



TOOL 15

PUBLIC HEARING



Public hearing in Ethiopia.
Credit: Peter Branney



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PUBLIC HEARING

What is the **purpose** of public hearing?

- To ensure transparency in a project's governance and decision-making and to make a project properly accountable to local participants.
- To provide information for project monitoring, annual reporting and annual planning purposes.

Plan Vivo Carbon Standard (PV Climate) **requirement?**

Holding an annual Public Hearing contributes directly to PV Climate requirement 5.1.1: "Projects must have a clear governance structure and decision-making process that incorporates input from Project Participants and other Local Stakeholders on key decisions affecting the development of the Project".

When to use this tool?

- Public Hearings should be conducted on a regular basis as a project progresses. Ideally a Public Hearing should be held every year before the Annual Report is submitted to Plan Vivo by the Project Coordinator.
- It is also useful to conduct a Public Hearing during a validation or verification visit (perhaps allowing the validator/verifier to attend as an observer).

Why is this tool required?

Holding a Public Hearing is a useful way of ensuring effective project governance and for encouraging project participants to hold their community leaders, committee members and project coordinators accountable. It is important, as a way, to engage participants in large village meetings in discussions and decision-making about a project and it is a way to review and assess progress made during project implementation over the past year. A Public Hearing is a communication tool that enables project coordinators or village/community leaders to inform local people about the project e.g. during an annual assembly meeting or when a project is being assessed by a validator or verifier.

The aim of a Public Hearing is to raise and discuss issues about progress with project activities and to get feedback on decisions that have been taken over the past year and that may be taken in future. It helps community members to understand what is happening with the project by informing them in an open and transparent way so they can be assured that the concerns and issues of different stakeholders are being addressed. The public element to this participatory tool is important because committee members may have made decisions and taken actions over the past year of which community members may not be aware.

A Public Hearing can often be combined with a Public Audit which is similar, but which focuses more specifically on financial aspects of the project. However, it is useful to keep discussions about project activities and progress (Public Hearing) separate from those about project finance and expenditure (Public Audit) because otherwise discussions often tend to focus on finance as opposed to project activities and their impacts.

Who should participate?

A large group of community members (if possible representing different stakeholder or interest groups) can participate in a Public Hearing. It is essential that committee members and project coordinator representatives are also present. If there is a formal community-based committee, the chair-person, secretary and treasurer as well as any other executive committee members should participate and lead the discussions. It is often useful to have non-community representatives present as participants or observers because specific questions can be addressed to them if necessary – for example local government officials, forestry agency staff, project staff etc.

How to use the tool?

- Plan and organise a meeting to which as many project participants as possible are invited (see notes above on using participatory tools). For such a large meeting, the logistics are really important!
- Before the meeting, prepare flip-charts showing clearly what interventions/ activities were planned for the previous period (usually the past year) and also showing what was actually achieved. These can be made as graphic as possible (see examples below) to assist with getting a clear understanding. Use quantitative information (data) as far as possible e.g. number of trees planted, number of farmers participating, number of trainings conducted etc. Don't include financial information in this because this will be shown separately during the Public Audit.
- At the start of the meeting briefly describe the meeting purpose and (if time permits) ask every participant present to introduce themselves briefly with their name and any other relevant details.

- A selected person (usually a local leader or project coordinator representative) starts the discussion by listing all the project's committee meetings that were held over the past period (usually the past year) and explains what was discussed and what decisions were taken during these. Another selected person presents the plan that was made for the previous (past) year along with progress made in different project activities using the prepared flipcharts. It is important that for each activity/intervention, the presentation should clearly show what was planned and what was actually achieved.
- During these presentations, participants should be encouraged to listen, comment and make suggestions about the points being made. Important points must be noted and written down. It is important to keep a good record of questions asked and answers received - normally this is the job of the secretary.
- In particular, allow participants to comment on whether certain activities/interventions have been properly carried out and what (if any) were the problems or reasons for any under-achievement.
- At the end of the meeting the secretary or another selected person reads out a summary of all the points made and of any key decisions that have been taken (meeting minutes). Participants can then check that these are correct according to their recollection - or they can ask for amendments to be made before the meeting finishes.
- Make sure that a list of names of everyone attending the meeting has been prepared. Take photographs during the meeting to show the general level of participation.