



A Vector Control Research Alliance

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# **Stakeholder Engagement & Public Consultation for Gene Drive Research**

July 2021

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# What is Stakeholder Engagement?

“Stakeholder engagement is about **building and maintaining constructive relationships** over time. It is an ongoing process between an organisation and its project stakeholders that **extends throughout the life of the project and encompasses a range of activities and approaches**, from information sharing and consultation, to participation, negotiation, and partnerships

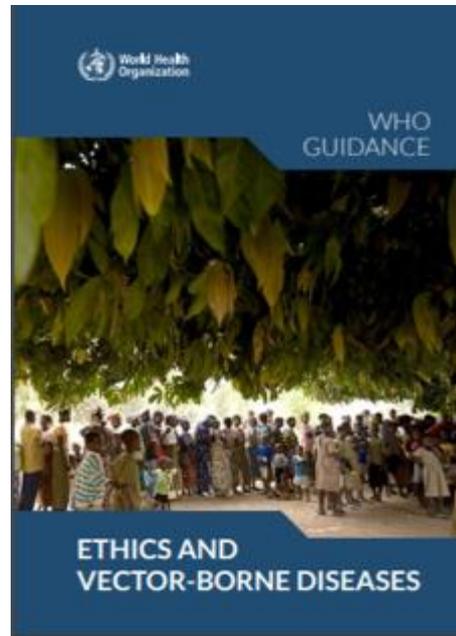
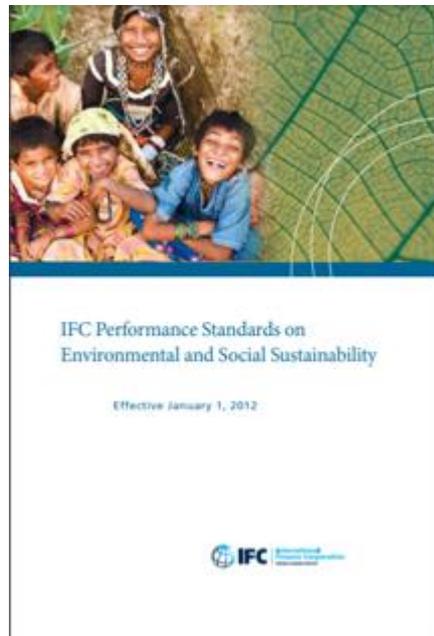
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IFC, Good Practice Handbook for Companies Doing Business on Emerging Markets

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# Existing guidance

- Established guidance for stakeholder engagement include
  - IFC Performance Standards for Social and Environmental Sustainability
  - WHO Guidance on Ethics and Vector Borne diseases



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# What makes engagement for gene drive research different?

- Stakeholder engagement is critical to responsible gene drive research
- Many theoretical and practical components of ethical and effective engagement remain subject to debate
- Debates are not specific to gene drive, they apply to other genetic approaches and other area-wide vector control
- It may not be possible for individuals within a community to opt-out of field evaluations
- As a result, agreement at the community level for gene drive release is a specific requirement that the project is seeking to answer

# Example: Target Malaria SE strategy



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# Engagement and acceptance - challenges

➤ Overall the **key challenges** are:

- To identify stakeholders to engage, incl. those who might not be the most vocal ones
- To bring the debate closer to and maintain it with those who could benefit from the technology
- To find the right balance between engaging proactively and in a timely manner, and not overpromising while the technology is still being developed
- To ensure the decisions can be informed at each level, regardless of the complexity of the technology
- To open an informed discussion on risks and benefits considering the context
- To ensure that stakeholders understand that this isn't a silver bullet and that elimination and eradication will require all tools available

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# What is public consultation?

- “ The Parties shall:
- (a) Promote and facilitate public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms in relation to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health. In doing so, the Parties shall cooperate, as appropriate, with other States and international bodies;
  - (b) (Endeavour to ensure that public awareness and education encompass access to information on living modified organisms identified in accordance with this Protocol that may be imported. ”

## Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Article 23: Public Awareness and Participation

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# What is public consultation?



Parties and other Governments to ensure 'the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities and with their prior and informed consent or free, prior and informed consent or approval and involvement, , and consistent with national legislation and circumstances [sic], and in accordance with international obligations [emphasis ours] ”

Conference of the Parties to the Convention on  
Biological Diversity Decision 14/14

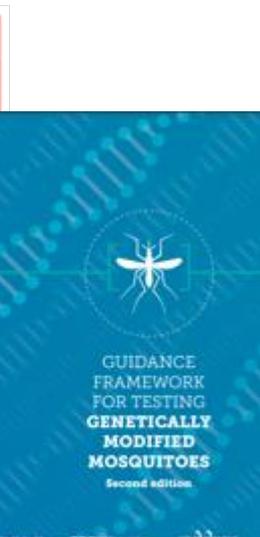
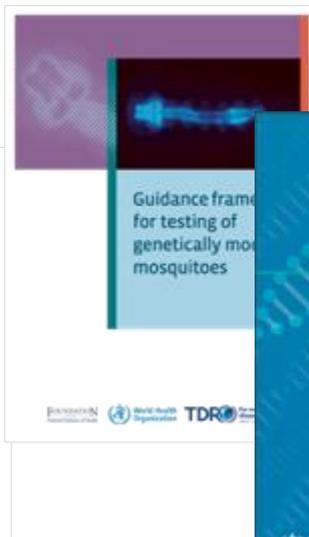
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# Public consultation – Role of government

- National regulatory frameworks establish legal review processes that include public consultation
- Each country has unique administrative structures and institutions that inform their approach to public consultation
- Inspection and audits are undertaken by the Regulators or independent contractors for regulatory compliance, and this would include public consultations
- It is important to note that the guidance for roles and responsibilities of government and researchers are nuanced

# Existing guidance

- Clear guidelines about the inadequacy of individual consent for area-wide vector control using modified mosquitoes (WHO, NASEM, literature)
- The agreement or authorization is to be provided by a community
- The existing documents do not provide specific guidance about what is acceptable and legitimate for community agreement



# Example: Developing a model for community agreement for gene drive research

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OPEN LETTER

## Proceedings of an expert workshop on community agreement for gene drive research in Africa - Co-organised by KEMRI, PAMCA and Target Malaria [version 1; peer review: awaiting peer review]

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# Acknowledgements

“Target Malaria receives core funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and from the Open Philanthropy Project Fund, an advised fund of Silicon Valley Community Foundation”

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**Thank you**

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