



Community hearing and audit. Dolpa, Nepal. Photograph by USAID/Nepal.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR USAID PROTECTED AREA ACTIVITIES:

How-to Guide

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CONTENTS

Preface.....	ii
I. Introduction.....	1
II. What is Community Engagement?.....	3
III. What are Effective Community Engagement Processes?	5
IV. Tools for Community Engagement	6
V. Additional Resources.....	7

PREFACE

Starting in FY20, the Joint Explanatory Statement or Statement of Managers accompanying the Appropriations Act began to direct the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to incorporate several new requirements, as applicable, into contracts and assistance awards for programming in national parks and other protected areas. USAID interprets parks and protected areas to include all six [International Union for the Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) categories for parks and protected areas](#).

- Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area
- National Parks
- National Monument or Feature
- Habitat Specific Management Areas
- Protected Landscape/Seascape
- Protected Areas with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

This document, along with several others, has been developed to provide guidance to Missions and other USAID operating units to meet the directive from Congress. The four requirements enumerated within the Statement of Managers are noted below:

- Information detailing the proposed project and potential impacts is shared with local communities and the free, prior, and informed consent of affected indigenous communities is obtained in accordance with international standards;
- The potential impacts of the proposed project on existing land or resource claims by affected local communities or Indigenous Peoples are considered and addressed in any management plan;
- Any eco-guards, park rangers, and other law enforcement personnel authorized to protect biodiversity will be properly trained and monitored;
- Effective grievance and redress mechanisms for victims of human rights violations and other misconduct exist.

I. INTRODUCTION

Community engagement is a critical tool for international development, allowing the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and implementers to understand and address stakeholder goals, concerns, and challenges around a development project. This “How To” Community Engagement Guide links to USAID’s Community Engagement Guide and provides an overview of the key tools for engagement, how to determine what approach will work for your Operating Unit based on your needs, and when to apply the tools. This guide also provides an overview of how to facilitate engagement, with links to more comprehensive Agency or external guidance, as appropriate. The audience for this guide is USAID managers, technical staff, and implementing partners in all technical sectors.

Robust community engagement, undertaken in accordance with international practices, can achieve the following, among many other benefits:

- Increased trust between USAID, implementers, and communities through meaningful consultation and open dialogue;
- Identification of community development priorities and plans that ensure that USAID interventions align with community priorities, assets, and needs;
- Facilitation of community participation in the design process and application of local knowledge and resources to addressing development challenges;
- Ongoing consultation and communication over the life of the activity that informs collaborating, learning, and adapting to improve project and development outcomes;
- Increased capacity to undertake development;
- Community identification of potential positive or adverse impacts and mitigation measures that may not be considered by external stakeholders, including mitigation of reputational risks to USAID, implementing partners, and the project; and
- Reduction of risk and associated costs of project redesign or closure if “social license” (approval of local actors) is not obtained or lost.

RELATIONSHIP TO USAID AWARDS

This document was drafted for USAID activity managers, Contracting and Agreement Officer Representatives, and implementing partners, as applicable. The information contained herein reflects good practices and is intended to function as a reference document and job aid for designing and implementing activities in national parks and protected areas. This document is designed to support USAID staff and is not legally binding. Implementing partners are encouraged to consult this guidance in carrying out the activities described in their USAID award, but this document does not impose binding obligations on any party unless incorporated into an award. Consultation and the consultation process informed by the principles set out in this “How To” Guide ultimately the responsibility of each implementing partner, with oversight by USAID award staff and subject to the terms and conditions specified in the relevant contract or assistance award.

USAID REQUIREMENTS AROUND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

USAID systematically addresses environmental risk in its efforts to support resilience and to safeguard people and resources. For USAID, risks to the environment also cover social risks. USAID uses an [environmental impact assessment process](#) to evaluate the potential impact of USAID's activities on the environment and society prior to implementation.

In addition, USAID projects should comply with the requirements of the Joint Explanatory Statement (frequently referred to as the Statement of Managers) that began in FY 2020 and accompany the Appropriations Act .

In determining whether this requirement applies to your project or activity, consider the following non-exhaustive factors:

- Whether the project or activity involves work with ecoguards, park rangers, or similar personnel authorized to enforce laws associated with a national park or other protected areas
- Whether the project or activity involves work that affects Protected Area access or natural resource use rights and practices
- Whether the project or activity involves legislation, regulatory, or policy work that specific Protected Areas or associated communities

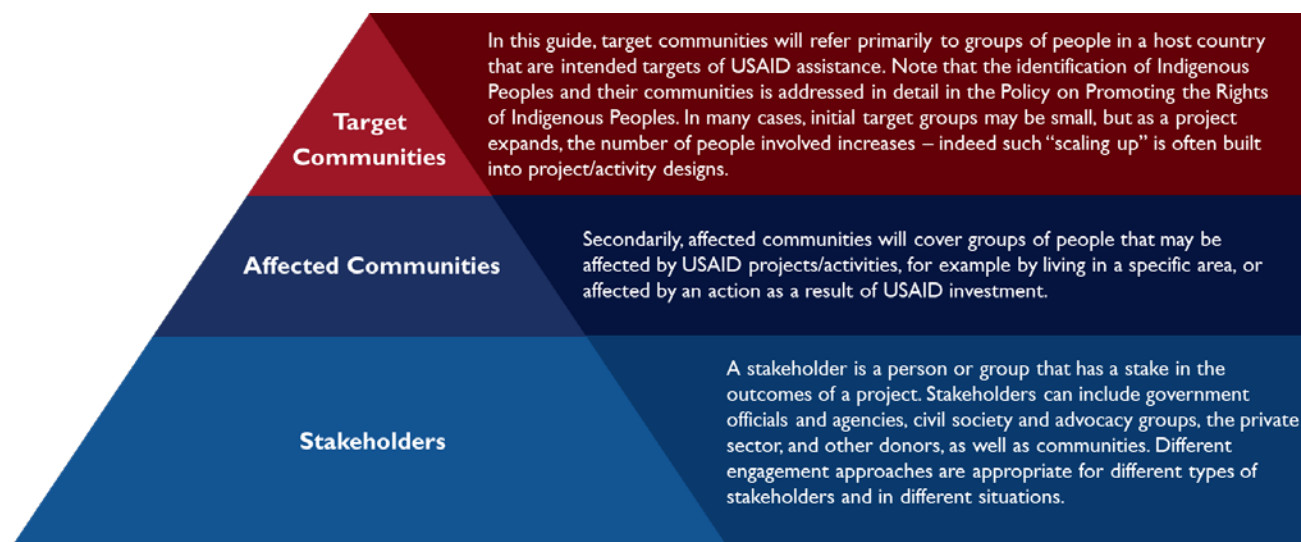
Consult your activity's contractual or agreement language for further information and see Section V of this document for tools and guidance.

II. WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

For purposes of this “How To” Guide, community engagement refers to the full suite of communications and interactions with affected local communities over the life of a project that leads to deeper, more sustained development impacts and positive relationships among USAID, implementing partners, and communities. There are multiple levels of community engagement that range from less formal to more formal and structured.

The term community has many meanings and components, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Types of Communities and Definitions



All parties to an engagement process should be in agreement about the type of engagement and expected outcomes; this can ensure that expectations are managed on all sides.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

USAID released the [Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Policy \(PRO-IP\)](#) in March 2020. The policy mandates that operating units invite Indigenous Peoples to be partners in the development process. The policy further states, “When Indigenous Peoples are stakeholders in a given activity, USAID’s operating units must carry out an analysis that considers the potential impact of proposed development activities and that involves direct engagement with affected Indigenous Peoples.” The PRO-IP identifies criteria for identifying Indigenous Peoples, delineates the Agency’s operating principles and policy objectives, and provides guidance on how to integrate Indigenous Peoples into the Agency’s program cycle.

USAID operating units should carry out steps 1,2, and 3 as relevant from the PRO-IP and should consult the Senior Advisor for Indigenous Peoples (PRO-IP pg. 19-20).

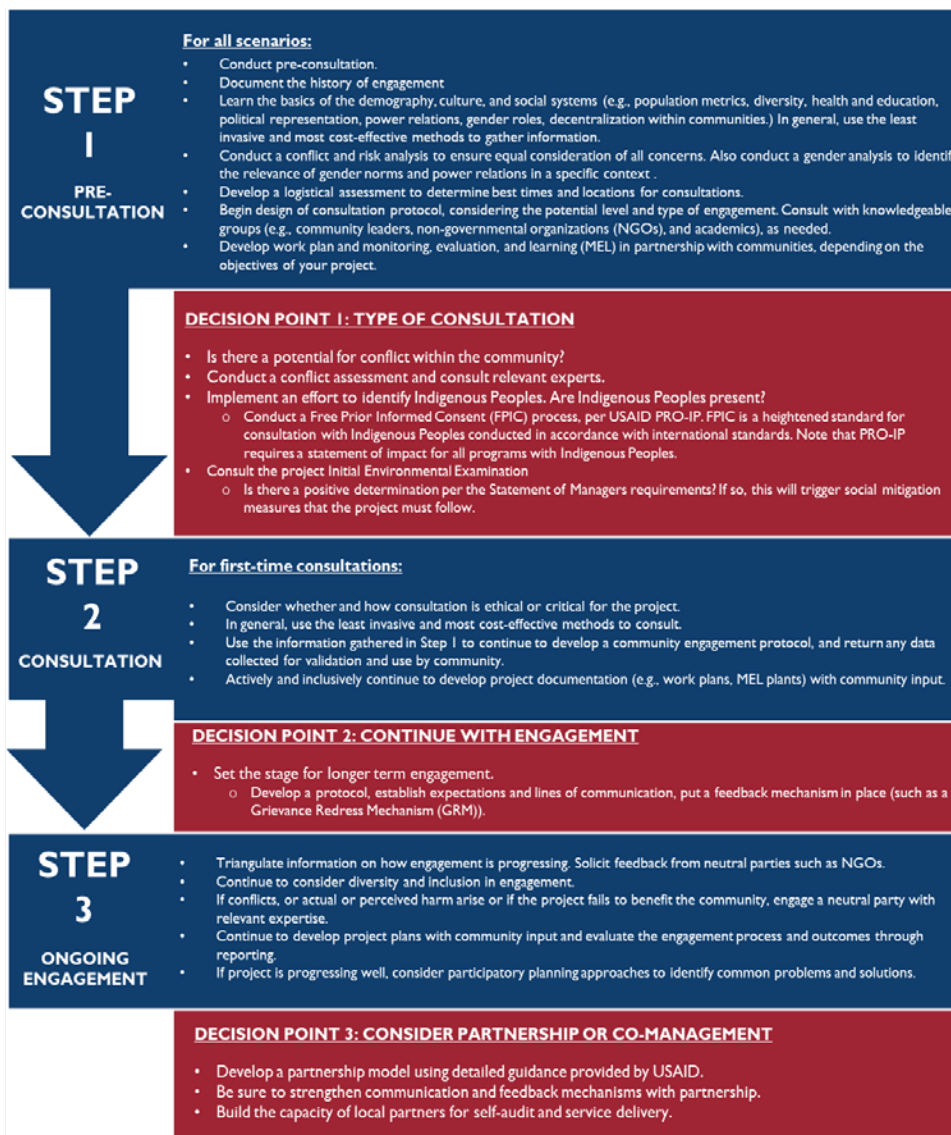
USAID identifies three primary purposes for engagement:

- Affected communities are **informed** about what has already been decided or what action has been or may be taken. This level of engagement may be focused on communities and other stakeholders not closely affiliated with the project or for general awareness (e.g., health messages). This communication is usually informal but could take place in more formal settings such as community organizational meetings.
- Affected communities are **consulted** on their preferences for alternatives, decisions, or actions. This level may be most appropriate for planning stages. Consultation could be an informal process or built into agreements with communities, depending on commitments to adhere to communities' preferences. Implementers should be clear about follow-up to consultations so that communities are not frustrated after providing input and not seeing it reflected in the project.
- **Decision-making** involves collaborative communication and effective partnering with communities in all relevant activities and phases of the decision-making process, including identifying issues, holding consultations, gathering information, formulating alternatives and exploring their potential consequences, and implementing and evaluating the project. This level is recommended for robust community engagement and ownership of project actions and results. Note that it can involve both formal (e.g., memoranda of understanding, grants) and informal processes. Capacity building, mentoring, and other support are often needed for effective co-decision-making to reduce power inequalities and prevent and mitigate conflict. (Adapted from [USAID's Best Practices in Stakeholder Engagement in Biodiversity Programming](#)).

III. WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES?

Community engagement can be conducted through a variety of approaches, using a variety of tools. The approach and level of engagement will depend on the objectives. If an activity presents potential adverse environmental or social impacts, more formal engagement approaches should be adopted. If activities are intended to be co-created with communities, an implementer may want to establish clear rules for engagement through a more formal process. In conducting community engagement, consult the decision tree shown in Figure 2 below.¹

Figure 2. Community Engagement Decision Tree



¹ Note that members of a community may have competing views, and therefore USAID will need to consider the potential for both internal and external conflicts during the consultation process.

IV. TOOLS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An approach to engagement should be informed by best practices and a vision for how engagement fits within cultural norms and can be sustained through local systems. There are numerous tools and methods for engagement, but the overall *approach* should shape how these tools are selected and deployed. Prospective challenges that should be considered include language barriers or historical failures of engagement from country governments.

TABLE I. WHEN TO USE APPROACHES AND TOOLS		
PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT	TOOL OR APPROACH	CONSIDERATIONS
Initial identification of communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of studies, reports, assessments, and selected academic literature Demographic surveys and maps of any project area Discussion with knowledgeable people Local systems analysis Rapid appraisals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid appraisals should be done after reviewing documentation and consulting with experts
Consultations with communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake pre-consultation steps Initial consultation approach will depend on size and diversity of group Inclusive development analysis and gender analysis Key informant interviews to develop approach Focus groups, disaggregated appropriately to gather diverse views Appreciative inquiry approach for key informant interviews and focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review information on culture and social protocols as well as community diversity and representation Conduct or review conflict analysis if in a conflict or potential conflict zone Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) may be needed at this stage if Indigenous Peoples are to be engaged in future stages
Project design with communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRA tools that facilitate joint planning See additional tools in the USAID “How To” Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the type of project, these steps could be undertaken by the implementing partner as part of work plan development
Due diligence and risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social impact assessment Conflict analysis Initial Environmental Examinations and EMMPs Grievance/feedback mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires commissioned expertise
FPIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various formats and timing (see associated guidance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires commissioned expertise
MEL/CLA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training communities to undertake MEL in their communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to incorporate community inputs into formal MEL plans Include engagement in performance criteria Create strong theories of change linking engagement to results

Note: These approaches and tools have been adapted from the USAID Community Engagement Guide.

V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This section provides additional resources that can be used as per the information provided in this “How To” Guide. These resources are adapted from the internal USAID Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Policy Factsheet.

- For engagement with communities:
 - [Consultation Handbook](#)—See Annex 3 of USAID’s Optional Social Impact Assessment Framework
 - [USAID/Democratic Republic of Congo’s Partnering with Indigenous Peoples in CARPE Initiatives: Towards a New Conservation Practice](#)
 - [USAID/Guatemala’s Indigenous Peoples’ Engagement Strategy](#)
 - [USAID Power Africa’s Guide to Community Engagement for Power Projects in Kenya](#)
- For free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC):
 - [USAID/Democratic Republic of Congo’s Participatory Approaches to Natural Resource Management Planning](#) (USAID access only)
 - [USAID/Liberia’s Nine Steps for Community Forestry](#)
 - [USAID/Papua New Guinea’s training on FPIC and research](#)
 - [USAID’s Guidelines on Compulsory Displacement and Resettlement](#)
 - [“Our People, Our Resources” report from the World Bank](#)

Other resources are listed on [USAID.gov](#) and can also be searched for online.

- For identifying Indigenous Peoples:²
 - [USAID’s Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(PRO-IP\)](#) - Guides development practitioners to strengthen the design and management of programs that affect Indigenous Peoples
 - [Example Scope of Work](#)—A scope of work to solicit a technical expert to identify Indigenous Peoples

² Any development effort that might affect Indigenous Peoples should consider and address the unique challenges and disadvantages they face, including their contexts. Understanding Indigenous Peoples’ priorities; opportunities; and social, cultural, environmental, and legal challenges helps ensure that activities safeguard against the risk of adverse impact, mitigates against the risk of conflict that can arise from misaligned expectations or misunderstanding, and aligns with USAID’s approach of Do No Harm.

- From multilateral frameworks:
 - [International Labour Organization \(ILO\) Convention 169](#) and [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)—Learn more about the rights of Indigenous Peoples
 - [United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)—Explore the multilateral frameworks that support Indigenous Peoples’ rights and in-country engagements
 - [ILO](#)—Multilateral organization that supports implementation of ILO Convention 169
 - [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#)—Mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples’ rights in the Americas
 - [African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights](#)—The Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities and Minorities in Africa