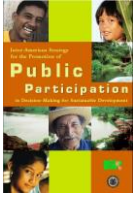




Organization of
American States

“Strengthening Public Participation Mechanisms for Sustainable Development and Economic Prosperity in the Hemisphere”



The Department of Sustainable Development of the Organization of American States (OAS-DSD) is working with CAFTA-DR countries to strengthen public participation mechanisms for sustainable development. This initiative aims to facilitate public participation in the decision-making process for sustainable development as well as to reveal the degree of implementation of the "[Inter-American Strategy for Public Participation in Decision Making for Sustainable Development \(ISP\)](#)" in these countries.

In April 2000, the OAS Member States adopted the ISP with the objective of promoting transparent, effective, and responsible public participation in decision-making and fostering the formulation and execution of sustainable development policies in the Americas. The ISP contains the basic principles, goals, and policy recommendations for greater involvement of all sectors of society in decision-making on sustainable development.

Strengthening public participation mechanisms for Sustainable Development

The project main objectives are to improve access to information and to facilitate participation in existing formal opportunities and mechanisms for public participation at the national and regional level (those included within free trade agreements (FTAs) and international financial institutions (IFIs)). The key components of the project are to: 1) identify and compile available formal opportunities and mechanisms for public participation in decision-making process for sustainable development at the national level in DR-CAFTA countries, and within FTAs and IFIs, as well as, the procedures to access them; and 2) increase knowledge base of governments, individuals, and civil society to participate in sustainable development decision-making process.

Component 1: Identify and compile available formal opportunities and mechanisms for public participation in decision-making for sustainable development at the national and regional level

On the domestic front, the OAS-DSD consolidated existing public participation mechanisms in CAFTA-DR Member States, and described and outlined the procedures to access them (requirements and deadlines, with a corresponding flowchart of each mechanism). Countries requested special focus on the following six thematic areas: a) Environmental Impact Assessment; b) toxic releases; c) establishing protected areas; d) clean water; e) natural resource use or management; and f) climate change. The OAS-DSD worked closely with focal points of the respective Ministries of Environment of the DR-CAFTA countries and other government officials to validate the preliminary compilation of each domestic public participation mechanism profiles. In addition, the OAS-DSD is analyzing how to incorporate the principles of the ISP - proactivity, inclusiveness, shared responsibility, openness throughout the process, access, transparency, and respect for public input - in these existing mechanisms and provide recommendations to decision-makers on how to strengthen them.

At the regional level, a draft document has been prepared on public participation mechanisms that are established by FTAs and IFIs in the Hemisphere while considering their respective cases, decisions, and results available to the public. Also, the OAS-DSD is consulting with representatives of public participation mechanisms in order to review the draft document and ensure effective coordination and their input in the process. Currently, the OAS-DSD is editing the draft compilation.

Component 2: Increase knowledge base of governments, individuals, and civil society to participate in sustainable development decision-making.

A user-friendly training handbook will be developed and shared among all key stakeholders and involved parties. In addition, two regional training sessions on formal opportunities and mechanisms of public participation for sustainable development are scheduled for this year.

The sessions aim to provide capacity building and training to government officials responsible for domestic public participation mechanisms in the DR-CAFTA countries (focal points assigned for this project), as well as, civil society representatives (community leaders and individuals working in sustainable development and/or exposed to public participation mechanisms), citizens and users of participation mechanisms, among others. On May 23rd, 2013 the first training session (pilot) will be held in San Salvador, El Salvador.
