

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING IN GHANA



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About Ghana EPA



- ❖ Ghana EPA a public sector institution under Ministry of Environment, Science & Technology
- ❖ It is an implementing agency, a regulatory body & serves as catalyst for change towards sound environmental stewardship
- ❖ Mission: co-manage, protect and enhance Ghana's environment in particular as well as seek common solutions to global environmental problems
- ❖ EPA pursues its mission through an integrated environmental planning and management system established on, among others, A BROAD BASE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ghana EPA's View of Public Participation (I)



- ❖ Ghana endorsed Rio Earth Summit declaration (1992)
 - Principle 10 states:
 - Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant levels
 - At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities& the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process
 - States shall facilitate & encourage public awareness & participation by making information widely available

Ghana EPA's View of Public Participation (II)

- ❖ 1992 Constitution acknowledges **RIGHT TO INFORMATION** as a fundamental human right of all persons in Ghana:
 - "It is only when those who are to participate in governance are well informed that they can contribute meaningfully to governance. This can only be achieved if they have access to the relevant information.
 - ...when citizens are conscious of their rights, they are able to demand for accountability and responsibility on the part of their government".



Public Hearing within Environmental Impact Assessment Review Process

What is Public Hearing?



- ❖ A form of participation in which stakeholders & proponents are brought together in a forum to express their opinions and offer suggestions on a proposed undertaking in order to influence the decision-making process
- ❖ It's usually organised by the EPA within the project area of influence & moderated by an independent panel

Public Hearing -Procedure



- Presentation is done in the local language to facilitate better understanding of issues
- Representatives of the affected communities/ stakeholders, also present their opinions and concerns about the proposal
- Proponent is then given the opportunity to react to the substantive issues and concerns raised
- Panel members collate all the concerns raised and make their findings and recommendations known to the forum and then to the Environmental Protection Agency

Public Hearing Procedures...cont



- Most public hearings last for a period of about five hours and are well attended. In a particular case, as many as 600 people attended the meeting
- These include chiefs, community representatives, government officials, and the proponent's representatives

How are Public Hearings Organised?



- ❖ Selection of site for the meeting
- ❖ Posting of notices
- ❖ Invitation of stakeholders
- ❖ Selection of panelists
- ❖ Reconnaissance trip to the project area of influence.

Notices are served through:

- ❖ Advertisement in all the national newspapers
- ❖ Announcements made on the National Radio and Television of an impending public hearing
- ❖ Advertisement in the affected area using local advertising media like the beating of ‘gong gong’
- ❖ Posting of public notices in areas where impacts are likely to be directly felt.

Benefits of Public Hearing



- ❖ Provides an avenue for public information and interaction between the proponent and all interested groups
- ❖ Leads to social acceptability of projects and promotion of harmonious relationship between the proponent and affected communities
- ❖ Creates confidence in the newly established Ghana EIA (this is evident by the level of participation in these hearings)
- ❖ Unearths issues that may be hidden from the reviewing authority
- ❖ Resolves conflicts during public meetings since every party is given the opportunity to express concerns before an independent panel

Challenges of Public Hearing



- ❖ The inability of the affected communities to easily understand project proposals due to the low levels of literacy
- ❖ Lack of understanding has usually led to hostilities during public hearings.
- ❖ The absence of EIA capacity at the District Assembly Level to undertake their own EIS review and to guide their communities to make inputs into EIA Studies.
- ❖ The absence of organised NGOs to assist communities in understanding the issues and in making meaningful comments about a given project.

Conclusions



- ❖ Public participation in environmental assessment review is essential and may lead to substantial benefits for both the proponent and affected community
- ❖ Where it is ignored it leads to conflicts and problems for project implementation, acceptability and sustainability

Thanks for the kind attention