Report Stakeholder Engagement Training
for NWO-WOTRO Global Challenges Programme (GCP)

Authors: Herman Brouwer & Jan Brouwers

Introduction

NWO-WOTRO Science for Global Development and the Food & Business Knowledge Platform organized a training for research projects of the Global Challenges Programme. The training focused on stakeholder engagement: *how do you engage the wider circle of stakeholders in your research?* This note covers the rationale, programme and some of the contributions of this one-day training in Utrecht on 30 March 2017.

Rationale

Participating consortia members of GCP indicated a need for further support in how to deal with stakeholder engagement in their research projects. The design of GCP already highlights the need for active engagement of researchers with other stakeholders, in order to ensure the relevance, contextualization, and uptake of the research project. Therefore the need of these consortia is not to be convinced of the importance of stakeholder engagement, but rather to get assistance in how to do it.

Stakeholder engagement is an important requirement for GCP research projects. During the design phase, incentives for research teams and stakeholders (e.g. users, informants) are clear. However, once research activities have started, the incentives for direct involvement and engagement are often less obvious.

This starting point led to the one-day training on 'how to do stakeholder engagement in your research project'. It was attended by 28 participants (of which 4 from NWO-WOTRO), and led by Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation. The training provided practical tools and tips to help participants shape the research uptake part of their project. It involved, amongst others, methods to build strong relationships and negotiate with stakeholders, and ways to manage expectations on the usefulness and usability of research findings.

Training

The programme of the training can be found in the Annex.

Expectations of the day were mainly to be able to have an overview of possible tools and decide on which tool is moist appropriate (about half of the group). Other expectations were related to being able to share experiences, have new links with other researchers and being critical about tools.

Available tools and how to select

For an overview and the choosing of tools the trainers referred to Chapter 6 of the MSP Guide (online available as PDF on www.mspguide.com). This guide provides direction by offering some 10 tools for each of the process stages. Choosing tools requires being clear about the purpose you want to achieve, and how you build on earlier stages, the trainers explained. For instance applying a participatory stakeholder analysis tool may require first to have s stakeholder mapping and meetings with individual actors, before you can purposefully use the joint analysis tool. (See also the principles on deciding who will be at the table in the MSP Guide). Good tool practice is also characterised by adaptation of the tools to your own needs, combining it with other tools, or building on other tools, and being aware of cultural issues related to tools. Maybe there are already some tools often being used in the country you are working. Good practice is also shown by linking with the practice community that is applying the tool. Finally, good practice of tool work is also characterised by having a clear story why and how the tool fits the overall approach or methodology of the project.

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

The MSP Guide: How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships
Get the MSP Guide and all 60 tools at www.mspguide.org
www.wageningenur.nl/cdi

Group sessions on experiences with stakeholder engagement
Five groups worked in the morning to share and discuss good and difficult experiences. Based on their interaction the following guiding principles for good practice were made:

- Engage stakeholders from the beginning
- Do not communicate as "research will resolve the problem": expectation management
- Choose tools with your partners
- Use common sense
- Deal with conflicting and power issues in your team
- Acknowledge the political factors and be prepared to deal with possible "blockers", powerful actors that do not want to change.
- Prepare events and workshops well (for instance: pretesting presentations)
- Have a communication strategy: what to communicate to whom and when
- Consider associating external neutral facilitators
- Be critical on which players you want at the table and which not
- Research teams cannot be 100% neutral and have to make choices. This will sometime require negotiations
- Expect surprise. Not everything will happen as you have planned
- Manage expectations. At the start actors (to become stakeholders maybe later in the process) enter with "what is in it for me?")
- Capture, document and use lessons learned
- Apply research leadership (not researchers leading the process)

The tool & experience market
The afternoon programme consisted of a tool & experience market; in which participants could choose three different sessions offered by the trainers and other participants. The following topics were covered:

- Stakeholder research task matrix (adapted from RAAKS tool B5. Jan Brouwers)
- Steps to successfully influence policy makers (credibility, legitimacy, negotiation, influence). Based on Mozambique experience (Maja Slingerland)
- Interest-based negotiating (MSP Guide p 50; with roleplay. Herman Brouwer)
- What I learned from +20 years co-management of fisheries in India (Subramaniam Karuppiah)
- Timeline (MSP Guide tool 15. Jan Brouwers)
- Ranking tool to identify and support local climate change adaptations in agriculture(Roel Bosma)
- Stakeholder mapping tools: a comparison (see MSP Guide tools 5, 10 and 12 ..., and this handout)
- Reviewing your ToC with stakeholders (customized tool; see www.theoryofchange.nl for more information. Jan Brouwers)
- How to engage 'end-users' such as poor farmers in your research? (Maarten Voors & Joeri Scholtens)
- Dealing with staff turnover in your team (knowledge management analysis tool, adapted from RAAKS tool C1. Herman Brouwer)

At the end a quick check was done how people felt at the end of the day, checking with their expectations. The "applause meter" had a top of about 80%. Some comments offered:

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

The MSP Guide: How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships
Get the MSP Guide and all 60 tools at www.mspguide.org
www.wageningenur.nl/cdi

"Experiences shared allow me to step out of my own thinking; helpful for my work"
"I expected to be able to work on my own project with some tools – I missed this."
"I didn't apply much of the tools, as they are in the book (homework)."

NWO-WOTRO closed the training by offering the possibility for coaching/advice on stakeholder engagement by the trainers over the next period. This was generally welcomed, although some participants expected to need this only in 2-3 years' time in the project cycle. It was mentioned that some consortia are facing problems with internal coordination, and may require support. Also the Food & Business Knowledge Platform was mentioned as a place where projects can find and exchange on tools for stakeholder engagement and share good practices.

The MSP Guide: How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships
Get the MSP Guide and all 60 tools at www.mspguide.org
www.wageningenur.nl/cdi

Annex - Training Programme

Time	Session
9:00	Registration, coffee
9:30	Welcome, Introductions and Expectations
10:00	Introduction of the Global Challenges Programme
10:30	Interactive lecture 'Current insights on stakeholder engagement for researchers'
11:15	*Coffee break*
11:30	Group work: What are some of your best and your worst experiences with stakeholder engagement? What are principles for good practice based on your experience?
12:30	*Lunch*
13:30	Tool & Experience market: getting hands-on experience with stakeholder engagement tools.
13:45	Round 1
14:45	Round 2
15:30	*Tea break*
15:45	Round 3
16:30	Plenary synthesis
17:00	Closing of training

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

The MSP Guide: How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships
Get the MSP Guide and all 60 tools at www.mspguide.org
www.wageningenur.nl/cdi