



Fauna & Flora International's Position on Stakeholder Engagement

BACKGROUND

Biodiversity conservation is a social process; it's very rare for conservation activities not to involve people. In many of the contexts that we work people are highly reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods, food, income, and shelter. The behaviour of the women and men that live in or near these areas affects and is affected by the biodiversity we seek to conserve. It is therefore important for us to understand the complex relationships between people and their environment, building on local knowledge, and developing strong relationships of trust with local communities.

Stakeholder engagement is a key part of this process, and is fundamental to inclusive and effective conservation. Learning about people's diverse values and uses of natural resources, seeking to understand their varied interests, and listening to and taking steps to mitigate their concerns are crucial steps to realising biodiversity outcomes. Stakeholder engagement is a collaborative and ongoing process through which we seek to build partnerships and define shared goals and visions with stakeholders and rights-holders.

EXISTING COMMITMENTS

FFI's current position in relation to livelihoods and governance¹ states that FFI will endeavour to ensure that our conservation activities do not disadvantage or undermine poor, vulnerable or marginalised people who are dependent upon or live adjacent to natural resources, and wherever possible [we] will seek to conserve biodiversity in ways that enhance local wellbeing and social equity. We are also committed to respecting human rights, promoting their protection and realisation within our conservation programmes, and supporting the governance systems that can secure those rights.

In order to uphold these commitments, and to ensure that stakeholders are effectively engaged in the projects that we implement, this Position details FFI's ambition and approach to stakeholder engagement. It has been designed to align with and be used alongside FFI's other associated position documents related to stakeholder engagement².

PRINCIPLES OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

1) Respect for human rights

Respect for human rights, including respect for diverse knowledge systems and perspectives, and recognition of rights for resource use, access and tenure is crucial to effective and inclusive conservation. Stakeholder engagement done correctly is one of the most powerful yet under-utilised tools that can be used to address the risk of negative social impacts, ensuring that we avoid infringing on the human rights of others through our activities, and address such impacts should they occur.

¹ See FFI's [Position and Approach to Livelihoods and Governance](#) for further information.

² See FFI's [Position on Rangers and Human Rights](#), [Position on Free, Prior, and Informed Consent \(FPIC\)](#), [Position on Gender in Conservation](#), and [Position on Displacement and Restrictions on Access to Resources](#) for further information.



2) Early, adaptive and ongoing

Stakeholder engagement is an ongoing process of interaction and dialogue, including as and when risks and impacts arise. It should begin as early as possible during the project planning process to gather initial views on the project proposal, and to inform project design. It should continue throughout the project lifecycle, supported by monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). Whenever stakeholders have provided input or raised issues, they must then be responded to as a way of adaptively informing project design and identifying and engaging with potentially affected people.

3) Participation

Stakeholder engagement must be suited to the local context, in an appropriate language, format, and mode of communication for all groups and individuals. There should be an emphasis on engagement at the local level, including the participation of diverse individuals and groups from local communities and local civil society organisations, and integration with existing formal and informal decision-making processes where applicable. Engagement must be carried out in a non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive manner, free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, and discrimination, from outside or within the community. Steps may need to be taken to access hard to reach, vulnerable and disadvantaged populations, at a time and location suited to their needs and interests.

4) Gender and diversity

A key aspect of community stakeholder engagement is recognising that women and men have different priorities, values, and interests related to the environment and that their access to and control of ecosystem services and natural resources is influenced by gender dynamics. Biological sex intersects with other social characteristics such as age, ethnicity, education, religion, and wealth class. For stakeholder engagement to be effective and inclusive, it is crucial to take account of these social characteristics when identifying stakeholders, and planning engagement.

5) Appropriate type of engagement

The type of engagement with each stakeholder should be appropriate to their interest (stake) and influence (power) on the project. The intensity of engagement must be tailored to the specific needs of each stakeholder, for example through taking account of and seeking to address barriers to participation, and recognising local practices and behaviours.

6) Transparency and accountability

Stakeholder engagement must be transparent and open, with prior, timely disclosure of relevant, meaningful and easily accessible information on proposed activities. This should be in a locally-appropriate and culturally-sensitive format. There should also be clear lines of accountability and responsibility regarding the stakeholder engagement process, including for project or land-/sea-scape grievance mechanisms.



ARCADIA
A CHARITABLE FUND OF
LISBET RAUSING & PETER BALDWIN

The development of this position and its dissemination to FFI partners has been funded by Arcadia, a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin