

Consultation on ADB's Draft Public Communications Policy
PRC Resident Mission, Beijing
Summary of Participant Recommendations
19-20 May

ADB organized a workshop with representatives of NGOs, academe, and other development partners in the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 19 May 2004, and another with PRC Government officials on 20 May. Following are the recommendations of participants at both workshops. The list of those who attended the workshops is attached to this summary.

Evaluation by Government Officials

A. Strengths of the Draft Policy

- The new policy is a good framework, follows the current international trends, and reflects ADB's positive attitude.
- It is systematic, comprehensive, and very progressive.
- The policy is very good, especially the policy, strategy, and implementation arrangements sections.
- None of the proposed disclosure requirements are inconsistent with local laws or procedures.

B. Recommendations for Improvement:

1. Project Information (General):

- ADB information should be oriented toward the public rather than the stakeholders. For example, when carrying out the tendering process, relevant information should be made publicly available in order to increase competition and combat corruption. Stakeholders should approve of those selected to be involved in a project. Information such as that proposed for the Summary of Project Information (private sector projects) should be disclosed in full because it does not involve privacy.
- Disclose information related to project financing during project implementation.
- Insufficient attention is paid to the role of different levels of government in public communications. Include a paragraph describing the roles of local government in explaining project/policies to local communities.
- ADB should focus on its overall objectives and coordinate among its respective departments to ensure that those objectives are met. For example, ADB should streamline its project preparation processes by integrating safeguard assessments in order to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

2. Project Information to Affected Peoples:

- Communications should be two-way and interactive; the draft should provide for feedback of information from target groups, information gathering, and information processing (using the information to correct/adapt project design). Establish feedback mechanisms because more information disclosure may result in challenges and requests. How will ADB respond to those requests? Who will respond? Add a paragraph on this issue.
- Define "audience" and "affected groups."

- Encourage public participation in project preparation and accommodate for disclosure to affected people in the project design.
- A summary of the project should be disclosed to affected stakeholders as early as possible. This includes the overall investment, major issues, and objectives.
- The paper should describe the measures/approaches planned for communications with affected peoples.

3. What Information Should Not Be Disclosed:

- All other information should be made publicly available except that which is commercially sensitive (e.g., trade secrets) or related to individual privacy or national security.

4. Implementation Arrangements

- Effective Date -- The paper does not discuss the policy's implementation in sufficient detail. Clear preparations must be in place when the policy goes into effect. The paper should specify what ADB, the central government, and implementing and executing agencies will do. Will the policy go into effect for all projects at all stages on the effective date? There should be a cut-off, e.g., projects that start fact-finding in 2005 would start publicizing project information to affected areas. This makes more sense than starting to provide information to affected areas during project implementation.
- Training for government staff -- participants recommend producing manuals for government officials, supplemented by training courses for EAs and IAs. This training could be integrated with ADB's annual training for EA officials in PRC, and those held 2-3 times per year at ADB HQ.
- Participants suggested a 5-6 month lead time to prepare government officials and encourage trainees to train others.

5. Publicity and Outreach

- ADB should reinforce its efforts in publicity and outreach, attracting the interest of the public and general groups, including government agencies and companies.

6. Translation

- Although English is ADB's working language, ADB should use local languages more to improve its communications. This includes running a parallel Chinese web site. All ADB documents need not be translated, but the public should have guidance on how to get relevant information from ADB, including the Bank's working procedures. The World Bank has done better in this aspect.

7. Resource Implications

- Disclosure should not increase the costs of the project. Participation is traditionally built into project design, through surveys and consultation processes. Still, there will most likely be some incremental cost increases. ADB should ensure that budgets for PPTAs accommodate a consultation/communications strategy. Two-way communications may even reduce costs, e.g., through the use of e-technology.

8. Structure and Format of the Paper:

- The background and introductory sections could be more succinct, including the review of the existing policies (add as an appendix).

- The policy's purpose is not articulated fully. The purpose should be to improve the efficiency of project performance/effectiveness.

9. ADB Cooperation with Government and NGOs

- Many government organizations and NGOs want enhanced cooperation with ADB – they can provide services, and they want more dialogue and information. ADB should specify a department responsible to guide the public and relevant organizations to seek the help they need. NGOs and private businesses don't know how to access ADB.

10. Other

- Application of loans – ADB should improve services for on-line application of loans, similar to World Bank practice. Today, EAs can view withdrawals, but not project review sheets or tracking sheets for processing new loans and TAs.

Evaluation by NGO, Academia, Business, Donor and Media Representatives

A. Strengths of the Draft Policy

- ADB has demonstrated a good attitude and intentions.
- The document recognizes the need for good project implementation.
- ADB is proactively promoting public participation. This is very encouraging.
- ADB dares to recognize its own shortcomings and deficiencies.
- It has good mechanisms and hopefully will become a model promoting transparency.

B. Recommendations for Improvement:

1. Operational Information (General):

- Approach to Delivery – the communication approach is one-way only, but should be two-way. How will feedback be handled? ADB should provide a mechanism for public feedback, and disclose how that feedback has been used.
- Forge partnerships with media, researchers, anthropology/sociology.
- Develop media plans with a role for local, traditional media.
- ADB should know Chinese laws, e.g., required public participation in environmental assessment process. Surveys show that this is not happening. The public does not hear dissenting opinions.
- ADB should disclose information of about women's issues and give attention to these in the policy.
- Disclosing information on the web is useful.
- The working procedures for private sector projects should be disclosed.

2. Project Information to Affected Peoples:

- Affected groups are not included in the list of audiences in paragraph 67, but should be.
- Research should cater to the needs of affected peoples/groups.
- At project identification, ADB should disclose information about the expected project impact, including appropriation of land, so the public can be real partners in the feasibility study and provide assistance. If this is disclosed just before the project prepared, it is too late. An environmental assessment needs to provide

many alternatives. If the project is already underway, it is difficult to choose different alternatives.

- People should receive more information about what ADB has done. Information provided to the public affects a project's progress. It is impractical for everyone to achieve everything at once. The Government determines almost everything – 80%. ADB is a carrier or disseminator of information. For beneficiary groups, including the poor, access to information is a big problem.

3. What Information Should Not Be Disclosed:

- Information related to national security.
- The application materials and other information in the tendering and bidding process should not be disclosed.
- ADB should review UK and EU data protection laws to determine what should not be disclosed.

4. Implementation Arrangements

- How will the policy be implemented? Who will carry out the communication process? What will be communicated? Who will serve as a medium for getting information to affected groups? The policy should specify these arrangements. Over 50% of ADB loans for PRC are directed to transportation improvement. But so many government officials involved are guilty of corruption. The public needs to monitor such projects and we need workers in local communities to communicate with affected persons and monitor the projects. Local officials do not communicate well with local people.
- Training is important for building staff/consultant capacity to do the local work.
- ADB should exert further efforts to train its government partners in transparency and information disclosure. The new Chinese government is devoted to greater transparency, and requires disclosure of its affairs. ADB should be more aggressive in promoting government reform.
- Communications officers should be engaged for projects. ADB should provide training and work-flow procedures for their outreach to affected groups, to enable beneficiaries to fully participate in project processes.
- Deadline for responses -- In paragraph 145, there is a deadline for a response when someone requests information, but the policy does not have a deadline for those items which will be proactively disclosed. This could result in untimely disclosure and posting on the Internet.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Policy

- The paper does not include a mechanism for evaluation. Is this the responsibility of government executing agencies or ADB? The effectiveness of the disclosure of operational information should be evaluated systematically.

6. Translation

- Translation – Some terms in the Chinese translation of the PCP should be improved; provide a glossary for the final version. ADB should provide accurate translation of its documents.

7. Anticorruption Information

- Information about corruption cases should be included up front, with a focus on corruption avoidance.

8. Structure and Format of the Paper:

- The title of the document implies one-way communications.
- The paper should include a glossary of terms, such as “stakeholder” and “apex NGO.” Jargon should be eliminated.
- The paper is too long.
- The paper lacks a set of guiding principles, e.g., fairness/equity in accessibility.
- The principles articulated in the paper are not identified as such.
- Para 163 mentions objectives, one is for poverty reduction and for improving other areas. ADB is positioned more as a financial institution; it should not always be identified with democratization.
- The paper should specify the criteria for disclosure and non-disclosure.
- Consider explaining disclosure procedures during the project cycle through case studies. ADB procedures are difficult to understand.
- Under implementation arrangements, A, B and H should be put together since these are the responsible agencies.

9. Publicity and Outreach

- ADB’s web site is insufficient in explaining concepts, approaches, and case studies. ADB should set up an area for useful stories, data, and lessons learned throughout the region.
- In general, ADB should raise awareness and understanding of its activities among the public.
- ADB should use minor media publications as well as major ones, since the minor ones have large circulations. Media operated by the public plays an important role in the PRC. The policy focuses on guiding information.
- Media leaders and the science/research sectors are important disseminators of information, and ADB should use research groups to reach the grassroots.
- ADB should clarify its audience focus.
- Hope the policy will play a direct role to allow more people to access information so enterprises can get more information relevant to their priority areas.
- The policy should include public networks or webs, including women and migrant networks.

10. Good Practices

- Use information blackboards and flyers to inform the public.
- Invite those working in the religious community to participate in this work because people will listen to them.
- The government should consider the client-orientation of the private sector.

11. Cooperation with NGOs

- Interaction between ADB and NGOs could be further strengthened so that more NGOs can join ADB in developing different projects, and can mobilize local people to provide more information to the public. More work with grassroots NGOs at the local level can help elevate ADB’s image and facilitate better understandings of ADB procedures that are perceived as complex.
- ADB made efforts to understand NGOs in the PRC. However, there is a lack of completeness of information because of communication difficulties. Incorrect

translations can create misunderstandings and obstacles to smooth communication.

Review of the ADB's draft Public Communications Policy

List of Participants to Non-Government Workshop, 19 May, 2004

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List of Participants to Government Workshop, 20 May 2004

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