Stakeholder engagement and evidence uptake plan (SEEP)

STUDY TITLE	
3ie GRANT CODE	
AUTHOR(S) OF SEEP	
PRIMARY CONTACT FOR SEEP	
PRIMARY CONTACT'S EMAIL AND SKYPE	
TOTAL BUDGET FOR SEEP ACTIVITIES	

About 3ie

3ie's mandate is to improve the evidence base for what works, for whom, why and at what cost in international development policies and programmes in low- and middle-income countries (L&MICs). To further that mission, 3ie funds high-quality impact evaluations and systematic reviews that are relevant and useful to decision makers.

What is a stakeholder engagement and evidence uptake plan (SEEP)?

3ie recognises that evidence alone does not have much impact. Research on evidence uptake and use suggests that, among other things use of evidence is highly dependent on factors related to engagement and communication. Dedicated to funding research that is relevant and that decision makers can access and understand, 3ie requires you to develop a plan around stakeholder engagement and evidence uptake.

It is important to have an engagement and communication plan from the very start of the study to encourage ownership and understanding of the impact evaluation among key stakeholders. It is critical to identify challenges inherent in engaging with a range of stakeholders with competing and conflicting priorities and mitigating risks associated with null and negative findings. The plan will help strengthen the demand for information about study progress and increase the likelihood that findings will be known, understood and used appropriately to improve policy and programming.

Ensuring that the plan is appropriate to your role as the evaluation team

3ie expressly cautions against the promotion of findings from single studies without seating the findings in the broader evidence base. This plan underscores the importance of timely and appropriate engagement and communication with policymakers and programme managers while being cognizant of the limits to what researchers can be doing to promote evidence use.

Realistic expectations

How long it takes to change policies or programmes, or how difficult it is, usually depends on what is being changed and is likely to be determined by more than just evidence. However, evidence is much more likely to contribute to change, if the researchers employ effective stakeholder engagement and communication approaches. We do regularly see instances where early work in the study, such as baseline findings, can lead to changes, usually at programme level. Major policy and programming changes usually take longer than the lifespan of the study with the study being a contributing, and not the sole factor, affecting the observed change.

The plan and its implementation are 3ie grant requirements

We strongly recommend that you develop your plan with inputs from the implementing agency, other implementing partners and key stakeholders. We encourage you to reach out to 3ie for guidance or constructive feedback as you develop your plan.

3ie expects research teams to set aside at least 10 per cent of the total study budget to undertake SEEP activities.

A completed SEEP must be approved by 3ie for disbursement of the first tranche.

For each reporting cycle, 3ie requires grantees to report on their stakeholder engagement and uptake activities, as per the guidelines in Appendix 3 of this document: Stakeholder engagement and evidence uptake plan (SEEP) progress report.

Policy and programme implementation contexts are dynamic. The plan therefore is a living document and an active strategy. Opportunities for engagement will emerge or change and this should be reflected in evolving approaches to engagement over the life of the evaluation.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The political economy context for evidence production is an important determinant in whether or not the evidence is likely to be taken up and used (see the guidance box for relevant resources). Usually, the main driver is the political context, which includes the political system- actors and institutions, including actors within communities - and the power dynamics both among and within the institutions and actors. For example, whether it is a relatively open and democratic or a closed and autocratic society, or if it is a fragile and conflict-affected society where political institutions are weak or non-functioning. This is likely to impact how knowledge circulates and how decisions are taken. It would be important to consider what knowledge, debate and decision-making is public and how much is not public. Do communities have access to and any influence over formal power, and if so, how?

Context analysis is crucially important for ensuring the quality of study design and its implementation, but also for understanding how, when and with whom to engage and communicate. The guidance box lists some indicative questions that are useful to consider in your analysis.

GUIDANCE

DFID Political Economy Analysis How to Note, 2009
www.odi.org/publications/4797-political-economy

ODI Political economy analysis framework
http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8334.pdf

Context

- What are the knowledge or evidence gaps in policy, programing or practice that the study will address?
- What contextual factors make this evaluation and the issues it addresses timely and relevant? Is there a specific window of opportunity in policy or programming that the evaluation findings can inform?

Culture of evidence use

- Is there demand from policymakers and/or programme managers for the kind of evidence the evaluation is designed to provide?
- Is there a culture of using evidence for decision making in the implementing agency and other key decision-making bodies?
- Is research evidence valued by the public and used by the media and civil society?

Community involvement

- Do communities support the programme and evaluation (if it has been running; if not, not applicable)?

RISKS

All undertakings have risk. Doing a risk register of both the controllable and the uncontrollable is an important study design and management tool.

Certain contextual factors present risks that, if not adequately recognised and mitigated, could hamper or even derail study implementation and uptake of study findings. Risks in your immediate programme environment and implementing agency are important to identify. There may be risks related to study ownership, understanding of the study design and objectives or expectations about the findings (especially findings of null or negative impact) by the implementing agency and other key actors.

Using the template below, please list all of the risks, both controllable and the uncontrollable that you are likely to face, including risks identified in the programme's theory of change. It is helpful to focus on risks that you can manage or mitigate through communication and engagement.

You can add additional rows below for more risks that may have been identified.

GUIDANCE

Below is an indicative list of some risks that you might face during the course of the study that are amenable to mitigation by the team:

- Opposition from actors that resist or oppose the programme evaluation
- Over reliance on any one key stakeholder to champion the study
- Pressure to screen findings to suit vested interests, especially null and negative findings
- Misuse or misinterpretation of study findings

Examples of risks that are hard to control or outside the team's control that could negatively impact study results or uptake and use:

- Lack of ownership among stakeholders of the programme being evaluated (starting with community actors. Try and break out for each relevant stakeholder,)
- Opposition from actors who are against the programme's implementation
- Upcoming elections that prevent actors from taking positions or actions needed to support policy and programme change
- Limited freedom of the media and civil society
- High turnover of key decision-makers or staff in the implementing agency
- *Force majeure:* conflict, natural disasters, health emergencies and other such unforeseeable events
- Tight budgets in the implementing agency that may affect its ability to use study findings
- Change in donor or implementing agency's strategy or programme priorities

Risk 1:
Mitigating action (if possible)**:**
Risk 2:
Mitigating action (if possible)**:**
Risk 3:
Mitigating action (if possible)**:**

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR PREPARATION OF IMPACT EVALUATION PROPOSAL

In your application proposal you briefly noted the process followed for ensuring engagement with the implementing agency and other stakeholders. Here we expect you to describe how you jointly developed the study design and evaluation questions. You are requested to be specific in your information about the details related to each activity. For the stakeholders met, please provide the names, their institutional affiliation (expanding on abbreviations and acronyms) and position in the institution. The guidance box provides broad expectations around engagement.

Using the table below, please highlight efforts undertaken by the team to establish ongoing dialogue and promoting ownership of the study.

GUIDANCE

Below is an indicative list of activities that 3ie expects the grantee to undertake, as communicated in the RFQ.

- Establish an ongoing dialogue with the implementing agency staff to ensure buy-in and increase ownership to encourage uptake of study findings.
- Carry out scoping and other background information needed to ensure that the full evaluation proposal is relevant to the programme and policy needs and priorities of the implementer. Identify any global public goods, as in filling a priority evidence gap, needed beyond the immediate study context.

Objective	Activities undertaken (include key highlights from the discussion and action points)	Who participated (name, designation and institutional affiliation)
Promoting understanding of the IE, including preparing the IA for findings of null or negative impact		
Ensuring involvement of IA and other stakeholders in the design of the study and identifying the research questions to establish the relevance of the evaluation to users		

EVIDENCE UPTAKE AND USE OBJECTIVES

3ie expects researchers to engage throughout the study duration to ensure that key stakeholders understand and support the study and are subsequently able to use the findings appropriately.

We would like you to summarise your main objectives for evidence uptake and use, in the light of the type of evidence that you expect to produce and the context in which it will be communicated. We encourage you to try and limit objectives to not more than three.

GUIDANCE

Examples of possible uptake objectives: Findings from the study are used for scaling up successful programmes; Closing programmes that do not work; Changing policy or programme design being evaluated; Informing discussions of policies and programmes being evaluated; Informing design of other similar programmes, elsewhere; Informing global policy discussions; Improving culture of evidence use in the implementing agency or among other implementing partners.

See ODI working paper 300, *Improving impact evaluation production and use,* for guidance on other types of evidence use (p.10) that your study can contribute to

Your uptake objectives should be **SMART**:

Specific – do the evidence uptake and use objectives specify what is to be achieved clearly enough to be monitored?

Measurable – can you monitor your progress on the objectives that you have set out for yourself? (see section on Evaluation and Learning)

Achievable – are the objectives realistic given the resources available to you? This could include resources in addition to 3ie funding.

Relevant – is the study design likely to produce findings that will be useful, even if null or negative?

Time-bound – have you identified objectives that can be achieved within the timeframe of this study?

Longer term: Some objectives may not be achievable during the study, but setting goals is important to ensure work is done to promote the conditions needed to achieve them later on.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Your evidence uptake and use objectives will define your key stakeholders for the study and its findings.

A thorough mapping and analysis of stakeholders who are likely to be key in study implementation and the uptake of research findings is an important precursor to drawing up an engagement and communication strategy.

Stakeholders are actors that have either the power to affect (positively or negatively) what you are doing or want to do or are affected (positively or negatively) by what you are doing or want to do. Stakeholders can be individuals and formal or informal organisations and institutions. Attention to who holds formal or informal power and how power relations are constructed will be central to your analysis at all levels.

It is important to disaggregate entities as far as possible. For example, a community is not one homogenous entity; it needs to be disaggregated. Formal and informal community leaders, local decision making entities, religious leaders, mothers, fathers, children, and relatives in households, are important to map and analyse, where appropriate.

For this exercise, the focus is on actors that will be central to your engagement objectives, as well as detractors that may hinder your engagement and evidence uptake efforts.

Provide analysis of how and why these actors will be beneficial and how you plan on engaging and communicating with them. In our experience a joint representation of the implementing partner and the research team has been found to be effective in communicating the scope and relevance of the evaluation and its findings.

HOW TO DO A STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Appended to the document is a 3ie worksheet for stakeholder mapping and analysis (Appendix 1: 3ie worksheet for stakeholder mapping and analysis).The worksheet provides a stepwise approach to doing a robust stakeholder mapping and analysis of your key stakeholder and influencers.

Note: We would appreciate if you could share scanned copies or pictures of the worksheets for the stakeholder mapping and analysis exercise. **A summary of the findings from the exercise should be provided here.**

KEY INFLUENCERS

Identify at least three stakeholders (we would expect you to have more in most instances) with the potential to influence the uptake and use of study findings and explain your selection. We would expect to see a range of key stakeholders or influencers that exercise power to influence and make change happen in different ways, formally and informally. Influencers can be in the community, parliament, the media, civil society (including community-based organisations), the private sector, academia, religious organisations, traditional leaders, trade unions, professional associations, elected officials and so on.

You may add additional contacts if you wish in separate sheets.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">ONE</th></tr>
<tr><td>Name:

Position:

Contacts: (email or telephone number)

Type of organisation: (Government agency- central, regional or local; community-based organisations; religious organisations; civil society organisations; international organisations, research organisations, think tanks, development agencies, media, trade unions or professional associations, private sector partners and others)</td><td>Name of organisation:

Website:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Relevance or level of influence: Why is his or her participation important? What role does she or he play in the decision-making process? How much influence or leverage is she or he expected to have? What is his or her perceived interest in the evaluation process? Is she or he part of a particular network (e.g. policy network, policy committees, advisory boards or research communities)?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Do you have any previous experience of working with this stakeholder? If so, please elaborate.</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">TWO</th></tr>
<tr><td>Name:

Position:

Contacts: (email or telephone number)

Type of organisation: (Government agency- central, regional or local; civil society organisations; community-based organisations; religious organisations; international organisations, research organisations, think tanks, development agencies, media, trade unions or professional associations, private sector partners and others)</td><td>Name of organisation:

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Contacts: (email or telephone number)

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<tr><td colspan="2">Do you have any previous experience of working with this stakeholder? If so, please elaborate.</td></tr>
</table>

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION PLAN

Please provide a detailed plan for engaging relevant stakeholders through the duration of the study. You will be expected to report your progress on the activities identified here (see Appendix 3: SEEP progress report). Please provide supporting documents, including list of participants, key takeaways and follow-up plans from meetings and events. We encourage you to share copies of presentations, blogs, articles, policy briefs, memos and other related knowledge products including publications related to this study.

Key milestones	**Why- objectives of the engagement**	**Who- stakeholders**	**How- channels**	**By whom**
**Specify approximate timelines within each evaluation stage.* *These should be aligned to your deliverables and disbursements schedule. Tranche numbers are only indicative. Your project may have less or more than 5 tranches depending upon the study duration*	*Please summarise here why you are engaging with the identified stakeholders? E.g. raising awareness, securing buy-in and ownership from key stakeholders including communities, updating on study progress, sharing preliminary results for feedback or disseminating study findings.*	*Of the stakeholders identified in the 'stakeholder analysis' section, please specify which ones you would engage with at what stage of the study*	*Specify the channels to be used for each stakeholder or group of stakeholders (an indicative list is provided below):* • *Meetings* • *Study design, impact evaluation training or dissemination workshop* • *Participation in online forums or steering and working groups* • *Media interviews, briefings, opinion pieces, social media or blogging* • *Presentation at conferences or seminars* • *Study outputs such as briefs, memos and videos*	*Team members who will lead on engagement and communication*
Tranche 2				
Tranche 3				
Tranche 4				
Final tranche				

Note: The plan needs to align with your deliverables and disbursements (D&D) schedule. You will hence be asked to revisit the engagement plan once your D&D has been agreed to.

MONITORING

You need a systematic approach for monitoring whether your stakeholder engagement and communication plan is on track. Using Appendix 2: 3ie indicators, please list the indicators you will use and the tools for monitoring the same throughout the study duration.

GUIDANCE

Monitoring engagement, uptake and use indicators are a part of 3ie's commitment to continuous learning and improvement. As a funder, it is important to us that our grants produce evidence that informs positive changes in development programmes and policies, which in turn help to improve the lives of people living in poverty.

You can decide on your indicators based on the activities you are likely to undertake (as also indicated in the stakeholder engagement and communication plan section of the SEEP) to achieve your evidence uptake and use objectives. So, if you say media engagement will play an important role as part of your overall strategy to inform the public discourse on a particular issue, you would have indicators that monitor your level of media engagement and coverage (i.e. media clippings or citations in the press).

The team should identify specific engagement, uptake and use indicators from Appendix 2: 3ie indicators and list them here.

LEARNING

3ie encourages you to have a system in place for documenting learning from the study. The learning could be around study design, implementation and/or stakeholder engagement and communication. You could use a journal, or any other tool, to track what you have learned and report to 3ie. Please elaborate on the activities that you will undertake to promote learning within the team and with your key counterparts in the study.

At the end of the study, 3ie will interview key stakeholders to document and capture lessons learned from the study.

GUIDANCE

Below is an indicative list of questions that we ask you to report on towards the end of the study.

Evaluation design
Challenges faced while designing the study; facilitating or enabling factors that contributed to the design of a study that is relevant to users; mid-term changes in the study design, if any; any lessons for approaching study design differently for future studies in similar settings.

Study implementation
Challenges related to adhering to the planned timeline of the evaluation; implementation bottlenecks along the causal chain of the intervention evaluated, if any; lessons around data collection.

Engagement
Reflections on stakeholder engagement and communication, including factors that contributed or inhibited uptake of evidence; challenges and lessons learnt from mitigating known and unforeseen risks.

Based on your assessment what is the potential for uptake and use of study findings beyond the study duration? This information will contribute to decisions about whether 3ie will continue to monitor a grant for tracking change.