

Azerbaijan's EITI NGO Coalition - Communication Strategy

**Prepared by Tatiana Sedova
The World Bank
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Chapter 1. Background.

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is a coalition of governments, companies and civil society working together to improve openness and accountable management of revenues from natural resources. It is assured through the full publication and verification of company payments and government revenues from oil, gas and mining industries. Azerbaijan joined EITI in 2003 and became the first EITI Compliant country on February 18, 2009. EITI implementation in the country is overseen by the National Committee on EITI, chaired by the State Oil Fund (SOFAZ). All extractive industry companies operating in Azerbaijan are engaged in the implementation of EITI. As of now, Azerbaijan had published 18 EITI reports, covering 11 fiscal periods in 2003-2013.

Azerbaijani's EITI coalition of NGOs - Improving Transparency in Extractive Industry (ITEI) Coalition, an equal and well recognized partner in EITI implementation, celebrated its 10th anniversary on May, 2014. Presently, there are 110 SCOs- members of the Coalition. The Coalition is the main stakeholder responsible for sharing and informing the general public. Bearing in mind current challenges EITI and the Coalition in particular are facing (the adoption of the new EITI Standards and validation), it is important to review and amend the ITEI communication strategy.

The consultant met with several Coalition members, key other stakeholders (representatives of EITI Secretariat, extractive companies, international organizations), did the desk research (analyzed EITI communication strategies from Ghana, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Mongolia, UK and other countries; reviewed ITEI Coalition previous communications' activities and Strategic Plan 2015-2018; relevant documents from international EITI and etc.). In September, 2014 the consultant held an interactive seminar- workshop for the members of ITEI Coalition in order to develop the Coalition Communication' strategy (SC) draft using participatory approach. The links to relevant documents could be found in the attachments.

Chapter 2. Communication Strategy (CS).

Communication is the process of information sharing and exchange with stakeholders, such as state authorities and political parties; state and private extractive companies, business associations and chamber of trade; universities; media; other CSOs associations; donors, members of the Coalition and etc.

This communications strategy is designed to help the organization- ITEI Coalition- communicate effectively and meet core organizational objectives. Here are the key elements of a communications strategy.

2.1. Statement of purpose

This communications strategy shows how effective communications can:

- help the Coalition achieve its overall organizational objectives
- clarify its goals and objectives; demonstrate the success of its work
- engage effectively with stakeholders
- ensure people understand what the Coalition does and what EITI gives
- change behavior and perceptions where and if necessary.

This Communication Strategy aims to deliver communications activities over the period of validation exercise (in 2015) and post- validation period (2015-2016) and will develop over time depending on circumstances.

2.2. Current situation

Here is a brief SWOT- analysis of the current situation. The Coalition's strengths are obviously:

- its 10-years experience,
- wide representation of civil society organizations of the country,
- pool of CSOs with a great expertise in the field,
- public image,
- organizations represented in 'social' media.

The Coalition is well-structured, has democratic election procedures; it is not- and not perceived as-GONGO, being independent, and is a member of EITI International Board.

However civil society organisations (CSOs) can face problems in some cases in fulfilling their EITI role at country level¹. According to the position of ITEI Coalition, main challenges of EITI NGO Coalition were related to the increasingly limited activity environment for NGO's. Thus, after approval of amendments and modifications made by the Milli Majlis to the NGO Legislation on December 13, 2013, the administrative interferences to NGO activities and number of hindrances for organization of public discussions by NGO's have increased. As per the EITI Annual Activity Report 2013², if NGOs had difficulties to organize events in regions till 2013, at present it is problematic even to rent conference halls in Baku.

Unfortunately, there is now a real threat even of Azerbaijan's withdrawal from EITI³. The government of Azerbaijan has been criticized by international organizations for its recent restrictions towards CSOs' activities. On its 31st meeting the EITI International Board expressed deep concern about this situation⁴. The Board agreed on an early validation in January 2015.

This is a serious threat to be considered by ITEI Coalition. Nevertheless the Coalition should plan ahead and consider continuing its activities aimed at improving transparency and accountability in extractive sector, supported by relevant communications activities.

Let's look at the Coalition's communication activities. During past 6-7 years, experts mentioned that among the most efficient activities there were round table discussions for students and representatives of youth organizations in Baku; quarterly publication of the magazine "Transparency" (2007-2012) in English and local languages. The other activities, such as EITI information sessions for representatives of the Municipality and communities affected by extractive industries in the regions of Azerbaijan or publication of information bulletins were less successful as it did not reach particular target audiences.

Local EITI Secretariat is of course involved in information sharing, namely it disseminates EITI reports to state authorities, universities, embassies, diplomatic missions and international organizations. As mentioned, ITEI Coalition is responsible for spreading information in the regions of Azerbaijan, but has faced difficulties such as lack of financing, sometimes- technical issues (when TV signal does not reach

¹ http://wiki.openoil.net/index.php?title=EITI_in_Azerbaijan

² http://www.eiti.az/doc/2013/feal_hesabat_2013_en.pdf

³ This statement came from the chairman of the State Commission of Azerbaijan on EITI, the executive director of the State Oil Fund (SOFAZ) Shahmar Movsumov (<http://www.news.az/articles/93025>)

⁴ <https://eiti.org/news/statement-eiti-chair-clare-short-azerbaijan>

remote rural areas) and recently- also difficulties in obtaining permission for implementing activities in the regions.

Any communication could be divided on internal and external. The most of the Coalition's activities were targeted at the Coalition's external stakeholders leaving almost no funding in the projects for improving internal communication capacity and practices. The Coalition provides wide CSO representation having 110 members, which, from the other hand, makes internal communications and developing common Coalition opinion quite complicated. The most informed NGOs are members of the MSG. Majority of remaining members are considerably less informed and involved in the process.

During the workshop, organized by the World Bank with the Coalition members, they discussed its weaknesses, and about 70% out of them were somehow connected with weak communication (such as difficulties in working with electronic media; low interaction with printed media; minor representation in social networks; small cooperation with regions) - as a results, there is clearly weak population's interest to EITI. Experts mentioned, the communication practices of the Coalition remained the same for many years (round tables, bulletins and etc.) and there is lack of innovative approaches. Hence the Coalition should obviously improve its capacity in terms of external and internal communication, bearing in mind current circumstances and validator's recommendations.

2.3. Organizational objectives and communications objectives

Any communications strategy should closely reflect overall organizational plan. At the same time- as this SCOs Coalition focused on EITI in particular- its CS should synergy with overall EITI communication strategy in the country.

The Coalition had its strategic planning exercise on June, 2014 for 2015-2018, and defined the following strategic directions\ targets:

1. Application of new EITI Standards in Azerbaijan;
2. Strengthening the participation of civil society (CS) in EITI process (indicators: participation of members, strengthened regional representation, increased number of monitoring and researches and media statements);
3. Establishment of legal framework on EITI (indicator: new law or relevant modifications to the existing laws);
4. Increased accountability and transparency of government and companies (indicators: relevance to new standards, quality evaluation of reports);
5. Increased participation of women and youth in coalition activity.

Each of the organization's strategic objectives can be broken down to show how operations and communications can contribute to delivering the objectives. The objectives are interrelated: improvement of reporting and accountability (objective 4) depends on proper application of the new EITI Standards in Azerbaijan (objective 1), which in turn depends of the legislative base (objective 3).

There are communication's elements in almost each of the strategic objectives, for ex:

- Discussion of new Standard with political parties; with candidates to Milli Mejlis and promotion of its inclusion to their platforms;
- Lobbying EITI legislation in Milli Mejlis; promotion in media;
- Involvement of women and youth organizations to the Coalition;
- Working with communities in the areas of mining industry.

Priority Organizational and Communication’s Objectives.

Having in mind limited resources, during the workshop the following objectives were defined as priority ones from its communicating point of view:

- to strengthen the participation of civil society (CS) in EITI process and
- to improve the Coalition internal communications.

These objectives were further elaborated to operational and communications objectives:

- **To strengthen the participation of civil society (CS) in EITI process**

Operational or policy objectives	Communications objectives
2.1. Knowledge and skills of civil society institutes increased;	To provide a regular flow of information to key partner civil society’s organizations
2.2. Cooperation of civil society institutes with mass media extended;	To regularly showcase organizational successes in the local media To be approached by local media for opinions on EITI in particular and transparency and accountability issues
2.3. Regional representation strengthened;	To provide a regular flow of information to and from regional SCOs on EITI-related issues; on the Coalition activities and projects
2.4. Monitoring in the areas of mining industry extended;	To regularly gather feedback from stakeholders to ensure accountability standards in extractive regions are followed
2.5. Benefiting from international and regional cooperation and practice.	To provide a regular flow of information to and from regional and international partners

- **To improve the Coalition internal communications**

The second important priority in terms of the Coalition’s CS is its internal communication (IC). Effective internal communications is commonly understood by practitioners to improve employee engagement and therefore to add significant value to organizations⁵.

Internal communication can help on several different levels:

- Tell: simply informing people of the direction, non-negotiable
- Sell: anticipating some form of backlash, requiring some persuasion
- Consult: seeking specific areas of input to the decision-making process
- Involve: seeking varying degrees of involvement and co-creation

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_communications

Operational or policy objectives	Communications objectives
Knowledge of new EITI Standards among the Coalition members increased;	To ensure all Coalition members and staff know and understand new EITI Standards;
Coalition opinions on EITI developed;	To provide a regular flow of information and active discussion with the Coalition's members on EITI- related issues; To regularly convey common Coalition's opinion to MSG and general public

The ITEI Coalition – as many organizations- has lots of audiences who they need to interact with. The audiences need also to be prioritized.

2.4. Identifying stakeholders\ target audiences

One way of prioritizing audiences or stakeholders might be to ‘map’ them. Some simple examples of mapping stakeholders include: looking at their influence on policy and resources and their interest in your organization. Using this approach⁶, the Coalition's stakeholders in general were mapped as follows:

- general public- **to monitor**
- local communities in regions- **to keep informed**
- Media, partners organization, ministries, business- **to keep satisfied**
- The Coalition's members, EITI Secretariat (local and international), major donors, MSG members- **key players**

Bearing in mind priorities identified above, **four main target audiences** were identified:

1. other CSOs
2. media
3. the Coalition members (internal communications)
4. local communities in extractive regions.

Each of these target audiences was analyzed in details using the same mapping approach, trying also to formulate key messages and means to reach its target.

2.5. -2.6. Messages and Key communications methods

The next task is to break down objectives into relevant messages for each of those audiences. The messages should be relevant and appropriate to the audience. It is very important that there is continuity across the messages, that the organizations' stakeholders understand what kind of organization it is.

For each audience identified, the most appropriate channels for communicating with them should be indicated. These might include an e-bulletin, conference, workshop, leaflet, press release, event – or broader methods such as media and the Coalition's website.

⁶ <http://knowhownonprofit.org/campaigns/communications/effective-communications-1/communications-strategy>

Audience	What they need to know	Key communications messages	Key communications channels and instruments
<p><i>Other CSOs- Environmental- key players</i></p> <p><i>Social- keep satisfied</i></p> <p><i>Economic\ business – keep informed</i></p> <p><i>Political\ legal- monitor</i></p>	<p>How EITI assists in making transparent ecological issues, related to extractive industries</p> <p>How EITI assists in making transparent social issues of communities living in extractive regions and local government accountable</p> <p>Extractive sector makes substantial input in the country’s economic and business development. Business rules are clear and legal</p> <p>EITI provides a mechanism for partners’ dialogue between the government, business and CSOs</p>	<p>We help to ensure more efficient management of natural resources</p> <p>Use your potential to influence decision making on social issues related to extractive regions</p> <p>The purpose of the coalition is to improve transparency in extractive industries, which gives a signal to investors of a transparent business environment</p> <p>Add your value to strengthening the policy dialogue and civil society of Azerbaijan</p>	<p>Coalition e-bulletin on news and activities</p> <p>Quarterly EITI meetings</p> <p>Quarterly EITI policy briefings on specific policy areas; positive media- coverage</p> <p>Webinars</p>
<p>Media</p> <p>-Pro-governmental- monitor</p> <p>- National TV- keep satisfied</p> <p>-Oppositional and social media- keep informed</p> <p>- High rated media- key players</p>	<p>Regularly published EITI reports provide useful information for public debate on extractive sector, important for the country’s economy; and partnership between government, business and CSOs</p>	<p>We are not politically engaged against the government- we engaged in transparency and accountability in oil, gas and mining sector and partnership between government, business and CSOs. EITI reports provide interesting and comprehensive information on these issues!</p>	<p>The Coalition website</p> <p>Ensure all press releases are sent to relevant media in advance</p> <p>Use of social media, “opinion leaders”</p> <p>Webinars</p>
<p>The Coalition members-</p> <p>NGOs with expertise</p>	<p>Your knowledge and expertise are appreciated</p>	<p>The Coalition and EITI international community appreciate your expertise!</p>	<p>The Coalition website</p> <p>Representation on the Coalition Board</p>

<p>in EITI- <i>key players</i></p> <p>Pro- government NGOs- <i>keep satisfied</i></p> <p>Unregistered NGOs and NGOs from the regions – <i>keep informed</i></p> <p>Formal members- <i>monitor</i></p>	<p>EITI, being an international and recognized standards for better transparency and accountability, helps to improve public management</p> <p>EITI develops on the regional level, providing useful info for citizens</p> <p>Coalition is a recognized equal partner of the government and business in Azerbaijan, as well as on international level</p>	<p>Be more active in activities of the coalition in order to add specific expert value to the initiative</p> <p>The coalition is not a tool to pressure the government. It serves the purpose of increasing efficiency of state policy in this direction.</p> <p>Benefit from coalition’s potential and add more value to the coalition</p> <p>You should benefit from the resources and opportunities that the coalition offers</p>	<p>and MSG</p> <p>Quarterly EITI policy briefings on specific policy areas; positive media- coverage</p> <p>Quarterly newsletter; offer training on EITI (including Hazar hub)</p> <p>Coalition members e-bulletin webinars</p>
<p><i>Local communities in extractive regions</i></p>	<p>EITI provides useful information on the revenues from extractive companies nationally and on regional level and how local communities are affected by these revenues and its management</p>	<p>Know your rights! Requires compliance with the rights! The good of the land belong to you!</p>	<p>Round tables with community representatives (could include also local authorities and extractive companies, operating in the region);</p> <p>Leaflets\ brochures on EITI with regional specific.</p> <p>Working with “opinion leaders”</p>

For each audience, there will probably be several appropriate communications channels to communicate effectively with relevant stakeholders. There are pros and cons to all of these channels, which once again will vary depending on the organization’s needs and resources. Internet and social media (Facebook, Youtube, Twitter) are the most modern and less regulated channels then the others, but mainly aimed at youth and people living in Baku. Quite substantial number of newspapers⁷ and TV and radio stations⁸ with good coverage of the country’s territory is a plus, but monitored carefully. The Coalition previous communication experience shows that the most

⁷ 36 daily and almost 200 weekly and monthly newspapers

⁸ 23 television stations and 26 radio stations, including a small number of independent stations.

effective means which ITEI Coalition used were round table discussion and quarterly newsletters (if properly targeted to a specific audience).

Now the Coalition can begin to construct its communications plan, linking audiences, messages and channels.

2.7. Work plan

With audiences and key communications methods identified, and the Strategy approved by the Coalition, the next step for the Coalition is to draw up a table that indicates the key communications activities, budget and resources allocated to delivering the strategy. First of all, the Coalition has to increase its internal capacities in communications- external, as well as internal.

As the nearest steps (for Y2015) there are suggested:

Activities	Timeframe	Budget
To appoint a Communication coordinator for the Coalition and train if necessary	1 st month ⁹	
To improve the Coalition web- site	Already in process	
To define a core group of communications experts among the Coalition members	1-2 nd month	
To train the group (possible use of Hazar hub training program or international opportunities (such as from the International EITI Secretariat)	2-5 th month	
To evaluate the efficiency of current practices of internal communication (mailing lists, frequency and etc)	2-3 rd month	
To conduct a survey of key communication channels (specific media) for each target audiences	2-6 th month	
To define “opinion leaders” for key players in each target audience (for social media, for example, using special services such as Wobot \ Social Bakers)	3-6 th month	
To develop media- plan, fundraise and implement	6-11 th month	
To organize a series of webinars for media, other CSOs and the Coalition members	5- 9 th month	
To develop innovative leaflet (in a form of infographics, for instance) for targeted	7-10 th month	

⁹ Month are counted after the Strategy’s approval by the coalition Board

communities and distribute the leaflets		
To evaluate efficiency of activities	10-11 th month	
To review the Strategy and plan for next year	12 th month	

The Plan should be budgeted properly and relevant fundraising activities planned and implemented.

2.8. Evaluating success

Here are some tools\ measures to evaluate various sections of the communications:

- the number of responses to e-bulletins
- hits to the website
- number of attendees at the Coalition\ EITI events
- media coverage; not only in terms of volume, but also breadth and depth. How often were key messages mentioned and has there been a shift in public attitude on issues the Coalition has been campaigning for?
- feedback from stakeholders (e.g. survey after 6 month from starting CS implementation)
- policy changes, for example have the key goals of ITEI Coalition been achieved?

3. Conclusions.

This strategy should support the Coalition objectives, as well as EITI overall goals, and will develop over time. As for now, it focuses on the Coalition enforcement by attracting partners from other CSOs and further building its expert potential by training and active involvement of its members. The other audiences should not be left without attention, such as extractive companies, parliament members and representatives of political parties (bearing in mind coming election).

There is a big advantage- EITI is internationally recognized- which the Coalition should use. It provides ‘moral’ and financial support, but local sources should be considered too- for example, The Council on State Support for NGOs (CSSN) under the President of Azerbaijan provides grant support for CIS NGOs¹⁰.

Considering current situation, it is important to keep implementing communication activities in a very modest manner. Four main target audiences – the Coalition members, media, other CSOs and local communities- would remain important even if the Coalition would have to do its rebranding due to current circumstances (from EITI to, for example, the Coalition of Transparency and Accountability).

The Coalition web- site as a main tool in information sharing is being modernized with the World Bank assistance and should be used actively in future.

¹⁰ <http://cso-central.asia/mezhdunarodnaya-programma-grantov-dlya-npo-stran-sng/>

4. Attachments.

Attachment 1. Links to the documents used during preparation:

Talking Matters Guide Roadshow version (April 2013 UPDATED)	https://eiti.org/files/Talking_Matters_Guide_Roadshow%20version_April%202013_UPDATED.pdf
EITI UK IMPLEMENTATION COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY	https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/318815/EITI_Communications_Plan.pdf
Nigeria EITI Communication Strategy	http://neiti.org.ng/index.php?q=documents/neiti-communication-strategy
LIBERIA EITI Communication Strategy	http://www.resourcegovernance.org/sites/default/files/Liberia_communication_strategy.pdf
GHANA EITI COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	http://www.resourcegovernance.org/sites/default/files/Ghana%20EITI%20Communication%20Strategy.doc
A Communication Strategy for promoting transparency and accountability in Uganda's extractive industry. A Case for EITI	http://www.afiego.org/index.php/publications/other-publications/13-a-communication-strategy-for-promoting-transparency-and-accountability-in-ugandas-extractive-industry-a-case-of-eiti-2010/file
Afghanistan EITI Communications Strategy	http://aeiti.af/AEITI-Communications-Strategy.html
Mongolia EITI communication and its implementation (2013)	http://resource3.sodovision.com/eiti/file/2013/9/dy6otsgpzne1aih9rtxt5a3m9/EITI%20Communication%20plan%202013_eng_final.pdf

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_communications

<http://knowhownonprofit.org/campaigns/communications/effective-communications-1/communications-strategy>

Attachment 2. The brief general review of media channels in Azerbaijan, based on international organizations\ experts (such as Freedom House and International Bar Association) analyses¹¹:

Independent Media. International experts had been pointing out increasing limitation of independent broadcast, print, and online media which has effectively silenced public debate in 2011 and until now. This trend discourages investigative journalism and contributes to a climate of distrust and fear.

Television and radio.

In addition to Article 47, which protects freedom of speech, Article 50(II) of the Constitution of Azerbaijan guarantees ‘freedom of mass media’ and prohibits ‘state censorship in mass media’, including the press. In the field of broadcasting, this is further regulated by the Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting. There are currently 23 television stations and 26 radio stations in Azerbaijan, including a small number of independent stations. However, broadcast licenses are issued by the National Television and Radio Council (NTRC), a public body that is wholly state-funded and whose members are each appointed by the President. Some independent television and radio stations have been permitted to operate in Azerbaijan, but facing interference from the authorities. Most media in Azerbaijan ‘practiced self-censorship and avoided topics considered politically sensitive’¹.

Restrictions on foreign broadcasters have been particularly severe. In January 2009, for instance, the government closed the FM relays of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America and Azadlıq Radiosu (the Azerbaijani service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty). In May 2012 the NRTC allegedly demanded all Azerbaijani television stations to cease broadcast of foreign TV shows or face fines. 50 Foreign programming is still accessible, however, via satellite, shortwave and the internet.

Newspapers

There are 36 daily newspapers in Azerbaijan and almost 200 weekly and monthly print publications. In 2011 Amnesty International estimated that state-owned publications made up 80 per cent of newspapers, with the remaining 20 per cent being composed of opposition-run or independent newspapers. The leading pro-government newspapers are Azərbaycan (founded by the National Assembly), Khalg Gazeti (founded by the Presidential Administration), Yeni Azərbaycan (owned by the President’s New Azerbaijan Party), and Milkiyyet. Leading opposition papers include Azadlıq (published by the PFP) and Yeni Musavat (published by the Musavat party). Unlike the role played by the NRTC in the broadcasting sector, newspapers in Azerbaijan are not subject to direct governmental regulation, other than by way of the general requirements of the 1999 Law on Mass Media. At the same time, the Press Council regularly publishes a blacklist of publications said to have breached Azerbaijan’s Code of Professional Ethics for Journalists in Azerbaijan. Blacklisted publications – together with pro-opposition and independent publications more generally – appear to experience considerable difficulty in attracting advertising revenue for apparently political reasons.

Internet and social media

Although the number of users is said to have increased significantly in the past decade, internet penetration remains highest in Baku and considerably lower in rural areas. Internet in Azerbaijan has generally been much less regulated than either its broadcast or print media, making it ‘a medium for alternative voices and popular political dissent’. Internet news stations are described as particularly popular for young Azerbaijanis ‘because of their independent coverage and focus on issues of public interest’. In particular, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are increasingly used. In February 2013, the Council established a special body to receive complaints concerning online media. Shortly afterwards, the NTRC announced that it was considering introducing licensing for online television channels.

¹¹ https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/FOTN%202013_Full%20Report_0.pdf
<http://www.ibanet.org/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=D168B0B4-C377-4EC7-A0B9-D029EF09A39C>