

## Information Access Surveys (IAS)

### What is an Information Access Survey?

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.

Attention to color, script and dialect, simple language, photographs and positive images are all important factors.

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.

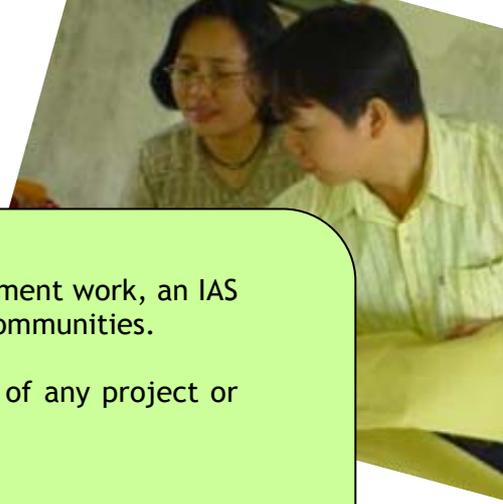
Rural communities rely heavily on traditional information sources including the village chief, commune chief, monks and to an extent, village elders.

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.

Vietnamese people love reading.

Filipino comics (love stories with simple text accompanied by colorful cartoon drawings) are popular.

# Information Access Surveys: getting started



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:



# Producing an Information Access Survey: a process

So if I want to produce an IAS, what steps do I need to go through?

START HERE

## STEP ONE

### Say what geographical area the IAS covers

- What is its population?
- What are the literacy rates like?
- What about languages, dialects, ethnic groups, urban and rural communities, men and women?

## STEP TWO

### Find out about existing communications and networks

- What networks are there (formal or informal)?
- How about household radio and TV ownership (or access communally or with friends or family)?
- Who broadcasts over what area?
- What is popular and with whom?
- What national or local newspapers and magazines are there? What about specialist interest publications?
- What about performing arts? What do people like? Street-plays, puppet shows, dance, singing?

## STEP THREE

### Find out about what works well and why

- How do institutions communicate now?
- Are messages getting through? What could improve?
- What links exist between organizations? (government, NGOs, people's organizations, communities)
- What plans and strategies exist?
- What about the research sector, how accessible is new information for people who could use it?

## STEP FOUR

### Find out how village people prefer to get information

- How do people in villages prefer to get information?
- What sources do they use, want or trust?

## STEP FIVE

### Say what the needs are

- Where are the communications gaps?
- What are the needs? Training, media, better linking?

## What tools should I use?

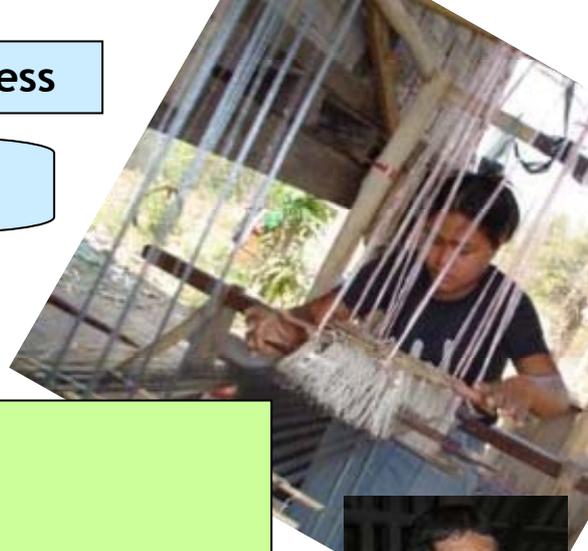
When we talk about tools in the IAS, we're talking about the techniques you will use to get the information you want. Here are some examples:

Questionnaires

Focus group discussions

Interviews

Formal or informal meetings



## Information access: a meeting

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.

So, how do you guys prefer to get information?

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 like reading comics.

I go to my auntie's house and watch videos.

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.

### Your STREAM Country Office is

Phone:  
Fax:  
Email:

#### STREAM Regional Office

c/o NACA  
Department of Fisheries Complex  
Kasetsart University Campus,  
Phaholyothin Rd  
Bangkhen, Bangkok 10903  
Thailand  
Phone: 662 561 1728/29  
Fax: 662 561 1727  
Email: [stream@enaca.org](mailto:stream@enaca.org)

#### STREAM Website

[www.streaminitiative.org](http://www.streaminitiative.org)