

Appendix B: Stakeholder participation during the assessment process

This appendix provides an overview of the ways that stakeholder participation can enhance the sustainable development impact assessment process and the contribution of policies to sustainable development. [Table B.1](#) provides a summary of the

steps in the assessment process where stakeholder participation is recommended and why it is important, noting where relevant guidance can be found in the *ICAT Stakeholder Participation Guide*.

TABLE B.1

Steps where stakeholder participation is recommended in the impact assessment

Step of sustainable development impact assessment	Why stakeholder participation is important at this step	Relevant chapters in <i>Stakeholder Participation Guide</i>
Chapter 2 – Objectives of assessing sustainable development impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the objectives of the assessment respond to the needs and interests of stakeholders 	Chapter 5 – Identifying and understanding stakeholders
Chapter 3 – Key concepts, steps and planning the assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 3.3 – Planning the assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build understanding, participation and support for the policy among stakeholders • Ensure conformity with national and international laws and norms, as well as donor requirements related to stakeholder participation • Identify and plan how to engage stakeholder groups who may be affected or may influence the policy • Coordinate participation at multiple steps of this assessment with participation in other stages of the policy design and implementation cycle, and other assessments 	Chapter 4 – Planning effective stakeholder participation Chapter 5 – Identifying and understanding stakeholders Chapter 6 – Establishing multi-stakeholder bodies Chapter 9 – Establishing grievance redress mechanisms
Chapter 5 – Choosing which impact categories and indicators to assess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance completeness by including impact categories that are relevant and significant for the priorities and concerns of diverse stakeholder groups • Identify and address possible unintended or negative impacts early on • Identify credible sources of information for selected indicators 	Chapter 5 – Identifying and understanding stakeholders Chapter 7 – Providing information to stakeholders Chapter 8 – Designing and conducting consultations
Chapter 6 – Identifying specific impacts within each impact category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen identification and assessment of sustainable development impacts • Enhance completeness by identifying impacts for different stakeholder groups • Integrate stakeholder insights about cause–effect relationships between the policy and impacts • Identify and address possible unintended or negative impacts 	Chapter 8 – Designing and conducting consultations

TABLE B.1, continued

Steps where stakeholder participation is recommended in the impact assessment

Step of sustainable development impact assessment	Why stakeholder participation is important at this step	Relevant chapters in <i>Stakeholder Participation Guide</i>
Chapter 7 – Qualitatively assessing impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the assessment period responds to stakeholders’ needs • Gain insights into a policy’s specific local context and impacts • Strengthen evidence base of the assessment • Integrate stakeholder insights on likelihood and magnitude of impacts, and the nature of change 	Chapter 8 – Designing and conducting consultations
Chapter 12 – Monitoring performance over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure relevance and completeness of indicators to be monitored • Ensure that monitoring frequency addresses the needs of decision makers and other stakeholders • Assess impacts on different stakeholder groups to identify and manage trade-offs 	Chapter 8 – Designing and conducting consultations
Chapter 13 – Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of benefits and other impacts to build support for the policy • Ensure that reports and summaries properly characterize the impacts for each category • Inform decision makers and other stakeholders about impacts, including differentiated impacts on different stakeholder groups, to allow adaptive management to reduce negative and enhance positive impacts • Increase accountability and transparency, and thereby credibility and acceptance of the assessment 	Chapter 7 – Providing information to stakeholders
Chapter 14 – Evaluating synergies and trade-offs, and using results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that diverse perspectives are considered when doing a CEA, CBA or MCA, especially regarding subjective elements such as valuation of social and environmental benefits, and weighting the importance of different impacts • Ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, especially those of affected communities, when making decisions about whether to continue or discontinue policies, make changes to policies, or implement new policies 	Chapter 7 – Providing information to stakeholders Chapter 8 – Designing and conducting consultations

Appendix C: Qualitative research methods

Qualitative methods can be flexible. They may involve several methods and approaches, such as stakeholder interviews, surveys, focus groups, case studies, literature review and direct observations, using narrative descriptions.

Interviews and case studies are useful to gain insights into a policy's specific local context and impacts, as well as the attitudes, experiences and perspectives of affected stakeholders and participants. On the other hand, they tend to be limited in coverage and therefore non-representative of broader conditions or impacts, which can produce less reliable results with less ability to generalize and quantify impacts. Therefore, it can be helpful to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data and approaches.

Quantitative approaches should be used if a user wants to conduct numerical or statistical analysis, wants to be precise, knows what can be measured, or wants to cover a large group. On the other hand, qualitative approaches should be used if a user wants narrative or in-depth information, is not sure what can be measured, or does not need to quantify the results.⁶⁶

Qualitative methods are used specifically to consider the “why” questions that quantitative methods typically cannot answer:

- Why does the policy work (or not work)?
- How does the policy achieve its goals?
- Why does the policy work in some situations and not others?
- What needs of the population are/were not anticipated?
- What were the additional unintended and/or unexpected positive or negative consequences?

Qualitative methods (especially story-based approaches) can yield powerful stories, which can be useful for media reports, and are often preferred by policymakers and politicians. Hard data are not always the most convincing evidence for all audiences.

The approach used will depend on the goals of the assessment. To determine which type of data to collect, users need to determine what is most important to the policy under assessment. Is the goal to collect numerical data on the use of solar PV or provide a more in-depth understanding of the situation in the poorest urban areas? Sometimes both approaches are important, but resource availability may require that one must be given priority.

C.1 Forms of data collection

Data-collection approaches can be considered structured or semi-structured. A structured data-collection approach requires that all data be collected in exactly the same way. Structured data collection allows users to compare findings at different sites to draw conclusions about what is working where. A structured approach is also important when comparing alternative interventions to determine which is most cost-effective. Structured data collection is mostly used to collect quantitative data when the user has a large sample or population, knows what needs to be measured, needs to show results numerically, or needs to make comparisons across different sites or interventions.

A semi-structured data-collection approach may be systematic and follow general procedures, but data are not collected in the same way every time. Semi-structured interviews, for example, are often based on a predetermined set of broad questions, but the order of presenting the questions may depend on circumstances. Moreover, some responses provided can be probed with additional questions developed during the interview. This approach is more open and fluid than the structured approach. The semi-structured approach allows respondents to tell users what they want to know in their own way.

⁶⁶ Morra Imas and Rist (2009).

Semi-structured data-collection methods are generally qualitative. They are used when a user is conducting exploratory work in a new development area, seeks to understand themes or issues, or wants participant narratives or in-depth information. They can also be used to understand results of structured data collection that are unexpected and not well understood, or to give nuanced examples to supplement the findings from a structured data-collection effort.

For example, in an evaluation of a community-driven development project, evaluators might choose a semi-structured approach to data collection. Because such programmes give control of planning decisions to local groups, it is appropriate for the evaluator to use a semi-structured approach to learn more about how decisions are made, as well as to solicit community members' views of the process and project outcomes.

Data can also be collected obtrusively or unobtrusively. Obtrusive methods are observations made with participants' knowledge. Such methods are used to measure perceptions, opinions and attitudes through interviews, surveys and focus groups. Observations made with the knowledge of those being observed are also obtrusive. Unobtrusive methods are observations made without the knowledge of the participant. Examples of unobtrusive methods are using data from documents or archives, and observing participants without their knowledge.

Data collection usually includes both quantitative and qualitative data, but one approach may be dominant. The two approaches can be characterized as shown in [Table C.1](#).

[Box C.1](#) provides a checklist to help decide which data-collection approaches are most appropriate.

TABLE C.1

Summary of quantitative and qualitative approaches

Quantitative approach	Qualitative approach
More structured	Less structured
Emphasizes reliability	Easier to develop
Harder to develop	Can provide nuanced data (idiosyncratic data on each unit being studied)
Easier to analyse	More labour-intensive to collect and analyse data
	Emphasizes validity

Source: Morra Imas and Rist (2009).

BOX C.1**20-question qualitative checklist**

1. Does the programme emphasize individual outcomes – that is, are different participants expected to be affected in qualitatively different ways? Is there a need or desire to describe and evaluate these individual client outcomes?
2. Are decision makers interested in elucidating and understanding the internal dynamics of programmes – programme strengths, programme weaknesses and overall programme processes?
3. Is detailed, in-depth information needed about certain client cases or programme sites (e.g. particularly successful cases, unusual failures, critically important cases) for programmatic, financial or political reasons?
4. Is there interest in focusing on the diversity among, idiosyncrasies of, and unique qualities exhibited by, individual clients and programmes (as opposed to comparing all clients or programmes on standardized, uniform measures)?
5. Is information needed about the details of programme implementation – that is, what do clients in the programme experience? What services are provided to clients? How is the programme organized? What do staff members do? Do decision makers need to know what is going on in the programme and how it has developed?
6. Are the programme staff and other stakeholders interested in collection of detailed, descriptive information about the programme for the purpose of improving the programme (i.e. is there interest in formative evaluation)?
7. Is there a need for information about the nuances of programme quality – descriptive information about the quality of programme activities and outcomes, not just levels, amounts or quantities of programme activity and outcomes?
8. Does the programme need a case-specific quality assurance system?
9. Are legislators or other decision makers or funders interested in having evaluators conduct programme site visits so that the evaluations can be the surrogate “eyes and ears” for decision makers who are too busy to make such site visits themselves, and who lack the observing and listening skills of trained evaluators? Is legislative monitoring needed on a case-by-case basis?
10. Is the obtrusiveness of evaluation a concern? Will the administration of standardized measuring instruments (questionnaires and tests) be overly obtrusive, in contrast to data gathering through natural observations and open-ended interviews? Will the collection of qualitative data generate less reactivity among participants than the collection of quantitative data? Is there a need for unobtrusive observations?
11. Is there a need and desire to personalize the evaluation process by using research methods that emphasize personal, face-to-face contact with the programme – that is, methods that may be perceived as “humanistic” and personal because they do not label and number the participants, and they feel natural, informal and understandable to participants?
12. Is a responsive evaluation approach appropriate – that is, an approach that is especially sensitive to collecting descriptive data and reporting information in terms of differing stakeholder perspectives, based on direct, personal contact with these stakeholders?
13. Are the goals of the programme vague, general and non-specific, indicating the possible advantage of a goal-free evaluation approach that would gather information about what effects the programme is actually having rather than measure goal attainment?
14. Is there a possibility that the programme may be affecting clients or participants in unanticipated ways and/or having unexpected side effects, indicating the need for a method of inquiry that can discover effects beyond those formally stated as desirable by programme staff (again, an indication of the need for some form of goal-free evaluation)?
15. Is there a lack of proven quantitative instrumentation for important programme outcomes? Is the state of measurement science such that no valid, reliable and believable standardized instrument is available, or can be readily developed, to measure quantitatively the particular programme outcomes for which data are needed?
16. Is the evaluation exploratory? Is the programme at a pre-evaluation stage, where goals and programme content are still being developed?
17. Is an evaluability assessment needed to determine a summative evaluation design?
18. Is there a need to add depth, detail and meaning to statistical findings or survey generalizations?
19. Has the collection of quantitative evaluation data become so routine that no one pays much attention to the results anymore, suggesting a possible need to break the old routine and use new methods to generate new insights about the programme?
20. Is there a need to develop a programme theory grounded in observations of programme activities and impacts, and the relationship between treatment and outcomes?

Source: Patton (1987).

To collect data on a policy, it is important to apply rules in the data-collection process. Some of the data-collection rules are in [Box C.2](#).

C.2 Sampling in qualitative impact assessment

Qualitative impact assessment involves engaging with people and talking to them. This can be time-consuming and generate a large amount of data to analyse. For example, policies are likely to affect thousands of people; setting up interviews and analysing transcripts for each of them will be expensive and may divert the user from other tasks. Sampling systematically enables the user to select a representative smaller group of participants from the overall population who can give a reliable account of the bigger picture.

The way users select the sample has implications for the conclusions users can draw. Sampling for qualitative impact assessment has a slightly different aim from sampling in quantitative impact assessment. In quantitative impact assessment, the goal is to draw a sample that is mathematically representative of the whole, so can be used to draw firm conclusions about the population. In qualitative impact assessment, precise or definitive conclusions are less important, so sample sizes can be smaller – the goal is to learn about the range of experiences of stakeholders.

Although samples can be smaller, it is still vital to ensure that the sample resembles the whole group as closely as possible. Therefore, users should:

- have a clear idea of the characteristics of the group they are assessing
- create a sample that attempts to reflect the range of different people in the group; for example, if the policy affects equal numbers of women and men, the qualitative sample should contain equal numbers of women and men.

A particularly important goal of sampling in qualitative impact assessment is involving people who have been less engaged in the policy and those who do not volunteer themselves to be consulted. If the user only collects information from those who have been affected by the policy or are the first to volunteer, the sampling will not be representative of the population as a whole, and the assessment will not be credible.

C.3 Longitudinal impact assessment

To show change over time, it is useful to speak to the same people at multiple points in time to see how their experiences have changed, rather than collecting information only once. Longitudinal qualitative impact assessment provides nuanced information on people's perspectives, and how and why they have changed over time, which can give a fuller assessment of policy impact.

BOX C.2

Rules for collecting data

Evaluators should apply the following rules in collecting data:

- Use multiple data-collection methods when possible.
- Use available data if possible (doing so is faster, less expensive and easier than generating new data).
- If using available data, find out how earlier evaluators collected the data, defined the variables and ensured accuracy of the data. Check the extent of missing data.
- If original data must be collected, establish procedures and follow them (protocol), maintain accurate records of definitions and coding, pre-test, and verify the accuracy of coding and data input.
- Collect data in a disaggregated manner, to understand whether there are differences in views, impacts and economic opportunities between women and men, people with different ethnicities, and other groups.

Source: Adapted from Morra Imas and Rist (2009).

C.4 Avoiding bias

The data-collection technique chosen will depend on the situation. Whichever method is chosen to gather data from people, all the information gathered is potentially subject to bias. One form of bias results from the fact that, when asked to provide information about themselves or others, respondents may not tell the whole truth, unintentionally or intentionally. They may distort the truth because they do not remember accurately or fear the consequences of providing a truthful answer. They may also be embarrassed or uncomfortable about admitting things they feel will not be socially acceptable. All self-reported data are vulnerable to this problem.

Selection bias may also exist. Selection bias occurs when the people who choose to participate in the survey are different from those who choose not to participate. This is often a challenge in surveys, interviews and focus groups. Those who volunteer to participate may be systematically different from those who do not.

C.5 Tools for collecting data

Typically, more than one data-collection approach is used to answer different impact assessment questions or provide multiple sources of data in response to a single impact assessment question. Users may, for example, collect available data for solar PV installation records, interview buyers on the use of solar PV, and survey users. Sometimes investigators use focus groups or conduct case studies to help develop themes for a questionnaire or to make sense of survey results.

Collecting the same information using different methods to increase the accuracy of the data is called a triangulation of methods. Evaluators use triangulation to strengthen findings. The more information gathered using different methods that supports a finding, the stronger the evidence is.

The following data-collection tools can be used, depending on which are most appropriate for a given situation:

- surveys
- interviews
- focus groups

- participatory methods
- ethnography
- documents and other sources
- case study approaches.

C.5.1 Surveys

Surveys can be excellent tools for collecting data about people's perceptions, opinions and ideas. They are less useful in measuring behaviour, because what people say they do may not reflect what they actually do. Surveys can be structured or semi-structured, administered in person or by telephone, or self-administered by having people respond to a mailed or web form. Surveys can poll a sample of the population or all of the population. There are two types of surveys:

- **Structured surveys** are surveys that include a range of response choices, one or more of which are selected by respondents. All respondents are asked exactly the same questions in exactly the same way and given exactly the same answers to choose from.
- **Semi-structured surveys** are surveys that ask predominantly open-ended questions. They are especially useful when the user wants to gain a deeper understanding of reactions to experiences or to understand the reasons why respondents hold particular attitudes. Semi-structured surveys should have a clearly defined purpose. It is often more practical to interview people about the steps in a process, the roles and responsibilities of various members of a community or team, or how a programme works than to attempt to develop a written survey that captures all possible variations.

[Box C.3](#) gives example of questions in structured and semi-structured surveys.

When conducting surveys, it is important to ensure representative samples to draw meaningful conclusions about the broader population of interest and avoid selection bias. Obtaining a credible and representative response from the population of interest can sometimes be time-consuming and expensive.

BOX C.3**Structured and semi-structured survey questions**

Examples of structured questions:

1. Has this workshop been useful in helping you to learn how to evaluate your programme?
 - Little or no extent
 - Some extent
 - Moderate extent
 - Great extent
 - Very great extent
 - No opinion
 - Not applicable
2. Do all people in the village have a source of clean water within 500 metres of their homes?
 - Yes
 - No

Examples of semi-structured questions:

- What have you learned from the programme evaluation workshop that you have used on the job?
- Where are the sources for clean water for the villagers?

Source: Morra Imas and Rist (2009).

C.5.2 Interviews

One of the most common methods of collecting qualitative data is interviewing people – that is, talking to them one-to-one. Interviews can be undertaken in person, by phone or over the internet (e.g. using Skype). [Table C.2](#) describes three different approaches to interviewing.

Of the options in [Table C.2](#), semi-structured interviewing is often the most promising approach for carrying out qualitative impact assessment. The approach allows the user to guide the direction and themes of the interview, while still allowing the respondent to articulate their experiences in detail.

Another valuable approach is to combine structured “tick box” type questions with more open-ended questions within the same interview. This provides both numerical impact results and more nuanced qualitative information.

In qualitative assessment impact, interview questions should have the following characteristics:

- **Open ended** to encourage full responses. Minimize yes/no questions; instead, try to start questions with “how”, “what”, “why” and “where” to encourage interviewees to explore their answers.
- **Clear and in plain English.** Avoid long or complex questions. Instead of asking “What was the impact of ...”, try “Did anything change after ...”.
- **Framing rather than leading.** Do not point interviewees towards a particular response. Instead of “Did you feel better after ...”, ask “How did you feel after ...”.
- **Neutral.** Using emotive language or asking in a way that sounds accusatory may close down people’s responses. Instead of “Did you do ...”, ask “How many times have you done ...” to imply that others also do so.

Source: Morra Imas and Rist (2009).

TABLE C.2

Interview approaches

	Structured	Semi-structured	Unstructured
Description	Questions are agreed in advance; interviewers stick rigidly to a script.	The main questions are fixed, but follow-up questions can be improvised.	Interviewer may have a list of broad topics, but no set questions.
When to use	Useful for collecting standardized, survey-style information.	Most common in qualitative work; allows expanded opinions on the topics of the interview.	More appropriate for very exploratory research questions or academic research; direction is set by the interviewee, rather than the interviewer, so topics vary.
Sampling	Sample sizes can be large, and time commitment is minimal. Random sampling is recommended for maximum rigour.	Longer interviews require more time, so it is more suited to smaller samples targeting particular participants.	Longer interviews require more time, so it is more suited to smaller samples targeting particular participants.
Transcribing	Easy because all responses are on the same template.	Mixed	Time-consuming; full transcription or detailed notes and recording may be needed.
Data analysis	Easy to compare and analyse, but detail and nuance limited.	Mixed	Difficult to analyse, but provide detailed and nuanced data.

Source: Adapted from Arksey and Knight (1999).

C.5.3 Focus groups

Focus groups are interviews with small groups of people. Numbers should be restricted to around 6–8 participants to prevent subgroups emerging and to make transcribing easier. In some cases, mini-groups of three or four may be most suitable.

Focus groups may be useful:

- where time is too limited to conduct individual interviews
- for a collective discussion among a similar or differing group, since the group dynamics can encourage more lively and interesting discussions
- where participants do not feel confident about taking part in individual interviews.

Group interviews provide group data, since participants play off against each other. This can be positive, allowing ideas to develop and be discussed in detail. However, it is important for the user to note that an individual's response in a focus group cannot be considered in the same way as an individual interview. Participants influence each other, and responses should be seen in that context. When analysing focus group data, avoid talking about magnitude. For example, three out of six participants making a statement does not necessarily mean that 50% of participants agree with it, particularly because they can be influenced by each other.

Focus groups can have disadvantages. They can be hard to set up and organize, and difficult to moderate. They are not good for discussing sensitive or personal topics. Unless the user has skills in drawing out quieter members of the group, the views can be strongly influenced by the most vocal or dominant participants.

C.5.4 Participatory methods

Impact assessment is participatory when the population under study is actively involved in designing the assessment or collecting data. For example, participatory methods have been used in international development projects to give local people a say in how projects are run, and to use local knowledge to better tailor the project and its measurement to specific contexts.

Participatory methods can be used to collect qualitative evidence of impact. Project participants gather data using methods such as photography or video, giving a highly personal account of their own lives and experiences. Other participatory methods include creating diaries or “route-maps” with users, in which they plot events on a timeline. These methods can help to highlight the link between certain life events and levels of engagement with a project, giving a sense of external influences.

Participatory methods can give nuanced information on the effects of a policy, but are resource-intensive. They also lack objectivity and any method of comparing impacts on different individuals.

C.5.5 Ethnography

Ethnography involves observing things from the point of view of those being studied. Rather than talking to people about their experiences, the ethnographer joins in and sees it first-hand. For example, it may be used to help understand how people are engaging with community services staff.

C.5.6 Documents and other sources

Although qualitative data collected face-to-face are ideal, in some cases users may not need to collect data directly. Instead, the required information may be found in existing documents. For example, some qualitative data may be available from open-ended questions in a quantitative survey or from key workers’ case notes. Media articles about a particular topic can also be useful, or users may want to analyse local strategy documents to show variation in attitudes or services.

Although these data are already available, collecting and analysing the data systematically is still important. It will help to show that users have included data from all participants or a systematically selected sample, and that users have completed a thorough search for publicly available material.

C.5.7 Case study approaches

Case studies are widely used in impact assessment. They are not a method of data collection in themselves, but rather an approach that focuses on gathering a range of evidence about a small number of cases. They show the policy impact in a balanced way. Case studies should be chosen systematically, as would be done for a sample for interviews or surveys. In particular, it is important to capture a wide spectrum of experiences of the policy, not just the cases in which the project worked best.

To create credible case studies, users should choose a small sample of cases randomly or based on certain criteria. Users can use the methods described above to gather more information about each selected case (e.g. interviews, focus groups, observation, quantitative data, documents relating to the case). The aim is to create a nuanced description of how a policy has (or has not) affected individuals and the reasons for change, as well as any other factors that are important.

C.5.8 Using multiple methods

In general, many of the above techniques for collecting data can be used. In qualitative assessments, partly as a quality control mechanism, the use of multiple methods (also called “mixed methods”, especially when quantitative methods are included) is common. It also yields more robust results on the basis of triangulation – that is, use of different methods, with different sources of data and from different perspectives, to gain the best understanding and produce the most credible results.