



Public Involvement *in* Transboundary Waters Management

*LAC Regional Workshop on Public Participation
in
Transboundary Waters Management
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What is public participation?

What is Public Participation?

- ◆ A process in which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into decision-making. It allows people to influence the outcome of plans and working processes by:
 - ◆ Informing the public
 - ◆ Consulting with the public
 - ◆ Actively involving the public in decision-making and implementation

International Norms of Public Participation in TWM

◆ Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration

- ◆ Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have *appropriate access to information* concerning the environment that is held by public authorities...and the *opportunity to participate in decision-making processes*, states shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. *Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings*, including redress and remedy, shall be provided. [emphasis added]

Key Benefits of Public Participation

- ◆ Broadens the base of knowledge, expertise, and information
- ◆ Increases likelihood that public values and priorities will be incorporated into project design and execution;
- ◆ Can enhance cooperation, build consensus, and avoid conflict;
- ◆ Increases transparency and enhances legitimacy and accountability of project decisions and activities;

Key Benefits of Public Participation cont'd

- ◆ Raises awareness about international waters issues and their solutions, increasing the likelihood of sustainable behaviors;
- ◆ Can empower and create a sense of social responsibility among stakeholders;
- ◆ Builds capacity of civil society to participate meaningfully in water governance;
- ◆ Fosters public ownership of project goals and activities, facilitating implementation and project sustainability; and
- ◆ Minimizes cost and delays due to public opposition.

Challenges

- ◆ Representivity
- ◆ Scale
- ◆ Coordination
- ◆ Resources (time and money)
- ◆ Awareness and capacity of stakeholders and decisionmakers
- ◆ Political will
- ◆ Context
- ◆ Languages

Questions for discussion

- ◆ Who is the public? How does the public differ from stakeholders? Is it important?
- ◆ What aspects of international public participation are different from the domestic level? What is similar?