UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

High-Integrity Carbon Markets Toolkit

Module 2 Part 1

Stakeholder Engagement

Practical considerations for stakeholder engagement in carbon market activities



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This publication was developed with support from the UN-REDD Programme. UN-REDD is the UN knowledge and advisory platform on forest solutions to the climate crisis. It supports nationally-led REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, to mobilize finance for and implement REDD+ activities agreed under the UNFCCC. UN-REDD builds on the convening capacity and technical expertise of FAO, UNDP and UNEP, serving 65 partner countries. UN-REDD is made possible through support from the European Commission and the governments of Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Japan, Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

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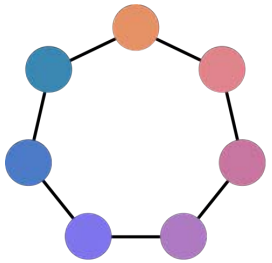
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High-Integrity Carbon Markets Toolkit

The Toolkit serves **supply-side** actors—governments, project developers, companies, NGOs, Indigenous Peoples and local communities—and **demand-side** actors, including investors, corporates and individuals. It equips them to **design, implement and scale** high-integrity carbon market activities that **deliver real and equitable climate outcomes**.

It also supports institutions **that shape and uphold market quality**—including standard-setters, rating agencies, validation and verification bodies, and integrity initiatives—helping to build a **trusted global framework** for carbon markets that deliver lasting benefits for **climate, people and nature**.

The Toolkit **offers flexible, multimedia content**—from webinars and case studies to guidance notes and presentations—for both self-paced and group learning.

Developed with **leading international partners**, the Toolkit focuses first on **social integrity**, an area where UNDP brings deep expertise and global relevance.

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About this guidance

What does this guidance provide?

- Practical considerations for stakeholder engagement across the carbon project/programme cycle. It is grounded in UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards, which are anchored in international human rights law and international environmental law. It also reflects the requirements of carbon crediting standards and integrity initiatives, as well as established practice in stakeholder engagement and social and environmental assessment.
- It sets out what is recommended rather than what is required.

How does the guidance relate to existing frameworks?

- It is designed to be used alongside the framework a project/programme operates under.
- It does not endorse one framework over another.

UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards (SES) apply to UNDP programmes and projects. This guidance draws on them as a reference point for other carbon market activities because they are aligned with international human rights instruments, including UNDRIP, ILO Convention 169 and the core UN human rights covenants, and with multilateral environmental agreements. The SES have been applied across UNDP programming since 2015 and were updated in 2021. They are not binding on activities outside UNDP.

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Chapter 1

What is stakeholder engagement?

Chapter 1 **Content**

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- **Who is a stakeholder?**
- **What does stakeholder engagement involve?**
- **What is stakeholder analysis?**
- **What is information disclosure?**
- **What are the levels of stakeholder participation?**
- **How does free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) apply?**

What are the objectives of stakeholder engagement?

Stakeholder engagement is both a goal in itself, upholding the right of people to participate in decisions that may affect them, and a means of achieving outcomes. It also supports carbon integrity. Opposition from affected communities and unresolved disputes over land and resources can disrupt implementation and lead to reversals. Engagement that builds trust, and consent that is obtained and maintained where FPIC applies, reduce these risks to the permanence of emission reductions and removals.

What are the objectives of stakeholder engagement?

Full and effective stakeholder engagement seeks to:

- Provide access to information and dialogue, and space for those whose rights may be affected to shape decisions.
- Identify stakeholder priorities in order to better tailor activities, opportunities and benefits.
- Learn from and incorporate local knowledge to improve design and to avoid and mitigate risks and impacts.
- Identify potential constraints and conflicts that could affect effectiveness or lead to delays or under-delivery of outcomes.
- Strengthen results through effective partnerships.
- Ensure transparency, accountability and integrity.
- Ensure no one is left behind, and that marginalized and disadvantaged stakeholders* have a voice in development and implementation.
- Provide a feedback and monitoring mechanism to confirm intended results are being achieved and to identify potential unintended consequences.

* Marginalized and disadvantaged: Individuals and groups who may be differentially or disproportionately affected because of such factors as race, ethnicity, sex, age, language, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, political or other opinion, national or social or geographical origin, property, birth, health status or other status, including as an Indigenous person or as a member of a minority (UNDP SES).

Who is a stakeholder?



Persons, groups or institutions with an interest in the activity or the ability to influence its outcomes, either positively or negatively. They may be directly or indirectly affected.

The range is diverse

Locally affected communities and individuals, Indigenous Peoples, landholders and land users, workers and their representatives, community and traditional leaders, national and local government authorities, civil society actors including non-governmental organizations, the academic community, private sector entities, and other special interest groups, with attention to the equitable representation and meaningful participation of women, men and youth across all stakeholder groups.

Interests vary

- Stakeholders may include groups opposed to the proposed activity.
- Within each group, women, men and youth may hold different interests and face different barriers to participation.

Rights holders

Among stakeholders, rights holders are those whose rights the activity may affect: those holding statutory or customary rights to land, territories and resources, including users without formal title, and those with claims to the rights to the emission reductions and removals. Their rights shape the engagement owed to them, including free, prior and informed consent where it applies.

What does stakeholder engagement involve?


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An ongoing process across the project cycle, involving six elements to varying degrees.

Six elements

1. Stakeholder analysis and planning.
2. Disclosure and dissemination of information.
3. Consultation and meaningful participation.
4. Dispute resolution and grievance redress.
5. Stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation.
6. Ongoing reporting to affected communities and other stakeholders.

Intensity and scale vary

- Intensity and scale vary with the type of activity, its complexity, and its potential risks and impacts.
- Engagement begins early in planning and spans the entire life of the activity.
- Meaningful engagement involves more than occasional consultations. It seeks to bring affected communities and interested parties into decision-making processes.
- Where FPIC applies, the rights holders concerned shape the activity's plans, and their consent is obtained before it proceeds.

What is stakeholder analysis?



The process of identifying key stakeholders and assessing their interests and the ways in which they may influence outcomes.

What it involves

- An understanding of the interests involved: rights to land and resources, livelihood practices connected to natural resources in the activity area, and formal or informal authority over resource access or management. Particular attention is paid to affected communities and resource users within the activity area.
- An understanding of stakeholders' expectations of the activity, which may explain their position towards it.
- An understanding of power relations, and of potential alliances and conflicts among stakeholders, is necessary.

What it provides

- Stakeholder analysis provides the foundation for planning engagement throughout the project cycle, and the basis for the stakeholder engagement plan.

What is information disclosure?

The provision of timely, accessible information regarding the activity and its potential social and environmental impacts, in order to facilitate meaningful, effective and informed participation in design and implementation.

Information disclosed

- Planned activities and land use.
- Any proposed changes in access to and use of resources.
- Anticipated revenue and possible benefits for those affected.
- The parties and partners involved in the activity.
- Records of consultations.
- Stakeholder engagement plans.
- Risk identification and screening outputs.
- Draft and final assessments and management measures, where these are prepared.
- Monitoring reports.

Scope and timing

What is disclosed, and at what point, is shaped by the requirements of the framework the activity operates under and by what stakeholders may need to participate. Timely means in advance of the decisions the information relates to, with lead time that accommodates stakeholders' own decision-making processes.

What are the levels of stakeholder participation?

The nature, scope and frequency of engagement is proportionate to the nature and scale of the activity, its potential risks and impacts, and the level of stakeholder concern.

Increasing influence of stakeholders on decisions →

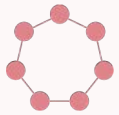
1	2	3	4	5
Inform	**Consult**	**Collaborate**	**Consent**	**Empower**
Provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the activity, its risks, opportunities and key decisions.	Obtain stakeholder feedback on analysis and design, alternatives and decisions, and consider stakeholder concerns and aspirations.	Partner with stakeholders in reaching all key decisions and ensure stakeholder input is incorporated to the maximum extent possible.	Respect freely given decisions of rights holders to proceed or not proceed with the activity or with certain components.	Transfer control over decision-making, resources and activities to stakeholders.

Adapted from: International Association for Public Participation (2024). IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation; UN-REDD (2018). Guidelines on Free, Prior and Informed Consent, Types of Participation (Annex II).

How does free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) apply?

FPIC is a principle and a legal norm that was developed to protect Indigenous Peoples' collective rights, and specifically their right to self-determination, their right to be consulted, their right to participate in decisions that may affect them, and most importantly, their rights to their lands and resources.

In practice, FPIC may be understood as a process where Indigenous Peoples who may be affected by a project are meaningfully engaged in project design, implementation and decision-making, are fully informed and are able to grant or deny consent prior to implementation of any activities that may affect them.



To note: this topic is covered in depth in Module 2, Part 2.

FPIC applied throughout the activity

- Indigenous Peoples participate in a meaningful, effective and informed way on all matters, from the earliest stage of conceptualization and design and iteratively throughout implementation and closure. How that participation will take place is identified and put in place at the outset.
- FPIC applies to matters that may affect Indigenous Peoples' rights and interests, lands, territories, resources, livelihoods and cultural heritage.

Determining FPIC application

- FPIC is a right of Indigenous Peoples.
- It applies where a collective satisfies any of the commonly accepted criteria for identification as Indigenous, whether or not the state recognizes it as such, and whether or not title is held over the lands and territories concerned.
- It can also extend to communities holding customary tenure, where their relationship to lands, territories and resources is comparable. The scope of that extension is assessed on a case-by-case basis.



Chapter 2

The basis for stakeholder engagement in carbon markets

Chapter 2 **Content**

- **Where the requirement comes from**
- **Article 6 of the Paris Agreement**
- **Crediting standards and integrity initiatives**
- **Across the frameworks***

* The frameworks reviewed in this chapter are Article 6.2, the Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (PACM), the ICVCM Core Carbon Principles, and the VCS, Gold Standard, TREES and Plan Vivo standards. The selection is illustrative rather than comprehensive. It does not review national frameworks, which apply alongside those covered here, and does not imply that any one framework is preferred over another.

Where the requirement comes from

Is stakeholder engagement required in carbon market projects and programmes?


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Yes, wherever credits are issued to a project or programme.
The specific requirements depend on the crediting mechanism, the host country's national laws and its international human rights obligations.

Where the requirement comes from

- **From international human rights law.** The core human rights treaties bind States Parties, ILO Convention 169 binds states that have ratified it, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples sets the standard against which those obligations are read. Individual projects and programmes are also reached, including through national laws that give effect to these obligations, through the conditions of host country approval of projects/programmes, through the standards the project/programme registers under, and through corporate responsibility to respect human rights under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- **From the host country.** National policies, laws and regulations on consultation and consent, and on land and resource rights, apply whichever market the credits are sold into, alongside any rules a government sets for approval or authorization.
- **From the crediting mechanism.** Voluntary standards and the PACM set engagement requirements on the activities they register.

Where the requirement comes from

What is the international legal basis for the right to participate?

The commitment to stakeholder engagement arises from international human rights instruments and from the right to participate in decisions that affect one's life. Treaties bind the states that ratify them; declarations and frameworks carry political weight but are not legally binding.

Core human rights treaties, ratified by the large majority of states

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, Article 19. Freedom of expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas. The Declaration is not itself a treaty, and its provisions are given binding effect through the covenants and conventions that follow.
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, Article 25. The right of all citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs.
- **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**, Article 5(c). The right to participate in public life without discrimination.
- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**, Articles 7 and 14. The right of women, including rural women, to participate in public life and in development planning.
- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, Articles 3 and 29. Full and effective participation in the conduct of public affairs.



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Where the requirement comes from

What is the international legal basis for the right to participate?


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Declarations, regional agreements and frameworks, whose standing varies

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The right to participate in decision-making in matters that would affect their rights, to be consulted, and to give their free, prior and informed consent. Adopted by the General Assembly as a declaration, so it is not subject to ratification.
- International Labour Organization Convention 169, Articles 6 and 7. Consultation with Indigenous and tribal peoples through their representative institutions, and participation in the formulation and implementation of development plans. Binding on the states that have ratified it, a considerably smaller group than for the core treaties, though it includes several states hosting carbon market activity.
- Escazú Agreement. Access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Aarhus Convention. Access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, in its region of application.
- United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Meaningful consultation with potentially affected groups as part of human rights due diligence. Endorsed by the Human Rights Council as an authoritative framework rather than adopted as a treaty.
- Sustainable Development Goals. Target 16.7 on responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making, and Target 16.10 on public access to information. A political commitment agreed by all Member States.

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement

How does Article 6.2 address safeguards and engagement?

Article 6.2 places reporting obligations on participating Parties. It sets no activity-level safeguard or stakeholder engagement procedures. These come from host country law and approval conditions, the terms of the bilateral agreement and authorization, and any standard or programme the activity is credited under.

What participating Parties report

- **Human rights and participation:** the initial report, submitted no later than the authorization of ITMOs, describes how the approach reflects the Eleventh preambular paragraph of the Paris Agreement, including how it respects, promotes and considers obligations on human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- **Updated initial report** for each further cooperative approach (para. 19).
- **Biennial transparency reports:** the same information in an annex to each report, including how each approach contributes to sustainable development objectives (para. 22(f) to (h)).

How it is checked

- **Article 6 technical expert review:** a desk or centralized review of whether the information submitted is consistent with the guidance (para. 25).
- **Review report:** recommendations to the Party on improving consistency, forwarded to the Article 13 technical expert review and published on the centralized accounting and reporting platform (paras. 27 and 28).
- **Public information:** non-confidential information submitted is made public on the platform (para. 24).

Source: Decision 2/CMA.3, Guidance on cooperative approaches referred to in Article 6, paragraph 2, and its annex (FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/10/Add.1).

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement

What does the PACM require?



The PACM was established under Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement and is supervised by the Article 6.4 Supervisory Body. All proposed activities, including CDM activities transitioning to the mechanism, must apply the Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool (SD Tool, A6.4-TOOL-AC-001).

Source: Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool (A6.4-TOOL-AC-001).

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement

What does the PACM require?

How the A6.4 SD Tool is applied across the activity cycle

- The Tool defines stakeholders as the public, including individuals, groups or communities, marginalized and disadvantaged groups, women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, minorities, Indigenous Peoples, or any other person who may be affected or is likely to be affected by the proposed activity, or by the actions leading to its implementation (para. 19(d)).
- The Tool sets out an environmental and social safeguards risk assessment (A6.4-FORM-AC-015); an environmental and social management plan (A6.4-FORM-AC-016), completed where the risk assessment concludes 'Yes or Potentially'; and a sustainable development impact form (A6.4-FORM-AC-017).
- The three completed forms are shared with stakeholders during the local stakeholder consultation, and are open to comment from Parties, stakeholders and UNFCCC-admitted observers during the global stakeholder consultation. Activity participants revise the forms in light of the inputs received, then submit the revised forms and the inputs received to a designated operational entity for validation.
- After registration, activity participants maintain a continuous engagement mechanism through which stakeholders may comment on compliance with the Tool until the end of the crediting period. The management plan's environmental and social indicators are monitored, at least annually, and the monitoring report records the results and how comments were addressed.
- At each request for issuance, a designated operational entity verifies the monitoring, reviews the input received and interviews local stakeholders.

Source: Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool (A6.4-TOOL-AC-001).

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement

What does the PACM require?

Key stakeholder engagement provisions in the A6.4 SD Tool

- **Human rights due diligence.** Activity participants carry out due diligence to identify, evaluate, prevent and mitigate actual or potential adverse human rights impacts, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Activities are implemented with respect for participation and inclusion (E4.1, E4.2).
- **No retaliation.** Activity participants may not engage in any form of direct or indirect, formal or informal pressure or retaliation against individuals or groups exercising their rights in relation to an activity or proposed activity (E4).
- **Indigenous Peoples.** Element 9 requires activity participants to identify the communities within the activity boundary that may be affected, approaching them with respect, sensitivity and transparency so they are fully informed and participate voluntarily in the identification process. An environmental and social analysis is carried out with their full and effective participation, for which activity participants provide adequate resources. Activity participants recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' collective rights to own, use, develop and control the lands, resources and territories they possess by traditional ownership, occupation or use (E9.1, E9.2, E9.4).
- **Consent.** FPIC must be obtained and documented for any relocation, and for impacts on territory, land or resources, cultural heritage or places containing sacred elements. Consent is documented both in the process and in the agreements reached through good-faith dialogue and negotiation, using local protocols where available (E9.3, E9.5).

Source: Article 6.4 Sustainable Development Tool (A6.4-TOOL-AC-001).

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What do the ICVCM criteria set out?



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The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (ICVCM) sets the Core Carbon Principles (CCPs), which operate at programme and methodology levels. Programmes apply for assessment, and the ICVCM awards the CCP label where the criteria are met. Most safeguards requirements, including those described on the following slides, apply at programme level; criteria 12.1 and 12.2 apply CORSIA safeguards and sustainable development requirements at category level.

Source: ICVCM, Core Carbon Principles Assessment Framework, Criteria 1.2, 7.1, 7.6 and 7.7 (Requirements).

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What do the ICVCM criteria set out?

Criterion 1.2: Public engagement, consultation, and grievances

In addition to CORSIA requirements related to public engagement, consultation and grievances, the carbon-crediting program shall have a process for:

1) robust and transparent local and global stakeholder consultation, which provide for public comment and issue resolution;
2) addressing grievances, for which the process shall be clear and transparent, ensure impartiality and where appropriate, confidentiality, in the filing and resolution of grievances and for which any applicable fees shall not impede legitimate access to the grievance process by civil society organisations or of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPs & LCs).

Criterion 7.1: Assessment and management of environmental and social risks

a) In addition to CORSIA requirements relating to Safeguards System and Sustainable Development Criteria, the carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to:
    1) abide by national and local laws, objectives, programs and regulations and, where relevant, international conventions and agreements;
    2) assess associated risks of negative environmental and social impacts with regard to the safeguards contained in criteria 7.2 to 7.8 (inclusive), taking into account the scope and scale of the mitigation activity;
    3) ensure free, prior and informed Consent (FPIC) processes for IPs & LCs, where applicable, and conduct stakeholder consultations, including local stakeholders, as part of project design and implementation in a manner that is inclusive, culturally appropriate, and respectful of local knowledge, take these consultations into account and respond to local stakeholders' views.

Source: ICVCM, Core Carbon Principles Assessment Framework, Criteria 1.2, 7.1, 7.6 and 7.7 (Requirements).

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What do the ICVCM criteria set out?

b) Where, pursuant to criterion 7.1 a) 2) above, the mitigation activity proponents have assessed that the mitigation activity poses risks of negative environmental and/or social impacts with regard to any of criteria 7.2 to 7.8 (inclusive) the carbon-crediting program shall require the mitigation activity proponents to:

1) include measures, commensurate with the identified risks, to minimize and address such negative environmental and/or social impacts, in validated design documents prior to registration;

2) include information on the measures implemented pursuant to criterion 7.1 b) 1) above, commensurate with the identified risks in the monitoring report.

Criterion 7.6: Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and cultural heritage

a) Where the mitigation activity directly or indirectly impacts IPs & LCs, including livelihoods, ancestral knowledge and cultural heritage, the carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity:

1) recognizes, respects and promotes the protection of the rights of IPs & LCs in line with applicable international human rights law, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples;

2) identifies the rights-holders possibly affected by the mitigation activity (including customary rights of local rights holders);

3) when relevant to circumstances, has applied the FPIC process;

4) does not force eviction or any physical or economic displacement of IPs & LCs, including through access restrictions to lands, territories, or resources, unless agreed upon with IPs & LCs during the FPIC process;

Source: ICVCM, Core Carbon Principles Assessment Framework, Criteria 1.2, 7.1, 7.6 and 7.7 (Requirements).

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What do the ICVCM criteria set out?

5) preserves and protects cultural heritage consistent with IPs & LCs protocols/rules/plans on the management of cultural heritage or UNESCO Cultural Heritage conventions.

b) Where the mitigation activity directly or indirectly impacts IPs & LCs, including livelihoods, ancestral knowledge and cultural heritage, the carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents confirm in validated design documents that the mitigation activity adheres to the above safeguards or that it has put in place the measures referred to in criterion 7.1 b) 1) above.

Criterion 7.7: Respect for human rights, stakeholder engagement

a) The carbon-crediting program shall require mitigation activity proponents to ensure that the mitigation activity:

1) avoids discrimination and respects human rights;

2) abides by the International Bill of Human Rights and universal instruments ratified by the host country;

3) takes into account and responds to local stakeholders' views.

b) The carbon-crediting program shall require that mitigation activity proponents confirm in validated design documents that the mitigation activity adheres to the above safeguards, or that it has put in place the measures referred to in criterion 7.1 b) 1) above.

Source: ICVCM, Core Carbon Principles Assessment Framework, Criteria 1.2, 7.1, 7.6 and 7.7 (Requirements).

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does VCS require?



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VCS Standard v5.0, Section 3.17, addresses stakeholder engagement requirements for the project proponent.

Before the project start date

- Identify stakeholders in partnership with any Indigenous Peoples or local communities present in the project area, with special attention to women, marginalized and vulnerable people; record the methods used; assign every stakeholder to a group; and set the level of engagement for each group. (Section 3.17.1)
- Table 11 sets the level of engagement required for the groups assigned to each stakeholder classification: empower to co-design, obtain FPIC and maintain ongoing consent for customary rights holders and Indigenous Peoples; enable influence in decision-making for directly affected stakeholders; collaborate, involve and inform for the remaining three groups. (Table 11)
- Prepare a stakeholder engagement plan using the VCS Stakeholder Engagement Plan Template, to be implemented throughout the project lifetime and updated for each verification. Establish and make publicly available a grievance redress mechanism. (Section 3.17.2; 3.17.22 to 3.17.23)
- Obtain consent from customary rights holders and Indigenous Peoples where they are identified in the project area, where competing claims to land or resource rights involving customary rights are identified, or where risks to their cultural heritage or traditional livelihoods are identified. (Section 3.17.11, Conditions under which FPIC Applies)

Source: Verified Carbon Standard, VCS Standard v5.0, Section 3.17 and Table 11.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does VCS require?

Throughout implementation

- Consult stakeholders according to the plan. Keep stakeholders free from pressure, intimidation, manipulation and coercion. Use inclusive, locally and culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive methods, and provide information in simple terms in the local language. (Section 3.17.3 and 3.17.4)
- Respect stakeholders and their autonomy, customs, values and institutions, including their governance structures and legitimate representation where these exist. Give women, marginalized people and vulnerable people targeted opportunities to influence design and implementation. (Section 3.17.4)
- Take due account of all input received and incorporate it into decisions, analysis or actions. Prevent and prohibit retaliation, threats and harassment against any stakeholder for withholding consent, submitting grievances or speaking publicly about the project. (Section 3.17.4)
- Maintain a stakeholder input tracker, categorized by source and date, describing how input influenced design or implementation or why no action was appropriate, made publicly available except for confidential information. (Section 3.17.6)
- Where consent applies, sign a project implementation agreement stating whether consent is granted, conditioned or withheld, and maintain ongoing consent with customary rights holders and Indigenous Peoples, updating the agreement as necessary. (Section 3.17.17 to 3.17.19)
- Where land or resource rights are affected, sign the benefit-sharing mechanism jointly with the rights holders before the project start date, and establish a schedule for reporting implementation of the benefit-sharing mechanism to benefit-sharing mechanism participants. (Section 3.17.14(6))

Source: Verified Carbon Standard, VCS Standard v5.0, Section 3.17 and Table 11.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Gold Standard require?



Gold Standard for the Global Goals, Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements v2.1, in force 12 September 2022, addressed to the project developer.

Source: Gold Standard for the Global Goals, PAR 102 Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements v2.1, section 3.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Gold Standard require?

3.1 General overview

3.1.1 The objective of the stakeholder consultation and engagement process is:

a) to identify, engage and consult stakeholders in a meaningful manner to improve project design and its outcomes, and

b) to inform stakeholders about the projects and discuss their likely impacts (both positive and negative) during the design, planning and implementation stage and relevance to stakeholders, and

c) to establish an ongoing engagement process for stakeholders to provide input, feedback and to raise concerns throughout the project life.

3.1.2 All Gold Standard projects shall take gender issues into account in their design, planning, and implementation of the project. This requires project developers to ensure that gender issues are fully factored into comprehensive social and environmental impact assessments and that equal and effective participation of both women and men in stakeholder consultation is ensured. Therefore, all projects submitted for Gold Standard certification shall meet GENDER SENSITIVE requirements (Step 1-3 of Gender Equality requirements and guidelines) AND shall adhere to the Gender Principles as established in the Gold Standard Gender Policy.

3.1.3 The Stakeholder consultation shall comprise of **a minimum of two rounds of consultations** including one mandatory physical meeting and one stakeholder feedback round lasting for at least one month.

Source: Gold Standard for the Global Goals, PAR 102 Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements v2.1, section 3.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Gold Standard require?

3.2 Timing of Stakeholder Consultation

3.2.1 The Stakeholder Consultation shall be conducted before the start date of the project.

3.2.2 If the Stakeholder Consultation is conducted after the start date of the project (retroactive project), the project developer shall;

a) provide clarification on why the stakeholder is not conducted before the project start date, and

b) conduct consultation with relevant stakeholders as early as possible, and

c) provide further explanation of how comments received during the consultation were taken into account in the design and implementation of the project.

3.3 Minimum group of stakeholders to be consulted

3.3.1 The Project Developer shall identify and invite all relevant (local, affected and interested) stakeholders for consultations and comments, including, but not limited to, as mentioned below:

a) Local people, communities and/or representatives who are expected to be directly or indirectly affected (adversely affected or beneficiaries) by the project or may have an interest in the project

b) Stakeholders with land-tenure rights within or adjacent to the project and marginalised individuals and groups

c) Local policymakers and representatives of local authorities

d) National government officials or National Focal Point, for example, Designated National Authority (DNA) or equivalent body

Source: Gold Standard for the Global Goals, PAR 102 Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements v2.1, section 3.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Gold Standard require?

e) Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Women Groups working on topics relevant to the project or working with communities who are likely to be affected by the project

f) Gold Standard representative

g) Relevant international Gold Standard NGO Supporters with representation in the region and all Gold Standard NGO Supporters located in the host country of the project.

3.3.2 The Project Developer shall provide evidence that invitations were sent and comments were invited from the relevant stakeholders, at minimum, the stakeholders listed in para 3.3.1 above. For cases where any of the stakeholders listed in para 3.3.1 above, were not invited, the project developer shall provide a justification that shall be assessed by VVB.

3.4 Means of inviting stakeholders

3.4.1 The project developer shall invite stakeholders in an open and transparent manner - that provides equal opportunity to each stakeholder to participate in stakeholder meeting and provide feedback.

3.4.2 The project developer shall invite the stakeholders at least 30 days before the physical meeting by;

3.4.3 selecting an appropriate invitation method considering the context of the project, stakeholders, local and national circumstances, and

3.4.4 using appropriate language and measures, and adequate and effective means.

3.4.5 The project developer shall ensure that the stakeholders are invited in a gender-sensitive manner. Efforts shall be made to solicit input from women and marginalised groups.

3.4.6 The stakeholder consultations shall be open to anyone wishing to attend, and participate and the project developer shall not deny anyone access to the consultation.

Source: Gold Standard for the Global Goals, PAR 102 Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements v2.1, section 3.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Gold Standard require?

3.5 Information to be made available to stakeholders

3.5.1 Prior to the physical meeting, the project developer shall share information in a manner (format, medium, language(s), etc.) that allows local stakeholders to understand – how the project is likely to affect them. The information to be made available to stakeholders shall include, *inter alia*:

a) A non–technical summary of the project, including information on project design, technology, objectives, scale, duration, and implementation plan (so far as known) and how it is likely to affect the various stakeholder groups.

b) Summary of the economic, social and environmental impacts of the project as per Safeguarding Principles & Requirements, along with potentially known positive and negative impacts of the Project.

c) Summary of likely contributions of the project to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

d) Other relevant information to help stakeholders understand the project design, implementation and operation.

e) A preliminary agenda for the event summarising the different topics that will be discussed in the physical meeting.

f) Contact details of a Project Developer's representative to get further information.

g) Means and methods to provide further feedback for those who are not able to join the physical meeting

3.5.2 The timing of when prior information should be provided varies depending on the nature of the project and the local context. At a minimum, prior information shall therefore be provided at least a week in advance before the planned physical meeting. In some situations, such as projects entailing higher risk affecting Indigenous Peoples, more time may be needed.

Source: Gold Standard for the Global Goals, PAR 102 Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements v2.1, section 3.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Gold Standard require?

3.6 Physical meeting(s) and feedback round

3.6.1 The stakeholder consultation shall comprise of a minimum of two rounds of consultations including:

a) mandatory physical meeting with local stakeholders, and

b) stakeholder feedback round lasting for at least 30 days

3.6.2 The objective of the physical meeting is to inform the relevant stakeholders of the project details and ensure that stakeholders are provided with an opportunity to influence project design, implementation and operation by interacting with the project developer (and also amongst each other) and exchanging views and concern(s) in a free and transparent manner.

3.6.3 The project developer shall cover the following key aspects during the physical meeting(s):

a) summary of project information as per para 3.5.1 above,

b) ensure that at a minimum, the discussion covers stakeholder's perceptions and expectations about project benefits and potential adverse impacts; how adverse impacts may be avoided and minimised and what the appropriate mitigation mechanisms may be,

c) potential options for input & feedback and grievance mechanism

d) information on next steps and contact details

Source: Gold Standard for the Global Goals, PAR 102 Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements v2.1, section 3.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Gold Standard require?

3.6.4 The project developer shall ensure that the place and timing of the physical meeting(s) is appropriate for all relevant stakeholders and do not pose a barrier to participation, e.g. for a particular gender or stakeholder group.

3.6.8 The project developer shall encourage equal and effective participation by both men and women, marginalised individuals and groups in the meetings.

3.6.9 The project developer shall provide feedback to the stakeholders on how comments received in the physical meeting(s) have been considered and seek further comments from stakeholders.

3.6.11 The project developer shall share the updated project documentation with stakeholders for thirty days via publicly accessible means i.e., easily accessible online or other means for example publicly accessible website, online platform or others. It shall include details on procedure & contact details for submission of further comments.

3.7 Consideration of comments received

3.7.1 The project developer shall ensure that all the comments received during the consultations i.e., physical meetings and Stakeholder Feedback Round are well documented in the form they are received i.e. with minimum interpretation and without tempering with the spirit and intent of the comment.

3.7.2 The project developer shall include details with justifications, as applicable in Stakeholder Consultation Report on how stakeholder comments have been taken into account. The Project Developer shall provide justification when any comments have not been incorporated or addressed.

Source: Gold Standard for the Global Goals, PAR 102 Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements v2.1, section 3.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Gold Standard require?

3.8 Continuous input and grievance mechanism

3.8.1 All projects shall set up a formal input & feedback, and grievance mechanism with the purpose of providing stakeholders with an opportunity to submit any feedback or record concerns/grievances during the entire project lifetime.

3.8.2 The project developer shall discuss in the physical meeting potential options for ongoing feedback & input and grievance mechanism and agree on an appropriate method.

3.8.5 The project developer shall record all comments, inputs or concerns raised by the stakeholders using the agreed mode of continuous feedback or any other form (such as verbally, telephonically, via email and/or through representatives). The project developer shall send a written acknowledgement to the stakeholder, except if the comment is anonymous.

3.8.6 The project developer shall keep the stakeholder(s) informed of the measures taken in the context of the comment(s) raised.

3.10 Ongoing Reporting

3.10.1 Project developer shall provide information in the annual report and monitoring report, as applicable, on the following:

a) Concerns that have been identified during the period of project implementation and raised by stakeholders and the measures put in place to address those.

b) Any feedback given by stakeholders as part of the project's grievance mechanism.

Source: Gold Standard for the Global Goals, PAR 102 Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements v2.1, section 3.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does TREES require of Participants?



TREES 3.0, Section 12. TREES applies only to jurisdictional REDD+ programmes. Participants are national or subnational governments, not project developers. Conformance is shown through structure and process indicators and outcome indicators, reported in the TREES Registration Document and Monitoring Report.

Source: ART, The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard (TREES), Version 3.0 (June 2026), Sections 12.4.2 to 12.4.4 and 2.6.2 (excerpt).

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does TREES require of Participants?

Cancún Safeguard D, Theme 4.1. Respect, protect, and fulfill the right of all relevant stakeholders to participate fully and effectively in the design and implementation of REDD+ activities.

Structure and Process Indicator: Participants have in place a legal framework, policies or programs as well as the necessary procedures, resources and mechanisms to respect, protect and fulfill the right of all relevant stakeholders, including women, youth and vulnerable groups, to participate fully and effectively (including timely access to information prior to consultations and access to recourse mechanisms to ensure the participation process is respected) in the design and implementation of REDD+ activities as well as in the decisions about the distribution of REDD+ benefits.

Outcome Indicator: Public institutions have respected, protected and fulfilled the right of all relevant stakeholders, including women, youth and vulnerable groups, to participate fully and effectively in the design and implementation of REDD+ activities and decisions about the distribution of REDD+ benefits.

Cancún Safeguard D, Theme 4.2. Develop adequate participatory procedures for the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and Afro-descendant Peoples, or equivalent.

Structure and Process Indicator: Participants have in place a legal framework, policies or programs as well as the necessary procedures, resources and mechanisms to guarantee that the participation of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Afro-descendant Peoples or equivalent in the design and implementation of REDD+ activities as well as in the decisions about the distribution of REDD+ benefits occurs through their respective decision-making structures and processes, ensuring adequate conditions for their participation and using culturally appropriate procedures.

Outcome Indicator: Public institutions have guaranteed that the participation of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Afro-descendant Peoples or equivalent in the design and implementation of REDD+ activities as well as in the decisions about the distribution of REDD+ benefits occurred through their respective decision-making structures and processes, ensuring adequate conditions for their participation and using culturally appropriate procedures.

Source: ART, The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard (TREES), Version 3.0 (June 2026), Sections 12.4.2 to 12.4.4 and 2.6.2 (excerpt).

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does TREES require of Participants?

Cancún Safeguard C, Theme 3.1. Identify indigenous peoples and local communities, or equivalent.

Structure and Process Indicator: Participants have in place a legal framework, policies, or programs as well as the necessary procedures, resources and mechanisms for the identification or self-identification of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Afro-descendant Peoples or equivalent, including Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact and transhumant communities.

Outcome Indicator: Public institutions have identified Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples, or equivalent, including Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact and transhumant communities, living and/or using forest resources in the REDD+ accounting area.

Cancún Safeguard C, Theme 3.3. Respect, protect, and fulfill rights of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples, or equivalent.

Structure and Process Indicator: Participants have in place a legal framework, policies or programs as well as the necessary procedures, resources and mechanisms to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and Afro-descendant Peoples, or equivalent (including Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact and transhumant communities), in conformity with customary law, institutions, and practices, throughout the design and implementation of REDD+ activities and REDD+ benefit distribution.

Outcome Indicator: Public institutions have respected, protected and fulfilled the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and Afro-descendant Peoples, or equivalent (including Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact and transhumant communities) in the design and implementation of REDD+ activities and REDD+ benefit distribution, including applicable rights to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) for any REDD+ activity that could affect their rights to lands, resources and livelihoods.

Source: ART, The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard (TREES), Version 3.0 (June 2026), Sections 12.4.2 to 12.4.4 and 2.6.2 (excerpt).

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does TREES require of Participants?

Cancún Safeguard B, Theme 2.1. Respect, protect, and fulfill the right of access to information.

Structure and Process Indicator: Participants have in place a legal framework, policies and/or programs as well as the necessary procedures, resources and mechanisms for providing access to information related to REDD+ activities, REDD+ benefit distribution, and how safeguards have been addressed and respected.

Outcome Indicator: Public institutions have provided access to information, and the public has been aware of and exercised the right to seek and receive official information on REDD+ activities and REDD+ benefit distribution as well as on how safeguards have been addressed and respected.

Cancún Safeguard B, Theme 2.4. Respect, protect, and fulfill access to justice.

Structure and Process Indicator: Participants have in place a legal framework, policies or programs and the necessary procedures, resources and mechanisms for guaranteeing non-discriminatory and non-cost prohibitive dispute resolution mechanisms at all relevant levels for stakeholders involved in the implementation of and/or with a recognized legal interest in the REDD+ activities, including judicial and/or administrative procedures for legal redress, which, among other things, provide access for Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Afro-descendant Peoples or equivalent stakeholders.

Outcome Indicator: Public institutions have resolved disputes and competing claims and provided effective recourse and remedies through non-cost prohibitive and non-discriminatory mechanisms when there was a violation of rights, grievance, dispute or claim related to the implementation of REDD+ activities. All REDD+ related dispute resolution mechanisms have been transparently and proactively communicated to stakeholders, and the disputes resolution progress is being monitored to inform evaluation and improvement processes.

Source: ART, The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard (TREES), Version 3.0 (June 2026), Sections 12.4.2 to 12.4.4 and 2.6.2 (excerpt).

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does TREES require of Participants?

Section 2.6.2. Feedback Regarding Participant Programs

Notifications regarding TREES Registration Documents and TREES Monitoring Reports will invite stakeholders to submit comments to ART regarding these submissions. Comments may be submitted in any language via email to ARTComments@winrock.org. Comments submitted to the Secretariat within 60 days of notice that documents are available in all required languages shall be directed to the Participant and their Validation and Verification Body to be responded to as part of the validation and verification.

Participants shall notify stakeholders of document availability and the opportunity to provide public comments in line with the Safeguards.

Source: ART, The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard (TREES), Version 3.0 (June 2026), Sections 12.4.2 to 12.4.4 and 2.6.2 (excerpt).



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Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Plan Vivo require?



Plan Vivo Climate Standard, Project Requirements v5.7, addressed to the Project Coordinator. Local Stakeholders are those with statutory or customary rights to land or resources in the Project Area, and others resident in the Project Region who could be directly affected.

Source: Plan Vivo Climate Standard, Project Requirements v5.7, sections 2.1, 2.4 to 2.6, 3.14, 3.16 to 3.18 and 5.1.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Plan Vivo require?

2.4 Participatory Design

2.4.1 Project Coordinators must work directly with representatives of all Local Stakeholders in the development of Project Interventions and in defining the Project Logic (particularly those that may normally be excluded or Marginalised because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, or social status) based on the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

2.4.2 Project Interventions must be developed in collaboration with potential Project Participants, who must work in partnership with the Project Coordinator to explore alternatives and identify preferred options (see Section 3.5).

2.5 Stakeholder Consultation

2.5.1 Projects must have a Stakeholder engagement plan that is commensurate with the scale and risk of the Project and that uses differentiated measures, where necessary, to engage Marginalised, Vulnerable and/or Disadvantaged People.

2.5.2 The Project Coordinator must inform all Stakeholders of the Project during the Project design phase and consult with all Local Stakeholders throughout the Project Period.

2.5.3 All Stakeholders, including men, women, youth, and other important social axes of differentiation, must have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Project Interventions and Project Logic prior to finalisation of the project design.

2.5.4 All Local Stakeholders must be provided with updates on the Project at least once per year during the Project Period.

Source: Plan Vivo Climate Standard, Project Requirements v5.7, sections 2.1, 2.4 to 2.6, 3.14, 3.16 to 3.18 and 5.1.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Plan Vivo require?

2.5.5 Consultation approaches must be appropriate to the capacity of the Stakeholders, for example, written material should be provided in the preferred language of the Stakeholders and workshops or meetings should be used when required to fully explain the Project and its impacts.

2.5.6 All Stakeholders must have the opportunity to provide feedback and raise issues or concerns about potential negative impacts of the Project throughout the Project Period (see Section 2.6), through a transparent and accessible Grievance Mechanism (See Section 3.17).

2.6 Free, Prior and Informed Consent

2.6.1 Projects must follow an FPIC process that enables Indigenous Peoples and local communities with statutory or customary rights to land or resources in the project area(s) to negotiate the conditions under which the project is designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated.

2.6.2 The FPIC process must meet or exceed the requirements of national legislation and legal obligations under international standards safeguarding Indigenous Peoples' rights.

2.6.3 The FPIC process must follow a decision-making process and timeline defined by the rights holders, who must be able to participate through their own freely chosen representatives, while ensuring the involvement of women and Marginalised, Vulnerable and/or Disadvantaged People.

2.6.4 The FPIC process must enable a collective decision by the rights holders to grant or withhold consent at key stages of project development and implementation that include, as a minimum whether to: i) Consider the proposed Project; ii) Engage in the Project design process; and iii) Implement the Project.

2.6.5 Consent must be sought before the Project or activity takes place and be re-confirmed periodically.

2.6.6 Consent must be independently decided upon based on accurate, timely and sufficient information provided in a culturally appropriate way, including full details of risks, responsibilities, and potential negative impacts of the Project.

2.6.7 All rights holders must be able to raise issues relating to consent at any time throughout the Project Period through the Grievance Mechanism (see Section 3.17).

Source: Plan Vivo Climate Standard, Project Requirements v5.7, sections 2.1, 2.4 to 2.6, 3.14, 3.16 to 3.18 and 5.1.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Plan Vivo require?

3.17 Grievance Mechanism

3.17.1 Projects must have an accessible and culturally appropriate Grievance Mechanism for reporting and remediating social, environmental and cultural incidents that result (directly or indirectly) from Project activities; and that can address situations where there is non-conformance with the conditions of the Project as stated in the Project Agreement.

3.17.2 All issues raised through the Grievance Mechanism must be documented and resolved in a transparent, fair, and timely manner.

3.17.3 Where possible, grievances should be reconciled by the affected parties; in case this is not possible, however, the Grievance Mechanism must identify an independent arbitrator that will be responsible for mediating resolution of any grievances that cannot otherwise be resolved.

3.17.4 The Grievance Mechanism must be described in each Project Agreement.

5.1 Governance Structure

5.1.1 Projects must have a clear governance structure and decision-making process that incorporates input from Project Participants and other Local Stakeholders on key decisions affecting the development of the Project.

5.1.2 Selection of Project Participants and other Local Stakeholder representatives must follow a fair and transparent process that includes women and Marginalised, Vulnerable and/or Disadvantaged Peoples.

Source: Plan Vivo Climate Standard, Project Requirements v5.7, sections 2.1, 2.4 to 2.6, 3.14, 3.16 to 3.18 and 5.1.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Plan Vivo require?

2.1 Stakeholder Analysis

2.1.1 All Stakeholders that could influence or be affected by the Project must be identified and categorised as either Local Stakeholders or Secondary Stakeholders.

2.1.2 All Indigenous Peoples and local communities with statutory or customary rights to land or resources in the Project Area(s) must be identified, and their governance structure and decision-making processes must be described with details of the involvement of women and marginalised or vulnerable groups.

2.1.3 Any past or ongoing disputes over land or resources in the Project Area(s) must be identified and described, with details of how they were or will be resolved.

3.14 Land Management Plans

3.14.1 Project Participants must decide on the Project Intervention(s) they wish to implement on the land or marine areas they manage, and the details must be recorded in a Land Management Plan.

3.14.2 Each Project Participant must develop a Land Management Plan with the support of the Project Coordinator.

3.14.4 Project Participants must fully understand all details in their Land Management Plans.

Source: Plan Vivo Climate Standard, Project Requirements v5.7, sections 2.1, 2.4 to 2.6, 3.14, 3.16 to 3.18 and 5.1.

Crediting standards and integrity initiatives

What does Plan Vivo require?

3.16 Benefit Sharing Mechanism

3.16.1 All income from the sale of Plan Vivo Certificates must be distributed according to an agreed Benefit Sharing Mechanism, developed iteratively in partnership with Project Participants. Draft and final versions must be shared with Project Participants and other Local Stakeholders in an accessible form, with documented evidence showing how feedback was addressed in the final design.

3.18 Project Agreements

3.18.1 Project Participants must enter into a Project Agreement with the Project Coordinator according to the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) (see Section 2.6).

3.18.3 Information must be provided early enough to provide sufficient time for Project Participants to consider prior entering into the Project Agreement.

3.18.4 Project Agreements must be prepared in the preferred language(s) of the Project Participants.

3.18.6 Project Participants must be provided with a copy of their Project Agreement.

3.18.8 Project Agreements must include details of how Project Participants can access the Grievance Mechanism (see Section 3.17).

Source: Plan Vivo Climate Standard, Project Requirements v5.7, sections 2.1, 2.4 to 2.6, 3.14, 3.16 to 3.18 and 5.1.

Across the frameworks

Which elements recur across the various frameworks?

Terminology and depth differ, but a common set of elements runs across all frameworks. These elements shape the rest of this guidance. **Chapter 3** covers identification, consultation, disclosure and planning. **Chapter 4** follows assessment, management, grievance redress and ongoing engagement across the project cycle. Consent is introduced in **Chapter 1** and covered in depth in Module 2, Part 2.

1 Identify Identification of affected stakeholders.	**2 Consult** Consultation before design is finalized.	**3 Disclose** Disclosure of information in advance of consultation.	**4 Consent** Free, prior and informed consent for Indigenous Peoples.	**5 Record** Documented record of consultation and of the response to what was raised.
6 Plan A stakeholder engagement plan or an equivalent instrument.	**7 Assess** Assessment of social and environmental risks.	**8 Manage** Measures to address the risks identified.	**9 Resolve** A grievance mechanism.	**10 Sustain** Ongoing engagement and monitoring through the crediting period.



Chapter 3

Stakeholder analysis and engagement plans

Chapter 3 **Content**

- **Stakeholder analysis**
- **Consultation and disclosure**
- **Stakeholder engagement plans**

Stakeholder analysis

What are the fundamentals of stakeholder analysis?



Stakeholder analysis, also referred to as stakeholder mapping, is the process of identifying key stakeholders and assessing their interests. It provides the foundation for developing the stakeholder engagement plan and helps prioritize engagement with particular groups and individuals.

Six questions stakeholder analysis seeks to answer

1) Who are the key stakeholders of the proposed activity?
2) What are the interests of these stakeholders related to the activity?
3) How will stakeholders' interests be affected, positively or negatively?
4) Which stakeholders are the most vulnerable and subject to potential adverse impacts?
5) Which stakeholders wield the most influence to affect outcomes?
6) Whose capacity needs to be supported to enable them to participate?

Stakeholder analysis

What are the fundamentals of stakeholder analysis?


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Three steps of stakeholder analysis

1) Identifying stakeholders.
2) Specifying stakeholder interests and mapping power relations and influence.
3) Prioritizing engagement across different stakeholder groups.

Analysis can initially draw on secondary data such as desk studies and review of past consultations, but direct collaboration with key stakeholder groups is what accurately identifies stakeholders, their interests, and how to plan for their participation. Workshops, public meetings, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and surveys can all be used to gather primary data. In many countries, experienced national institutes, research centers, social scientists, academics or NGOs can be engaged to assist.

Stakeholder analysis

How are stakeholders identified?

Identification is the first step of stakeholder analysis. Assessing who holds rights, and to what, is central to identifying stakeholders correctly: rights to land and resources, and to the emission reductions and removals.

Who is identified

- **Affected people and communities.** Those whose interests may be affected, positively or negatively, directly or indirectly. This includes smallholder farmers, pastoralists and other land and resource users, and people who live outside the activity area but depend on its resources.
- **Contributors and implementation partners.** Those with a role in delivering the activity: farmers and land managers changing practices on their own land, community organizations, landowners and concession holders, contractors and technical partners, and the authorities responsible for approval and oversight.
- **Rights holders.** Those holding statutory or customary rights to land and resources, including tenants and users without formal title, and those with claims to the rights to the emission reductions and removals.
- **Groups often left out.** Women, youth, marginalized and vulnerable groups, and people who may face exclusion because of disability, health status, or sexual orientation or gender identity.

Practices that strengthen identification

- **Do not rely on legal recognition alone.** Indigenous Peoples are not always recognized by national governments, and customary rights are often not formally recorded. Criteria for identifying Indigenous Peoples are set out in Module 2, Part 2.
- **Be specific.** General categories such as "local communities" signal limited outreach. Communities are grouped only where they share patterns of social organization, political structure and livelihoods, with sub-groups identified separately.
- **Open the list.** Verify and extend it through interviews, consultations and site visits, and share it with an explanation of how others can put themselves forward.
- **Revisit as scope becomes clear.** Identification is updated as design takes shape. The full range of people affected, including those reached indirectly, often becomes apparent only once the activity's boundaries and effects are better understood.

Stakeholder analysis

How is stakeholder analysis made gender responsive?

Gender is often a key factor in determining access to benefits and exposure to potential adverse impacts. A gender-responsive stakeholder analysis determines how and when women and men stakeholders are involved and addresses potential gaps in participation and decision-making. The analysis also considers age-related dynamics, including the perspectives and participation of female and male youth*, who may face distinct barriers to engagement.

What gender analysis provides

- Insight into the distribution of tasks, activities and roles associated with the division of labor among women, men and youth, and the relative position of women, men and youth in terms of representation, influence and decision-making.
- Key information on the number of men, women and youth potentially affected, literacy levels, and access to and control over resources.
- Cultural norms may make gender differences more pronounced or harder to interpret, and identifying these allows for more successful implementation of an inclusive plan.

To strengthen identification and participation of women and male and female youth stakeholders, it may be useful to consult civil society organizations focused on women's and youth rights, local committees, coalitions of women's and youth organizations, ministries responsible for women's affairs, and gender focal points in other ministries.

* Youth: the United Nations defines youth, for statistical purposes, as persons between the ages of 15 and 24.

Stakeholder analysis

How is stakeholder analysis made gender responsive?



Questions a gender-responsive stakeholder analysis responds to

- Who are the different stakeholders? Are men, women and male and female youth represented?
- What are their interests? What are the priorities for men, women, and male and female youth?
- How will men, women and male and female youth be affected differently by the proposed activity?
- What is the capacity for men, women and male and female youth to participate, particularly at the decision-making level?
- What are the key constraints to women's and youth participation?
- Who does what work? How does the work differ for men, women and male and female youth?
- Who has access to and who has control over environmental resources?

Stakeholder analysis

Who represents stakeholders?

The stakeholder analysis seeks to understand how stakeholder groups are represented, including their decision-making structures, their constituencies and their accountability. This is especially important for civil society organizations.

Stakeholders choose their own representatives

- The rights of key stakeholders, such as Indigenous Peoples, to organize themselves and be represented by the institutions and individuals of their choosing need to be respected.
- Attention is also given to who represents stakeholders at the national level as distinct from the local level, which are not necessarily the same.
- Support may need to be provided so that representatives of certain groups can meaningfully participate.

Confirming that representatives speak for their constituencies

- One way to do this is by talking directly to a sample of affected people. The purpose is to understand how information is being relayed and processed, and to assess the extent to which the activity can rely on the inputs received.
- Where gaps are identified, establish their cause before responding.
  a) If they stem from limited resources, such as the means to circulate information or convene internal deliberations, the activity can provide support and adapt its consultation arrangements. Examples include scheduling meetings to allow broad participation and returning a written record that participants endorse.
  b) If they stem from disputed representation, such as competing institutions claiming to speak for the same group, the activity should seek to understand the origins of each and the extent to which it represents the will of the people concerned. Establishing a new body for the activity rarely resolves the dispute, since the new body inherits the same question. Instead, the activity can work with the group to agree on a mechanism that accommodates differing views, while continuing to engage its members directly so they remain informed about what the activity involves.

Stakeholder analysis

How is engagement prioritized across stakeholder groups?

The group of potential stakeholders and their interests will be diverse. It may be neither practical nor warranted that the same level of engagement be sustained for each group throughout. Prioritization is not tantamount to exclusion or discrimination, but is objectively based on the identified rights, interests and influence of each stakeholder. Those whose rights may be affected, and those most exposed to adverse impacts or most marginalized, are prioritized; influence shapes how engagement is designed, not whether it takes place.

Key questions

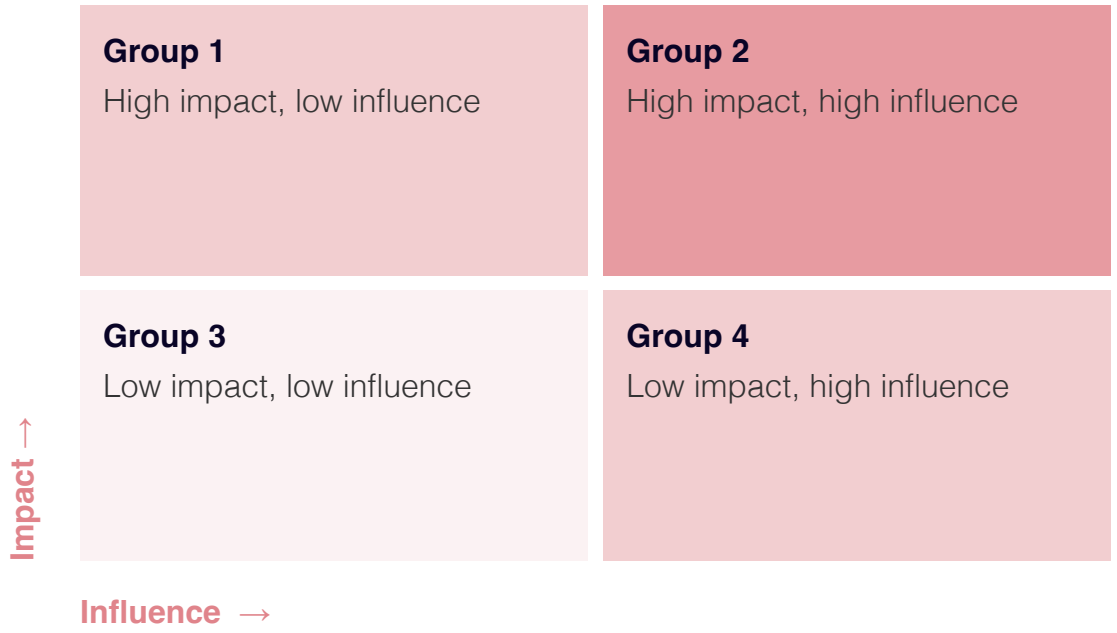
- Who are the intended beneficiaries? Who may be adversely impacted?
- Are special measures needed to protect the interests of marginalized stakeholder groups?
- What type of stakeholder engagement is required by national law, international obligations, or the framework the activity operates under?
- Who is it critical to engage with first, and why? For example, to enhance design, assist in early scoping, or avoid adverse impacts.
- What are the relationships between different stakeholders and groups of stakeholders?
- What is the degree of influence of each group to affect outcomes?
- What is the importance of each group to the success of the activity?
- Does opposition from any stakeholders or groups put the activity at risk? If so, are there ways to engage with them so that their concerns are addressed?

Stakeholder analysis

How is engagement prioritized across stakeholder groups?

One approach to prioritization is a simple matrix organizing stakeholders by impact and influence. Impact relates to who the activity is most likely to affect, adversely or positively, which may differ from the level of influence they hold to affect outcomes. This exercise supports the development of tailored engagement approaches for specified groups, which are then set out in the stakeholder engagement plan.

Stakeholder impact and influence matrix



Consultation and disclosure

What makes consultation meaningful, effective and informed?

Nine characteristics, each with considerations for the stakeholder engagement plan.

1	**Free of external manipulation, interference, coercion and intimidation**	No acts of intimidation or violence, and no provision of bribes, gifts, or unregulated and questionable patronage. Timelines are realistic and respectful of stakeholder decision-making processes and preferences, including seasonality such as harvest periods and festivals. Security arrangements are considered carefully, both to ensure safety and to avoid perceptions of intimidation, and are discussed with all parties where possible.
2	**Gender and age inclusive and responsive**	Stakeholder analysis assesses how women, men and male and female youth may be affected differently by the activity due to existing gender norms, roles and power dynamics. It identifies barriers to equitable participation, decision-making, and access to resources and benefits, and proposes culturally appropriate mechanisms to address these gaps and facilitate the equitable and active participation of women, youth and older persons in design and implementation.
3	**Culturally appropriate and tailored to the language preferences and decision-making processes of each group**	Consultations and workshops are designed to the specificities of each group, respecting local decision-making processes and time frames. Materials and outreach methods are understandable and accessible, including in local languages, and tailored across groups to ensure equity in information access. Consultations are free of charge. Accessibility principles apply and reasonable accommodation is made for persons with disabilities. Diverse forms of communication are used, from community postings, radio and SMS to public hearings, videos and local plays, and liaisons such as community elders and religious leaders.

Consultation and disclosure

What makes consultation meaningful, effective and informed?

4	**Based on prior and timely disclosure of accessible, understandable, relevant and adequate information, including drafts**	Information on purpose, nature, scale, duration and potential risks and impacts is available in a timely, accessible manner. Where risk assessments, impact assessments or management measures are prepared, drafts are disclosed and stakeholder feedback is considered before they are finalized. Final versions are disclosed. Technical information is summarized accessibly.
5	**Initiated early in the design process, continued iteratively, and adjusted as risks and impacts arise**	Stakeholders are engaged early in planning. The stakeholder engagement plan identifies key junctures where engagement takes place before further activities advance. Stakeholders are updated about upcoming activities and issues requiring their input. Adequate lead time accommodates stakeholder decision-making processes.
6	**Addresses social and environmental risks and adverse impacts, and the measures proposed to address them**	Stakeholders are involved in identifying social and environmental risks and impacts. They are consulted on the assessment of those risks and on the development of mitigation and management measures, and those who may experience adverse impacts are fully consulted. Participatory assessment techniques are considered.

Consultation and disclosure

What makes consultation meaningful, effective and informed?

7	**Seeks to empower stakeholders, particularly marginalized groups, and enable all relevant views to inform decisions**	This covers goals, design, mitigation measures, the sharing of benefits and opportunities, and implementation. Iterative opportunities are provided for stakeholders to express concerns, ideas and knowledge, and their input is reflected in goals, objectives and design. As much decision-making as possible is transferred to stakeholder groups. Stakeholder representation is provided for at national, regional and local levels on boards, monitoring committees and other key structures. Budget is allocated for capacity-building, accessibility and reasonable accommodation, and for expenses incurred by stakeholders, especially rights holders, to secure technical advisors or legal counsel.
8	**Documented and reported in accessible form to participants**	Each consultation is summarized, circulated to participants for feedback and publicly disclosed, withholding identifying information where confidentiality is necessary. Stakeholders are regularly informed of relevant information and new developments, including setbacks and delays. Reporting intervals are included in the engagement plan. A feedback mechanism captures stakeholder input on progress and how that input is addressed. Monitoring reports are disclosed in a culturally appropriate format.
9	**Consistent with States' duties and obligations under international law**	The stakeholder engagement plan is consistent with domestic laws and regulations on public engagement, including public hearings, access to assessments and comment periods. It supports the international obligations of governments regarding public participation and, where relevant, consent processes, transparency, redress for grievances, and accountability.

Consultation and disclosure

What are some key elements of gender-responsive consultations?



Relations between men and women, across different age groups, influence all stages of an activity. Men and women stakeholders may have different interests in, and different abilities to influence, the outcome.

Understanding the barriers

- Cultural context and the geographical, physical, attitudinal, informational, communicational and language barriers that undermine equal participation need to be understood.
- Women with low literacy levels, for example, may lack access to information. This can be addressed by disseminating information through multiple media including notices, leaflets, announcements in community forums, market days and picture-based texts.

Consultation and disclosure

What are some key elements of gender-responsive consultations?



Facilitation

- Good facilitation means everyone understands the explanation and has the information needed to make informed decisions.
- Framing questions and listening in a gender-responsive way reveals where significant differences exist between men and women in economic and social conditions, opportunities, priorities, planning approaches, implementation abilities, training needs and desired outcomes.
- Addressing barriers to participation and power imbalances ensures that women, men, youth, older persons and other underrepresented groups have equitable opportunities to speak, influence discussions and shape decisions.

Consultation and disclosure

What are some key elements of gender-responsive consultations?



Gender and age inclusive consultation methods

- Women-only, elderly-only and youth-only interviews.
- Interviews held separately with women, older persons and youth.
- Separate meetings with women's cooperatives or youth associations.
- Reserved seating for women, youth and older persons on steering committees and in decision-making and monitoring bodies.
- Childcare provided during consultations.
- Tailored capacity-building sessions.
- Gender-balanced facilitation teams, including female facilitators where appropriate.
- Feedback and validation processes that confirm diverse perspectives are reflected in final decisions, disaggregated by gender, age and stakeholder group.

Consultation and disclosure

What are some key elements of gender-responsive consultations?



Timing and location

- Activities should be mindful of women's daily routines and responsibilities, and of the time and place consultation happens. For instance:
  - Lack of childcare is a critical constraint, and budget should be considered to accommodate childcare support in meetings.
  - Timing should adapt to the working schedules of both men and women. Scheduling meetings in the evening may not be appropriate in environments where women can feel insecure after dark.
  - Meeting locations should be culturally appropriate spaces for women to participate in. Women may not be permitted in public places or may feel embarrassed or threatened in unfamiliar environments.
  - Holding gender sensitization training or consultations within the community avoids men feeling threatened and reduces the risk of male violence against women.
- Identifying community leaders and raising their awareness of how inclusion benefits the whole community allows them to act as local ambassadors.

Consultation and disclosure

What measures enable participation of marginalized and vulnerable groups and persons with disabilities?

Information and communication	Safety and confidentiality	Costs of participation	Access, location and timing
Share information in accessible formats and local languages, with technical findings summarized in understandable form. Use facilitation that explains complex issues and terminology. Provide simultaneous interpretation, including sign language.	Identify and address risks of retaliation and reprisals against people who participate, raise concerns or use grievance mechanisms. Hold private meetings that ensure a degree of anonymity where groups face discrimination or harassment. Where identities must be protected, record and report consultation information in statistical form.	Cover the costs participants incur, such as travel, childcare and time given to meetings, from the activity budget rather than leaving them to participants. Where representatives receive allowances, consider the effect on others in the community, since an allowance can become income that others do not have.	Hold consultations at convenient locations, in venues that are accessible. Schedule meetings around participants' obligations, such as harvest seasons and religious observances. Provide transportation to meetings. Provide support workers and other reasonable accommodation for participants with disabilities.

Consultation and disclosure

How is engagement conducted in challenging environments?

Activities may at times be undertaken in especially challenging environments such as areas experiencing armed conflict or where human rights violations are rampant. Government stakeholders may object to engaging with certain other stakeholder groups. Civil society stakeholders may be fearful of expressing opposing or critical perspectives. Natural hazards may impede access. Infectious disease outbreaks may pose health risks to stakeholders.

The question to ask

Could planned meetings and consultations put stakeholders at risk?

If so, good practice is to take measures to avoid and minimize that risk.

How engagement adapts

- Stakeholder engagement specialists with up-to-date familiarity with local contexts will most likely be needed to devise and help manage engagement processes.
- Decentralized, targeted meetings with specific stakeholder groups may be necessary.
- Where direct consultation with certain groups is politically impossible, other avenues are explored, such as using third parties as intermediaries.
- Third-party monitors will likely be needed to closely monitor risks to stakeholders.

Consultation and disclosure

How is engagement adapted when in-person engagement is limited?

In-person engagement may be limited by an infectious disease outbreak, by remote communities spread across large or hard-to-reach areas, or by natural hazards and seasonal conditions that restrict access. The context of each activity is unique, and the risks and barriers to engagement need to be carefully reviewed.

Risk analysis

- Review what limits in-person engagement in the activity area, such as disease transmission, distance and travel time, or seasonal access, together with the capacity of duty bearers and the awareness of stakeholders.
- Review national and local government regulations currently in force, monitoring regularly for updates, and ensure a "do no harm" approach is respected.
- Assess the level of proposed direct in-person engagement and the risks or barriers involved, and identify components for which direct in-person engagement is critical, such as consent processes.
- Assess the level of stakeholder access to information and communications technology that could be used.
- Consider how gender norms shape access to online engagement. In low- and middle-income countries, women are 12 percent less likely than men to use mobile internet, and in 2025 the gender gaps in mobile phone and smartphone ownership stood at 7 and 13 percent. Moving engagement online can therefore deepen the exclusion of women.
- Consider whether limits on engagement would exacerbate the exclusion of marginalized and disadvantaged groups and individuals, and whether there is a risk of disinformation about the activity.

Consultation and disclosure

How is engagement adapted when in-person engagement is limited?



Potential adjustments and risk mitigation

- Consider postponement of relevant components or activities. Where the constraint is a health risk, avoid public or group gatherings.
- Use social media and online channels where available for two-way communication, including online platforms for virtual workshops, chat groups, online meetings, SMS and messaging applications.
- Structure online consultations with prior electronic sharing of documents, guiding questions and facilitators.
- Establish or identify community groups that can organize local consultations and provide feedback by phone or other communications, supporting the capacity of those groups as needed.
- Diversify the means of informing stakeholders: television, newspaper, radio, dedicated phone lines, mail, public postings, message boards. Where marginalized and disadvantaged groups do not have ready access to these forms of communication, identify alternative means of reaching them.
- Ensure any alternative engagement approaches accord with applicable local laws and policies.

Consultation and disclosure

What information is disclosed?

Information is disclosed in a timely manner, in an appropriate place, and in a form and language understandable to affected persons and other stakeholders, so they can understand potential opportunities and risks and provide meaningful input into design and implementation.

What is made available

- Information on purpose, nature and scale, duration, and potential risks and impacts.
- Stakeholder engagement plans and summary reports of stakeholder consultations.
- The outputs of risk identification.
- Draft social and environmental assessments, including gender assessments, and management measures, where these are prepared.
- Final assessments and management measures.
- Monitoring reports.

Ask stakeholders

Stakeholders are asked for input on the types of information they want and need, beyond the disclosures set out here, and on the most appropriate formats, languages and mechanisms for dissemination.

A public record of stakeholder engagement throughout the project cycle is maintained and disclosed. Where it is necessary to safeguard the identities of stakeholders due to potential harm, statistical information is recorded and disclosed.

Consultation and disclosure

What makes disclosure timely, accessible and appropriate?

Transparency is essential to building and maintaining public dialogue, increasing public awareness, enhancing good governance and accountability, and ensuring effectiveness.

Timely	Accessible	Appropriate in form and language
Information on potential social and environmental impacts and on mitigation and management measures is provided in advance of decision-making.	Stakeholders need to be able to readily access the information.	Information is in a form and language readily understandable and tailored to the target group. Summary information may need to be translated and presented by various means, written and verbal.
Drafts are provided in advance as part of the consultation process.	Local regulatory requirements might mandate availability of environmental assessments in government offices, but this may not be sufficient for local stakeholders to actually access them.	Level of technical detail, local languages and dialects, levels of literacy, persons with disabilities, roles of women and men, and local methods of disseminating information are important considerations.
In all cases, draft and final documentation is disclosed and consulted on ahead of the implementation of activities that may give rise to potential adverse impacts.	Other means of dissemination are considered: websites, public meetings, local councils or organizations, newsprint, television and radio reporting, flyers, local displays and direct mail.	A general solicitation of feedback on documents may not be an appropriate form of information sharing. Material may need to be presented contextually, such as options with key information and questions designed to solicit feedback.
		Proactive disclosure goes beyond web posting: radio broadcasts, brochures, community postings, SMS, oral presentations. Communication methods are devised to reach potentially marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

Consultation and disclosure

What does a project description record about engagement?

Some frameworks include project description templates that ask developers to document engagement in detail.

1 Stakeholder identification
How stakeholders were identified, and a description of each

2 Access to documents
How full and summary documentation reaches communities

3 Informational meetings
How meetings with communities were held and publicized

4 Risks from the project
Including risks to stakeholder participation

5 Costs, risks and benefits
Shared in a form communities understand, before decisions

6 Validation and verification
Informing stakeholders of the audit and the auditor's site visit

7 Consultations
How input influenced design, with a comment and response table

8 Continued consultation
Ongoing communication and adaptive management

9 Consultation channels
Engagement directly or through legitimate representatives

10 Participation in decisions
Measures enabling effective participation in decision-making

11 Anti-discrimination
Measures to prevent discrimination and harassment

12 Feedback and grievances
A redress procedure developed with stakeholders

Source: CCB and VCS Project Description Template (CCB v3.0, VCS v4.3), Safeguards and Stakeholder Engagement sections.

Stakeholder engagement plans

A stakeholder engagement plan sets out how engagement is planned and carried out across the project cycle. Some frameworks require such a plan or an equivalent instrument. Others require the underlying activities, such as consultation, disclosure and grievance redress, without requiring a single plan that brings them together.



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How the term is used here

- Stakeholder engagement plan is used as the general term for the instrument that plans engagement across the project cycle.
- Developing a stakeholder engagement plan is good practice, because it establishes who will be engaged, why, how, when, by whom and at what cost, in one central place.

How it fits with existing documentation

- The content described in the slides that follow can be used within whatever documentation a developer already prepares, whether or not it carries this name.
- Depending on the framework, that may be the project design document, a consultation report, a safeguards assessment, or a management plan.
- A plan is a planning tool, not a substitute for engagement itself. Where FPIC applies, the plan can set the stage for the consent process but does not replace it.

Stakeholder engagement plans

What is a stakeholder engagement plan?

A roadmap for stakeholders and implementers on when, how and with whom consultations and exchanges are undertaken over the life of the activity. It is developed from the stakeholder analysis.

Scaled to the activity

- Plans are scaled to reflect the nature of the activity and its potential impacts, from relatively simple measures where there are few if any social and environmental risks, to more developed plans for activities with potentially significant adverse risks and impacts.
- No one type or format accommodates all activities. Content depends on the nature, scale, location and duration of the activity, the diverse interests of stakeholders, the scale of potential positive and adverse impacts, and the likelihood of grievances.

Agreed with stakeholders

- The content of the plan is confirmed with all affected stakeholders before design is finalized, so that those who will be engaged have reviewed and agreed how that engagement will work.
- At the start of implementation, partners confirm their understanding of the agreed design and of their respective roles and responsibilities, including engagement, communications, reporting, conflict resolution and grievance redress.



Stakeholder engagement plans

What considerations shape a plan?

Consideration	What it involves
Ownership and trust	Building mutual trust is facilitated by stakeholder ownership of the process. Work with relevant stakeholders to design by mutual agreement the engagement and consultation processes, including mechanisms for inclusiveness, respect for cultural sensitivities and any consent processes. Cultural understanding and awareness is central to meaningful stakeholder engagement.
How input is solicited	A general call for feedback should not be the only way of consulting stakeholders. Setting out specific options, with the reasons for each and their likely consequences, can be a more effective approach.
Rhythm and revision	Engagement may be minimal at certain times and intense at others, depending on the issues and the phase. Targeted input from select groups may be needed at key points. As information changes, whether from further assessment of risks, additional activities, or stakeholder concerns, the plan is reviewed and modified accordingly.
Facilitation and budget	The plan anticipates whether professional, neutral facilitators may be needed to lead key engagement activities. Where the process is likely to be complex or sensitive, social advisors or other expert staff help design and facilitate it and assist with participatory methodologies and other specialized techniques. The plan outlines a reasonable budget, including potential support for groups to facilitate their participation. Meeting locations are as convenient as possible, and stakeholder acceptance of such support is not interpreted as endorsement of the activity.

Stakeholder engagement plans

What questions does a stakeholder engagement plan answer?

Questions	
Who	Which stakeholder groups and individuals are to be engaged, based on the stakeholder analysis? Which stakeholders will be involved in particular activities? Have potentially marginalized groups and individuals been identified among stakeholders?
Why	Why is each stakeholder group participating? What are their key objectives and interests?
What	What is the breadth and depth of engagement at each stage of the project cycle? What decisions are to be made through stakeholder engagement? What roles will stakeholders undertake, for example lead, support, or affected party?
How	How will stakeholders be engaged, including strategy, methods and communications? Are special measures needed to ensure inclusive participation of marginalized or disadvantaged groups?
When	What is the timeline for engagement activities, and how will they be sequenced, including information disclosure?
Responsibilities	How are roles and responsibilities for conducting engagement distributed among the project developer, implementing partners, contractors and consultants? What role will stakeholder representatives play? Are stakeholder engagement facilitators needed?
Resources	What will the plan cost and under what budget?

Plans provide for adequate financial resources for engagement throughout the project cycle.
This is often overlooked, and for large-scale activities with significant risks and impacts the costs may be substantial.

Stakeholder engagement plans

What does a comprehensive plan contain?

The scope and level of detail is scaled to fit the needs of the activity.

Element	Content
Introduction	Brief description of the activity including design elements and potential social and environmental issues. Where relevant, maps are included of the site and surrounding area.
Regulations and requirements	Summary of the legal and regulatory requirements pertaining to stakeholder engagement and the requirements of the framework the activity operates under. This may include public consultation and disclosure requirements as well as relevant international obligations.
Previous stakeholder engagement	Where engagement has already been undertaken: type of information disclosed, in what forms and languages, and how it was disseminated; locations and dates of meetings; individuals, groups and organizations consulted; key issues discussed and concerns raised; responses to issues raised, including commitments or follow-up actions; and the process used for documenting these activities and reporting back.
Stakeholders	The key groups to be informed and engaged, based on the stakeholder analysis: those directly or indirectly affected, those with interests that determine them as stakeholders, and those with potential to influence outcomes or operations. Consideration of the capacities of various groups to participate effectively, and measures to support them where capacity is limited.
Barriers and accommodations	Identification of affected marginalized and disadvantaged stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, and of limitations for understanding information and participating, such as language differences, lack of transportation, venue accessibility and disability. Measures to support and accommodate engagement, such as information in accessible formats, convenient locations, accessible venues, transportation, adjusted meeting times, facilitation and explanation of complex terminology, support workers, and simultaneous interpretation including signing.
Information to be disclosed	What information will be disclosed, in what formats and languages, and the methods used to communicate it to each group. Methods vary by audience: newspapers, posters, radio, television; information centers, exhibitions and other visual displays; brochures, leaflets, non-technical summary documents and reports.

Stakeholder engagement plans

What does a comprehensive plan contain?

Element	Content
Methods of engagement	The methods used to engage and consult each group: interviews with representatives and key informants; surveys, polls and questionnaires; public meetings, workshops and focus groups; participatory methods; and other traditional mechanisms for consultation and decision-making.
Inclusion	How the views of women and other relevant groups, including minorities, older persons, youth and other marginalized groups, will be taken into account and their participation facilitated. Where relevant, the activities that call for prior consultation and FPIC from Indigenous Peoples, cross-referenced to any Indigenous Peoples plan and consent protocols.
Ongoing communication and partnerships	Methods to receive feedback and maintain communications outside formal consultation meetings. Other engagement activities including participatory processes, joint decision-making and partnerships with local communities, NGOs or other stakeholders, for example benefit-sharing programmes, stakeholder-led initiatives, and training and capacity-building.
Timetable	Dates, periodicity and locations for engagement activities including consultation, disclosure and partnerships, and the date by which each will be undertaken.
Resources and responsibilities	Who is responsible for carrying out the specified activities, and the budget and other resources allocated. For activities with significant potential impacts and multiple stakeholder groups, a qualified stakeholder engagement facilitator may undertake all or part of the work, including community facilitators and assistants able to work in local languages, ideally from the same ethnic group or culture. A gender expert may also be engaged as relevant.
Grievance mechanism	The process by which people concerned with or potentially affected can express grievances for consideration and redress. Who will receive grievances, how and by whom they will be resolved, and how the response will be communicated back to the complainant. Where risk assessment indicates a likelihood of reprisals and retaliation, all relevant parties are informed that there will be zero tolerance for such actions, and preventive and response measures are developed with relevant stakeholders.
Monitoring and reporting	Plans to involve stakeholders, including affected groups, or third-party monitors, in monitoring implementation, potential impacts and management measures. How and when the results of engagement activities will be reported back to affected and broader stakeholder groups.



Chapter 4

Engagement across the project cycle

Chapter 4 **Content**

- **Engagement across the cycle**
- **Assessment and management**
- **Implementation and monitoring**
- **Verification**
- **Raising concerns**
- **Protection from reprisals**

Engagement across the cycle

When does engagement take place across the project cycle?

Engagement runs from before design decisions are fixed through to the end of the crediting period. Each stage has its own entry points, and the frameworks set requirements at each.

Concept and design

- Screening of social, gender and environmental risks, and stakeholder mapping
- Analysis of who holds rights to land, resources and the emission reductions
- Consultation on design options while the design can still change
- Consent sought where it applies
- Engagement plan agreed and grievance mechanism operating

Validation and registration

- Safeguard and engagement documentation disclosed
- Public comment period, which may open when the project is listed
- Comments and responses available to the auditor

Implementation and monitoring

- Participation in governance and in decisions on benefits
- Engagement plan implemented and updated
- Participatory monitoring and reporting back
- Consent conditions monitored and re-confirmed where consent applies

Verification

- Safeguard performance reported for each monitoring period
- Stakeholders comment on monitoring reports
- Auditor site visit and interviews with local stakeholders

Issuance, renewal and closure

- Benefits delivered as agreed
- Engagement maintained to the end of the crediting period
- Plans and consent revisited at renewal

Project start date: several frameworks require consent to be documented and a grievance mechanism to be operating before the first significant action to implement the project, which can come before validation.

Assessment and management

How are stakeholders engaged during social and environmental assessment and management?

Stakeholder engagement applies to all activities regardless of the level of potential risks and impacts. Processes are increasingly intensive where risks and impacts are greater, and engagement is equally relevant where risks are minimal.

Identify	Assess	Manage and monitor
Undertake initial stakeholder analysis and engage stakeholders in identifying potential social, gender and environmental risks and impacts. Develop an initial stakeholder engagement plan with stakeholders, scaled to the nature of the activity and its potential risks and impacts. Confirm the results of risk identification and the engagement plan with stakeholders.	Revise and update the stakeholder engagement plan. Ensure stakeholder engagement in the design and conduct of any assessment, whether targeted at specific risks or a fuller impact assessment. Where potential impacts are more varied, complex or significant, consult stakeholders on the draft terms of reference. Ensure stakeholders are consulted on the draft assessment. Update the plan with new information from the assessment or changes in context. Disclose summary reports of consultations.	Develop mitigation measures and management plans with the participation of affected stakeholders. Ensure stakeholders are consulted on draft management measures. Ensure stakeholders are involved in monitoring of management measures. Ensure awareness of grievance entry points and, where warranted, an activity-level grievance mechanism. Update stakeholders on changes and involve them in identifying, assessing and managing any additional potential risks and impacts.

The assess and manage columns apply where potential adverse social, gender and environmental risks and impacts are identified, and to the extent required by the framework the activity operates under.

Implementation and monitoring

How are stakeholders engaged during implementation?

Once activities begin, engagement shifts from shaping the design to influencing decisions taken as the activity runs, and to checking that agreed measures work.

Participation in decisions	**Governance arrangements**. Stakeholder representation on boards, monitoring committees and other structures where decisions are taken. These are standing bodies maintained across the life of the activity, not convened for individual consultation rounds. **Representatives are chosen by stakeholders.** Budget covers the costs of participation, including independent technical or legal advice where needed. **Decisions on benefits.** Participation extends to decisions on how benefits are distributed. **A seat is not consent.** Representation on a governance body does not replace a consent process where one applies.
Keeping engagement active	**The plan is implemented and updated.** It is revised as the activity, its context and its stakeholders change, not filed after validation. Consent conditions are monitored. Where consent applies, the conditions agreed are tracked and consent re-confirmed periodically. **Regular reporting back.** Affected communities receive periodic updates on implementation of management measures and on issues of concern. At least annually is good practice. **Changes trigger engagement**. Where the activity changes materially, screening is revisited with stakeholders. **Risks to those who engage.** Signs of retaliation against people raising concerns are watched for and addressed.

Implementation and monitoring

How are stakeholders involved in monitoring and reporting?

Involving affected stakeholders in monitoring tests whether agreed measures are working as intended. Reporting results back to them closes the loop and gives early warning where measures are not working.

Participatory monitoring	This means more than stakeholder access to monitoring data. It typically involves stakeholders themselves defining meaningful monitoring indicators and processes, and participating actively in field visits and in the elaboration of monitoring reports and recommendations. Participatory approaches focus on building stakeholder capacity, ownership and commitment to implement corrective actions. Methods include community-based monitoring, citizen report cards, social audits, and target group narratives. The stakeholder engagement plan sets out which stakeholders are involved in monitoring and how, and mechanisms are in place for stakeholders to verify monitoring results.
Reporting back to affected communities	Where social, gender and environmental risks or impacts are significant, affected communities are provided periodic progress reports on implementation of management measures, and on issues of concern to stakeholders. Any material changes, incidents, accidents, corrective actions or additions to mitigation measures are also communicated. Frequency is proportionate to the level of stakeholder concern, and reporting at least annually is good practice. Reporting covers how grievances received have been responded to. (Grievance redress itself is addressed in the next section.)

Verification

How do stakeholders engage with the auditor?

Carbon crediting adds entry points at which stakeholders can comment on an activity and speak to the auditor. These sit alongside the developer's own engagement. Online comment periods may not reach local communities, so the auditor's site visit is the main opportunity for rights holders to speak directly to the auditor; what is raised there can inform the engagement plan and design.

	At validation and registration	At verification
Verra	A 30-day public comment period opens once the project is listed as under validation. Comments are submitted through the Verra Project Hub and the proponent addresses them (RIP v5.0, 3.1.17 to 3.1.18).	Engagement continues under the stakeholder engagement plan, which is updated for each verification (VCS Standard v5.0, 3.17.2 and 3.17.3). The proponent enables direct communication between the validation and verification body (VVB) and all stakeholders during validation and verification, including site visits (3.17.5).
Gold Standard	The VVB takes stakeholder feedback, and how it was addressed, into account before concluding validation (3.6.13).	Comments received after validation, and the action taken, are reported at the next verification or in the annual report (3.10.2).
PACM	Parties, stakeholders and admitted observers may comment on the SD Tool forms during global stakeholder consultation. Inputs and revised forms go to the designated operational entity.	The designated operational entity reviews input received through continuous engagement and interviews local stakeholders.
TREES	Comments on the TREES Registration Document received within 60 days go to the Participant and its VVB for response (2.6.2).	The same comment process applies to TREES Monitoring Reports (2.6.2).
CCB Standards	The project description records how stakeholders are informed of the audit, and how direct and independent communication between communities and other stakeholders, or their representatives, and the auditor will be facilitated (G3.3).	Communities are told of the auditor's site visit in advance, and direct and independent communication with the auditor is facilitated (G3.3).

Sources: Verra Registration and Issuance Process v5.0 and VCS Standard v5.0, 3.17; Gold Standard PAR 102 v2.1; A6.4-TOOL-AC-001; TREES 3.0, 2.6.2; CCB and VCS Project Description Template, G3.3.

Raising concerns

How do stakeholders raise concerns?


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Even with strong planning and engagement, unanticipated issues arise. Stakeholders need to be able to communicate concerns or complaints.

Entry points scaled to the activity

- Where an activity presents few if any adverse social and environmental risks and impacts, concerns can be effectively addressed through relatively simple procedures, for example handled directly by a communications officer or community liaison.
- Information on how to contact them is shared through the engagement process.

Accessibility starts with awareness

- Affected people and communities are informed of grievance entry points.
- In all interactions with stakeholders, including consultations, meetings and websites, information about how to access complaints processes is made available.
- The means of sharing this information are accessible to affected groups, taking into account literacy levels, language preferences, digital access, disability, mobility constraints and gender-related barriers to communication and technology use.

Raising concerns

When is a project-level grievance mechanism warranted?

Several frameworks require a grievance mechanism, so the question is often not whether to have one but rather, what form it takes and whether existing channels are sufficient.

What the frameworks require

- **ICVCM.** Carbon crediting programmes have a clear and transparent process for addressing grievances, ensuring impartiality and, where appropriate, confidentiality, with fees that do not impede access for civil society organizations or Indigenous Peoples and local communities (Criterion 1.2).
- **VCS.** A grievance redress mechanism is established and made publicly available. It operates before the project start date and can start simple, then be strengthened with stakeholder input (3.17.22 to 3.17.23).
- **Gold Standard.** All projects set up a formal input, feedback and grievance mechanism for the entire project lifetime, with the approach agreed with stakeholders (3.8.1, 3.8.2).
- **Plan Vivo.** Projects have an accessible and culturally appropriate mechanism, described in each Project Agreement, with an independent arbitrator where grievances cannot otherwise be resolved (3.17).
- **TREES.** Participants have non-discriminatory and non-cost prohibitive dispute resolution mechanisms in place, providing effective recourse and remedies (Theme 2.4; Section 16.1).
- **PACM.** Stakeholders can comment on compliance with the SD Tool through a continuous engagement mechanism until the end of the crediting period; appeals and grievances go through a mechanism-level procedure (para. 17; para. 227).

Sources: ICVCM Core Carbon Principles Assessment Framework, Criterion 1.2; VCS Standard v5.0, 3.17; Gold Standard PAR 102 v2.1, 3.8; Plan Vivo Climate v5.7, 3.17; TREES 3.0, Theme 2.4 and Section 16.1; Article 6.4 SD Tool (A6.4-TOOL-AC-001), para. 17; Article 6.4 activity cycle procedure for projects (A6.4-SB008-A06), para. 227; UNDP SES Stakeholder Engagement Guidance Note.

Raising concerns

When is a project-level grievance mechanism warranted?

Several frameworks require a grievance mechanism, so the question is often not whether to have one but rather, what form it takes and whether existing channels are sufficient.

Deciding what form it takes

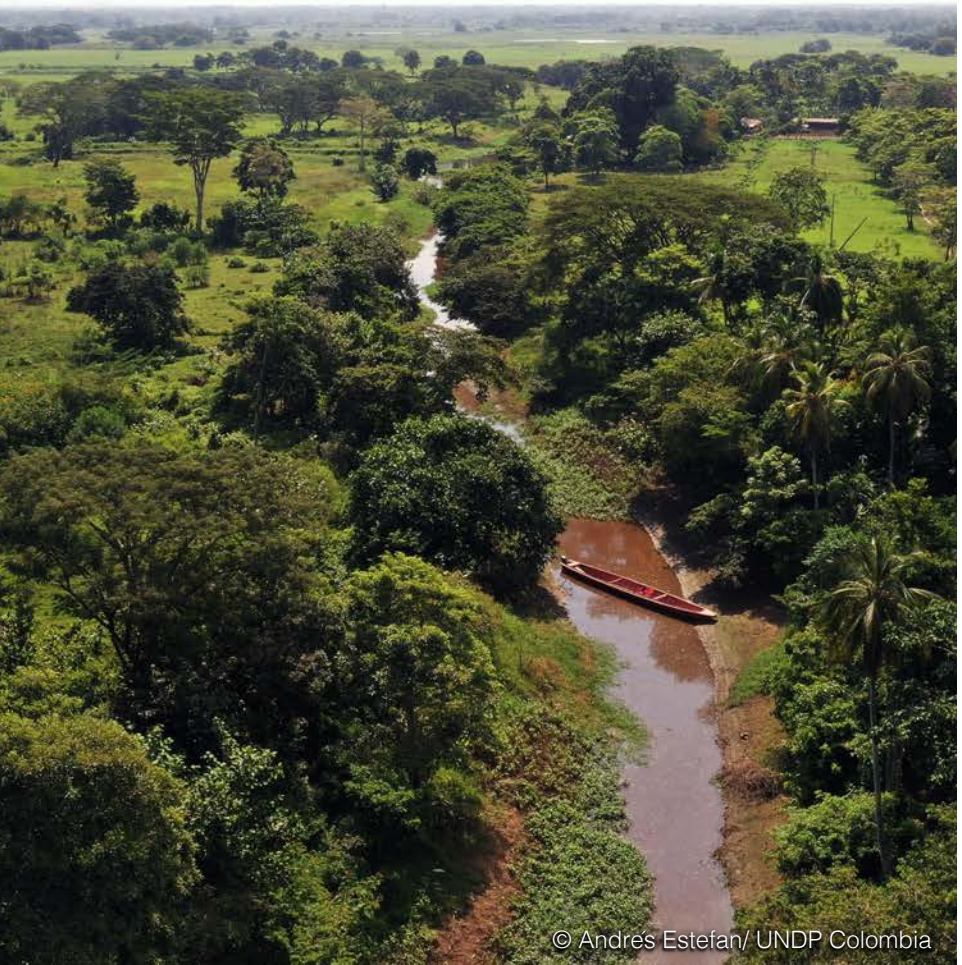
- Existing local and national channels are mapped and assessed before a new mechanism is designed, including the potential to use national mechanisms such as a human rights ombudsman.
- Where existing capacity is sufficient, the engagement plan sets out how that mechanism will be accessed and used.
- Where existing capacity is not sufficient, activities and budget strengthen it, and an interim means of addressing grievances is identified.
- Where no suitable host exists, a mechanism is established for the activity with clear terms of reference setting out its roles, responsibilities and functions.
- Project-level mechanisms can respond more directly, being tailored to the context and staffed by people who understand the risks and issues involved.

To note: Grievance redress is addressed in depth in Module 4 of the HICM Toolkit. This section covers only how it connects to stakeholder engagement.

Sources: ICVCM Core Carbon Principles Assessment Framework, Criterion 1.2; VCS Standard v5.0, 3.17; Gold Standard PAR 102 v2.1, 3.8; Plan Vivo Climate v5.7, 3.17; TREES 3.0, Theme 2.4 and Section 16.1; Article 6.4 SD Tool (A6.4-TOOL-AC-001), para. 17; Article 6.4 activity cycle procedure for projects (A6.4-SB008-A06), para. 227; UNDP SES Stakeholder Engagement Guidance Note.

Protection from reprisals

What forms do retaliation and reprisals take?


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Stakeholders will often actively seek information on or participation in activities, and concerns and complaints about social and environmental performance are to be expected. In some circumstances, however, requests for information, participation or complaints can elicit harsh reactions from powerful actors with vested interests.

The scale of the problem

- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has identified a significant increase in cases of retaliation and reprisals against persons who cooperate with the United Nations on human rights, including through submitting complaints and sharing information.
- There has also been an increase in cases of severe retaliation against local communities and activists who oppose certain projects and interventions. Global Witness documented the killing of at least 124 land and environmental defenders in 2025. More than three-quarters were small-scale farmers, Indigenous Peoples or Afro-descendant Peoples.

Source: This slide draws on Inter-American Development Bank Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism (2019). Guide for Independent Accountability Mechanisms on Measures to Address the Risk of Reprisals in Complaint Management: A Practical Toolkit.

Protection from reprisals

What forms do retaliation and reprisals take?



Forms to consider when assessing risk

- Intimidation, including by indirect and direct threats and verbal harassment against requesters, complainants or others associated with them.
- Smear campaigns, including by State-owned media and social media.
- Revoking professional permits for individuals such as lawyers, and for trade unions and civil society organizations that support or facilitate the complainants.
- Dismissal from employment, or discrimination, disadvantage or other adverse treatment in relation to employment.
- Judicial harassment, including retaliatory lawsuits intended to censor, intimidate and silence critics by burdening them with the cost of a legal defense until they abandon their criticism or opposition, and arbitrary detention.
- Physical assault against persons or their property, including their offices and vehicles.
- Surveillance by State and non-State actors, including through digital interference.
- Gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) and actual or threatened harassment, abuse, violence, coercion, exploitation or intimidation against individuals involved in a grievance, complaint or accountability process.

Source: This slide draws on Inter-American Development Bank Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism (2019). Guide for Independent Accountability Mechanisms on Measures to Address the Risk of Reprisals in Complaint Management: A Practical Toolkit.

Protection from reprisals

How are reprisal risks addressed?

Addressing these risks calls for context-specific analysis and response. The following are general points for consideration.

1	**Set a zero-tolerance policy for retaliation**	› Establish a clear set of expectations that all affected stakeholders have the right to seek information on and participate in design and implementation, including expressing concerns and submitting complaints to grievance mechanisms. › Notify team members and contractors that any acts of retaliation are unacceptable and will lead to serious consequences.
2	**Assess risks of retaliation**	› Seek to identify whether affected persons may be at risk for seeking information, participating, or raising concerns or complaints. A key starting point is any personal safety concern expressed during meetings and consultations. › Review media reports and consult local civil society organizations on potential risks. › Examine country- and region-specific reporting from human rights bodies on the state of civil society, the situation of human rights and environmental defenders, previous reprisals, and how authorities responded to them.

Protection from reprisals

How are reprisal risks addressed?

Preventative measures are set out in the stakeholder engagement plan, and responses are prepared before they are needed.

3	**Adopt preventive measures and include them in the plan**	› Where the risk assessment indicates a likelihood of retaliation, identify preventive measures specific to the circumstances together with relevant stakeholders. Measures may address the means and timing of communication, the location and timing of meetings, means of transportation, use of trusted intermediaries, the use and selection of interpreters, facilitators and other consultants, and specialized intermediaries for people with specific needs. › Measures are sensitive to gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, and other status. › Respect the confidentiality of stakeholders, including identity and information received, disclosing only with the informed consent of those potentially at risk. Use secure forms of communication. › Monitor potential retaliation by following up with those who have raised concerns. Engage relevant groups in monitoring the situation, and refer specific at-risk individuals to support organizations.
4	**Respond to acts of retaliation and reprisals**	› Give immediate priority to reported cases and sensitively seek to corroborate and assess the credibility and severity of retaliatory threats and actions. › Prioritize the safety and well-being of persons subject to retaliation and seek their views on appropriate courses of action. › Actions are context-specific and may include intervening directly with the source of the threat, engaging influential political, civil or religious figures to intervene, publicizing and condemning the actions, requesting partners to engage national authorities, seeking support from international mechanisms such as United Nations human rights bodies, diplomatic missions and international NGOs, and supporting protection strategies including temporary relocation.

Key takeaways

Ten points that run across the chapters

1. **Engagement is a requirement, not a discretionary activity.** It derives from international human rights law, host country law, and the requirements of the framework under which the activity is registered. It also supports carbon integrity: effective engagement, and FPIC where it applies, reduce the risk of conflict and reversals.
2. **Requirements converge across frameworks.** Terminology and depth differ across VCS, Gold Standard, TREES, Plan Vivo, PACM and the ICVCM, but a common set of elements recurs.
3. **Identification shapes the engagement that follows.** Groups not identified at the outset are unlikely to be engaged later, and unresolved claims to the rights to emission reductions can prevent issuance.
4. **Representation is established with the group.** Who speaks for a group, and whether those institutions are accepted by the people they represent, is assessed rather than assumed.
5. **Consent is distinct from consultation.** FPIC is a right held by Indigenous Peoples and is sought through their own decision-making structures.
6. **Engagement influences design only while decisions remain open.** Consultation held before commitments are fixed can change an activity; after registration its scope for doing so is limited.
7. **Depth of engagement is proportionate to risk.** The scale and intensity of engagement reflect the rights and impacts at stake, not the project type alone.
8. **Disclosure precedes consultation.** Information, including drafts of assessments and management measures, is provided in advance and in accessible form and language.
9. **Engagement continues to the end of the crediting period.** Plans are implemented and updated, monitoring involves stakeholders, and results are reported back to affected communities.
10. **Risks to those who engage are part of engagement.** Where stakeholders may face retaliation for seeking information or raising concerns, those risks are assessed and addressed alongside other risks.



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