



Sida, April 2010

Getting it together

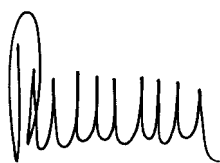
Strengthening transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination with communication methods

Introduction

Evidence-based experience shows that actual change is not possible without appropriate and targeted communication. The 2008 Accra Agenda of Action highlights that aid and development effectiveness, which is a prerequisite for better results for people living in poverty, require that partner countries are characterized by strong domestic accountability, transparency, ownership and citizen participation without discrimination.

This Guidance Note provides recommendations on when and how communication can be used as a means to promote enhanced accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination, and thereby contributes to genuine domestic ownership and change. The recommendations and guidance are geared towards instances when programme-based approaches are used as an aid modality, but can also be applied in project-based approaches and in the overall development dialogue with partner countries and donors, and with actors in the civil society.

We hope that the Note will encourage discussion and reflection on how domestic ownership and accountability can be promoted and supported in an effective way. We hope that it will also provide “food for thought” on how communication methods can be used for stimulating accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination. Your feedback on the content and recommendations is highly welcomed.



Per Lundell

*Director
Department for Methodologies and Effectiveness*

Abbreviations

CCA	Common Country Assessment
CSO	Civil Society Organization
IBP	International Budget Partnership
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD/DAC	The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PBA	Programme-Based Approaches
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PETS	Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys
PFM	Public Financial Management
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	The World Bank

Recommendations

When you want to support a cooperation partner to stimulate broad ownership and dialogue on the development in a country:

- promote communication methods to realise transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination
- encourage a result-oriented view of communication
- emphasize the analysis of communication capacities and needs
- support transparent information and communication systems
- integrate communication with the core work processes
- couple support to a public body with support to the citizenry and the media



The content is relevant for the Sida cooperation in all partner countries and regions.

Sida's Agency Objectives: This is an instrument to fulfil Agency Objective 2: Effective strategies, Agency Objective 4: Efficient organisation and contributes to Agency Objective 3: Proactive Dialogue.

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1. Getting it together

– why, what & for whom

This Guidance Note suggests concrete ways to enable the people in a country to influence the work of government and public agencies - and in that way ensure more sustainable, substantive and democratic development results. Sida teams and joint donors will find suggestions of key issues to raise in the dialogue with partners as well as in the strategic planning.

International development cooperation is dominated by efforts to increase the efficient use of resources – how development work can be better organised, have greater impact and increasingly shaped by sustainability and the needs of the beneficiaries instead of the needs of donors. Experience from years of work to reduce poverty and support sustainable development was conceptualised in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) which is built around five core principles: Ownership, Alignment, Harmonisation, Managing for Development Results and Mutual Accountability.

All five principles address democratic values, processes and institutions. *Ownership, alignment and harmonisation* focus primarily on respecting the leadership and strategies of the partner country, recognising and using the democratic processes and institutions of the partner country and highlighting the preconditions for the country to democratically lead and drive the development agenda. *Managing for development results* aims to shift the focus from inputs and activities – with the attendant risk of donor micro-management – to results. The final principle, *mutual accountability* implies making not only the partner countries, but also donors, responsible for results.

The 2008 Accra Agenda for Action (Accra Agenda) underscores these five core principles and broadens them to create a more inclusive aid effectiveness agenda: Human rights, gender equality and environment are highlighted, as is a broadened definition of development programme ownership to include non-government actors. The Accra Agenda puts further emphasis on domestic accountability and citizens' participation, underscoring the vital roles to be played by media, local and global civil society organisations (CSOs), parliaments, local governments and the private sector.

From the cooperation strategy all the way through the work cycle

While both the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action point to the need for better and increased use of communication to meet desired outcomes, it has become increasingly apparent that good communication is an inextricable component of good development practice. This Note demonstrates how effective communication meth-

ods can be used by partners to increase accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination, thereby contributing to broadened ownership and domestic accountability.

Sustained democratic dialogue within the society on development issues can not happen without taking advantage of relevant communication methods. The point of departure of this Note is to propose how a “public administration” supported by Sida and joint donors should provide information to citizens and their representatives (such as media and CSOs), and what kind of initiatives the administration should aim at to create conditions for public participation, interaction and collaboration. The term “public administration” is used representing a multitude of possible forms of public bodies responsible for providing services. The institution may for example be national or decentralized, a fund or a ministry, but is in any case established by some kind of mandate.

The advice here relates in particular to cases in which programme-based approaches (PBAs) are used – Sida’s preferred approach - but it is relevant for other forms of development cooperation as well.

The Guidance Note starts by defining communication as both a concept and method. It recognises different types of working methods such as those with communication elements that are process-driven and participatory, as well as those that are about distributing information. It identifies possible entry points and opportunities for using communication to realise Sida’s aims: that is, supporting the efforts of people living in poverty to improve their lives. It further provides a menu of key issues for planning, review, assessment and follow-up at different levels and in different areas, highlighting the roles of civil society and the media.

The direction provided here combines different policy and practice perspectives with the purpose of guiding Sida staff in supporting partners to get it together with citizens – in other words, to encourage and assist Sida teams to take advantage of communication as a means for increasing accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination in (1) development cooperation strategy work (2) at all stages of the contribution cycle and (3) in dialogue with partners at all levels.

For further understanding of PBAs, see: Guidance on Programme Based Approaches (Sida’s Department for Methodologies and Aid-Effectiveness, 2008).

There can be no democratic participation in decision-making without transparency and sharing information. Secretive government is nearly always inefficient in that the free flow of information is essential if problems are to be identified and resolved. Furthermore, a secretive governing culture fosters suspicion and encourages rumours and conspiracy theories. In such a culture, the public is likely to treat all government information with scepticism.”

Right to Information – Practical Guidance. UNDP, 2004.

2. Communication – what does it mean?

The process of effective communication has both technical and political aspects to it. On one level it is about ensuring availability and access to information. On another level it is about ensuring the citizens' right to participate and to have a voice in the development of society. A public body in a democracy has the responsibility to secure both levels, and both are needed for reaching sustainable results.



Human interaction is impossible without communication. This Guidance Note is based on communication for development being “a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It seeks change at different levels, including through listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change.” (The World Congress on Communication for Development, 2007).¹

Communication in the context of development cooperation has for decades been used to support development initiatives for example in the areas of health, nutrition and agriculture. The main approach has long been a defined message going from a sender to a receiver – “Who says what through which channel to whom with what effect?”. This top-down perspective with limited results has been complemented by participatory approaches where the views and values of the “receivers” are driving forces.

We are in a particularly rich time in history because of the widespread ease of access to technologies for communication – as well as a much better understanding of what facilitates effective traditional communication.

¹ This definition of communication for development builds upon extensive experience and research. Annex 1 and 2 give a deeper understanding of communication methods in partners' work.

Communication methods are often used with various terms – such as campaigning, advocacy, outreach activities, access to information, public education, media relations, press services, media coverage, etc.

By channelling human interaction, communication serves as the nerve-system of a society. Sida and our partners today use various communication approaches as reforms are unlikely to succeed without interaction with intended beneficiaries and potential adversaries. Nevertheless, the systems, channels and methods are rarely cared for in a strategic or result-oriented way. The mechanisms for openness, collaboration and complaints are too often weak.

Development obstacles and inefficient management commonly result from choosing communication methods unwisely or not sufficiently assessing key situations.

Communication is central to the process through which citizens hold governments accountable and responsive to public demands. Likewise, the media and CSOs play a key role in the promotion of an informed citizenry by providing platforms for dialogue and debate. Informal and everyday means for communicating also play a vital role. The Accra Agenda emphasises the importance of accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination as these principles are preconditions for broadening ownership. The principles also form the basis of the rights-based perspective on development cooperation:

Transparency

Access to and availability of public information and the openness of information exchanges between governments and the people. Representatives and intermediaries such as media, ombudsmen and CSOs play crucial roles.

Accountability

The existence and effective functioning of processes by which individuals, civil society groups, the media and the courts can hold officials and institutions responsible for their performance and use of public resources.

Participation

Where men and women, girls and boys, are being consulted or asked to collaborate, ensuring that they have voice and influence in decision-making processes, political life and matters of common interest.

Non-discrimination

Taking steps to ensure that no individuals or groups are given preference or denied opportunities based on their gender, sexual, linguistic, racial, ethnic, or religious background or beliefs.

COMMUNICATION FOR REFORMING UKRAINE'S FOREST SECTOR

61,000 school children, teachers, forest industry workers, politicians, ministers and even the President planted almost 11.8 million tree seedlings. This massive campaign, covered by some 1000 journalists, was part of a reform programme addressing administrative structures: The "Ukraine Forest Management Programme" supported by Sida, aimed to strengthen participatory, democratic processes.

The forest sector started off from a top-down system for internal communication and

had practically no external communication activities. One of the major problems affecting the forest sector was the lack of information that both the public and non-expert decision-makers could understand. In parallel with the external campaigning, an internal communication system and dialogue, as a planning tool, were introduced based on discussions at all levels of the administration, while simultaneously empowering the regional communication staff.

3. How: basic principles for integrating communication

National dialogue and broadened ownership should be promoted by:

- engaging with partners systematically
- using existing processes
- integrating assessments of communication methods
- analysing the communication flows
- focusing communication activities on results
- addressing reasons for lack of motivation
- planning for sensitising activities

Engage with partners systematically

Use formal and informal dialogue occasions as well as sensitising activities (p. 15) to promote and encourage citizens' influence and understanding of the development agenda. The relative strength of donors and partners involved affect the communication; consensus-building, shared understanding and dialogue tend to lead to deeper, more sustainable change than imposing conditionalities.

Use existing processes and mechanisms for dialogue and consensus-building

Using existing processes and mechanisms of the partner organisation is essential, hence you need to coordinate the dialogue with the partner's working cycle and then identify additional opportunities. In the case of programme-based approaches, the form of cooperation and the dialogue occasions are most often stipulated in documents such as a Code of Conduct or Memorandum of Understanding.

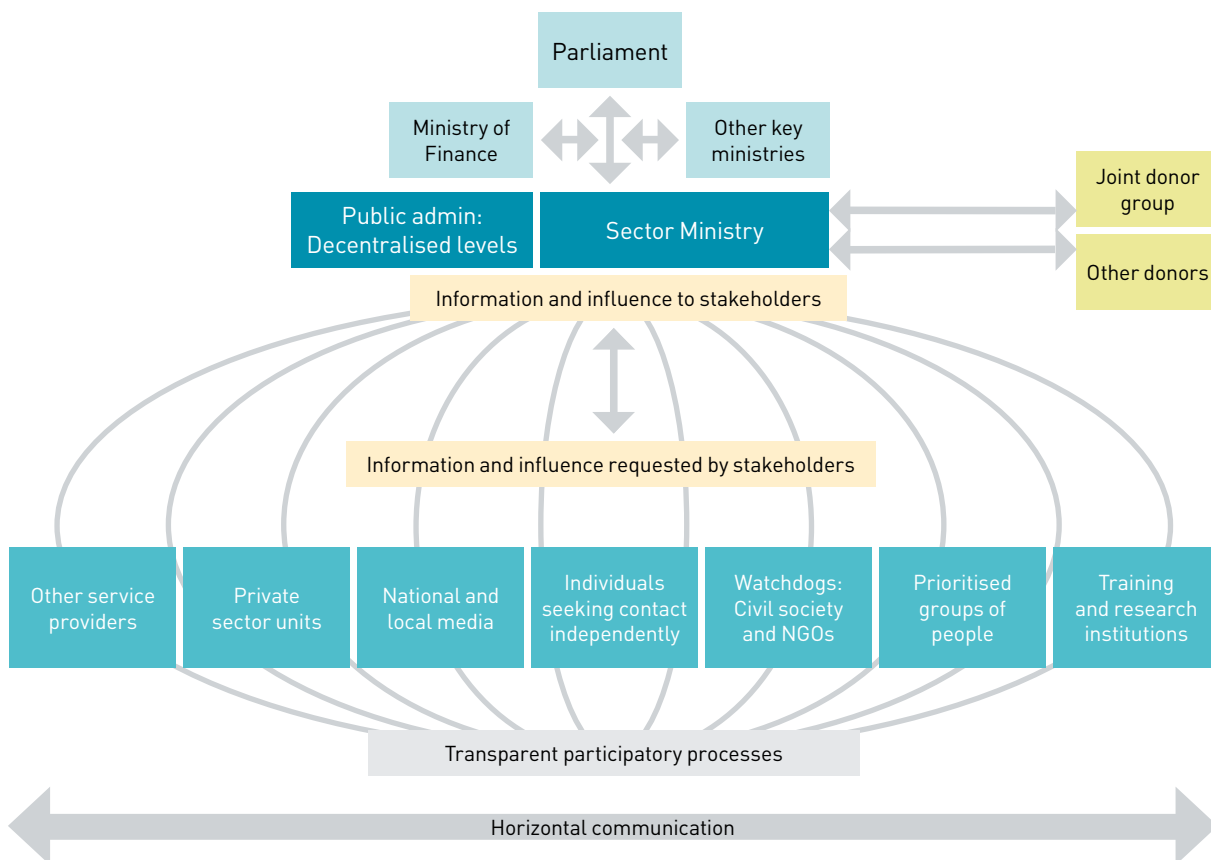
Integrate assessments of communication methods

Experience shows that communication assessments conducted outside the main process are often marginalised and thus have less influence. Chapter 5 suggests issues to consider for regular, jointly agreed analytical, appraisal and monitoring work.

Call for partners to focus communication activities on results

Communication efforts for broadened democratic ownership are rarely strategically planned nor are the results measured. Analysis, planning and monitoring of communication initiatives should be specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and timely (S.M.A.R.T). Is the communication engaging the relevant individuals or groups with the desired effect? Entry points and issues to be raised are suggested in Chapters 4 & 5 and in Annex 2.

Figure 1: The communication flow of different stakeholders



See to it that stakeholder mapping includes analysis of communication

Stakeholders must be at the heart of communication planning. Which individuals and what groups are the drivers of change? What degree of influence do they have on the process? How can key groups inside and outside government gain access to information and how can officials best engage them as participating partners? How can listening to and learning from the voices of people in poverty and exclusion be included? It is important to look at those who resist or oppose the desired change as well. Can open discussions between people with different points of view be facilitated? After all, isn't it the opponents among opinion- and policy-makers who must be brought into the dialogue and their support won over?

Address the lack of motivation at its roots

Actively allowing non-elites to influence policies, decision-making and delivery of public services is contrary to standard practice in many countries. Indeed, demands for accountability and transparency are often seen as potential challenges to entrenched power structures and agendas rather than positive features of development. Lack of motivation or capacity to support change needs to be identified and addressed. Experience shows that when public servants and politicians do engage with civil society organisations, the media and the public to identify problems and jointly arrive at solutions, the perceived threat can be reduced and solutions are more sustainable.

Plan for sensitising activities

Most often it is much more convincing and compelling to show the partners positive evidence of how and why to make a desired change, rather than simply telling them about it. Strategically planned sensitising activities – showcases – often build improved understanding among stakeholders and partners. Targeted communication activities have in many cases paved the way for and created a stronger platform for development dialogue. Convincing examples of this are the Reality Check project in Bangladesh (below) as well as the Rich and Poor Project (RAPP) in Kenya 2004–2007. RAPP re-focussed the development agenda from “poverty” to “equality” by using existing government data and actively engaging the media and parliamentarians.

COMMUNICATING THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE POOR



Soneka and her son Aslam's experience at the Upazila hospital feeds into the systematic collection of voices in the Reality Check project in Bangladesh.

The Reality Check project by the Swedish Embassy in Bangladesh gives voice to the poor and builds platforms for dialogue “from below” to those directly providing services to the poor. Reality Check builds on a systematic participatory listening approach where research teams stay several weeks every year in the homes of families living in poverty – participating in the lives and daily decisions of family members and neighbours, as well as with local

service providers. Different fora are created for people to express their views.

The analysis and documentation shows, not just tells, and lifts poor peoples' voices into two sector programmes: health and education.

The work has both given Sweden a new, proven platform for partner dialogue and has led partners to make positive changes in programme planning and implementation.

4. When: strategic entry points

What are the most relevant entry points for Sida in promoting communication as a tool for building accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination? If the conditions for citizens to be able to discuss, interact and monitor are provided for in overarching national plans, public reforms and legislation, this will facilitate the democratic development of all sectors. Actions can be taken at all levels from the international level to the sector and programme levels.

At the international level

- *when influencing international analytical tools and methods*

Communication approaches and processes – like those suggested in Chapters 5 and 6 – need be integrated into international tools for assessments, analysing development results and planning development support. A communication audit, also called a Communication Based Assessment (World Bank), is a common tool for identifying stakeholders, mapping their relative influence and evaluating role-players. Step-by-step, the World Bank, UNDP, and UNESCO have started to mainstream important information, media and communication aspects into analytical tools, such as into the Common Country Assessments (CCA).

At the national level

- *when formulating Sweden's Development Cooperation Strategy and Joint Country Assistance Strategies*

"Sweden's Country Strategy: Bangladesh 2008–2012" describes how communication can be used as an instrument in strengthening accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination:

"Sweden should also aim at developing channels for conveying knowledge about poor people's situation and needs. New applications in information and communication technology should be considered as methods."

From the right's perspective, the cooperation strategy for Bangladesh emphasises the possibility to examine the quality and accessibility of social services. One way of doing this is to *"inform poor people of their rights and about how government agencies are meeting the targets set."*

In order to open the door for activities such as Reality Checks (see page 15):

"Sweden must also be in a position to give support to other strategic and innovative initiatives."



- *when supporting formulation, review and follow-up of a Poverty Reduction Strategy/National Development Plan*

Communication is both an end in its own right and a means to catalyse participation and transparency. Some of the shortcomings of Poverty Reduction Strategies are due to the fact that they do not integrate communication and media aspects in the analysis and findings, nor include media or strategic communication as effective tools for the national planning process itself.

- *when supporting formulation and implementation of key legislation*

Accessibility and participation are mainly regulated at the national level. Supporting access to information legislation and enforcement of the legislation in practice – as well as provisions on transparency, accountability and public consultation – can drive substantial change in all sectors. More and more countries are adopting laws on transparency and accessibility that meet international standards, but even in some developed democracies, people are still routinely denied access to information that the law says should be in the public domain. Global NGOs such as Article 19 and multilaterals like the World Bank and UNDP can provide useful guidance, as can experience-sharing between partner countries.

- *when supporting formulation and implementation of national reforms*

Real change requires integrating communication activities and building communication capacity into key national reforms such as those of the public financial management system, the public administration, the tax system as well as decentralisation and sector-specific reforms.

- *when supporting media and CSOs to drive public debate, information sharing and investigations*

Domestic accountability relies to a great extent on how well individuals, media and CSOs can investigate and report on procurement, budget formulation and disbursement of public funds, planning procedures, complaint mechanisms, delivery of public services, exclusion of groups, etc.

At the sector and programme levels

- *before or during development of the partners' sector strategy and/or programme.*
If Sida supports the partner's integration of communication for stakeholders' influence and access to information in this phase, it can start off a positive spiral of learning and development in a long-lasting way.

- *during implementation and review of a sector strategy and programme.*
Partners often gain deeper appreciation for communication during the implementation phase which can lead to improved structures and services. Windows of opportunity can arise during this period, such as increased interest from media and CSOs in issues of accessibility, voice and accountability.

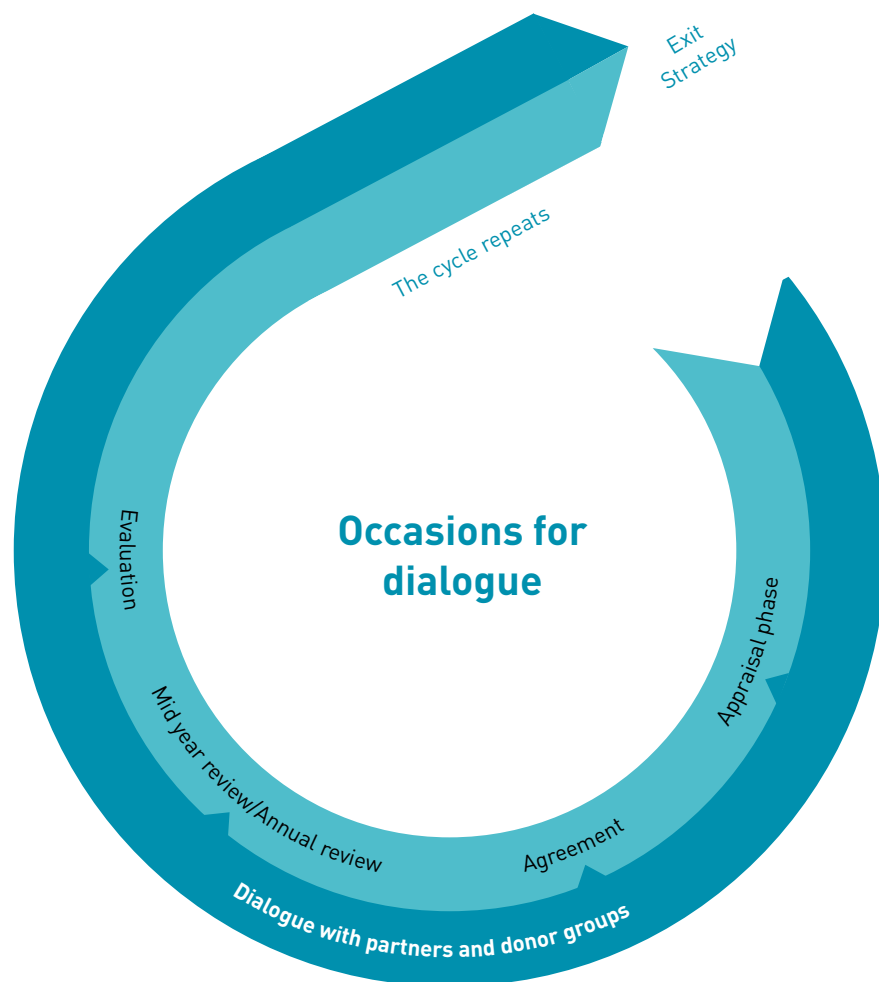


Figure 2: There are specific formalised occasions for dialogue with the partner during the work cycle – as well as different informal occasions depending on the context.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL AUDITS REALLY WORK

Karla Maria Mendoza Molina (top left) knows that communication works. She uses a mix of media and non-media approaches to get people talking about health issues and collaborating on solutions in the Sida-supported Health District of Huehuetenango in Guatemala – where the health situation is among the poorest in the country.

A social worker by training, Karla has become a communication enthusiast producing regular press releases, facilitating meetings of weekly community collaboration groups and answering questions from inves-

tigative media as well as on a popular radio talk show.

Karla also manages the district's cooperation with CSOs on annual social audits where citizens investigate what budget funds were used for and the results of the spending. Because of her work, citizens now know how to read and analyse a budget and investigate the effects on the community as well as how to raise official complaints about inefficiencies, misappropriations and other ways in which the community is deprived of quality health services.



5. What: key issues for planning, assessment and follow-up

This chapter suggests ways to enable stakeholders' influence and access to information when the provision of services of the sector (such as health, agriculture, infrastructure, education) is managed by a ministry or agency at the national or sub-national level. What can Sida raise in the dialogue with the partner at different entry points?

Chapter 6 highlights the importance of capacities for demanding rights and services with a focus on the role of CSOs and the media.

The influence of the citizens depends on the information they can obtain as well as on what they are able and motivated to use this information for. When analysing a public agency, it is important not only to focus on the information released to the public, but also on how the administration enables citizens to actually make relevant use of the information.

What are the concrete, key issues that the partner organisation needs to plan for, assess and follow-up on in order to effectively use communication to broaden ownership, accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination² at the national, regional and sector-levels?

The main working areas of programme support highlighted here are:

- a. The basic institutional framework
- b. The capacity of the public administration, including public financial management
- c. The sector implementation plan

The basic institutional framework

Accountability requires access to information and participation, essential elements for ensuring that the public understand the initiatives being launched and know what resources are being deployed in programmes designed to improve their welfare.

For people to be empowered to participate in the design and implementation, the legal framework for information access must be in place. Citizens and civil servants alike need education and information about the public's rights to public records.

However, it is one thing to adopt sound legislation and quite another to bring it to life via even-handed, apolitical reinforcement. It can be difficult to address the responsibilities of a single ministry or agency alone because its conditions are often connected to other government bodies and thus require a governmental framework. The Entry Points in Chapter 4 are useful for reaching sustainable and broad results.

² Donors cooperating on a development programme have different goals and conditions. The language used by each can vary a great deal and cause delays and misunderstandings. The solution suggested here is to use the rights-based vocabulary promoted by the EU (for EuropeAid) and endorsed in the Accra Agenda: transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination/ inclusion.

Annex 2a gives a choice of issues that can be used for analysis, reviews or dialogue on:

- The quality of the laws already in place
- Institutional capacities and systems for public access to information
- Staff capacity
- The quality of activities enabling access to information
- Watchdogs' access to and use of public information

ACCESS TO PUBLIC DOCUMENTS – REMOVING THE NEED FOR DUST COATS...

Land rights have been a source of conflict since the origin of man. Access to important archive information is often crucial for individuals and groups to mobilise for their rights.

Archived documents clarify a host of issues that affect the daily lives of Kenyans in Kuria District. Like people everywhere, they need to know what documents are available, what rights they have to obtain them, where to go to get them, and what to do if archive staff

refuse them access.

Despite the importance of the archive, it is difficult to access and staff need to put on special coats to keep the dust from coating their clothes.

Sida support to improve archiving systems with public accessibility can empower people while tangibly improving transparency and accountability.



Photo: Anna Turesson

The capacity of the public administration, including public financial management

Government at all levels must have the systems, resources, skills and motivation to provide the information citizens need, and must create the space and approaches needed for ongoing public dialogue and debate. The quality of information and of communication activities is the key to enabling broad access and citizen collaboration. Finally, good governance and inclusion cannot be realised without the mechanisms and capacity – inside and outside of the government – to monitor and investigate public programmes and services. Public financial management reform used for improved democracy and good governance can help create transparency and participation, as well as decrease discrimination if accessibility is built into programming and budgeting from the outset.

Annex 2b suggests a choice of issues based on core areas:

- The quality of the governance information made available: comprehensiveness, perspectives and relevant channels
- Facilitating citizen-government collaboration
- Enabling monitoring and investigation
- Comprehensiveness and timeliness of the key budget documents such as highlighted by the Open Budget Questionnaire and other tools

The sector implementation plan

Experience shows that the success of many sector programmes such as health, education, gender/women's issues and environment turns on the support and participation of beneficiaries. This makes the comprehensibility and accessibility of programme information and advocacy approaches as well as the availability of dialogue opportunities critical success factors. Thorough analysis is needed to map stakeholders' preferred communication channels, identify cost-effective, culturally appropriate ways to engage the groups affected by the programme and ensure that communications reflect each group's priority concerns.

With much focus at the sub-national or community levels and with access to mainstream media often limited, citizen-based mechanisms for monitoring are needed to ensure accountability, transparency and broadened ownership. Local-level civil servants charged with implementing the programmes as well as local media will need support to engage programme beneficiaries.

Annex 2c provides a set of issues for use in analysis, planning and monitoring:

- The quality of information provided on sector services
- Capacities and systems for public communication
- Enabling systems and activities for stakeholder collaboration and monitoring on sector issues

IBP: RANKING ACCESS TO PUBLIC BUDGET INFORMATION

“Open budgets. Transform lives” is the motto of Sida’s partner the International Budget Partnership (IBP). With tools and training from IBP, CSOs in developing countries analyse, monitor, and influence government budget processes and outcomes. Particularly in low-income countries, CSOs often work closely with legislators and government ministries. So, IBP’s work building the technical capacity and advocacy skills of these groups can have far-reaching impact. IBP’s goal is to make government budget systems more responsive to the needs of poor and low-income people and accordingly to make these systems more transparent.

Open Budget Questionnaire

One tool for measuring how open and accountable budget systems are within and across countries is the Open Budget Questionnaire. Administered biennially in 85-90 countries, the Questionnaire raises awareness about the types of information that gov-

ernments should release whilst providing standards for budget transparency and benchmarks for improvement.

South Africa: already number two in the world

IBP also developed the Open Budget Index (OBI) that measures the level to which governments make comprehensive, accessible and useful budget information available to their citizens. The 2010 OBI includes more than 90 countries, providing a comparative snapshot of transparency and accountability worldwide. CSOs, think tanks, media and research facilities monitor the OBI results to evaluate their governments’ performance independently as well as by comparison with other countries. They then use that information to pressure their governments to do better. Only 14 years after its democratic rebirth, South Africa achieved the second highest score on the OBI, after the U.K. Sweden ranked 7th.



Photo: The Omar Asghar Khan Development Foundation in Pakistan.

ENSURING COMMUNICATION DELIVERS RESULTS

Partners' communication activities are rarely a part of the result-based planning of programme support, even if some of them dedicate substantial human and financial resources to communication.

"Looking at all these paid adverts on 'anniversaries', 'achievements' and 'stakeholders' meetings' in the national, English-language newspapers, I often wonder what the real purpose is," says Anna Tufvesson, Programme Officer for Water and Sanitation in Kenya.

"Often, the contacts for the organisation are not even provided for the readers, who presumably should be those who have an interest in their services. I can't help but wonder if the ads sometimes serve a different purpose, such as marketing individuals or simply to be able to tick off for donors that they invest in communication and are transparent towards their citizens. To me it looks like propaganda, and is not credible. Does anybody even read it?"



6. Support to media and CSOs

The focus to this point has been on how public agencies can stimulate broad democratic ownership of the development agenda and of specific programmes. However, non-state actors such as civil society groups and the media also need support to be able to play their crucial role in promoting real change and ownership.

A sector programme approach entails support not only for good governance and the provision of goods and services, but also support to increase the opportunities for people to demand the same. The Accra Agenda underscores this and the parties endorsing it commit to “support efforts to increase the capacity of all development actors – parliaments, central and local governments, CSOs, research institutes, media and the private sector – to take an active role in dialogue on development policy and on the role of aid in contributing to countries development.”

Creating the conditions for Civil Society Organisations and the Media

CSOs and independent media play crucial roles in creating the conditions for increased accountability by advocating for greater access to information and by providing independent sources of information to citizens. CSOs can prepare citizens and elected officials/representatives for accountability work through civic education programmes explaining citizens’ rights and how to broaden political participation. CSOs and journalists can also play essential roles in monitoring how well governments fulfil their commitments, duties and obligations.

The media’s importance stems from the critical impact of the public sphere for which all kinds of mass media are crucial. Public debate, shaping opinion, deliberation, building cohesion and inclusion – all these aspects require citizens to have access to media. This means media must be independent, have access to information, be equipped with sufficient resources, have professional staff and actively contribute to the public dialogue. The public sphere has been broadened by the vast impact of affordable information and communication technology, such as Internet and mobile phones. Both the increasing amount of informal media – social media and citizen journalism – and dynamic, professional formal media are vital for participatory development and good governance.

Media and CSOs are equally important actors in aid effectiveness and broadened ownership. Sida’s support to the media sector is concentrated in three areas:

- 1) legislation and regulation
- 2) media capacity and professionalisation
- 3) economic sustainability



Communication and media issues have a long history in international development cooperation and more broadly in processes of social change. The richness and diversity of interventions has produced convincing evidence of the positive impact they can have promoting voice, checks and balances, participation, accountability and empowerment.

WATCHDOGS FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR OF TANZANIA

HakiElimu has played an important role in the education sector in Tanzania since it started in 2002. The CSO was created by people engaged to promote the improvement of education in Tanzania, as well as of democratic institutions and culture related to the education sector.

HakiElimu has promoted public debate about education in media as well as at the local level, disseminated readily accessible information to stakeholders, engaged in analysis and debate on policy issues and monitored implementation of education reforms and programmes. In that way, the organisation has managed to increase Tanzanians'

attention and interest in improving the education sector.

HakiElimu's main achievement was as a watchdog for the education sector. Their work eventually led to a confrontation with the government in 2005 when the then-Minister of Education banned HakiElimu from activities with schools and barred school staff from being in contact with the group. This effectively prohibited them from carrying out their core activities. The ban has since been lifted and HakiElimu is back to making sure the government delivers on its education commitments again.

DEMOCRATIC VOICE OF BURMA – FROM BROADCASTING GREETINGS TO INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

The searing images of the 2007 monk protests in Burma made it onto television screens around the world thanks to the courage of underground video-journalists (VJs) who risked their lives to document the events



of the protest, also known as the Saffron Revolution. The VJs and fellow journalists were part of secret teams of Sida's media partner The Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB). Many of the people arrested are still in prison.

The DVB has gained a unique reputation within and outside Burma for giving voice and images to the Burmese people. By broadcasting on the web, radio and TV in several ethnic languages, this media house in exile plays a key role globally and within Burma for media diversity and the right to information.

Just 10 years ago, DVB radio was produced by refugees with no journalism training and with strong political influence from parts of the democratic movement of Burmese in exile. The staff was even ordered to broadcast birthday greetings for exiles' family members. Sida decided not to end the support but to stay put and encourage a professionalisation of the staff, the content and the production.

7. Finally

“It always seems impossible before it’s done,” Nelson Mandela once said.

Hopefully, this Guidance Note has shown in a user-friendly way, both simple and challenging steps to take to improve citizens’ and inhabitants influence for positive change. Supporting partners to use communication methods strategically for informing and collaborating with stakeholders will lead to better development results – Getting it Together.

Annex 1

The function and form of communication leads to diverse results

Repressive regimes often are highly skilled when it comes to communication, media relation and working with information – but their motives lack democratic intentions. Actors in democracies steer the messages as well, for example in corporate marketing or political persuasion activities. For democratic participation and interaction, other forms of communication are used since different approaches lead to diverse results. It is important to have a basic understanding of how the resources on hand are used.

Two main approaches dominate communication in development cooperation:

1. one-way, monologic, or vertical approach = information design and dissemination
2. two-way, participatory or horizontal approach = dialogue processes

Different approaches yield different results. The two can also be linked to each other and they constitute different stages in a combined approach:

“Citizens need (one-way) information to understand the measures being put in place to benefit them, and they need (two-way) communication to be able to articulate their perspectives on their design and performance.” (BBC World Service Trust, 2010).

One-way, monologic communication

Here, government produces and delivers information for use by citizens or other stakeholders without expectation of feedback or dialogue. Sometimes simple awareness is sufficient to achieve the intended result.

Examples of this approach include: posters and brochures, propaganda, advertising, public service announcements, press releases, text message campaigns and mass-mediated messages. The one-way communication approach is often more effective if the design of the information is participatory and inclusive of the perspectives of the target group.





Information dissemination is the dominant form used by national public administrations and other management units. Whether the desired impact is achieved depends on whether the principal target groups understand and are motivated to use the content. By itself, information dissemination is rarely effective for catalysing change or building democratic ownership.

Two-way, participatory, dialogic communication

When the aim is to reduce conflicts, give voice to people, collaborate or consult with the public, interactive exchanges are needed – as well as the structures, practices and capacity for leading such dialogue-based approaches. Two-way communication approaches include stakeholder consultation systems, peer group engagement, meetings, mediated public debates, call-in TV/radio shows, stakeholders' media production, web chats, press conferences, public hearings and consultations, as well as activities such as popular theatre, storytelling, music, participatory video, blogging, etc. Communication flows horizontally, back and forth between participants, encouraging participation, multiplicity and feedback. The results tend to be more open and are dependent on the analysis and attitudes of the parties. Two-way dialogue facilitates broader ownership and shared responsibility for solutions. Another effect can be public criticism, a cornerstone of any democracy.

In short, if used effectively information and dialogue complement each other.

Communication: key to all human rights

The right to information and communication are protected by numerous human rights conventions and laws governing freedom of expression, access to information and participation. As this Guidance Note has shown from different perspectives, communication is moreover unique – a key instrument for realising all human rights.

For further information see: Participatory Communication – A Practical Guide (the World Bank, 2009): A “multi-track strategy” is recommended combining one-way and two-way approaches and emphasising the importance of thorough analysis as the starting point.

Annex 2a

What: the basic institutional framework

Accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination cannot be realised without the necessary laws detailing citizens' rights to information, officials' obligations to provide it and the enforcement needed to make the laws functional.³ Even if the legal architecture is in place and the leadership supports implementing it, public administrations must have effective, adequately resourced structures. Addressing the laws and the structures for implementation at the central level can create substantial positive effects for all sectors. The approaches identified here can be used in connection with all of the entry points described in Chapter 4.

Enabling access to information: Basis for transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination

The quality of the laws already in place

Do the scope and content of the laws on access to information and public consultation meet international standards?

Which laws are being implemented? Which are not? Why?

Do the laws protect informants/whistleblowers?

Is there an independent, non-executive body empowered to safeguard implementation?

Are the courts and administrative bodies enforcing them fairly?

Example: If the law prescribes an overarching rule that civil servants can be prosecuted for making the wrong information public – a common occurrence – they may be reluctant to provide even documents that are acceptable for disclosure.

Institutional capacities for public access to information

Do citizens receive information from political appointees or professional civil servants?

Are decision-making processes and accountability tools – assessments, reports, audit findings, etc – documented and publicly available?

Do Codes of Ethics include instructions on public access to information?

Systems for accessibility

Are functional systems in place to produce and disseminate information on government planning, policy-making and service delivery to stakeholders and the media?

Do data management, statistics and document archiving facilitate (or obstruct) public accessibility?

Example: Where archiving or statistics systems exist, a trained officer could be responsible to provide timely, comprehensible information to stakeholders.

³ Citizen is here being used as a term for individuals living with or without formal citizenship in the country.



The right to information is important for many reasons. Chief among these is the contribution it makes towards:

- *Creating a more open and democratic society*
- *Reducing poverty (achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs))*
- *Challenging corruption and enhancing transparency*

Right to Information – Practical Guidance. UNDP, 2004

Is a web-portal or an e-governance system used? How many people can use and access it? Are documents available in electronic format to ease access needed for monitoring and consultation?

Example: Frequently, more key documents are produced than are publicised. Transparency can quickly improve simply by posting documents on a national or sub-national website or bulletin board.

Staff capacity

Are there enough trained staff to spread information publicly?

Do all levels of the administration understand the rules and responsibilities for communication?

Are public servants at all levels regularly informed on rules covering access to public records?

Are they trained to implement the laws? Are civil servants at all levels aware of the provisions in the Code of Ethics and trained in their use?

Do managers support the work? Are the Codes of Ethics followed and continuously monitored?

Enabling actual use of information: Participation and performance monitoring

The quality of activities to enable access to information

Does the administration continuously offer training and support to stakeholders on: how to find relevant information, what documents are “public”, rules on secrecy and lodging complaints?

Are the procedures and provisions/mechanisms for accountability, anti-corruption, procurement, lodging a complaint and disclosure of public information publicised at the national and sub-national level?

Example: Trained staff, websites and posters are useful sources. Relevant universities and media training institutions can spread the knowledge.

Do campaigns target stakeholders’ priorities? In a relevant language? Are the initiatives coordinated (as opposed to being produced ad hoc). Do they address how to influence policy-making, the right to information, anti-corruption activities and complaint or watchdog mechanisms?

Watchdogs’ access to and use of public information

Are relevant officials and staff trained to deal with the media and other watchdogs in a neutral, informative manner?

Are freedom of information requests processed within a reasonable time so journalists can use the information needed for their stories?

Does the government use libel laws to punish the media for publishing or broadcasting stories critical of its performance?

Annex 2b

What: the capacity of the public administration

Even if the overarching governmental framework (Annex 2a) is lagging behind, important issues can be addressed on the national and sub-national level of the public administration. The following guidance can be useful for identifying ways to enable broadened ownership, and can be used in connection with the entry points described in Chapter 4.

Enabling access to information: Basis for transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination

The quality of governance information made available

Is information comprehensible? Does it include the relevant perspectives?

Can the average citizen easily grasp the content of key documents, such as programme plans, implementation reports, etc?

Does the information take into account the interests of men, women, girls and boys in poverty, human rights aspects and other issues specific to key sub-groups – such as age, gender, region, ethnicity, profession, physical impairment, illiteracy?

Quality, timeliness and relevance of the communication channels used

When and how are key procedures and documents made accessible to media, beneficiaries and monitoring organisations?

Is the information publicised in media accessible to the targeted stakeholders? In relevant languages? In an accessible format – for example, available to residents of remote villages or nomadic tribes that are constantly moving.

Examples: It can be more effective to send press releases to national and local media, and public administration offices as well as to post them in public places such as libraries, municipalities and clinics, instead of buying an expensive ad on TV or in a national paper.

Radio is more effective for reaching illiterate people of all ages and visually impaired people than are newspapers, pamphlets, etc.

Posters may be popular, but can people read your message? Will they simply be torn down and used as home decoration?

Information framework for consultations on sector issues

Are there accessible public spaces for dialogue between officials and citizens – town hall meetings, call-in radio programmes, etc.

How is citizen feedback fed into policy-making and public service delivery?

Are the functions and framework for the consultation made public via the best channels and long enough ahead of the event to allow people to prepare, plan?

Are citizens and/or their representatives informed of opportunities for lodging complaints?

Example: Regulations may require officials to consult stakeholders, but it does not happen nevertheless. Ombudsmen may intervene to investigate.

Adding communication approaches to core programme activities

In 2008, Statistics Sweden (SCB) helped Cambodia's National Institute of Statistics to produce a booklet called "Women and Men in Cambodia." When launching the booklet and in order to get out information both to direct users and the public at large, SCB led workshops for people in different government departments and agencies, researchers, journalists, CSOs, women's organisations and other stakeholders. The purpose was to raise awareness about gender disaggregated statistics and to inform the various stakeholders on how to use the data for analysis, planning, research, education, lobbying and to educate Cambodians about the situation in their country. The compilation of gender statistics was presented on TV and in the press and the Minister of Planning promoted it proudly inside and outside Government.

Enabling actual use of information: Participation and performance monitoring

Facilitating citizen-government collaboration

Do relevant officials meet regularly with the media, groups performing social audits and other watchdogs in a neutral and informative manner to exchange information and facilitate their work?

Are public meetings and hearings held regularly in beneficiaries' communities to intensify dialogue between local authorities and the public?

Do key implementers participate actively in debates and knowledge-sharing programmes, particularly in local media reaching marginalised groups like women and children living in poverty?

Public consultation

Is the process of selecting contributors for public consultation democratic?

Are the selection criteria for stakeholders to be consulted explained adequately?

Do citizens receive support to enable them to provide regular feedback and seek information on specific programme aspects and services? Does it increase their knowledge of programme goals and their responsibilities?

How are results of the consultative process reported back to the public?

Is input from key stakeholders – particularly marginalised ones – actively sought in agenda-setting, planning and implementation/problem-solving?

Example: see "Better health by engaging the community" on health communication in Nicaragua, page 38.

Are citizens and their mediators trained to monitor implementation plans and other key programme aspects via, for example institutionalised consultation, citizen report cards, social audits, budget monitoring groups?

Example: Train-the-trainer programmes might be set up with universities and national/international NGOs to train other CSOs, citizens and journalists on monitoring. Journalists might find it difficult to cover highly technical processes such as procurement, budget-making and funds disbursement without recognising the democratic values and the stories behind the bureaucratic formalities.

What: public financial management

Signatories to the Accra Agenda committed explicitly to support more robust “public disclosure of revenues, budgets, expenditures, procurement and audits.” Public Financial Management (PFM) is a substantial part of the administration, often closely connected to the central body for financial management. The issues for dialogue that are raised for the public administration are important for PFM as well. However, a few additional issues can be of value for the PFM analysis:

Participation and performance monitoring

Enabling monitoring and investigation

Is the budget a clear, comprehensive and readily available document, explaining the budget policy, providing summaries of sector spending, giving data showing how budget allocations develop over time, as well as the actual budget outcome of previous years?

Are the details of donor-funded programmes and budget support publicly and timely available? Experience shows that the developing countries most supported by donors are among those least likely to make public documents accessible.

Are watchdog organisations and the Parliament monitoring the budget process?

Is the procurement process transparent and fair? Are procurement documents, evaluations and contract awards accessible to the public readily and in a timely manner?

Are public expenditure tracking surveys used to make way for open budget policies?

Are the perspectives of the poor and other key groups reflected in the information? Are citizens' budgets, green budgeting or gender budgeting used?

Example: The Open Budget Questionnaire by the International Budget Partnership (IBP) is a proven tool for promoting timely, comprehensive accessibility and participation. The Questionnaire is focused on the national level, not on sub-national levels. (Read about it on page 23)

The **Citizen's Guide to Monitoring Government Expenditures** by IBP is excellent for understanding relevant issues, complementing international standards.



Annex 2c

What: the sector implementation plan

The officials responsible for outreach and provision of sector services at national and sub-national levels may not be the same individuals or have the same profession and training as those responsible for other forms of public information. The following guidance for identifying ways to enable broadened ownership can be useful in connection with the entry points described in Chapter 4.

Enabling access to information: Basis for transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination

The quality of information provided on sector services

Is information timely and comprehensible? Does it include relevant perspectives?

Are sector services regularly presented for stakeholders, including minority groups, in a timely, comprehensible and accessible manner?

Does the information target key stakeholders using appropriate language, images and forms?

Example: A girl from a rural minority group may respond better to and thus need information in a different language, format and programme style as well as on a different radio channel than a city-dwelling, male civil servant.

Quality and relevance of communication channels

Have stakeholders' preferred communication channels been analysed and mapped to identify cost-effective, culturally sensitive ways to reach groups affected by the programme?

Is programme information publicised timely and in appropriate ways to educate beneficiaries about programme goals, enable them to participate in public debate, monitor performance and inform them of progress?

Are "edutainment" or media-based public awareness programmes used to reach programme beneficiaries and marginalised groups, especially women and children? Programme concepts and content should be designed based on stakeholder research results and have outreach components.

Capacities and systems for public communication

Staff capacity

Are the responsible implementing persons at national and sub-national levels trained for participatory and public communication?

Is the training coordinated and consistent?

Are staff trained in how to approach and respond to inquiries from the public?

Do they understand the democratic purpose of working with media?

Systems for accountability

Does the implementing agency use public hearings, citizen report cards, posted budgets and procurement information, call-in radio shows or knowledge-sharing platforms on the web for communicating with stakeholders about programme performance?

Has the implementing ministry/agency appointed staff with clear responsibilities and capacities for public engagement and media relations?

Are citizens provided feedback on how their input was incorporated so as to promote dialogue and motivate further cooperation?

Advocacy methods

Do the advocacy approaches reflect each stakeholder's priority issues/concerns? Are the 'messengers' people they trust?

Example: As described in Annex 1, campaigns can lead to interesting general results, but are more effective with result-based planning.

Do implementers work with local media to produce programming on sector issues – such as kids programming on health or education?

Example: Local radio or TV can produce engaging dramas or call-in programmes addressing sector issues with support from the programme. Sponsorship shall be transparent to all.

Are influential personalities engaged to raise awareness, advocate for change or catalyse public debate on sector issues?

Example: Popular theatre groups, musicians, artists, writers, even religious figures can be especially influential advocates.



Enabling actual use of information: Participation and performance monitoring

Enabling systems and activities for stakeholder collaboration on sector issues

The structures and mechanisms

How do sector programme implementers engage beneficiary communities in collaboration? Public hearings?

Are citizens able to collaborate in agenda-setting – providing regular feedback on programme performance, or only asked to comment on already-decided plans or policies?

How are collaboration participants chosen?

Media cooperation

Do implementing staff support discussion of programme plans, services and results in relevant media and with key groups – including critical voices?

Do implementers facilitate or sponsor media programming that covers sector issues and programme performance?

Enabling monitoring and investigation of sector issues

Are outreach activities used systematically to increase collaboration, awareness, broaden public consultation and promote public debate about programme implementation?

Are citizen-based mechanisms for monitoring service delivery and programme results, for example social audits, call-in radio shows and citizen report cards used to stimulate dialogue between officials and stakeholders? Marginalized populations?

Are the results of participatory processes and how they were incorporated into policies and service delivery reported back to citizens to promote dialogue and motivate further cooperation?

Facilitating citizen-government collaboration

Training and education

Are media or Internet-centres used to educate key sector professionals, on various issues needed, for example via radio or via e-learning? This is cost-effective and offers wide reach while also training in media literacy.

Media participation

Is media production used within the sector for enabling voice, agenda-setting and debate of professionals and citizens?

Example: If children are helped to produce radio shows (or blogs) on a sector issue, they themselves as well as the audience learn about the issue, but they also learn media techniques, give voice to kids and catalyse “buzz” about the issues.

BETTER HEALTH BY ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY



Photo: Prosalais

Reduced maternal and infant mortality was the result of a wide-reaching health programme supported by Sida in six of the poorest regions of Nicaragua, where participation and communication were integrated into programme planning. The communication strategy was based on a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative study on service delivery, use of health services, community organization and risk signals of the most common diseases.

Programme communication was directed towards three levels:

- (1) central policy level – to create alliances;
- (2) level of health services – using information and communication to optimise the use of financial and human resources;
- (3) family level – campaigns to promote behavioural change and healthier living.

Social actors at the community level were engaged in defining and executing plans and strategies. Health workers, midwives, outreach staff and volunteers were organized into networks and trained in how to detect signs of illness and find remedies in their communities. All this led to better, more realistic planning that met the real health needs of mothers and children in these communities.

Whenever local stakeholders are not engaged from the beginning of the intervention, the possibilities for problems and failures rise dramatically. Examples are innumerable in which communication failed to achieve expected changes due to people's initial lack of involvement or due to a limited or contradictory understanding of issues by various stakeholders.

Participatory Communication – A Practical Guide.
The World Bank 2009

Annex 3

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Sida works according to directives of the Swedish Parliament and Government to reduce poverty in the world, a task that requires cooperation and persistence. Through development cooperation, Sweden assists countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Each country is responsible for its own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge, skills and expertise. This increases the world's prosperity.

Getting it together

GLOBAL ISSUES

This Guidance Note suggests concrete ways to enable the people in a country to influence the work of government and public agencies - and in that way ensure democratic development results. While both the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action point to the need for better use of communication, it has become increasingly apparent that good communication is an inextricable component of good development practice.

The point of departure is to propose how a public agency should provide information to the citizens and its representatives, and what kind of initiatives the agency should aim at to create conditions for public participation, interaction and collaboration. Different policy and practice perspectives are combined with the purpose of guiding Sida in supporting partners to get it together with the public – in other words, to take advantage of communication for increasing accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination.

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