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GUIDELINES

Community Consultation Guidelines

SUMMARY

This document outlines best practices and guidelines for conducting the Community Consultations required for the ERS certification process. It is intended to assist Developers by highlighting vital elements and their implementation, as is the case of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, and by pointing out each Consultation's objectives, preparation and outcomes.

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Background for *Conducting Community* Consultations

DEFINITION AND TYPES OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

To comply with ERS Stakeholders' participation requirements, Developers must consult the Communities participating in or impacted by the Project, as identified in the Stakeholder mapping in the Livelihood Matrix. Community consultations are engagement platforms through which Developers meet interested and impacted parties in the Project, share the Project's design proposition, and collect feedback and critical information from the communities in a co-creation process. The Developer usually convenes these at the earliest stages of the Project. ERS requests three types of Community Consultation:

Feasibility phase

- Feasibility interviews

Assessment phase

- Ecological Recovery Community Consultation
- Livelihoods Community Consultation

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The objectives of a community consultation are:

- To **onboard** communities on the proposed Project. It entails presenting the Project's concept, the Developer(s) and key staff working in the field, proposed intervention areas and overall expected results.

- To **gather feedback** from the relevant communities. Notably, to collect information from Stakeholders by using the questions in this guide, to better understand the Project Area and its communities, and to learn traditional and Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) regarding the site.

- To **co-create** with the community and allow them to influence the Project's Objectives, Activities and Outcomes from the beginning. The Community Consultations are also an essential platform and critical step to obtaining Consent from the communities. Involving Stakeholders since the Project's inception will create co-ownership and support, vital elements for a Project's success.

This document is a tool to help Developers conduct the different types of Community Consultations required by the Standard. General guidelines and recommendations on how to conduct Community Consultations can be found in *Appendix 1*.

💡 Guiding Questions in this document are suggestions; Developers are free to change and/or amend them as appropriate.

FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC)

All consultations with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) must follow the FPIC Guidelines when applicable.

Feasibility-phase *Consultations* Guidelines

FEASIBILITY INTERVIEWS

The Feasibility Interviews are held during the Feasibility phase and are dedicated to collecting feedback and engaging Stakeholders impacted by or impacting a Project. Interviews can be conducted individually between the Developer and the Stakeholder or collectively between the Developer and multiple Stakeholders simultaneously. There is no validation from Stakeholders at this stage.

1. Interview Objectives

1. Present an overview of the Project and planned interventions.
2. Engage Stakeholders to provide feedback on Project feasibility.
3. Gather feedback to:
   - 3.1. Confirm the selection of the Project Area.
   - 3.2. Confirm the selection of the Reference Ecosystem.
   - 3.3. Refine the Zonation through Participatory Mapping in the Ecological Recovery Assessment
   - 3.4. Refine the Stakeholder mapping in the Livelihood Matrix.
   - 3.5. Collect Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) to inform the Restoration Plan and the Ecological Recovery Assessment (Participatory Mapping tab).
   - 3.6. Confirm the ownership, tenure, user rights or management rights of the Project Area.

💡 When applicable, all Interviews must follow FPIC process, as outlined in FPIC Guidelines.

2. Before the interviews

The following materials must be prepared:

1. Draft of the Project Area.
2. Draft of the Reference Ecosystem.
3. Draft of the Stakeholder Mapping. The mapping must be drafted following the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) Guidelines for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.
4. The Preliminary Zonation and the Participatory Mapping (section 'Input from the Developer') in the Ecological Recovery Assessment.

3. Post interviews

After the interviews are performed, the Developer must be able to:

1. Validate the Project Area.
2. Validate the Reference Ecosystem.
3. Complete the Participatory Mapping (section 'Input from Stakeholders').
4. Complete the Stakeholder mapping.
5. Complete and submit the Feasibility Study Report.

💡 These interviews may be followed by several other meetings to further discuss the Project and engage the Communities.

Assessment-phase *Consultation* Guidelines

The Community Consultations taking place during the Assessment Phase have per objective to co-create and validate the four-year objectives, namely Social Additionality objectives, and Ecological Recovery objectives, and all four-year plans (Social Additionality Plan and Restoration Plan).

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION ON ECOLOGICAL RECOVERY

This meeting aims to present and validate the Ecological Recovery Assessment. The key findings, suggested objectives, interventions, and rationale should be submitted to Stakeholders and validated upon integration of their feedback.

1. Meeting Objectives

1. Validate the Ecological Recovery Assessment (baseline and Recovery Wheel, key findings, suggested interventions and their rationale);
2. Validate the Final Zonation;
3. Validate the Project's four-year objectives and plan, namely the Restoration Plan.

2. Before the meeting

In preparation for the meeting, the Developer must:

1. Perform the Field Assessment in the ERS App following the Field Assessment Guidelines and have it shared with and validated by the ERS Certification Agent.

2. Fill the "Baseline" tab of the Ecological Recovery Assessment using the observations and scores of the Field Assessment.

3. Produce the Recovery Wheel.

4. Prepare the Preliminary Zonation, a result of the Feasibility Interviews

5. Complete the "Input from the Developer" section for both "Key Findings" and "Objectives" in the Tab "Interventions" of the Ecological Recovery Assessment.

    5.1. If the Project has undertaken pre-submission activities, an overview of the activities and the results must be shared in the respective zone.

3. Post meeting

After the meeting, the Developer must be able to:

1. Have the final version of the Restoration Plan informed by the Stakeholder's feedback.

💡 If interventions with direct social implications are identified, such as changing land uses and creating alternative jobs, they must be reported in the Social Additionality Plan after discussion during the Livelihoods Community Consultation.

LIVELIHOODS COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The Community Consultation on Livelihoods aims to provide the Developer with a clear understanding of the stakeholders' socioeconomic structure and livelihood conditions.

1. Meetings Objectives

1. Establish a baseline for livelihoods, including agreeing on a common definition of some criteria such as wealth, well-being and living standard.
2. Validate the Social Additionality Plan.
3. Define the benefit-sharing mechanism.

2. Before the meeting

In preparation for the meeting, the Developer must:

1. Prepare a comprehensive overview of the Restoration Plan to be presented.
2. Familiarise with the concepts of the Livelihood Matrix.
3. Secure a translator if necessary.
4. Assess all applicable laws and regulations concerning benefit-sharing obligations.

3. Post meeting

After the meeting, the Developer must be able to:

1. Have the “Baseline” and “Interventions” tabs of the Livelihood Matrix filled
2. Have the Social Additionality Plan designed and validated by the Stakeholders.

Appendix 1.
Organise and Hold a Consultation

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

The following indicative guidelines can be applied to all types of Consultations.

1. Obtaining Permission

1.1. If applicable, Developers must obtain the necessary permit from the relevant local office to hold Community meetings. Developers are responsible for understanding the requirements to hold Community meetings and following the process that applies to the jurisdiction.

1.2. Once permission is granted, the Developer must approach the Community's leadership to introduce the Project, request permission to hold the meeting and invite them to participate as described in the FPIC Guidelines.

2. Setting the Meeting Date and Time

2.1. The Developer must define the duration of the meeting and set the date and time of the Consultation in advance so that Stakeholders can organise accordingly. The schedule and period must be considerate of attendees' ability to participate.

3. Setting the Meeting Venue

3.1. The Developer must select a venue that is easily accessible for all participants, can hold the capacity of the expected attendees, does not offer distractions, and is a place where participants feel safe to share their point-of-views and address delicate matters.

3.2. Politically neutral venues are encouraged. Ideal locations can be schools, community meeting centres, and other similar facilities which allow for sitting. The Developer must consult with the Community leaders beforehand, enabling them to help find a suitable venue.

3.3. If accessing the venue is a barrier for participants, the Developer must secure commuting solutions or reimburse commuting costs.

4. Inviting Stakeholders

4.1. The Developer must send invitations to the participants in advance with the precise meeting details (Date, Time, Venue, Agenda, Relevant materials).

4.2. The Developer must invite all Stakeholders or the group's representatives identified during the Stakeholder mapping.

💡 Developers should get the buy-in of Community leaders before the Consultation and ask them to help gather participants. Invitees are more likely to attend if their leadership is participating.

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5. Agenda

5.1. The Agenda for the meeting must be prepared in advance, detailing discussion topics and their allocated time.

5.2. Allocated time should include buffers and account for enough time to allow spontaneous discussions.

5.3. The Agenda must be shared in advance of the meeting.

6. Other Preparations

Community Background and Knowledge

6.1. Before a Consultation, the Developer must study and understand the history of the Community, prevailing social and political issues and any other dynamics.

Tools and resources

The Developer must prepare and bring all the resources and tools necessary to run the consultation. Overall tools and resources include:

6.2. This guide;

6.3. The templates that need to be completed;

6.4. Stationary materials such as notebooks, pens/pencils, flip charts, markers, stickers, and scotch tape;

6.5. A voice or video recorder to help register the consultation.

Staff skills

Ideally, there should be facilitators with a background in Community development, project management, and pillar-specific knowledge. A dedicated note-taker should be assigned. The roles of the staff should be outlined and communicated in advance. Ensure facilitators speak the local languages or dialects and always respect the local culture.

Content

Content for the meeting must be prepared in advance and be culturally and linguistically adequate to the participants.

Appendix 2.

Community Consultation

Reporting Template

Disclaimer: *This template will eventually be integrated into the ERS App to facilitate its use. In the meantime, the Project Developer should either download the template, print it to fill it out during the consultation and send it back via email to ERS, or turn on the offline mode before every consultation and fill it out electronically.*

💡 This template will be completed during and after each Consultation for record-keeping purposes.

Name of the consultation:

Date and time:

Location:

Facilitator(s):

Objective(s) of the consultation:

General meeting notes:

Conclusions & outcomes:

Attendees list:

Name of participant *Full name and title, if applicable*	Stakeholder group *As identified in the Livelihoods Matrix*	Age	Gender	Status and/or profession *Describe the participant's role in the community*

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