Continuous Input Mechanism

1. Purpose of the Mechanism:

1.1. For the project to maintain a transparent channel of contact with local stakeholders throughout the crediting period, in addition to the design stage (via Local Stakeholder Consultation and Stakeholder Feedback Round) and monitoring plan.

1.2. So that unforseen issues that arise during the course of the project can be addressed early on in the crediting period, and stakeholders can suggest improvements or modifications, based on their direct experience of the project and understanding of local conditions.

1.3. To further increase the robustness of the standard through more active and continuous stakeholder involvement, thereby adding value to the existing system of stakeholder feedback and monitoring.

1.4. To increase mutual trust between the project owner and the local stakeholders, to the benefit of both parties.

2. Mandatory Continuous Input Mechanism:

Project Proponents (PP) must establish Methods 1-3 (below) of continuous input for each of their project activities, Method 4 (below) is optional and may be chosen in agreement with local stakeholders (as part of the LSC meeting). Project proponents must also demonstrate they regularly monitor and respond to the comments that are made through the each of the Methods for continuous input.

Methods for Continuous Input

1. *Continuous Input Process Book*
2. *Telephone access*
3. *Internet/email access*
4. *Nominated Independent Mediator*

Comments received through any of the Methods must be documented using the table template below. This table must be provided to the DOE at the time of verification and to the Gold Standard Secretariat at the time of request for issuance.

2.1 Table Template

Date	Comment	Action requested from project	Response from project	Person designated with responsibility by project	Issue resolved?
	Explanation of problem or comment.	*What would the stakeholder like to see change/stay the same.*	*Explanation from the project of what they will do in response to the comment. This may be an explanation as to why the project is unable to respond/does not see the problem as necessary to address.*	*Identification of who will take responsibility for responding AND monitoring issue.*	*This could be confirmation from the person who made the complaint, or the project.*

2.2 Continuous Input Process Book

A comment book should be made available on the project site or in the most appropriate, publicly accessible location (e.g. a local community centre, at the local council, a local library or school), so that local stakeholders can provide feedback on the project activity. The book is important to also allow for continuous inputs in regions with high literacy rates but which have minimal access to the internet. The location of the book must be explained and discussed at the LSC meeting, and then justified in the project documentation.

As a minimum, the book should be formatted to include the five sections in the Table Template under 2.1. If projects feel that additional columns to those in the Template are necessary then these can be included. The Table should be formatted to allow for stakeholders to make anonymous comments should they wish.

The project proponent should check the comments in the book on a regular basis, and record their responses. This may be recording changes that are made to the project, acknowledging problems and explaining their causes, or explaining why the comment cannot be addressed by the project, or is irrelevant. Even where the desired outcome of the stakeholder cannot be achieved, the project proponent should use their response to show that they are respectful of the views of stakeholders and suggest alternative solutions or compromises wherever possible.

Pros	Cons
- Simple to use – does not require access to technology or associated costs for stakeholders - Cheap, efficient to manage - Simple to explain to stakeholders	- Assumes literacy (they are still able to communicate through other input mechanisms) - Requires small geographical spread of stakeholders (or possibly more than one book) - Potential loss/theft of the book (ensure that a secure place is chosen and daily checks are carried out) - Could result in complaints from individuals, but little space for constructive discussions with wider community (encourage discussing these complaints in the local governance meetings – see section 3)

2.3 Telephone access

In regions where stakeholders may be spread over a large geographical area, telephone contact may be more practical than a physical book. The telephone contact details must be explained and discussed at the LSC meeting, and then justified in the project documentation.

The telephone number could be that of the project site office or another location. However, in countries where local or national calls, or calls to mobiles, have different pricing, the project proponent should try to offer the least expensive option and justify their choice. The contact details of the regional Gold Standard office must also be provided for stakeholders to contact. The project proponent should ensure that the phone is answered by someone (or has an answer phone message) in a language(s) that are appropriate to the stakeholders of the project.

Calls received should be logged and recorded in the same way as in the book, with the date, comment, action requested and project response recorded for each call. As with all of the methods, stakeholders should not be required to give their personal details when they wish to make a comment.

Pros	Cons
- Simple to use - Simple to explain to stakeholders - Inexpensive to run if the PP uses the same phone line as the project/office rather than setting up a separate phone line - Greater anonymity for stakeholders - Overcomes illiteracy issues - Better where stakeholders may be spread over a larger area or have geographical barriers to access the project site/book/mediator	- Incurs the cost of a phone call for the stakeholder - Provides fewer channels for discussion with wider community as complaints are individualized (encourage discussions on these also in the local governance meetings)

2.4 Internet access

In regions with widespread internet access, an email address or comments section on a website established by the PP could be the easiest way of receiving input from stakeholders. The email / website details must be explained and discussed at the LSC meeting, and then justified in the project documentation.

The email address of Gold Standard's regional manager should also be provided for stakeholders to contact. On a website, the project information and mechanism for providing comments should be presented in a straightforward manner, showing the same information as in the Table Template under 2.1. The information should be in the language(s) most appropriate for local stakeholders and it should allow for comments to be made anonymously.

Emails or website comments received should be logged and recorded in the same way as in the book, with the date, comment, action requested and project response recorded for each message. As with all of the methods, stakeholders should not be required to give their personal details when they wish to make a comment.

Pros	Cons
- Simple to use - Simple to explain to stakeholders - Useful where stakeholders are be spread over a larger area or have geographical barriers to access the project site/book/mediator - Managing an an email address or website section for comments is inexpensive for PP.	- Assumes literacy - Assumes internet connection, and access to the internet for all groups of stakeholders - May entail some costs for the PP to set up, if a website is used - Provides fewer channels for discussion with wider community as complaints are individualized (discuss in the local governance meetings) - Potential lower level of anonymity than telephone calls / comment book.

2.5 Nominated Independent Mediator (Optional)

The selection of a Nominated Independent Mediator (NIM) by the PP may be the best approach for projects in regions with low literacy rates and/or little access to telephone and internet connections. The mediator should be someone that local stakeholders can access easily, trust to represent their views, and who is in contact with the PP. The selected NIM should be discussed at the LSC meeting, and agreed with the local stakeholders.

Contacts between the mediator and the local stakeholders should be communicated to the PP, and recorded by the PP. This should include the date of contact, all of the issues that have been discussed, and any information or responses that were provided to the NIM to respond to stakeholders comments using the Table Template under 2.1. The NIM should be willing to be contacted by the DOE during verification and the Gold Standard Secretariat during registration or issuance reviews to confirm their role and the comments they have received.

Pros	**Cons**
- Simple to explain to stakeholders - Can work within (and uphold) local customs for managing disputes - Potentially provides a third party to mediate relationships - Overcomes literacy issues - Potentially allows for community engagement and discussion of issues	- The mediator may be biased towards/against the project and not give objective feedback (can be discussed in the local governance meetings and a request can be made to change the mediator if they are found to be prejudiced) - May not be approachable for stakeholders, or not to all groups (as above can be resolved in local governance meetings) - May require remuneration to take the role seriously

Example of stakeholder inputs (sample cases):

Date	Comment	Action requested from project	Response from project	Person designated with responsibility by project	Issue resolved?
2 Feb 2011	*The construction vehicles that drive to the site make lots of noise, and beep their horns to access the site.*	*Please make less noise on the roads around the site and at the site entrance, as there are houses nearby.*	*Drivers have been asked to be respectful of the neighbours as they drive near the site, and turn off their engines when they are waiting to enter. They have also been asked to telephone the site office to gain entry to the site, instead of beeping their horns.* *March 2011.*	*Mr. Jones, Head of Site Transport*	*Internal monitoring suggests that drivers now call instead of using their horns to gain entry to the site. Mr Jones has spoken to project neighbours, and they agree that the noise level from the site has reduced. April 2011.*

3 Feb 2011	*There is now less land to graze our cattle because the area around the turbines has a fence.*	*Access to more land for grazing the animals.*	*For safety reasons, some areas have to be restricted so that there are no accidents. However, we will hold a meeting with local people to explain which areas are dangerous and therefore restricted, but use a map and discuss with local people to see if there are other areas of the site that can be used for grazing animals. March 2011.*	*Ms. Smith, Site Manager.*	*Project community meeting held 30th March 2011. Map produced and copies distributed to local people to indicate which areas are accessible. Explained the dangers of high voltages for the animals to show why access to some land had been restricted. Community members agreed, but have asked for an animal passage to be made to access the western area of the site. This will be done with new fencing in June 2011.*

3. Local Stakeholder Consultation Meeting

At the Local Stakeholder Consultation Meeting, the methods of input should be explained and discussed to ensure that local stakeholders agree that the details of the selected methods will be the most appropriate e.g. the location of the book is accessible and secure, local stakeholders agree that the mediator is someone that they can approach and trust to represent their comments to the project without prejudice, the website is in appropriate language(s) and will be easy for local stakeholders to use etc.

The Local Stakeholder Consultation Report should document any comments, criticisms or improvements that were made to the Continuous Input Mechanisms discussed at the LSC meeting.

Recommended Best Practice for Continuous Input from Stakeholders (local governance meetings)

The Gold Standard Foundation recommends that, where practical, project proponents have regular meetings to invite local stakeholders to give their feedback on the project, ensure that the project goals are understood and investigate if there are any improvements that could be made. These could be in the form of:

- Annual project open days to allow local stakeholders to visit the site and see the project
- A meeting (e.g. coincide with training and repairs, or at the same time as DOE verification site visits) that included general information about the project, education about climate change and carbon offsetting, etc.

These regular meetings can be very useful for projects as they allow project proponents to hear the views of local stakeholders (including employees) and can improve relations between the project and local community as they allow for greater communication and understanding.

If regular meetings are planned, they should be mentioned at the Local Stakeholder Consultation and Feedback Round and advertised appropriately.

4. Guidelines for DOEs

The continuous input mechanism log (the Template Table under 2.1) is part of the project documentation that the DOE must use to audit the project.

The DOE should check:

- That the project proponents have responded in a reasonable manner to comments that have been raised
- That the responses are adequate, timely and appropriate for addressing the problem or comment raised.
- That any issues the DOE considers serious are taken up as FAR for the project as part of the validation or verification to ensure further monitoring of the issue.

The DOE should make use of the comments in discussions with local stakeholders as part of site visits. The comments can provide useful starting points for conversations with local stakeholders. If there are comments from a stakeholder that has chosen not to remain anonymous, the DOE can request to speak to this individual if they think an issue is of serious concern for the project. Where the DOE has doubts about the activities of the project, or the comments raised relate to a serious problem, the DOE should:

- Confirm that the responses from the project recorded in the table have taken place
- Confirm that stakeholders accept the results.
- Consider using a FAR to ensure further monitoring of the issue.

If a project informs the DOE that no comments have been made through the continuous input mechanisms, the DOE should record this information as part of their report. When engaging with local stakeholders they should inquire whether stakeholders are aware of the continuous input mechanisms, whether there are any problems, concerns or comments about the project, and encourage the stakeholders and the project proponent to make use of the continuous input mechanisms.

5. Changes in project documentation:

LSC Report:

Section B.1.i.

Add to agenda:
- Discussion of continuous input mechanism selection

Section C.3.i and ii.

Add to minutes:
- Outcomes of discussion of continuous input mechanism selection, agreement or modifications suggested by local stakeholders

Section E
New Section E.2

Include the following table:

	Method Chosen (include all known details e.g. location of book, phone number, identity of mediator)	Justification
Continuous Input Process Book		
Telephone access		
Internet/email access		
Nominated Independent Mediator (optional)		

Project Passport:

Section E.3

Include the following table:

	Method Chosen (include all known details e.g. location of book, phone number, identity of mediator)	Justification
Continuous Input Process Book		
Telephone access		
Internet/email access		
Nominated Independent Mediator (optional)		

Sustainability Monitoring Plan

All issues identified through any of the Methods shall be monitored for the rest of the crediting period. The identified issue and the corresponding mitigation measure should be added to a revised Project Passport.