

# Christian Aid Guidelines: Information Provision to Communities

These guidelines have been developed as a practical tool to support staff and partners in developing and implementing project information provision strategies within their projects.

## Goals:

1. The organisation has consulted community members on their information needs
2. Information has been disseminated to community members in a variety of ways
3. Information is accessible to vulnerable and marginalised groups
4. The majority of community members know basic project information as per CA expectations (listed below)
5. The community feel that they have adequate information to participate in and question the project

## Why provide information?

*Communities have the right to be informed of what we do and how we do it, including projects, programmes, activities, services and decision-making mechanisms, in a manner that is accessible to them.*

Effective information provision can strengthen trust, build community ownership and encourage participation. People can't be involved in a project or service if they are not adequately informed about that project or service. Lack of information about a project is an instant block to community participation, ownership and empowerment.

Christian Aid is committed to ensuring beneficiary communities and other key stakeholders are informed about the projects we support. Greater transparency with our key stakeholders **strengthens our relationship** with them and enables us to improve what we do. The right information provision strategies can **build trust** with relevant stakeholders and is the foundation for **greater accountability** in our programmes.

## What we expect

Christian Aid expects partners to make the following information publicly available to intended beneficiaries, the wider community, agency staff and other stakeholders:

- its background and contact details
- its goals and project objectives, expected results with the time frame
- summaries of evaluations and progress reports
- beneficiary selection criteria and deliverables
- staff roles and responsibilities
- basic financial information and regular financial reports
- dates and locations of key events open to community participation
- how input from participation activities has contributed to decisions
- complaints-handling procedures

## How to do it

A step-by-step approach is outlined in these guidelines led by the **question 'what do the communities our partners work with need and want to know?'**

**Information should NOT be shared if it is determined to be too sensitive or harmful to Christian Aid, the partner, or its stakeholders, or if the information is likely to be misused.**

## Step 1. Design appropriate information provision mechanisms for projects

The partner should undertake the following with the community, ideally at the assessment or project design stage:

- a) For each stakeholder group involved in the project, **consult** with them to identify their information needs, what do they need to know about the partner and the projects
- b) **Identify appropriate formats** for communicating each of the messages to each stakeholder group. Stakeholder groups should be asked how they prefer to receive information.
- c) Ensure that vulnerable and marginalised groups within the community are identified and their particular information requirements are met
- d) **Design an information sharing action plan** for each activity or project as required
- e) **Develop materials**, and check them first with the community through focus groups or informal interviews to make sure the intended message is clearly understood and the formats are appropriate
- f) Ensure information provision plans are implemented

Information sharing tools might include: **community meetings, local radio, notice boards or posters, house to house visits, information on ration cards, leaflets, information desks, loud speakers/megaphones, phone calls, theatre groups etc.**

## Step 2. Provide the Information

Information should be:

- ✓ **Accessible, understandable and appropriate:** the information must be accessible to everyone who needs it, including vulnerable and marginalised groups. It should be presented in languages and means that are appropriate for the audience. It should not include jargon or acronyms. Where possible, effort should be made to make the information provision methods engaging
- ✓ **Timely:** the information should be current and updated regularly
- ✓ **Safe:** double check that information does not mislead or cause harm to the agency or the community, and that it respects the dignity of all
- ✓ **Verifiable:** information should be accurate, consistent, and validated
- ✓ **Accountable:** give information users an opportunity to feedback on what kind of information they want and how they want it as well as evaluate whether the information provided met both their needs and the above criteria

## Step 3. Monitor to ensure your information sharing is effective

Talk to:

1. **Project staff** and have a look at the project site. What mechanisms have been put in place? Is the information up to date, does it cover the key information requirements and does it appear to be accessible to all community members?
2. **Members of the community.** Do they feel they have the information necessary to actively participate in the project? Can they tell you key bits of information about the project as identified in the 'what we expect' section above, indicating that these have been effectively communicated to them?

You may want to use a checklist like this example:

Information requirement	Methods of dissemination	When you talk to people can they tell you this piece of information?	Comments and observations
i.e. implementing organisation and mandate	i.e. public notice board	i.e. 5 out of 10	i.e. More accessible to men as better literacy. Inadequate provision made for women/illiterates
i.e. objective and timeframe for the project			

