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Stakeholder Engagement
and
Public Documents

MYANMAR FOREST CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE

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1   Policy Background

1.1   Introduction

Myanmar Forest Certification Committee (MFCC) is the National Governing Body (NGB) of forest/timber certification schemes in Myanmar. Currently there are two schemes operating in Myanmar which MFCC overseas and manages. These are:

1.   The Myanmar Timber Legality Assurance System (MTLAS);
2.   The Myanmar Forest Certification Scheme (MFCS).

This document contains the policy that governs MFCC engagement with stakeholders and making documents publically available.

With regards stakeholder engagement, frameworks, standards and codes drawn on to provide the guiding principles for this policy include the AA (Accountability) 1000 Series (on systematic accountability, including engagement), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Reporting Guidelines (on reporting), and The Stakeholder Engagement Manual Volume 1 & 2 (Stakeholder Research Associates Canada Inc, United Nations Environment Programme, Accountability).

With such a large and diverse network of interested parties both within Myanmar and overseas, effective stakeholder consultation is central to MFCC operations. This Policy elaborates the core principles that underpin MFCC consultations. It has been developed to inform stakeholders about the MFCC approach to obtaining stakeholder feedback on analysis, and decisions and increase understanding of the MFCC consultation process. In many respects it also adds additional detail to MFCC P 3 Standard Setting.

MFCC is also committed to ensuring MFCC key documentation are transparent and openly available to stakeholders and any interested parties, and aims to ensure stakeholders and interested parties are offered every opportunity to make known and exchange views on the MFCC systems. In practice, transparency is to a large extent realised through the right of the general public to access documents.

1.2   Scope

This policy is designed for reference and guidance for MFCC employees, Certification Bodies and interested parties and stakeholders.

1.3   Normative References

MFCC P 1 Implementation Arrangements
MFCC P 3 Standard Setting
MFCC SOP 3 Document Control and Record Management
AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard Exposure Draft: AA1000SES, London (2005).
The Stakeholder Engagement Manual Volume i: The Guide To Practitioners' Perspectives On Stakeholder Engagement – Stakeholder Research Associates Canada Inc, United Nations Environment Programme, Accountability.
The Stakeholder Engagement Manual Volume ii: The Guide To Practitioners' Perspectives On Stakeholder Engagement - Stakeholder Research Associates Canada Inc, United Nations Environment Programme, Accountability.
Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Reporting Guidelines- GRI.

1.4   Definitions

Accountability	An organisation can be considered as accountable when it accounts to its stakeholders regarding material issues (transparency), responds to stakeholders regarding these issues (responsiveness) on an ongoing basis, and complies with standards to which it is voluntarily committed, and with rules and regulations that it must comply with for statutory reasons (compliance)[1].
Consultation	The process of gathering information or advice from stakeholders and taking those views into consideration to make decisions, change plans or set directions.
Dialogue	An exchange of views and opinion to explore different perspectives, needs and different strategies to address an issue or initiative. The aim is generally to create and foster mutual understanding, trust and cooperation on a strategy or initiative.
Disadvantaged stakeholder	A stakeholder who might be financially or otherwise disadvantaged in participating in the standard-setting work. Examples in Myanmar may include those communities with limited access to internet communications, and/or those who speak a minority language.
Engagement	An organisation's efforts to involve and understand stakeholders and their concerns in its activities and decision-making processes.
Inclusivity	The notion of including the views and needs of all stakeholder groups. Inclusivity requires the consideration of 'voiceless' and disadvantaged stakeholders including future generations and the environment[2].
Material(ity)	Knowledge of the concerns those are relevant and important to both an organization and its stakeholders.
MFCC	Myanmar Forest Certification Committee
MFCC employees	In this policy an MFCC employee can refer to full and part time employees, consultants and sub-contractors and volunteers.
MFCS	Myanmar Forest Certification Scheme. MFCS is contained in a range of documents including MFCC policies, Standard Operating Procedures, other supporting system documentation, and the MFCS Forest Certification Standard.
MTLAS	Myanmar Timber Legality Assurance System. MTLAS is contained in a range of documents including MFCC policies, Standard Operating Procedures, other supporting system documentation, and the MTLAS Timber Legality Standard.

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[1]*Source for this definition: Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability.*
[2]*Definition adapted from the AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard.*

Partnerships	In the context of corporate social responsibility interactions, partnership has been defined as "people and organizations from some combination of public, business and civil constituencies who engage in common societal aims through combining their resources and competencies"[3] sharing both risks and benefits.
Responsiveness	Coherently and consistently responding to stakeholders' and the organisation's material issues, including the adequate communication of these responses to its stakeholders.
Stakeholder	A person, group or organisation with an interest in the subject of the standardisation. Note: The nine major groups that have been defined by Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 provides an example of stakeholders involved in/concerned by sustainable forest management: (i) business and industry, (ii) children and youth, (iii) forest owners, (iv) indigenous people, (v) local authorities, (vi) NGOs, (vii) scientific and technological community, (viii) women, and (ix) workers and trade unions. Stakeholders broadly defined are those groups or individuals: (a) that can reasonably be expected to be significantly affected by an organization's products, services and activities, (b) whose actions can reasonably be expected to affect the ability of an organization to successfully implement its strategies and achieve its objectives[4].
Voiceless Stakeholder	Voiceless stakeholders *are* unable to make the claim directly because they are, for some reason, inarticulate or 'voiceless'. This does not invalidate their claim however. Typical reasons for this include the stakeholder being: • (apparently) powerless (e.g. .an individual customer of a very large organisation); • not existing yet (e.g. future generations); • having no voice (e.g. the natural environment); • being remote from the organisation (e.g. producer groups in distant countries). In some instances there may be an overlap between disadvantaged and voiceless stakeholders.

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[3]*Source for this definition: Partnership Alchemy: New Social Partnerships in Europe (Copenhagen: The Copenhagen Centre, 2001).*
[4]*Source for this definition: GRI Sustainability Reporting Guidelines.*

2 Policy Standards

2.1 Stakeholder Engagement

2.1.1 Overview

Stakeholder engagement is core to MFCC's aims to ensure accountability and transparency.

MFCC will strategically engage stakeholders to:

- give those who have a right to be heard, including disadvantaged and voiceless stakeholders, the opportunity to be considered in decision-making processes;
- allow MFCC to learn from stakeholders;
- achieve better management of risk and reputation;
- where appropriate allow and encourage the pooling of resources (technology, knowledge, people and money) to solve problems and reach objectives;
- build and strengthen trust between MFCC and its stakeholders.

2.1.2 Principles of Stakeholder Engagement

The process for MFCC stakeholder engagement has inclusivity as its foundation consistent with the AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard. Views will be sought that allows stakeholders to express themselves openly and without fear or restriction. Inclusivity also requires the consideration of disadvantaged and voiceless stakeholders.

Engagement will be underpinned by a number of principles[5]:

1. Clarity

The purpose, process and scope of consultations are clearly communicated to participants at every stage.

2. Transparent

All stakeholders should have access to engagement outputs, and the comments of other stakeholders.

3. Meaningful and Relevant

Targeted consultations are conducted with MFCC stakeholders that are either impacted by the issue or have appropriate technical or industry expertise. Full public consultation occurs when the issue is strategically significant or impacts on wider stakeholder groups.

Likewise, consultation methods used are those that best support the consultation purpose, scope and types of participating stakeholder groups.

4. Timeliness

Consultation activities have clear timeframes that allow participants reasonable time to prepare and provide input.

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[5] The following six points, as with the whole policy, reflect stakeholder engagement best practices as outlined in a number of international guidelines and particularly 'The Stakeholder Engagement Manuals' as listed in 1.3 above.

5. Responsive

Following an engagement process there must be a timely and coherent response to stakeholders' expectations and concerns.

6. Procedural Certainty

All MFCC consultations will be guided by a Consultation Plan that identifies the target participants, timeframes, submission requirements, who is responsible for the management of the process, and where responsibility for the final decision will lie.

2.1.3   Identification and Engagement

MFCC recognizes that the map of stakeholders will almost certainly look different from issue to issue. As such MFCC will use internationally recognised best practice tools to go through the process of mapping stakeholder material issues and stakeholder groups. A formal stakeholder mapping review/revision will be carried out at least once a year. In addition, stakeholder mapping will be reviewed and confirmed at the start of every individual engagement process.

There are numerous options for the process of engaging with stakeholders. These range from basic communications by email or even regular mail, through to website and online processes, to more innovative processes such as advisory panels, technical working groups or multi-stakeholder forums and even surveys.

MFCC will endeavour to use techniques of engagement that are appropriate for a given issue in any given context, and ensure that stakeholder concerns are addressed and recorded, and also to allow MFCC to provide a meaningful response to stakeholders' expectations and concerns.

Where appropriate MFCC is committed to sharing any lessons learnt not only with others within the organization, but also with our peers, business partners and stakeholders.

2.1.4   Consultation Plan

Each consultation conducted by MFCC will be guided by a Consultation Plan. This Plan will identify:

- consultation objectives;
- consultation management steps, tasks and responsibilities;
- relevant stakeholder groups, likely number of consultation stages and timeframes;
- consultation types and methods;
- risks and risk mitigation strategies;
- feedback and post-consultation strategies.

2.1.4   Reporting

MFCC is committed to reporting standards that comply with international best practices. MFCC may not agree with or be in a position to comply with the whole range of stakeholder concerns and interests. Nevertheless, MFCC is committed to report fully and consistently on any engagement process.

As a minimum an adequate response will include:

- acknowledgement of the key concerns;
- a prioritisation of issues (including how this was determined);
- action implemented since engagement;

- next steps within a fixed timeframe.

2.2   Transparency and Public Documents

2.2.1   Overview

Whilst there is a range of documents that MFCC makes publically available, this policy is confined to those documents that MFCC publishes in the interests of transparency and accountability, and in order to gather feedback and comments.

Documents that must be available publicly are:

- MFCC policy documents;
- MFCC Certification Body Application guidelines and materials;
- MFCC system standards (MTLAS and MFCS);
- registers of certified operators;
- registers of acknowledged Certification Bodies.

2.2.2   Accessibility

MFCC will ensure the above documents are easily accessible to any party that wishes to view them without restriction. Moreover, persons wishing to provide feedback/comments can do so with ease and without restriction.

At a minimum MFCC documents (as outlines in 2.2.1) shall be available on the MFCC website. Additionally, in order to guide readers to access information required, a summary of available documents will be made available with clear links to full versions.

To ensure access where any possible technical obstacles might exist, the MFCC website will also contain clear directions for interested parties to access their required documents through at least one alternative source besides website download.

In cases where MFCC is asked to supply documents at a cost (such as by post or fax), MFCC reserves the right to charge for any costs incurred.

2.2.3   Public Comments and Feedback

MFCC will encourage interested parties and stakeholders to comment on public documents, and ensure any feedback/comments received are fully processed and considered. In addition to formal public consultation processes, interested parties are encouraged and free to comment on documents at any time.

To enable this the MFCC website will contain a comment form with clear directions for submission, along with at least one alternative means (such as standard mail), with clear instructions, for feedback and comments submission.

2.2.4   Comment Acknowledgment

Any emailed comments/feedback received outside of a formal consultation period will be recorded and an acknowledgement reply sent. Where comments/feedback are received by another means (such as regular mail) it is at MFCC's discretion to acknowledge the comment/feedback.

MFCC will withhold acknowledgement at its own discretion. Such cases include (but are not limited to) comments/feedback that are, in MFCC's view:

- clearly not serious;
- deliberately offensive.

2.2.5   Document Quality and Control

MFCC aims to ensure that all documents publically available are of the highest possible quality, and available in their most current version.

Prior to release documents will have undergone a control process so that:

1. Public documents are released without errors;
2. Only the most current versions are available;
3. Public documents that have been revised or are new are made available as soon as practically possible after finalization and approval.

3 Document History

Date of Issue:	Version	Approval date:	Requested by:	Nature of Change	Approved by: