

Stakeholder involvement in research, extension, and training: option or necessity¹

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Introduction

The term stakeholder dates back to the early 1700. These were persons entrusted with the stakes of bettors. Nowadays, the term stakeholder and attention to their participation in research, extension and training (RET) are very popular. Most development agencies, research organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and government departments declare that stakeholder involvement is part of their work. However, stakeholders and participation are very general terms, nebulous and fuzzy, with varying meanings.

Papers and posters prepared for this thematic group are addressing stakeholder involvement in RET in many different ways. A summary of these papers is presented in Annex 1. This keynote is planned as an introduction to these contributions. It describes the evolution of stakeholder involvement in RET; provides an overview of types of stakeholders and participation; presents major methods, tools and techniques; and, finally, based on a (1) literature review, (2) a study of the experiences of the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development (CIIFAD) and (3) the authors' personal experiences in a multi-stakeholder project in sub-Saharan Africa, this paper highlights and focuses on ten key challenges of stakeholder involvement.

1. The evolution of stakeholder involvement in RET

The rapid evolution of stakeholder involvement in research and extension in the 1980s and 1990s resulted from the critique of the linear innovation model as the dominant research and extension paradigm and competing notions of what is “the problem” and what is “the solution” (Chambers and Jiggins 1987). Weak linkages between agricultural research and technology transfer as a major bottleneck in agricultural technology systems resulted in the development of a knowledge system perspective (Roeling 1990).

An agricultural knowledge and information system (AKIS) is defined as a “set of agricultural organizations and/or persons, and the links and interactions among them, engaged in such processes as the generation, transformation, transmission, storage, retrieval, integration, diffusion and utilization of knowledge and information, with the purpose of working synergically to support decision making, problem solving and innovation in a given country's agriculture or a domain thereof.” (Roeling 1990) Consequently, farmers, farmers' organizations, extension organizations, NGOs, educational institutions, research institutions, private companies, markets, and policymakers are now seen as active participants in a single AKIS.

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An AKIS perspective would suggest that the actors of the national agricultural research system (NARS) are working interdependently rather than independently. In practice, the component institutions of an AKIS often function rather independently, with few explicit linkages to each other in the form of networks, consortia, or other groupings. The independently functioning component institutions are often the result of political and bureaucratic realities, legal or financial constraints, high transaction costs, poor management, and/or lack of understanding of how intra-system collaboration can be mutually beneficial. A high-performing AKIS would involve a shared vision among its members that gives rise to (1) clearly defined mandates and a rationale for collaboration, (2) policies and strategies that legitimize and facilitate coordination, (3) specific mechanisms for linkages, and (4) human and financial resources for linking together (Zuidema et al. 1995).

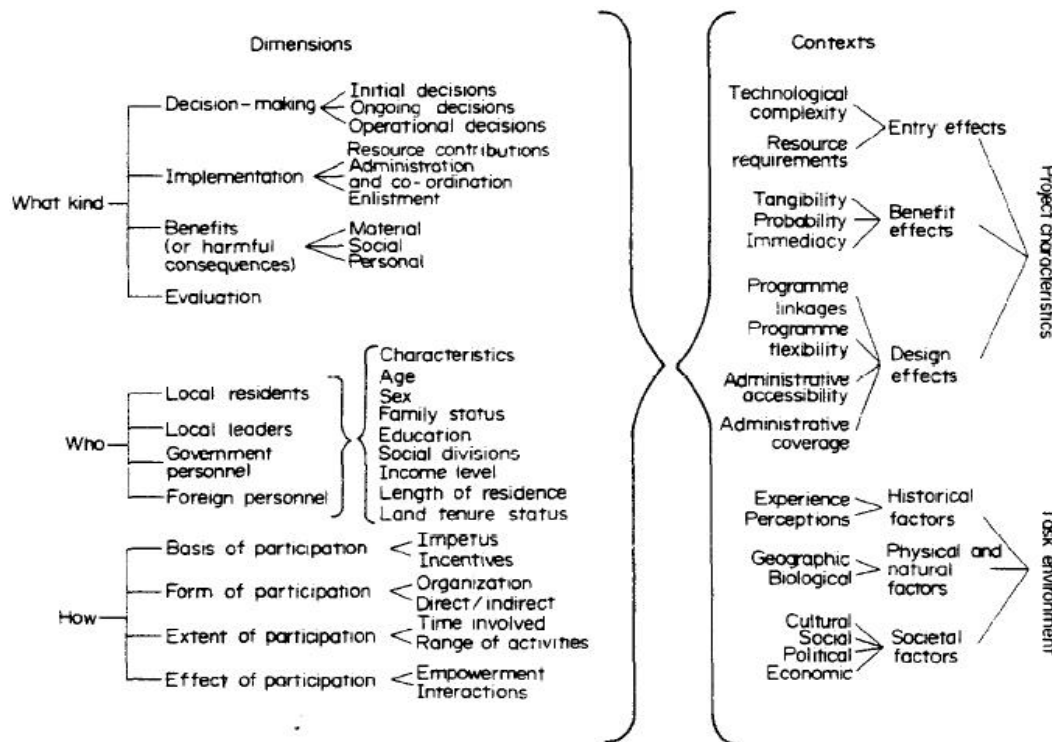
Participatory approaches or so-called learner-centered approaches in adult education and training developed in parallel with the evolution towards a knowledge system perspective. While traditional teaching methods, e.g., didactic teaching, emphasized the transfer of knowledge, messages or content pre-selected by outside specialists, participatory training focuses more on the development of the human capacities to assess, choose, plan, create, organize and take initiative. The emphasis is on helping learners take greater control of their lives and their environment by developing their skills in problem-solving and resource management (Srinivasan 1993). The move from a teaching to a learning style implies that the focus is on how we learn and with whom we learn and less on what we learn (Pretty 1995). It also implies a shift from the blueprint approach to the learning process approach for development. David Korten (cited in Chambers 1993) who contrasted both approaches characterized the learning process approach by decentralization, empowerment, adoption to and exploitation of diverse complexity.

2. Types of stakeholders and participation

To get more specific on the term participation, the multi-dimensional conceptual model developed by (Cohen and Uphoff 1980) can be used to describe and analyze stakeholder participation (Table 1). It is based on three basic questions. (1) What kind of participation takes place at different stages and levels of a project or program such as decision-making, implementation, consequences, and evaluation. (2) Who participates in each stage? (3) How does the process of participation take place? The basis, form, extent, and effects of participation add a qualitative dimension to the evaluation of participation. As a result, participation can have a broad range of meaning.

Seven main forms of participation, from passive participation to self-mobilization, are presented in Table 2 (Pretty 1995).

Table 1: Basic framework for describing and analyzing rural development participation



Source: Cohen and Uphoff 1980

Who participates is closely related to the question of who are the stakeholders. However, there are very different definitions for stakeholders. According to the World Bank stakeholders are those who are affected by the outcome – negatively or positively – or those who can affect the outcome of a proposed intervention (World Bank 2002). The British Overseas Development Administration (ODA, 1995) defines stakeholders as persons, groups or institutions with interests in a project or program. They are distinguished as primary, secondary and key stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are those ultimately affected, either positively or negatively. Secondary stakeholders are the intermediaries in the aid delivery process. Key stakeholders are those who can significantly influence, or are important to the success of the project. Bawden (2002) provides a further classification and distinguishes four types of stakeholders:

1. Owners = Who represents the powerful in the sense that they have considerable influence on the situation?
2. Community of beneficiaries = Who are the community of beneficiaries who are the assumed ‘focus’ of the intended transformation?
3. Actors = Who are the actors who need to be involved in the actions for change?
4. Guardians = Who speak as guardians of the interests of those who cannot speak for themselves?

Table 2: A typology of participation

1. Passive participation	People participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. It is a unilateral announcement by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
2. Participation in information giving	People participate by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings, as the findings are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.
3. Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted and external agents listen to views. These external agents define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of people's responses. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
4. Participation for material incentives	People participate by providing resources, for example labor, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Much on-farm research falls in this category, as farmers provide the fields but are not involved in experimentation or the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.
5. Functional participation	People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social organization. Such involvement does not tend to be at early stages of project cycles or planning but rather after major decisions have been made. These institutions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may become self-dependent.
6. Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives, and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
7. Self-mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated mobilization and collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power.

Source: Pretty 1995 adapted from Adnan et al, 1992

It is usually the first group that dominates projects and programs while it is the last group that is usually left out. According to this classification, stakeholders of the AKIS involve farmers, NGOs, private sector, public agricultural research, agricultural education institutions, consumers, donors etc.

3. Tools and techniques of stakeholder involvement in RET

There are several methods, tools and techniques that have been developed over the last century regarding participation of stakeholders. An overview of major methods that support participatory development is given in Table 3. A description of these methods is provided in a sourcebook on participation (World Bank 2002) and Agriservices (GTZ 2002).

Table 3: Methods of participatory development

Type	Methods
Workshop-based methods for collaborative decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciation-Influence-Control (AIC) ○ Objectives -Oriented Project Planning (ZOPP) ○ TeamUP
Community-based methods for collaborative decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) ○ SARAR (Self-esteem, associative strength, resourcefulness, action planning, responsibility) ○ Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
Methods for stakeholder consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Beneficiary Assessment (BA) ○ Systematic Client Consultation (SCC) ○ Conflict Resolution
Methods for social analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social Assessment (SA) ○ Gender Analysis

Source: Adapted from World Bank 2002

Participatory action research (PAR), which is related to many of these methods, is an important development in the area of social research. PAR means that research is carried out in collaboration with an organization or community seeking to improve its situation. PAR promotes broad participation in the research process and supports actions leading to a more just or satisfying situation for the stakeholders (Greenwood and Levin 1998). Although it is a research process, its three main ingredients (1) participation, (2) awareness-raising, and (3) action make it also a tool for empowering people and communities (Cabungcal-Cabiles 1994; Greenwood and Levin 1998).

4. Key challenges of stakeholder participation

Stakeholder participation has many advantages but also some limitations. Theoretically, participation is about greater effectiveness and improves sustainability of development projects and programs. The impact on efficiency is less clear due to possibly higher transaction costs. Examining analytical studies on the role of 'participation' for development, Pretty concluded that participation is one of the critical components of success in irrigation, livestock, water and agricultural projects. "All the evidence points towards long-term economic and environmental successes coming about when peoples'

ideas and knowledge are valued, and power is given to them to make decisions independently of external agencies.” (Pretty, 1995) Many others came to similar conclusions (e.g., World Bank cited in Uphoff et al. 1998; Colle et al. 2001). However, the literature also identifies many physical, social, political, and economic conditions that can limit or hinder success (Dearden et al. 1999; Colle et al. 2001; Heeks 1999).

In this section, ten key challenges of stakeholder involvement are highlighted and discussed.

1. Keeping the process dynamic

Relationships among institutions are not static. They evolve over time or change, as do the expectations of individuals and institutions involved (Michelsen 2002). Time is needed to establish and develop relationships. Partner organizations need time to get to know each other, to discuss motivations, to set the objectives of the relationship, to overcome constraints, to adapt to changes in the environment, and to monitor the development of the relationship. Establishing and developing a relationship is a learning process. Partners need to learn how to partner, how to communicate and understand each other. Therefore, relationships have characteristics that induce real conflicts with the guidelines of donor funding which are time-bound and output-oriented.

2. Getting the science right

It is commonly asserted that participatory methods are undisciplined and sloppy. But, participatory methods, tools and approaches can be high-quality social science research and there are ways to prove the trustworthiness of findings. Twelve criteria for establishing trustworthiness are presented by Pretty (1995).

Using participatory methods also requires highly skilled persons to implement the approaches appropriately. While scientists take care of the ‘hard’ science, NGOs are brought into projects to take care of the ‘soft’ systems like participation. But, often NGOs are professionals in extension but not in research design and data collection, leading to a social under-design of projects (Rhoades 2002).

While participatory methods are a fresh counterpoint to the unimaginative questionnaire, the present application of such approaches may become counterproductive and a violation of their original intent. Rather than treating local people with respect and as colleagues, participatory methods sometimes treat them more like school children (Rhoades 2002).

3. Finding optimal levels of participation

Find the optimal - not maximal – level of participation of stakeholders. Clearly determine who participates and who does not and on which levels and at which stages. The key criterion should be that it is useful and beneficial for all stakeholders involved.

There are situations where people are asked or dragged into participating in operations of no interest to them in the very name of participation. The dilemma for authorities is that they both need and fear people's participation. They fear it because it is less controllable, less precise and so likely to slow down the planning processes (Pretty 1995). On the other hand, there are situations where key stakeholder groups are left out. It is extremely important to invite all those actors who are involved in the actions for change. If for example organizational change is the expected output, it is important to involve policy makers, leaders and managers from the beginning of the project. Only their involvement can ensure that the project can induce any changes (Michelsen 2000).

There are also situations where social, political and cultural structures make participation unproductive, unrealistic or undesirable (Colle et al. 2001). For example, local elites can dominate through their participation. It is, therefore, important to determine whether or not the context allows to implement participatory approaches (Heeks 1999).

4. Motivating key stakeholders

When key stakeholder groups have been identified, what would be required to motivate all of them to actively participate? Relationships are very much determined by individuals and leaders. Individuals are the entry point to partner organizations and individuals determine how the relationship develops. People do make the difference. People can be more important than institutions. Relationships also depend on the leadership of the partner organizations. But, organizations and their relationships change because leaders are changing. Strong and permanent leadership is often lacking.

Mutual benefits for all stakeholders participating are important and there should be good reasons for all stakeholders to participate in a project (Heeks 1999). They need to understand clearly how they will benefit from their participation and the changes induced by the project. But why stakeholder groups participate is not only related to monetary and non-monetary incentives. Other factors that keep relationships going are related to altruisms, i.e., with the aim to maximize common interest with one's own interests subordinated, ideas that attract and motivate people, ideals or a joint understanding how to improve the world or what is good for the society and friendship which is very powerful (Uphoff 1996).

Participation of key stakeholders is also closely linked to the question of ownership. Changes induced by a participatory project will only be sustainable if stakeholders feel a sense of ownership. Participation can only be assured and sustained if appropriate systems of organizations are created (Uphoff et al. 1998). Such organizations must be ones that they can and will take possession of as their own, even if others instigated these organizations.

5. Addressing conflict situations

Is a consensus always possible? There are mutual and conflicting interests of stakeholders. As the number of stakeholders increases, the more likely are conflicts

among them. A win-win situation is less likely than competing or conflicting interests. Conflicting objectives that are countervailing cannot be accomplished (Rhoades 2002).

How to deal with real conflicts of interests? Resolving such differences requires more than dialogue. Decisions have to be made and someone has to take responsibility. But roles and responsibilities should be clear. There should be consensus about the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved.

6. Limiting complexity

There is a certain level of complexity at which projects can become counterproductive. Many projects promise through interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and inter-institutional mechanisms to conduct quality research leading to impact-oriented development which is locally defined but globally relevant (Rhoades 2002). Projects that promise to answer multiple, often contradictory objectives can become their own enemy. Projects should be kept simple and remain realistic in what can be achieved.

Participation in the planning process is likely to increase the number of objectives and activities of a project and program. Unrealistic expectations are created in the process itself when people meet and present their interests and agendas. They will talk about all their problems not only the ones which are part of the project. But it is not realistic to accomplish all these objectives within the project's time frame or budget. During the development of a relationship, it should always be asked how realistic are expectations.

7. Keeping transaction costs low

Participatory approaches entail the danger of high transaction costs for all stakeholders as well as for project management and control. Many costs are related to the time that all stakeholders have to invest for meetings and discussions. The assumption that stakeholders have all this time available might be wrong. The resulting costs may reduce benefits for participants. In addition, many projects create their own management structures unnecessarily increasing the costs.

8. Scaling-up to regional and national levels

Long-term success of participation will depend on the ability to scale-up local successes. For over two decades, participatory methods have proven their usefulness for development at the local or micro level. A key challenge is how to build upon these successes and bring them to a larger scale by incorporating participation into the development and implementation of national policies and in large-scale institutions. This offers tremendous opportunities for expanding the participation of the poor in development. However, there is a danger of misuse and abuse which ultimately would discredit the concept of participation as a critical ingredient for development (Gaventa 1998).

Success in scaling-up of participatory approaches depends on three enabling conditions: (1) policy context in which democratization and decentralization are genuinely embraced as necessary governance reforms, (2) support by high-level government figures, and (3) the existence of an in-country critical mass of people with training experience (IDS 1998, p.135). Dangers of scaling-up include routinization meaning that the same group is facilitating participatory methods en masse leading to standardized outputs, and participatory fatigue that might occur if participatory methods are used in the same location again. Another danger is the abuse of participatory methods; for example when these are used to just extract information (IDS 1998, p.135).

9. Institutionalizing participatory approaches

To institutionalize participatory approaches is extremely complex and requires substantial changes in organizational cultures, roles, relationships and attitudes of individuals and groups. A number of public institutions have tried to develop and integrate participatory research and development approaches into their program activities (Thompson 1995; Haggmann et al. 1998). Thompson (1995) concludes that besides training of personnel in participatory principles, concepts and methods, there are many key elements such as enabling policies, strong leadership, long-term and flexible financial commitments, improved systems of monitoring and evaluation of performance, and creative management necessary to institutionalize participatory approaches.

10. Implementing what you preach

How participatory are institutions (i.e., donor organizations, international centers, international universities) themselves that promote participatory approaches? It has long been a concern that development organizations, and NGOs in particular, often lack the management tools to implement what they preach and that their internal systems, structures, procedures and values are far from participatory (IDS 1998). However, this does not imply that all development institutions do have to be 'participatory' per se. Participation is not necessarily desirable in all circumstances.

A related issue is the lack of collaboration among all organizations involved in research, extension and training. Each of them has his own approach towards participation and instead of agreeing on a joint strategy, each of them is competing and duplicating efforts, often within one project framework.

Concluding remarks

Stakeholder participation in RET is a very convincing concept for the success of local development projects, but very complex and difficult to implement. Stakeholder involvement is a necessity but how much participation in what aspects of a project depends on whether or not it is important, useful and beneficial.

Based on the key challenges of participation presented above, the following are recommendations for two important stakeholder groups, donors and social scientists who are the main participants in this workshop.

Recommendations for donor and development organizations:

- Coordinate your efforts and form donor communities;
- Create funding opportunities that are less time bound, more process-oriented and provide more flexibility;
- Harmonize your agendas with those of the community of beneficiaries;
- Provide funding opportunities to evaluate the successes of participatory projects so all can learn from these experiences;
- Provide funding for scaling-up and institutionalizing participatory approaches to regional and national levels to achieve greater impact;
- Become more participatory in your work as appropriate.

Finally, a recommendation for social scientists using participatory methods and approaches. More empirical evidence is needed to defend the cases of participatory research and training and sharing of lessons learned. In the words of Rhoades (2002) : “Most of us who are engaged in the field readily agree with the new philosophy, but are struggling with the ‘how’ not the ‘why’. Our hearts are in the right place, but where are our heads?”

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Annex 1: Summary of Papers of the Group “Research, Extension, and Training”

The four papers prepared for this thematic group are addressing stakeholder involvement in research, extension and training in many different ways.

The first paper by Patrick Kormawa et al. presents the application of participatory approaches using a community-based participatory appraisal that was conducted to identify current and alternative technologies for controlling Imperata. The use of different participatory tools such as infestation mapping, livelihood analysis, and wealth ranking

resulted in identifying varying management strategies for sustainable land use in the Sub-Humid Savannah of Nigeria.

The second paper by D. Arokodoun, I. Gbego, and Annemarie Matthes focuses on the challenge of institutionalizing participatory approaches in the case of demand-driven agricultural research. The authors describe the experiences with the implementation of a management cycle of agricultural research in Benin at the eco-regional level. The conclusion highlights that this cycle has stimulated collaboration between the different actors in the national agricultural research system and has stimulated interdisciplinary research.

The third paper by John Mburu and Regina Birner focuses on the challenge of how to motivate the key stakeholders to participate in a project. Their paper on wildlife collaborative management in Kenya includes an empirical analysis of landowners' incentives for participation. The emphasis is on the kind of incentives that motivate landowners and resource users to become stakeholders of these collaborative management arrangements and maintain their participation throughout the process.

The final paper by Frank Hartwich, Willem Janssen, and Jaime Tola focuses on how partnerships function and the effects of these partnerships on development. Results of output, process, and evolutionary evaluations of cases of public-private research and development partnerships in Chile and Uruguay are presented. This research contributes to the understanding on how partnerships are created and how they evolve over time and which factors lead to their success.

Abstract

The term stakeholder dates back to the early 1700. These were persons entrusted with the stakes of bettors. Nowadays, the term stakeholder and attention to their participation in research, extension and training (RET) are very popular. Most development agencies, research organizations, NGOs, and government departments declare that stakeholder involvement is part of their work. However, stakeholders and participation, that are addressed in the papers and posters prepared for this thematic group, are very general terms, nebulous and fuzzy, with varying meanings. This keynote paper provides an overview of stakeholder involvement in RET, presents major methods, tools and techniques and discusses key challenges.

The rapid evolution of stakeholder involvement in research and extension in the 1980s and 1990s resulted from the critique of the linear innovation model as the dominant research and extension paradigm (Chambers and Jiggins 1987). Weak linkages between agricultural research and technology transfer as a major bottleneck in agricultural technology systems resulted in the development of a knowledge system perspective. Consequently, farmers, farmers' organizations, extension organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions, research institutions, private companies, markets, and policymakers are now seen as (active) participants in a single agricultural knowledge and information system (AKIS) (Roeling 1990).

Participatory approaches or so-called learner-centered approaches in adult training developed in parallel to the evolution towards a knowledge system perspective. While traditional teaching methods, e.g., didactic teaching, emphasized the transfer of knowledge, messages or content-pre-selected by outside specialists, participatory training focuses more on the development of the human capacities to assess, choose, plan, create, organize and take initiative (Srinivasan 1993).

To get specific on the term participation the multi-dimensional conceptual model developed by Cohen and Uphoff (1980) is used to describe and analyze stakeholder participation. It is based on three basic questions. (1) What kind of participation takes place? There are different stages and levels of a project or program such as decision-making, implementation, consequences, and evaluation. (2) Who participates in them? (3) How does the process of participation take place? The basis, form, extent, and effects of participation add a qualitative dimension to the evaluation of participation. As a result, participation can have a broad range of meaning. Nine main forms of participation, from passive participation to self-mobilization, are presented (Pretty 1995).

Who participates is closely related to the question of who are the stakeholders. According to Bawden (2002) four types can be distinguished. (1) Owners = who represent the powerful in the sense that they have considerable influence on the situation? (2) Community of beneficiaries = who are the community of beneficiaries who are the assumed 'focus' of the intended transformation? (3) Actors = who are the actors that need to be involved in the actions for change? And (4) Guardians = who speaks as guardians of the interests of those who cannot speak for themselves?

Stakeholder participation has many advantages but also some limitations. Theoretically, participation is about greater effectiveness and improves sustainability of development projects and programs. The impact on the efficiency due to higher transaction costs is less clear. Examining analytical studies on the role of ‘participation’ for development, Pretty (Pretty 1995) concluded that participation is one of the critical components of success in irrigation, livestock, water and agricultural projects. However, the literature also identifies many physical, social, political, and economic conditions that can limit or hinder success (Dearden et al. 1999; Colle 2002).

Based on a literature review, a study of experiences of the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development (CIIFAD) that focused on stakeholder participation and the authors’ personal experiences in a multi-stakeholder project in sub-Saharan Africa, the paper highlights and focuses on ten key challenges of stakeholder involvement.

1. Relationships are not static. They evolve over time or change, as do the expectations of individuals and institutions involved.
2. Get the science right. Participatory methods, tools and approaches can be high-quality social science research and there are ways to prove the trustworthiness of findings. Using participatory methods also requires highly skilled persons to implement the approaches appropriately.
3. Find the optimal - not maximal – level of participation of stakeholders. Clearly determine who participates and who not and on which levels and at which stages. The key criteria should be that it is useful and beneficial to all stakeholders involved.
4. Involve key stakeholders. What is required to motivate all key stakeholders to actively participate?
5. Address conflict situations. A win-win situation is less likely than competing or conflicting interests. Decisions have to be made and someone has to take responsibility. But roles and responsibilities should be clear.
6. Limit complexity. There is a certain level of complexity at which projects can become counterproductive. Projects should be kept simple and remain realistic in what can be achieved.
7. Keep transaction costs low. Participatory approaches entail the danger of high transaction costs for stakeholders as well as project management and control, which may not result in greater benefits for the participants.
8. Scale-up to regional and national levels. Success (long-term) of participation will depend on the ability of scaling-up rather local successes.
9. Institutionalize participatory approaches. What is required to institutionalize participation to make changes sustainable?
10. Implement what you preach. How participatory are institutions (i.e., donor organizations, international centers, international universities) themselves that promote participatory approaches?

Stakeholder participation in RET is a very convincing concept for the success of local development projects, but very complex and difficult to implement. Stakeholder involvement is a necessity but how much participation in what aspects of a project depends on whether or not it is important, useful and beneficial.