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PARTICIPATORY PLANNING: FOSTERING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study describes participatory approaches to foster stakeholder engagement in sustainable management and land-use planning and decision making. These concepts are examined with a view of improving planning efficiency for sustainability, and factors explored that need to be considered in involving land users / communities in participatory planning and decision making. A case study was conducted to explore such approaches in Iceland and Ghana with a view on developing recommendations for implementing participatory planning and decision making as a tool to improve sustainable use of natural resources while maximizing benefits to end users and their level of involvement. Key informants selected for the study were involved in management, conservation and restoration of natural resources. They represented community or organizations with experience in farming and land management, science and provision of advisory services in participatory planning / land use, property planning and sustainable management. A semi-structured interview was used with a checklist guided by a questionnaire to collect the primary data. The results of participatory planning had been positive in most cases and those interviewed saw great value in participatory planning for addressing complex issues facing local communities, and for reaching more sustainable livelihoods in the long run, and

improving the land for future generations. This question highlights the importance and implication why authorities should use participatory approaches at all. It has to be explained to farmers and landowners why a participating planning process is taking place and why they should work towards improving their livelihoods. If it is clear to all participants why they should participate in the process, then it is more likely that the participatory planning will create a positive outcome.

Key words: participatory planning; community involvement; sustainable land use approaches; planning; participatory; land-use planning; participatory property planning; physical property planning