

**Developing a stakeholder consultation strategy for the  
Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum****Notes for October Forum Meeting****Sarah Roberts, Arup, October 2008****Overview**

This document describes the actions that I have taken over the past two weeks to address the brief that I was given and the issues that have arisen from the conversations I have had so far with Forum members. Based on these initial discussions and further conversations with Helen Locher, I have set out some initial suggestions for the objectives of the consultation and its key elements and developed a draft stakeholder map. The aim is to provide a useful basis for discussion at the Forum meeting in China at the end of October.

**Section 1 Brief, actions and issues****Brief**

The Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum aims to establish a broadly endorsed sustainability assessment tool to measure and guide performance in the hydropower sector. The Forum is considering the relevant issues ("aspects") to be assessed for each Protocol section, and the criteria ("attributes") one would use to rate performance for each of these issues. In December 2008, the Forum members will have agreed to a list of aspects and attributes for each of the four proposed sections of the revised Protocol. Between January and mid February 2009, the Forum wishes to undertake stakeholder consultation to obtain views on the purpose and intent of each section of the Protocol; and the aspects and attributes for each section of the Protocol.

Objectives for the stakeholder consultation are that it should:

- have a broad geographic spread of countries with emphasis on those with hydropower facilities or proposed developments and with good coverage of developing countries;
- provide a good cross-sectoral representation of views;
- pay particular attention to obtaining views from stakeholders directly affected by hydropower facilities or developments;
- be low-cost and time-efficient; and
- obtain information in a form that is readily analysed and compiled into a report back to the Forum.

The Forum is appointing a consultant to:

1. Identify for us and help evaluate cost-effective consultation methodologies appropriate to our needs.
2. Liaise with Forum members and other organisations to assist in stakeholder mapping, building on networks identified by the Forum members and their reference groups.
3. Develop a draft consultation strategy including methodologies, responsibilities, timetable and delivery plan.

The contract started at the beginning of October and runs until the end of the month.

**Actions**

I have reviewed the stakeholder engagement process for WCD and the Dams for Development process and carried out telephone interviews with Larry Haas (former WCD secretariat member), Joerg Hartmann, Donal O'Leary, Michael Simon and Daryl Fields.

Based on a conversation this week with Helen Locher, I have set out the issues arising from my conversations with Forum members so far and my initial suggestions for the consultation strategy, in order to aid discussion at the meeting in China. I will continue to try and contact other members of the Forum and feedback their views to Helen over the next two weeks.

### **Issues arising**

The key issue that needs to be resolved is the **overall purpose** of the consultation. At one end of the spectrum is a fairly technical consultation with interested parties on how to improve an assessment document. However, for some Forum members, it is critical that the consultation is a much more open process where considerable effort is made to engage groups not yet involved in the process and ensure that their key issues are understood. Their feeling is that, unless this is done, the Protocol cannot be said to have broad stakeholder support and will not be credible. A number of other issues relate to this, including:

*Managing expectations* – wherever the level of ambition is set, a clear and consistent message must be set out on what the consultation is and is not. The worst case scenario is if the perception is that the consultation process can deliver more than it is set-up to do. It is also important to be aware that, in certain locations, concerns about hydropower are linked into wider political issues and it is difficult to disentangle them.

*Getting beyond the 'international stakeholders'* – most people felt that the only way to do this was to organise in-country consultation processes in different regions.

*Consulting with directly affected people* – there were different views on whether the consultation should aim to consult directly with people affected by hydropower projects or whether it would be sufficient to understand the views of local or national NGOs linked to them. There was also a related issue of where to draw the line on directly affected communities, ie how far downstream. On the one hand, some people felt that without some direct engagement with such communities the consultation (and therefore the Protocol) would not have sufficient credibility. On the other hand, there was considerable concern that this would draw the Forum into unhelpful debates about site-specific issues which the Protocol could not resolve.

*Resource implications* – the ambition of the consultation clearly has resource implications both in terms of direct budgets but also in terms of Forum member and staff time. The importance of translation and providing travel budgets for certain stakeholders was raised and should be factored in to resource planning. There were some useful suggestions on how to link into existing networks and possibly access additional funding for consultation.

*Preparedness to act on issues raised* – the point was made that there was no point in embarking on a consultation process unless the Forum was clear that they had to be prepared to take action on the information coming out of the process, even if meant significant changes to the Protocol.

Three other issues were raised:

*The differences between the two phases of Forum work and the implications for the consultation approach*

There were different views about whether consultation on a future phase of work that set the bar for what is acceptable and unacceptable hydropower would require a different consultation approach.

*Links to learning and capacity building*

Some Forum members saw considerable potential for two-way learning and capacity building by involving organizations in their networks in testing the Protocol and Helen reported back on the positive learning that had come from such a workshop in Brazil involving government and industry. There was interest in ensuring that the consultation process included such joint learning processes.

*Outreach and engagement at the Brazil meeting*

The point was made that Brazil should be one of the countries where an in-country consultation process was carried out and there was a Forum meeting taking place there in December, so the Forum should look at how these could be combined or linked.

**Section 2 Initial Suggestions for the Consultation Strategy**

Based on the issues outlined above and follow-up discussion with Helen Locher, I have developed draft objectives for the consultation, set out the suggested elements of a strategy and developed a draft stakeholder map.

**Proposed objectives**

The overall aim of the consultation is to ensure that there is broad based support for the final Protocol.

The specific aims are to:

- Ensure that views from each of the key stakeholder groups identified on the stakeholder map, and their implications for the Protocol, are understood
- Engage with key representatives of stakeholder groups who have not yet been involved in the Protocol process
- Enable anyone who wishes to comment on the draft Protocol to do so
- Check the appropriateness and applicability of the Protocol in different locations

The process needs to meet the above objectives in as resource-efficient a way as possible and within timescale of the Forum process ie the first phase needs to be completed by the end of February.

The consultation needs to be established so that the second phase can build on the first, although they may include all the same elements. For example, certain groups such as standards and verification organisations and the media who are unlikely to key priorities in the first phase will be more important in the second phase and there may be less need for in-country processes in the second phase.

**Proposed elements**

Based on the above and experience with other consultations, my suggestion is that a consultation process is established with five related elements:

- a) An open invitation to everyone with an interest in hydropower and sustainability to respond to the draft Protocol during a set period,
- b) Sessions organised by Forum members to discuss the draft Protocol with key stakeholders in their networks, where appropriate
- c) Four 'in-country' engagement processes in different regions
- d) Shared learning/capacity building processes, where appropriate
- e) One-on-one meetings or phone consultations

*a) Open response mechanism*

It is important that the consultation is set up so that anyone who wishes to respond can, even if they are not involved in a network or in-country process, and that no-one can claim that they had no access to the consultation.

The easiest way to do that is to set up a web-based questionnaire and notify everyone on the HSAF's stakeholder list, forum member networks and relevant email groups, publications, websites etc when the consultation is open. The questionnaire can be structured so that questions are asked on all the key areas of the document but it is essential that there is also a space for open comment and suggestions, so that respondents do not feel that the questions have constrained their ability to feedback views. A phone number should be included so that people know that they have the option of talking to someone, although in practice this is not likely to be made much use of.

Clearly a web-based questionnaire relies on respondents having access to the internet and will mainly reach those who are already interested in the process. If there are individuals that Forum members know are more likely to respond to hard-copies, draft documents and questionnaires can be sent out by post, however, those people who are unlikely to respond electronically are more likely to be reached through direct engagement processes (see below).

A web-based questionnaire is a cost-effective way of directing stakeholders to the consultation and collates the results in an Excel spreadsheet, making analysis easier and less costly.

Target audience: all stakeholders with internet access

Resource implications: £Low <5-7.5k, time low

Responsibilities: Forum co-ordinator to organise consultancy contract to develop web-based interface and develop questionnaire in conjunction with members

*b) Network sessions*

Forum members are already looking at how they can use existing structures and meetings to provide input into the consultation. For example, WWF offices in specific locations could be involved in trialing the Protocol or organising local NGO discussions, TI can use their 'Chapters' in relevant countries and the World Bank is looking at how 'Water Week' in February could be used to provide feedback from Development Banks and potentially other developing country officials.

Such sessions will enable more in-depth discussion of the issues and should provide HSAF with a more consolidated response from some constituencies. They are likely to be well attended by particular groups as the organiser will be a trusted member of their sector and they may well piggy-back on existing meetings, which is a resource efficient way of holding such events. The questions in the questionnaire can be used to structure the sessions, with the aim of providing feedback in all the key areas, however having a facilitated session with a Forum member, should yield a richer response. It is essential that those involved understand how their views will be fed back to the Forum and that responsibility is assigned for making this happen.

Target audience: Forum members networks

Resource implications: £Low, build on existing events, time low

Responsibilities: Forum co-ordinator to provide outline structure for members to adapt and proforma for feedback. Individual Forum members to organise sessions as appropriate and ensure that feedback is returned to the Forum in a structured manner.

*c) 'In-country' engagement processes*

If the Forum is serious about consulting with the full range of stakeholders, particularly people directly affected people and those in developing countries considerable effort will need to be taken to reach such stakeholders. Therefore four 'in-country' processes should be established. In each case an appropriate organisation should be engaged to identify relevant groups and individuals and spend some time 'preparing the ground' with them before attempting to seek views on the draft Protocol.

As well as ensuring that the views of people directly affected by hydropower are understood, more detailed engagement in individual locations will have the following benefits:

- It will help to check how well the approach plays out in different contexts
- It should elicit views from people working at the project level in governments, NGOs and the private sector who are less likely to respond to other forms of consultation

The key to making this work is finding a local organisation with the capacity and skills to organise the engagement process, which may differ slightly in different locations, depending on the local context. The organisation in question will need to be able to identify stakeholders, get across the mandate and boundaries of the HSAF process to them, be seen as neutral enough to elicit real responses from different stakeholder groups and be able to provide feedback in a way that the Forum can use. In some cases, there may be an obvious candidate, for example, a Forum member partner. If a suitable organisation/individual cannot be identified then it is not worth embarking on the process in that country.

The key candidates for an in-country process from the discussions so far are:

Vietnam

India

Brazil

This would provide input from S.E. Asia, South Asia and Latin America.

In addition suggestions were made for an African country, particularly one of the SADC members, Russia and including a developed country to show balance.

My recommendation would be to characterise these processes as an attempt to carry out detailed consultation in particular locations, rather than to bill them as regional processes which would have significant resource implications in terms of identifying and balancing input from many countries and increasing translation and travel costs.

Target audience: directly affected people, local and national NGOs and research and professional organisations, project level and national industry and government

Resource implications: £High ~10k per country?, time medium

Responsibilities: Forum members to help identify appropriate local organisations to coordinate process. Forum co-ordinator to organise ToRs and contracts, including proforma for feedback. Forum members to commit to being involved in at least one in-country process.

*d) Shared learning/capacity building processes*

Shared learning/capacity building processes should take place in countries where they are most likely to succeed. These could be the same countries as the in-country consultation processes, in which case they could be organized by the same organisation and combined into one larger process. However, there may be other cases where this does not seem appropriate and should not be attempted.

Target audience: interested government, industry and NGOs

Resource implications: £Medium ~5k per event?, time medium

Responsibilities: Forum members and co-ordinator to identify appropriate locations, organisers and participants. Forum co-ordinator to organise ToRs and contracts where required, including structure of session. Forum members to be involved as appropriate.

*e) One-on-one meetings or phone consultations*

There will be some people whose understanding and support (or at least non-hostility) of the final Protocol are essential to its credibility who may not respond to the consultation unless prompted. A 'hit-list' of those essential stakeholders should be identified by Forum members. They should be notified of the web-based questionnaire and encouraged to respond, however there will be some people who are unlikely to set aside the time to do this, for example key climate change organisations who have not been involved in the Protocol to date. In these cases, Forum members or a consultant should organise meetings or phonecalls to get direct feedback.

Target audience: 'hard to engage' senior people in key organisations

Resource implications: Time, medium, Cost low

Responsibilities: Forum members and co-ordinator to generate hit-list. Forum co-ordinator to generate key questions that need to be covered and allocate responsibilities for meeting/phoning to Forum members and/or consultant as appropriate.

### **Final thought**

Whatever consultation strategy is followed, work needs to begin on setting up the appropriate mechanisms in November to ensure that effective consultation can be carried out January and February.

Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum  
STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

