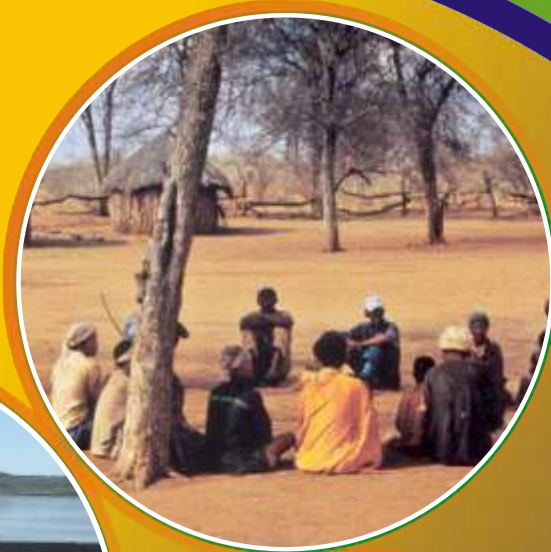




Guidelines for Strengthening River Basin Organisations

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION



The Guidelines on Strengthening River Basin Organisations were formulated through an all inclusive consultative process. Many thanks go to representatives of Member States who have been very supportive to this process especially through their participation in the Annual RBO Workshop series. The financial support provided by the American Government through USAID to the formulation process is greatly appreciated. Further thanks goes to our regional consultants for the guidance they provided to the SADC Secretariat's Directorate of Infrastructure and Services - Water Division. Last but not the least, all could not have been achieved without the technical and financial support from the German and UK Governments through GTZ.



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Stakeholder participation can be defined as the process of involving stakeholders in problem-solving or decision-making and using the stakeholders input to make better decisions. A stakeholder is an individual, group or institution that has a defined and recognized interest, or stake, in a decision making process or project. By definition stakeholder participation refers to a process which involves a series of actions, impacts and outcomes. It is not one single activity.

The ultimate goal of stakeholder participation is to improve the quality and the sustainability of decision-making, by ensuring *i*) that decisions are soundly based on shared knowledge, experience and scientific evidence, *ii*) that decisions are influenced by the views and experiences of those affected by them, *iii*) that innovative and creative options are considered and *iv*) that new arrangements are workable and publicly owned.

Within SADC, stakeholder participation plays a central role in decision-making, as it is one of the seven principles guiding the

implementation of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), the document outlining the regional targets and priority intervention areas in all key sectors for the next fifteen years.

With regard to stakeholder participation in the water sector, the SADC Regional Water Policy includes several provisions focusing on participation, awareness creation, gender mainstreaming, training and capacity building (textbox 1).

The purpose of this guideline is to establish a set of procedures that can assist River Basin Organisations (RBOs) with the implementation of participatory processes. The guideline was designed to help practitioners assimilate, evaluate, and implement the ever increasing amount of evidence on best practices. It is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive. Rather, the guideline was developed in the perspective of providing well balanced information on strategic options and procedures available to RBOs for strengthening their human and institutional capacities.

Textbox 1: SADC Regional Water Policy

- a. Water resources development and management at all levels shall be based on a participatory approach, with effective involvement of all stakeholders including the private sector, non governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations.
- b. All stakeholders shall be empowered to effectively participate in the development and management of water resources at international, regional, river basin, national and community levels, particularly in shared watercourses.
- c. Member States and Shared Watercourse Institutions (SWCIs) shall recognise the positive role played by civil society in water resources management, particularly at community level, and shall facilitate their participation at all levels in water development and management activities.
- d. Watercourse States shall promote the development and implementation of water infrastructure projects through a participatory process, especially of affected communities.
- e. Member States will put in place proper legislation to provide for equitable compensation of affected communities, so that they will not be worse off as a result of the project.



This guideline should not be viewed as a template to structure interactions between RBOs and stakeholders. Rather it proposes some key interventions that can assist RBOs with stakeholder participation. All the options presented in the guideline are based

on a series of accepted principles, which provide the overall framework of action and the rule of conduct with regard to stakeholder participation. The followings are suggested as key principles applying to stakeholder participation.

Inclusiveness

All views are represented.

Equity

Dialogue is based on equally valued contributions from all.

Flexibility

Opportunities exist to revise activities and re-visit issues.

Transparency

Information is freely available and directly accessible in an understandable form to those who are or will be affected by decisions.

Integrity

Participation is made in good faith with an open mindset.

Textbox 2: SADC Regional Water Policy

The pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment is seldom reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water resources. In recognition of their critical role, women should be included and empowered to fully participate in decision making at all level of water resource development and management.

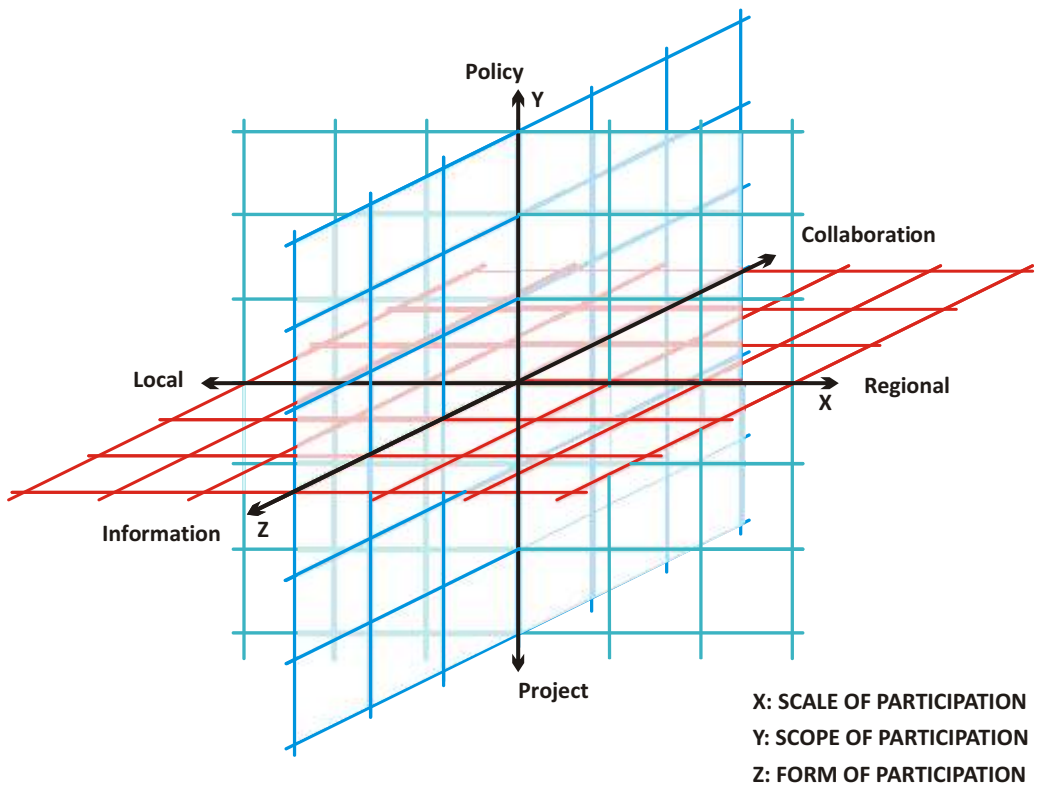
Guidelines are perceived in this context as statements developed to assist practitioners in making decisions about appropriate actions in specific circumstances. Guidelines should be clear, reliable, applicable and flexible. Most importantly guidelines should be evidence-based as they should be derived from experiences and focus on proven mechanisms.

Accordingly, the recommendations made in this guideline are derived from best practices observed in RBOs operating in the region and in different parts of the world. All the case studies examined in the process of preparing this guideline were analyzed on the basis of three variables: *i*) the scale of participation, *ii*) the scope of participation and *iii*) the form of participation (figure 1). The **scale** refers to

the spatial level at which participation takes place (local / national / regional), the **scope** indicates the management level at which participation occurs (project / programme / policy), and the **form** indicates the flow and use of information between RBOs and stakeholders (information / consultation / collaboration).

From the review of best practices it appears that the most effective cases of participation relate to processes for which RBOs ensured that participation is undertaken up to the river basin level, above the programme level and beyond consultation. The interventions presented in this guideline are in line with these general observations.

Figure 1: The multiple dimensions of stakeholder participation



RBOs aspiring to implement participatory processes should consider undertaking interventions in at least four strategic areas: *i)* participation framework, *ii)* communication and outreach, *iii)* stakeholder consultation

and *iv)* collaboration with stakeholders. For each of these strategic areas several interventions and methods are available, suitable instruments are presented in the following tables.

1. PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORK

Stakeholder participation is a process that rests on the completion of a series of actions and the involvement of a variety of actors. Hence, participation should not be achieved on an 'ad hoc' basis. Rather it should be planned carefully through the elaboration of a participation framework.

Possible interventions	Considerations and/or methods available
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1.1 Define the context of participation	Complete a situational analysis to determine the factors influencing stakeholder participation. Factors to consider include: economic, social, cultural, political, institutional and legal.
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1.2 Identify and classify all potential stakeholders	Conduct a stakeholder analysis to determine the stakeholder characteristics. Characteristics to consider include: interests, resources, influences, perceptions, relationships and powers.
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1.3 Develop a participation strategy	Define the desired scale (local / national / international), scope (project / programme / policy) and form (information / consultation / collaboration) of participation.
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TIP: Stakeholders should be involved in that process. Make sure to avoid that a particularly articulated group dominates or misdirect the process.

1.4 Create an enabling environment	Develop the implementation plan in which should be determined the methods and activities selected, the responsibilities of all role players, the budget to be allocated, the deadlines for each steps and the necessary capacity building mechanisms.
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TIP: Make sure to avoid overlaps with existing structures.

Example 1: Roadmap towards stakeholder participation in the Orange-Senqu

In May 2005, the Water Ministers of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa mandated the ORASECOM (Orange-Senqu River Commission) to develop a strategy for stakeholder participation, which resulted in the drafting of the Roadmap on Stakeholder Participation. The Roadmap is based mainly on inputs provided by stakeholders. The objectives of the Roadmap are:

- To develop and strengthen institutional mechanisms for effective stakeholder participation;
- To build and strengthen capacity in basin forums to effectively participate in decision making;
- To develop and maintain open and effective horizontal and vertical communication between and among the structures of ORASECOM and basin stakeholders.

2. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Stakeholder participation is most and foremost a process of information sharing, which involves as a first step, that RBOs inform the stakeholders on the various issues at stake and provide them with the necessary background information to understand these issues.

Possible interventions	Considerations and/or methods available
2.1 Sensitise the broader public	Initiate a media campaign to present the issues at stake and/or use advertisement to bring particular projects to the attention of the public (e.g. billboards, corporate merchandise)
2.2 Provide in depth analysis on core issues	Use publications such as fact sheets, brochures, newsletters, articles to provide background and technical information (e.g. article on flood prevention and early warning system).
2.3 Provide first hand exposure on RBO activities	Organize rallies, ceremonies or public events (e.g. Exhibition, open-house, field visits).
2.4 Reach out to marginalised groups and younger audiences	Convey messages through art and entertainment (e.g. contests, films, concerts, radio broadcasts) and/or develop educational material (e.g. educational posters, school curriculum, in-class activities).
2.5 Provide updates and specific information on RBO initiatives	Develop a website offering a platform for uploading and downloading RBO documentation (e.g. bilateral and multilateral agreements, pictures and audio-visual materials).



TIP: Messages should always be clear and specific; tailored to target audience; strengthened by facts and practical examples; adapted to existing communication infrastructures.

Example 2: River Awareness Kits

River Awareness Kits (RAKs) are interactive knowledge management tools designed to promote sustainable management of water resources within river basin organisations. The material included in the RAKs is defined by the stakeholders themselves, reflecting the needs for awareness raising and capacity development in the basin. The first RAK was developed to promote sustainable management in the Mekong basin. Since then RAKs have been developed for the Nile basin and just recently for the Orange-Senqu. The Limpopo River Basin Commission and the Kunene Permanent Joint Technical Committee are actually in the process of the developing their own RAKs.

Example 3: Regional awareness and communication strategy for the SADC water sector

This strategy provides guidance to RBOs and Member States on the nature of the messages to be communicated in areas such as Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), climate change, water demand management, transboundary water resources management and SADC instruments for regional cooperation on water. The Strategy also includes a series of methods and tools to effectively promote key messages in the water sector.

3. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Stakeholder participation is not a unidirectional but mutual process. In addition to sharing information with stakeholders, RBOs should collect information from stakeholder to better understand their needs and interests. Some information can only be provided by the stakeholders themselves.

Possible interventions

Considerations and/or methods available

3.1 Obtain contextual information

Administer surveys and questionnaires to draw from the stakeholders' intimate knowledge and experience of the environment (e.g. effects of floods and droughts on groundwater).



TIP: The objective is to better understand what the situation is in the basin.

3.2 Obtain views and comments on RBO activities

Conduct interviews with key stakeholders to draw in depth inputs on particular water management issues (e.g. water demand management).



TIP: The objective is to assess what is being done by the RBO.

3.3 Gain inputs on priorities and preferences

Organize focus groups and/or hold public hearings to explore the stakeholders' attitudes on potential options.



TIP: The objective is to define what could be done by the RBO. records of the meeting should be kept and shared with the Stakeholders.

Example 4 : Basin Wide-Forum (Okavango)

The Basin Wide Forum (BWF) was established by the Okavango Commission (OKACOM) through the "Every river has its people project". The BWF is a committee of local authorities and community members, each country having ten elected members to seat with OKACOM, all of them having been capacitated to make decisions. The OKACOM model, while hampered by lack of financial sustainability, worked well. However, the model will have to be adapted significantly to work in larger and more complex basins.



4. COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Collecting information from stakeholders is one thing. Acting upon it is another. Collaboration implies that stakeholders are invited to contribute actively to the decision-making process and thus play a role in advising the competent authorities.

Possible interventions

Considerations and/or methods available

4.1 Elaborate joint development plans

Set up advisory groups or task forces to map out possible solutions and advise RBOs on programmes of actions.

Depending on the type of stakeholders either use workshop-based methods (e.g. objective-oriented project planning) or community-based methods (e.g. participatory rural appraisal).

4.2 Formalise the institutional framework for engaging stakeholders

Establish at the basin level a formal and permanent stakeholder body to address transboundary issues.

Integrate stakeholder participation into the shared watercourse agreement (e.g. preamble section).



TIP: Make sure to coordinate activities with existing structures at other levels to avoid duplication and overlaps.

4.3 Develop the stakeholders' capacities

Formulate and implement a capacity building plan to improve the stakeholders' access to knowledge, skills and institutions.



TIP: Train both officials and stakeholders to participatory processes.



Example 5 : Komati Joint Operation Forum

The cornerstone of water resource management in the Komati River Basin lies in the effective involvement of stakeholders through the Komati Joint Operation Forum (KJOF). The KJOF is comprised of representatives of the water users and officials from the Water Departments of Swaziland and South Africa, and is chaired by the Komati Basin Water Authority (KOBWA). The KJOF is the engine of the institutional setup, as all the information regarding the management of the river is discussed at the KJOF first, then to the KOBWA Board and finally to the Joint Water Commission and the Governments. On average all these bodies meet separately once a month depending on the need. Eventually this forum could be improved through up scaling to cover the entire Incomati basin, the Komati Catchment only being a sub-basin of the Incomati.

Example 6: Observer status in the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)

The “Danube river basin strategy for public participation in river basin management planning” (2003-2009) identifies observership as a key element to support the active involvement of stakeholders. According to the rules of procedures of the ICPDR observers are entitled to take part in ICPDR meetings. Observers are international or national organizations which are engaged in the protection and water management of the Danube or in general questions of water protection and water management. Currently, ICPDR has ten observers, including the Danube Environmental Forum, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Global Water Partnership. To be admitted as an observer the applicant organisation should acknowledge the goals and basic principles of the Danube river basin convention (DRBC) and have specialized technical or scientific competences relating to the goals of the DRPC. Also, the applicant organisation should have a structured permanent administration and have the mandate to speak as an accredited representative.





It is important to note that there is no single approach to implement stakeholder participation. In all cases, it will require a tailor made process reflecting each basin's unique characteristics. This guideline is intended to assist RBOs with that process by providing some clarity on best practices in the field of stakeholder participation. More importantly, the guideline gives a direction to that process, based on lessons learnt, with the objective of ensuring the formalisation of institutional arrangements for engaging stakeholders in RBO activities. Nonetheless, the interventions presented in the guideline should only be interpreted as indications of best practices, none of them being mandatory. It is now up to each RBO to decide

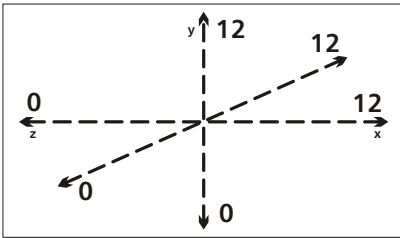
which set of interventions is the most suited to its needs.

While embarking on that process RBO should keep in mind that the further they progress with stakeholder participation - be it in term of scale, scope or form - the more complex and the more expensive the process will get. While it is one thing to publish a monthly newsletter it is another to provide stakeholders with decision-making powers in formal RBO structures. Fortunately, the same applies to the potential benefits that can be derived from stakeholder participation: the greater the stakeholders are empowered, the more sustainable the decision-making process becomes.

Participation is not one single activity, rather it is a process involving activities that can range along a continuum from mere information sharing to regional joint decision making and planning. Participation then needs to be monitored to track-down the evolution of RBOs along that continuum, acknowledging

that based on best practices, participation should result in the empowerment of all stakeholders to allow them to effectively take part in strategic decision making at the basin level. The following Monitoring & Evaluation tool allows RBO to assess their position along that continuum.

PARTICIPATION POSITIONING SYSTEM (PPS)



	Never (0)	Rarely (1)	Sometime (2)	Often (3)	Always (4)	Total	
SCALE OF PARTICIPATION (x) Indicates the spatial extent of participation							
<i>Micro</i> Participation takes place at the local level							
<i>Meso</i> Participation takes place at the national level							
<i>Macro</i> Participation takes place at the international level							
						←---→	
	TOTAL						
SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION (y) Indicates the functional influence of stakeholders							
<i>Project</i> Participation is carried out in the process of developing projects							
<i>Programme</i> Participation is carried out in the process of developing programmes							
<i>Policy</i> Participation is carried out in the process of developing policies							
						↑ --- ↓	
	TOTAL						
FORMS OF PARTICIPATION (z) Indicates the flow and use of information							
<i>Information</i> RBO provides information to the stakeholders							
<i>Consultation</i> RBO seeks information from the stakeholders							
<i>Collaboration</i> RBO acts according to the recommendations made by the stakeholders							
						↖ --- ↗	
	TOTAL						

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