HOW-TO NOTES

Using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to Improve Transparency in Bank-Financed Projects
June 2013—This note has been written by Stephan Eggli, Operations Officer at the Bank’s Operations Policy and Country Services (OPCS) division, and Kyung Ryul Park, Consultant at the World Bank Institute. The authors are grateful to World Bank staff Sanjay Agarwal, Saki Kumagai, Denyse Morin, Tenzin Dolma Norbhu and Jonathan Rose as well as Savita Bailur, London School of Economics, for their review. The authors would also like to thank Audrey Liounis for editorial support. The views expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank Group.

The Open Development Technology Alliance (ODTA) is an initiative of the World Bank, anchored in the World Bank Institute, the Social Development Department, and the ICT Sector Unit. It aims to enhance social accountability and improve the delivery and quality of public services through technology-enabled citizen engagement.

Anchored in the World Bank’s Operations Policy and Country Services Unit, the Governance & Anticorruption (GAC) in Operations initiative aims to provide Bank staff, clients and development partners with good governance practices and guidance to improve development outcomes.

Other How-to Notes currently available (downloadable on FURL “GAC”):

- Citizen Charters
- Citizen Report Cards: Monitoring Citizen Perspectives to Improve Service Delivery
- Citizen Service Centers
- Community Scorecards
- Electronic Government Procurement
- GAC in Fragile and Conflict Situations: 10 Things to Know
- Good GAC Practices for FMS
- Grievance Redress Mechanisms - Theory
- Grievance Redress Mechanisms - Practice
- How, When, and Why to Use Demand-Side Governance Approaches in Projects
- Participatory and Third Party Monitoring in World Bank-financed Projects: What Can Non-state Actors do?
- Political Economy Assessments
- Supporting Passage and Implementation of Right to Information Laws
- Using Demand-Side Governance in Projects to Identify and Manage Risk in Projects
- Value Chain Analysis
“We can and will go further in supporting transparency in government and public service delivery.”

Jim Yong Kim, President, The World Bank Group, July 10, 2012

Citizens all over the world are calling on their governments to increase transparency and improve governance. An increasing number of governments respond to this call by passing access to information legislation and using increasingly available information and communication technologies (ICTs) to make information accessible. At the end of 2012, some 93 countries had explicit Access to Information (AI) laws, and 54 countries have committed via the Open Government Partnership to use ICT to become more transparent.

The World Bank emerged as the leading international organization in terms of transparency with the introduction of an AI Policy that allows unprecedented access to World Bank data and project-related information. This information is accessible through websites, mobile apps, social media, and even geographic information systems.

However, introducing these kinds of “eTransparency” measures requires resources—including time and money. So why should governments—and, by extension, Bank-financed projects—invest in such initiatives? First, both governments and Bank-financed projects have a legal obligation to make a broad range of information available via multiple channels, which often includes ICTs (see Section 1 and Annex II). The obligation for public entities to proactively disclose information (i.e. through the internet) can stem from national laws, state-level laws, and specific regulations. In addition, there is a growing consensus on the benefits of eTransparency initiatives, which include:

- **Reduced corruption.** The improved access to information allows greater public scrutiny, and the automation of processes limits opportunities for graft.
- **Citizen empowerment.** eTransparency measures can reduce information asymmetries and create greater equality through automated processes. Moreover, access to information is often a precondition for meaningful participation.
- **Improved service delivery.** ICT-based transparency initiatives can lower transaction costs for both governments and citizens, improve service accessibility, increase competition in the procurement process, facilitate coordination, and lead to better decision-making because of better information.

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the Bank’s Operations Policies
We expect this note to be a useful resource for task teams seeking to make Bank-financed projects or programs more transparent. The note provides an outline of recent developments in the areas of AI and ICT and offers suggestions and practical examples on how to translate this potential into better project outcomes. While traditional ICTs—such as radio and TV—continue to play an important role in AI, given the wealth of publications on traditional ICTs, this note focuses exclusively on the more recent internet, geospatial, and mobile technologies. See Annex I for a list of basic eTransparency concepts and their definitions.

When deciding on what project-related information should be made publicly accessible, task teams and counterparts have to be aware of both national regulations and Bank policies and practices. This section provides a short overview of relevant policies and standards.

The Policy on Access to Information, effective July 1, 2010, is the main guideline defining what information the Bank is making publicly accessible. The policy constitutes a major shift in what information the Bank discloses from a previous policy that identified what information could be made available to one that allows disclosure of all information in the Bank’s possession except for that on a list of exceptions (see Box 1).

Bank projects routinely make the following documents available:

- Project Information Document
- Factual Technical Documents (including analytical work, assessments, surveys, etc.)
- Project Appraisal Document/Project Paper;
- Procurement Plans;
- Environmental and social safeguard instruments; and
- Implementation Status and Results (ISR) Report/Implementation Completion and Results Report (ICR).

In addition to the categories listed above, Bank-financed projects frequently make available such additional information as frequently asked questions (FAQs), information regarding complaints handling mechanisms, procurement-related information, extracts from the management information system, training material, good practices, impact evaluations, and media coverage of the project or program.

For further information, task teams can consult the AI focal point in their unit or the AI website: go.worldbank.org/TRCDVYJ440

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**BOX 1**

The 10 exceptions—Bank information not to be disclosed

*Eligible for Declassification,

1. Personal
2. Executive Director’s Communication
3. Board Ethics Committee
4. Attorney-Client Privilege
5. Security & Safety
6. Other Disclosure Regimes
7. Client/Third Party
8. Corporate Administrative
9. Deliberative*
10. Financial*
Annex II provides an overview of disclosure requirements under the Bank’s Operational Policies (OPs).

A comparison of national and international AI laws suggest an emerging minimum standard on the classes of information that government agencies should make available:

- **Institutional information**: Legal basis of the institution, internal regulations, functions, and powers.
- **Organizational information**: Organizational structure, information on personnel, names and contact information of public officials.
- **Operational information**: Strategy and plans, policies, procedures, reports, evaluations—including underlying documents and data.
- **Decision-making process**: Information on decision-making procedures including mechanisms for participation, sharing of data informing the decision-making process, final decisions, and acts.
- **Public services information**: Descriptions of services offered to the public, guidance, forms, and information on fees and deadlines.
- **Budget information**: Projected budget, actual income and expenditure, salary information, audit reports, and other financial information.
- **Subsidies information**: Information on the beneficiaries of subsidies, the objectives, amounts, and implementation.
- **Public procurement information**: Information on public procurement processes, criteria, and outcomes of decision-making on tender applications; copies of contracts, reports on completion of contracts.
- **Lists, registers, databases**: Information on the lists, registers, and databases held by the public body, including guidance on how to access this information.
- **Information held**: An index or register of documents/information held, information on corresponding databases.
- **Publications**: (Annual) Reports, assessments, evaluations, case studies.
- **Information about the right to information**: Information on legislation and how to request information, contact information for the responsible person in each public body.

Whereas this list reflects an emerging standard, task teams always have to consider and work within the boundaries of the relevant national and/or sub-national AI laws and regulations. Further guidance on this topic is offered in the How-To Note: “Supporting Passage and Implementation of Right to Information Laws” (see section 4 for a link to additional How-to Notes).

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“We accept responsibility for seizing this moment to strengthen our commitments to promote transparency, fight corruption, empower citizens, and harness the power of new technologies to make government more effective and accountable.”

Open Government Partnership Declaration, September 2011

As described in the previous section, most AI laws guarantee full access to information with only a few exceptions. However, given the amount of information held by public bodies, there are practical limitations as to what information can be proactively made available. Good AI practice, therefore, very much relates to how information is being made accessible. This section responds to the “how” question by presenting technologies and applications that help make information widely accessible in user-friendly and understandable manners. It is understood that eTransparency initiatives should also be aligned with national development strategies, institutions and procedures, with the aim of increasing their effectiveness (Box 2).

**BOX 2**
Strengthening country institutions

**Indonesia: Transferring the complaints handling mechanism to the Ministry**

When designing an eTransparency initiative, a strategic decision must be made as to how and where information is best embedded and presented. This decision is influenced by regulatory requirements as well as the organizational environment in which a project or program is rooted. The public entities covered under a project might already have web portals, networks, data centers, and e-policies. To ensure sustainability and avoid duplication, fragmentation, and interoperability problems, Bank-financed projects should use and strengthen such country institutions whenever possible. The Bank’s updated Governance and Anticorruption (GAC) Strategy proclaims: “This is a clear message from Bank clients: they are concerned to make sector-wide systems and institutions work, not merely the few specific initiatives that may be World Bank funded.” A case in point is Indonesia National Program for Community Empowerment in Urban Areas (PNPM UPP):

The Indonesia PNPM UPP project is a community-driven development project under implementation since 1998. The project operates an extensive, user-friendly website which provides a wide range of project-related information, including a web-based Management Information System, terms of reference, guidelines, important letters, training modules, a news section, a dialogue forum, a best practice section, consultant contracts, and much more. The website has more than 8,400 visitors per day.

The project also includes an online- and mobile-based complaints handling mechanism where citizens can report issues and track the handling process. So far, this complaints handling mechanism has been run by the project implementation unit (PIU). However, to ensure the sustainability of the system, the task team is now working with the Ministry of Home Affairs to move the complaints handling mechanism from the PIU to the ministry, where it can be operated in the long term and also be used for other projects. For more information, visit [www.p2kp.org](http://www.p2kp.org) (language: Bahasa).
Before looking into specific technologies, there are two broad factors to be considered that determine the quality of an eTransparency intervention: the content (message) and the channel (medium). Figure 1 provides an overview of the attributes that ensure content and channel quality.

As depicted in Figure 1, the quality of the content is determined by the relevance and soundness of information. Information is relevant if it is of high value to the user; this implies comprehensiveness, accuracy, and applicability. Sound information is “fit for use,” i.e. up-to-date, free of bugs, and cleared of non-relevant content. The quality of the channel is determined by the processes set up to operate the channel and the underlying hardware and software infrastructure (see Box 3).

The World Resource Institute (WRI)—in collaboration with the Bank—has developed online maps for several Central African countries to make information on logging permits, protected areas, and even mining and oil permits publically available. Having received widespread international recognition, the websites are used by a wide range of actors in the area of natural resources, land use management, and governance more broadly. Looking at the example of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the government and WRI update the overall map and website content annually to ensure the data is up-to-date and high quality. Quality of content is ensured through annual multi-stakeholder validation workshops (including government, private sector, and NGOs) and additional quality control by WRI. Channel quality is ensured through a user friendly, interactive website, which allows the user to display different themes, zoom from macro to micro data, and easily export underlying datasets. The site is available 24/7 and based on a secure server that is independent of WRI and thus can be easily transferred to the ministries in charge. The website and supporting products have led to significantly improved transparency, accountability, and collaboration in these sectors. For more information, visit www.wri.org/publication/interactive-forest-atlas-democratic-republic-of-congo.
The following sub-sections present specific ICTs and provide suggestions on how to ensure channel and content quality for each specific technology. Section 3 provides overall considerations on how to design and implement an eTransparency initiative.

“We commit to developing accessible and secure online spaces as platforms for delivering services, engaging the public, and sharing information and ideas.”

*Open Government Partnership Declaration, September 2011*

**Purpose & Scope**

The provision of an informative and user-friendly website is becoming the standard for public bodies as well as for Bank-financed projects. The scope ranges from simple websites providing basic project information, such as project objectives and contact details, to full-fledged online portals which include a news stream, multimedia products, eProcurement, and financial information (see Boxes 4 and 5).

**Advantages, Limitations, and Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple: a basic website can be set up quickly</td>
<td>One-way: a website only allows for one-way communication (unless social media features are integrated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible: websites can be accessed from all over the world on a 24/7 basis</td>
<td>Segregative: accessing and navigating a website requires literacy, access to a computer, and internet connectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient: large amounts of data can be made accessible at little cost</td>
<td>Standardized: e-policies of a public entity may require the use of templates and standards</td>
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</table>

**Costs**

**Development**: A basic website can be developed within a few hours using free, ready-made templates. More sophisticated and customized websites will take up to several months to conceptualize and program. Additional costs might arise if a domain-name (URL) and a computer or server have to be purchased.

**Maintenance**: The cost factors are determined by the person-hours invested in updating/improving the website and thus range from minimal costs to funding of several full-time staff positions.
Using ICT to Improve Transparency in Bank-Financed Projects

Implementation: Getting the Channel & Content Right

National and subnational AI legislation and e-policies provide initial guidance on the need for and content of a given website. For example, the US eGovernment Act of 2002 requires government agencies to provide websites which are searchable, secure, allow for aggregation (and disaggregation), and offer relevant and current information. The Estonian Public Information Act, passed in 2000, requires government agencies to maintain freely accessible websites (i.e. accessible through public libraries) that provide up-to-date and accurate information, including date of disclosure and information regarding updates.

BOX 4
Dominican Republic: Good practice website

The electricity distribution market in the Dominican Republic has historically been characterized by governance challenges, including clientelism in contracting and payments, lack of orientation toward the consumer, and inefficient management. This created a vicious cycle: while customers were unhappy with low levels of service, and illegal connections were rampant, distribution companies were struggling with low levels of payment, a lack of investment, and political pressure. With assistance from the World Bank, the energy distribution companies tried to shift this dynamic and professionalize services with a package of measures, including a strong social accountability component comprised of client engagement, explicit “Social Compacts” with consumers in rehabilitated areas, a client-orientation strategy, and transparency measures. Transparency measures include the creation of a transparency web portal, which provides users with contact information, financial and procurement data, performance data (broken down to specific zones), a complaints-handling mechanism as well as guidance on the legal framework for transparency. Further ICT-related innovations by one of the distribution companies (EdeEste) included a comprehensive client-orientation strategy whereby feedback from citizens (via call centers receiving as many as 1.5 million calls, Twitter, etc.) on service delivery is integrated into a “client voice” indicator for each employee and translated into performance incentives. Further, an independent unit managed randomized customer call backs to monitor the quality of service delivery and track whether customers have been asked for a bribe by front-line workers (often contractors to the distribution company). As a result of the overall intervention (rehabilitation, technical loss reduction, Social Compacts guaranteeing 24-hour service for areas with sufficient payment levels, more targeted social safety nets for those who cannot pay, internal client orientation systems and incentives, and ICT-enabled citizen feedback), client satisfaction dramatically increased in rehabilitated areas while the balance sheet of energy utilities improved. One of the project’s PDOs was linked to improvement in customer satisfaction. Further, a current pilot under a social accountability Non Lending TA will explore the use of 311-style systems to independently gather citizen feedback on electricity via SMS, web, Twitter, and Facebook. For further information, visit www.cdeee.gob.do and www.edeeste.com.do/transparencia.
When it comes to the infrastructure and processes behind a website, there are a number of good practices to consider. Websites should be easy to navigate, appealing to the user, and easily accessible; this means being reachable from other sites, requiring no downtime, and being accessible to those with disabilities. Larger permanent websites should be compatible with other government information systems. In addition, global estimates suggest that by 2015 more users will connect to the internet over mobile devices than desktop computers; hence, mobile versions of websites should be available.

“Getting the content right” refers to the way information is structured, formatted, and presented. Good practice suggests that website content be:

- searchable (search function, tagged content),
- integrated (structured according to function or topic rather than organizational structure—for large websites, it helps to think in user profiles),
- re-usable (available in widely used machine-readable formats and open standards—as opposed to poorly scanned files resulting in the computer not recognizing the text)
- shareable and downloadable,
- visualized, and
- (dis-)aggregatable.

It is further good practice to use website analytics software and online satisfaction surveys to ensure channel and content quality.

**BOX 5**

Enhancing fiscal transparency with BOOST

The Bank has been supporting client efforts to improve public access to fiscal data and analysis through the BOOST initiative. BOOST platforms are detailed databases of national and sub-national spending data that can be used to analyze public expenditure. The BOOST databases for Kenya, Moldova, Paraguay, and Togo have been released to the public, with additional countries to follow. In the Moldova BOOST, budget data for districts and municipalities can be visualized in a map. The BOOST platforms for Paraguay and Togo present the data using an interactive pivot table and use open source coding. In all cases, the content of the databases can be downloaded in the widely-used CSV format (i.e. used for Microsoft Excel). For more information, visit [http://moldova.wb-boost.org](http://moldova.wb-boost.org), [www.openlooksolutions.com/boost_paraguay](http://www.openlooksolutions.com/boost_paraguay), [www.openlooksolutions.com/boost_togo](http://www.openlooksolutions.com/boost_togo)
Using ICT to Improve Transparency in Bank-Financed Projects

Social Media

“A discussion of social media is a discussion of new communications possibilities.”
World Bank Web Program

Purpose & Scope

Social media is an umbrella term including all web- and mobile-based technologies which allow for interactive (two or more ways) communication and collaboration. Online collaboration on documents, blogging, Tweeting, video- and picture-sharing, crowdsourcing, and instant messaging are all considered social media applications. To assess its usefulness for eTransparency initiatives, it is helpful for practitioners to look at different functions that social media can perform:

- **Connecting people**: Well-known social media services such as Facebook, Google+, or LinkedIn allow users to connect, exchange and group around specific areas of interest. Social media networks are powerful outreach tools as they bring the information to where the people (virtually) meet. Moreover, they allow for the creation and/or targeting of highly specific groups (e.g., interest groups). Illustrative example: *The Bank-supported Bolsa Familia (Brazil), a program to support low income families, provides a facebook space for discussions and news*

- **Sharing content**: Services such as Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo or Tumblr allow users to upload and share various types of media such as picture, video, audio, or text. Countless projects and governments use these services to share information and increase transparency. Such services frequently offer additional functionalities such as creating a profile, commenting, and more. Microblogging services, such as Weibo or Twitter, allow for the sharing of small pieces of content and play an important role in disseminating news and information. Illustrative example: *Learn how to use ICT for public transparency on the Sunlight Foundation Youtube Channel youtube.com/SunlightFoundation*

- **Assessing content**: Rating, discussion/comment, and tagging functions are often integrated into broader social media services. They play an important role in assessing the quality or relevance of content and amplifying information. Such interaction and feedback can help the government and project teams better understand users’ needs and interests. StumbleUpon or Delicious are well known services in this category, as is the “like” function in many social networks. Illustrative example: *Kenya’s open data initiative, opendata.go.ke, allows users to filter datasets according to popularity, user rating and number of comments, thereby facilitating access to the most relevant data*

- **Crowdsourcing content**: Crowdsourcing is about obtaining ideas, content, or services by inviting contributions from a large group of people. This can include reporting corruption (ipaidabribe.com), raising seed money (indiegogo.com), and collecting and mapping intelligence during elections or natural disasters (ushahidi.com). Illustrative example: *Kallxo.com is a website to crowdsource corruption reports in Kosovo*
• **Generating knowledge**: Closely related to crowdsourcing are services such as Wikipedia or ask.com that generate knowledge by tapping into the collective knowledge of their member base. Various free “wiki” softwares allow users to generate their own knowledge-generation website. Illustrative example: Wiki.ushahidi.com: Wiki space on how to use maps for transparency, monitoring and more

While the list above covers well-known services, there are a great many software applications (many of them for free) that allow programmers to set up new, customized social media spaces (e.g., for a specific interest group such as goxi.org, a space around governance in extractive industries).

**Advantages, Limitations, and Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inexpensive: many applications are free</td>
<td>Time consuming: conversations need to be monitored, responsiveness must be guaranteed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible: social media can reach large audiences</td>
<td>May have reputational risks: discussions cannot be controlled; “Once it's out there…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple: most applications are easy to use</td>
<td>Ineffective: in the absence of a clear social media strategy, participation will be low (or even backfire)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive: social media allows to bring people/communities together</td>
<td>Segregative: technological literacy and infrastructure is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate: information can be shared within seconds</td>
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**Costs**

**Development**: There are countless ready-to-use, off-the-shelf social media applications available at no cost. Customized applications will take several months to develop and might require the procurement of a database, server, and domain name.

**Maintenance**: Social media is interactive and thus requires person hours to moderate discussions, share content, and connect people. A continuous investment in facilitation and moderation is critical to the success of most social media initiatives.

**Implementation: Getting the Channel & Content Right**

The starting point for any social media activity should be the drafting of a social media strategy. Such a strategy can be relatively short, but should define the following basic points:

- **Objective**: rationale for using social media (e.g. informing project beneficiaries, raising awareness, and bringing traffic to the project website)
- **Target audience**: definition of the audience to be reached (“general public” is not recommended as target audience—people differ in terms of language, interests, affinity to technology, etc.)
• **Message and value proposition:** definition of the broad message to be communicated and description of how it creates value for the recipient. Value is generated by addressing issues that recipients care about.

• **Guiding principles:** guidance on how to operationalize the strategy (i.e. who is responsible, how much time and resources will be invested, what are the arrangements with other involved parties, and what are the measures to be taken to achieve objective)

The drafting of the strategy provides the basis for getting the channel right. It pays to thoroughly assess the social media landscape before selecting a social media platform or even creating one. The basic assessment criteria are:

• **Target audience:** Is there an existing social media platform that covers the target audience? If people are really interested in a subject, there is a high chance that they have already formed a group or a space to convene. The channel should match the target audience's profile in terms of language, level of technology etc.

• **Content:** Selecting the right social media channel will strongly depend on the type of content to be provided. Youtube is the leading video sharing platform, Flickr is used all over the world to share photos, and Facebook is the world's preferred social networking site.

• **Reliability:** Existing social media channels can pose risks in terms or reputation and continuity. Are there angry critics or inappropriate advertisements, how long has the channel existed, and what is its reputation?

Reading reviews, scanning the design, checking the user statistics, following conversations, or reading the "About" section can provide the necessary information to rate different social media channels. Once a channel has been chosen, there are a number of success factors to consider during implementation:

• **Staffing:** Is the staff capacity available to maintain the channel? Frequent updates are essential to sustain momentum. A great number of social media initiatives failed simply because they stopped to engage with the audience, assuming the platform would be a self-runner.

• **Inform stakeholders:** Affected stakeholders such as IT staff, communications staff, and management should be briefed before going online, even if they are not directly involved.

• **Value proposition:** The audience should be able to see/read right away how this channel will benefit them. This includes kick-starting with good content.

• **Start small, grow, and tweak:** When faced with internal resistance or when unsure about how to use social media, it is useful to start with one low risk-channel (with limited reach, geared towards dissemination instead of discussion).

• **Building rapport with the audience:** Being honest, answering questions swiftly, and featuring stories of how users benefitted from the service/information offered are essential ingredients to foster engagement. It is good practice to localize content to the extent possible.
• **The fine print:** Personal details like home address and phone numbers should not be shared. It should also be clear whether one is participating in an official or a personal capacity. The Bank’s Web Program developed a number of standards and guidelines that Bank teams should follow when creating a social media channel: [webprogram.worldbank.org](http://webprogram.worldbank.org) (Bank intranet).

It is good practice to localize content to the extent possible; this includes the use of local language and consideration of locally relevant conversations and topics. User feedbacks as well as statistics software provide valuable feedback on user demand and satisfaction (Box 6).

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**BOX 6**

**Philippines: Innovative use of social media**

The World Bank-supported Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is a conditional cash transfer program targeted at extremely poor households. The project was criticized early on as a government “plaything.” In response, the 4Ps project team designed a comprehensive communications strategy. Besides traditional communication channels such as TV, radio, and posters, the 4Ps makes extensive use of social media channels, including a website with a blog and a Facebook site to share project-related information (such as the strategy, information on consultations, FAQs, impact evaluations, and related newspaper articles) and drive traffic to the website. The website, boasting almost 1,000 visitors a day, also features a financial dashboard which lists projected and actual budget allocations, as well as a map which displays the number of recipients at the local level. Both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries can file complaints via the website, Facebook, Twitter and mobile phones. These communication activities have turned around public opinion, and the program now enjoys broad support: [http://www.facebook.com/pantawidpamilya](http://www.facebook.com/pantawidpamilya)

**Check My School (Philippines) was established in early 2011 as a participatory monitoring platform using ICT and community mobilization to improve transparency and service delivery in the education sector. Led by ANSA (Affiliated Networks for Social Accountability, funded by the World Bank Institute) and the Department of Education, the initiative also includes other actors from the government, private sector, and civil society. The purpose of Check My School is to provide easy access to information and a platform for feedback. In line with this mandate, [checkmyschool.org](http://checkmyschool.org) provides extensive information (i.e. on enrollment, teaching personnel, facilities, and school budget) and allows users to upload feedback, photos, and videos via mobile phones and the internet. Facebook and Twitter accounts complement the website. The initiative reached more than 1 million users within the first year and achieved tangible results, including improvement of facilities and better collaboration between actors involved in the education sector.**
“At its heart, mapping is about openness. [...] In order for citizens to shape their own development, they need information on development activities, and spending by donors, as well as what their own governments are doing.”

Suzanne Kindervatter, Vice President, InterAction

Purpose & Scope

GIS is an information system that allows users to integrate, display, and analyze geographically referenced data. By overlaying different layers of geo-referenced data, GIS allows the user to visualize the data in ways that help to reveal patterns, trends, and relationships. It can create maps which tell stories that are much more valuable and understandable than the raw data itself. Besides tabular data, maps can be complemented with photos and other multimedia content. As such, GIS is used as a tool for monitoring, decision-making, and communication. In line with this, GIS are a highly useful instrument to make projects and programs more transparent. Bank-financed projects have been using GIS to publicize budget data, mining cadastres, water concessions, information about project locations, and information about the quality and infrastructure of schools all over a country (Box 7).

Advantages, Limitations, and Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can be visualized: a map can create understanding, help communicating</td>
<td>Time consuming: the process of data collection, verification, and cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complex data and facilitate monitoring</td>
<td>can take time—mapping data, in contrast, takes little time, especially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive: maps and visualizations can be understood by those who are not</td>
<td>compared to traditional mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not literate</td>
<td>Data intensive: sophisticated maps can be too heavy for basic internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow convening: GISs are frequently used as a unified platform where</td>
<td>connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different stakeholders share information and coordinate</td>
<td>Technical: setting up and maintaining a GIS requires non-standard technical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible: web-based GIS system can be accessed anytime and anywhere</td>
<td>expertise</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Costs

**Development:** In general, the cost of developing a GIS system depends on whether and how data needs to be collected and what software and hardware is being used. Smaller initiatives that do not require data collection in the field can be implemented at no cost except for a few person hours required for setting up the system. Project teams have successfully used various free and open source tools to collect, aggregate, and display geo-referenced data. A complex GIS project can require the purchase of expensive GIS software, a server (or cloud space), and, in case data needs to be collected in the field, GPS devices (i.e. smartphone or GPS camera).

**Maintenance:** Many GIS are set up to track a development over time (i.e. project implementation). Resources have thus to be set aside for repeated data collection exercises, data verification, as well as system updates and process improvements.
Implementation: Getting the Channel & Content Right

Setting up a GIS starts with a clear definition of the type and extent of information to be disclosed as well as the manner in which this information should be presented. This definition guides the selection of the major components of a GIS:

- database software to input and store data;
- GIS software to retrieve, display, and analyze data;
- a computer; and
- GPS-enabled data collection hardware (usually smartphones).

For smaller GIS eTransparency initiatives, regular open-source desktop applications can be the right solution. With some level of technical expertise, such platforms can be set up within a few hours. On the other end of the spectrum, large GIS systems often need to be customized and require complex technical decisions with regard to server architecture and system components. In general, it is recommended that different options be discussed with an experienced GIS specialist. Such a discussion should include aspects such as expected frequency of data updates, level of detail, meaningful aggregation of raw data, and potential for scaling up in the future.

Once the hardware and software are in place, the data can be collected and aggregated in the database. Data collection usually includes the following steps:

- **Training**: collecting and geo-referencing data is quite simple in most cases; training “mappers” (the individuals who collect and geo-reference data) should therefore not take long. Training the individuals responsible for aggregating and displaying data is more demanding.

- **Data collection & geo-coding** (attributing latitude and longitude to a piece of information): data collection refers to the process of going into the field to collect and geo-code data such as photographs of project sites or statements of individuals. In some cases, project teams might already have datasets, and they know where this data comes from (e.g., they know the budgets of all local councils in a country). In this case, the data can be geo-coded at the desk.

- **Aggregation**: the data collected is then aggregated in a database. Smartphones can send data via cellular network or internet to the database; in absence of wireless networks, devices need to be connected to the computer hosting the database.

- **Cleaning**: the aggregated data often contains faulty information or geo-references which need to be removed.

- **Publishing**: the aggregated data can be published via a website or, in communities without internet access, as printouts.

While focusing on the process of interactive community mapping (engaging individuals in creating a map of their community), the How-To Note “Getting on the Map: A Community’s Path to Better Service” provides general technology and process guidance that will be useful for project teams implementing an eTransparency GIS.
The natural resource sector has seen some of the most innovative uses of GIS for transparency. The above mentioned WBI initiative piloted an extractive industries map for Ghana which displays the location of mineral, oil and gas deposits, active mines, oil and gas wells, and other extractive industries data. This data can be overlaid with socioeconomic indicators such as unemployment or government revenues: maps.worldbank.org/extractives/afr/ghana.

In collaboration with several non-profit and donor agencies, the Government of Sierra Leone created the website sierraleone.revenuesystems.org which provides extensive information on mining and mineral resources extraction. Pulling data directly from the government’s concession management system, the website also provides an interactive map where concessions, license statuses, and company-related information can be displayed.

The Bank supported online Extractive Industries Map of Mongolia allows visitors to access and map a broad range of data on oil, gas and mining, including licenses, company activities and government revenues: http://mongoliaminining.org/en

The purpose of these online GISs is to provide policy makers, private sector, civil society, and other actors with credible, understandable, and easily accessible information. In doing so, they contribute to improving the sector’s transparency and governance.
Mobile Phones, SMS, and Apps

“**My colleagues at Nokia, Orange, and Vodafone say that as mobile handsets get cheaper and better, in the next 3 to 5 years, most people in Asia and Africa will first connect to the Internet through their mobile phones—and that connection will likely be to a social media platform.**”

Jim Rosenberg, Head of Social Media, The World Bank

**Purpose & Scope**

Mobile phones create unprecedented opportunities to bridge the digital divide, increase transparency, and improve public service delivery. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the total number of SMS used globally tripled in just three years—from an estimated 1.8 trillion in 2007 to 6.1 trillion in 2010. While the aforementioned ICTs might not reach remote locations, mobile phones nowadays connect some of the most isolated areas with the rest of the world. Operators have originally targeted urban areas, but it is the demand from rural and low-income regions that has been growing more than expected.

There are at least four ways through which Bank financed-projects use mobile phones to increase transparency: i) automated phone calls, ii) text messages, iii) USSD (the technology used check the balance of a mobile phone and to “top up”—also used for mobile banking) and iv) Apps.

**Advantages, Limitations, and Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targeted: mobile phones allow targeting of specific geographic areas</td>
<td>Limited data: phone calls—and especially text messages—can only convey limited amounts of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Rural) Reach: the mobile-cellular penetration rate is 87% globally and 79% in the developing world</td>
<td>Limited Smartphone penetration: this is still low in the developing world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate: information can be shared within seconds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive: information transmitted via phone calls is understood by those who are illiterate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective: calls and SMS bring information to the end user (“push”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Costs**

- **Automated phone calls:** Various open-source software tools allow uploading of pre-recorded messages and entering numbers to be called. For an actual call to mobile phones, local rates will apply. Large-scale automated calls, i.e., to all mobile phones in reach of a cell phone tower, require collaboration with the mobile phone provider; costs vary according to region and number of calls.

- **Text messages:** The costs are similar to automated phone calls; Bank-financed projects have successfully used a number of free, ready-to-use text messaging software tools, with the only cost being that incurred in the sending of text messages.

- **USSD:** USSD works on any mobile phone, and sending and receiving messages is free of charge. USSD connections, however, are always between a mobile phone and the server of a provider; thus, they require collaboration with mobile phone providers and compensation for their expenses.

- **Apps:** The costs to develop apps can range from zero to substantial amounts of money; Bank teams have successfully organized “Hackathons” (events where software specialists meet to develop a software) where specialists created new Apps for development at no charge.
Implementation: Getting the Channel & Content Right

When including mobile phones in an eTransparency initiative, the following factors should be considered in the selection of a technology:

- **Coverage & level of technology**: The first logical step is to clarify whether the targeted population has network coverage. Mobile service providers have coverage maps and can provide data on handset types used. Additional data is also available from international sources such as ITU (www.itu.int).

- **Time and resource availability**: Thanks to the free software tools available, automated calls and mass distribution of text messages can be implemented quickly and with modest resources, provided the cell phone numbers are known. If mobile phone numbers are not known and distribution has to be done geographically via selected antennas, mobile service providers have to be contacted, which increases the time and resources required.

- **Target group**: Uses of mobile phones differ according to region, culture, age group, and other demographic factors. Initiatives are most likely to succeed if they rely on locally established technologies. East Asians are known for their frequent use of text messaging services. Kenyans are very much at ease with USSD-type messages due to the popularity of mobile banking systems. Low levels of literacy among a target population may suggest the use of automated phone calls over text messages or Apps.

- **Information to be conveyed**: Text messages are a likely choice if short pieces of information have to be conveyed. Apps and USSD allow for interaction and for the user to specify an information request. Thus, they are good tools for handling larger amounts of information. For example, a USSD message might say, “For project development objectives, press 1, for project financial data, press 2.” etc.

**BOX 8**

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Using text messages to increase transparency

The World Bank Institute (WBI) ICT4Gov program has introduced mobile technology to enhance participatory budgeting processes in Democratic Republic of Congo’s South Kivu province. The program uses mobile phones for four purposes: 1) to invite citizens to the participatory budgeting assemblies through geo-targeted SMS messages—these messages reach all the phones receiving signals from a particular tower and announce the date, time, and location of the assemblies; 2) to vote on the priorities citizens would like to see addressed in their community—citizens can use their cell phones to send a text with the priorities of their choosing; 3) to announce the voted decision, making the process more transparent and inclusive than ever before; 4) to ask citizens about the projects that are chosen. Citizens are able to offer feedback and monitor the projects through text messages. More than 250,000 text messages have already been sent throughout the different stages of this initiative. (For more information: Boris Weber, bweber1 at worldbank.org)
While the main purpose of this note is to familiarize project teams and their counterparts with existing ICTs for AI, the technology is only one part of the equation. There is a broad consensus in the literature and among practitioners on a number of process steps and key success factors that have to be considered when starting an eTransparency initiative (Figure 2).

**Design Stage**

**Step 1: Assess project environment and identify need/opportunities for transparency**

The assessment should include both the supply side—the legal AI framework and government’s capacity and buy-in—as well as the demand-side—reflected in the citizens’ interest and capacity to scrutinize government data. A good starting point for eTransparency initiatives is to consider existing diagnostic work. Political economy studies, open data readiness assessments, Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessments, Country Procurement Assessment reports (CPARs), or value chain assessments can help to identify where...
transparency interventions are most needed, what entry points exist, and who might be the champions for reform. Box 9 provides an overview of key criteria to consider before initiating an eTransparency initiative. An assessment of all these factors should allow the project team to identify where eTransparency measures are most needed and what the potential challenges and opportunities are.

Before launching an eTransparency initiative, it is useful for project teams to consider a number of key criteria to help decide whether an ICT intervention is the right approach to improving transparency in a given context. The following factors provide an enabling environment for eTransparency initiatives:

- The target group/infomediaries demand transparency
- The target group/infomediaries have access to and frequently use internet and/or mobile technology
- The implementing agency shows a high level of acceptance for transparency and the use of ICTs and might already have prior experience
- Relevant and up-to-date data is available
- The political environment is supportive, there are eTransparency champions, and government-induced censorship is absent
- There is a supporting legislative framework (e.g., laws mandating eTransparency)
- There are long-term resources and support to sustain the initiative

While these factors facilitate the implementation of eTransparency initiatives, they should not be understood as mandatory requirements. In fact, the value of eTransparency initiatives can also lie in working towards and creating such an enabling environment.

**Step 2: Consult and engage with involved actors and affected stakeholders**

It is good practice to include supply- and demand-side project stakeholders, especially the potential champions for such an eTransparency initiative, from the early stages of the design process. Building a strong coalition for change is crucial to create ownership and overcome resistance to greater transparency. Such engagement appears particularly important when considering the numerous examples of governments limiting the use of certain ICTs or censoring content.

South/South exchange can be a valuable tool to inform and inspire the stakeholders involved in the design process. Linking the eTransparency intervention with other ongoing (broader) reforms is often essential to ensure that the initiative is sustainable and achieving the intended results.
Step 3: Conceptualize and design eTransparency initiative

This stage requires a decision about what content should be made available and through which channel. As pointed out above, the different ICTs have pros and cons, and the selection of the technology will depend on factors such as government capacity and commitment, type of content to be made available, literacy rate, and local culture. Relying on a combination of locally-used technologies is often the most successful method. Whereas this note is focusing on more recent ICTs, project teams should also consider combining new ICTs with traditional means of communication, such as print, radio, and TV.

As part of its efforts to improve governance, Cameroon is taking measures to make public financial management more transparent. In two of Cameroon’s 10 regions, a World Bank-supported initiative has piloted a citizen-centered approach for disseminating simplified budget information for 151 schools, 58 health centers, 28 municipalities, and the two regional administrations. Budgets were made public and awareness was raised through various complementary activities, including public community meetings at which the budgets of institutions were read aloud, poster campaigns, art competitions, theater performances, radio programs, and student budget clubs. In addition, a Facebook site was established to interact with citizens and provide information in an easily accessible and understandable manner. More than 2,100 users signed up to the Facebook site and are actively engaged. The Bank is also partnering with the Open Knowledge Foundation on the Cameroon Budget Inquirer, a website that publishes (and visualizes in user-friendly graphics) national, regional, and local budget data. Initial findings show that active facilitation of the process is key and a variety of concerted activities and communication channels are required to mobilize citizens. Preliminary results include the recovery of substantial amounts of illegal fees, removal of corrupt officials, and additional community support to a health center after citizens became aware of its shortage of funds. See: www.facebook.com/#!/budgettransparencyinitiative.cameroon/http://cameroon.openspending.org

Countless eTransparency initiatives failed because the incentives were not properly aligned with the reform objectives. Setting the right incentives also matters to sustain the initiative once the initial excitement wears off. A clear action plan with deadlines, management leadership, exposure to international best practice, competition, peer recognition, training, and monetary incentives or compliance reviews should be considered in the project design. Designating an agency to lead the implementation of the eTransparency initiative has proven useful to building commitment.
To avoid fragmentation and “piecemeal” implementation, the conceptualization phase should include considerations of how to create a holistic transparency cycle that includes simplification of information and different opportunities for interaction and feedback (as shown in Figure 3; for a practical example see Box 10). Simplification is often a critical success-factor for eTransparency initiatives and may consume considerable preparation time. ICTs hold an enormous potential to condense, visualize, and simplify complex data and offer platform for discussion and provision of feedback.

Implementation

Step 4: Recruit, assign and train staff

It can be useful to start the preparation and piloting phase with a smaller group of reform-minded and tech-savvy staff who then become the advocates of the initiative. Moreover, AI laws often require the nomination of information officers to act as focal points for transparency-related matters in a given unit or agency. These information officers can contribute to implementing and promoting the initiative.

There is broad consensus on the importance of capacity building for the success of eTransparency initiatives. Capacity building should include training on the legislation and the organizational arrangements as well as strengthening ICT capacity. Communities of Practice have proven helpful in building capacity and incentivizing staff. Training plans should include contingencies for frequent personnel turnover. Moreover, training has to be supported by development of guidelines, operating procedures, and other necessary instructions.

Step 5: Prepare eTransparency channels/content and pilot

Many eTransparency pilots start with an initial set of core classes of information that meet the most pressing information needs and then gradually increase the volume of material published (phased approach). The same applies for the use of ICTs, where project teams and counterparts start by piloting a certain technology and expanding and modifying as they move forward.
Content and channel quality as well as user friendliness are key to the success of any eTransparency initiative. ICT has to contribute to making the information provided more attractive, accessible, and comprehensible.

**Step 6: Scale up and generate demand**

Based on the learnings from the piloting phase, channel(s) and/or content can be added. At this stage, it is often necessary to generate awareness and stimulate demand for information. Public sensitization campaigns and technologies that push information to the user (emails, social media, calls, SMS, or USSD) can be valuable tools to inform stakeholders.

“Infomediaries” are groups or individuals who conceptualize and translate complex data for the general public and play a critical role in creating awareness and understanding. Think tanks, media, civil society organizations, youth groups, women’s groups, or experts on a given topic frequently act as infomediaries. They have proven to be crucial to the success of many eTransparency initiatives, and project teams might consider specific training or support activities to strengthen capacity of relevant infomediaries.

**Step 7: Sustain momentum**

Having achieved momentum around the eTransparency initiative, it is important to sustain the level of interest and activity. Improving the quality and quantity of information as well as the technology can help to maintain interest. Posting news and updates, being responsive to user requests and sharing success stories (e.g. before/after comparisons) further contributes to encouraging users. Information gathered as part of the monitoring and evaluation process can help to identify where user interests lie, whether there are technology weaknesses, and if the value proposition for the initiative still holds.

**Monitor and evaluate**

You can’t manage what you don’t measure. Smart project design includes the definition of indicators and target values to measure the success of an eTransparency initiative. Establishing the baseline data at the onset of the initiative creates the foundation for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Impact assessments, user feedbacks, web analytics, and automated user surveys can provide valuable hints as to where improvements are needed.

This note focuses on the use of ICT to create access to information. Increasing transparency, however, is only one pillar of good governance. It is a necessary precondition for improvements on the other two pillars, namely accountability and participation.
Task teams working on eTransparency initiative might also consider creating spaces for stakeholders to respond to the information provided and to engage and participate in the program. The resources listed in the following section offer guidance on how to improve participation and accountability in projects and programs.

**World Bank resources:**
- **Open Development Technology Alliance (ODTA):** ICT Platform to enhance accountability and improve the delivery and quality of public services. Includes an advisory service for task teams: ODTA@worldbank.org / FURL: odta / web: odta.net
- **WBI innovation team:** wbi.worldbank.org/wbi/about/innovation-for-development
- **Governance & Anticorruption in Operations:** worldbank.org/publicsector/FURL: gacinoperations
- **ICT Sector team:** worldbank.org/ict
- **Social Accountability E-Guide:** https://saeguide.worldbank.org / FURL: saeguide

**Open Data / Access to Information Links:**
- **opendatahandbook.org:** A handbook on the legal, social and technical aspects of open data, released by Open Knowledge Foundation (OKF).
- **right2info.org:** Provides relevant materials concerning the current state of the public’s right to information (RTI) held by public bodies all over the world.
- **RTI-rating.org:** Ranks the quality of national RTI laws (focuses only on the legal framework).

**Access to Information (AI)** means enabling and simplifying access to data and information held by governments. Freedom of and access to information is critical to hold governments accountable and to make democratic participation meaningful. Early AI legislation focused on the provision of specific documents, but expanded to access as the default principle with no need to proof special interest. Also called Right to Information or Freedom of Information laws, these regulations outline what information shall be made public (including exceptions) and how information can be accessed. AI initiatives are often a combination of i) the introduction of an AI law, ii) improvements in quality of data, iii) improved data management and publication, iv) statistical capacity building, and v) sensitization of the public on the new AI law.

**Proactive Transparency:** Nowadays, AI goes beyond legally allowing the public to access information upon request—it is about proactive disclosure of relevant, accurate, and up-to-date information in an easily accessible and understandable manner. Far-reaching AI laws and the potential of ICTs for making large amounts of information easily accessible have been the main drivers of proactive transparency. Bank client countries such as Mexico, Kenya, and Moldova are emerging as good practice examples in proactive transparency. The principle of proactive transparency is also anchored in the Bank’s AI policy.

**Targeted Transparency (TT)** differs from national AI initiatives in that it focuses on specific sectors or areas of intervention, such as health, education, or extractive industries. Often independent of broader national AI initiatives, but based on the respective legislation, TT allows...
tailoring content and channels to specific groups and stakeholders. In fact, it is the characteristics of these particular groups that determine how a targeted transparency initiative is set up in terms of information to be disclosed, reporting format and method of dissemination. As a result, targeted transparency is easier to implement and more likely to achieve benefits for the targeted audience.

**Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** is an umbrella term including any hardware or software related to communication and/or the handling of information. This includes radio, TV, and all technologies presented in this note.

**eGovernment** comprises the use of web-based applications and other information technologies by the government as well as the processes related to the implementation of these technologies. While eGovernment generally is about using technology to make public service delivery more effective and efficient, it is also about leveraging ICTs to better provide government information to the public. ICT-based transparency initiatives can therefore also be considered eGovernment initiatives, and there are likely to be synergies between specific ICT transparency initiatives and broader eGovernment reforms; in fact, any credible eGovernment reform nowadays has to include transparency components.

The Bank’s commitment to transparency is reflected in its Operations Policies, including:

**Investment Project Financing (OP/BP 10.00):** During Investment Project Financing preparation and implementation support and in evaluating after closing, the Bank discloses Investment Project Financing-related information in accordance with the Bank’s Policy on Access to Information.

**Safeguards (OP/BP 4.01, OP/BP 4.12, OP/BP 4.10, OP 4.36 and OP/BP 4.09):** The borrower and/or the Bank have to make environmental and social safeguard documents, reports and assessments publicly available. It is crucial that key stakeholders have access to these reports, and that the form and language are understandable to them.

**Procurement Policy:** The Procurement Guidelines and Consultant Guidelines require proactive disclosure of information by the Borrowers which is also posted on the Bank’s external website (procurement plans, contract award information) or published in the United Nations Development Business website (procurement notices). A guidance note on procurement implications of the Bank’s new AI policy provides advice on how to deal with the information that does not fall under the proactive disclosure requirement.
Using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to Improve Transparency in Bank-Financed Projects

www.worldbank.org/socialdevelopment
www.worldbank.org/governance
www.odta.net