

Local Engagement for Rights-Based, Equitable and Effective Natural Climate Solutions

Phase Summaries



The Landscapes and
Livelihoods Group

Acknowledgements

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Cover photo – **Pascaline Youl/Tiendrebeogo**, of SEMUS (Solidarité et Entraide Mutuelle au Sahel) facilitating a community meeting for Scoping a forest conservation and livelihoods project in Passoré Province, Burkina Faso.

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A note on Indigenous Peoples & local communities

Our commitment

Indigenous Peoples hold inherent rights to self-determination and to their lands, territories, and natural resources. This guidance is built on the principle that Indigenous Peoples and local communities must be at the centre of any project that affects them - not merely as stakeholders to be consulted, but as rightsholders who have the right to define the terms and processes through which they engage.

No project should proceed without a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process that is designed in accordance with the preferences and decision-making processes of Indigenous Peoples and local communities themselves. This guidance is intended as a practical tool in service of that commitment.

Feedback and improvements

This is a Version 1 of this guidance, and we are actively seeking peoples' views on the guidance. Please do contact TLLG if you have recommendations and suggestions for improvements, sending an email to info@landscapesandlivelihoods.com.

1. SCOPING

Aim

The scoping phase of engagement aims to identify and describe a broad and initial project concept, and to identify what Engagement Activities are needed to develop the initial concept further. This phase is the foundation for all subsequent phases, generating early understanding of the context, initial ideas for the project concept, flagging any key risks, and inputs from community representatives for the engagement approach going forward.

Outputs

- Contributions to the scoping report which is used to evaluate whether further investment in concept development is justified
- Agreement with the representatives of rightsholders to conduct Engagement Activities for the co-design of the project concept with community groups and other local stakeholders
- A workplan for the concept development phase



Key Messages

- Engagement at this stage is at the community representative level, not yet the broader community or community groups
- Expectations must be carefully managed: feasibility is not yet confirmed, and consultations may not lead to a project
- Engagements collect information that will help develop the engagement plan and FPIC protocol, although further inputs from communities and community groups will be sought in the concept development phase.
- This is a light-touch exercise which can be completed in response to a community request (community-led initiatives) or a concept from a project developer (to be co-designed).

Engagement Activities

1.1 Document Review Collation and review of existing information on the project area, including the socioeconomic context, governance arrangements, stakeholder landscape, legal and rights frameworks, and a high-level environmental and social (E&S) screening to identify potential red flags. Feeds directly into the scoping report.

1.2 Project Stakeholder Analysis Desk-based identification and analysis of key stakeholders (communities, rightsholders, community groups, and other local actors) assessing their interest, influence, and degree of affectedness. Produces the initial stakeholder list and informs who to engage in the scoping workshop and fieldwork (Activities 1.4 and 1.5).

1.3 Capacity Assessment Assessment of the core project team's skills and experience against the competencies required for implementing the Good Practice Areas for NCS project development (Part 1). Identify gaps and actions for training, recruitment, or partnerships.

1.4 Scoping Workshop An initial engagement meeting or workshop with community representatives from across the project area. Validates the stakeholder analysis, generates feedback on the broad project concept, contributes to the theory of change (eg. key drivers, central problem), and screens for E&S risks. Allows for planning of the scoping fieldwork.

1.5 Scoping Fieldwork Site-level meetings with community representatives at each project site. Sharing of basic project information, deepening understanding of governance structures and land rights, collects basic socioeconomic parameters, conducts E&S screening, and agreement on proceeding to engagements with communities and community groups during the concept development.

1.6 Project Workshop An internal and stakeholder-facing workshop to analyse all information gathered during the scoping phase, establish the basis for an initial theory of change, and produce a workplan for the concept development phase. Outputs feed into the scoping report.

2. CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Aim

The concept development phase moves beyond the initial scoping to engage directly with communities, rightsholders, and local stakeholders at village and intra-village level. It initiates a co-design process to further develop the initial project concept discussed during scoping to sufficient detail to assess the feasibility of the initiative, forming the basis for an investment decision to proceed to full project design.



Outputs

- Contributions to a feasibility report to evaluate whether further investment is justified
- A workplan for the project design phases (baseline and assessments, implementation planning)
- Updated community engagement strategy (CES), including a provisional FPIC protocol and grievance redress mechanism based on community inputs
- Consent from rightsholders to proceed to the project design phase ('willingness to consider the project').

Key Messages

- Engagement moves from representatives (scoping) to the full community and community groups, so every community and village should be engaged.
- Expectations must be carefully managed: consultation does not guarantee a project will proceed
- The theory of change for the project is iteratively developed and requires internal planning activities beyond these Engagement Activities
- All FPIC decision-points and community responses must be documented

Engagement Activities

2.1 Concept Development Fieldwork Direct engagement with communities which usually occurs on the village-level, and then with a number of community groups within each village and community. Meetings are held separately, where appropriate, working with men, women, youth, vulnerable groups, and other relevant community groups (for example key livelihood groups). Engagement focuses on participatory planning to develop a shared problem statement, understand underlying causes, and generate solutions. Engagements also seek input into the FPIC protocol, grievance redress mechanism (GRM), and preferred engagement forums and approaches.

2.2 Stakeholder Workshop A workshop with secondary stakeholders — those not directly affected but with an interest or influence in the project, and where possible, also with community representatives and other local stakeholders. Discussions cover information-sharing, validation of the initial theory of change, and feedback on the community engagement strategy, GRM and proposed governance structure.

2.3 Community Feedback and FPIC Findings from the fieldwork are presented back to communities in an accessible format of their choosing, based on the updated community engagement strategy. Information is validated, further feedback is collected, and the first formal FPIC decision point is sought: consent to consider the project, and hence to participate in the project design baseline and assessment activities.

2.4 Concept Development Workshop Workshop with community representatives, and other key stakeholders including representatives of other local stakeholders, and secondary stakeholders. Discussions analyse the information collected during the concept development phase, and plan the project design phase. This includes updating the theory of change (developing strategies, activities, and results chains), the community engagement strategy (including the FPIC protocol and GRM), and making decisions about which project strategies should be prioritised for the project design phase.

3. BASELINE AND ASSESSMENT

Aim

The baseline and assessment collects the foundational information needed to draft village or site-level land and natural resource management plans and to draft the project design document (PDD). It moves into a focused village-by-village and community group-level set of Engagement Activities which start with a closer planning of how the broad landscape-level strategies and activities identified during previous engagements could work in practice at each site. This is coupled with gathering relevant baseline information, including socioeconomic information, land and natural resource use and rights, and assessment of the potential environmental and social (including human rights) risks and impacts of the initiative. This phase moves from a broad concept to a clearer idea of what the project would look like on the ground in practical terms, enabling rightsholders to take a decision on whether they wish to move forward to implementation planning.

Outputs

- Contributions to the further design of the project's strategies and activities (the project theory of change).
- Contributions to key sections of the site-based management plans (eg. maps, socioeconomic baseline data, initial management measures).
- Contributions to the relevant sections of the project design document.
- Updated community engagement strategy, including the sections on the FPIC protocol and grievance redress mechanism, and an agreed management planning process.
- Project environmental and social action plan.
- Outcomes of the consent sought from rightsholders and other interested parties to proceed with implementation planning.
- A workplan for the implementation planning phase.



Key Messages

- Activities 3.1 and 3.3 can be combined into a joint-engagement exercise to reduce the transaction costs for the community and project.
- Socioeconomic baseline development requires that site and village socioeconomic profiles have been established in previous phases, or are assembled at this stage, to enable a robust sampling strategy and approach to be developed.
- The socioeconomic baseline can occur in a sample of sites, villages, and households.
- The initial project-level E&S assessment can occur in a sample of sites and villages, and any identified risks and impacts that will require assessment at every site and village will be incorporated into future engagements (such as the final management planning exercises during the implementation planning phase).
- In large landscapes with multiple sites and many villages, working with a group of community representatives (a sort of task force), including representatives of women, youth, and vulnerable groups, can reduce transaction costs while maintaining inclusive input. These representatives would be responsible for engaging with and seeking input from the broader community, and is not without its risks.
- This consent point is more substantive than the previous “willingness to consider” as rightsholders are deciding on whether to proceed based on a far clearer picture of the likely management measures, costs and benefits, and would be committing to entering into an implementation planning process to finalise management plans and establish agreements.



Engagement Activities

3.1 Initial Management Planning Engages communities and local stakeholders to agree on a management planning process for each project strategy — who will be involved, how, and when. Fills information gaps in the strategies and activities, for example what is already being done on the ground, and develops initial ideas for site-based management plans. Often conducted in parallel with participatory mapping (Activity 3.3).

3.2 Socioeconomic Baseline Establishes socioeconomic and wellbeing indicators for monitoring project impacts. Can include a participatory wellbeing assessment (PWA), in which communities define their own wellbeing indicators through focus group discussions, followed by a household survey that collects monitoring indicators and any other information needed for management planning and the E&S assessment (Activity 3.4).

3.3 Participatory Land Use and Land Rights Mapping Produces site and village-level maps of land and natural resource use, customary and statutory land and resource rights, and High Conservation Value areas 4–6 (ecosystem services, livelihood values, and areas of cultural significance). Serves as the spatial foundation for site-based management plans and the E&S assessment. Conducted in every site and village, with meaningful inclusion of community groups, including men, women, youth, and key livelihood user

3.4 E&S Assessment and Action Planning Identifies environmental, social, and human rights risks and impacts the project could cause, contribute, or be linked to. Assessment includes potential impacts of access restrictions, peoples' barriers to adopting the potential natural resource management measures, human-wildlife conflict, and law enforcement arrangements, for example. Assessment requires sufficient clarity on the proposed strategies and activities, and local-level understanding of these, for communities to discuss impacts meaningfully. Culminates in an environmental and social action plan (ESAP) with project-level mitigation measures and safeguard protocols or plans.

3.5 Rightsholder and Local Stakeholder Feedback and FPIC 2 Engagements in each village to share findings from Activities 3.1–3.4, validate results, followed by a process to seek consent to proceed to the implementation planning phase. This is a substantive FPIC decision point and rightsholders should have a much clearer picture of proposed management measures, the likely costs and benefits, and next steps for implementation planning, compared to the FPIC conducted at the concept development phase.

3.6 Project Workshop A workshop with community representatives, other local stakeholders, and secondary stakeholders to analyse baseline and assessment phase findings, update the theory of change and engagement strategy (including the FPIC protocol and GRM), identify gaps in the draft PDD, and develop a workplan for the implementation planning phase.

4. IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

Aim

The implementation planning phase takes the information, maps, and draft land and natural resource management plans developed during the preceding phase (baseline and assessment) and develops these further into the final management plan. The benefit-sharing mechanism for the project is furthered, and the community benefit-sharing mechanism and benefit-sharing agreements are developed with rightsholders and other local stakeholders. Free, prior and informed consent at this phase of the project is sought for the benefit-sharing agreements and management plans, enabling communities and the project to move into the operationalisation phase of the project.



Outputs

- Completed project activity feasibility assessments
- Project and community benefit-sharing mechanism designed, based on priority local-level costs, and a procedure for use of community development funds
- Final village or site-level land and natural resource management plans
- Benefit-sharing agreements developed.
- FPIC for management plans and benefit-sharing agreements (third FPIC decision point) sought and documented.
- PDD submitted.

Key Messages

- This phase moves from drafting to deciding, with communities consenting to legally significant agreements, so the quality of earlier phases determines whether those decisions can be genuinely informed.
- Benefit-sharing engagements need to enable sufficient analysis of the local costs and cost-bearers, to ensure that this is factored into the community benefit sharing mechanism and resulting agreements.
- The third FPIC decision point is the most consequential and requires independent legal advice, rounds of information dissemination and discussion, and strict adherence to the community's own decision-making timeline.
- Governance and capacity-building commitments must be costed into the project financial model.

Engagement Activities

4.1 Project Activity Feasibility Assessment and Planning Assesses the feasibility of each project activity by evaluating the social, economic, and environmental conditions under which it is likely to work and establishing a plan for trialling and scaling it out. Covers land and natural resource management interventions, livelihood development activities, and governance activities, co-designed with those people who would implement or be affected by the activity.

4.2 Final Management Plan Planning Takes the initial site-level plans from the baseline and assessment phase further, establishing final management interventions — what will happen, where, by whom, and on what timeline. This local-level planning ensures communities have understood and co-designed the principal management measures, who may be adversely affected, and what the potential costs are, feeding directly into governance and benefit-sharing discussions.

4.3 Project Governance Structure Reviews proposed roles and responsibilities within site-level plans and the overall project governance structure. Includes a governance assessment of actors and institutions (strengths, weaknesses, and inclusivity) and a capacity assessment of community institutions to identify capacity development needs. Aims to centre community institutions in the governance structure and build their capacity to fulfil these roles over time.

4.4 Benefit-Sharing Assessment and Agreements Two linked engagements: first, the definition of the objectives and principles of the design of the community benefit sharing mechanism (CBSM), and second the design of the CBSM, including a participatory cost-benefit assessment to understand the full range of costs and cost bearers. These engagements enable the development of benefit-sharing agreements through a transparent and inclusive process.

4.5 Stakeholder Feedback and FPIC The third FPIC decision point. Returns to each village to share the final management plan and benefit-sharing agreements, in an accessible format. Substantial information dissemination is required before this key FPIC decision point, and rightsholders should have had access to independent impartial legal advice prior to this consent point.

4.6 Project Workshop Workshop to finalise the PDD and prepare for the inception phase, including internal write-up sessions with the project team and a workshop with community and stakeholder representatives to plan for inception and validation.