WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACHES TO INCLUSIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

MARCH 2024

NDC PARTNERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

This best practice brief provides guidance and examples on how to apply a whole-of-society approach to effectively engage stakeholders in the enhancement, planning and implementation of nationally determined contributions (NDCs). The best practices presented in this brief have been consolidated based on experience across the NDC Partnership.[1] The guidance presented is nonprescriptive and should be tailored to the unique experiences, circumstances and capacities of individual countries.

INCLUSIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Inclusive stakeholder engagement enables broad participation in climate planning and action. Well-thought-through and executed engagement allows governments to leverage the existing capacities and commitments of a diverse set of stakeholders to make NDCs more ambitious and implementable. Broad and meaningful engagement facilitates exchanges to determine how to embed climate policy within whole-of-society stakeholders' existing plans and priorities, allowing governments to align climate action with national sustainable development plans to deliver strong social and economic benefits. Furthermore, engaging disenfranchised and marginalized populations can help ensure that NDC processes and outcomes are just, fair and respectful of human rights.

However, stakeholder engagement processes can be complex and difficult to execute. Governments are often faced with institutional or contextual constraints, such as a lack of legislation, new plans and mandates with no additional resources provided, economic challenges or corruption. They may also face gaps in capacity, such as frequent turnovers, limited or unpredictable staffing and limited budgets. These barriers can make engagement activities rushed, under resourced and under planned.[2]

This brief outlines best practices that governments can consider when designing activities and preparing institutional arrangements that favor quality and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Each engagement activity or process provides an opportunity for government officials to work with a defined set of stakeholders toward a common goal and can contribute to building or strengthening a **whole-of-society approach** to climate action.

---

1. Insights for this best practice brief were gathered through desk research and interviews, drawing on the in-country experience across 15 NDC Partnership member countries.

2. UNESCAP and IAP2. *Creating a Seat at the Table: Stakeholder Engagement for the 2030 Agenda.* https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Indicator%20Framework%20Brochure_180518_0.pdf

A WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACH

NDCs are national climate plans that set targets for economy- and society-wide transformations that are meant to be increasingly ambitious over time. Accomplishing such significant policy goals requires public acceptance, high-level political will and capacity building within government and society.[3] A whole-of-society approach to NDC enhancement and implementation can help deliver such transformations and can be put into practice through quality and inclusive stakeholder engagement that is multilevel, multi-actor and multisectoral, as illustrated in Figure 1.[4]

FIGURE 1

A whole-of-society approach
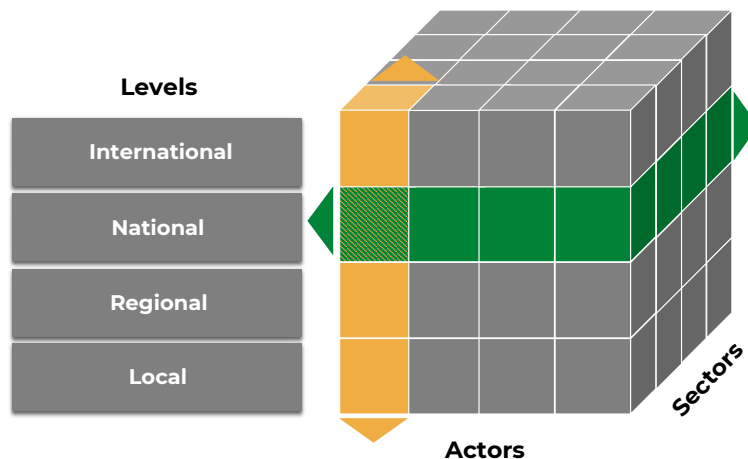
- › NDC processes are multilevel when coordinating action across the international, national, regional and local levels.

- › NDC processes are multi-actor when national governments involve all affected, interested or influencing stakeholders, such as line ministries, subnational governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, communities affected by climate change, gender and youth stakeholders, indigenous peoples, universities and unions, among others.

- › Finally, NDC processes are multisectoral when engaging the relevant actors and levels across the sectors prioritized in a country's NDC (energy, agriculture, transport, water, waste, etc.).

A whole-of-society approach is adopted when governments build upon each iteration of stakeholder engagement to incorporate new actors and deepen engagement with those who have already participated in NDC processes. Governments follow up with the stakeholders involved in each initial project, consultation or activity through regular and

3.   Samji, S. Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., & Woolcock, M. (2018, October). PDIA Toolkit. Harvard Kennedy School of Government. https://bsc.hks.harvard.edu/tools/toolkit/

4.   Image adapted from Strauch, Y. Robiou Du Pont, J. Balanowski, L. (2018). *Multi-level climate governance in Vietnam: Bridging national planning and local climate action*. Adelphi. https://adelphi.de/system/files/mediathek/bilder/Multi-level%20climate%20governance%20in%20Vietnam%20-%20adelphi.pdf

sustained engagement until all relevant sectors, levels and actors have the knowledge, motivation and capacity to take ownership over the climate action that falls within their mandate and functions. Figure 2 below illustrates how the Dominican Republic has built a whole-of-society approach as the public-sector bodies leading NDC processes hold stakeholder consultations during NDC updates while also mainstreaming climate across sectors with the help of central agencies and an interministerial coordination mechanism.

In the Dominican Republic, the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development (MEPyD), the Ministry of Environment and the interministerial National Council for Climate Change (CNCCMDL), established in 2008, are responsible for executing the National Climate Change Policy. Together with the Ministry of Finance, these public-sector bodies formed a national committee to carry out the country's NDC update process. These public-sector bodies involve a diverse set of stakeholder groups year after year through national-level and sectoral consultations.[5] Moreover, the 2020 NDC outlines how future inclusive engagement practices can be strengthened by fully integrating the National Strategy on Gender and Climate Action[6] and developing a National Strategy on Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE).[7]

Additionally, the active participation of central agencies in charge of planning, development and budgeting helps mainstream climate considerations across sectors through engagement with line ministries and agencies. In 2022, for instance, the MEPyD developed a practical methodology and guide for national policymakers to identify and quantify public investment with climate impact and disaster risk management. Complementary to this process, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) supported work on climate tagging for the identification, quantification and monitoring of spending on climate change activities in the national budget. The CNCCMDL ensures that all relevant sectors are involved through its coordination efforts across government, supporting line ministries in taking ownership over climate mainstreaming within their sector by jointly introducing projects, monitoring implementation and creating synergy with initiatives in other sectors.[8]

5. Puig, M. Experiencia de la República Dominicana: El compromiso nacional con la acción climática [Slide show]. https://www.euroclima.org/images/2021/Gobernanza/Agosto2021/Intercambio-virtual12Agosto_Rep-Dominicana.pdf

6. NDC-RD 2020": The Dominican Republic's widely embraced climate Plan. (2020, December 30). https://ndcpartnership.org/news/ndc-rd-2020-dominican-republics-widely-embraced-climate-plan

7. Government of the Dominican Republic. (2023, June). *ACE-specific targets and indicators in Dominican Republic's NDC and its Action Plan* [Slide show; UNFCCC]. 2023 Dialogue on Action for Climate Empowerment, Bonn, Germany. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/2023%20ACE%20Dialogue_Dominican%20Republic.pdf

8. *Mainstreaming climate policy and action in the Dominican Republic* | NDC Partnership. (2023, October 11). https://ndcpartnership.org/news/mainstreaming-climate-policy-and-action-dominican-republic

FIGURE 2

Adopting a whole-of-society approach through inclusive stakeholder engagement
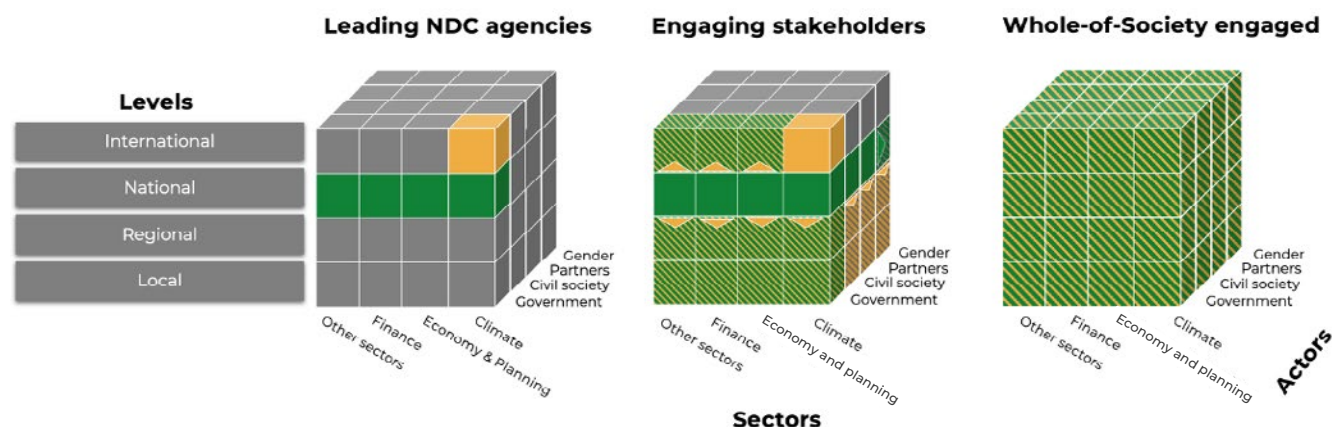
Given each country's distinct social and institutional structures, how a government agency leading NDC processes seeks to adopt a whole-of-society approach will be unique. In all cases, active participation of stakeholders across government and society within climate action provides a unique opportunity to deliver transformative social and economic change in alignment with development priorities. The following section discusses best practices that governments can consider adopting in their institutional arrangements, as these set the stage regarding if, how and when engagement takes place, in what form, its outcomes and the extent to which it is inclusive. The final section discusses best practices when preparing for stakeholder engagement activities or processes. The strategies and standards that the leading NDC agencies choose from earliest stages have an impact on the processes and outcomes throughout.[9] Prioritizing gender equality and social inclusion in activities and institutional arrangements as soon as possible contributes significantly to fair and equitable NDCs.

---

9.   Falleti, T. G., & Riofrancos, T. (2017). Endogenous participation. *World Politics, 70*(1), 86–121. https://doi.org/10.1017/s004388711700020x

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS
FOR INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

Institutional arrangements are the policies, systems and processes that organizations use to legislate, plan and manage their activities efficiently and to effectively coordinate with others in order to fulfill their mandate, these are usually formal but can also be informal.[10] NDCs provide governments with new and transformative mandates that require the participation of the whole-of-government and whole-of-society to meet included commitments. Governments can strengthen and adapt existing institutional arrangements according to the requirements of NDC mandates. The following best practices draw from the experiences of NDC Partnership member countries.

Define the public-sector bodies that will lead NDC-related engagements.

Assigning specific roles and responsibilities for NDC coordination and having the personnel to structure, plan, implement and monitor engagement across government and society helps ensure it is conducted. The teams need adequate resources and high-level political support for coordination efforts. Countries often embed these responsibilities within pre-existing institutions, such as the Ministry of Environment, in partnerships between key ministries or within an existing or emerging interministerial coordination mechanism.

Cambodia's National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD), an intergovernmental body composed of 36 ministries and agencies and 25 provincial governments, is chaired by the Minister of Environment with the Prime Minister as its Honorary Chair. The NCSD's receives technical support on climate-change-related issues from the Climate Change Technical Working Group (CCTWG), established in May 2017. The CCTWG is composed of technical staff from 19 ministries/agencies chaired by NCSD's Deputy Secretary General. The working group meets four times a year to review its progress and plans and approves NDC/LTS updates in Cambodia before the final approval of the minister and final submission to the UNFCCC. The NCSD's Department of Climate Change (DCC) serves as the group's secretariat and coordinates the Cambodia Climate Change Alliance between the government and development partners to engage a wide range of stakeholders and promote innovative partnerships between government, civil society, academia and the private sector.[11]

10. Kaoma, M., & Gheewala, S. H. (2021). Evaluation of the enabling environment for the sustainable development of rural-based bioenergy systems in Zambia. *Energy Policy*, 154, 112337. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2021.112337

11. The General Secretariat of the National Council for Sustainable Development/Ministry of Environment, the Kingdom of Cambodia. (2020). *Cambodia's Updated Nationally Determined Contribution*. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/20201231_NDC_Update_Cambodia.pdf

Map stakeholders in an inclusive and participatory process.

Mapping efforts help identify all stakeholders that may contribute significantly to NDC actions, especially when seeking to include vulnerable groups, women, youth, people with disabilities, poor households and other groups that are often left behind in government programs. Outside actors can assist in this process as needed, and mapping can support NDC enhancement and implementation generally or specific projects and sectoral priorities. Stakeholder mapping offers an opportunity to identify how each group may be affected, be interested in, contribute to or influence policy — both positively and negatively. Mapping should occur regularly given that the composition of stakeholders and group representatives changes frequently.[12]

The NDC Partnership has supported mapping-related requests with **Antigua and Barbuda** for NDC development, with **Honduras** for assessing e-mobility and renewable energy capacities, with **Mexico** for adaptation actions in the fisheries and Forestry and other land use (FOLU) sectors, with **The Gambia** to incorporate subnational actors in its NDC implementation plan and with **Uganda** to structure access to green bonds.

---

12. Durbin and S. Vincent, Eds., J. C. (2020). *Stakeholder Participation Guide: Supporting Stakeholder Participation in Design, Implementation and Assessment of Policies and Actions.* ICAT (Initiative for Climate Action Transparency). https://climateactiontransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Stakeholder-Participation-Assessment-Guide.pdf

Antigua and Barbuda
Nicola / Adobe Stock

Design institutional arrangements in a participatory manner and encode them in a formal framework.

If the conditions are given to generate sufficient consensus among state and nonstate actors through participatory mechanisms, encoding institutional arrangements in law or other formal mechanisms provides government bodies responsibilities regarding climate action they must abide by and can be used to secure budget allocation. This facilitates coordination and engagement efforts to mobilize key state actors by the leading NDC agencies because they have mandates to do so. Such an initiative requires significant political will and public acceptance, so it must be carefully timed and planned. Accompanying frameworks with strong targeting and communications efforts can ensure that mapped stakeholders are aware of the formal framework and their entry points for participation. Providing the institutional arrangements' legal backing may not be feasible at the moment or, even if passed, may not be feasible to implement. If so, consider strengthening pre-existing or alternative mechanisms to create strong incentives for cooperation within government. Analyze whether a coordination mechanism may function best without the rigidity of a legal mandate or with a limited time frame, responding appropriately to the context.

Following the passage of **Peru's** Climate Change Law, a regulatory framework for implementing its components was developed through consultations with 2,000 representatives of the public sector, indigenous peoples, youth, civil society, the private sector and academia. Stakeholders' contributions and how they were taken into account were published on government websites, demonstrating a commitment to transparency in the decision-making process.[13] The framework establishes responsibilities of the national authority on climate change, line ministries and agencies, regional and local governments and ensures the participation of nonstate actors.

Seek legal mandates to organize stakeholder engagement.

Legal mandates to organize stakeholder engagement processes significantly contribute to the feasibility and support received of activities organized. Legislation can establish standards in line with quality stakeholder engagement discussed throughout the document that also protect the right to public participation of nonstate actors and the right to access information. Laws and resolutions can also mandate meaningful and quality engagement of marginalized groups, protecting their right to shape policies that will directly affect them. However, engagement processes should not be limited to those that are legally mandated. Instead, establishing consistent engagement practices can serve efforts to institutionalize them.

13. Dirección General De Cambio Climático Y Desertificación. *Dialoguemos sobre el Reglamento de la Ley Marco sobre Cambio Climático*. https://www.minam.gob.pe/cambioclimatico/dialoguemos-reglamento-lmcc/

Georgia's Environmental Assessment Code mandates the right to public participation, specifically mandating that government institutions organize open consultations for environmental policies and that officials provide feedback on how public comments are considered in decision making.[14]

Coordinate actions across sectors with the support of line ministries and specialized agencies.

Collaboration between an NDC coordinating agency and other ministries can support identifying intersections across existing mandates and climate change commitments. Agencies can work together to identify projects, capacity-building opportunities and needed technical assistance and funding required to reach NDC targets. Each agency can also help include relevant actors across levels — such as subnational sectoral bodies or specialized international organizations — and stakeholder groups. Engaging government agencies with expertise on women, gender, youth, human rights, inequality or other such issues from early on supports mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion, as well as addressing social and economic needs. Coordination mechanisms can exist outside of formal institutional arrangements.

In **Burkina Faso**, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Sanitation included the Ministry of Gender in the preparation of its NDC implementation plan from the start. Together, they ensured that sector-specific action plans included gender mainstreaming with input from women in local communities and other stakeholders. The Ministry of Gender also designated an NDC focal point to participate in the NDC coordination meetings and monitor gender inclusion in NDC project implementation.[15]

---

14. Law of Georgia. *Environmental Assessment Code*. https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/3691981/1/en/pdf

15. Burkina Faso engages in collaborative efforts to mainstream climate and gender across sectoral plans. (2020, December 9). https://ndcpartnership.org/news/burkina-faso-engages-collaborative-efforts-mainstream-climate-and-gender-across-sectoral-plans

Burkina Faso
Matthieu / Adobe Stock

Establish focal points to engage with all key state and nonstate stakeholders within the leading NDC agency.

Designating focal points for sectoral line ministries, specialized agencies, vulnerable groups, gender stakeholders and other key nonstate actors allows engagement and communications to be regular and sustained, reinforcing trust between all involved. Governments can also embed a team of inclusion experts to support the focal points' work in mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in engagement processes within the coordinating agency and across government. Their responsibilities can include developing analyses, project enhancement, gender-responsive budgeting and collaborating with other stakeholders to develop inclusive indicators.

In **Ecuador**, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition created a Commission on Gender and Climate Change with the support of technical specialists on adaptation, mitigation and social inclusion. The Subsecretariat for Climate Change co-leads an interinstitutional network on gender and climate change with different public institutions and nonstate actors, working with women's organizations working on climate change management at a national and regional level, providing technical assistance to include a gender perspective in sectoral projects and generating indicators and collecting data on gender in climate action implementation.[16]

Define a coordination framework to work with subnational authorities.

Subnational governments are critical to deliver on goals at a local level. They are often best positioned to offer knowledge on pressing mitigation and adaptation needs on the ground and execute them with proper national and international support. Subnational actors include regional and local authorities, subnational ministry offices, a broad set of nonstate actors and local communities. Vertical coordination across these actors ensures that national plans reflect the needs, aspirations and implementation capacities of local stakeholders. If coordination with subnational actors is not initially a part of institutional arrangements, NDC coordinating agencies can work with central government and line ministries to assign focal points and design localized work programs. Additionally, national governments have an important role in offering support and resources to subnational governments that may lack implementation capacity due to lower budget allocations. Occasionally, subnational actors are leading climate actions that NDC coordinating agencies can integrate into national planning for additional support.

16. Mainstreaming Gender and Youth in Latin America: Experiences from Panama and Ecuador. (2023, July 26). *NDC Partnership*. https://countries.ndcpartnership.org/news/%E2%80%8Bmainstreaming-gender-and-youth-latin-america-experiences-panama-and-ecuador

Mozambique has partnered with the United Nations Capital Development Fund to provide access to climate finance for 30 local districts, benefitting approximately 3 million people by channeling USD25 million directly to local governments. Through the project, local governments listen to the voices and needs of communities to design better investments that are resilient to rapid changes in climate and Local Adaptation Plans. Additionally, the national government provides incentives for local governments to incorporate climate adaptation thinking into day-to-day planning, investments and public finance systems. As a result, 100 adaptive development infrastructures have been financed and local government budgets will be reinforced with USD5.3 million for climate actions in 2024.[17]

Create enabling conditions for civil society and private-sector input.

Nonstate actors contribute in crucial ways to NDC processes. Civil society organizations (CSOs) hold vast knowledge and local implementing capacity, back government accountability efforts and champion safeguard mechanisms around justice and human rights. CSOs are most able to participate in engagement processes when they are secure in their rights to public participation, peaceful protest, freedoms of association and expression.[18] Economy-wide transformations required to reach NDC objectives are only possible when the private sector is actively mitigating emissions and has the capacity to integrate adaptation measures. The private sector requires appropriate fiscal policies and regulations and information to fully participate in climate action and contribute to policy development.[19] Both groups of actors can maintain demand for and supply of climate action beyond the lifecycle of individual governments.

---

17. UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). (2023, August). "LoCAL is the best model to respond to the needs of the people." https://www.uncdf.org/admin/editors/ArticleItem/Index/8384?articleTitle=local-is-the-best-model-to-respond-to-the-needs-of-the-people

18. Civilis Derechos Humanos. (2020). Derechos de la sociedad civil. In *Proyecto SCere*. https://proyectoscere.org/web/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ManualSesio%CC%81n2.pdf

19. *NDC Investment Planning Guide and Checklist | NDC Partnership*. https://ndcpartnership.org/knowledge-portal/climate-toolbox/ndc-investment-planning-guide-and-checklist

Burkina Faso
malajscy / Adobe Stock

Eswatini developed a strategy to enhance private-sector participation in green investments after identifying major barriers to green investments in a lack of enabling policy and financial incentives. The resulting private-sector implementation plan included recommendations to establish a leading private-sector engagement platform and conduct regular consultations.[20] To best facilitate public engagement, **Georgia's** Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture has a team dedicated to guaranteeing access to information, the right to public participation, consultations and access to justice in environmental matters.[21]

Plan for stakeholder engagement processes in every stage of NDC policy cycles.

Stakeholders can make significant contributions to each stage of NDC policy cycles: enhancing NDC targets and objectives, designing action plans, implementing and financing NDCs, and monitoring, evaluating and learning. Inclusion of stakeholders at any point of the cycle can serve as an entry point for involvement in other stages. This practice foments consistent engagement and accountability, with multiple actors following up on whether action plans are achieving targets and where there is room for improvement.

Eswatini's leading NDC agencies, the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs along with the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, are working with the Central Bank to integrate climate change in its monetary policy and incorporate climate change impacts in economic indicators. Such assessment and planning activities are an entry point for the Central Bank to participate in climate policy implementation and monitoring.[22]

20. *Strategy to Enhance Private Sector Engagement in Eswatini NDC Actions.* (2021). Commonwealth Secretariat. https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/migrated/inline/Eswatini_NDC_private_sector_UPDF.pdf

21. *About EIEC | Environmental Information and Education Centre.* https://www.eiec.gov.ge/En/Page/AboutEIEC

22. *Central Banks Driving adoption of Financial Systems | NDC Partnership.* (2023, October 12). https://ndcpartnership.org/news/central-banks-driving-adoption-financial-systems

Build internal technical capacity to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion in climate policy.

Having a gender equality and social inclusion action plan will help structure efforts to mainstream inclusive practices throughout government. Measures to build internal capacity can include training for officials across government ministries, agencies and at a subnational level; embedding gender equality and social inclusion units or focal points throughout government; coordination mechanisms among assigned focal points; implementing gender-responsive budgeting in all agencies; promoting the leadership and participation of women, youth, indigenous peoples and marginalized communities in government plans and climate change forums; conducting research on the impacts of climate change on marginalized communities; and conducting vulnerability assessments. Regularly collecting data on accessibility needs through institutional questionnaires allows officials to properly design inclusive engagement processes. Institutions can also incorporate diverse perspectives by establishing hiring practices that encourage recruitment from groups often left behind and vulnerable to climate change.

Nepal's NDC Implementation Plan incorporates a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Action Plan that commits to adding a dedicated unit in all ministries and departments of federal and provincial governments and focal points in all local governments.[23] **Panama**, **Zimbabwe** and **Antigua and Barbuda** train and hire young people to work in the ministry in charge of environmental issues or equivalent entities.[24] Internship programs and youth climate academies are examples of programs that increase institutions' technical capacities to engage youth and adopt intergenerational perspectives.

---

23. Government of Nepal. (2022). *Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Implementation Plan.* https://ndcpartnershipplans.com/public/view/06c865b1-b8d0-4360-a3e0-e8075b182de5

24. The Ministry of Environment of the Government of Panama is an active participant of the Climate Youth Negotiators Programme (https://www.youthnegotiators.org/programmes).

Nepal
mikespixels / Adobe Stock

Assess stakeholder requirements for participation in NDC actions.

An important aspect of enabling climate action by stakeholders is to understand their technical assistance and funding needs and match them appropriately with support from central government, ministries and implementing and development partners. Requests for support can be made to the NDC Partnership, which has already provided support for stakeholder engagement activities to nearly all its developing country members. When working with implementing and development partners on such efforts, governments should focus on building partnerships that embed institutional capacity within government and society.

Burkina Faso is receiving support from Climate Analytics and GIZ's NDC ASSIST II Project through the NDC Partnership to strengthen resource mobilization for NDC implementation by developing bankable projects with key national and sectoral stakeholders. To do so, implementing partners are providing capacity building for staff in central and decentralized technical services, civil society organizations and the private sector on creating adaptation and mitigation project concept notes. Implementing partners support embedding capacity within national stakeholders while also helping develop a portfolio of projects that express technical assistance and funding needs.

Incorporate stakeholder engagement in monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts for consistent improvements.

Stakeholder engagement is important at this stage to ensure diverse perspectives, information and analyses that can contribute to transparency and accountability efforts. Furthermore, stakeholder inputs are used to improve future iterations of NDC action and engagement processes. NDC targets and action plans should include gender equality and social inclusion indicators that are monitored and evaluated with participation from the communities involved, who can drive consistent data collection and improvement to indicators. For example, stakeholders may seek additional follow-ups, request a clearer report on the impact of their contributions or clear next steps following engagement. Regular reflections should also examine the extent to which women and marginalized groups were included in NDC processes to plan for improvements in next cycles.

Cambodia's annual reports on climate action developed through an online tracking system provide yearly results on gender engagement in NDC/LTS implementation. Additionally, Cambodia developed a Women's Resilience Index for the years 2019 and 2022 to measure women's participation in decision-making processes, access to social programs and infrastructure and income and economic access to natural resources. The index collected data by consulting 385 women across four provinces, identifying systematic barriers to women's resilience.[25]

EXECUTING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENTS

The care that goes into organizing each stakeholder engagement is key in building up institutional structures of coordination and joint action. Quality and meaningful stakeholder engagement seeks to share ownership of NDC targets and actions, requiring leading NDC agencies to communicate consistently with stakeholders and to tailor engagement strategies, especially when working with groups that are often left behind. Government officials can take the following best practices into consideration when designing stakeholder engagement plans. These best practices can help build trust among stakeholders so that coordination and engagement efforts become sustainable and increasingly impactful with time. Importantly, appropriate planning must include necessary technical assistance, funding and other resources required for their implementation.

Tailor engagement according to stakeholder needs.

Different groups of stakeholders will require different levels of engagement according to their roles or responsibilities related to climate action. These levels of engagement may include informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering. To define a level of engagement, governments should consider stakeholders' capacities and understanding of climate change, their role in reaching the NDC target and how their involvement can positively or negatively affect outcomes. Annex 2 outlines the levels of engagement, when they may be most appropriate and suggested activities to implement tailored outreach. NDC Partnership's Youth Engagement Plan and Gender Strategy offer guidance on engaging each of these populations.

25. *Women's Resilience Index | The National Council for Sustainable Development.* (2023, July 29). https://ncsd.moe.gov.kh/dcc/data-portal/womens-resilience-index

Peru has sought to engage state and nonstate actors in NDC implementation through a wide-scale participatory process called "Dialoguemos". The process created many entry points to reach new actors by utilizing multiple levels of engagement. Initially, larger-scale gatherings encouraged informing stakeholders. Key stakeholders were then invited to smaller gatherings to solidify their involvement in NDC actions by defining roles and responsibilities. Finally, the process ended with high-level meetings to establish agreements and alliances that empowered stakeholders to plan and implement NDC actions. Throughout the process, stakeholders became increasingly engaged.[26]

Tailor engagement according to stakeholder practices and priorities.

Officials should frame climate action in language familiar to stakeholders and showcase how climate action is embedded within their interests. Technical climate language common among experts may not be an effective tool for outreach with particular communities. Likewise, stakeholder motivation around climate action may not focus on NDC targets, but how policies affect or can benefit their communities, resources, employment or livelihoods. Government officials should also tailor engagement according to stakeholders' own coordination practices. Potential strategies include hosting engagements at familiar venues, understanding how the agendas for meetings are set and planning sets of engagement activities according to the rhythm of each group's decision-making processes.

In **Lebanon**, the government has prioritized its economic agenda to address the current complex situation. Therefore, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has worked with the Ministry of Environment to instigate climate action by using a climate lens to strengthen the economic agenda. For example, UNDP conducted a cost-benefit analysis of projects included in the country's development plans, identifying which ones were "climate proofable" and estimating government savings if recommendations were adopted. The Ministry of Environment also produced analyses on how 1.5°C and 2°C scenarios would affect projected industrial and agricultural outputs, demonstrating the importance of climate-proofing economic plans to ensure their long-term sustainability.[27]

26. Echaverría Ramirez, A. M. (2019). Dialoguemos NDC: A Participatory Process for NDC Implementation in Peru. In *NDC Partnership*. https://api.knack.com/v1/applications/5b23f04fd240aa37e01fa362/download/asset/5cc1c7943b69be00078c54ba/dialoguemos_peru_ndc_partnership.pdf

27. UNDP. (2021). *Climate-Proofing Lebanon's Development Plans*. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/lb/Climate-ProofingLebanonsDevelo-20210922091855.pdf

Make engagements meaningful by appreciating the value of stakeholder contribution, communicating consistently and following up on commitments.

Stakeholders dedicate valuable time and resources contributing to government efforts when participating in engagements. Governments can demonstrate that their efforts are appreciated by being transparent about how inputs affect decision-making and how their actions and support contribute to reaching NDC targets. Clear and consistent communication with stakeholders before, during and after the engagement process helps build meaningful and trustworthy relationships. Importantly, government officials should follow up on commitments assumed with stakeholders in a timely and orderly fashion.

Georgia and **Peru** shared how public comments during consultations were considered in decision-making processes related to climate policy. The comments themselves and an analysis of how they were included are publicly available online.[28] In **Burkina Faso**, the Ministry of Agriculture monitors NDC-related projects being implemented by the private sector and civil society organizations. By incorporating nonstate actors in monitoring and evaluation systems, the government is following up on results and recognizing how these outcomes contribute to reaching NDC targets.

---

28. Ministerio del Ambiente. *Dialoguemos sobre las Contribuciones Nacionalmente Determinadas (NDC)*. Retrieved January 19, 2024, from https://www.minam.gob.pe/cambioclimatico/dialoguemosndc/

Georgia
Serg Zastavkin / Adobe Stock

Prepare to make activities accessible, nondiscriminatory and safe.

There are numerous barriers for stakeholders to learn of engagement opportunities and participate in them meaningfully. Experiences of vulnerability, marginalization and violence must be considered when designing engagement processes, especially when engaging people who are often left behind. An essential part of adopting inclusive practices is to ensure that activities are accessible, nondiscriminatory and safe. Governments should plan additional time to understand the context and potential barriers for prospective stakeholders and allocate resources for accessibility measures appropriately. Additionally, creating anonymous feedback or grievance redress mechanisms allows stakeholders to make recommendations and complaints on accessibility, nondiscrimination and facilitation. Annex 3 provides a list of accessibility aspects that governments can consider in engagement activities.

The Government of **Peru** identified geographical and financial accessibility barriers before organizing a consultation with 80 representatives of indigenous peoples to establish a country position for climate change negotiations as part of the Conference of Parties (COP). The consultation was to be held in-person in the capital while key representatives lived in regions throughout the country. The Ministry of Environment ensured the consultation was accessible by securing implementing partner support to fund participants' travel and accommodations.

Peru
Aliaksei / Adobe Stock

Support existing initiatives and plans that align with NDCs.

Outside of agencies responsible for NDCs and climate policy coordination, many stakeholders within government and across society are already taking important forms of climate and sustainable development action. Promoting and coordinating with these existing initiatives and plans, including them in NDC processes, is an opportunity to recognize stakeholders' contributions and inputs to national climate commitments. For instance, many states have conducted significant stakeholder engagement when designing and implementing sustainable development plans. Building links between NDCs and development efforts recognizes stakeholders' contributions during engagements and ensures climate action is embedded in their expressed priorities and current initiatives. Support for initiatives should fit into broader government strategies to build synergy between top-down efforts (international and national) and the knowledge and initiatives built from the bottom-up (subnational and local). It is also important to be responsive to engagement that is initiated by stakeholders in a bottom-up fashion through advocacy, peaceful protests and media outlets. These often signal needs and aspirations that may lack accessible institutional outlets.

In **Peru**, nonstate actors, such as universities and indigenous peoples' organizations, have coordinated climate actions within their stakeholder groups. For example, universities across the country collaborate on research projects on climate policy and indigenous peoples have developed natural resource co-management practices. The government has incorporated representation from both stakeholder groups in its interministerial coordination mechanism, the Comisión Nacional de Cambio Climático and formally recognized climate action functions of a newly created Indigenous Peoples Platform to Combat Climate Change.[29]

CLOSING

Adopting a whole-of-society approach to NDC processes can be a complex challenge for governments. However, including more actors is crucial to achieving transformative climate action. In addition, embedding climate action within the priorities and interests of each sector, level and actor is an important strategy to enlist the involvement of more key stakeholders in each iteration of engagement. When people are strategically coordinating actions, they are forming the building blocks to unlock more ambitious NDCs and ensure the implementation of climate commitments.

29. *Comisión Nacional sobre el Cambio Climático.* Campañas - Ministerio Del Ambiente - Plataforma Del Estado Peruano. https://www.gob.pe/institucion/minam/campa%C3%B1as/5064-comision-nacional-sobre-el-cambio-climatico

ANNEX 1: WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY ARRANGEMENTS CHECKLIST

Best practice	Description
Institutional arrangements	
The country has a defined institutional arrangement for managing NDC-related actions NDC-related responsibilities are distributed across public-sector bodies, including mandates regarding NDC enhancement, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, coordination, investment and engagement. There is at least one government agency in charge of coordinating NDC processes.	
The institutional arrangement is established through participatory mechanisms	Relevant stakeholders are consulted on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the proposed structure and collaborate with its establishment.
The institutional arrangement is encoded in legislation or administrative resolutions	There are mandates outlining the roles and responsibilities for each of the public-sector bodies involved. The formality and structure of these mandates depend on country context and the level of political support.
The leading NDC agency has focal points to engage with all key state and nonstate stakeholders.	Focal points or teams are responsible for engaging with sectoral line ministries, specialized agencies, vulnerable groups, gender stakeholders and other key nonstate actors.
Coordination mechanisms exist to manage climate policy integration across sectors, actors and levels	There is a consistent frame to understand the linkages across sectors and mechanisms to link policy subsystems and corresponding relationships of authority. These often include interministerial, subnational and donor coordination mechanisms. Nonstate actors are often included in such coordination mechanisms or may require their own.
Coordination mechanisms meet regularly and have adequate support from personnel	Structures work best when they are consistent and appropriately leveraged for climate policy integration by an active chair who can facilitate and follow up on interactions among members.
Government agencies have internal technical capacity to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion	Governments can establish focal points to engage with stakeholders and embed a team of experts on gender, social inclusion and participatory methodologies to mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in NDC engagement processes within the coordinating agency and across government. These efforts can include analysis, project revision, gender-responsive budgeting and collaboration with other stakeholders to develop inclusive indicators.

Best practice	Description
Creating opportunities for participation	
Quality and inclusive stakeholder engagement processes occur at every stage of the NDC policy cycle. Important NDC processes, such as NDC updates or implementation plan design, legally mandate engagement.	
NDC enhancements include engagement of all relevant actors across sectors, levels and stakeholder groups	NDC enhancements are consistent with international obligations regarding increasing ambition and reflect the needs, aspirations, capacities and realities of stakeholders across sectors and levels.
NDC implementation includes participation of all relevant actors across sectors, levels and stakeholder groups	NDC actions are implemented in collaboration with state and nonstate stakeholders across sectors and levels, involving the whole-of-society in delivering broad transformations.
NDC monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts include engagement of all relevant actors across sectors, levels and stakeholder groups	NDC monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts engage all relevant state and nonstate stakeholders to ensure diverse perspectives, information and analyses that can contribute to transparency and accountability efforts. Stakeholder inputs are used to improve future iterations of NDC action and stakeholder processes.
Stakeholders are mapped in an inclusive and participatory process.	Leading agencies identify all stakeholders who may be affected, interested in or influence NDC actions – both positively and negatively. Stakeholder mapping systematically includes marginalized groups, women, youth, people with disabilities and other groups that are often left behind. Mapping happens regularly as the composition and representatives of stakeholder groups change.
There are legal mandates for stakeholder engagement and public participation.	Government officials have legal mandates to organize stakeholder engagements and facilitate public participation in decision-making processes, with high standards regarding inclusivity, accessibility, transparency and access to information.
There is an enabling environment for civil society and the private sector.	The government promotes measures so that civil society and the private sector can flourish and maximize their contributions to NDCs. Civil society organizations are independent and can fully exercise their rights. The private sector has financial incentives and institutional mechanisms to support their participation in green investments.
Technical assistance and funding to support stakeholder participation is secured.	Leading agencies seek to secure the technical assistance and funding necessary for stakeholders to fully participate and contribute to NDC actions.

Best practice	Description
Executing a stakeholder engagement process	
This stakeholder engagement process is meaningful and inclusive. The engagements are meaningful because they contribute to accelerating transformative climate action while sustainably strengthening the inclusion of more actors in NDCs. The engagements are inclusive because they take into consideration equity, human rights and the inclusion of people who are often left behind and they are tailored to the stakeholder.	
The engagement is tailored to stakeholder needs.	The government tailored the level of engagement (Annex 2) by considering the stakeholder's capacities and understanding of climate change, their role in reaching the NDC target and how their involvement can positively or negatively affect outcomes.
The engagement is tailored to stakeholder practices and priorities.	The facilitators of the engagement process understand the language, culture, practices and priorities of the stakeholder group to appropriately embed climate actions.
Stakeholders understand how their inputs and contributions influence decision making and NDC implementation.	Government reports back to stakeholders how their participation influenced a decision-making process or how the actions they took contributed to reaching NDC objectives.
The engagement helps build trust with stakeholders.	Communication with stakeholders is clear and consistent before, during and after the engagement process. Government officials follow up on commitments assumed with stakeholders in a timely and orderly fashion.
Engagement activities are accessible, nondiscriminatory and safe.	Accessible engagement processes take into consideration the barriers to participation outlined in Annex 3, implementing the appropriate strategies to not leave people behind.
Support existing initiatives and plans that align with NDCs.	Leading agencies acknowledge and support climate actions taken by other actors and provide the appropriate support and coordination to promote successful initiatives. Government officials seriously consider requests for engagement coming from external actors.
Engagement processes incorporate effective feedback and grievance redress mechanisms.	Feedback helps improve inclusivity in future engagement processes. However, institutions also benefit from having mechanisms to redress grievances. These types of mechanisms serve as early warning and protection systems to ensure human rights, accountability and transparency in NDC processes and climate projects.

ANNEX 2: STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM[30]

Description	May be appropriate when:	Tools
Inform		
To provide stakeholders and the general public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding problems related to climate change and NDCs	› First engaging a stakeholder › Governments need to convince actors on the importance of climate action › Governments want to create narratives to influence official plans, investors and public opinion › Stakeholders lack sufficient understanding of NDCs and climate change to engage in actions › Stakeholders who are influential wish to stay informed of important steps, even if not directly involved	*In-person:* Town hall meetings, workshops, seminars, trainings, report launches, incorporating in education curricula, internal presentations and open houses *Media and virtual:* Online data or open government portals, email lists, conference calls, newsletters, bulletins, online trainings, websites, social media, traditional media, reports, textbooks and educational material for schools and universities and fact sheets
Consult		
To obtain public feedback on NDC targets, plans, actions, assessments or monitoring and evaluation frameworks	› Clear plans exist and there are a limited range of options for change › Governments want to improve their existing plans and can use the feedback received › Governments are committed to providing feedback to stakeholders on how their input influenced the outcome › Stakeholders can understand the subject and relate to the plans and options	*In-person:* In-person consultations, focus groups, surveys, public meetings, public comment in legislative body, one-on-one meetings with stakeholders, responsiveness to independent lobbying efforts and protests *Media and virtual:* Online consultations, surveys, webinars, social media chats, web-based platforms for discussion and inputs, radio, attention to online petitions, demands and media coverage

---

30. Adapted from IAP2's "Public Participation Spectrum" and "Stakeholder Engagement and the 2030 Agenda: A Practical Guide" by UNDESA and UNITAR

Description	May be appropriate when:	Tools
Involve		
To work directly with stakeholders throughout NDC processes to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	› Governments need the expertise and contacts of stakeholders to effectively implement decisions › Governments are committed to incorporating inputs received into their decisions and to providing feedback to stakeholders › Stakeholders are interested and have the capacity to engage in NDC processes	*In-person:* National consultations, social dialogues, inclusion of stakeholder representatives in interministerial coordination mechanisms, co-design of indicators, service delivery partnerships, deliberative polling, provision of data, workshops and forums *Media and virtual:* Stakeholder reviews, solicitation of recommendations and proposals online, webinars, web-based platforms for discussion and inputs, surveys

Description	May be appropriate when:	Policy options
Collaborate		
To partner directly with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision-making process throughout NDC policy processes	› There is an identifiable added value to coordination among stakeholders › There is enough time and resources to make the collaboration meaningful › Governments and stakeholders demonstrate the political will, interest and commitment to develop a meaningful partnership around NDC enhancement and implementation › Governments recognize the need for stakeholders' advice and innovation to create the best solutions › Stakeholders, especially marginalized communities, will be affected by policies	Representation in coordination mechanisms and technical working groups, collaboration in designing NDCs and associated plans and strategies, collaborative stakeholder engagement, advisory bodies, joint planning and shared projects, training and capacity building to support joint action, knowledge production, collaborative web-platform, participation in monitoring and evaluation systems and participation in open government platforms

Description	May be appropriate when:	Policy options
Empower		
To place final decision making or implementation in the hands of stakeholders, to create enabling environments, to support or incorporate bottom-up initiatives	› Governments adopt an inclusive approach, recognizing stakeholders' capacities, interests and concerns › Governments have limited capacities or there are stakeholders better positioned to complete NDC action › Stakeholders are interested in taking climate action that does not depend on government initiatives but can be facilitated by enabling environments, regulations or capacity building › Stakeholders are best positioned to provide a service or when mitigation and adaptation actions depend on stakeholder behavioral changes	Improving enabling environments for civic space and the private sector, legislation, regulation, capacity-building workshops, technical assistance, funding opportunities, recognition, awards, systematically providing access to decision-makers, monitoring and support of independent climate actions, recognition of grievances communicated through institutional and extra-institutional means and participation in international fora

ANNEX 3: CONSIDERING ACCESSIBILITY IN ENGAGEMENTS[31]

Common barriers to participation	Questions to ask	Potential strategies
Physical accessibility	Are there physical barriers in getting to or within the venue for participants with physical disabilities or restricted mobility (e.g. stairs, tight spaces, inaccessible toilets, accessibility of roads, transportation, entryways)?	› Choose venues that are physically accessible › Increase mobility in entryways and within the venue (e.g. provide ramps, rearrange furniture) › Plan suitable adaptations to engagement activities for individuals with disabilities or restricted mobility › Provide advance notice about the venue's physical accessibility › Plan to have staff or volunteers available to assist participants in entering the space, if necessary. Make this support available for all participants, instead of relying on assumptions.
Geographical accessibility	Do participants have access to safe and reliable transportation to the venue? Is the distance to the venue reasonable for participants? How long or complex is the commute? Are some groups of people unable to leave their place of residence?	› Choose venues near main public transit lines › Offer complimentary transportation › Host multiple engagements at different locations › Offer alternative channels for participation (e.g., online engagement, hard-copy surveys distributed by community partners, telephone surveys)
Financial accessibility	What costs or financial losses may participants face if they attend? Is the form of financial compensation accessible for participants?	› Provide complimentary services or reimburse participants for costs of participation (e.g., transportation, meals, childcare, caregiving, support workers) › Host family-friendly engagement events or multiple engagements at different dates and times › Provide financial compensation after discussing the most appropriate and meaningful form of payment with participants (e.g., cash, cheques, gift certificates)

---

31. Adapted from "Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement (A Guide for Global Practitioners)" by SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue.

Common barriers to participation	Questions to ask	Potential strategies
Date and time	How might work, health conditions, caregiving or other responsibilities impact when and for how long participants are available? Does the engagement coincide with important dates or times that would impact attendance or make the event insensitive? What cultural differences exist regarding time?	› Consult community members and partners about event dates and times › Respect start and end times › Host multiple engagements at different dates and times › Offer alternative and/or asynchronous channels for participation (e.g., online engagement, hard-copy surveys)
Safety and security	Are there histories of conflict or discrimination that could increase some participants' risk of experiencing physical or verbal harassment or social exclusion before, during or after participating in the engagement? Do some participating communities commonly face marginalization in public venues or online spaces? Do some participants fear threats to their personal safety due to the time or location of the event? Do some participants fear their income, other resources or social relationships might be affected if they participate?	› Clearly communicate guidelines for respectful participation › Consider the need to host separate engagements for groups who may experience harassment, exclusion, marginalization or other forms of systemic harm › Develop a moderation strategy for online discussions › For higher-risk contexts, design engagements that are by invitation only, with a low public profile (and password protected if online) › Choose venues at well-lit and safe locations › Provide complimentary transportation or "safe-walk" accompaniment to transport › Offer alternative and anonymous channels for participation

Common barriers to participation	Questions to ask	Potential strategies
Cultural diversity	How might cultural differences in ways of knowing, meaning-making and communicating impact engagement processes? Are the engagement spaces, activities and language inclusive of people from diverse races, ethnicities, religions and other identity-based cultures? Are there cultural norms and protocols that should inform the communication strategy?	› Work collaboratively with community members and partners to frame and design engagements with attention to cultural worldviews and community narratives › Respect cultural norms and protocols in the engagement process (e.g., order of speakers) › Incorporate cultural traditions and forms of expression
Gender inclusivity	Are spaces, activities and language respectful and safe for people of diverse gender identities and expressions, including people in the LGBTQI+ community? Do women feel like they can participate and express their views freely?	› Consider the need to host separate engagements for women and other groups who may experience harassment, exclusion, marginalization or other forms of systemic harm › Invite participants to indicate their preferred pronoun(s) through introductions or on nametags › Offer gender-inclusive options on registration forms and surveys › Choose venues with at least one gender-neutral washroom; affix signage stating that washrooms are trans-inclusive › Be mindful of language and visuals that are gendered or perpetuate the erasure of transgender or nonbinary identities
Language and communication	Are your methods for outreach and public engagement accessible for people with lower levels of literacy, who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind/low vision, have speech impairments and are not proficient in the dominant language?	› Combine multiple modes of communication, such as text, audio, video and graphics as well as print and digital communication › Ask participants about particular needs and preferences regarding communication tools and means of communication › Provide real-time translation and interpretation in relevant languages, including sign language › Add captions to images and videos; use live-captioning for digital video events › Use plain language, with limited jargon › Do not speak quickly; use a microphone in large spaces › Use large, accessible fonts › Ensure that digital materials are accessible by screen readers

Common barriers to participation	Questions to ask	Potential strategies
Digital accessibility	Might some participants lack access to computers and fast or stable internet connection? Do some groups of people lack the digital literacy to navigate key information or platforms?	› Combine offline and online engagement approaches › Give preference to low-bandwidth and mobile-friendly engagement platforms › Consider loaning or sponsoring technology, mobile data cards or Wi-Fi hubs › Use platforms that are familiar to key audiences and/or that are easy to navigate › Send a how-to guide beforehand and schedule time for testing and orientation
Awareness	What spaces and modes of communication do community members regularly access? What community networks can support outreach?	› Develop tailored outreach strategies for different communities of interest › Work with community partners to support outreach › Combine online and offline approaches for outreach › Take measures to ensure accessibility in language and communication
Sense of belonging, capacity and confidence	Might some participants feel they have less of a right to participate? Might some need more time to respond to questions, speak or write? Do participants have the necessary skills and experience to fully participate in the engagement activity? Is there trust with the convening institutions? Do the facilitators have the necessary skills to identify and address inequalities among participants and create an environment of safety?	› Develop dedicated outreach strategies to invite historically marginalized groups › Send personalized, individual invitations › Hold space for participants who may take longer to speak or write and encourage them to take the time they need › Provide communities with resources to fully participate, potentially including funding to build their internal expertise and capacity › Host engagements at familiar community venues › Identify power imbalances and encourage participation from marginalized voices through facilitation and process design › Provide specialized training for facilitators

Common barriers to participation	Questions to ask	Potential strategies
Health and wellness	What dietary restrictions, allergies or environmental sensitivities do participants have? Are the topics to be discussed sensitive? Will health-related support be required for the activity? How frequent do activities need to be?	› Inquire about participants' health and wellness needs in advance › Provide complimentary food and refreshments, with necessary dietary alternatives › Provide advance notification about airborne allergies and environmental sensitivities › Establish a scent-free policy, requesting both participants and venues not to use scented products › Provide culturally appropriate physical and mental health supports › Create a dedicated wellness space for participants to reflect, gather themselves or seek support › Include regular breaks and consult partners and participants about appropriate break length. Do not eliminate or shorten breaks to address schedule delays, as those who rely on breaks will feel disengaged if their needs are not met
Data security and ownership	May there be personal or professional repercussions for participants if their participation or input is disclosed? Is there a need to ensure confidentiality or anonymity regarding participants' identities or contributions?	› Establish policies and procedures for secure data handling and storage and communicate these to participants › Communicate the privacy policies of online engagement platforms in plain language › Give preference to platforms with secure, domestic servers, end-to-end encryption and password-protected access for online outreach, engagement, communication and data storage › Inform participants about data collection plans and obtain signed informed consent for photographs and audio/video recording › Do not attribute participant names to ideas in notes; anonymize data sets

Whole-of-society approaches to inclusive stakeholder engagement

BEST PRACTICE BRIEF

Cover photo by aerogondo / Adobe Stock