

FAQs—Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: *Can you say more about the measurable benefits of C&P?*

A1: A cross-sector study of 68 World Bank projects indicates projects well aligned with socio-cultural conditions had average rates of economic return that were more than twice as high as those for socially incompatible and poorly analyzed projects.²⁵ A multiagency statistical analysis of 121 rural water supply projects found that “beneficiary participation” was the single most important factor in determining overall quality of implementation.²⁶

Q2: *Can you say more about the costs of C&P?*

A2: Costs are highly variable. A World Bank study of participatory projects found a cost increase of 10–15% for preparation and supervision budgets, largely offset by use of trust funds.²⁷ The *World Bank Participation Sourcebook* illustrates several case studies where the added cost for C&P was in range of \$10,000–30,000 with costs being shared between the government and the Bank. Other World Bank studies show that although it may take longer to prepare projects with C&P, no additional time is required to present them to the board of directors for approval or to become effective.²⁸ Projects with relatively modest C&P plans will not require much additional time or cost. Others, such as large dam projects, may require an extended and complex C&P plan taking over 1 year and costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. C&P also has opportunity costs for the groups that are engaged.

Q3: *Which kinds of projects are amenable to C&P?*

A3: Participatory methods can be used in all kinds of projects, including policy-based lending and large infrastructure activities, not just poverty reduction and social projects. A minimum

requirement is that ADB, the government, and key stakeholders mutually agree to implement a participatory process.

Q4: *Are there places where participation works particularly well?*

A4: Yes—where stakeholders are willing to participate and where there are clear benefits, no conflicts over basic goals, and prior favorable experience with C&P.

Q5: *Are there situations where C&P is not appropriate?*

A5: Very few. More limited participation may be appropriate at the earliest stage of emergency response, and in post-conflict situations, and in situations where the government strongly opposes participation. The key is to design a C&P approach tailored to opportunities and constraints unique to the particular situation.

Q6: *How much C&P is enough?*

A6: A solid C&P plan (meeting the checklist criteria for Tool 2) is a good way to assess adequacy. The adequacy of C&P does not occur in a vacuum. It depends on the activity's scope and objectives, complexity of stakeholder interests, and other social and political factors in the setting. Activities that involve high social, economic, or environmental risks or central objectives promoting participation and empowerment will require more and deeper participation throughout the project cycle. Projects with few competing interests will require less C&P. C&P in politically hostile environments may be challenging, but not impossible. In some such situations, ADB might choose to invest considerable C&P resources to encourage reform and build local capacity.

Q7: *What if a group refuses to come to the table or we are at an impasse?*

A7: First, assess how critical the group is to successful preparation and implementation. If the group is vital to the project and refuses to cooperate—even with repeated peaceful persuasion—then one might need to consider mediation, a significant change to the design, or as a last resort, abandoning the project.

Q8: *What about C&P for private sector activities where the private sector sponsor has prepared the project?*

A8: It is still a good idea to prepare the stakeholder analysis and do some due diligence on stakeholder interests to make sure that there are no surprises. Although one must be attentive to business confidentiality concerns, companies have over the years become much more open about their practices related to social and environmental issues. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has published a “how to” manual for IFC clients on managing the expectations of local communities, tailoring consultation to a private sector context, and encouraging consultation between companies and their local stakeholders throughout a project’s lifecycle.²⁹

Q9: *Where can I go to get training?*

A9: ADB provides staff training in participation-related areas, including C&P, relations with NGOs/CSOs, and the safeguard policies. In addition, there are many training programs and institutes in the region with expertise in participatory methods, such as the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction in the Philippines, and the Institute for Participatory Practices (PRAXIS) in India.

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