

Summary - How to integrate stakeholder needs in a Vulnerability Assessment?

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What things are important when integrating stakeholders in assessments? The idea is broadly accepted that effective public participation in planning and vulnerability assessments enhances legitimacy, acceptance and implementation of planning or assessments. This can also improve governance. Governing is a top down approach and governance is a more bottom up approach.

However the question is raised whether stakeholder participation always is the same as applied democracy. In some cases it turns out to be just ‘political bluff’.

Stakeholders are only involved for the form.

Corporations move from just satisfying shareholders to considering stakeholders. Is this really corporate responsibility or just a marketing trick?

What is a stakeholder? Basically this is everybody who has something at stake; who is affected.

In socially relevant research the impacts on society have to be assessed. What do people really want? Ask the stakeholders!

Different stakeholder dialogue types:

- ◆ Policy – to gain support of to discuss policy or policy goals (Montfleury South Africa);
- ◆ Multi stakeholder platforms – partnership to influence policy of public (NGO’s working together)
- ◆ Corporate – adapt to societies expectations (eg Shell & Brent Spar)
- ◆ Science based – to improve understanding and to combine knowledge bases of different disciplines (eg A-team).

The science stakeholder dialogue is characterized by:

- ◆ Structured and communicative process;
- ◆ Scientists and other relevant actors are partners in a reflective and learning process;
- ◆ Issues are of interest for both parties;
- ◆ Can aim at consensus or exploration of controversy

What can scientists gain?

- ◆ Clear focus;
- ◆ Reality check;
- ◆ Access to new or different knowledge;
- ◆ Valuable networks;
- ◆ Increasing science visibility and recognition;
- ◆ Inspiration.

Stakeholder gains are:

- ◆ Influence on the research agenda
- ◆ Scientific stamp
- ◆ Status of sponsor (social accountability)
- ◆ Access to new science information sources

Why embedding a stakeholder dialogue in research.

This is done because missing expertise and data can be identified. Next to that explicitly normative and ethical issues can be incorporated in the science process. Sometimes its better to not involve stakeholders. For instance in fundamental research, detailed modeling or in projects with a very large temporal or spatial scale.

Methods are:

- ◆ Questionnaires
- ◆ Workshops
- ◆ Interviews
- ◆ Participative techniques

Issues to consider are:

- ◆ How to communicate
- ◆ Prejudices and cultural differences
- ◆ Biassed stakeholder representation

Key elements are:

- ◆ Open minds, the desire to learn from each other
- ◆ Clear objectives
- ◆ Clear rules
- ◆ Build a common language
- ◆ Building trust
- ◆ Understanding of how groups work
- ◆ Flexibility
- ◆ Have fun.....

Use of stakeholders is a bridge between fundamental and applied sciences. It is very user oriented. To make it really work it is necessary to include stakeholders' wishes in the process and not only those of the scientists.

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