Information Sharing Guidelines

The purpose of these Guidelines is to set out the approach that Self Help Africa requires to ensure that the people we work with in our countries of operation as much as possible understand the nature and objectives of our activities.

This Guide applies to the Self Help Africa Board, all Self Help Africa (and subsidiary company) employees, including affiliate organisations, and to all paid and unpaid consultants, contractors, interns, secondees and volunteers that provide supplies, services or support, to Self Help Africa or promote its work at any location in or out of Ireland.

"Self Help Africa Board" is employed as a collective term and refers to the Self Help Africa Ireland Board as well as the boards of Self Help Africa UK, Gorta UK, Partner Africa, Traidlinks, TruTrade and the boards of any entities that may form part of the group in the future.

This Guide also applies to Self Help Africa's partners, vendors and other third parties, where it is included or referenced in relevant bid or tender documents, agreements, memorandums, purchase orders or contracts.

Version Control

Version No.	Date	By (Name, Position)	Details of changes	Reviewed and approved by (Name, Position)
1	24.5.2018	David Dalton, Executive Director	N/A	SHA Board on 24.5.2018

David Dalton   **Peter McDevitt**

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Executive Director   *Chief Finance and Operations Officer*

INTRODUCTION

Self Help Africa recognises the need to strengthen stakeholder accountability across the organisation. Accountability is *"a process of taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, and primarily those who are affected by the exercise of power"*. Stakeholders to which Self Help Africa holds itself accountable include programme participants, communities, staff, partner organisations, host governments, donors and the public. Current plans prioritise programme participants and communities where Self Help Africa works.

FRAMEWORK

Information provision is an important nexus through which other elements are achieved. For example, if community members do not have information on the objectives of a programme (nor participated in forming them), it is difficult for them to feel motivated to participate in activities or feel ownership of what happens. For example, in order for complaints and feedback mechanism to work, clear and accessible information must have been provided on the process of making a complaint and who to contact, at what location and when. Moreover, in order for Self Help Africa to achieve transparency in respect of community access to information, an information provision strategy needs to share details of funding sources, progress updates and evaluation findings.

WHY IS SHARING OF INFORMATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS IMPORTANT?

The reasons Self Help Africa shares information with <u>communities</u> is to:
- ❖ maintain or build community trust in Self Help Africa.
- ❖ empower communities.
- ❖ increase communities' engagement with the programme so that the programme will be more sustainable and have a greater impact.
- ❖ minimise damaging rumours by providing clear and accurate information on the programme
- ❖ be transparent about the programmes funding, objectives, achievements, shortcomings and future plans.
- ❖ inform communities as to their right to complain and give feedback about the programme and the process of doing so. Without a strong information provision campaign, complaints and response mechanisms are unlikely to function well.
- ❖ inform communities of staff codes of behaviour and what they can expect.
- ❖ meet the commitments Self Help Africa makes to donors regarding community engagement.

Reasons Self Help Africa shares information with <u>local and international NGOs</u> is to:
- ❖ assist open and positive two-way communication between Self Help Africa and partner staff (you get more information if you give more information).
- ❖ improve coordination (and overall effectiveness) between different organisations working in the same communities and to learn from each other.
- ❖ minimise misinformation that circulates informally in the absence of an active strategy of information provision.

Additional reasons Self Help Africa shares information with <u>local authorities, line ministries and national authorities</u> is to:
- ❖ enable them to better coordinate government and civil society plans.
- ❖ demonstrate respect for the authorities and to open communications with key local authority figures so that they can inform you of difficulties they can foresee through their knowledge of the political and administrative context.
- ❖ get support for planned changes in your country programme (for example the geographical or group targeting).

❖ Keep key persons in authority on your side and prevent disruptions which may result from them feeling excluded. It is easier to keep them on side by sharing information from the start than to win them back afterward when they are disgruntled!

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDELINE
❖ To communicate with staff the minimum standards expected of all Self Help Africa's programmes with respect to information sharing.
❖ To ensure a two-way information sharing is established with the communities through Self Help Africa's method of information sharing.
❖ To clarify for external parties (donors and government institutions) what procedures Self Help Africa has in place.

WHAT TYPE OF INFORMATION SHOULD WE SHARE?
❖ Background on Self Help Africa as an organisation globally and in a particular country.
❖ Objectives of the specific programme and type of activities planned and how participants are selected, donor, entitlements, office addresses and contact details.
❖ Titles and names of those in charge, complaints and feedback procedures.
❖ Progress updates, findings from evaluations; future plans of Self Help Africa to operate in that location.
❖ Safeguarding policies – code of conduct, child protection, etc.

HOW TO SHARE INFORMATION
Information must be shared bearing in mind the context of those we are sharing with. For literate stakeholders this can be done in writing, emails, etc. For communities that we work with we must bear in mind the likely high levels of illiteracy, power imbalances between genders and on ethnic and religious grounds, logistical issues – remoteness, lack of access to technology, workloads, etc – when sharing information. For such communities face to face meetings will be a very important way to share, backed up by (field tested) media – posters, radio broadcasts, etc. The Project Manager in charge of the oversight of a project is responsible for ensuring information is shared with all the aforementioned stakeholders in the appropriate manner. This is incorporated into project and activity planning to ensure information is shared at appropriate times, for example, at project inception, following evaluations and project reviews.