



**Awakening Participation
Guide for Effective Public Hearing Process
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The manual was brought out under the BCF Fellowship for Corporate Partnerships. The study was undertaken by H.C Sharatchandra, an MSC in Agriculture from Bangalore University. Mr. Sharatchandra has over 25 years of experience as a researcher, teacher, administrator and consultant.

Public participation in many areas has been accepted as a right in many developed nations the world over. Experiences worldwide indicate that public participation improves the quality of decision-making in a number of ways. It promotes clarity, stability and fairness in laws and institutions and advances a culture of openness and shared responsibilities among different sections of the society. The manual in a nutshell gives an overview of the theory and current practices of the public hearing process with special emphasis on the Indian scenario.

The last three-four decades have brought two major changes in the legal system of almost all the nations of the world. Human rights and environment have been accepted as a fundamental social value. The 1972 Stockholm conference accepted 'right' of environment and was adopted as the first principle in its declaration. The Rio declaration of 1992 has also given emphasis to the issue of public participation. All these treaties have led to a growing emphasis on the involvement of stakeholders at all stages of public administration. This study explores the need for effective public hearing process and the commitment and understanding needed by various stakeholders in this regard.

The manual is developed as a guide at increasing the level of understanding the philosophy and the process among enforcement agencies, members of the public hearing panel, NGOs, industrial representatives and other concerned stakeholders to make the public hearing process effective. The document traces the historical evolution of public participation, the philosophy behind it and the various types of participation and what public participation can achieve. The report also underlines the benefits of public participation to the governments, the industry and the citizens.

The study basically underlines the fact that the value and effectiveness of public participation lies in the process and stresses the importance and gives guidelines regarding developing of information and communication guidelines in order to establish clear and uniform procedures for requesting, receiving, processing and disseminating information.

One of the chapters of the study is dedicated to the Indian scenario which brings out the fact that the system is still in its infancy in the country. The study focuses on the environmental public hearing process and the various activities that come under its purview. After a factual analysis of the policy, it points out to the various limitations of the public hearing process and comments on the loopholes. The manual concludes with a chapter on suggestions to the various stakeholders like the

implementing authorities, the government, the industry, the NGOs and citizens on the issues they need to address and the steps they need to take to make public hearing more effective.