

Consultation on ADB's Draft Public Communications Policy
The Holiday Inn, Suva, Fiji Islands
Summary of Participant Recommendations
29 April 2004

A. Strengths of the Policy Draft

- All elements of the policy are beneficial for research and development.
- The draft calls for the use of appropriate tools/forms (i.e., not just mass media-driven strategies).
- The draft allows for the disclosure of consultant reports.
- Partnering with apex NGOs and civil society in general is encouraged.
- Easy access to information is essential to maximize resources and minimize future failures.
- The draft provides for the release of historical information.
- ADB uses the "best practice" of other agencies.

B. Recommendations for Improvement

1. Operational Information (General)

- The policy should discuss how ADB will address the community/public response to increased information. ADB might include a "feedback column" on its web site for projects. ADB should provide opportunities for people to "tell their side of the story"; what does ADB do with information published by other organizations that critique ADB's work?
- ADB should create awareness among member governments of the requirement to disclose. What are the political implications of ADB releasing more information than governments and civil society? ADB needs to specify an approach for dealing with governments regarding disclosure of ADB information, without accepting excuses from governments that refuse to release such information. Disclosure be considered as a condition for financing in projects; disclosure clauses could be incorporated in MOUs.
- How do we define an "ADB document"?
- Conflict prevention should be part of project investigation (initial social assessment); assessments should describe how the project could exacerbate existing or potential tensions.

2. Project Information for Affected Groups

- The policy should address property rights issues.
- Address information gathered during community participatory research processes and if this information violates intellectual property rights. One cannot simply extract data from a community and use it without the community's agreement and without providing feedback to the community regarding how the information was used.

3. Approaches to Delivery

- ADB should ensure information is provided in correct forms.
- The policy is unclear regarding who will develop the appropriate social and cultural modes of delivery.
- Provide a simplified summary for the media and expand ADB's on-line media center to include alternative media and civil society organizations.
- Supply information to schools and civil society organizations.

- Consider packaging information together for specific target audiences.
- All ADB reports should have executive summaries for ease of public understanding, especially oral societies.

4. Structure and Format of the Policy Paper

- The policy would be easier to understand and more transparent if it only identifies what ADB *won't* disclose.
- The policy is too wordy.

5. “Pacific” Perspective

- The draft does not adequately incorporate a “Pacific” perspective, e.g., in paragraph 17. Many in the Pacific countries cannot access ICT/Web but documents should be readily available -- documents that provide guidance for policy advice, e.g., a country’s Poverty Assessment and documents which describe the Pacific’s progress on the Millennium Development Goals.

5. Resource Implications

- Implementation of the policy will cost money; will this take away from resources available for projects in the Pacific? Who pays?

6. Implementation Arrangements

- Need to work through apex NGOs to encourage information sharing within networks.
- Suggest rapid implementation (before 2005) since there is much support for the policy.
- Up-to-date information needs to be made available through the regional and sub-regional offices.
- ADB should consider developing a lessons learned database.

7. Role of Civil Society Organizations

- Ensure the policy includes civil society, e.g., paragraph 74 should read “will only be achieved if governments AND CIVIL SOCIETY...”

8. Consultation Process

- Suggest presenting an overview of ADB’s web site during future consultations

**Review of the ADB's Draft Public Communications Policy
Suva Workshop, 29 April 2004**

List of Participants

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