



Stakeholder participation in water resource management: Categorisation and evaluation of approaches

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The involvement of stakeholders and communities in water resource management is advocated for many reasons including ideological (democratic principles) and functional (harnesses social capital to identify problems and solutions, facilitates implementation of strategies, and achieves compromises). This poster presents a categorisation framework for organising and evaluating approaches used to “do” participation described in the literature. The framework organises participatory approaches according to the extent to which they address one of three processes: information exchange, consensus building and active involvement, and the intensity of the approach. Intensity is used to describe the capacity of the approach to encourage participants to think about and question their positions, views, situations and objectives. Such processes have been described in the literature as essential for developing appropriate resource management strategies. The approaches are evaluated in terms of their inputs (number of participants involved, resources mobilised), processes (satisfaction of participants with the approach) and outputs (measurable successes such as improvements in water quality, reduction in conflict over resource distribution). The preliminary findings suggest that while less intense approaches tend to have greater inputs (more participants and financial resources), lower participant satisfaction is associated with these approaches. In contrast, more intensive approaches tend to operate with more limited resources, yet achieve greater participant satisfaction. Examples in the literature also demonstrate the challenge of evaluating the outputs of participation, often due to the limited availability of baseline data. However, even when suitable data sets are available, the large number of factors interacting within a catchment create difficulties in relating outputs to participation activities.