

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL FOCUS

Tailored Course under the DFC Scholarship Programme



Dates

The 3-week the learning programme will take place in Denmark **12–30 October 2026**. Online activities will take place in the weeks before/after the course itself.

Venue

Sankt Helene conference facility, north of Copenhagen. It is a retreat centre with on-site catering and perfect meeting facilities - tucked away among North Zealand's beaches, woodlands and fjords.

Target Group

The target group for this learning programme includes policy- and decision-makers, as well as technical staff from government institutions, civil society organisations, and the private sector engaged in environmental governance, resource management, and related decision-making at local, regional, and national levels. This course is designed to serve professionals who are 1) managing or staffing projects

with an environmental focus/impact and 2) seeking to learn how to better inform people about such projects and potentially involve them in their planning/development.

This learning programme can accommodate up to 30 participants. Participants must be affiliated to a Danish-supported project or programme. As a minimum, participants must hold a bachelor's degree in a relevant education and have relevant work experience. It is essential that the participants have a strong command of English. Teaching and group work will be conducted in English, and all participants will be required to give verbal presentations in front of the group. The stay in Denmark involves many site visits and longer walks and it is necessary for the participants to be in good physical shape.

Introduction

Public engagement in decisions that impact/modify/develop the natural environment is regarded as an integral component of sound process. It can serve several specific purposes: to inform people about upcoming projects; to surface concerns about local impacts and disruptions; to identify previously unrecognized alternatives and/or consequences; to improve co-ordination with other jurisdictions, agencies and landowners; and to incorporate local/indigenous knowledge. Collectively, accomplishing these goals means that decisions—even those that have unavoidable negative impacts—have greater social legitimacy and thereby strengthen the legitimacy of the organization undertaking them.

Every project that affects the environment must address a unique constellation of technical considerations: Hydrology, sensitive species, geo-technical, economic, etc. By the same token public participation and engagement must address a unique constellation of factors: Legal, institutional and cultural context; Policy requirements, social structure and history of controversy; Inclusion of marginalized groups, scientific, local and indigenous knowledge; etc. Therefore, effective public participation cannot be a one-size-fits-all endeavour. Each engagement strategy must be custom tailored to the particulars of the case at hand.

Learning Objectives

The course's overall objective is to strengthen the capacity of practitioners and policymakers to design and implement inclusive, transparent, and accountable processes for public participation and engagement in environmentally related decision-making. This objective will be met by: 1) familiarization with key concepts, methods, and tools for public participation and engagement; 2) developing the course participants' capacity to assess the cultural and institutional context in which they work so as to be better able to design/implement custom-tailored public participation activities; and 3) creating a community of practice among the course participants, so they can be a mutually supportive social group both during and after the on-site portion of the course.

Tentative Programme	
Pre-Course Module August-September	Pre-Course Webinars, Self-paced Work and Coaching Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Case/Action Plan selection and development • Assessment of cultural and institutional context • Interviews of key parties in Learning Case and Action Plan • Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) on-line training
Main Course	Three weeks, on-site in Denmark 12-30 October 2026, retreat at Sankt Helene
Week 1 Day 1	Introduction to Course Content and Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation to instructors, participants, and course design • Participant introductions and Action Plan overviews

Day 2	Public Participation and Engagement in Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Importance of institutional and cultural context Introduction of the “IAP2 Spectrum” Participants own cases and Action Plan briefings
Day 3	Ethics and Values of Public Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying IAP2 Values and Ethics to institutional and cultural context. Case study: El Yunque National Forest in Puerto Rico. Action Plan briefings
Day 4	Why and How to Keep Stakeholders and Citizens Informed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IAP2 Spectrum Level 1—Inform: Purpose, theory, tools and practice Communication – strategies, skills and practice. Action Plan briefings
Day 5	Why and How to Consult Influential Stakeholders and Affected Citizens? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IAP2 Spectrum Level 2—Consult: Purpose, theory, tools and practice Case Study: Forestry in Cambodia. Apply Spectrum Level 2 to Action Plans
Weekend	Off - Time of your own – walk along the coast, visit Copenhagen or...? 😊😊😊
Week 2 Day 1	Why and How to Involve Stakeholders and Citizens? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IAP2 Spectrum Level 3—Involve: Purpose, theory, tools and practice Case study: Geothermal energy development in Kenya Apply Spectrum Level 3 to Action Plans
Day 2	Why and How to Engage Stakeholders and Citizens? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IAP2 Spectrum Level 4—Collaborate: Purpose, theory, tools and practice Exposure case study “CONSUS” collaboration project: Public Engagement in water and waste management in Tshwane, South Africa Apply Level 4 to Action Plans
Day 3	Stakeholder Analysis – Methods and Tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue/stakeholder mapping SWOT Analysis Apply to Action Plans Field Trip and Exposure – National Park Establishment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How we establish new National Parks in Denmark, North Zealand case? Issue/stakeholder mapping and SWOT Analysis in practice
Day 4	Field Trip and Exposure – How the Public Participates in Denmark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orientation to Danish public participation cases (prepare for field trip) Water and wetland management, lake restoration case, North Zealand Sustainable rural/urban planning collaboration, Central Zealand Afforestation, nature restoration and rewilding, West Zealand
Day 5	Field Trip and Exposure – Green Energy Transition – Bottom-Up Approach! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field trip to “the Green Energy Island” of Samsø (ferry from Kalundborg) Wind Turbines in the landscape, environmental conflict management Visit Samsø Municipality, land-use planning and public engagement in practice Visit at Samsø Energy Academy, community collaboration – bottom-up in practice <p>Samsø Energy Academy is a world-renowned institution and a global pioneer in community-led renewable energy transitions. In 2021 Samsø Energy Academy received the UN Global Climate Action Award</p>
Weekend	Off - Time of your own – visit Copenhagen, shopping, hiking, touring or...? 😊😊😊
Week 3 Day 1	Collaborative Learning/Adaptive Co-management - Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose, theory and principles Case study: Monroe Mountain Working Group, Utah, USA Work and coaching on Action Plans
Day 2	Collaborative Learning/Adaptive Co-management – Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methods, tools and practice Apply to Action Plans—transform towards implementation

Day 3	Facilitation Skills and Conflict Management Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation and meeting management—exercises and lecture • Environmental conflict management fundamentals 1—exercises/lecture
Day 4	Environmental Conflict Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental conflict management fundamentals 2—exercises/lecture • Action Plans—implementation plans, own role, power and mandate
Day 5	Course Summary, Synthesis and Wrap Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essence and take-home-conclusions —lecture and reflection exercises • Wrap up, orientation to post course activities, evaluation and adjourn • Social Evening
Post Course Module Nov-December	Post Course Application - Supported by Webinars and Group-coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home organization debrief of the course • Implementation of Public Participation Action Plan • Post-project partner and community debrief • Passing on acquired knowledge/skills • Participation in final follow-up evaluation

Learning Approach and Action Plan Development

This programme will involve three phases. During the pre-work, the participants will identify an initiative/project in their professional context in which public participation might be desirable and feasible (referred to as their Learning Case below.) Participants will be coached to preliminary assess 1) any legal/regulatory and cultural requirements that any public participation strategy must comply with and 2) the issues and parties that need to be considered in their Action Plan. The on-site course will build a practical understanding of techniques and approaches to public participation, using the participants' Learning Cases as the focal points for discussion and skill-building. The fundamental task of the course is for each participant to develop an Action Plan that responds to the features of their Learning Case. The post-course portion of the programme will be the participants' field application of the Action Plans that they developed in coursework.

The course content will be tied closely to the materials produced by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). As the broadest and most well-established professional association of public participation practitioners, IAP2 develops both training materials and publications with the specific intention that they be globally applicable. Relying on IAP2 as an instructional cornerstone will aid the participants' ability to organize their cases and explain their design choices, using some of the most well-established terminology and frameworks in the profession.

The course content and design will be finalized once the participants have been selected, and their collective interests are known. If a large portion of the participants are interested in a particular area—such as water, or ecological restoration, or protected areas establishment/management, the course illustrations and excursions will be designed to speak to that shared interest, to the extent feasible.

Creating a Fruitful Learning Environment – Including Optional Social Events

This course will employ a retreat-style format to create an immersive learning experience with time and space for informal social and course-related interactions among the participants and the teaching team. Through (optional) inspirational evening/weekend activities we aim to facilitate social bonding, networking, communication and peer-to-peer learning among the participants, during and after the course. The lead teachers will stay at the venue with the participants throughout the course and will work with the participants to develop a balanced mix of meaningful (optional) social events, which could include small hikes, walk-and-talks; focused course-related discussions on the day's content, or invited "special guests" from the teachers' networks to discuss topical issues. An overall framing of the evening sessions could be: "How to prepare for real life challenges of public participation and engagement?"

including topics like: Human rights and fairness? Transparency and misuse of power? Corruption and nepotism? Trust and distrust dynamics? Prevention of conflict - early warning, mitigation and management? or “Not in My Back Yard” (NIMBY) dynamics?

These are preliminary ideas and possible initiatives that will be adapted to the actual group’s energy, dynamics, needs and interests. The deeper purpose is to build a strong, socially cohesive and well-functioning group of engaged learners – a learning community of practice able to bond across education, discipline, nationality, culture, age and gender.

Instructional Team



Jens Emborg, Ph.D., MMCR, Course organizer and Lead Instructor
Dr. Emborg is Associate Professor at University of Copenhagen where he established the field of *Environmental Conflict Management*. He is currently Head of Studies at the *Forest and Nature Management* programme. He has a Professional *Master of Mediation and Conflict Resolution* from University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Law. He has ongoing collaborations with universities in East/West Africa, including Univ. of Nairobi, where he is Affiliated Professor. In 2009, he teamed up with Prof. Wangari Maathai, contributing to the establishment of *The Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies*.



Steve Daniels, Ph.D., Lead Instructor

Steve Daniels is an independent process designer and facilitator working in natural resource/environmental public participation, having retired from a career as a faculty member at Utah State University and Oregon State University. Much of Dr. Daniels’ professional interests focus on community linkages to natural resources and in collaborative public participation in natural resource management. He has published over 60 scholarly articles, chapters or books. In addition to being a faculty member, he has maintained a private practice in process design and facilitation of environmental public participation processes, designing over 20 larger, long-term public participation projects throughout the United States.



Patience Mguni, Ph.D., Instructor

Patience is an urban planner specializing in environmental governance in Southern and East African cities with a focus on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) as an urban climate resilience response. She is an Assistant Professor in the Geography Department at University of Copenhagen with over 12 years’ experience with research-based teaching in water and environmental governance in Master’s and PhD-level courses. She also has over 14 years’ experience in participatory design, implementation and coordination of action research DFC-funded projects in Africa. In addition to NbS, her research focusses on fostering inclusive and just urban development in postcolonial and post-apartheid cities through a critical understanding of the lived realities of human-nature-infrastructure relations in marginalized communities.



Kathy Berger, M.Sc., Instructor

Kathy is a PhD student at Aarhus University working on how to strengthen engagement and learning for youth and nature in urban settings. By training, Kathy is a human geographer with a special interest in development studies and collaborative learning approaches. Her experience in stakeholder process management, youth engagement, and facilitation spans over two years of PhD research, as well as previous roles as strategic coordinator for the European funding programme “Driving Urban Transitions” and as junior researcher at the Austrian Institute of Technology’s Department of Innovation Policy and Transformation.



Jens Bjerregaard Christensen, Ph.D., Exposure & Excursion Organizer

Jens Bjerregaard Christensen has worked for more than 40 years in the Ministry of the Environment in Denmark, including seven years as the Deputy Director General in the Forest and Nature Agency. He concluded his career as the Regional Director for Nature Agency, North Zealand. He knows the details of public policy in the environmental sector from top to bottom. He has throughout his career been involved in and pushed to develop better practice of Public Participation and Engagement in environmental public policy and natural resource management in Denmark. The exposure and excursions component in the programme will benefit hugely from his experience and extensive connections. Jens and his network will expose and showcase “How we do public involvement in Denmark” and give insights in the real-life

challenges of engaging stakeholders and the civil society in the green transition, biodiversity protection and public policy formation in practice.

What is Danida Fellowship Centre?

Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC) manages and implements the DFC Scholarship Programme, which provides learning opportunities in support of capacity building in Danish-supported development programmes and projects worldwide. DFC is responsible for the educational, administrative and logistical aspects of the learning programmes in Denmark, regionally and online. For more information, please refer to <https://dfcentre.com/>

How to Apply?

Please note that it is not possible to apply directly to DFC for this programme. Applications must be submitted through our [online application system](#). Once registered in the online system, please select the Programme: **Public Participation and Engagement – Environmental Focus**. Following the submission of your application, it will be reviewed and endorsed, if found relevant, by a Sector Counsellor or the respective Danish Embassy or Danish NGO. The final selection of candidates for the learning programme will be carried out by DFC in collaboration with the instructional leads.