Information Access Surveys (IAS)

An Information Access Survey is a tool that:

- Identifies **key issues** about people and what **information needs** they have
- Identifies what **media sources** are available, what **strategies** people use to get information and finds out how **cost-effective** these are
- Recommends **methods of communication** that are useful for poor rural communities who use aquatic resources to **improve their livelihoods**

What is it for? How do you use it?

The IAS describes how people get information they need. This tells us how we can best communicate with stakeholders. Here are some examples of what we can find out when we conduct an Information Access Survey.

- Radio is a popular medium and access is high in coastal Philippines communities.
- Drama and comedy are popular forms of entertainment in Cambodia. Many believe that theater, puppetry and soap operas on radio and television have great potential as vehicles to communicate information.
- In Vietnam, public address systems, the broadcast of radio and news on public loudspeakers, are provided free to about 5,000 remote and isolated communities.
- Vietnamese people love reading.
- Filipino comics (love stories with simple text accompanied by colorful cartoon drawings) are popular.
- Rural communities rely heavily on traditional information sources including the village chief, commune chief, monks and to an extent, village elders.

Attention to color, script and dialect, simple language, photographs and positive images are all important factors.
You can use this tool in many different contexts. In the context of development work, an IAS could be used to find out more about the information needs of poor rural communities.

The Information Access Survey is an important part of the planning stage of any project or intervention.

The IAS should:
- take into consideration the needs of the target group
- involve as many people as possible
- be socially and culturally acceptable
- be flexible, so that we can modify it according to the circumstances
- have recommendations that are easy to put into practice

When you conduct an Information Access Survey, you need to work in a team and plan ahead.

Start by asking questions:

- Why are we doing it and what do we want the information for?
- How will we get the information we need? What tools will we use?
- Who will we work with? How will we talk to them about what we are trying to achieve?
- How will we consult and give feedback to the people who have helped us?
- How will we improve what we did for next time?
- How will we tell people what we found out?
- How much time do we have? How long will it take?
What tools should I use?

When we talk about tools in the IAS, we’re talking about the techniques you will use to get the information you want. Here are some examples:

- Questionnaires
- Focus group discussions
- Interviews
- Formal or informal meetings
I learn a lot from my relatives and friends. I got some useful leaflets about the problem of over-fishing last week. They were from the Department of Fisheries.

If there is something important from the municipal office, I prefer to get a letter.

Well, I listen to the radio. There are some useful programs. There is a program in my language and I listen to that.

When I’m out fishing, I can take my radio with me. I listen to the news and I listen to the soap operas while I am working.

I have a radio, but if I can watch TV, I prefer that.

I don’t always listen to the news, but I find out what’s happening when I see the neighbors or when I am selling my fish.

Useful Contacts

Other Better-Practice Guidelines

There are more Better-Practice Guidelines in this series. These include:

- Consensus-building Process
- Self-Help Groups

You can get more copies of this and other Better-Practice Guidelines from your STREAM Country Office, from the STREAM Regional Office or from the STREAM Website.

We would like your feedback about these Better-Practice Guidelines. You can let us know by phoning, emailing or writing to the Communications Hub Manager at your STREAM Country Office.

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