
IFAD procedures to ensure public consultations on policies and strategies

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Useful references: IFAD's Policy on the Disclosure of Documents (2010) [GC 34/INF.2/Rev.2](#), IFAD's Policy on Disclosure of Documents for Non-Sovereign Private Sector Operations (2022) [EB 2022/136/R.5](#).

Action: The Executive Board is invited to take note of the procedures in use at IFAD for ensuring public consultations on policies and strategies.

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I. Introduction

1. As an international financial institution and a specialized United Nations agency dedicated to transforming rural economies and food systems, IFAD policies, strategies and projects have significant implications, especially for vulnerable populations. To ensure ongoing and comprehensive feedback, IFAD conducts key stakeholder consultations throughout the development process. It now intends to enhance its consultation process by introducing public-wide consultations for corporate strategies and policies and creating a robust mechanism for incorporating feedback from those most affected by its work.
2. **What is public consultation?**
Public consultation is a process whereby an institution gathers feedback from the public and specific audiences on a policy, strategy or intervention before finalizing and releasing it. The purpose is to include relevant stakeholders' opinions in shaping the outcome.
3. **Why engage in public consultation?**
Public consultation gathers diverse opinions from a wide range of members of society for incorporation into key IFAD documents before their finalization. This fosters transparency, broad support and institutional trust; reduces in-country investment risks; and enhances development effectiveness.
4. **Roles and responsibilities in IFAD**
The relevant division in IFAD will lead the public consultation based on the subject. The guidelines currently in place aim to ensure a well-designed and transparent consultative process that involves the relevant audiences. Roles and responsibilities are detailed in annex I.

II. Context

A. IFAD's existing mechanisms for seeking inputs

5. With the introduction of public consultations, IFAD builds on a well-established practice of collecting input and feedback from key groups.
6. For example, IFAD stakeholders, host governments, beneficiaries, civil society and IFAD's Membership are routinely consulted on all loan, grant and non-sovereign operation proposals to be financed by IFAD, as well as on all country and regional strategies, via a well-established process that starts during the design phase and runs through implementation.
7. IFAD-funded projects and programmes are also required to seek [free, prior and informed consent \(FPIC\)](#) from local communities and ensure "full and effective participation in decision-making on proposed investment and development programmes that may affect their rights, their access to lands, territories and resources, and their livelihoods."
8. Finally, IFAD's [Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures \(SECAP\)](#) require community feedback on draft environmental and social impact assessment reports and other key project-related documents to ensure broad support and endorsement of the risk reduction, mitigation and management measures proposed by the project. SECAP also mandates all IFAD projects to establish an easy-to-access grievance mechanism, and a procedure to receive complaints regarding IFAD-supported projects, and facilitate their resolution.

9. In light of the above, no new procedures are foreseen for in-country IFAD-financed interventions. The consultation process for loans, grants and non-sovereign operations financed by IFAD, and for country and regional strategies will not be discussed in this document.

B. Objective of public consultations

10. The scope of the public consultation process at IFAD is to systematically collect comments from the public and from select audiences on the key elements of an IFAD policy or strategy prior to its finalization and release.
11. This document outlines procedures for **public consultations during the development of IFAD's corporate policies and strategies**.
12. Corporate policies and strategies can be divided into two broad categories: general and thematic.
- **General policies and strategies** are those pertaining to IFAD's overall approach, modus operandi or corporate priority. The IFAD division that typically takes the lead in the development of a general policy or strategy is the Operational Policy and Results Division (OPR). An example of this type of policy is the [IFAD Strategy for Engagement in Small Island Developing States 2022-2027](#).
 - **Thematic policies and strategies** address a specific topic or group. The IFAD divisions that typically lead the development of a thematic policy or strategy are the Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division and the Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division. Examples include: the [IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples](#), or [IFAD's Disability Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027](#).

C. Audiences

13. Although public consultations will be open to all, the following key IFAD audiences are deemed most relevant and should therefore be reached out to actively to ensure meaningful participation and relevance. Proactive outreach is key to mitigating the risk of elite capture of the process and ensure truly inclusive participation.
- IFAD stakeholders
 - Member State representatives
 - Host governments
 - Civil society
 - Academia and research institutes
 - Development partners
 - Private sector partners

D. Consultation tools

14. IFAD will use a combination of the following tools to conduct public consultations:
- Active e-mail outreach
 - Hybrid face-to-face and virtual meetings with select audiences
 - Website and online form to collect inputs
 - Social media posts
 - Virtual meetings open to all
15. To encourage open dialogue and frankness, it is recommended that inputs be treated as confidential. A comprehensive summary of all inputs will be produced at

the end of the consultation process and shared with the public in IFAD's official languages. IFAD will abide by data privacy laws and ensure the safety of all participants' data.

III. IFAD public consultation procedures for corporate policies and strategies

16. The following procedures will apply to all general and thematic corporate policies and strategies.

A. Audience groups and consultation and outreach tools

17. The table below maps each audience with the tools needed for outreach and collection of feedback.

Table 1

| <i>Audiences</i> | <i>Member States</i> | <i>Academia and research institutes</i> | <i>Civil society</i> | <i>Private sector</i> | <i>Development partners</i> |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| Consultation and outreach tools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member States Interactive Platform (MSIP) • Dedicated webpage for public consultations • Informal seminars • Executive Board sessions • Ad hoc consultations • Governing Council sessions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated webpage for public consultations • Targeted e-mail outreach • Virtual meetings open to all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated webpage for public consultations • Targeted e-mail to groups with which IFAD regularly interacts • Virtual meetings open to all • Social media posts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated webpage for public consultations • Social media posts • Virtual meetings open to all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated webpage for public consultations • Targeted e-mail outreach • Virtual meetings – either closed or open to all |
| Responsibility | <p>For general policies or strategies: OPR, as the IFAD division that develops policies of a general nature, is responsible for designing and running the consultation process.</p> <p>For thematic policies or strategies: The originating division is responsible for designing and running the consultation process.</p> | | | | |

B. Documents disclosure

18. All documents pertaining to the consultation process (see box 1 below) will be disclosed to the relevant audiences according to IFAD's guidelines and policies, including [IFAD's Policy on the Disclosure of Documents \(2010\)](#) and [IFAD's Policy on Disclosure of Documents for Non-Sovereign Private Sector Operations \(2022\)](#).
19. The list of documents made available to the participants of the consultation process should be limited to those strictly necessary for the audience to make an informed opinion about the policy/strategy being discussed.
20. Documents must be translated into IFAD's official languages to facilitate participation in the consultation process. Participants can submit comments in any official language, and additional languages may be considered depending on the audience.

Box 1

Documents to be disclosed (in all IFAD languages)**At start of consultation**

- Key elements of policy and potential implications or risks, and other considerations relevant to the consultation.
- Outreach package and timeline.

At closeout

- Public consultation report.
- Number of participants and names of participating organizations.
- Strategy/policy in its final form as approved by the Executive Board.

Shelf life of consultation documents

- All documents published at the start of the consultation will be taken down and replaced by the link to the final policy/strategy.
- The consultation report and information on participants will stay on the page for four weeks after closeout and will then be removed. An e-mail address will be provided for those wishing to access the documents at a later stage.
- All other documents will be removed from the page once the final strategy is published.

C. Timeline and steps

21. The new public consultation element for IFAD's strategy and policy development may take between three and five weeks. This timeframe covers collecting and receiving comments from the public (see box 2 for details). The final document will be made public after the Executive Board's approval. In the case of updates and amendments to existing policies, the need for a public consultation will be considered case-by-case.

Box 2

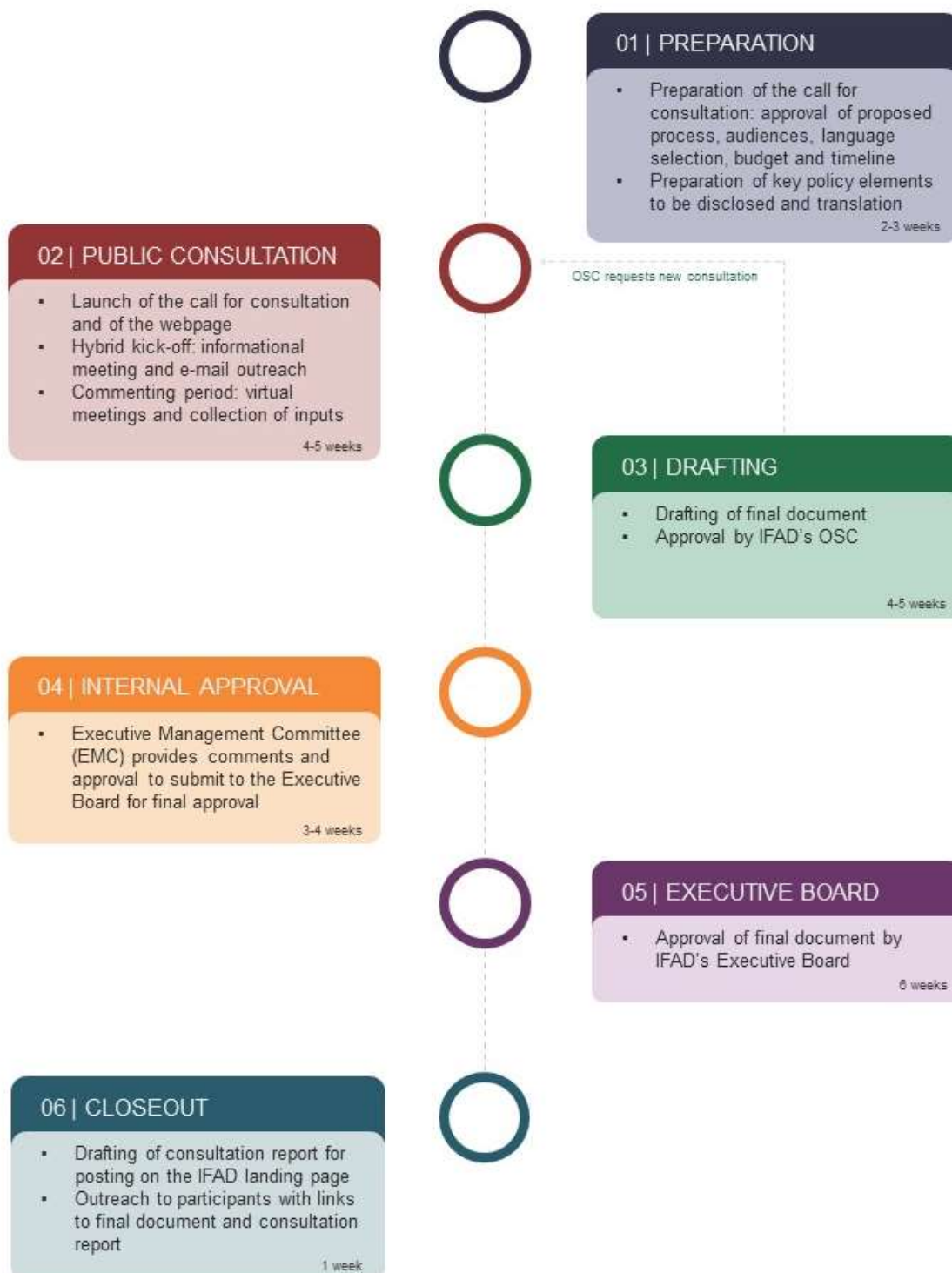
Strategy/policy development timeline

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Pre-consultation (2-3 weeks): | PREPARATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of the call for consultation, outreach plan and budget. Selection of primary and secondary audiences and outreach channels and identification of language translation needs. • Preparation of messages, timeline, list of documents and outreach package (must include purpose, timeline and process description). • Approval of the proposed process, audiences, languages, budget and timeline by the division director. • Preparation of key policy elements to be disclosed. • Translation of outreach package and outreach messages. |
| Consultation (4-5 weeks): | STEP 1: Soft launch Launch of the call for consultation and of the webpage with relevant drafts and description of the consultation process and key dates. Initial review time starts. STEP 2: Kick-off Hybrid kick-off, informational meeting and e-mail outreach to key audiences whose input is essential or actively sought. (1 week or less) STEP 3: Commenting period Virtual meetings with subgroups and other key audiences. Collection of comments posted on the web platform (3 weeks). Once the commenting period has ended, no more comments will be accepted, unless the Operational Strategy and Policy Guidance Committee (OSC) decides to run another round of consultations. |
| Post-consultation (1 week): | STEP 4: Closeout <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting of consultation report for posting on the IFAD landing page. • Outreach to participants with links to final document and consultation report. |

* If the OSC requests significant changes to the draft after the initial consultation, it may conduct another round of review (STEP 2 to STEP 3) with the participants to incorporate the changes. This will result in an additional 3 to 4 weeks being added to the timeline and will require additional funds for translating all revised documents needed for the second round of consultation.

22. Figure 1 below summarizes the steps needed to develop a new policy or strategy. Steps 1, 2 and 6 relate to incorporating a public consultation into the process.

Figure 1
Full timeline for developing a new policy or strategy at IFAD



D. Expected budget

23. The expected recurrent cost related to one public consultation, with all processes handled in house, is between US\$5,000 and US\$10,000. The originating division will need to secure the required funding for the various services rendered by other divisions.

E. Closeout

24. The closeout phase starts after the document has been finalized and approved by the Executive Board. It includes the preparation of the public consultation report, the update of the landing page with a link to the approved strategy or policy, and outreach to participants to notify them of the end of the public consultation process.
25. The expected closeout dates will be defined at the start of the consultation process and communicated clearly to the participants.
26. Participants will be informed of how their collective input has contributed to shaping the final document through the public consultation final report, and the final policy/strategy will be made available publicly for download on the IFAD landing page under the dedicated public consultation page, in the section [Policies and Strategies](#), and also on the publicly available MSIP page.
27. Communication regarding the public consultation outcome will occur through the same channel used for the initial notification. For example, if an e-mail was used to start the consultation, the process will be closed with an e-mail containing a link to the consultations landing page with all final documents. Similarly, those who saw the call for consultation on social media will see its closing communicated in a similar post. Ensuring consistency in audience outreach is crucial to prevent confusion and maintain trust and transparency throughout the process.
28. **No more comments will be accepted after the public consultation window is closed.**
29. Complaints regarding alleged unintended consequences of IFAD-funded interventions or reporting of fraud, corruption or other types of misconduct will be redirected to the appropriate reporting mechanism, as described on the IFAD webpage on [transparency and accountability](#).

Roles and responsibilities

| <i>Process</i> | <i>Responsible division</i> |
|---|--|
| Preparation of the call for consultation, outreach plan and budget. Selection of primary and secondary audiences and outreach channels as well as language translation needs. | Policy/strategy lead division |
| Preparation of messages, timeline, list of documents and outreach package (must include purpose, timeline and process description). | Policy/strategy lead division |
| Approval of the proposed process, audiences, languages, budget and timeline. | Director of the lead division |
| Preparation of key policy elements to be disclosed. | Policy/strategy lead division |
| Translation of outreach package and outreach messages. | Office of the Secretary |
| Launch of the call for consultation and of the webpage with relevant drafts and description of the consultation process and key dates. | Policy/strategy lead division in collaboration with the Communications Division and Information and Communications Technology Division |
| Hybrid kick-off, informational meeting and e-mail outreach to key audiences whose input is essential or actively sought. | Policy/strategy lead division |
| Virtual meetings with subgroups and other key audiences. Collection of comments posted on the web platform. | Policy/strategy lead division |
| Drafting of document based on results of the consultation. | Policy/strategy lead division |
| Internal commenting and approvals. | OSC and EMC |
| Preparation of final document for Board approval. | Policy/strategy lead division |
| Final approval. | Executive Board |
| Drafting of consultation report for posting on the IFAD landing page. | Policy/strategy lead division in collaboration with the Communications Division and the Information and Communications Technology Division |
| Outreach to participants with links to final document and consultation report. | Policy/strategy lead division |

Summary of other international financial institutions' public consultation procedures

| <i>International financial institution</i> | <i>Main features</i> | <i>Process</i> | <i>Objects of public consultation</i> |
|--|--|--|---|
| Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) | Two types of consultation: synchronous and asynchronous. Open to everyone. | Preparatory dialogue Consultation Closeout | Projects in Categories A/B/C Policies with social and environmental impact. |
| European Investment Bank (EIB) | Focus on transparency of the entire process. Stated objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To collect expertise from wide range of individuals and organizations. ▪ Reinforce transparency and accountability. ▪ Possibility for stakeholders to engage freely with the EIB. | Announcement on the EIB website. Minimum one consultation meeting, with the possibility of another round. Summary of all the responses is published. Post-consultation: draft policy is published at least 15 working days before the approval of the EIB governing body. After approval: final policy is published on the EIB website. Timeframe: 45 days or more. | Formal consultations on relevant key corporate and sectoral policies. All policies and projects with a potential social or environmental impact. |
| European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) | Full disclosure of all the documents on the website. | Announcement on the website. All necessary documents are uploaded to the website. Comments are collected via e-mail before the deadline. | Projects in Categories A/B/C. New proposed institutional and operational policies. Country strategies. |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| World Bank Group | <p>Stated objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To collect a broad range of perspectives, in particular from those affected by the Bank's work but outside the internal decision-making process. To strengthen outcomes and accountability. To devise more effective solutions. <p>Source: Consultation guidelines adopted in 2019. The guidelines include consultation principles and implementation key components.</p> | <p>Announcement on the website after management and Board approval.</p> <p>Different methods of consultation, depending on the issue, with usually more than one consultation period.</p> <p>Summary of the consultation process and responses are published. Final impact is publicized.</p> <p>Timeframe: 8-12 weeks for complex documents. Shorter for smaller projects, with a minimum of four weeks.</p> | <p>Any new policy development process, including proposed new policies or changes to regulations.</p> <p>Country partnership strategies.</p> <p>Global thematic studies and programmes.</p> |
| Asian Development Bank (ADB) | <p>Stated objective: To learn from stakeholders' experiences and inputs.</p> <p>Audiences: Member States, governments, civil society organizations, people affected by ADB interventions, and more.</p> | <p>Initial consultation and stakeholder outreach.</p> <p>Findings are shared with stakeholders through meetings.</p> <p>Analysis, drafting, revisions and finalization of the policy/project document.</p> | <p>Policies.</p> <p>Projects with environmental, involuntary resettlement, and impacts on Indigenous Peoples.</p> |
| International Finance Corporation (IFC) | <p>Strong focus on public consultations, particularly on issues that affect more people.</p> <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public consultation manual IFC 1998 Procedure for Environmental and Social Review of Projects IFC Access to Information Policy | <p>Consultation on project.</p> <p>Consultation on draft environmental assessment.</p> <p>Disclosure to project-affected people and international community.</p> | <p>Projects in Categories A/B/C.</p> |
| Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) | <p>No dedicated platform for public consultations.</p> <p>Exception: COVID-19 Global Coordination Platform where COVID-19 project-related information/data were posted for review, comments and approval by member countries.</p> | <p>Information not available.</p> | <p>Information not available.</p> |

Sources:

IDB: <https://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=EZSHARE-908968382-312>

EIB: <https://www.eib.org/en/about/partners/cso/consultations/index.htm>

EBRD: <https://www.ebrd.com/strategies-and-policies/have-your-say.html>

World Bank Group: <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/248301574182372360-0290022019/original/WorldBankconsultationsguidelines.pdf>

ADB: <https://www.adb.org/who-we-are/safeguards/safeguard-policy-review/stakeholder-engagement>

IFC: <https://disclosures.ifc.org/access-info-policy>

IsDB: <https://www.isdb.org/>