How to use communication to make aid effective:

Strategies and principles for programme-based approaches
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review from the BBC World Service Trust examines why and how the role of communication can be mainstreamed into programme-based approaches (PBAs), one of the main methods now used by bilateral donors to disburse funding to developing countries.

The review, which has been developed in association with (but is published independently of) the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), is intended for three types of audience:

- communication and media practitioners who work in support of development objectives, or who have a link with the development and aid sectors;
- donors and developing country policymakers concerned with increasing public understanding and engagement within developing countries with the development system; and
- country-based organisations that provide technical support and conduct advocacy to prioritise communication and media issues among donors and governments.

In it, we argue that more strategic and effective communication is justified for three main reasons:

- The first is that the principles and commitments in the Accra Agenda for Action, the agreement articulating the principles on which most development funding is organised, cannot be realised without making government/citizen communication (and vice versa) a more central component of PBA strategies.

- The second is that greater public understanding, better access to information and improved communication flows between government and citizen are likely to improve the performance and delivery of PBAs.

- Finally, we argue that significant existing efforts carried out under the Accra “aid harmonisation” agenda and in the context of PBAs are inherently information and communication processes. However, such information and communication processes are often characterised by poor coordination, insufficient lesson learning, high rates of duplication and poor integration across development sectors. Information and communication support is, in other words, insufficiently harmonised.

The report contends that a stronger focus on communication underpinning the delivery of PBAs can lead to greater government legitimacy and accountability, broader public engagement and better public buy-in of development strategies and funding.

It argues that much excellent information and communication work is already taking place in this area but there is little clear coordination, clarity or unifying purpose underpinning widely divergent information and communication strategies. Synthesising and creating linkages between different efforts to achieve better impact will require a clearer allocation within the development system at country level for such coordination.

This report draws on an extensive literature review to provide insight into which kinds of communication and media strategies have been effective and under what circumstances to initiatives relevant to PBAs. It is a sister publication to Getting it together: Strengthening transparency, participation, accountability and non-discrimination with communication methods, a guide to the use of information and communication in programme-based approaches published by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (a summary can be found at the end of this document).

Both publications stress six key steps that can be taken to improve the incorporation of communication into PBAs:

- promotion of communication methods that can realise transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination;
• encouragement of a result-oriented view of communication’s role;
• placing a clear emphasis on the analysis of communication capacities and needs;
• supporting transparent information and communication systems;
• integration of communication within core processes of work; and
• coupling support to governments and other public bodies with support to meeting the information
  and communication needs of citizens and those – such as the media – who inform them.

The document does not aim to present a single framework for enhancing the use of communication to make aid more effective. It concludes that the choices around communication focal points and methodologies depend fundamentally on decisions over specific objectives and context, and these will vary substantially from one situation to another. It does, however, propose a set of overarching objectives that may usefully be employed in development of specific strategies: contribute to achieving greater government legitimacy and accountability; enhance public understanding of PBA objectives; and broaden public engagement.

Finally, it proposes a set of principles specifically relating to mainstreaming information and communication into PBAs. These focus on clarity of objectives, defining the role of communication in PBAs, ensuring that this is recognised in aid harmonisation agendas, making the citizen central, and understanding specific limitations.
Part 1:
Integrating information and communication with programme-based approaches
**Part 1A: Information, communication and programme-based approaches**

**Introduction: The purpose of this document**

The international development system has invested immense effort in recent years in working out how aid money can be better spent – better organised, more impactful and increasingly shaped by the needs of beneficiaries rather than the preoccupations of those providing money.

The purpose of this document is to offer recommendations for mainstreaming communication and media issues in programme-based approaches (PBAs), one of the main methods now used by bilateral donors to disburse money to developing countries.

The document is intended for three types of audience:

- communication and media practitioners who work in support of development objectives, or who have a link with the development and aid sectors;
- donors and developing country policymakers concerned with increasing public understanding and engagement within developing countries with the development system; and
- country-based organisations that provide technical support and conduct advocacy to prioritise communication and media issues among donors and governments.

The analysis and recommendations are based on a desk review and compilation of documents on recent experiences and “best practices” in information, communication and media. The paper’s dual goals are to aid development actors in planning communication and media activities in PBAs, and to help media and communication actors make sense of the sometimes complex and technical nature of the development system.

**Part 1** falls into three sections: **Part 1A** outlines how and why information and communication strategies are important in programme-based approaches. **Part 1B** focuses on integrating Information and Communication into PBAs and articulates some strategic principles. **Part 1C** provides a conclusion and a series of recommendations.

**Part 2** is based on a literature review of information and communication strategies relevant to PBAs and provides a broad synthesis and summary of the lessons that, in our analysis, might be usefully learned about what does and does not work in incorporating information and communication strategies into PBAs and similar approaches.

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1 The mechanisms and principles upon which the modern development system is founded are inevitably characterised by often technical, sometimes jargonistic language. “Programme-based approaches” is a fine example of such jargon. While this document is aimed in part at those within the development system, and at those who already have intimate knowledge of the development assistance argot, it is designed to be comprehensible to a broad range of actors, including media and communication actors.
**What is a programme-based approach?**

Nearly all bilateral donor organisations and the great majority of developing country governments receiving significant development assistance have agreed over the last decade to better organise how development assistance should operate. Rather than having multiple strategies by multiple actors, donors now harmonise their aid. How this is done, the extent to which it should be done, and the principles on which aid harmonisation operates are encapsulated in two major agreements – the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action on Aid Effectiveness.

A key tool now used by donors and development partners (usually governments or other national or sub-national public administration bodies) to organise aid better and to work within the agreement of this aid harmonisation agenda is the programme-based approach (PBA). A PBA is, in essence, a framework governing the relationship between a donor (normally a government within the OECD group of countries or a multilateral organisation such as the European Union or United Nations) and a partner (normally a developing country government) receiving and utilising development funding in a way that is as administratively efficient and most likely to maximise development benefits as possible. A programme is usually defined as “an integrated set of activities designed to achieve a related set of outcomes (for example delivering a set of national health or educational outcomes) in a relatively comprehensive way”.

Underpinning any definition of a programme-based approach is a core set of principles focused on ensuring coordinated support for a locally-owned programme of development; and a set of four elements:

- Leadership of the design and implementation of the programme is invested in the host country or organisation.
- There is a single programme and budget framework.
- Donors are responsible for coordinating and harmonising their assistance in support of this programme and within the context of country leadership.
- Efforts are made to increase the use of local procedures over time with regard to programme design as well as implementation, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation.

Programme-based approaches incorporate and build on other development assistance strategies founded on similar principles, such as “sector-wide approaches” which were defined as significant funding for the sector (e.g. health) supporting “a single sector policy and expenditure programme, under government leadership, adopting common approaches across the sector and progressing towards government procedures to disburse and account for all funds”. They are also linked to and often integrated with broader “budget support” mechanisms designed to provide government-to-government funding in ways that reduce administrative burdens and transaction costs of developing countries.

Those donors who have signed up to the Accra Agenda for Action and Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness – nearly all bilateral donors – have specific targets and internal incentive structures designed to ensure that their spending and decision-making abides by these principles and elements.

Some donors, such as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) place this work within a rights-based approach and a governance framework characterised by increased transparency, accountability, participation, and non-discrimination:

- Transparency refers to the openness and free flow of information between governments and citizens
- Accountability alludes to the existence and effective functioning of processes through which citizens hold officials and institutions responsible for their performance and use of public resources
- Participation refers to the active and regular engagement of citizens in matters of common interest
- Non-discrimination refers to the recognition and equality of gender, sexual, linguistic, racial, ethnic, and religious diversity

Neither PBAs nor the principles on which they rest are new within the development system. The principles of encouraging greater country ownership and increased harmonisation of development and aid strategies dates back to the late 1990s. They are, however, increasingly prevalent and dominant as a form of aid delivery.

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2 CIDA Primer on Programme-based approaches, R Lavergne and A Alba, CIDA 2003
Information, communication and media in programme-based approaches: The opportunities, the challenges

Programme-based approaches are designed to make aid effective. It’s unsurprising therefore that most donors are substantially increasing the proportion of funding they channel through such arrangements. The Accra Agenda for Action\(^1\) committed donors to “recollect and reaffirm their Paris Declaration commitment to provide 66% of aid as programme-based approaches. In addition, donors will aim to channel 50% or more of government-to-government assistance through country fiduciary systems, including by increasing the percentage of assistance provided through programme-based approaches”.

Members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC – the club of donor organisations and key architect of the aid harmonisation agenda) have committed themselves to meeting this 66% figure by 2010. Internal targets of many bilateral donors, such as Sida, stress the importance of increasing the proportion of spending through mechanisms such as PBAs.

PBAs consist of a formal, financially-based relationship principally between donors and governments. The beneficiaries of such relationships, however, are not governments – they are people. The performance of PBAs implicitly rests on the understanding that they will work best in the interests of the people they are designed to benefit if those people have some say over how effectively they are performing.

Translating those principles into practical reality requires a flow of information from government to citizen and from citizen to government. PBAs that are designed entirely as technical arrangements between donors and government – and seal themselves from citizens understanding them, being involved to some degree in their design and objectives, and being able to hold their performance to account are likely to fail. They also risk failing to abide by the principles upon which they were conceived. This document is centrally concerned with how those flows of communication between government and citizen and citizen and government can best be designed, with the ultimate goal of achieving optimal results for PBAs. Its starting point is the Accra Agenda for Action and other international agreements that have underpinned the aid harmonisation agenda.

Linking information and communication to programme-based approaches: An unwarranted burden?

There are significant challenges in integrating information and communication into programme-based approaches. PBAs provide limited institutional incentives for donors or government partners to prioritise communication to or with development beneficiaries; and there is no established mechanism designed to allocate specific responsibility for who in a PBA relationship has the responsibility for ensuring such information and communication flows.

The reasons why such information and communication flows are important in fulfilling the commitments in the Accra Agenda for Action around increasing democratic ownership and ensuring better mutual accountability are set out in the following sections. At the outset, however, the key challenges outlined in the previous section should be acknowledged in prioritising such issues in the design and delivery of PBAs.

Experience to date suggests that PBAs can actually increase transaction costs for donors, but that they are having success in meeting their principal objective: enabling developing country governments to get on with governing and delivering for their citizens. Ministers – at least those in comparatively well governed countries – are able to spend a lot more time focused on delivering services, and much less time in multiple meetings with numerous donor organisations that provide funding to support them.

A review by the Wolfensohn Center for Development at the Brookings Institution found (in relation to joint country assistance strategies) that “government perceptions of the process were more positive than

\(^1\) The Accra Agenda for Action and Paris Declarations on Aid Effectiveness, developed under the framework of the OECD DAC, are the main international agreements that shape development policy and practice around development assistance.
those of donors, since it reduced the disruption of and burden on the government from donor activities; in Tanzania, donors agreed that the process had reduced transaction costs for the government while it increased transaction costs for donors.\footnote{Aid Coordination on the Ground: Are joint country assistance strategies the answer? Johannes F. Linn, Wolfensohn Center for Development at Brookings, 2009}

Reducing the administrative burden on developing country governments with weak administrative infrastructures and capacities is the main purpose of a PBA. Donors have been prepared to make significant changes and sacrifices, including suffering increases in their own administrative burdens and incurring higher reputational risks to make such processes work. Any set of proposals that imply imposing additional burdens on the aid process can be expected to receive a cool reception.

The measures and arguments outlined in this document proposing a better organised and more strategic set of information and communication approaches in support of PBAs might involve fresh burdens on partners implementing programme-based approaches.

Three main arguments are proposed to justify this increased burden:

- The first is that the principles and commitments in the Accra Agenda for Action cannot be realised without making government/citizen communication a more central component of PBA strategies.
- The second is that greater public understanding, better access to information and improved communication flows between government and citizen (and vice versa) are likely to improve the performance and delivery of PBAs. Increasing citizen demand for better governance and improved service delivery – a central preoccupation of much development debate – depends fundamentally on improved information and communication flows.
- Finally, we argue that many efforts currently carried out under the aid harmonisation agenda and in the context of PBAs are inherently information and communication processes without necessarily being understood as such. However, such information and communication processes are often characterised by poor coordination, insufficient lesson learning, duplication and poor integration across development sectors. Information and communication support is, in other words, insufficiently harmonised.

Major challenges remain, however, in translating such arguments into practice. It is a central principle of PBAs that it is the partner – normally the recipient government – who makes the decisions on how and where funding is spent. At least in its ideal form, it is not in the remit of the donor to specify conditions – indeed avoiding placing burdensome conditions on partner governments is a key objective of the aid harmonisation agenda. Furthermore, few if any of the agreed indicators set out in either the Paris Declaration or the Accra Agenda for Action provide clear institutional incentives for more prioritised or coherent information and communication planning.

The following pages outline how information and communication strategies are implicit within and throughout the aid harmonisation agenda. Only rarely are they explicit. This issue is the subject of one of the main recommendations of this paper; namely, that what is implicit in the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda should be made explicit in the form of more coherent and concrete information and communication strategies in support of aid harmonisation.

Why information and communication is important: Getting ownership right

The fundamental principle underpinning the implementation of programme-based approaches is that of country leadership or “ownership”. This principle has been subject to intense debate within the international development community. The precise definition of ownership was left deliberately vague in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the initial agreement between donors and partner countries that created the framework for aid harmonisation from which PBAs largely emerged. It was left to the
follow-up Accra Agenda for Action – agreed in 2008 at a major meeting of heads of multilateral, bilateral agencies and developing countries – to articulate this more clearly.

“Country ownership is key”, proclaimed the Accra Agenda for Action. “Developing country governments will take stronger leadership of their own development policies, and engage with their parliaments and citizens in shaping them. Donors will support them by respecting country priorities, investing in their human resources and institutions, making greater use of their systems to deliver aid, and increasing the predictability of aid flows.”

Although Accra did not go as far as civil society networks wanted, it marked an important shift, broadening the notion of country ownership to extend beyond government to include the citizen, thereby constituting a more democratic concept of ownership. That shift has important implications for how budget support, PBAs and other strategic components of the aid harmonisation agenda are conducted. Ownership could no longer be defined as the product of bilateral conversations between government and donor largely divorced from a process of dialogue with beneficiaries and citizens.

The Accra Agenda commits donors to supporting 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 objectives”.

Even after Accra, and although the Accra Agenda goes into some detail about what is required to achieve greater country ownership, there remains a lack of clarity around the precise definition of the term. For the purpose of this document, country ownership comprises two key elements:

1. governments reliant on external development funding should be principal architects and implementers of the development strategies and processes designed to benefit their country and people, and
2. those most affected by and in need of development support should have a substantive understanding of, and capacity to influence and hold to account the development strategies designed to benefit them.

If PBA strategies are designed to be rooted in country ownership, then people most affected by those strategies need to have some understanding of what they are. They also require the means and the capacity to express what they think of them and ultimately, to influence their implementation. If country ownership is accepted as extending beyond a simple governmental relationship to one where all actors – both donor and recipient government – have a responsibility to ensure citizen engagement at some level, the process of communication becomes critical.

Citizens need information to understand the measures being put in place to benefit them, and they need channels of communication to articulate their perspectives on their design and performance.

**Why information and communication is important: Getting accountability right**

Country ownership is one key principle underpinning programme-based approaches. A second is accountability. Shifting accountability relationships in development funding has been the central theme underpinning much restructuring of the development system over the last five years or so.

“We will be more accountable and transparent to our publics for results”, proclaimed the Accra Agenda for Action. “Transparency and accountability are essential elements for development results. They lie at the heart of the Paris Declaration, in which we agreed that countries and donors would become more accountable to each other and to their citizens.”

The aid harmonisation agenda at its core is designed to place responsibility for the effective design and implementation of development strategies in the hands of developing country governments. Explicit in

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1 A joint civil society statement designed to influence the outcome of the Accra agreement urged governments to “commit to broadening the definition of ownership so that citizens, civil society organisations and elected officials are central to the aid process at all levels”.
that restructuring has been the understanding that developing countries should no longer be principally accountable to donors for the funds they spend – they should be accountable to their citizens.

Translating this shifting of accountability relationships downward from government to citizen, rather than upward from government to donor, remains one of the greatest challenges in international aid harmonisation. It is also an area where some of the most intense donor and civil society activity action is taking place, including within the OECD DAC.

Underpinning nearly all strategies designed to ensure that governments are accountable to their citizens is a process of information and communication. Information and communication is playing an increasingly central role in enabling citizens to understand the funds being spent for their benefit. Without such understanding, and without the capacity to communicate their own perspectives on whether they think it is being effectively and appropriately spent, an accountability relationship cannot properly exist.

**Why information and communication is important: A rights-based approach to development**

Many donors and development actors committed to aid harmonisation and structuring aid around programme-based approaches also subscribe to principles underpinning a rights-based approach to development. The principal duty bearer is the partner government, responsible for using taxpayer funding and donor funding to benefit society and citizens. Rights are held principally by the proposed beneficiaries of PBAs, but also by a range of stakeholders working in their interests and acting as intermediaries between government and beneficiary.

A rights-based approach has profound implications not only for partner governments but also for how donors choose to approach the issue of information and communication in programme-based approaches. A report by the think tank FRIDE put this choice in stark terms:

"Donors themselves distort access to information for citizens because they give too little, too much or the wrong information to civil society. On the one hand donors still subscribe to old habits of flag-posting and have communication strategies for their projects, not for the overall engagement with government and the development of the country as a whole. This often leads to the perception that getting services is a question of good luck or having special skills that attract donors. This in turn prevents poor men and women from developing the perception that access to services is a right, which is to be fulfilled by the state as a duty bearer and which can be demanded through social mobilisation."

Such a conclusion suggests that not having a clear information and communication strategy that enables citizens to understand and engage with the efforts implemented through PBAs can in itself constitute an abuse of rights.

**Why information and communication is important: Communicating for, not just about, results**

"Management for results" is another key component of programme-based approaches. One important component of communication within the aid effectiveness agenda is communicating results of development assistance. Most of this effort is focused on convincing publics of donor countries that aid money is achieving the impact for which it is designed. There is much less focus on communicating with developing country publics – particularly beneficiaries – in whose interest aid is being spent.

However, another element being increasingly incorporated within development strategies is what OECD DAC has recently highlighted as communication for results, an arena using what are often called

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4 The rights-based approach to development roots development cooperation in the realisation of human rights laid down in Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is designed to enhance the capacity of “dutybearers” to meet their obligations, and “rights holders” in claiming their rights.

7 Ownership with adjectives: Donor Harmonisation: between effectiveness and democratisation, Fride, 2008
‘communication for development’ approaches. According to a World Bank study (one of the main proponents of this approach), there is a strong evidence base of the contribution that communication for development has played in delivering successful programmes.  

An informal paper prepared for OECD DAC has argued that communication is:

“...highly compatible with the holistic nature of the Management for Development Results process. Such approaches privilege a role for communication throughout the programme cycle, as opposed to exclusively as a dissemination function at the end of the programme. By definition, integrating communication as a tool for project or programme implies internal as well as external dimensions. Internally the emphasis is on harnessing communication as a tool for internal learning towards more joined-up action. Externally communication engages project or programme beneficiaries and other key stakeholders, including government officials and policy-makers.”

How we should understand information, communication and media: Lessons from PRSPs

Effective programme-based approaches depend on an effective flow of information from citizen to government, and from government to citizen. This is how the role of information and communication is conceived in this document. This guide does not focus on issues of public relations or improving institutional profiles.

This two-way flow of communication has been repeatedly identified as a defining characteristic of good communication in development contexts. As defined by the 2006 World Congress on Communication for Development, communication is “a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It seeks change at different levels, including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change.”

Many of the principles suggested as using communication to enhance country ownership of development strategies have been highlighted for several years, particularly with relevance to Poverty Reduction Strategies and similar mechanisms. These remain highly relevant to PBAs, particularly in the wake of the Accra Agenda for Action. According to a 2005 World Bank/DFID report:

“Strategic communication is much more than merely informing citizens about PRSPs. Rather, it is the active seeking of the perspectives and contributions of citizens so that they can help to shape policy. It also means ensuring that mechanisms are in place for a two-way flow of information and ideas between the government and the citizenry as well as making deliberate efforts to build consensus amongst stakeholders about the development strategy the nation wishes to pursue. Done properly, strategic communication contributes to the effectiveness of PRSPs in the following ways:

- It creates open and inclusive national dialogue on policy options. This leads to greater and informed participation in policymaking by significant segments of the population. The result is increased support and commitment for the strategy that is agreed.
- It manages expectations. Rather than a revolution of unrealistic hopes it gives the people a balanced sense of what policy options can deliver. This helps governments.
- It promotes transparency and accountability. Open and inclusive dialogue richly informed by a full airing of the facts helps citizens to hold governments to account. They can measure progress against promises more easily.
- It establishes and maintains momentum. This is because once vast multitudes are engaged in the process of working out the strategy to be pursued the energies of the nation are more easily unleashed; and once unleashed it is almost impossible to switch off.
- It creates or deepens a public culture of citizen–government dialogue. This is already evident in several PRSP implementing countries, as this study affirms. Such a culture has enormous benefits all round for the development agenda”.

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8 Mefalopulos (2008), section 3.4 on ‘Communication for Monitoring and Evaluation’

9 Managing for and Communicating Development Results, Background Paper Prepared for the OECD Informal Network of DAC Development Communicators (DevCom Network), 2008

10 With the Support of Multitudes: Using strategic communication to fight poverty through PRSPs, Mozammel, M. and Odugbemi, S. (eds) for DFID and the World Bank, 2005
Part 1B: Integrating information and communication into programme-based approaches: What does a strategy look like?

The previous section focused on how information and communication processes lie at the heart of many donor, government, civil society and other efforts to fulfil the commitments outlined in the Accra Agenda for Action. It suggested that a more strategic and coordinated approach to the use of communication in the aid harmonisation agenda would be useful, including within the design and delivery of PBAs. This section focuses on what that strategy might look like.

The starting point: Link what already exists

While current efforts to enhance the role of information and communications are underway, question marks remain over how well coordinated and integrated diverse information and communication measures are:

- **Government partners** in many countries are increasingly making budgetary and policy information more accessible and available to publics, and investing in a range of strategies designed to enhance public and beneficiary understanding of the services designed to be delivered under PBAs. The Accra Agenda for Action made several commitments where developing countries agreed, for example, to facilitate parliamentary oversight through “public disclosure of revenues, budgets, expenditures, procurement and audits”. A panoply of e-governance initiatives, budget transparency efforts, access to information legislation, public consultation exercises, public information campaigns, media engagement and other efforts are an increasing characteristic of development planning and programming. Sometimes these have been supported or catalysed by pressure from external development actors (donors or the World Bank), sometimes they have been internally generated from within government, and often they have resulted from civil society pressure.

- **Donors and international development actors** are investing substantial resources in making information and data on aid disbursements more publicly available. The Accra Agenda for Action committed donors to “publicly disclose regular, detailed and timely information on volume, allocation and, when available, results of development expenditure to enable more accurate budget, accounting and audit by developing countries”. It also committed donors 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 objectives”. Donors are making major investments in mechanisms such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative and other related initiatives such as Publish What You Fund. Major resources are also being mobilised to support improved domestic accountability and generate greater citizen demand for good governance.

- **Industry bodies**, such as those in the extractive industries, are also responding to civil society pressure to improve the transparency of their payments in developing countries, including through the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

- **Civil society organisations** have been at the forefront of translating the more democratic principles implied by the Accra Agenda for Action into impact on people’s lives. While much of this has been through advocacy, it has relied heavily on information and communication-based processes, including access to information movements, freedom of information campaigns, budget monitoring

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11 Note: the Accra Agenda for Action focuses significantly on aligning the information and statistical systems of donor and developing country partners. Such processes are not designed to be significantly addressed here.
and budget transparency initiatives, community information and multiple other methods. Such efforts are increasingly well resourced, well organised and a clear international accountability movement has emerged over recent years. These efforts have gained additional momentum since Accra.

- Media are increasingly recognised as an essential factor in informing publics and – particularly in convergence with new technologies such as mobile telephony – transforming the capacity of citizens to access information on the services designed to benefit them. New and significant opportunities for citizens to access information are being recognised, and new and social media are already proving important components in generating greater demand and citizen accountability of programme delivery.

This is far from a comprehensive list of all the kinds of information and communication approaches already being used in the context of PBAs. Many of these initiatives are reflected at community and local levels specifically in the context of improving service delivery. It is not necessarily recommended that all of these very diverse initiatives by very different development actors somehow be corralled into a single information and communication framework. Information and communication strategies are being used for very different purposes with very different results.

It is recommended, however, that many if not most of these information and communication initiatives have strong and dynamic linkages, and that a much more strategic and holistic assessment and approach to the deployment of information and communication within the context of PBAs is likely to produce real results. At present there are few examples or capacities that seek to synchronise or develop impact-oriented synergies between the multitude of information and communication strategies.

The strategic choice about participation: Balancing the technical with the political

The second strategic starting point for using information and communication more effectively and in a more coherent and holistic way within PBAs is to be clear about objectives. The starting point should not be about what information and communication methodologies are available, but what it is they are designed to achieve. In few areas of the aid harmonisation agenda does confusion over objectives appear more readily than in the use of information and communication.

How donors and partners choose to use information and communication in PBAs ultimately depends on how important they consider the process of participation to be in their design and delivery. Communication can be a highly technical process – simply making selective information available in order to enhance the efficiency of development efforts – or it can be a highly political and complex one that actively draws citizens into the process of design and assessment of programmes.

Access to information in Vietnam, for example, is considered to be very high by international development actors, particularly through government investments in e-government. The level of country ownership of harmonised development strategies has also for a long time been perceived as very strong. Political participation, however, is considered to be low and accountability weak, according to the think tank FRIDE12.

"In countries such as Vietnam, information is available, but engagement with it is more challenging due to the tight control of the public. In this respect, donors have either limited power or little inclination to stand up for basic rights such as freedom of association, freedom of speech and access to information," according to the FRIDE report.

There are intense and long running debates about the effectiveness of participation and a more democratic approach to aid delivery in actually securing material benefits for aid recipients. Some government partners argue that the increased transaction costs incurred in what they regard as open-ended participatory

processes outweigh the benefits of government-led and organised programme planning and delivery. Within the current aid harmonisation agenda, including within the context of PBAs, the decision on how much to invest in participation and through what mechanisms continues to be largely one of government partner discretion. What is possible, and what the most effective use of information and communication is in one political context will clearly be very different in another.

This document has made arguments about why and how information and communication are central to improving participation and thereby improving aid effectiveness, but its central point is that the choice of information and communication methodology and focus depends fundamentally on a decision over objectives, and those objectives are likely to differ substantially between one political context and another.

All this makes it very difficult to make clear recommendations or develop a single framework to achieve specific PBA objectives. Which communication methodologies, and the extent to which they are used, ultimately depends on choices being made between these technical and political tensions in how PBAs are delivered.

Three sets of objectives can, however, be usefully be associated with the use of information and communication in PBAs:

- **Greater government legitimacy and accountability**: The legitimacy of government is intimately connected to how well publics understand government strategies and objectives. While government information and communication efforts in many countries and many cases are designed to shape – and often manipulate – public opinion in the government’s own interest, there is both a responsibility and often a public expectation that the government will make information available on the strategies and services it is providing. Public legitimacy cannot be achieved without it.

- **Better public understanding of PBA objectives**: Publics cannot make use of or respond to PBAs without being informed about what they are designed to achieve. Many of the strategies outlined below are designed to achieve better public understanding of the service delivery objectives, strategies and policy choices embedded within PBAs.

- **Broader Public Engagement**: Enhancing country ownership and accountability relationships around PBAs depends on increased capacities for public debate and the expression of public opinion on the design and performance of PBAs.
Part 1C: Conclusion: Make what is implicit in PBAs explicit

The arguments presented above, and the summary of evidence included in Part 2 of this review, point to some clear principles underpinning how the mainstreaming of information and communication in programme-based approaches can be fully achieved.

Crystal clarity of objectives: Some PBAs operate in an environment where governments’ principal objective is to design and deliver services in ways that they consider most appropriate with the minimum of citizen engagement, assessment or feedback. Their communication priority is to communicate to people, not to gain information from them. Others believe that PBAs can only be successful in the context of engagement and active assessment and the holding to account of their delivery. Aid harmonisation reduces the potential for conditions and influence of donors over partner decisions and behaviours, but even in situations where influence is very limited, it is critical that the objectives – and constraints – of any information and communication process are clearly defined and made transparent.

Make implicit assumptions of the role of information in communication in PBAs explicit: Programme-based approaches have several explicit values (in the context of a rights-based approach, transparency, accountability, participation and non discrimination). However, information and communication strategies can best be designed and integrated into PBAs where there is a more explicit articulation of just how far PBAs should be rooted in more democratic ownership and greater accountability, and how much they should deliver these values. Information and communication strategies can then be designed within a clear and transparent framework adapted to the political context. Very different strategies will be used in very different contexts.

Aid harmonisation needs to accommodate information and communication: No mechanism currently exists for linking the very different, but increasingly numerous and impactful, information and communication mechanisms designed to improve aid effectiveness. This report has touched on the vast range, diversity, energy and creativity of different information and communication approaches. It has also suggested that such approaches are often characterised by poor coordination, insufficient lesson learning, high rates of duplication and poor integration across development sectors. Information and communication support is, in other words, insufficiently harmonised. Civil society, government, donor and other information and communication strategies – including in the area of sector service delivery – are too rarely linked and strategically synthesised. It is not suggested that there should be one simple uniform and coordinated strategy, however, mapping the links and catalytic opportunities based on a more comprehensive view of information and communication as it affects the beneficiaries of PBAs would be useful. This requires creating a new capacity within the aid architecture to make this possible. An explicit point of reference to enable creative linkages between the government partner and other actors (donors, civil society and media) on mainstreaming information and communication into PBAs might be considered.

Starting with the citizen: Most information and communication initiatives start with the institution – the government, donor or civil society actor. In no other field, however, is it more important to root any strategy in the information and communication realities of the citizen, and particularly the beneficiary of PBAs. Governments have both the right and responsibility in PBAs to determine how and through what strategy and policy they will deliver sector programmes, but there can be little objection to any PBA relationship being rooted in a clear understanding of the information and communication realities, needs and aspirations of the people they are designed to benefit.

Know the limits, but be clear about them: It may be difficult to successfully integrate communication and media in PBAs where governments are uninterested or reluctant to prioritise rights-based communication, or propose actions to strengthen the informational and political power of elites and shut out civil actors. However, as highlighted in this report, the very absence of an information and communication strategy underpinning PBAs can create citizen confusion and can in itself constitute a threat to rights. Whatever the scale or character of the information and communication strategy and whatever the nature of the relationship between donor and partner, it is useful to be clear about what the strategy is, what it is designed to achieve and what parameters it is working within.
Part 2:
Incorporating communication and media activities in PBAs for sector support:
Summaries of lessons learned
Part 2 of this document comprises an assessment of the available evidence to provide insight into what kinds of information and communication interventions have proved relevant to PBAs. It provides (in a highly summarised form) some conclusions the authors have drawn based on an assessment of the lessons emerging from a detailed literature review. Sources for the literature review are detailed at the end. Only some of these are drawn explicitly from PBA experiences, but all of them have been reviewed based on their relevance to PBAs.

The options for using information and communication are generally multiple and complex. This section is designed to help guide such choices based on what has worked in the past and what has not. It is not designed as a comprehensive list of information and communication strategies, but it is hoped that it can provide some insight into how different information and communication mechanisms have fared in the design and delivery of PBAs and other linked aid processes.

Many of the measures outlined below are the subject of major development effort, including central components of government engagement strategies by the World Bank, and by highly sophisticated international civil society networks (such as Revenue Watch and the International Budget Partnership). Much more detailed information and analysis are available from these and other networks.

The focus here is on synthesising lessons learned based on our own analysis of how well different information and communication experiences and approaches have underpinned PBAs or similar approaches based on desk research. As such, the measures and principles outlined here are for general guidance only – specific policy action should be rooted in more context-specific and purpose-led research.

**Part 2A: Making government information accessible**

Much has been written and researched on issues of public financial management, but based on a literature review conducted for this guide, some particularly key challenges are relevant in relation to information and communication (these are inevitably generic and not country specific).

**Constraints and problems**

Both donors and civil society actors have invested substantial effort in using budget monitoring and other budget accountability and transparency measures to improve aid effectiveness and delivery. Numerous political constraints are regularly encountered:

- There tends to be limited recognition among politicians and managers of the need to address public financial management as an instrument for democracy.
- Commitment among political actors to propose realistic and sufficiently detailed budgets that can be monitored is often weak.
- There frequently tends to be a lack of cooperation and linking between planning and budgeting.
- Public acceptance of taxes and the public trust in the expenditure of tax-generated revenues is often weak.
- Both political and broader civil service sympathy to more transparent budgeting mechanisms has tended to be very low (e.g. government systems tend to be strongly against participatory budget groups).
- Government data systems tend to be weak.
- There is generally very limited public access to audits and financial procedures in parallel with poor knowledge about financial management issues among citizens, CSOs and media.
- Procurement processes tend to lack transparency and there is a general deficiency in societal capacity (either from media, civil society, parliament, etc) to play a sufficient watchdog capacity to cover procurements. Accountability mechanisms to assess fairness and equality of procurement, disbursement procedures and decision-making tend to be lacking.
There tend to be restricted or unclear instructions among civil servants for sharing of information, non-existent information management staff and supportive structures for information sharing internally and to the public.

There is limited capacity within partners to address media and CSOs, mirrored by poor capacity and incentives for media to investigate or report.

**Information and communication – relevant responses**

Efforts to use information and communication to improve transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination in this area have been substantial. Some of the most effective are outlined here, followed by what existing research suggests about which factors have contributed to successful strategies.

- **Budget accessibility and interpretation**: Making budgets accessible and interpretable to those they are designed to benefit. However, simple accessibility of budgetary information may not be enough if it is not backed up by a capacity to interpret and make sense of data. Similarly, public access to budgetary information generally needs to be accompanied by mechanisms to ensure real public transparency and public exposure of wrongdoing or mismanagement.

- **Transparency of public records**: Promotion of public understanding of the rights and regulations governing access to public records (to ensure equality and fairness in financial processes).

- **Codes of ethics**: Production and broad public communication of agreed codes of ethics for government officials and citizen rights in dealing with government officials.

- **Budget reporting**: Communication at all levels (through the media at national level through to community notice boards) of budget allocations, expenditures and audits in forms that can be understood by beneficiaries and those working in their interests.

- **Budget monitoring**: Active support for budget monitoring processes and capacities, and the encouragement of linkages between CSO budget monitoring and the media.

- **E-governance**: Systematic application of e-governance strategies designed to open public records and government functions to easy public electronic access.

- **Conduct of public hearings** on budget decisions, and mechanisms such as civic councils, public expenditure tracking surveys and other measures that can foster “open budget” policies.

- **Investigative journalism**: Preparedness to respond to, openness to and development of mechanisms designed to encourage investigative journalism and other media initiatives designed to uncover corruption or poor service delivery.

- **Local language budget accessibility**: Ensuring that key data and budgetary information, and associated information about participatory and decision-making processes, are available and disseminated in local languages to relevant beneficiaries.

- **Participatory budgeting**: Institutionalising participatory budgeting mechanisms (decisions, tracking expenditures and monitoring performance).

Substantial literature exists around the impact and benefits of efforts to make public financial management and budget processes more transparent, accountable and participatory. Research has particularly focused on:

- Impact of the simplification of budget process

- Preparation of summaries and guides (an example is Croatia’s Institute for Public Finance)

- Provision of easy-to-access information about budgets for popular consumption

- Provision of expertise and critical analysis of budget process (notable examples come from India and Zambia)
• Development of advocacy expertise of civic groups to promote certain budget priorities
• Training initiatives for legislature/civil society (examples are Mexico’s experience from Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) and South Africa’s Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA))
• Monitoring of budget allocations (India’s Public Affairs Center, Ghana’s Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative)
• Advocacy and monitoring of budget priorities (especially as they relate to women, children, and the poor – good examples are South Africa’s Children’s Budget and Tanzania’s Gender Networking Programme)

The evidence shows that certain processes facilitate the implementation and effectiveness of participatory budget mechanisms. Initiatives are more likely to be effective if they take place in settings/countries undergoing broad process of democratisation, decentralisation (especially fiscal devolution), and efforts pushing for new public expenditure management systems.

Studies on the impact of civil society organisations (CSOs) on participatory budget mechanisms have focused on two issues: the effects on budget accountability/process and on budget policies/priorities/earmarks.

CSOs have played a lead role in influencing drafting process of budget by conducting public hearings, gathering information, and producing research and analysis. Examples include the work of Kenya’s Institute for Economic Affairs which coordinates meetings between CSOs and government officials and produces reports including agreed priorities. In South Africa, the National NGO Coalition has conducted hearings and collated information/priorities using these to engage with government. Contributions from CSOs tend to be stronger in terms of analytical roles (dissecting, explaining and debating budgets) rather than during drafting, implementing and auditing them.

The literature suggests several factors that increase the likelihood of positive impact:

• The government is the driver of the process (Uganda is a useful example of this). CSOs play a key role, but unless governments take the lead, their chances of successfully promoting participatory mechanisms are slim.
• Parliaments have decision-making power in the budget process. If parliament is weak and the executive is strong, it is unlikely that actions will be effective.
• Notwithstanding the importance of government leadership, evidence also suggests that bottom-up, long-term approaches work better than top-down or government/donor mandated. Success is contingent on long-term support and collaboration with CSOs with expertise and capacity on budget issues.
• Pro-poor leadership plays a crucial role throughout the budget decision-making process.
• Well-established relationships among various stakeholders (governments, CSOs) increase the prospects of success.
• Strategies and prospects for donor influence are contingent on how much a given country depends on donor funding. Donors are more likely to have more impact when their funding is a significant proportion of public budgets.
• Interventions are unlikely to be effective if parliaments lack sufficient research capacity, power to amend budgets prepared by executive, and have a weak committee system.

The space, capacity and culture for public debate and freedom of information determine the possibilities for broad-based domestic budget participation.
**Information and communication relevant conclusions**

There is very limited evidence of coordinated or coherent programming designed to improve broader democratic ownership of development programmes, or of public understanding of development choices (e.g. the advantages and disadvantages of generating better public understanding of the kinds of taxation regimes that can provide exit strategies from aid dependence).

Efforts to promote public understanding of the links between government revenue raising and service delivery seem minimal. Historically, accountability relationships have developed from public demands for accountability on how tax-generated government revenue is spent. There is little evidence to suggest that beneficiaries of programme-based approaches understand the financing mechanisms and funding sources for the services designed to benefit them.

Public understanding of accountability relationships for service delivery can be strong in situations where it is clear where funding has been generated (particularly if it is from their taxes). Where funding sources are more distant and fuzzy (such as in donor-funded activities), public demand for accountability becomes less focused. Although PBAs are in part designed to address this problem, by consolidating funding sources within one financial mechanism, public relationships with money being spent on their behalf can still be unclear. If there is to be much stronger public and beneficiary demand for accountability of service delivery in programme-based approaches, far more intensive public education and engagement efforts would appear to be needed. This is likely to include working through and with media, investigative journalism and other communication strategies capable of bringing larger numbers of beneficiaries into the development conversation.

**Part 2B: State-citizen relationships**

Weak communication between government and citizens has been repeatedly flagged in governance assessments and much other governance research. This is often attributed to weak structures and capacity for public information management and for participatory communication, lack of an enabling environment for promoting public access to official information (e.g. no public information or access to information legislation, weak enforcement of existing laws, insufficient resources in government units to respond to requests, unclear rules and responsibilities, lack of public knowledge about existence and use of laws, difficulty of petition). This is often exacerbated by weak watchdog bodies to monitor corruption and other unethical behaviours.

**Information and communication relevant measures**

As in the budgetary sector, substantial information and communication effort has already been made to improve accountability, transparency, participation and non-discrimination in public administration efforts by government, donors and especially by civil society. Measures include:

- **Access to information and freedom of information**: Intensive and often highly successful citizen movements designed to increase access to information and freedom of information. This can lead to systemic change from the passing of new legislation through to sector-specific campaigns around better access to information around plans, programmes policy in education, health or other sectors.

- **E-governance initiatives** designed to provide regular updates on programmes, seek feedback, and solicit input on specific aspects and activities to increase public knowledge about goals and responsibilities.

- **Public consultations and participatory dialogues** at national and community level with the participation of the news media, citizen journalists, community councils and NGOs to increase communication between government and public.

- **Government communication** involving efforts to enhance capacity of government communication and media offices to conduct regular outreach activities to communities and civic organisations.
• **Citizen-based monitoring** mechanisms of programmes and activities, such as social audits, media debate fora, service users reporting on a regular basis, the use of citizen report cards.

• **Watchdog units** involving measures to create public monitoring and watchdog functions (e.g. ombudsmen, auditor, independent media boards) with sufficient resources and opportunities to report to both government and civic organisations in order to institutionalise accountability mechanisms.

• **Public information campaigns** involving the conduct of awareness-raising activities and campaigns to promote programmes, “right to information,” and participation in watchdog mechanisms among minority and marginalised populations. The capacity of government to reach large sections of the population through public service and other media may be weakening significantly.

• **Community information support**, including support for community and minority media for reporting, debate and investigation into service delivery under the framework of PBAs to enable public debate and open dialogue at community level.

**Freedom of information: Evidence of activity/intervention impact**

Although there is still a lack of comparative studies analysing lessons across the world, several case studies suggest that freedom of information (FoI) efforts are more likely to be successful when:

• CSOs pushing for FoI laws work on several fronts. Experiences from India, Mexico, and Uruguay suggest the need for broad civic coalitions and social movements to promote FoI, raise awareness among key decision-makers, and produce drafts of laws.

• CSOs find sympathetic allies in legislature/executive who for a variety of reasons are willing to sponsor bills.

• CSOs and pro-FoI legislators take advantage of the political momentum created by scandals and mismanagement of public money (examples of such momentum being established have come from Ireland, Canada and Japan, among others).

• Legislation clearly determines modes of access to official information, and institutional responsibilities to respond to requests, and specific resources that need to be earmarked for the effective implementation of the legislation.

• FoI procedures are embedded in routine decisions of government units and users.

**E-governance/transparency involving civil society participation: Evidence of activity/intervention impact**

E-governance – how citizens are enabled to access government services by digital means – is one of the most widely adopted information-related measures by governments and tends to be used in both highly open political environments and very closed ones.

• Evidence suggests that e-governance is not simply about technology. Instead, it is about programmes aimed at transforming relations between state and civil society in order to facilitate decision-making and policy-making, allow for regular interaction of various stakeholders, and provide services and management.

• If programmes are not properly implemented with accountability mechanisms and citizens’ participation, e-governance can be a method for reinforcing top-down, authoritarian structures.

• Programmes are more likely to effectively contribute to transparency, accountability and participation (TAPN) relevant goals if they guarantee access for all and implement actions to reduce digital divide.

• Impact is also contingent on the existence of e-champions/entrepreneurs – people who are favorably disposed to introduce and institutionalise e-governance to further transparency and accountability.
Programmes need to organise “the playing field” – stakeholders who are interested in institutionalising e-governance.

However, there are clear risks and challenges:

- If countries are not “ready for e-governance”, the success of programmes is unlikely. E-governance requires strong political will, institutional support, and commitment from key stakeholders. If government agencies lack interest or incentives to use e-governance towards fostering TAPN goals, programmes are unlikely to deliver results. Thus it is necessary to determine needs and promising courses of action, as well as identify interests among government agencies.
- E-governance has limited impact on TAPN goals when the public is not aware about its availability or has access difficulties (e.g. connectivity, money, distance, etc).
- Resistance to change from current actors (officials, public administration staff) who view e-governance as a threat.
- Establishment of e-governance mechanisms that primarily provide services that fit interests of business and urban citizens rather than the poor.
- Institutional weakness, lack of human resources/capacity, limited technology, and inadequate legislation undermine the contributions of e-governance mechanisms.
- Availability of e-governance doesn’t necessarily lead to e-democracy. Cases show that the majority of uses don’t support democratic governance goals.

Citizens’ voice and participation: Evidence of activity/intervention impact

Evidence shows that citizens’ voice and participation are more likely to have successful impact when:

- Participatory mechanisms are easily accessible to the poor.
- Debate and decision-making procedures follow entrenched participatory norms and legislation.
- Participatory mechanisms are incorporated into existing legal frameworks (instead of being set up in new and separate structures).
- Citizens’ voices are articulated with government mechanisms for deliberation and decision-making.
- Political conditions are auspicious or, under unfavourable political conditions, mechanisms are established outside the state.
- They are part of multi-pronged approaches such as work on constitutional provisions, local government laws, administrative procedures, and/or freedom of information legislation.
- Debate mechanisms are linked to decision-making procedures.
- Dialogue and collaboration between reform-minded officials and CSOs with grassroots linkages, credibility, and capacity.
- Community radio has a particularly strong record in enabling both real participation and conveying legitimacy on development processes. It is being expanded rapidly in some countries with direct government support (an example is Colombia) in part to improve the performance of service delivery. There remain key issues of sustainability and current analysis suggests that investment levels need to be determined more by the often considerable sustainable value they bring to the development process, rather than sometimes unrealistic expectations of commercial sustainability.
Some information and communication relevant conclusions on public administration and state/citizen relationships

There is very little research or analysis that provides an overview or status audit of information and communication flows between government and citizen (and vice versa) in the context of service delivery relevant to programme-based approaches. E-governance initiatives are well documented, as are access and freedom of information efforts, and multiple participatory and consultation exercises. Public opinion research on service delivery takes place in some instances. Media mapping is common but is not generally tailored to understanding and responding to the information and communication needs of citizens.

However, more integrated and comprehensive assessments of actual public understanding of and engagement with the services that are designed to be provided through programme-based approaches, and public satisfaction and other surveys that might provide greater insight into the quality of service delivery are still nascent. State/civil society relationships are an intensifying characteristic of many countries implementing programme-based approaches, but this does not always translate into a broader engagement of the citizen. Assessments of the quality, relevance or value placed on information available to users of services provided under PBAs are generally lacking.

The panoply of information measures relevant to better administration and delivery of public services under PBAs and associated objectives of improving state citizen relationships is only touched on here. Different actors – governments, civil society, media, donors, private sector actors – all make up a complex information and communication ecology which substantially impacts on the choices, behaviours and rights of the beneficiaries of PBAs. There appears to be little or no capacity or mechanism within any of these sectors to make better sense of numerous information and communication efforts and to assess the information and communication realities, needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries of PBAs.

While not designed specifically for PBAs, initial efforts to conduct citizen information and communication audits as part of UN and other country assessments are increasingly being piloted by UNDP and other organisations (see www.undp.org/oslocentre/overview/ogc_communication_empowerment.html). These may prove a valuable methodology in the context of PBAs.

As elsewhere, however, the specific measures that can be used to improve the integration of information and communication into PBAs depend on country context and many other factors. The principal conclusion is that the vast variety of information and communication methodologies and strategies already at work in improving aid delivery and harmonisation need to be better coordinated, better linked and above all, better assessed on whether they are actually meeting the expressed information and communication demands of PBA beneficiaries. A specific capacity capable of making these links between the information and communication efforts of government, civil society and other actors would be the most valuable measure to address these issues.
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Getting it together

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

The BBC World Service Trust report, *How to use communication to make aid effective: strategies and principles for programme-based approaches*, is a sister publication to *Getting it Together: Strengthening transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination with communication methods*, published by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

A summary of that report follows. The full report can be found at www.sida.se
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. Sida and our partners today use various communication approaches as change is unlikely to happen without interaction with intended beneficiaries and potential adversaries. Nevertheless, the systems, channels and methods are rarely managed in a strategic or result-oriented way.

The guidance is geared towards instances when programme-based approaches are used as an aid modality, but can also be applied in other situations. In Getting it Together different entry points are suggested:

**At the international level**
- when influencing international analytical tools and methods

Communication approaches and processes need be integrated into international tools for assessments, analysing development results and planning development support.

**At the national level**
- when formulating Sweden’s Development Cooperation Strategy and Joint Country Assistance Strategies
- 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.

- when supporting formulation and implementation of key legislation

Supporting access to information legislation and en-

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**Overall 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 enforcement of the legislation in practice can drive substantial change in all sectors.

- when supporting formulation and implementation of national reforms
  Real change requires integrating communication systems and capacity into national reforms.
- when supporting media and CSOs to drive public debate, information sharing and investigations
  CSOs and independent media need support to be able to play their important role in promoting voice, checks and balances, participation, accountability and empowerment.

**At the sector and programme levels**
Issues can be raised during the partners’ planning period, implementation phase and follow up phase. *Getting it Together* offers a set of relevant questions to use for different working areas of programme based support (see box):

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**The basic institutional framework**
- 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

**The capacity of the public administration, including public financial management**
- 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**
- 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