

International Assistance Review

A case study on Government of Canada Public Engagement

Overview:

The renewal of the International Assistance Policy was highly anticipated by national and international stakeholders. The engagement team at Global Affairs Canada (“the team”) were able to leverage this enthusiasm and desire to participate. They collected feedback from an extensive range of stakeholders, from international government partners to users of Canadian foreign aid. They used a mix of methods, which included radio consultations with rural Tanzanians, an often hard-to-reach group. All the information and feedback received were analyzed in house. This ensured that the lessons learned and intelligence gleaned through the engagement process remained within the organization.

1 History

1.1 Introduction

The global context for Canada’s international assistance has evolved. There has been progress towards sustainable development and poverty reduction. However, new, complex challenges and opportunities have emerged, requiring a new approach. In order to be effective when responding to these challenges and opportunities, the government needed to update the Canadian International Assistance Policy.

On May 18, 2016, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie launched a public review and consultations for the renewal of the policy. The vision for the new policy aimed to reflect Canada’s feminist government agenda.

1.2 Why Engage?

The previous International Assistance Policy had not been changed in 10 years. The Government of Canada initiated a series of consultations to:

- Seek feedback to inform the renewal of Canada’s International Assistance Policy and funding framework.
- Establish and strengthen relationships with new and existing international partners.

2 People and Context

2.1 Who was included

The team engaged with national and international stakeholders, including international aid implementation organizations, and national and international research institutes.

International engagement had two major streams. One was high-level, with foreign governments and organizations. The second stream was grassroots, seeking views from citizens

living in countries that had previously received assistance funding from Canada. For example, citizens in rural Tanzania were consulted on their views on what should be included in a new policy and framework.

2.2 Funding

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) funded the engagement process on the renewal of the International Assistance Policy.

3 Goals and Objectives (Policy)

The goal of creating a new framework was to refocus Canada’s international assistance on helping the poorest and most vulnerable people, and supporting fragile states. It would also help determine Canada’s approach internationally to supporting the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Within the government, a renewed International Assistance Policy Framework would support the unification and alignment of policy work, including guideline development and tools creation within the department.

4 Methods and Tools

The consultation used a combination of in-person and online methods to engage with stakeholders and target audiences. This included:

Methods:	Tools:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In- person meetings. - Online discussion forums. Twitter and Google Hangout housed these forums. - Radio. GAC partnered with Farm Radio International to conduct radio consultations with rural Tanzanians. Local radio hosts broadcast a set of questions each week and listeners could telephone the station to provide comments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Twitter - Google Hangout

5 Engagement

Consultation staff said that a major factor in the success of the consultation was the tremendous enthusiasm of external partners and stakeholders and their desire to contribute to updating the International Assistance Policy. Overall, international and national partners received the engagement very positively.

6 Analysis

The team received 10,600 online and in-person (transcribed) submissions. Stakeholders could also send in written comments by regular mail. A dedicated inbox was established and submissions were transferred to the central Excel file in Global Affairs's records management system. Once the team collected and organized all feedback, it set up thematic task teams to do a more in-depth analysis and breakdown of submissions. The teams conducted an initial review of the submissions, and then categorized them by theme for further analysis, classification and content breakdown.

Consultations with multiple cross-cutting subject areas require significant oversight to avoid siloing and to develop cohesive products and policies. In the context of the International Assistance Policy review, the management team worked closely with the thematic analysis teams to provide coordinated support.

7 Communicating back

In order to communicate back with participants and stakeholders, a "what we heard" report was made publicly available on the Global Affairs website, in full HTML format. The team took a digital first approach, creating a clickable website rather than a downloadable report.