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STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENT
GUIDELINES FOR
HOUSEHOLD
ENERGY CARBON
PROJECTS

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Any errors of fact or analysis are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Stakeholder engagement guidelines for household energy carbon projects

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Executive Summary

The rapid growth in carbon markets in recent years led to a boom in carbon finance flowing to household energy solutions. Between 2017 and 2020, for example, clean cooking businesses recorded a 21-fold increase in the volume of carbon finance secured.¹ However, this growth has leveled off in the past two years following an uncertain economic outlook as well as questions surrounding the social and environmental integrity of carbon markets.

Carbon credit buyers and investors in household energy solutions – including clean and improved cooking, lighting, and energy access – are increasingly concerned with whether projects are fair and whether finance reaches technology users on the ground. These are legitimate questions in projects where end users play a crucial role in generating carbon credits by using the technologies bought or provided. End-users may not fully understand the possible benefits and drawbacks of their participation, perhaps signing agreements they do not understand and receiving a less-than-fair share of project benefits.

While most carbon standards have requirements for consulting stakeholders on a project’s design – and allowing them to provide feedback in case of any grievances – there are no widely accepted guidelines to ensure that technology users and local communities are fully informed about their participation in a household energy carbon project. In particular, little guidance exists on how to solicit free and informed consent from technology users regarding the transfer of their rights to the carbon credits generated by their use of climate-friendly technology.

This guidance aims to fill this gap by providing guidelines that carbon project developers can follow to ensure that technology users and local communities are fully informed about their participation in a household energy carbon project. It describes who to communicate with, how to communicate, and what to communicate in a practical and concrete manner. The guidance focuses primarily on projects implementing clean or improved cooking solutions, although many of the recommendations are transferable to other project types.

This guidance can be used by:

- Carbon project developers and local implementers. For this group, the guidance provides general principles that should be followed in communicating with stakeholders, and guidance on the content and manner of communications, as well as when information should be communicated.
- Funders, investors, and carbon credit buyers. For this group, the guidance provides a checklist for ensuring that funding recipients are implementing the good practices outlined in this document.

The guidance starts by defining seven principles (Figure 1) for engaging with local stakeholders to foster an open, honest, and rewarding communication between all parties. It then outlines who to communicate with and how to do so, outlining specific considerations for communicating with different categories of stakeholders, including technology users, communities, community leaders, local governments, and local implementers.

Figure 1. Principles for communicating with local stakeholders.



¹ Clean Cooking Alliance (2022) 2022 Industry Snapshot. Available at <https://cleancooking.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CCA-2022-Clean-Cooking-Industry-Snapshot.pdf>

On what to communicate, the guidance describes categories of information essential to stakeholders to understand the context and nature of the project and the consequences of their participation. This includes:

- What climate change is, the concept of emissions and their impact on human health.
- Carbon markets and carbon credits.
- The nature of the project.
- The terms to which technology users and communities are agreeing.
- The availability of alternatives should they not wish to transfer their rights to carbon credits.

investor or carbon credit buyer – can use to determine whether a project is implementing the practices outlined in this guidance.

Communicating with stakeholders, and most importantly, doing so effectively and in a culturally appropriate way, is essential to the greater uptake of household energy technologies and the success of results-based carbon projects. Stakeholder engagement is an evolving process of learning, knowledge-sharing, and trial and error. This document is intended to summarize the building blocks of current good and best practices in stakeholder communication to contribute to broader developments in the household energy space toward implementing socially responsible and transparent carbon projects.

The guidelines close with a chapter on verification, which provides tips for internal procedure that project developers can put in place to ensure that the above procedures are followed. This chapter also provides a checklist that an evaluator – such as a potential



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1. Introduction

1.1 Scope of the guidance

This document outlines stakeholder engagement guidance for actors implementing household energy carbon projects. It is intended to ensure that project stakeholders, including technology users and the broader community in which they reside, are fully informed regarding carbon projects that affect them.

This guidance is primarily intended to be applied to projects that reduce emissions through the distribution of clean or efficient cookstoves and biogas systems but can be applied to all household energy projects. Project developers and local implementers can adapt their approach as necessary where the situation requires.

This guidance can be used by different actors, including:

- **Carbon project developers** can use these guidelines in their project design and implementation, ensuring

that local stakeholders are fully informed of the consequences of their participation in a carbon project.

- **Local implementers** can use these guidelines when preparing their marketing/sales teams to guide their customer and community interaction approaches.
- **Funds and investors** that invest in carbon projects can use this guidance as part of their project evaluation process through applying the verification checklist in Chapter 4.

1.2 Structure of the guidance

The document follows a “reverse pyramid” approach, from broad general guidelines to specific actions. The contents are as follows:

- Section 2 introduces seven general principles that should be followed in communicating with stakeholders.
- Section 3 goes deeper into thematic guidance, including identifying stakeholders, the content

and manner of communications, and the timing of communications.

- Section 4 presents guidance for verifying whether a project meets the good practices outlined in this document.
- The Annex includes visual aids that can be used to support communications with stakeholders.



PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

2. Principles for communicating with local stakeholders

Communicating with local stakeholders should be a rewarding exercise for both the carbon project developer (or implementing partner) and the recipient of the information. It is an opportunity to receive feedback on the project, to exchange ideas, and to foster a long-term relationship between the project

developer and the customer for the duration of the technology's lifetime and beyond. Establishing an open, honest, and welcoming means of communicating with local stakeholders should be guided by the principles outlined in Box 1.

BOX 1: PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE COMMUNICATION WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS



Keep it simple.

Use simple terms and short explanations to explain complex concepts. Climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, carbon markets and carbon credits are abstract concepts that involve highly specialized language. This information should be simplified as much as possible and presented intuitively. While the information provided to technology users should be complete, this needs to be balanced against ensuring users are not overwhelmed with information.



Be visually intuitive.

Since literacy levels among technology users may vary, visual explainers should be used over text where possible. Visual materials should include universal and/or culturally appropriate symbols and visual representations.



Be locally relevant.

Any text, verbal communication or visual material used should be adapted to local conditions (e.g., literacy, language, culture) and translated as necessary. Adapt the content of communications to the recipient, and to the situation in which the communication takes place, while ensuring the essence of the message and the most crucial parts for stakeholders to understand are maintained.



Be consistent.

Ensure consistency in the content, (visual) language, and style of communications to ensure uniformity between what is communicated to various stakeholders at different times during project implementation. Where trade-offs arise between ensuring consistency and adapting communication to different contexts and needs, project developers and local implementers should consider pragmatic ways to balance these goals, such as ensuring consistency in the fundamental terms of what is communicated, while adapting the language, images, or metaphors used to describe these.



Be respectful and honest.

When engaging potential technology users, adopt honest sales approaches that are respectful and accurately capture the performance and benefits of the technology offered and the terms of participation without exaggeration. Technology users and communities must be approached in good faith, with the aim of enabling them to make informed decisions.



Be welcoming of feedback.

Communication with stakeholders should be characterized by a two-way exchange. This means listening to stakeholders, being welcoming of feedback and questions, and ensuring that these are addressed. A project can also consider asking users to recount the key points discussed to ensure that they understood the information presented to them.



Learn and improve.

Ensure that a process is in place to evaluate the quality of engagement practices and regularly adjust them with a view to improving.




3. Thematic guidance

3.1 Who to communicate with

Project developers should identify the relevant stakeholders in the project as early as possible and devise a communication strategy for each stakeholder category (see Table 1). Each strategy should consider the information relevant to that group as well as the style, approach, and medium appropriate for each. In addition, best practices and lessons learned from stakeholder engagement in previous projects (whenever available) should also be taken into account.

Table 1 identifies the most common groups of stakeholders in household energy carbon projects and outlines key considerations on what and how to communicate with each. Box 2 includes additional considerations for local implementers.

Table 1. Key considerations for communicating with each stakeholder group.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	DESCRIPTION	KEY CONSIDERATIONS
 <p>Technology users</p>	<p>Users of household energy solutions who participate in carbon projects. These may include individual households or small businesses, schools, or medical facilities.</p>	<p>When establishing agreements with technology users, project developers must ensure that households or communities provide their consent for participation in a household-level carbon project. This consent needs to be voluntary and given prior to participation in a carbon project. It should be freely given, without coercion or manipulation, and obtained well in advance of planned activities. Moreover, it should be based on comprehensive information, including costs, drawbacks, and anticipated benefits, provided in a suitable and culturally appropriate format.</p> <p>Communication with technology users should be undertaken on a one-to-one basis, even if they are also part of communities to whom information has been provided. This enables project developers and local implementers to verify that the technology user has understood the implications of participating in the project.</p> <p>At a minimum, information should be provided to technology users on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project’s background (e.g. what is the nature of the project, what is climate change, what is the carbon markets and carbon credits). • The terms of the agreement, personal risks, benefits, and alternatives. • How to use the technology • Their consumer rights and the complaints procedure. <p>Information will usually be best provided through a combination of verbal explanations and visual materials.</p>

Communities



Communities include the broader population in areas where household energy solutions are distributed. This includes both technology users and others who are not directly participating in the project.

The broader community may not require as much information as those who are participating in the project. Nonetheless, it is important to ensure that the community is informed about the project generally and any implications it may have for the community. At a minimum, information should be provided to communities on:

- The project's background (e.g. what is the nature of the project, what is climate change, what is the carbon markets and carbon credits).
- Community-level benefit-sharing arrangements (if applicable).
- The likely impact(s) of the project on the local community.
- Employment opportunities generated by the project.

Information may be provided to communities through various means, including local meetings, demonstrations, posters or other visual materials, phone conversations, local media, or through community leaders. Due consideration should be given to the effectiveness of these various means of communication in reaching the target audience when deciding on the best means of engagement with communities.

When engaging in community-level communications, project developers should seek to identify the engagement structure that is most relevant in the given context. This may be a village or district in which distribution will take place. In urban settings, identifying an appropriate community structure may be more challenging, though it may still be possible to organize community meetings through local community centers or similar institutions.

Community leaders



Persons who assume a leadership role in the community. They are generally trusted sources of information and guidance.

Community leaders can play a valuable role in mediating between project developers and local communities. They can also play a role as local implementation partners. In selecting the right community leaders, project developers should look for people who are trusted in the community and are able to absorb and disseminate information about the project. It is also important to work with community leaders who have the time and capacity to take on this role, keeping in mind that some leaders are engaged in many projects and may find themselves overcommitted.

It is important that they are adequately informed of the project and its implications for the community, including:

- Project background (what is climate change, emissions, carbon markets, carbon credits, the nature of the project).
- Community-level benefit-sharing arrangements (if applicable), governance of any community funds (if applicable), potential risks.
- Employment opportunities generated by the project.
- Complaints or grievance procedures.

In addition, if community leaders are also engaged as local implementing partners, they should be trained in how to communicate the above points to technology users (see 'The role of local implementing partners' below).

Communication with community leaders should take place on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, ideally in person.

Local government



Relevant sub-national government bodies in the area where the project is being rolled out. This might include entities at multiple levels of government, for instance districts and counties.

Local governments should be informed of the project in advance of rollout, with project developers providing overall information regarding how the project operates, the benefits for the local area, and what activities will be carried out, as well as any support that will be needed from the local government. This also provides an opportunity to ask about any relevant licenses or permissions that may be required and seek guidance on effective strategies for roll out and local leaders to engage.

BOX 2. THE ROLE OF LOCAL IMPLEMENTERS

Projects will typically either rely on local staff or on third party organizations to roll out the implementation of the project in specific areas. In both cases, these teams are both a relevant audience for project developers to communicate with and also one of the groups these guidelines are intended to be used by. It is therefore important to ensure that local implementers are not only fully informed about the project but also trained in how to communicate that information to other project stakeholders. At a minimum, local implementers should fully understand and be able to communicate the following:

- Project background (what is climate change, emissions, carbon projects, carbon credits, the nature of the project).
- The terms of the legal agreement entered into, including at a minimum but not limited to: risks and benefits, carbon waiver, user manual, warranty terms, the availability of service and repairs, the availability of the project developer for questions, the availability and details of a complaints procedure. Local implementers need to both fully understand this information and be able to explain it to technology users clearly, effectively, and accurately. This should include the ability to check and follow-up with stakeholders to ensure their understanding of what they have explained (e.g., technology user contract).

Training for local implementers should also include instruction on minimum standards, best practices and prohibited practices (e.g., forceful sales tactics, deception, any misrepresentation of facts, etc.). It is also recommended to develop lists of common questions and answers to these, which can be distributed among implementers and updated on a regular basis.

Project developers have a responsibility to ensure that local implementers are provided with sufficient information on the above points and that they are trained in using this guide. In addition, project developers are responsible for monitoring stakeholder engagement practices of their implementing partners.

3.2 How to communicate

All communications should be guided by the principles outlined in Chapter 2 and the concept of voluntary, prior, and informed consent.

At a minimum, project developers should ensure that **dedicated, one-on-one communication** is undertaken with each individual technology user – or group of users – before any agreements are entered into. This can be through door-to-door sales (Box 3) or other means, such as a community technology demonstration. In all cases, however, communication should be led by a trained agent who can fully and adequately explain all relevant implications of participation in the project and the terms of the agreement.

Distributing technologies through third-party kiosks or retail outlets is not recommended since:

- Such outlets sell a wide range of items, and staff are likely to be less specialized than trained agents and are therefore less likely to be able to properly explain the details of a given project and the terms of the agreement in question;

- Time pressures in retail environments can lead to retail staff not dedicating sufficient time to ensure that technology users fully understand the terms of the agreement; and
- It is particularly challenging to undertake verification that communication guidelines have been followed in retail environments.

As literacy levels vary, using visual aids and as little text as possible while ensuring full understanding is highly recommended. Written materials, including agreements or consent forms, should be provided in the language that is most widely understood in written form in the community in question, noting that this may be different from the language that is most commonly spoken there. In some cases, it may be necessary to have materials available in multiple languages.

When engaging with individuals who do not have sufficient literacy to fully understand contracts or consent forms, agents should, in addition to explaining the terms themselves, ask if there is a family member or other trusted community member who can help read the contract on their behalf and explain it to them.

BOX 3. COMMUNICATION DURING DOOR-TO-DOOR SALES

Being the most direct and personal way of communication, door-to-door sales offer the most conducive environment to addressing individual concerns and questions. The primary method is verbal communications together with small-format visual explainers (e.g., fliers). Technology users should be afforded sufficient time to digest the verbal explanations and visual aids, be given space to ask questions, should receive full and honest answers, and should have time to make their decisions without being pressured into immediate participation in the project or signing agreements or forms. Once explanations have been completed, it is recommended to ask prospective technology users to describe what they have understood in their own terms. In case they have not yet correctly understood the main terms of their participation, additional explanations using alternative language, metaphors, or visual aids should be employed.

Where projects are rolled out to areas where there is a well-defined community, such as a village or commune, it can be helpful to combine one-on-one communication with community meetings or demonstrations (Box 4). This provides an opportunity for community members to consider the proposal as a group, discuss benefits and drawbacks, and listen to

answers given to the questions others ask. However, even where community demonstrations are made, projects should ensure each individual agreement is preceded by dedicated one-on-one communication in which the prospective technology user has sufficient time to absorb the information provided and ask questions.

BOX 4. COMMUNICATION DURING COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Community demonstrations may take place where local implementers provide information on the background of a project, demonstrate the use and benefits of a relevant technology, and answer any questions that community members may have. In such a situation, the use of large-format visual materials (for example, posters that everyone viewing the demonstration can see clearly) in conjunction with small-format visual explainers (e.g., fliers) that community members may take home and study later is recommended. Community members should have the opportunity to ask questions and receive full and honest answers. In carrying out community meetings, agents should be aware of group and power dynamics that may lead to some community members being reluctant to ask questions or participate in discussions. This emphasizes the importance of one-on-one as well as smaller group discussions.

Further, in line with voluntary, prior, and informed consent, household-level carbon projects need to ensure that consent is free from coercion or pressure. Local implementation partners and other field staff should be trained in the best practices of engaging with technology users and communities, and retraining should be provided periodically and/or whenever necessary, for instance, when field staff change or where practices or project circumstances change.

Additionally, visual aids should be employed to explain key concepts and the implications of project participation (see Annexes 1-4 for sample visual aids that can be used). These visual aids could take

the form of fliers (either to be reused by the local implementation agent or to be left with the customer), large-format visual explainers (such as posters), or could also be printed on the box of the product itself. Where possible, technology users should be able to keep at least one format of visual aids with simple explanations for their own ongoing reference. In addition, visual aids should be adapted to the relevant technology and, whenever appropriate, to different local contexts (for example, in Annex 1, the visual explainer focuses on climate change impacts in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the explainer should be adapted to impacts specific to a given region, to aid understanding).

3.3 What to communicate

To ensure full understanding from the side of the technology user and their communities, it is necessary to, at a minimum, communicate information on the following:

- a) Climate change, the concept of emissions, and their impact on human health
- b) Carbon markets and carbon credits
- c) The nature of the project
- d) The terms to which technology users and communities are agreeing
- e) The availability of alternatives

Points (a) and (b) are relevant to ensure technology users' and communities' understanding of the project and its context. To understand information on the project's more technical details, they must be informed of its background and must understand carbon markets and carbon credits. Points (c) - (e) are essential for ensuring an understanding of the technical and legal details of the project and for enabling technology users and communities to make informed decisions on their participation in it.

(a) Climate change, emissions and health impacts

When explaining the phenomenon of climate change, keep explanations simple and intuitive. It is best to relate to local experiences and to locally observable patterns and signs of climate change. An explanation should include:

1. A simple and short definition of climate change, in addition to a short explanation of its causes and effects, especially where related to local experiences. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, the effects of climate change that could be emphasized are, for example, changes in rainfall patterns, water scarcity, droughts, lower crop yields, land no longer being able to sustain communities' needs, and extreme heat.
2. A short explanation of emissions, including both references to the major sources of emissions from actors who are likely to buy credits (e.g., industrial

emissions, the aviation sector, etc.) and specific examples from the context of the project being implemented, using technology-relevant information and imagery.

Explanations on the effects on human health may be added to both points – for example, on the first point, an illustration focusing on the harmful impacts of heat waves on human health; and on the second point, examples of the harmful impacts of emissions on human health (e.g., respiratory problems). The relevance of including project-specific information on health effects is also considered in Section 3.3(c) below.

As with all explanations, prioritize simplicity, intuitiveness, and the use of visual aids over text. An example visual explainer on climate change is provided in Annex 1. Local implementation partners can also be trained on a standardized explanation² to be delivered together with the visual aids.

(b) Carbon projects and carbon credits

To ensure that technology users in household-level carbon projects have the necessary context to fully understand the implications of their participation in such a project, communications should include an explanation of carbon projects and carbon credits. This explanation should include, at a minimum:

1. A simple and short definition of both (Boxes 5 and 6)
2. An explanation that the credits are generated as a result of the technology user's (proper) use of the relevant technology and that the credits are originally the property of the technology user.
3. The fact that carbon credits have monetary value and that they can be bought by entities seeking to compensate for their own unavoidable emissions.

Example visual aids on carbon credits are provided in Annexes 2-4, and example explanations are provided in Boxes 5 and 6. Note that the explainers should be adapted to correspond to the distributed technology and to the setting.

² See, for example, Almás, O. and Merope-Syngé, S. (2023) Carbon Markets, Forests and Rights: An Introductory Series. Available at <https://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/default/files/documents/Carbon%20Markets%20Explainers%20second%20edition%20-%20SPREADS%20DIGITALv2.pdf> p. 7 for a short and simple explanation of climate change.

BOX 5. SAMPLE TEXT EXPLAINING CARBON PROJECTS AND CREDITS (EFFICIENT COOKSTOVES³):

Cooking with fire makes smoke and harmful gases that we can't see. These harmful gases are called emissions. Smoke and emissions are bad for your health and the planet. Smoke can make you cough, make you sick, and hurt your eyes. Too much smoke and emissions in the air also hurt nature and the climate.

A clean cookstove makes less smoke and emissions. This is better for your health and the planet. If you use a clean cookstove, less smoke and emissions get into the air than if you cook on your old stove. Because of this, we can make a carbon credit. A carbon credit shows how much emissions were avoided by cooking on your new stove. To make carbon credits, we need to set up a *carbon project*, give out clean cookstoves, make sure people use them, and check how much less emissions we have after using them.

After carbon credits are made, they can be sold to companies that want to help the environment. The money from selling carbon credits is used to pay for the cookstoves and the costs of the project.

BOX 6. SAMPLE TEXT EXPLAINING CARBON PROJECTS AND CREDITS (BIOGAS PROJECTS):

Cooking with fire makes smoke and harmful gases that we can't see. These harmful gases are called emissions. Smoke and emissions are bad for your health and the planet. Smoke can make you cough, make you sick, and hurt your eyes. Too much smoke and emissions in the air also hurt nature and the climate.

Biodigesters make fuel from leftover food and waste from plants and animals. You can use this fuel to cook. So, when you use a biodigester, you don't need to cook with wood or charcoal anymore. This means that there is less smoke and emissions, which makes you healthier. After cooking with the biogas, you get a leftover mixture called slurry. It is good for your crops, so you can use it as fertilizer. So, both you and your farm can get healthier.

If you use a biodigester and then cook with biofuel, less smoke and emissions get into the air than if you cook with wood or charcoal. Because of this, we can make a *carbon credit*. A carbon credit shows how much emissions were avoided by cooking with biofuel and not with wood or charcoal. To make carbon credits, we need to set up a *carbon project*, give out biodigesters, make sure people use them, and check how much less emissions we have after using them.

After carbon credits are made, they can be sold to companies that want to help the environment. The money from selling carbon credits is used to pay for the biodigesters and the costs of the project.

(c) The nature of the project

To further ensure that technology users in household energy carbon projects have the necessary context to fully understand the terms of their participation in such a project, communications should include an explanation of the project itself. Transparency on the nature of the project and its developers and/or implementing organizations can also ensure a perception of legitimacy from the technology user's side, building trust between them and the project developer and implementers.

Information on the nature of the project should include:

Where the project is implemented. To ensure the technology users' full understanding of the project scope, the project developer should be transparent about the geographical scope of the project in question.

The technology(ies) distributed. In addition to explaining the specific carbon project, carbon credits, and the relevant technology, stakeholders should also receive information on why this specific technology was chosen for distribution.

The organization(s) running the project. This should include a short introduction to the organization, its geographical scope of operation, mission, and experience with household technology solutions.

³ This text has been formulated to apply to projects distributing efficient cookstoves. Nonetheless, the text refers to 'clean cookstoves' since this term is likely to be more intuitive for technology users.

The organization's description should also provide a short overview of how carbon markets are engaged and what carbon credits are used for. In addition, the organization's character should be explained – for instance, whether it is a non-governmental organization or a for-profit company.

The project's timeline. Information should be provided on the project's timeline, as it is needed for stakeholders to fully understand the terms of using the provided or purchased technology and the scope and timeline of the project's benefit sharing arrangements. Stakeholders need to have a clear understanding of what is required of them and what benefits they accrue at what point along the project's timeline.

The source of emission reductions for the project. This information can be accompanied by visual explainers.

Cost of the relevant technology and financing. Project developers should inform technology users about the costs of the technology and how the project is financed.

The level of detail in the information provided may vary on a case-by-case basis. However, information should be in accordance with the overall principles in Section 2, and with voluntary, prior, and informed consent.

(d) The terms of the agreement

Project developers must obtain voluntary, prior, and informed consent from technology users before entering into agreements with them. An important step in obtaining this consent is addressing the information asymmetry between the project developer and the technology user. While project developers can be expected to have an in-depth understanding of how the carbon project works and the terms of contractual agreements entered into with technology users, for most households and communities the very concept of carbon credits is likely to be novel. Most will similarly not have the legal expertise required to understand complex contracts, and some may also have limited literacy. These factors can result in technology users not fully understanding the terms of the contracts they enter into with project developers.⁴

A socially responsible carbon project must ensure that safeguards are in place to protect technology users and ensure that they are fully informed before making any decisions on their participation. This includes informing them of all the terms of the agreement as well as any additional information required to fully understand those terms. For most projects, this will

⁴ See Clean Cooking Alliance: Delivering Responsible Carbon Finance, p. 27 at: https://cleancooking.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CCA_A-Call-to-Action_Delivering-Responsible-Carbon-Finance.pdf.

include, at a minimum, ensuring technology users understand the following:

- **Transfer of carbon rights.** Technology users need to be informed that they generate the carbon credits through their continued use of the product and that through the agreement, they transfer their rights to these credits to the project developer. They should also understand that the credits generated have monetary value. This ensures that they understand the implications of their decisions, and also that they can ask for fair compensation and/or benefit-sharing arrangements. As it is essential for informed consent that technology users understand the transfer of carbon rights, the clause detailing this in the terms of the agreement should be emphasized – for example, by including it in a prominent place in the contract, or by having local implementers explain it first.
- **Payment terms.** Project developers should inform technology users about any one-off or periodic payments they will be required to make, when such payments are due, how they are made, whether interest will be applied, and what happens in case they cannot continue to make payments.
- **Description of benefits provided.** Information must be provided on what technology users receive in return for their transfer of carbon rights. This may include:
 - o Fully or partially subsidized technology units (e.g., cookstoves, biodigesters), including information on the model provided and the subsidy amount.
 - o Fully or partially subsidized fuels, including information on the subsidy amount and how much fuel will be provided, how frequently, and for how long.
 - o The terms of any manufacturer's guarantee and the maintenance and technical services provided.
 - o Any entitlement to a share of carbon revenues or profits, how these will be calculated, and any conditions governing this right (e.g., relating to prices obtained for credits or use of cookstove).
 - o Community projects or funds. Where possible, estimations should be provided on how much funding will be made available and how decisions will be made on how to spend that funding.
- It is important that project developers ensure accurate and honest communication of benefits, avoiding promising benefits that cannot be guaranteed.
- **Obligations of the technology user.** All obligations assumed by the technology user, such as providing data on the use of the technology, must be clearly defined so that users understand what is expected of them, when, and for how long.

- **Risks of participation.** Technology users need to be informed of any risk pertaining to their participation in the project, including any legal liability they assume.
- **Transparency.** Project developers should inform technology users of information that will be provided to them on a periodic basis. For instance, where technology users are entitled to payments based on a share of revenues or profits, information should be provided periodically regarding revenues and profits earned.
- **Ongoing communication and complaints procedure.** Technology users should be informed on how they can get in touch with the project developer in case of any questions or issues. They should also be aware of the applicable complaints procedure or grievance mechanism and how to access this. Such a mechanism is beneficial for stakeholders as it allows them to raise complaints they may have and is also beneficial for the project developer in identifying (potential) problems and points of improvement in the project. The grievance mechanism can take various forms – for example, regular follow-ups with communities and technology users through local implementers or including a dedicated phone number on the product packaging.

(e) The availability of alternatives

Project developers should ensure technology users understand the possible alternatives to participating in the project. For instance, they may choose to:

- Forego the benefits offered (e.g. free/subsidized technology) and purchase the same or similar technology without participating in the project.
- Participate in a different project now or in the future.
- Organize the community or a group of communities with a view to developing their own carbon project.

While project developers are not expected to provide detailed information on each of these alternatives, they should ensure technology users have a reasonable understanding of the options available to them. This information should be provided in good faith, and project developers must avoid actively seeking to discourage technology users from considering alternatives.

area. Communication here should focus on the technology's benefits and drawbacks, the terms of the agreement, and consumer rights (see guidance in previous sections). Once an agreement has been reached and technology users sign agreements or consent forms, the technologies should be delivered immediately or with minimal delay.

In addition, communication should continue after an agreement is signed between the project developer, technology users, and/or communities. Ongoing interactions are necessary to ensure that users are satisfied with the relevant technology and to check if they are experiencing any issues or have questions about the project, the product, or any benefit-sharing arrangements that may be in place. In case ongoing participation benefits are offered to technology users, project developers and/or local implementation partners need to provide sufficient information about them.

Finally, it is essential to ensure that information provided at different times is consistent across the duration of the project.

BOX 7. EXAMPLE: LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS AS PROJECT IMPLEMENTERS

A carbon project located in Sub-Saharan Africa employs local community members to support the implementation of a clean cooking project on the ground. This is beneficial to the project developer as it ensures long-term community engagement through a local actor that is part of and trusted by the community. This helps ensure that the uptake of clean cooking technology goes smoothly, helps address technology user concerns, and ensures that the technologies are used, and used properly. For the community, it is also an additional local employment opportunity. The chosen community member serves as a point of contact between the project developer and technology users, providing training (and retraining, if necessary) to technology users, and monitors the uptake of the technology through visits that occur at least on a yearly basis.

3.4 When to communicate

Communication should begin well before distributing technologies in a given area. At this stage, the broader community—and in particular, community leaders (Box 7)—should be engaged to provide information on the general details of the project (context, benefits, risks) and seek feedback and guidance on how to roll the project out effectively in that area.

Where possible, communities and their leaders can also be involved in the project's developmental stage. They possess valuable knowledge about the local conditions and practices that enable better project design, which can help secure wider technological uptake and usage over the long term.

While it is important to begin this process early, project developers should be careful not to leave excessively long periods between initial communication and rollout, which can result in communities and leaders becoming unfamiliar with the project.

Individual prospective technology users could be engaged later once the project is rolled out in that





4. Verification

It is important that project developers have verification processes in place to ensure that the above guidelines have been implemented. An example process is provided in Box 8.

At a minimum, project developers should ensure:

- That technology users verify that the information contained in Section 3.3 of these guidelines has been explained to them. This may be done, for instance, through answering questions on an app or on paper. This should be verified by the technology user themselves and not by the implementer, for instance through answering questions on their own phone or initialing each question.
- That implementers leave hard copies of the contract and the materials explaining the technology and the project (including the visual aids) with the technology user and record photographic evidence of this. Photographic evidence should include a geolocation stamp.
- That a grievance mechanism is in place through which technology users can submit a grievance if any information has not been explained fully, if projects have failed to deliver on promises, or if the implementer engaged in undesirable conduct (for example, forceful sales practices, coercion, fraudulent representation of information).
- That staff and/or third-party implementers receive proper training on all aspects of these guidelines (see also Section 3.1 – The role of local implementers). Training should ensure consistency of understanding among implementers while also providing some

flexibility to adapt their approach to the needs of different stakeholders as long as the fundamentals of what is communicated remain consistent.

- That project developers undertake periodic spot checks to verify the quality of stakeholder engagement and the level of knowledge of staff and local implementers. When necessary, staff and third-party implementers should undergo continuous or refresher training.

In addition, **best practices** that project developers can implement include:

Undertaking verification with each technology user within a given time period of the agreement being signed. The verification should take place relatively soon after the agreement is signed (ideally, within two weeks) to ensure that the information received from the technology users is still fresh. This can take place in person or over the phone. The verification should seek to ascertain whether all the necessary information has been adequately explained to, and understood by, the technology user.

- Project developers may consider setting up additional infrastructure, such as a call center, to accommodate questions, queries, and potential complaints from technology users.

BOX 8. EXAMPLE: PROJECT DEVELOPER VERIFICATION PROCESS

When moving into a new area, a project developer first organizes a stakeholder meeting to introduce the project and then undertakes a three-stage customer verification. First, the market research team conducts detailed feasibility studies to identify areas that will most benefit from carbon subsidy. Next, field agents undertake door-to-door “prospecting” to find potential customers that meet certain carbon criteria. This data is validated by an independent team, before the field agent finalizes the sale and delivers the technology. Local agents explain the technology as well as the nature of the carbon project and the terms of the agreement to prospective end users. These agents go through multiple levels of training to ensure they are able to fully and competently communicate all relevant aspects of the project and the sale to technology users. Every customer home is visited by the project developer at least once in the sales process, and every customer signs a carbon waiver.

Finally, in the weeks following the sale, technology users receive a phone call from the project developer’s local call center, in which they are asked whether the agent explained how to use the stove, the terms of the warranty, and the transfer of carbon rights, as well as whether the agent lit the stove to ensure it was working. In the event that these calls find that one or more of these subjects were not fully explained, the commission earned by the agent in question will be reduced.

In addition to these follow-up calls, agents conduct quality assurance visits to a selection of households in the months following the same to check how they are using the stove and whether they fully understand the terms of their participation in the project.

4.1 Checklist

The following section includes a **checklist** that is intended as a tool for quickly assessing whether a project is implementing the good practices outlined in this guidance. It can be used both by project developers for self-assessment and by investors for assessing the practices employed by (potential) investees.

In addition, relevant questions may also be integrated into the verification procedures to assess the quality of implementation – for instance, questions under “What to communicate” can be used to verify whether technology users received all necessary information, and questions under “Principles – Respectful treatment” and “Principles – Iteration” can be used to assess the quality of local engagement, depending on the needs of the project.

THEME	QUESTIONS	YES	NO
WHAT TO COMMUNICATE			
Climate change	Are relevant stakeholders informed about climate change (in the context of [cookstove][biogas] carbon projects)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emissions	Are relevant stakeholders informed about emissions (in the context of [cookstove][biogas] carbon projects)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carbon markets	Are relevant stakeholders informed about carbon markets (in the context of [cookstove][biogas] carbon projects)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carbon credits	Are relevant stakeholders informed about carbon credits (in the context of [cookstove][biogas] projects)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are relevant stakeholders informed that technology users are the carbon right holders (in the context of [cookstove][biogas] carbon projects)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are relevant stakeholders informed that the carbon credits they generate have monetary value (that they can be sold in exchange for money)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nature of the project	Are relevant stakeholders informed of where the project is implemented?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are relevant stakeholders informed of the organizations developing and/or implementing the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are relevant stakeholders informed of the technology(ies) distributed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are relevant stakeholders informed of the project’s timeline, what is required of them and what benefits they accrue, and at what time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are relevant stakeholders informed of the source of emission reductions for the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are relevant stakeholders informed of the costs of the relevant technology, and of different financing options (if applicable)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Terms	Are there safeguards in place to ensure that users/communities are fully informed prior to making any decisions on their participation?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are users/communities informed of any risks involved in the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are users/communities fully informed of the terms of the benefits they are entitled to in return for their participation in the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are the legal details sufficiently explained (for example, if necessary, by reading out the contract or terms)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are there safeguards in place to ensure/test for user understanding of the legal details?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are users/communities informed that they are giving up their carbon rights?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Are there arrangements to ensure procedural rights (e.g., a complaints procedure) and user/ community understanding of them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are there arrangements in place to ensure good consumer service (warranty, service and maintenance, repairs, return of faulty product, etc.) and user/community understanding of them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are local implementation partners trained in how to communicate terms effectively, and how to ascertain user/community understanding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TO WHOM TO COMMUNICATE			
	Are all relevant stakeholders identified well in advance of the project’s rollout?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are communications adapted to the needs of each stakeholder group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TIMELY COMMUNICATIONS			
	Are technology users / the community afforded sufficient time to consider the information presented before taking any decisions regarding their participation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do communities / technology users have the opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	When communities / technology users have questions or voice concerns, are they provided with transparent and accurate answers in a timely manner?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are communications maintained after an agreement is signed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PRINCIPLES			
Simplicity	Are complex terms explained simply while ensuring accuracy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visual intuitiveness	Are visual aids employed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do the visual aids include as little text as possible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do the visual aids use culturally relevant symbols and visual representations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local awareness	Are there efforts made to adapt communications to local conditions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are communications founded in culturally appropriate language and symbols?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	In case of varying literacy levels, are measures in place to ensure understanding of all audiences?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consistency	Are communications consistent in their (visual) language and style?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adaptability	Are communications adapted to the recipient?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are communications adapted to the situation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Iteration	Are communications practices monitored, evaluated and updated regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respectful treatment	Does the project use honest sales approaches that accurately capture the performance and benefits of the technology offered without exaggeration?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are there safeguards against harmful implementation practices? Safeguards may include training for local implementation partners, in addition to procedural safeguards (for example, a complaints procedure).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are local implementation partners trained in the best practices of engaging with technology users / communities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Is iterative training and/or retraining provided to local implementers in case of insufficient implementation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Annex 1 – Climate change visual aid

WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?



Burning oil, gas, and charcoal releases harmful gases into the air.



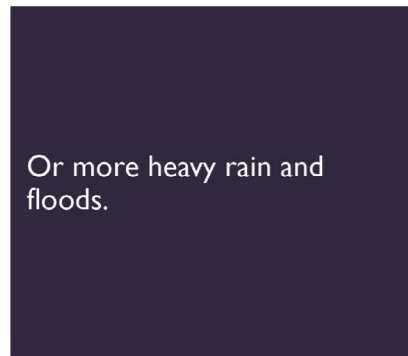
Cutting down forests too. Together these gases trap heat in the air.



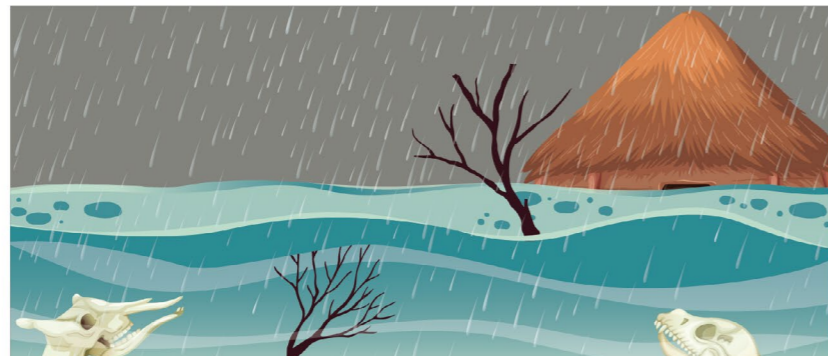
This causes the Earth to heat up and changes the balance of our climate.



This climate change leads to more extreme weather, such as droughts and extreme heat.



Or more heavy rain and floods.



To stop climate change, the world needs to release fewer gases into the air.

Annex 2 – Carbon markets visual aid: Urban cookstoves

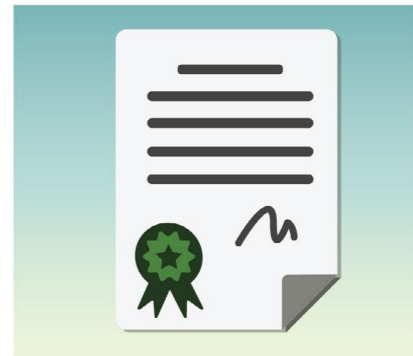
WHAT ARE CARBON CREDITS?



Cooking with wood or charcoal makes harmful gases. This harms the environment and people's health.



Clean cookstoves use less wood so there are fewer gases. This allows us to generate carbon credits.



A carbon credit is proof that fewer gases have been made by using the clean cookstove.

WHAT IS THE CARBON MARKET?



Many companies' activities make a lot of harmful gases. Some of these companies are taking steps to make fewer of these gases.



But they still have some left. To balance out these leftover gases, companies buy carbon credits.



We sell the carbon credits to these companies and use the money to pay for cookstoves.



Households like you get a cookstove from us in exchange for agreeing to join the project.

Annex 3 – Carbon markets visual aid: Rural biodigester

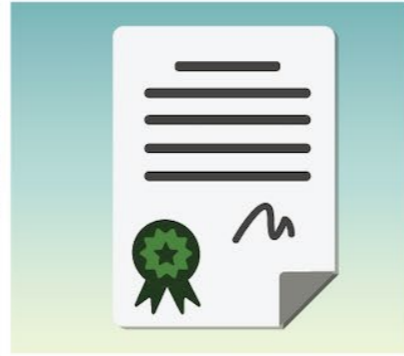
WHAT ARE CARBON CREDITS?



Animal manure makes harmful gases that harm the environment and people's health. So does using wood or charcoal for cooking and farm machinery.



Biodigesters turn farm waste into energy, so there are fewer gases from manure and less wood and charcoal use. This allows us to generate carbon credits.



A carbon credit is proof that fewer gases have been made by using the biodigester.

WHAT IS THE CARBON MARKET?



Many companies' activities make a lot of harmful gases. Some of these companies are taking steps to make fewer of these gases.



But they still have some left. To balance out these leftover gases, companies buy carbon credits.



We sell the carbon credits to these companies and use the money to pay for biodigestors.



Households like you get a biodigester from us in exchange for agreeing to join the project.

Annex 4 – Carbon markets visual aid: Rural cookstove

WHAT ARE CARBON CREDITS?



Cooking with wood or charcoal makes harmful gases. This harms the environment and people's health.



Clean cookstoves use less wood so there are fewer gases. This allows us to generate carbon credits.



A carbon credit is proof that fewer gases have been made by using the clean cookstove.

WHAT IS THE CARBON MARKET?



Many companies' activities make a lot of harmful gases. Some of these companies are taking steps to make fewer of these gases.



But they still have some left. To balance out these leftover gases, companies buy carbon credits.



We sell the carbon credits to these companies and use the money to pay for cookstoves.



Households like you get a cookstove from us in exchange for agreeing to join the project.

