



## **Benefits of a Sectoral Transparency Strategy**

The sectoral approach allows government, civil society stakeholders and the donor community to focus transparency efforts in one specific field or subject matter. This concentrated engagement may translate into more immediate results and impact, thus providing greater profile to the benefits of increased transparency and access to information.

A sectoral strategy takes advantage of the existing legislative framework and policies, and better integrates these with the policy reform notion of greater access to information as a tool to fight corruption. For example, in the area of procurement, there already may exist a public procurement law, policies related to procurement oversight by independent bodies, or public contracting statutes. By engaging at the sectoral level, these extant laws more effectively can be incorporated into the transparency efforts where appropriate or highlighted as in need of reform.

Moreover, in sectoral initiatives, it is often easier to identify and engage interested stakeholders. These groups already are invested in the theme, and often understand the issue more fully and are more amenable to utilizing new advocacy tools, such as access to information policies. The interested parties are more specialist and capable of adapting the new transparency mechanisms in their ongoing efforts. For example, the recently formed medicines transparency alliance draws upon entities such as the health ministry, the pharmaceutical companies, and NGO's interested in public health to foster support

full and enduring access to information regime. In other words, could sectoral

- J Without enforceability, may not be sustainable
- J Duplication of efforts and diminished coordination
- J Marginalizes groups already engaged in the promotion of access to information
- J In practice, it may not be feasible

### **A combined approach**

I would urge governments, civil society advocates and the donor community to consider a combined approach to access to information, with efforts aimed at both a sectoral and comprehensive methodology. Simultaneously supporting the two different types of initiatives will allow the advantages of the sectoral approach to flourish and negate some of the potential disadvantages. As indicated, the sectoral approach can provide for immediate change and this impact may be used by the generalists in their quest for a comprehensive access to information law. The lessons learned from the more targeted sectoral focus can be applied to all of government as the comprehensive strategy generates an access to information law. Moreover, donor support of both strategies will engage all interested stakeholders and encourage greater coordination and promote the links between relevant constituencies. Finally, if successful, a dual-pronged strategy will secure the more immediate results of a sectoral approach while assuring the transformation and sustainability of an enforceable comprehensive transparency regime.