices, community centers, religious buildings, shops, bus stops, utility poles, co-op-eratives, etc. is effective. This is often usefully reinforced with an invitation letter providing details of the scoping meeting schedules and asking if the recipient is concerned, and if not, requesting that the letter and poster be passed along to all interested parties, and stating that additional copies of letter and poster will be provided free. Normally, the social participation specialists of the EA team will hold individual conversations with many key participants before the first session to brief them on the process and to get a preliminary idea of their views. The usefulness of scale models and videos has been stressed.

5. Properly conducted, such public meetings help to lay a firm foundation of openness, agreement and trust for all the deliberations that follow. The meetings are crucial to building public confidence in a fair environmental analysis and ultimately, in a fair decision-making process. The design of a new project always involves much uncertainty. Excessive secrecy makes people fear the worst; openness and admission of uncertainty engenders cooperation. Public consultation and the whole scoping exercise should be a continuous process in which new issues are allowed to emerge and insignificant ones are set aside. The whole process usually involves a series of meetings, including discussions with small groups, personal interviews and written comments from interested parties. With public participation, the main lesson learned is that the meaningfulness of the exercise is proportional to the scope for influencing decisions which may affect the participants. The affected people cannot discuss specific site issues in the absence of details. The underlying theme is participatory decision-making. Participation in EA design, ranking of alternatives, (including the "no-go" option), and the selection of studies are ways of accomplishing this underlying objective.

6. The scoping session itself should be designed with respect to local customs, procedures, etc. As practiced in industrial countries, the session is usually chaired by an impartial hearing officer whose role it is to solicit views and transmit them frankly. The chair sets the ground rules and promotes civic responsibilities. The jeopardy of degenerating into a public relations exercise should be avoided. Evening and weekend meetings are needed, in addition to weekday meetings, if comprehensiveness is to be achieved. Sign up sheets are useful and transcripts essential. A preliminary list of issues is normally extracted from the transcripts and then consolidated and prioritized. Scoping should be provided for written comments. The scoping session can include questions, clarifications and statements, as well as objections. The main purpose of the scoping session is to obtain feedback. While project proponent agencies should attend and respond if necessary, they should not be major players. Proponents should avoid propagandizing, and should never dispute with contenders. The community is the major player. It should be

encouraged to dialog amongst itself, to hear what community members have to say. The session is less for information and more to record views. While consensus is not the main objective, a working relationship should start to be created at this stage, and some steps achieved towards a convergence of views.

7. It is important to the success of the EA process that from the beginning public consultation be conducted systematically and according to sound principles of research. The leaders of the EA process should be able to say to all the people involved (other government agencies, the affected community, municipal government, NGOs, tribal peoples, etc.) that the data provided is reliable for making informed decisions. If non-Bank researchers provide the data and analysis, the TM must determine whether they warrant Bank approval.

8. The social science elements of an EA process must be similarly rigorous and credible. For example, interviews should be conducted with representative samples of key population groups of the area of concern, and the sample size should be large enough to be considered significant by decision-makers. In this way, social science assists the EA team to understand the people to be affected by the process: i.e., their community, how differentiated the community is, where the authority structures and formal and informal leadership lie, and with whom communication should occur. Cultural aspects of the EA process must also be examined. The role of women in a community deserves special attention, as does the presence of any minorities, including indigenous or tribal ethnicities.

9. The EA OD mandates public consultation soon after a decision is made at the IEPS stage to prepare an EA. Community representatives and NGOs may be invited to an initial interagency meeting to help identify issues, types of analysis required, sources of relevant expertise, responsibilities and the schedule for the EA. The meeting can identify other governmental or nongovernmental agencies that should be invited to help design the EA consultative process. People may feel alienated and deceived if important decisions already have been made before consultation is initiated, and it will be much more difficult to achieve meaningful and constructive public involvement once negative interactions have begun. Although, in some cases, a coherent picture of the project and the environmental issues it poses can be presented at the initial meeting, in many others the project will not yet be fully defined. Areas of uncertainty should be acknowledged openly.

10. The literature on public participation listed at the end of this chapter describes the facilitator skills necessary for successful public meetings. The person chosen to run public meetings for the EA should possess those skills and might well be from the permitting or licensing agency or another national agency (other than the project agency itself), or from a university or other institution outside the government. Generally, the facilitator should be guided by the rules for any good meeting: for example, creating an open atmosphere.

11. One variant found useful on occasion is the mobile commission or hearing panel. This panel of impartial experienced citizens travels throughout the project region to obtain views. In one very successful case, the panel consisted of a single well-respected individual, who spent a couple of days in a hundred or so villages (Berger, 1977).

12. Other suggestions are more specific to the EA process. For example, the goal of initial meetings should be to ensure that there will be a thorough EA in the course of an environmental review process. The first part of an initial meeting should be devoted to a discussion of the project in general, covering its purpose, funding, proposed location and any other aspects that can be presented orally with the aid of maps and other visual aids. The EA process, the mechanisms whereby community views will be taken into account in decision-making, and the avenues that exist for appeals by those who feel their views have not been adequately attended to should also be explained. A question-and-answer period should follow. Then the meeting can break into small discussion groups. (Always, constraints of the culture [paras 13-17] should be honored.)

13. The object of the initial meeting is not to resolve issues but to ensure that major issues surface early so that they can be addressed in the course of the EA process. The task of each small group is to discuss the project and prepare a list of what its members feel are the issues of significance to the communities involved. An agency official or a member of the EA team may join each group, as a resource person, to listen to participants' concerns and to answer questions. Groups may choose their own discussion leaders or they may be pre-selected, provided they are not proponents. A project official might be perceived as unduly influencing the opinions of the others.

14. It is often useful in both the small group discussions and in the plenary meetings to have the issues recorded on a large pad or black-board. Thus, all can see that the views expressed have been heard and understood. Special efforts always should be made to include the illiterate and reticent elements of the society, especially if they are numerous. The group may be asked to discuss the relative merits and importance of each listed item and assign priority to them; discussion groups then return to the large meeting to report on the results of their ranking. In other situations, the sole purpose of the first meeting may be to make sure that all concerns are noted.

15. After the meeting the EA team must evaluate comments from the co-operating agencies and the affected community, and decide which ones to pursue further. However, every issue someone names as a priority during general meetings or in community consultations should be addressed in some manner in the EA: by an in-depth analysis, or by a justification of why the issue was considered but not explored further.

16. The meeting facilitator or hearing officer should be prepared to handle the conflict which nearly always will be present to some degree. Conflict often revolves around power: who has it, who wants it, and who needs even a little of it in order to participate in an EA process with those who already have it. People will naturally have different views about their own interests and what they perceive to be the interests of their community. Conflict arises, for example, when one group believes that the net benefit of a project comes at its expense while another gains. Some will see themselves as "losers," others as "winners."

17. It is the task of the meeting facilitator not to avoid conflict, nor cover it up, nor minimize it, but rather to articulate clearly the varying positions and interests -- to bring them out into the open. A useful, positive function of conflict is as a safety valve where the interests of different groups are in opposition. It is usually mismanaged conflict that becomes a destructive force. Behind every violent protest is a group which feels that its views are being suppressed and ignored. The main purpose of the first EA meeting is to ensure that participants have a chance to express their views.

18. A helpful reference for the EA process is Fisher and Ury's book, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. The authors usefully distinguish between "positions" and "interests". Positions are people's prepared answers; interests are the reasons people take particular positions. Frequently, during conflict, many people express their differences with positions that are mutually exclusive. Fisher and Ury, and now others in the field, urge the facilitator/negotiator to focus on interests, to keep asking the question, "Why?" EA professionals specializing in consultations with affected communities may want to participate in Fisher/Ury or other negotiation training beforehand.

19. During the discussion phase, differences in perception, feelings of frustration and anger and difficulties in communication are expected and should be acknowledged and addressed. Each side should come to understand the interests of the other. Both can then generate options that are mutually advantageous and can begin to seek objective standards for resolving opposed interests. If EA leaders clearly understand the interests (as distinct from the positions) of the opposing sides, they can enlist the advice of technical experts to propose approaches that address the differences and possibly resolve them.