
1 Introduction

The unprecedented challenge of climate change requires that society undergoes a fundamental shift away from carbon-intensive and unsustainable models of development. The urgency of the transition towards net zero global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions was underlined in the 2018 special report Global Warming of 1.5°C¹ by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

To ensure that policies and actions are effective in delivering GHG mitigation and sustainable development benefits, and given the fundamental changes they might entail, there is an increasing need to assess and communicate their multiple impacts. Stakeholder participation enhances the effectiveness of policies by integrating stakeholder knowledge and perceptions into policy design and implementation, and builds support for policies through increased transparency, accountability and legitimacy of decision-making. The Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (ICAT) Stakeholder Participation Guide helps policymakers conduct effective stakeholder participation in pursuit of these goals.

1.1 Purpose of the guide

ICAT provides methodologies for assessment of the GHG, sustainable development and transformational impacts² of policies and actions. This document provides guidance to help users conduct effective stakeholder participation in support of these impact assessments. The guide can also help users with stakeholder participation beyond impact assessment, such as to support policy design and implementation.

Effective stakeholder participation enhances policies and actions, and their assessment by:

- raising awareness and enabling better understanding of complex issues for all

¹ Available at: www.ipcc.ch/sr15/.

² A transformational impact is a system change that results when a policy or action leads to processes and outcomes of change at scale and sustained over time.

parties involved, thereby building their capacity to contribute effectively

- building trust, collaboration, shared ownership and support for policies and actions among stakeholder groups, thereby leading to less conflict and easier implementation
- addressing stakeholder perceptions of risks and impacts, and helping to develop measures to reduce negative impacts and increase benefits for all stakeholder groups, including the most vulnerable
- increasing the credibility, accuracy and comprehensiveness of the assessment, drawing on diverse expert, local and traditional knowledge and practices
- increasing transparency, accountability, legitimacy and respect for stakeholders' rights
- enabling enhanced ambition and finance by strengthening the effectiveness of policies and the credibility of reporting.

The guide helps users answer the following questions:

- Who is affected by, or has influence over, a given policy or action?
- Have the stakeholders of a given policy or action been effectively engaged?

The guide was developed:

- to raise awareness of the benefits of stakeholder participation
- to provide practical guidance on planning and implementing effective participatory processes.

The guide supports users in achieving various objectives of effective stakeholder participation, such as building understanding and support for policies and actions, strengthening the assessment of impacts and strengthening the technical review of

assessment reports. These objectives are elaborated in [Chapter 2](#).

This guide is intended to be used in combination with any ICAT assessment guides that users choose to apply. The series of assessment guides³ is intended to enable users to assess the impacts of a policy or action in an integrated and consistent way within a single impact assessment process. Refer to the *Introduction to the ICAT Assessment Guides*⁴ for more information about the ICAT assessment guides and how to apply them in combination.⁵

1.2 Intended users

This guide is intended for use by a wide range of organizations and institutions. Throughout this document, the term “user” refers to the entity using the guide.

The following examples explain how different types of users can use the guide:

- **Governments.** Strengthen stakeholder participation in design, implementation and assessment of policies and actions to enhance the effectiveness of policy design and implementation, and to build support and participation from stakeholders. This includes addressing potential barriers to effective implementation. Governments can also use this guide to enhance the monitoring of performance of implemented policies and actions, and ex-post assessment of impacts. This will enable them to learn from experience, enhance the transparency of reporting, and facilitate access to financing for policies and actions.
- **Stakeholders affected by policies and actions, such as local communities and civil society organizations.** Participate more effectively in, and influence, the design, implementation and assessment of policies and actions to ensure that their concerns and interests are addressed.

³ <https://climateactiontransparency.org>

⁴ <https://climateactiontransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Introduction-to-the-ICAT-Assessment-Guides.pdf>

⁵ <https://climateactiontransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Stakeholder-Participation-Guide-Executive-summary.pdf>

- **Donor agencies and financial institutions.** Assess the extent to which stakeholders’ interests and rights have been addressed in policies and actions that the agencies have financed, such as through grants or loans, including results-based financing and development policy loans.
- **Businesses.** Strengthen stakeholder participation in private sector actions, such as voluntary commitments, implementation of new technologies, and private sector financing, and enhance private sector participation in policies and actions.
- **Research institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).** Strengthen participatory approaches to assessing the environmental, social and economic impacts of policies and actions to assess their performance or provide support to decision makers.

1.3 Scope and applicability of the guide

This guide is designed to support all other documents within the ICAT series. It explains the key elements of effective stakeholder participation. The other ICAT assessment guides highlight the importance of engaging stakeholders at particular points in an impact assessment or technical review, and provide links to the relevant sections of this guide.

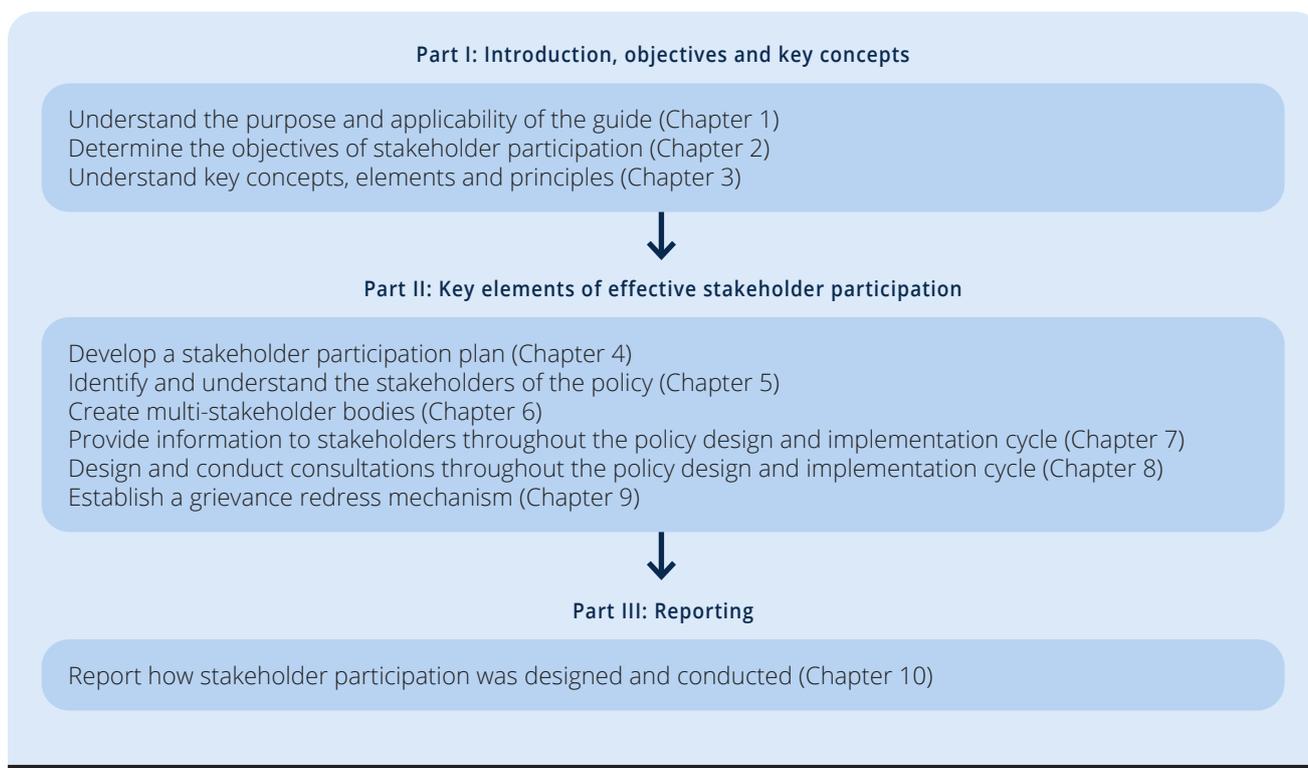
This guide provides general principles, concepts, methods and approaches for stakeholder participation, which are applicable to all types of policies,⁶ and throughout the policy design and implementation cycle. The guide also contains examples and case studies that illustrate how to apply the guide to specific policies or country contexts.

The document is organized in three parts (see [Figure 1.1](#)). Part I provides an introduction, including objectives and key concepts. Part II provides guidance on key elements for the user to consider when designing and implementing effective stakeholder participation. Part III provides guidance

⁶ Throughout this guide, where the word “policy” is used without “action”, it is used as shorthand to refer to both policies and actions.

FIGURE 1.1

Overview of the guide



on reporting how stakeholder participation has been conducted.

The document provides various methods and approaches that can be used in different country contexts; however, it does not provide specific recommendations for all possible stakeholder groups for all different country contexts (including laws and regulations on stakeholder participation). Users should consider their country context carefully and should adapt this guide for application to their specific stakeholder participation needs.

1.4 When to use the guide

The guide can be used throughout the policy design and implementation cycle, including:

- **before policy implementation** – to improve the design of a policy, and build understanding, participation and support among stakeholders of the policy; to strengthen the assessment of expected

future impacts of a policy (through ex-ante assessment)

- **during policy implementation** – to improve implementation of a policy to enhance its GHG, sustainable development and/or transformational impacts; to strengthen the assessment of impacts achieved to date (through ex-post assessment) and expected future impacts (through ex-ante assessment)
- **after policy implementation** – to enhance adaptive management to improve a policy; to strengthen the assessment of impacts that have occurred as a result of the policy (through ex-post assessment).

1.5 Key recommendations

The guide includes key recommendations that are suggested elements for implementing effective stakeholder participation. The key recommendations are intended to help users to plan and implement

effective stakeholder participation. They are based on the principles of inclusiveness, transparency, responsiveness, accountability and respect for rights (see [Section 3.3](#) on principles of effective stakeholder participation).

In keeping with ICAT assessment guides being non-prescriptive, the key recommendations focus on the key steps that users are recommended to follow, rather than on any specific methods, models or tools they should use. Key recommendations focus more on the “what” users should do than on the “how” they should do it. The guidance that accompanies each key recommendation provides the “how”.

Key recommendations are indicated in subsequent chapters by the phrase “It is a *key recommendation* to ...”. All key recommendations are compiled in a check list at the beginning of each chapter.

Key recommendations are provided as an option for users who want to engage stakeholders according to a consistent set of elements and principles. Users who want to follow a more flexible approach can choose to use the guide without adhering to the key recommendations.

Introduction to the ICAT Assessment Guides provides more information on how and why key recommendations are used within the ICAT assessment guides, and on following either the “flexible approach” or the “key recommendations approach” when using the documents. Refer to *Introduction to the ICAT Assessment Guides* before deciding which approach to follow.

1.6 Relationship to other resources

This guide supports, and is consistent with, international treaties, conventions and other agreements relating to stakeholder participation, including the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁷ and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters⁸ (see [Box 3.1](#) for additional examples of relevant international agreements). It builds on many existing resources, including those listed in the References section.

⁷ Available at: www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights.

⁸ Available at: www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf.

1.7 Process for developing the guide

This guide has been developed through an inclusive, multi-stakeholder process convened by ICAT. The development is led by the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance (lead) and Verra. The first draft was developed by drafting teams, which are a subset of a broader Technical Working Group (TWG), and the document leads. The TWG consists of experts and stakeholders from a range of countries identified through a public call for expressions of interest. The TWG contributed to the development of the technical content for the guide through participation in regular meetings and written comments. A Review Group provided written feedback on multiple drafts of the guide. ICAT’s Advisory Committee, which provides strategic advice to ICAT, reviewed the second draft.

The second draft was applied by ICAT participating countries and other non-state actors to ensure that it can be practically implemented. This version of the guide was informed by the feedback gathered from that experience and includes case studies from those applications.

More information about the development process, including governance of the initiative and the participating countries, is available on the ICAT website.⁹

All contributors are listed in the [Contributors section](#).

⁹ <https://climateactiontransparency.org>

2 Objectives of effective stakeholder participation

This chapter provides an overview of objectives users may have for stakeholder participation in the design, implementation and assessment of policies. Determining the stakeholder participation objectives is an important first step, since decisions about approaches and steps to follow will be guided by the identified objectives.

Stakeholder participation can make an important contribution to strengthening the design, implementation and assessment of policies. Stakeholder participation enhances effectiveness of policies by integrating stakeholder knowledge and perceptions, and builds support for policies through increased transparency, accountability and legitimacy of decision-making. The following potential objectives of effective stakeholder participation have been identified in relation to the objectives and scope of the initiative:

- **Build understanding, participation and support** for policies among diverse stakeholders, including enhancing legitimacy and shared ownership, and removing barriers.
- **Improve design and implementation** of policies to enhance their GHG, sustainable development and transformational impacts.
- **Strengthen assessment of impacts of policies on GHG emissions** by enhancing the comprehensiveness of the assessment through diverse expert, local and traditional knowledge and practices.
- **Strengthen the identification and assessment of sustainable development impacts** by enhancing the comprehensiveness of the assessment through diverse expert, local and traditional knowledge and practices.
- **Strengthen the identification and assessment of transformational impacts** by enhancing the comprehensiveness of the assessment through diverse expert, local and traditional knowledge and practices.
- **Strengthen technical review** of GHG emissions, sustainable development or transformational impact assessment reports.

- **Facilitate the assessment of effectiveness and efficiency of stakeholder participation** in policy design, implementation and assessment.

One or more of these objectives may be relevant, depending on when in the policy design and implementation cycle users intend to conduct stakeholder participation. Stakeholder participation objectives can be used to support other objectives of users of the ICAT assessment guides.