



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



**TOWARDS A COMMON UN SYSTEM APPROACH**

**Harnessing Communication  
To Achieve  
The Millennium Development Goals**

# **Harnessing Communication To Achieve The Millennium Development Goals**

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**Background Papers prepared for the 10th UN Inter-Agency  
Round Table on Communication for Development  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 12-14 February 2007**

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# Forward

The new UN Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, has said that “the true measure of success for the United Nations is not how much we promise, but how much we deliver for those who need us most”. We believe that strengthened collaboration among UN agencies in the area of communication for development will increase our capacity to deliver by enabling us to combine efforts and build synergies.

The 10th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development aims at discussing the ways in which we can reinforce our collaboration in this area, with particular emphasis on achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

This publication provides an overview of the issues that will be covered during the Round Table, as well as suggestions as to how inter-agency coordination can be improved, both at headquarters and at country level. The two background papers included in it, prepared respectively by UNESCO and the UNDP, complement each other. We hope that the ideas discussed in these two papers will stimulate all our colleagues in UN agencies to fully engage in the process of “delivering as one” and to transform, through concrete actions, our commitments into real results.

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# Contents

<b>Section 1:</b>	
<b>UNESCO Background Paper</b>	
<b>Towards a Common UN System Approach: The Role of Communication for Development in Achieving the MDGs</b>	
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1 Background to the Round Table	12
1.2 Theme and Objectives of the 10th Round Table	13
<b>Communication for Development and the UN system</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 Evolving Communication and Development Paradigms	16
2.2 New and Old Challenges	18
2.3 Communication in the UN System	21
<b>Good Practices in Interagency Collaboration</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1 The UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development	25
3.2 World Congress on Communication for Development	26
3.3 World Summit on the Information Society	26
3.4 UN Group on the Information Society	26
3.5 Community Multimedia Centres	27
3.6 International Programme for the Development of Communication	27
3.7 UN-Water	27
3.8 Research on ICTs & Poverty	27
3.9 ICTs Training	27
3.10 Rural ICTs	28
3.11 Freedom of Information	28
3.12 Press Freedom	28
3.13 Participatory Video	28
3.14 HIV/AIDS	28
3.15 Renewable Energy	28
3.16 International Day for Eradicating Poverty	29
3.17 Community Radio Policy	29
3.18 Parliamentary Broadcasting	29
<b>Key Expected Outcomes</b>	<b>29</b>

## Section 2: UNDP Background Paper: Harnessing Communication to Achieve the MDGs

<b>Introduction: Definitions and Scope of Communication for Development</b>	<b>37</b>
Communication for Development: Scope and Definitions	37
Definitions and Characteristics	37
The Scope of Communication for Development	39
Communication in Governance, or Communication as Participation	39
Communication in Support of Specific Development Sectors	40
Knowledge and Information and Communication Technologies	40
The Cross Cutting Nature of Communication for Development	41
<b>How Communication for Development is Central to the Achievement of the MDGs</b>	<b>42</b>
A Rights Based Approach to Development	42
Delivering on the MDGs	43
Ownership and Communication for Development	44
Governance and Accountability	44
Globalisation and the Role of Knowledge in Development	45
<b>Need for Systematic Integration of C4D into UN Development Planning and Assessment Tools at Country Level</b>	<b>48</b>
The "Communication" Confusion	48
An absence of data	49
The Dizzying Pace of Change	49
A Multisectoral Issue but Little Learning or Planning Across Sectors	50
Who Knows What is Going on?	50
The Lack of Champions and Capacity: Who Should Know What is Going on?	51
The Long Term Nature of Impact	51
Distance from Government	51

<b>How Coordination Can Be Best be Improved at Country Level Through the CCA/UNDAF Process</b>	<b>52</b>
The Current CCA/UNDAF Process	52
How do Communication for Development Issues Feature in CCA/UNDAF Process?	53
How the UNDAF/CCA System may Evolve in the Future	55
<b>Recommendations and proposals for incorporating c4d into the UNDAF/CCA and other country level planning processes</b>	<b>57</b>
Summary of Recommendations	57
<b>ANNEX I: Bibliography</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>ANNEX II: Access To Information And The Media: Governance Indicators</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Section 3: Draft Plan of Action</b>	<b>71</b>

# 1.

TOWARDS A COMMON UN SYSTEM APPROACH

## The Role of Communication for Development in Achieving the MDGs

UNESCO Background Paper prepared for the 10th UN  
Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 12-14 February 2007

### **Acknowledgement**

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# Executive Summary

This document was prepared as a background paper for the 10th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development, which is to be held in Addis Ababa from 12-14 February 2007, in line with the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/51/172 of December 1996. The paper has five parts. The introductory section provides background and spells out the objectives of the forthcoming Round Table. With reference to the evolution of the field, section 2 discusses the state of communication for development in the UN system. Section 3 highlights a cross-section of existing good practices in inter-agency collaboration, while section 4 articulates the key expectations from the 10th Round Table. A tentative Plan of Action, including concrete areas in which UN agencies can collaborate as a first step towards enhanced partnership around communication for development, is appended as an annex.

The introductory section begins with a historical review. Since its inception in 1986, the Round Table has come to be recognized as an important mechanism of inter-agency cooperation and coordination for promoting and advancing Communication for Development. Organized on the basis of a common theme influenced by current trends and practice, the Round Table has sought to foster and promote enhanced understanding and concrete collaboration on Communication for Development within the UN system. Detailed recommendations have emanated from each Round Table, which have been instrumental in building a strong communication for development constituency within the UN system and beyond.

The 10th Round Table theme, 'Developing a UN system-wide common approach to communication for development in view of achieving the Millennium Development Goals', has been selected for two reasons: the unprecedented political support for the MDGs, which provide a strong unifying basis for inter-agency collaboration;

and the recognition of Communication for Development's potential to help deliver the MDGs because it is predicated on participation and ownership, and because it facilitates public debate. The latest UN reforms, which aim to deepen coordination and coherence towards meeting the MDGs, constitute an unprecedented opportunity for the UN family to harness communication for development more systematically, both at country and headquarter level.

The 10th Round Table has three main objectives: Increasing joint inter-agency collaboration at international (headquarters) and national (UN country team) levels; Strengthening awareness within and among UN agencies on ways in which the impact and effectiveness of communication for development can be measured; and Introducing mechanisms to harmonize communication for development programming approaches within the UN system

Section 2 begins by examining the evolution of communication in the context of post-World War Two development and reconstruction efforts. In contrast to the linear, hierarchical approach espoused by earlier modernization and dependency theories, Communication for Development emerged as a two-way process, to the extent that interpersonal approaches are today recognized alongside mass media communication and diffusion models have largely given way to participatory approaches. Ensuring that women and other marginalized groups are fully involved in the development conversation is however still a challenge.

Communication for Development can be classified into three broad approaches: behaviour change communication, communication for social change and advocacy communication. There is significant crossover between these approaches, and in practice the application of each is context-specific.

Despite the evolution of the field, a number of old and new challenges remain that must be addressed if communication is to be more effective in advancing development. First is the rapid spread of globalization, with all its contradictions. Second is the rapid expansion of information and communication technologies over the past 20 years. Third is establishing how communication fits into, and becomes an active part of, local and national development processes. Fourth is how to demonstrate the added value and impact of communication in addressing development challenges, and ensure that it forms an integral part of government, international and donor policies, strategies and practice.

A fundamental reassessment and reprioritization is needed to see how Communication for Development can deliver the ownership and participation needed for the MDGs to succeed. This necessitates new levels of collaboration and coordination among UN system actors. While a wide variety of activities can be clustered under the Communication for Development umbrella, UN inter-agency

relations are characterized by a lack of coherence, limited partnership, and an absence of co-ordination. Communication rarely features as an integral part of common system development planning and implementation processes, is not unanimously understood or appreciated at the highest levels of decision-making, and is viewed as a downstream public relations or dissemination function, rather than as an upstream component of programme development and delivery.

Successive waves of reform have sought to address the wider UN system coordination deficit, and to place the MDGs at the centre of the UN's development effort. While some progress has been registered, a number of concerns remain. One is the unresolved tension between global strategies of each UN agency and the doctrine of country-owned and -led programmes. Another concern, raised by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel, is that the UN is not active enough in advising governments, convening stakeholders, advocating for international norms and standards, providing technical assistance and advising on building and strengthening institutions.

While this systemic reality accounts for the piecemeal and fragmented nature of Communication for Development in the UN, the lack of advocacy within the system is also largely to blame, as well as weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation. The emphasis in the ongoing UN reforms on improving coordination and coherence constitutes an unprecedented opportunity for Communication for Development advocates to ensure it forms an integral part of the UN's future plans and programmes.

Section 3 highlights some good practices in inter-agency collaboration, with the important caveat that in many cases, initiatives described are not consonant with the agreed understanding of Communication for Development as spelled out in the December 1996 UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/51/172. As such, the cases cited should be viewed as instances of collaboration around information and communication. There are relatively few examples of UN system agencies collaborating with each other, while good practices that do exist are largely in the ICTs area and are limited mostly to pilot projects whose successes have not been replicated at scale.

Good practices highlighted include the World Congress on Communication for Development, World Summit on the Information Society, International Programme for the Development of Communication, UN-Water, the International Initiative for Community Multimedia Centres, and the Round Table itself.

Key expected outcomes of the 10th Round Table are spelled out in Section 4. A first expectation is to arrive at a common understanding of Communication for Development as practised in the UN system. Second, the 10th Round Table should develop the parameters of a common approach, taking into account frameworks such as human rights, now at the centre of the UN's work. Third, the meeting should reach agreement on specific themes, issues and areas on which UN agencies can work together concretely and to good effect, both within countries and at international level. A fourth expected outcome is an agreement on how to reinforce existing mechanisms (such as the UNDAF, CCAs and PRSs) so as to facilitate delivery on the common approach and strategy. In light of the need for more systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation highlighted earlier in this paper, a fifth expectation is the identification of and agreement on the types of indicators that need to be developed or harnessed.

A final expected outcome of the meeting is that all the above expectations be codified in a jointly agreed Plan of Action which articulates steps and actions to put in place and implement a common UN Communication for Development approach and strategy. A preliminary Plan of Action is appended as an annex to this paper. It highlights a vision and mission, objectives, principles, thematic programme focus, expected results, performance indicators and other elements, aimed at informing discussions during the 10th Round Table.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Round Table

The Round Table was first introduced in 1986 as an informal mechanism for UN system collaboration<sup>1</sup>. In 1994, and on the basis of lessons learned, the UN General Assembly commissioned a Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) to recommend ways of better integrating communication in the work of UN agencies. The JIU report<sup>2</sup> urged UN agencies to work together more closely in developing better communication for development strategies, and proposed that the existing informal round table be regularized, including all UN agencies and the regional economic commissions.

Informed by the JIU recommendations, the UN General Assembly passed two resolutions on communication for development in the UN system<sup>3</sup>, and encouraged decision makers to include it as an integral component in developing programmes and projects. The round table was recognized as “an important mechanism of inter-agency cooperation and coordination for promoting and advancing communication for development...”, and the General Assembly requested the UN Secretary-General, in consultation with the UNESCO Director-General, to submit biennial reports on the round table’s implementation. It was subsequently agreed among participating agencies that the hosting of the round table be rotated.

Four round tables<sup>4</sup> have taken place since then, organized on the basis of a common theme influenced by current trends and practice. The overarching objective of these round tables has been “to ensure understanding among the UN agencies regarding the implementation of programmes and projects that contribute to communication for development or use that specific approach to resolve development-related issues” (UNESCO 2006).

Convened by UNESCO, the 6th Round Table recommended that communication should be viewed as an integral component of development projects and programmes, and that communities should be provided with the skills and

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1. The early Round Tables provided an important forum for the ongoing debate on diffusion versus participation Communication for Development methodologies and approaches. There has been a high degree of continuity between the early and more recent Round Tables. For example, proposals emanating from the 2004 Round Table in Rome – such as the call for communication needs assessments at the start of any development initiative and an appeal for donor and development agencies to set up well-resourced devcomm units – are said to echo suggestions made by Erskine Childers, a pioneer of development communication in the UN system who led UNDP’s Development Support Communications Services (DSCS) from 1967 to 1975 and was actively involved in the early Round Tables (Rogers 2005)

2. Recommendation 6 noted that there was “no forum whereby discussions are held and views exchanged on development and humanitarian assistance communication programmes”. Taking into account UNESCO’s mandate and the existence of the International Programme for the Development of

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equipment to voice their opinions and aspirations. The 7th Round Table, hosted by UNICEF, concluded that greater priority needed to be given to evaluating communication programmes and urged that more resources be dedicated to developing capacity for fostering behaviour change. The 8th Round Table, hosted by UNFPA, called for the formation of an international coalition on HIV/AIDS communication strategies and tools, and for key agencies and implementers to identify and improve access to proven tools and reduce duplication. The 9th Round Table, hosted by FAO in September 2004 in Rome, highlighted a number of emerging challenges which, while constituting new opportunities, had also led to a marginalization of poverty-related issues – necessitating enhanced collaboration and coordination on Communication for Development initiatives as a key to achieving the MDGs.

The recommendations from these meetings have been instrumental in building a strong communication for development constituency, both within the UN system and beyond. A crucial next step is to put in place policies to ensure communication is integral to development issues. Such policies would help earmark sufficient funds to carry out the work and also establish benchmarks for different issues. This is particularly relevant within the context of achieving the MDGs (see 1.2 below). To this end, and most recently, the 9th Round Table came up with a number of concrete proposals<sup>5</sup> (including the development of an action plan and the setting up of an inter-agency working group) which inform and underpin the 10th Round Table’s key objective of putting in place mechanisms to ensure a common UN system approach.

### 1.2 Theme and Objectives of the 10th Round Table

The 10th Round Table on Communication for Development will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 12-14 February 2007, convened by UNESCO, on the theme ‘Developing a UN system-wide common approach to communication for development in view of achieving the Millennium Development Goals’. The theme was selected in recognition of the unprecedented political support for the MDGs as a global framework for reducing poverty and making development more effective. Many development actors, including governments, bilateral and multilateral

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Communication (IPDC) since 1980, Recommendation 7 of the report urged the Programme to mobilise resources from UN agencies, bilateral and multilateral organisations, NGOs, foundations and universities in order to increase support to the development of communication in developing countries.

3. Resolution 50/130 in 1995, and resolution 51/172 in 1996

4. In Zimbabwe in 1996 on ‘Communication Access for Rural Development’ hosted by UNESCO; in Brazil in 1998 on ‘Communication for Social Change and Development’ hosted by UNICEF; in Nicaragua in 2001 on ‘HIV/AIDS Communication and Evaluation’ hosted by UNFPA; and in Italy in 2004 on ‘Focus on Sustainable Development’ hosted by FAO.

5. For the full list of recommendations, see pp.9 and 10 of the 9th Round Table report.

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agencies, as well as civil society, have sought to align their priorities around the MDGs (cf. Deane 2004, WCCD 2006), which have been placed at the centre of the UN system's development efforts by successive reforms, including the just-released report of the High-Level Panel<sup>6</sup>. The MDGs therefore provide a strong unifying basis for inter-agency collaboration<sup>7</sup>.

The importance of communication has been widely acknowledged by the development community, and significant evidence of its impact exists in relation to HIV/AIDS, sustainable development and other pressing development challenges (cf. Servaes et al 2006). What is also now increasingly being emphasized is the potential communication holds for helping to deliver the MDGs, precisely because it is predicated on participation and ownership, and because it facilitates public debate. And yet, despite this recognition, academics and practitioners argue that communication has neither been fully exploited by governments nor accorded the requisite priority by development agencies, a reality that renders the common goal of meeting the MDGs less achievable (CFSC et al 2004).

As highlighted by previous inter-agency round tables, as well as by practitioners and academics in the field, many issues need to be addressed – among them the need for capacity building, research, monitoring and evaluation, freedom of expression and pluralism, enhanced financial investment, and scaling up of good practices. However, the absence of a common approach and strategy among UN agencies has made it all the more difficult to address these challenges in a sustained and holistic way – resulting in a dispersion of effort and erosion of the potential of communication to make a difference to communities, strengthen governance and accelerate development. This is not to say that attempts have not been made to foster a common approach. In recent years many UN agencies have made efforts towards harmonizing different perspectives in Communication for Development<sup>8</sup>.

The latest UN reforms, which aim to deepen coordination and coherence towards meeting the MDGs, constitute an unprecedented opportunity for the UN family to harness communication for development more systematically, both within

6. 'Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform' (September 2002); 'In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All' (March 2005), the five-year review and follow-up document from the Millennium Summit; 'Delivering as One: Report of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel', United Nations, New York (November 2006)

7. While there is unanimity around the MDGs themselves, there are conflicts – both within the UN system and outside it – as to how to achieve them. Differing views on which MDGs should be prioritized reflect the particular mandates and agendas of different agencies, a factor that makes a common approach all the more difficult.

8. One attempt to do so is UNICEF's development, along with FAO, WHO, the World Bank and CDC, of a strategic inter-agency communication planning toolkit.

developing countries<sup>9</sup> and at headquarter level. The round table thus assumes increasing importance as a forum for fostering enhanced collaboration. It is to this end that the 10th Round Table will focus on practical and achievable interventions around which UN agencies can develop a common approach, strategy and action plan for harnessing communication for development. In doing so, it will draw on experiences and lessons learned in the wider community of practice.

**The 10th Round Table has three main objectives:**

- To increase joint inter-agency collaboration at international (headquarters) and national (UN country team) levels;
- To strengthen awareness within and among UN agencies on ways in which the impact and effectiveness of communication for development can be measured; and
- To introduce mechanisms to harmonize communication for development programming approaches within the UN system

This document has been prepared as a background paper for the 10th Round Table. Its purpose is five-fold. First, it is intended to inform the discussion by introducing and promoting possibilities for increased inter-agency joint collaboration on communication for development. Second, it sets out to establish an agenda for intensifying this collaboration on communication for development<sup>10</sup>. Third, it highlights some good practices in joint inter-agency collaboration. Fourth, it identifies international and country mechanisms and structures that can be harnessed towards fostering a common approach, and proposes strategies to actively strengthen communication for realization of the MDGs.

The rest of the paper will proceed as follows. With reference to the evolution of the field, section 2 discusses the state of communication for development in the UN system. Section 3 highlights a cross-section of existing good practices in inter-agency collaboration, while section 4 articulates the key expectations from the 10th Round Table. A tentative plan of action, including concrete areas in which UN agencies can collaborate as a first step towards enhanced partnership around communication for development, is appended as an annex.

9. A key recommendation of 'Delivering as One', the Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel, is that: "The UN should 'deliver as one' by establishing, by 2007, five One Country Programmes as pilots. Subject to continuous positive assessment, demonstrated effectiveness and proven results, these should be expanded to 20 One Country Programmes by 2009, 40 by 2010 and all other appropriate country programmes by 2012" (p.12)

10. Individual UN system agencies work on issues that relate directly to their respective mandates, and exercise leadership and comparative advantage in specific areas (e.g. UNICEF in immunization campaigns). The Round Table will focus on ways of strengthening collaboration amongst UN system agencies in addressing a) the underlying structural communication environment, including policies, in developing countries, and b) capacity building of different groups, including media practitioners.

## 2. COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE UN SYSTEM

### 2.1 Evolving Communication and Development Paradigms

Communication emerged as part of a broader development and reconstruction effort after World War Two (Servaes 2002). Modernization theory underpinned efforts to set poor countries along a teleological path designed to bring them as close as possible to the industrialized North's levels of development. During the early post-war period, communication was essentially top-down, based on the assumption that diffusion of technical knowledge via mass media would transform traditional societies into modern ones. Communication therefore served to transmit information related to health, agriculture and other sectoral development issues from the North, empowered by science and technology, to "Third World" subjects whose behaviour it was assumed would change for the better on the basis of the information received. Although the United Nations was created primarily to help maintain global peace and security<sup>11</sup>, it progressively became a key actor in promoting development (Rogers 2005).

By the mid-1960s, this approach to development had sparked a major reaction. Dependency theory, developed mainly by Latin American experts, conceptualized the world into the industrialized core and the underdeveloped periphery, with the colonialist, capitalist and imperialist core developing at the expense of the structurally impoverished periphery. From the late 1950s onwards a large number of former colonies in Africa and Asia, galvanized by nationalist movements, gained their independence, adding a category of 'third world' to the (capitalist) 'first' and (socialist) 'second' world divide (Carlsson 2003). As the Cold War intensified, the promise of development was then deployed by both East and West to win political influence in the newly-independent states, which needed help to combat poverty, illiteracy and unemployment (ibid)<sup>12</sup>.

Both modernization and dependency theories shared an important common feature: the nation-state as a unit of analysis. This left them both open to criticism that far from advancing the development agenda, the two theories tended to cancel each other out due to their deployment as ideologically oppositional narratives during the Cold War. One critique, which had a significant influence on the theory and practice of communication from the late 1970s onwards, was the 'Another Development'

11. Of the 18 Chapters of the UN Charter, five deal with peace and security issues while only one chapter (Chapter IX) makes explicit mention of 'development' (Rogers 2005).

12. In contrast with modernization and dependency approaches, more culturally-oriented versions argue that development is context-specific and relative, as opposed to monolithic or absolute. Thus, development should be seen not merely as a function of economic growth, but as an integral, multidimensional and dialectical process contingent on interactions between the individual, society and ecology (Servaes 1999).

perspective. This school of thought posited the "community" as the unit and level of analysis, arguing that since it was in communities within states that the reality of development was most evident, the participation of communities in the design and implementation of development programmes was key. Alternative communication systems and media practices were therefore viewed as a means for local communities to engage with and influence their development (Servaes 1995).

In sharp contrast to the linear, hierarchical approach espoused by the modernization and dependency theorists, communication for development thus became understood as a two-way process, in which communities could participate as key agents in setting normative development goals and standards. Added to this, the notion of participation was deepened by the emphasis on community access. As a result, interpersonal approaches are now recognized alongside mass media communication as key to achieving impact. Messaging-based diffusion models have by and large given way to participatory approaches, with the emphasis squarely on empowerment of communities and social change (Servaes 2002).

Communities are acknowledged as the owners of their own development, and communication is viewed as key to facilitating and amplifying the voice of the poor and marginalized. Lack of voice is unanimously agreed to be an element of poverty itself (Panos 2006). However, ensuring that communities – including women and other marginalized groups – are fully involved in the development conversation remains a challenge.

The 8th Round Table identified three broad Communication for Development approaches<sup>13</sup>. One is behaviour change communication (BCC), which aims to empower individuals and enable communities to make informed choices as to their well-being, and to act on the basis of those choices. A second approach is communication for social change (CFSC), predicated on collective community change and long-term social change, and based on participatory, voice-amplifying strategies that emphasize dialogue and process. A third approach is advocacy communication, involving organized efforts, including by coalitions and networks, to influence the political climate, policy and programming decisions, public perceptions of social norms, funding decisions and community support and empowerment, on specific themes, such as HIV/AIDS (UNFPA et al 2001). There is significant crossover

13. Servaes (2005) identifies five approaches: a) behaviour change communication (interpersonal communication); b) mass communication (community media, mass media, ICTs); c) advocacy communication (interpersonal and/or mass communication); d) participatory communication (interpersonal communication and community media); and e) communication for structural and sustainable social change (interpersonal communication, participatory communication and mass communication).

between these approaches, and in practice the application of each is context-specific.

## 2.2 New and Old Challenges

The above evolution in communication and development theory and practice notwithstanding, a number of challenges, old and new, need to be addressed if communication is to be recognised and harnessed as a means to the end of more effective development. A sub-set of these challenges is discussed below.

An overarching challenge, identified by the 9th Round Table, is the rapid spread of globalization. One manifestation is the growing inequality within and between countries, as well as between individuals and groups (cf. UNDP 2005, World Bank 2005)<sup>14</sup>. The MDGs, which measure progress in tackling poverty by aggregating and averaging change at national level, do not address issues of distribution, meaning that some of the goals could be achieved without in practice reducing inequality. Thus, the very poorest could be left behind even as progress against the MDG indicators is met (UNDP 2005). Beyond economic dimensions, inequalities of opportunity – in health, education, and the freedom and capacity of people to actively participate in and shape society – widen gaps between individuals and groups over time, both within and across generations, negatively affecting development (World Bank 2005).

Against this backdrop, the era of globalization is one of “radical transformation”, in which newly-created identities are transcending boundaries of the state, geographic communities and traditional institutions (Balit 2004). Globalization comes with many contradictions. For example, on the one hand media plurality is threatened by ownership concentration, and cultural diversity is being threatened by uniformity. But on the other hand, however, new technologies are facilitating horizontal linkages between communities like never before (ibid).

Indeed, the rapid expansion of information and communication technologies (ICTs)<sup>15</sup> over the past 20 years or so presents both opportunity and challenge. As evidenced by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process, ICTs – which have the potential to deliver a range of services, help capacity building, empower communities, and bridge social divides – are viewed as important tools in efforts to

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14. Inequality has at least two dimensions. One is inequality within countries. Of the 73 countries for which data is available, income inequality is rising in 53 countries (accounting for 80% of the world's population), while it is only narrowing in 9 countries (with 4% of the world's population). This holds true in both high and low-growth situations, and across countries. A second dimension is inequality between rich and poor countries. The gap between the average citizen in rich and poor countries is getting wider. In 1990 the

achieve the MDGs in health, education and community development (Servaes et al 2006). Affordable, accessible technologies such as mobile phones and low cost radio have demonstrably improved connectivity and access to information for previously marginalized communities.

However, in some areas, the ICT revolution has served only to widen existing economic and social divides as new information gaps threaten to further marginalize the poor, especially in rural areas (Balit 2004). As a result, it is now being strongly argued that access to ICTs should not be viewed as an end in itself, but as a means to the ultimate goal of social inclusion. Experts agree that ICTs are most successful when deployed as part of an integrated approach to development and social change (Servaes et al 2006). As such, a number of UN agencies, including UNESCO and FAO, are developing and implementing projects to explore interactivity, two-way flows of information, community engagement in effective use of technologies, and the development of local content and local knowledge (United Nations 2006).

A third challenge is to establish how communication fits into, and becomes an active part of, local and national development processes. ‘Participation’ and ‘voice’ are well-entrenched in the development discourse, and yet mechanisms to ensure these tend to be lacking. While civil society actors insist that the ultimate goal of Communication for Development is to shift power relations and facilitate social change led by the poor themselves, some argue that the poor cannot determine the outcome of policy processes, but can only inform decisions, which are the province of policy-makers, advised by technocrats. This latter perspective, which leaves insufficient room for broader engagement in policy advocacy, remains dominant. A consensus perspective argues that there is no either-or. The preference is for a holistic, ‘diagonal’ approach, harnessing vertical as well as horizontal communication to inform decision-making at high-level, in communities and in-between.

Related to the above, and discussed extensively in the 9th UN Round Table, is the conception of communication as part of a broader research approach. Communication can, and should, be used to assess the situation, including not only communication needs and capacities but also political risks and technical issues.

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average American was 38 times richer than the average Tanzanian. Today the average American is 61 times richer. Although growth rates are rising, absolute income inequality is still increasing between rich and poor countries (UNDP 2005).

15. In 2005, the number of internet users exceeded 500 million, surpassing industrial nations for the first time. More than 75 % of the world's population now lives within range of a mobile phone network (culled from <http://topics.developmentgateway.org/special/informationssociety>).

The 9th Round Table's recommendation that a communication needs assessment<sup>16</sup> be undertaken at the inception of any development initiative is a result of such a conception. Its proponents argue that when used in such a way, Communication for Development is probably providing the biggest added-value to development initiatives in terms of results, sustainability and risks control or prevention.

Many developing country governments rarely do enough to ensure and amplify voice and participation, while development agencies tend to design and manage participation in such a way as to endorse or validate top-down thinking. In the African context, a good example of this lack of political will is the fact that although the role of communication is spelled out in continental norms such as the African Charter on Broadcasting, which emphasizes the right to communicate, few governments have internalised its policy prescriptions on regulatory issues, public service broadcasting, community media, and telecommunications and convergence<sup>17</sup>. Even the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is unequivocal in asserting African ownership of its own development, is more or less silent when it comes to communication – in part because of a failure to advocate for its inclusion.

Indeed, and put together with the absence of political will, the lack of coordinated and country-focused policy advocacy makes the scaling up of Communication for Development good practice difficult. International donors stress the primacy of voice but by and large fail to operationalize communication as a tool for two-way engagement. The omission of Communication for Development from the 2005 Millennium Project Overview Report, intended as a practical guide to achieving the MDGs, is telling<sup>18</sup>. Other major policy documents, norms and standards also mirror this lack of recognition or prioritization. As a result, governments and development agencies have not been able to exploit the value-added of communication, and the potential of media and other forms of communication to help bring about social change remains largely untapped and underutilized.

In light of the above, a fourth challenge remains how to demonstrate the added value and impact of communication in addressing development challenges, and ensure that it forms an integral part of government, international and donor

16. The World Bank prefers to use 'Communication-Based Assessment'.

17. A study commissioned by UNESCO and conducted by the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association found that while the tendency in African Commonwealth countries is to broadcast major occasions on radio and television, few state broadcasters feature parliamentary proceedings live or on a sustained basis. Where parliament is featured on radio and TV, programming tends to be packaged (UNESCO 2003)

18. An electronic search of the documents reveals no mention of the word 'media', and no mention of 'communication for development'. 'Information and communications' appears five times, while 'telecommunications' appears twice.

policies, strategies and practice. Communication processes receive insufficient attention from development planners, and are not sufficiently integrated at the start of planning processes. For example, the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the common strategic framework for operational activities of the UN system at country level, often does not include the building of communication media and capacities as an integral component<sup>19</sup>.

Neither has communication been harnessed sufficiently to good effect in advancing poverty reduction strategies (PRSs), agreed to be the principal strategy for meeting the cornerstone MDG of halving poverty by 2015. Practitioners and theorists have also highlighted the fact that despite a strong emphasis in the PRSs on participation, "poor public understanding, limited public debate and low levels of country ownership threaten successful implementation of this strategy" (CSFC et al 2004).

Overall, while all the above challenges have brought new opportunities, they have also led to the marginalization of poverty-related issues, precisely the issues the MDGs were designed to address. Goal 3, for example, aims to promote gender equality and empower women. Yet although women represent an increasing share of the world's labour force and are the principal actors at household and community level, they still remain at a disadvantage, including in economic advancement and political participation (United Nations 2006). Insufficient attention has been devoted to ensuring that development is fully inclusive of women and girls, and Communication for Development has tended to replicate this failure.

As has been argued, initiatives designed to achieve the MDGs "... should be based on core principles of development thinking, such as equity, gender sensitivity, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity" (CSFC et al 2004). Furthermore, such principles must be reflected in the funding and practice of communication harnessed by development agencies towards meeting the MDGs (ibid). A fundamental reassessment and reprioritization is therefore needed to see how Communication for Development can deliver the ownership and participation in the public sphere needed for the MDGs to succeed. This necessitates unprecedented levels of collaboration and coordination among UN system agencies, funds and programmes.

### 2.3 Communication in the UN System

Paragraph 6 of UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/51/172, issued in December 1996, emphasizes "... the need to support two-way communication systems that

19. A recent evaluation commissioned by the UN (Longhurst 2006) found significant shortfalls in the UNDAF process, including weak interface with national poverty reduction strategies (PRSs), poor coordination with non-UN actors, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation.

enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development". This text remains the closest thing so far to a common system definition of Communication for Development articulated at the highest level of UN system policy making. Its emphasis on two-way communication is consistent with today's paradigm of communication as an amplifier of voice, facilitator of participation, and means of fostering social change<sup>20</sup>.

Few agencies would disagree with this definition on paper. In practice, however, agencies deploy differing communication methods and strategies<sup>21</sup> to deliver on their respective mandates and objectives – while all asserting that the MDGs provide an overarching rationale for their work. Communication for Development in the UN system allows for a wide variety of activities to be clustered under a broad umbrella.

A good number of examples of inter-agency collaboration on Communication for Development can be found, and section 3 below highlights some of these. Nevertheless, although some good practices stand out at the international (headquarter) level, many are at project level within countries, and most of these have not been scaled up beyond pilot level. While some noteworthy initiatives are underway (such as work on the right to information in the context of good governance, led by UNDP working with UNESCO), there is insufficient focus, particularly at country level, on putting in place the infrastructure, policies and capacities needed to ensure the right of citizens to information. As a rule, individual UN agencies are much more likely to partner with external actors than with other agencies in the system.

By and large, inter-agency relations in Communication for Development are characterized by a lack of coherence, limited partnership, and an absence of co-ordination. This is largely because, and is compounded by the fact that, as highlighted above, communication rarely features as an integral part of common system development planning and implementation processes such as UNDAF and the Common Country Assessment (CCA), or in national processes, notably the PRSs. In turn this is because communication is not unanimously understood or appreciated

20. See the different but complementary definitions on p.6 of the background paper (Servaes et al 2006) prepared for the recently-held WCCD.

21. Servaes and Malikho (2004) have identified the following development communication approaches deployed in organizations: Extension/ Diffusion of Innovations; Network development and documentation; ICTs for Development; Social Marketing; Edutainment (EE); Health Communication; Social mobilization; Information, Education and Communication (IEC); Institution building; Knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP); Development Support Communication (DSC); HIV/AIDS community approach; and Community Participation.

at the highest levels of international and developing country policymaking, and is viewed operationally as a downstream public relations or dissemination function, rather than as an integral, upstream component of programme development and delivery<sup>22</sup>.

The coordination and coherence deficit is not limited to the communication arena, but has historically been a system-wide problem, with successive waves of UN reform seeking to strengthen UN coherence both at headquarter level and in-country. In 1997 the UN Development Group (UNDG), chaired by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator, was set up to coordinate all operational agencies for development<sup>23</sup>. The same reforms also sought to consolidate the role of the in-country UN Resident Coordinators by designating them coordinators of the UN Country Team (UNCT), and by asserting the overarching role of the UNDAF and CCA (DFID 2005).

Subsequent waves of reform in 2002, 2005 and 2006 have placed the MDGs at the centre of the UN's development efforts, reinforced human rights, gender equality, sustainable development and other concerns as foundational for all the UN's work, and established the UNDG Executive Committee. The vision driving the reforms has been 'Delivering as One', and most acknowledge that there has been some progress in moving the UN system in this direction. However, a number of concerns remain.

One of these is the "unresolved tension between global strategies of each of the agencies and the doctrine of country-owned and country-led programmes..." (DFID 2005). This tension between headquarters-driven vision and country-level actions partly explains why, with most of the innovative work in Communication for Development taking place on a pilot basis within developing countries, it has been difficult to apply the lessons from these successes and implement them at scale to national level and across countries.

Linked to this, and as the High-Level Panel has stressed, the UN is not active enough in advising governments, convening stakeholders, advocating for international norms and standards, providing technical assistance and advising on

22. This led the WCCD's Rome Consensus to note: "Communication for Development is a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change. It is not public relations or corporate communication".

23. These include UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP (the four UN Funds and Programmes that fall directly under the Secretary-General's authority), the Specialized Agencies such as WHO, FAO and IFAD (which have their own independent Governing Assemblies), and observers such as the Bretton Woods Institutions (DFID 2005).

building and strengthening institutions (United Nations 2006). This is in large part because of the fragmented nature of the UN presence in developing countries, compounded by the proliferation of other development actors, including NGOs, bilateral donors, foundations and the private sector. According to the High-Level Panel, the UN system's current design "... risks perpetuating a myriad of niche players, which individually will not have the influence and authority to secure a strong voice in national and global debates" (United Nations 2006).

At least in part, this systemic reality accounts for the piecemeal and fragmented nature of Communication for Development in the UN. Nevertheless, the lack of advocacy within the system is also largely to blame. Systemic weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation also make it all the more difficult to provide the evidence needed to demonstrate the impact of Communication for Development in helping meet the MDGs.

Challenges of this nature are being grappled with not only within the UN, but in the Communication for Development community at large. The preoccupation with providing verifiable evidence of impact as a means of cementing the credibility of the field, for example, underpinned the recently-held WCCD, which recommended, among other things, that "development communication programmes should be required to identify and include appropriate monitoring and evaluation indicators and methodologies and improve development outcomes"<sup>24</sup>.

The emphasis in the ongoing UN reforms on improving coordination and coherence towards enhanced impact constitutes an unprecedented opportunity for Communication for Development advocates inside and outside the system to demonstrate its value-added and to ensure it forms an integral part of the UN's future planning and programming processes. Many proposals have already been tabled as the way forward<sup>25</sup>. What remains is to develop a common understanding, common approach and action plan spelling out a programme of time-bound activities, with clear deliverables and targets, to be implemented jointly by UN agencies.<sup>26</sup>

24. The Rome Consensus: Communication for Development, A Major Pillar for Development and Change, Final Draft, Rome 27 October 2006.

25. A number are contained in the report of the 9th Round Table. Proposals in the WCCD Rome Consensus and background paper are also of relevance to the UN system.

26. The Report of the High-Level Panel on UN reforms has recommended the following strategic directions

### 3. GOOD PRACTICES IN INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION

The most recent Note by the Secretary-General on Communication for Development programmes in the UN system (A/61/165) highlights a number of noteworthy initiatives led by different agencies, broadly classified as relating to Communication for Development. Nevertheless, and in many cases, initiatives described are not consonant with the agreed understanding of Communication for Development as spelled out in the December 1996 UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/51/172. As such, the cases cited below should be viewed as instances of collaboration around information and communication.

Indeed, the UN has long collaborated with external partners on Communication for Development, including the academic and research community<sup>27</sup> and practitioners. Yet there are relatively few examples of UN system agencies collaborating with each other. Content analysis of the Secretary-General's Note reveals that many good practices of partnership around information and communication involve external, non-UN system actors. Furthermore, those good practices that exist are largely in the ICTs area and are limited mostly to pilot projects whose successes have not been replicated at scale.

It should be noted here that the Secretary-General's Note is informed by contributions prepared by staff at headquarters in the various UN agencies. In view of the vision gap, identified above, between headquarters and country programmes, it is likely that this translates into a knowledge gap, and as a result a number of field-based initiatives may have not been reported. Inevitably, many of the good practices highlighted below are international, as opposed to country-specific<sup>28</sup>.

#### 3.1 The UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development

The Round Table is an important periodic forum for coordination and coherence of UN system Communication for Development programming. Under the overall

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for 'Delivering as One': Coherence and consolidation of UN activities, in line with the principle of country ownership, at all levels (country, regional, headquarters); Establishment of appropriate governance, managerial and funding mechanisms to empower and support consolidation, and link the performance and results of UN organizations to funding; Overhaul of business practices of the UN system to ensure focus on outcomes, responsiveness to needs and delivery of results by the UN system, measured against the Millennium Development Goals; Ensure significant further opportunities for consolidation and effective delivery of One UN through an in-depth review; Implementation should be undertaken with urgency, but not ill planned and hasty in a manner that could compromise permanent and effective change.

27. Notably in the IAMCR-UNESCO round tables (Sydney, 1996; Glasgow, 1998; Singapore, 2000) and a number of joint ICA-IAMCR-UNESCO sessions.

28. It was not possible during the preparation of this paper to gather data on field-based activities from the designated Round Table focal points, all headquarter-based staff.

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direction of UNESCO, but with responsibility for organizing and convening rotating from meeting to meeting, it brings together UN agencies and their partners around a specific theme. Most of the key agencies are represented.

### 3.2 World Congress on Communication for Development

The first such event of its kind, the Congress took place in Rome, Italy from 25-27 October 2006. Its purpose was to demonstrate that communication is essential for meeting today's most pressing development challenges and should therefore be fully integrated into development policy and practice. Although the Congress was not a UN event, agencies of the system were fully involved in its organization, and the working definition of Communication for Development articulated in the Rome Consensus is consonant with the principles agreed by the 9th Round Table. FAO and the World Bank were two of the three main organisers, with the Congress taking place at FAO headquarters. UNESCO and UNICEF were part of the Steering Committee while IFAD, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNDP and UNFPA were among other UN agencies that served as members of the Advisory Group.

### 3.3 World Summit on the Information Society

The UN system played a pivotal role in organizing WSIS, held in two phases (Geneva 2003, Tunis 2005). The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) was the lead organizing UN system agency for both phases. UN agencies are assigned a prominent role in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, with the UN General Assembly endorsing the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society in Resolution 60/252. In Tunis, ITU was designated sole facilitator/ moderator for 2 out of 11 action lines, and joint moderator for an additional 6 action lines. UNESCO was designated sole facilitator for two action lines (C8 on cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content, and C9 on media) and joint facilitator for 6 out of a total of 11. ITU, UNESCO and UNDP are key implementing facilitators of different parts of the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Action Plan, as well as the Tunis Agenda.

### 3.4 UN Group on the Information Society

The group was established in April 2006 by the UN system Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination as the new inter-agency mechanism to coordinate policy and substantive issues in the implementation of the WSIS Action Plan. It brings together CEB members (UN agencies, programmes, funds, and specialized agencies). It is designed to foster programme and policy coordination and coherence, and provide overall guidance to UN system. ITU has been appointed the first rotating chair.

### 3.5 Community Multimedia Centres

UNESCO's International Initiative for Community Multimedia Centres (CMCs) has been widely acknowledged and taken up by UN system agencies. More than 130 CMCs, including pilots, have been created and supported in 20 countries with varying degrees of involvement from other UN agencies. The initiative is currently being scaled up in three countries in Africa – Mali, Mozambique and Senegal. In Mozambique, UNESCO works closely with UNDP.

### 3.6 International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)<sup>29</sup>

The IPDC is the principal multilateral forum in the UN system that mobilizes the international community to discuss and promote media development in developing countries. It not only provides support for media projects, but also seeks to secure a healthy environment for the growth of free and pluralistic media in developing countries. Since its inception in 1980, IPDC has channeled \$93 million to more than 1,100 media development projects in 139 developing countries.

### 3.7 UN-Water

Established in 2003, UN Water is the official UN-designated follow-up mechanism to the water-related decisions emanating from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, as well as the MDGs. Active at global, regional and country levels, UN-Water adds value to the work and expertise of different UN agencies, by bringing coherence and integration, and serving as the common UN voice on water and sanitation. UN-Water takes the lead in organizing the annual UN Water Day (22 March) and the UN Decade on Water (2005 – 2015). Some 24 UN agencies, including the five regional commissions, belong to UN-Water, along with a number of non-UN partners. Agencies belonging to UN-Water have collaborated on a number of communication activities, including the production of audio-visual material

### 3.8 Research on ICTs & Poverty

UNDP and UNESCO, in collaboration with other UN system agencies, are undertaking a multi-country research project aimed at providing evidence on the extent to which ICTs impact on poverty.

### 3.9 ICTs Training

ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau is working in partnership with UNESCO, UNEP, UNITAR, and WHO to develop tools, training materials & guidelines for the development of capabilities in the field of telecommunications science and technology in developing countries.

<sup>29</sup> Multilateralism is viewed as the best way to promote media development in developing countries. For political and ethical reasons, media is more comfortable with international assistance provided through IPDC, because it ensures their independence and credibility.

### 3.10 Rural ICTs

IFAD is working closely with FAO to develop a Rural Knowledge Network in East Africa, with the aim of determining whether ICTs can strengthen market relationships among rural poor. IFAD and FAO have worked together on Farmer Field Schools since 1998. FAO works closely with IFAD and the World Bank.

### 3.11 Freedom of Information

UNESCO works closely with UNDP in-country in promoting freedom of information legislation. In promoting the right to information legislation in India, the two agencies at country level produced a film to show how the right to information can be applied to put a stop to local corruption. The film has been widely distributed, accompanied by a book entitled "Freedom of Information: A Comparative Legal Survey" authored by Toby Mendel.

### 3.12 World Press Freedom Day

UNESCO partnered with UNDP and UNDPI to organize World Press Freedom Day 2006, which focused on media freedom, access to information and freedom of expression as critical to the eradication of poverty.

### 3.13 Participatory Video

In 2004 UNDP's CSOs Division partnered with the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (a trust fund with the World Bank and UNEP) and the Human Rights Strengthening Programme (a joint programme with OHCHR) to commission 'Insights into Participatory Video: a handbook for the field'. UNDP has worked with UNAMA (Afghanistan) to develop public and civic education information programmes.

### 3.14 HIV/AIDS Communication

In September 2002 UNDP launched 'Breaking the Silence', the first-ever programme for Arab states on HIV/AIDS. It has collaborated with UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNIFEM, ILO, and OHCHR. 'Africa 2015' is a UNDP/UNAIDS/UNICEF partnership harnessing celebrities and political leaders to promote HIV/AIDS prevention, towards meeting the MDGs. FAO and UNICEF are implementing HIV/AIDS a sensitization and behaviour change communication project in 5 provinces in Cameroon.

### 3.15 Renewable Energy

With funding from the UN Foundation, UNEP launched E-Commerce & Renewable Energy (e-Care) in December 2005. E-Care is a 3-year initiative to deliver commercial and social services in Ghana using ICTs and clean energy systems.

### 3.16 International Day for Eradicating Poverty

UNEP is approaching UNDP to explore potential for joint observance.

### 3.17 Community Radio Policy

UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF work closely together to promote community radio in India, particularly to support the government in policy development in consultation with civil society, as a result of which the Indian Government has announced a community radio policy.

**3.18 Parliamentary Broadcasting:** In Afghanistan, UNDP and UNESCO work together to promote direct broadcasting of parliamentary debates as a public service.

## 4. KEY EXPECTED OUTCOMES

As highlighted in section 1 of this paper, the objectives of the 10th Round Table are to increase joint inter-agency collaboration, strengthen awareness on the need for monitoring and measurement of impact, and agree on mechanisms to harmonize Communication for Development programming approaches within the UN system. What follows are key expected outcomes of the Round Table.

**4.1 Common Understanding:** From the outset, and in view of the wide range of communication activities being implemented by different agencies, the meeting needs to arrive at a common understanding of Communication for Development as practised in the UN system. The idea is not to discipline agencies into compliance, but rather to foster consensus on what Communication for Development means or should mean, both conceptually and in practice, in the UN system. Achieving this consensus is a critical first step to improving coordination and coherence, charting a way forward on joint collaboration, and enhancing system-wide impact.

**4.2 Common Approach and Strategy:** On the basis of a common understanding, participants will need to develop the parameters of a common approach. Human rights are now at the centre of the UN's work. The rights-based approach already guides the communication strategies of agencies such as FAO and UNDP and lessons can be learned from such experience to date. The 10th Round Table provides an important opportunity to lay the groundwork for formally codifying a common approach, together with an accompanying strategy.

**4.3 Joint Programmes:** The meeting should agree on specific themes, issues and areas on which UN agencies can work together concretely and to good effect, both within countries and at international level. The approach should be strategic,

with interventions selected according to relevance, feasibility, and the likelihood of maximum impact. Approaches that are most likely to succeed are those that prioritize focused interventions around which agencies can work holistically in delivering impact in countries. To ensure scaling up, particular attention should be paid to systemic, as opposed to one-off interventions.

**4.4 Mechanisms:** The 10th Round Table should also agree on how to reinforce existing mechanisms so as to facilitate delivery on the common approach and strategy. Of critical importance is finding ways to incrementally integrate Communication for Development into existing country mechanisms, such as the UNDAF, CCAs<sup>30</sup> and PRSs. Regional (and sub-regional) mechanisms may also be worth exploring. Existing global fora such as the General Assembly, UNDG, and ECOSOC could be used to raise the profile of Communication for Development in the UN system as a whole.

In terms of specific ideas, a standing proposal is that governments, donors and development agencies render the incorporation of a communication needs assessment in any development initiative mandatory, eventually devoting an agreed percentage of the budget, 0.5 or 1%, to fund the assessments (this emanated from the 9th Round Table and was taken up by the WCCD). The UNDP Oslo Governance Centre has developed a practical guide to communication for empowerment which advocates for upstream communication audits<sup>31</sup> while the World Bank has developed a communication-based assessment methodology. These efforts can all be harnessed towards strengthening the UN system's diagnostic and programming instruments, globally and in countries.

#### 4.5 Measuring Impact

In light of the need for more systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation highlighted earlier in this paper, an important expectation is the identification and agreement on the types of indicators that need to be developed or harnessed. Such indicators are key, for consistently tracking the impact of Communication for Development as a field, for demonstrating that a common UN system approach can reap dividends, and for providing the empirical rationale for future programmes. As has been emphasized, communication indicators must be an integral part of

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30. Given that the UNDP background paper will include detailed proposals on how to mainstream Communication for Development in the UNDAF process and PRSs, this paper does not go into detail on this issue.

31. For more details, see 'Communication for Empowerment: Developing media strategies in support of vulnerable groups. Practical Guidance Note', Democratic Governance Group, BDP, UNDP 2006. A pilot project in 5 countries is shortly to get underway.

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every project planning process at the upstream design stage. Although it is not always possible to directly attribute development outcomes to communication, such indicators should be able to effectively measure the extent to which the communication environment develops over time, and to determine the role of communication interventions in improving the in-country enabling environment. 'Impact' must be holistically defined, in qualitative as well as quantitative terms, in direct, indirect and contextual objectives, and short versus long-term perspectives. Terms of reference of development assistance programmes should also include requirements for research on longer term change, not just short term effects, and for systematic research to inform programme design (Servaes et al 2006).

#### 4.6 Plan of Action

All the above expectations should be codified in a jointly agreed plan of action, as proposed by the 9th Round Table, which articulates steps and actions to put in place and implement a common UN Communication for Development approach and strategy. Preliminary plan of action, aimed at informing discussions during the 10th Roundtable is appeared in Section 3 to this publication.

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# 2.

## TOWARDS A COMMON UN SYSTEM APPROACH

# Harnessing Communication to Achieve the MDGs

UNDP Background Paper prepared for the 10th UN  
Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 12-14 February 2007

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## 1. INTRODUCTION ABOUT THE DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE OF COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

This paper, prepared on behalf of UNDP for the 10th Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development [C4D], focuses on how communication for development can be better integrated into country level development strategies. It complements another keynote paper prepared for the meeting by UNESCO, which focuses principally on coordination and coherence issues at the international level, but which also has important recommendations for action at country level. It should be stated that this UNDP paper agrees with and endorses both the analysis and the recommendations set out in the UNESCO paper. Some further complementary and additional recommendations are made at the end of this paper. This paper focuses on four issues:

- An articulation of why C4D is increasingly relevant to country level development strategies aimed at meeting national Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
- An explanation of current country level development planning processes and how these may develop further in the context of current UN system wide reform efforts;
- How Communication for Development can better be incorporated and prioritized within Common Country Assessments, the UNDAF and future development planning systems;
- Recommendations on mechanisms for enhancing coordination and coherence and developing more effective monitoring and evaluation systems at country level.

### Communication for Development: Scope and Definitions

It is extremely difficult to envisage an organizational and strategic framework for C4D at country level succeeding without a very clear understanding of what the term does and does not encompass. This paper is rooted in a framework of definitions and characteristics of C4D that have been established over several decades now, and which have been repeated at earlier Round Tables and other meetings.

Section 2 of the accompanying UNESCO Background Paper outlines very effectively how the UN system currently defines and treats C4D. It is important to highlight however some of the definitional issues related to C4D as they relate directly to the organizational and strategic challenges for country level programming.

Two sets of issues are important here: first the character and definitions of C4D; and second the scope of C4D (what this term encompasses).

### Definitions and Characteristics

Most definitions of communication for development focus on its characteristics, defining it consistently as a participatory and two way process, and distinct from

external relations and public relations. The formal UN definition of Communication for Development, adopted in General Assembly resolution 51/172 Article 6 says:

*“Communication for development stresses the need to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns, and participate in the decisions that relate to their development”.*

It is this definition that underpins the 10th UN roundtable. More recently, the World Congress on Communication for Development in October 2006 defined the term in a statement entitled The Rome Consensus: Communication for Development – A major pillar for Development and Change as:

*“A social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change. It is not public relations or corporate communication”*

This is broadly consistent with the earlier General Assembly resolution as well as other characterizations of the field, and with the last 9th UN Roundtable on Communication for Development, held in 2004, also in Rome. It argued that among other characteristics, that:

*“Communication for development is about people, who are the drivers of their own development; It contributes to sustainable change for the benefits of the poorest; It is a two way process [and] is about people coming together to identify problems, create solutions and empower the poorest; It respects indigenous knowledge and culture and that local context is key; It is critical to the success of the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>32</sup>”*

All of these definitions focus centrally on communication that enables people, particularly vulnerable groups, to participate in shaping decisions that affect their lives. This role of communication as empowerment contrasts sharply with how most communication is currently understood at country level within the development system, which is often focused on enhancing the public profile of development institutions and advocacy for specific programme areas. It is the empowerment role of communication that underpins all the recommendations in this paper.

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32. Powerpoint version of Declaration of 9th UN Communication for Development Roundtable, 2004, [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

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## The Scope of Communication for Development

As the Rome Consensus signified, the definitions and characteristics of communication for development are widely agreed among many stakeholders and actors, at least within the communication for development community. However, the scope – or landscape – of what does and does not count as a communication for development activity can present a greater challenge, particularly in relation to how development systems coordinate and plan it.

For the sake of simplicity, and for the purposes of this paper, Communication for Development encompasses the following three main spheres:

- Communication in governance, or communication as participation.
- Communication in support of specific development sectors.
- Knowledge and Information and Communication Technologies.

This is not designed to be a fully comprehensive list of all activities that fall within the remit of communication for development, and different labels and concepts will be highlighted in different contexts. However, for the sake of brevity and in an effort to portray the landscape of communication for development, these three areas are proposed.

## Communication in Governance, or Communication as Participation

This sphere encompasses the role of communication in enabling citizens, especially poor people, to amplify the voices of the latter, to enable them to participate in public debate on the issues that affect their lives and to hold their governments to account. It also underpins and cuts across the other two spheres. It includes for example work on:

- Ensuring access and rights to Information, especially for poor people
- Supporting community empowerment through communication for social change, and other dialogue focused methodologies linked to broader civic education initiatives
- Promoting communication as part of an overarching rights-based approach to development, and illustrating how communication (particularly with and through media) intersects with and enriches civil society voices
- Promoting the role of communication in informing and generating public debate, and in ensuring the voices of vulnerable and marginalized groups are prominent in such debate; and its allied role in enhancing ownership, accountability and transparency in development policy (such as formulating development, poverty reduction and other related strategies)
- Supporting media (including media freedom, community media, capacity building and enhancing financial sustainability of independent media, media policy, pro-poor/development focused content, professionalism and ethics in media)
- Strengthening a healthy public sphere, characterized by informed media, a vibrant civil society and decentralized patterns of information exchange
- Promoting the role of communication in supporting cultural diversity, as

represented in the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, and in the words of the 2004 Human Development Report, to develop “multicultural policies that recognize differences, champion diversity and promote cultural freedoms, so that all people can choose to speak their language, practise their religion, and participate in shaping their culture—so that all people can choose to be who they are”.

### Communication in Support of Specific Development Sectors

This sphere focuses on the role of communication in health, environment, livelihoods, gender, education and so on. This is a massive field encompassing the role of communication both in facilitating behavioral change, empowering people so they can take action on relevant issues, and in catalyzing processes of social change in society related to these issues. It encompasses major and increasing expenditure in the field of:

- Health, broken down into communication for behaviour and social change programming in HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, nutrition, polio and other childhood immunization programmes, as well as many other related issues (almost all health issues have an important communication dimension);
- Agriculture and livelihoods, ranging over a wide area from communication in support of improved agricultural techniques, land reform debates and policy, empowerment of poor farmers by amplifying their perspectives, ensuring instant access to market information etc. FAO was the home of some of the earliest and most pioneering communication for development programming.
- The role of communication in support of many other sectors, including environment, gender, education, habitat and so on.

### Knowledge and Information and Communication Technologies

This encompasses areas principally concerned with information and communication technologies, including:

- Creating enabling appropriate and dynamic ICT policy environments;
- Innovative models of financing for the use of technologies in development (e.g. enabling farmers to know the end price of their products at market to secure better prices, fishermen knowing the weather forecast through mobile telephony etc.);
- The use of ICTs in facilitating better functioning markets and in facilitating cash transactions, particularly among those without bank accounts;
- Enabling developing countries to integrate into the global economy by strengthening infrastructure, and developing more knowledge based economies;
- E-governance initiatives designed to make government services more efficient and transparent;

- The development of telecentres, village knowledge centres and similar projects;
- Overcoming the digital divide between rich and poor countries, and between rich and poor within countries.

### The Cross Cutting Nature of Communication for Development

These are the main, but not the only spheres which are generally taken to fall into the arena of communication for development. Other issues which often fall within this field include communication of academic or development research, advocacy in support of pro-poor development objectives, the promotion and catalyzing of social movements and other issues.

Furthermore, many of these fields cross-fertilise each other. E-governance initiatives are closely linked to Access to Information issues; HIV/AIDS communication programming is closely linked to enhancing the participation of people with HIV in HIV policy responses; the use of new ICTs interacts dynamically with the use of traditional media, such as radio, in enhancing public debate; broadcasting policies that cater for vulnerable groups affects all development sectors.

The purpose of this section has been to create some clarity of what communication for development is and what it is not, and to highlight that it is a large, diverse field with many areas that interrelate with each other. These issues inevitably have repercussions for how it can best be structured within the context of national development planning systems. We revisit these issues later in this paper. One final point is worth making in this context. Communication for development is principally related to citizen’s empowerment, and intimately bound up with issues of freedom of expression, media independence and the creation of a healthy public sphere. As such, in common with development approaches to civil society, it presents real challenges in how mainstream development policies engages with it. Much communication for development, for example, is focused on enabling people to hold governments to account. In this context, supporting communication for development through mechanisms such as budget support or other mechanisms that flow through government or government controlled systems becomes problematic.

## 2. HOW COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IS CENTRAL TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MDGS

In the introduction to this paper we highlight the character and scope of C4D. In this section we briefly summarize the main arguments that make these spheres of communication for development increasingly relevant to meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

There is an unprecedented consensus in global development policy, rooted in the Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus (2002), re-emphasized by the Gleneagles G-8 summit (2005), and articulated most recently in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Seven sets of issues underpin this consensus:

1. A rights based approach to development;
2. The achievement of the MDGs, anchored within the umbrella of the Millennium Declaration, as the principal strategic framework for development;
3. The importance of national ownership in formulating and implementing national development strategies;
4. The necessity for good governance, particularly the capacity of citizens, rather than donors, to hold governments to account for delivery of services;
5. Recognizing the importance of globalization;
6. The importance of coherence, alignment and harmonization of development policy;
7. Managing for results.

The last two of these Issues are covered in Section 3 and 4 respectively.

This section argues that little progress is likely to be made in the first five sets of issues without a strong, concerted and prioritized focus on communication for development. These arguments have been made in detail elsewhere, and are only summarized here.

At the heart of all of them is a simple argument that there is one characteristic that makes humans human, that underpins our success as a species and determines the character of our civilizations, and that is our capacity to communicate with each other. Curiously, this is also the one element almost entirely structurally absent from the way in which we organize and prioritize development.

### A Rights Based Approach to Development

Most of the development system recognizes the centrality of human rights to achieving development goals, and many UN organizations have adopted the rights based approach in their work. The importance of rights in development has been increasingly acknowledged by economists too, many of them influenced by the work of Nobel Prize winning economist, Amartya Sen. The approach focuses particularly on identifying in society those who are rights holders and those who are duty

bearers and focuses on many concepts – such as accountability, empowerment and participation – that are threaded through this paper. The Overseas Development Institute defines the approach as:

*A rights-based approach to development sets the achievement of human rights as an objective of development. It uses thinking about human rights as the scaffolding of development policy. It invokes the international apparatus of human rights accountability in support of development action. In all of these, it is concerned not just with civil and political (CP) rights (the right to a trial, not to be tortured), but also with economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights (the right to food, housing, a job)<sup>33</sup>.*

The role of civil society is widely acknowledged and increasingly supported as part of a rights based approach to development, and participatory methodologies are increasingly mainstreamed into the work of most development organizations, including the UN.

The specific role of communication within this sphere, however, remains poorly understood and little prioritized. The role of the media in amplifying citizens' voices, and particularly of community media to provide platforms for people to understand and realize their rights is only now attracting attention. How different communities communicate with each other across geographical, ethnic or religious boundaries, how processes of community change catalyze broader society wide processes of social change, how cultural identities strengthen, change or coalesce to realize rights – all these issues are intimately bound up with how people realize their rights. The ability of humans to communicate with each other is not a given, as much development policy sometimes assumes. The capacity of people – particularly people living in poverty – to articulate their perspectives freely and communicate them in ways that will attract attention and demand respect depends on communication channels being available to them. The capacity of people to communicate among each other, and to forge communities of common interest across boundaries requires communication infrastructures. The ability of people to understand what policies are shaping their lives depends on that information being made available, or at least accessible to them. There is little in the way of a systematic approach within the development system that recognizes these challenges.

### Delivering on the MDGs

Communication for Development encompasses and is integral to all aspects of rights-based pro-poor development including governance, health, education,

33. Maxwell, S. (1999), *What can we do with a rights based approach to development?*, ODI Briefing Paper

livelihoods, gender empowerment and poverty reduction. As such they have direct relevance to the work of each UN agency involved in any of these sectors. Some of the main links between communication and MDGs were articulated in 2004 when a group of representatives of bilateral and multilateral agencies gathered in Bellagio, Italy. [Box 1 on the next page contains an extract from a statement summarizing their conclusions.]

### Ownership and Communication for Development

A focus on the importance of ownership in development policy is not new, and has been the central theoretical principle of poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs) and of UN development policy over the last seven years (and in the latter case far longer). The role of communication in fostering country ownership is widely acknowledged. Ownership that is felt by governments, but not shared by its citizens has frequently proved to be unsustainable and brittle.

For citizens to develop ownership of a set of policies they need to be informed about them, and they need to discuss, debate and articulate their perspectives on them. In a landmark study published in 2005 by the World Bank and DFID [Mozzamel and Odugbemi, 2005], an insufficient focus on informing and fostering public debate among citizens was held significantly responsible for lack of ownership of PRSPs, and in some cases for their relative failure.

The importance of ownership, arguably the central pillar of 21st Century development policy, rests on effective communication for development, particularly in the form of an engaged, informed media, and on mechanisms that enable publics to openly discuss and debate issues and communicate their perspectives into public policy processes. This concept of ownership, and the importance of citizen's capacity to subject development policies that concern them to public debate, has been rehearsed in many major reports on development, most notably in the Report of the Commission for Africa. While the role of civil society in this regard is widely acknowledged and to some extent supported, the role of communication is not.

### Governance and Accountability

Development progress is consistently recognized, not least in repeated Human Development Reports, as being principally linked to standards of governance and the upholding of rights in developing countries rather than [only] to aid flows or natural resources. A central conclusion of the report of the Commission for Africa, echoed repeatedly in other statements and declarations is that many developing country governments have become more accountable to donors than to their own citizens and that this must change<sup>34</sup>.

34. Report of the Commission for Africa, page 94, paragraph 45, [www.commissionforafrica.org](http://www.commissionforafrica.org), 2005

Citizens cannot hold governments to account unless they are informed of and have access to information on the issues that shape their lives. The role of the media and of communication structures at all levels [community, sub regional, national, regional and international] is inextricably bound up with how citizens understand and engage in democratic life. The rights and capacities of people, particularly those living in poverty, to voice their own perspectives and have them heard in public debate, are widely recognized as critical to effective governance. This is a central concern of communication for development.

### Globalisation and the Role of Knowledge in Development

The role of knowledge and new technologies in enabling countries to engage in the global economy has been highlighted for many years, particularly since the World Bank's 1998 World Development Report focused on the role of knowledge in development. The World Summit on the Information Society was an explicit acknowledgement of the growing importance of the digital divide between rich and poor countries, and between rich and poor within countries. The role of ICTs in facilitating effective markets, enabling countries to integrate into the global economy and developing more knowledge based economies has been repeatedly highlighted. So too have the opportunities ICTs provide in enabling farmers to negotiate better prices at markets, villages to engage in national economies and policies and for citizens to access information on issues and services that affect them. The extraordinary growth of mobile telephony in particular is well documented as its role in facilitating horizontal, people to people communication, in enabling people without bank accounts to hold and transfer cash virtually and its role in potentially empowering people living in poverty.

#### BELLAGIO STATEMENT ON COMMUNICATION AND THE MDGs<sup>35</sup>

In 2000, the world committed to the Millennium Declaration, and to meeting eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In 2004, prospects for achieving these goals are already in doubt.

To a large degree, success in achieving them rests on participation and ownership. Communication is fundamental to helping people change the societies in which they live, particularly communication strategies which both inform and amplify the voices of those with most at stake and which address the structural impediments to achieving these

35. Bellagio Statement on Communication and the MDGs, Communication for Social Change Consortium, 2004 <http://www.communicationforsocialchange.org/pdf/statementmdgmeetingnov04final.pdf>

goals. However, such strategies remain a low priority on development agendas, undermining achievement of the MDGs.

For example:

- The principal strategy for meeting the primary MDG of halving poverty by 2015 is the implementation of poverty reduction strategies. Despite an emphasis in the PRSP process on participation, poor public understanding, limited public debate and low levels of country ownership threaten successful implementation of this strategy. Similar problems threaten sector wide approaches and budget support programmes.
- The goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 will not be met unless rural poverty is addressed. Knowledge, communication and participation are essential to this process. Rural people need to be able to collectively identify and articulate their aspirations, to analyse the options available from rural service providers and to take action. Rural service providers face obstacles to engaging with rural people to identify their priorities and options, as well as to support the articulation of these issues to policy makers. Development agencies and international donors need information about rural poverty for policy development and implementation. Inclusive communication strategies can facilitate the participation and sharing of knowledge between these various stakeholders.
- The goal of containing HIV/AIDS by 2015, and allied efforts to increase access to anti retroviral drugs, will not be reached unless more priority is given to communication. Successful HIV/AIDS strategies depend on communication to help people construct a social environment in which behaviour change becomes possible. Through dialogue and discussion, they can convert stigma to support. Where less than 10% of people know their HIV status, communication is needed to ensure that ARVs reach and benefit those who need them. Strategies which place the voices of those affected by HIV/AIDS at the core are essential to effect community based demand for prevention and treatment.
- The goal of reducing child mortality is challenged by increasing rather than decreasing child mortality rates. The global effort to

eliminate polio, for example, has been undermined by anti immunization campaigns. Communication strategies that engage dialogue on the issues are critical to successful responses to this challenge. The development of new vaccines is likely to face a similar challenge, rooted in distrust, poor public understanding and lack of public debate if not introduced with appropriate communication.

- High priority on the Development Cooperation agenda is given to enhancing democracy, enlarging participation and strengthening of human rights for poor people. To reach this goal the importance of a two way development communication where poor populations are given possibilities to share information and have a channel to voice their needs cannot be overestimated.

### 3. NEED FOR SYSTEMATIC INTEGRATION OF C4D INTO UN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS AT COUNTRY LEVEL

This paper has so far sought to demonstrate the scale and scope of the communication for development field, and its relevance to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In this section, we assess whether and to what extent communication for development is currently structured, organized and coordinated at country level.

The brief and simplistic response to this question is that it isn't! Some of the components that make up the communication for development field, particularly related to governance, are incorporated into country planning level processes. There is, within many sector specific strategies such as in health and education, a significant emphasis on communication, but even here communication is often a low priority (there is increasing recognition, for example, that in the field of HIV/AIDS, prevention of HIV transmission, and the central role of communication in HIV prevention in particular, has been a substantially neglected priority). In general, however, planning for communication for development is both fragmented and unstrategic. Some of the main reasons for this are presented in the following sections.

#### The "Communication" Confusion

The problems faced by UN country offices and other development organisations start with a lack of clarity over what communication is and why it matters. For most organizations, the term communication means something very different to the concepts dealt with at the roundtable. While the General Assembly has a definition of communication for development (see Section 1), this is not widely known among the broader UN or development community.

For most development agencies, including many civil society organizations, the term "communication" is associated with boosting of institutional profile or advocacy to secure public or political support for the organisation's aims. There is, at country level, a significant increase in advocacy-related activities and a growing number of communication officers in many agencies, focus principally on enhancing or protecting institutional reputations, visibility or agendas. Because of this, many communication for development efforts, focused for example on subjecting policy initiatives to informed scrutiny and public debate, are carried out by personnel who are principally employed to promote those policies in the best possible light.

#### An Absence of Data

There is almost no data collection system focused on understanding the information needs of people living in poverty (e.g. what information is available to people on the issues that affect their lives, or the extent to which the media covers issues of poverty). There is no system that gathers information on the opportunities available to people to feed their perspectives into public or policy debate. There is a general lack of information and data on communication issues at national level and what information does exist is fragmented and insufficiently accessible.

A recent major study by the BBC World Service Trust for the African Media Development Initiative examining media and media support issues in 17 countries found that:

*"The picture is of a sector undergoing significant growth and transformation due to democratic reform and globalization, typically accompanied by economic growth and the availability of new technologies. However, even including the wealth of valuable insights available from other published research, systematic and reliable data on the sector simply does not exist. There is a lack of robust research demonstrating what is and is not working in the attempts by many players to strengthen the media. The lack of reliable information has been a factor constraining private and public (donor) investment."*<sup>36</sup>

It is unsurprising therefore that few policy responses are made since there is no systemic mechanism for detecting or understanding the character or seriousness of these issues. In the absence of clearer data on people's information and communication needs and realities, activities inevitably will continue to be unstrategic and insufficiently effective.

#### The Dizzying Pace of Change

This lack of information is particularly problematic given the extraordinarily rapid and fundamental changes in communication environments in recent years. The media in most developing countries only 15 years ago was largely government owned, centrally controlled and poor in quality. Widespread media liberalization has achieved what has been termed "the other information revolution" with a flourishing of new, dynamic media actors, ranging from an explosion of commercial and community FM radio, a burgeoning print media sector, and growing reach of television, including via satellite.

36. African Media Development Initiative: Research Summary Report, BBC World Service Trust 2006, Page 13, [http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/AMDI/AMDI\\_summary\\_Report.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/AMDI/AMDI_summary_Report.pdf)

The media is recognized as having played a leading role in social and political change in much of the developing world: independent print media, for example, has been acknowledged internationally for exposing corruption in Kenya in the Githongo affair<sup>37</sup>; as has the role of community radio in playing a central role in facilitating peaceful democratic transition in Nepal<sup>38</sup>.

New technologies – particularly the mobile phone and the internet – are transforming economic, political and social systems. Dynamic and powerful interrelationships are being formed between old communication technologies (such as radio) and new technologies such as mobile telephony and internet. The effects of these changes on people's lives, particularly poor people's lives, are little understood in the development system, not least because it has little means of gathering data or evidence of these changes.

### **A Multisectoral Issue but No Learning or Planning Across Sectors**

Many communication for development issues cut across different development sectors and the UN organizations that coordinate them, and yet there is no clear mechanism for sharing analysis, learning or experiences on these sectors, or developing what could be highly impactful policy initiatives on them. Improving access to information from government, for example, cuts across all sectors. So too does the role of community media, which has demonstrated impact in the fields of governance [holding authorities to account and deepening democracy], empowerment [providing a voice to the poorest], health [demanding better services including, for example, ARVs in HIV/AIDS], livelihoods [improving agricultural techniques and market information], education, emergencies, conflict, habitat, cultural expression among many others.

Community media is consistently hampered by the lack of an enabling policy environment in many countries. A collective UN analysis, assessment and perspective on such an issue at country level, and a joined up policy approach and engagement with governments could play an important role.

### **Who Knows What is Going On?**

There is very little mapping of communication of development initiatives within countries so hard evidence on how well organized, relevant and structured such initiatives are at country level is difficult to determine. Many media and communication organizations report substantial duplication of funding effort at country level, while at the same time funds are not available for problems clearly

37. Political Governance, Corruption and Aid, Speech, Speech by Hilary Benn, " February 2006, [http://www.royalafricansociety.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=243&Itemid=242](http://www.royalafricansociety.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=243&Itemid=242)

38. Democracy in Nepal: the role of Community Radio

identified by practitioners on the ground. Bigger problems include an absence or very low prioritization of communication for development programming in many sectors, no clear funding lines, and no mechanism to prioritize it in national planning systems.

### **The Lack of Champions and Capacity: Who Should Know What Is Going On?**

Communication for development has few champions in the development system and substantial lack of clarity over who should have responsibility for coordinating this sphere. There is extremely limited human capacity and expertise in this field at senior or even mid levels within the development system. For these reasons, there are very limited mechanisms for ensuring that relevant issues and questions are raised in national planning processes. Organizational responsibilities and capacities within the development system are unclear and insufficient.

### **The Long Term Nature of Impact**

Most communication for development initiatives take a long time to achieve real impact and come as the consequence of a long term investment in capacity at country level. Strengthening a community media sector, creating a culture and professionalism of public interest journalism, seeing the benefit of pro poor ICT strategies, using communication to empower and help shift social norms in society – all of these are long term projects. The central role of community media in the peaceful transition to democracy in Nepal was the result of more than a decade of work.

Sites like the Communication Initiative<sup>39</sup> have revealed the extraordinary richness, diversity and scale of communication for development activities being undertaken in many developing countries. However, most of these operate in a climate where most support for the field is short term, project delineated, sometimes donor driven, fragmented, and unsuited to building the capacity of national level actors.

### **Distance from Government**

Most development funding, and virtually all bilateral and multilateral agencies, work through developing country governments. Most communication for development activities, particularly in the media field, need to operate independently from governments. This presents major and arguably increasingly challenges of how such activities can be prioritized in development action. The need for many communication and media for development activities to maintain a distance and capacity to criticize and hold government to account can also present significant challenges to UN organizations.

39. [www.comminit.com](http://www.comminit.com)

#### 4. HOW COORDINATION CAN BE BEST BE IMPROVED AT COUNTRY LEVEL THROUGH THE UNDAF/CCA PROCESS

In the next section, we make some recommendations on how communication for development can be better incorporated within CCA and UNDAF planning processes. In this section, we provide a background to this by explaining briefly how the process currently works, and how current UN reforms are likely to change it.

##### The Current CCA/UNDAF Process

The principal mechanism that the UN currently uses to coordinate development work at country level is the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which is developed with national governments and in consultation with civil society partners. It is designed to provide the foundation for all development action in the country.

The UNDAF – articulated in the Country Programme Action Plan – is developed on the basis of a Common Country Assessment (CCA), an analysis of the development problems facing a country, again something that is usually carried out with the national government. The CCA/UNDAF is designed to be mutually complementary to and consistent with the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP), a process most often led by the World Bank. The UNDAF is implemented under the aegis of the UN Development Group (which brings together all UN agencies) and the UN Resident Coordinator System, usually managed by UNDP through UN country teams.

All UN projects and programmes are designed to operate within the framework of the UNDAF. The whole process leads to the development of a Results Matrix, against which performance is judged. On the basis of the Results Matrix, an UNDAF Monitoring and Evaluation plan is developed, and the Matrix also underpins an UNDEF Evaluation, or joint UN review which is conducted with national level partners.

Increasingly, if an issue is not prioritised within either the CCA/UNDAF process, or the PRSP process, it is unlikely to be prioritised within national development programming by any bilateral, multilateral or governmental agency. As more donors commit themselves to working within this system, this reality will intensify. This clearly has major implications for communication for development.

The UNDAF/CCA system were initially used in 1999 and revised in 2002 to take into account the UN Millennium Declaration, and again in 2004 to take into account lessons learned. They are the principal strategic planning tool of the UN at country level for achieving the MDGs. The system is under revision again now (see below). The UNDAF is designed to be rooted in the Common Country Assessment.

According to the UN's Guidelines for UN Country Teams preparing a CCA and UNDAF (UN 2004), this analytical process identifies the:

*"...root causes of the major development challenges faced by the country. In doing so, it indicates who are the most vulnerable, disaggregating appropriately to capture the extent and location of poverty and highlighting gaps in capacity at various levels. As such, the analytical framework may be useful not just for the UN Country Team's preparation for the UNDAF, but also for other national development interventions, like the PRSP. Conversely, if other comparable analyses already exist, the CCA should complement rather than duplicate these."*

The UNDAF represents an agreement with the government of the relevant country and is designed to be rooted in the CCA. Again, according to the Guidelines,

*"Central [to the UNDAF] is the agreement of the Government and the UN Country Team that the UN focus on three to five priorities selected from these challenges identified through the CCA process. The selection of these top priorities should be driven by the collective comparative advantage of the UN system in addressing selected challenges identified in the CCA, as seen by the government, the UNCT and its other partners. In short, where can the UN system, seeking development results together, make the biggest difference? These three to five priorities are reflected in a results matrix....to guide and monitor progress."*

Clearly, each UN agency (particularly UNDP, UNFAP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP) develops its own country programmes to meet needs in its own sector, but under the UNDAF system these are meant to feed into and be consistent with the UNDAF. The timing of the UNDAF is also meant to be in line with national development planning cycles, including PRSPs where appropriate. The CCA and UNDAF are mandatory in all countries where there is a UN harmonized programme cycle -- which is all countries where two or more UN agencies present multi year country programmes to their respective governing bodies.

##### How Do Communication for Development Issues Feature in CCA/UNDAF Process?

To make an assessment of how the current CCA/UNDAF process encompasses communication for development issues, it's important to understand how the analysis for the process is undertaken and where information is derived. It is clear that communication for development will only feature in national development programmes if questions related to it are asked in the country assessment process. There are several components of the current guidelines which are relevant to communication for development.

According to UN guidelines:

*“The CCA draws on national monitoring and analytical processes, and on complementary assessments such as national human development reports, the economic and sectoral work of the World Bank and specialised agencies and on reports prepared in compliance with international treaties and country-specific observations and recommendations of the human rights mechanisms of the UN system. The CCA process and the CCA product should be of such a quality that they obviate the need for country macro analyses by individual UN agencies as part of their preparations for country programmes and projects”*

Among the areas most relevant to communication for development, the CCA process is designed to result in (this is not a complete list):

- A strategic analysis that identifies the root causes and gender differentiated and group specific (minorities, indigenous peoples, displaced persons etc) impact of poverty and other development challenges;
- The identification of rights holders to make claims, and duty bearers to meet their obligations (this includes an analysis of “people’s awareness of their rights and capacities of rights holders to make claims and realize their rights; and the role and capacity of the State and other duty bearers to meet their obligations” [italics inserted]). A Human Rights Based Approach to development underpins many UNDAFs;
- An analysis of opportunities for and obstacles to free, active and meaningful participation in national governance and development processes and outcomes;

According to UN guidelines,  
*“The quality of the CCA and hence the relevance of subsequent country programming depends on the depth and quality of the analysis... The analysis must clearly identify underlying and root causes of the selected development challenges and national capacities to address them.... problem areas that are not analysed in detail (for instance, owing to a lack of immediately available information) should be earmarked for inclusion in the future research agenda of national institutions and authorities and development partners.”*

Furthermore, principles of participation from civil society and other non public actors are also integrated into the UNDAF/CCA process.

On one level, therefore, many of the issues highlighted as central to Communication for Development are consistent with the existing CCA process, including a focus on a human rights based approach to development and the centrality of participation. CCAs frequently mention the media situation and make reference to the role of Information and Communication Technologies. It is also important to acknowledge that CCAs are not lengthy documents designed to cover every development issue in

detail. The CCA for India, last compiled in 2000, for example is 58 pages in length and, incidentally, has an entire box on The Right to Information: Peoples Initiative Gathers Momentum.

Despite this, and as detailed above, few would argue that communication for development issues are prioritised in UNDAFs, let alone prioritised in their implementation. While media issues are mentioned, sometimes prominently in the context of governance, there are few signs of a systemic set of question and analyses. The 2006 UNDAF for Uganda, a country with one of the most complex and dynamic radio environments, does not mention radio or broadcasting or media (except in an advocacy context). Togo, on the other hand, explicitly highlights the importance of rural radio in its 2006 UNDAF.

Clearly, the UNDAF/CCA process is designed at its heart to be context specific. However, the problems highlighted in Section 3 of this paper clearly suggest some very specific problems in enabling communication for development to be highlighted adequately in the UNDAF/CCA system.

#### **How the UNDAF/CCA System May Evolve in the Future**

There is currently underway a process of UN system wide reform, and also reforms within specific agencies which may change the current UNDAF/CCA process. Such processes are likely to further intensify the emphasis within the development system on increased coordination and harmonisation at country level.

In March 2005, more than one hundred donors, international agencies and developing country governments met in Paris and agreed to implement the Paris Declaration on Aid Harmonisation. This declaration commits all actors to abide by key principles (ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability) and committing donors to channelling support through countries own institutions and procedures. The declaration was made against a background of rapidly increasing aid flows, from around \$60 billion a year through the 1990s to \$100 billion in 2005 and a projected \$130 billion by 2010 (Burall and Maxwell, 2006). The vast majority – and probably an increasing proportion – of this funding is likely to be determined and spent through country planning systems. In November 2006, the High Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence published its report, Delivering as One (UN 2006). The report focused heavily on how the UN is and should be organised at country level and made important recommendations for strengthening development coordination. It recommended:

- the establishment of unified UN “country teams” with one leader, one programme and one budgetary framework. This represents a substantial intensification of the current CCA/UNDAF process;
- that this “One UN” should be based on a consolidation of all of the UN’s

programme activities at the country level, where the country wishes it;

- substantially strengthening the role of the Resident Coordinator, selected on merit and through competition;
- the role of UNDP to change, with its operational work to be focused on policy coherence and positioning of the UN country team, leading the UN's work on governance, but withdrawing from other sector-focused policy and capacity work being done by other UN entities.

This panel has only recently reported and it is not yet sure how many of the Panel's recommendations will be translated into policy, but it does seem clear that these, combined with other trends and processes, country level planning processes will be growing still further in importance in determining development priorities. Communication for Development is currently not a significant component of national level planning processes and this is arguably a major factor in its being a relatively low priority in development action. Given the many changes currently occurring, it seems likely that unless better systems are developed for integrating communication for development into national planning processes, such marginalisation can be expected to increase.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR INCORPORATING C4D INTO THE UNDAF/CCA AND OTHER COUNTRY LEVEL PLANNING PROCESSES

### Summary of Recommendations

A separate paper, prepared by UNESCO, has made a series of recommendations for consideration by the 10th UN Roundtable for Communication for Development. This paper in essence agrees with those recommendations for action at country level – and focuses on six main sets of issues and emerging recommendations:

- A.** At HQ level, UNDG takes responsibility for ensuring that the CCA guidelines – and other emerging assessment and planning mechanisms - include provisions for conducting information and communication needs assessments.
- B.** At country office level the UN Resident Coordinator, in discussion with UNESCO, takes responsibility for ensuring that information and communication needs assessments are incorporated into CCAs; and that analysis of the findings are incorporated into UNDAF.
- C.** The UN Resident Coordinator, in discussion with UNESCO, establishes and chairs an ongoing coordination mechanism for communication for development. This might include:
  - an annual meeting at national level and biannual or quarterly meetings at sub-national level, bringing together multilateral agencies, bilateral agencies, government, civil society organizations, media and media support organizations as well as communication for development organizations;
  - joint policy action between UN agencies on specific communication issues (e.g. freedom of expression legislation, enabling broadcasting environments for community media etc);
  - meeting prepared by a clear scoping study on what is happening (what is being supported) in the field of communication for development;
  - recognition that the purpose is not to exercise control, but to create an environment for ensuring complementarity, learning, cooperation, creativity and peer review.
- D.** Mainstreaming communication for development whilst also building stronger capacity and dedicated staffing within UN offices.
- E.** Development of a framework and parameters for supporting national partners to agree on common indicators against which work of Communication for Development can be measured [with possible link to UNDP's work on National Indicators].
- F.** Developing support mechanisms that encourage innovation and independence in communication for development.

Each of these will be explained in more detail in the sections following below.

**A. At headquarters level, UNDG takes responsibility for ensuring that the cca guidelines include provisions for conducting information and communication needs assessments**

The foundation for better development action in this field needs to be rooted in a much improved assessment of the information and communication needs and realities of vulnerable groups<sup>40</sup>. This is one of the most poorly understood areas of development action, and the intensification of research and analysis needs to be urgent and substantial. The CCA process does not currently encourage a systematic approach to these issues.

It is suggested that the Communication for Development Roundtable recommends that at Headquarters level, the UN Development Group takes responsibility for ensuring that the CCA guidelines – and the other country assessment mechanisms that are likely to emerge through the UN reform process – include provisions for conducting participatory information and communication needs assessments.

**B. At country level, resident coordinators to ensure information and communication needs assessments included within the cca/undaf and communication for development coordination.**

Current UN reform proposals envisage an increasingly central role in aid harmonization and coordination for Resident Coordinators. The Resident Coordinator has the authority and capacity to ensure that communication for development issues are more effectively integrated and prioritized within the CCA/UNDAF process.

It is suggested that the Roundtable make a recommendation that the Resident Coordinator takes responsibility for ensuring that information and communication needs assessments are incorporated into the CCA.

This endorses, augments and complements the existing proposals from UNESCO on improved needs assessments, particularly the use and further development with other agencies of participatory information and communication audit methodologies within the CCA/UNDAF process which are already being piloted by UNDP.

It is also proposed that the Resident Coordinator be responsible for ensuring that the needs and interventions identified through the CCA/audits processes be appropriately prioritized within the UNDAF and allied planning processes.

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40. UNDP's Practical Guidance Note 'Communication for Empowerment: developing media strategies in support of vulnerable groups' outlines a methodology for information and communication assessment.

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**C. Coordination of communication for development at country level through the resident coordinator**

There is currently no system for effective mapping or, where appropriate, coordination of communication for development initiatives at country level. Greater coordination, coherence and prioritized support in this area is essential. It is suggested that the Communication for Development Roundtable recommends that the UN Resident Coordinator, in discussion with UNESCO, establishes and chairs an ongoing coordination mechanism for communication for development. Such a mechanism might include:

- A regular, perhaps annual, mapping process capturing communication for development action as they relate to the MDGs, particularly those supported by multilateral and bilateral development agencies. It would focus centrally on the extent to which media and communication action was reflecting, amplifying and supporting the perspectives of people living in poverty. Such a process could, where relevant, be structured according to the different spheres of communication for development set out in Section 1 of this report (communication as governance and participation; communication in support of specific sectors, and knowledge and information and communication technologies). This could feed into an annual meeting (next bullet point).
- An annual Communication for Development meeting at national level (augmented in some countries by meetings at sub-national level where appropriate) bringing together multilateral agencies, bilateral agencies, relevant government departments at national and sub national levels, communication for development organizations, civil society organizations and media and media support organizations. Its purpose would be to map and discuss communication and media trends, improve learning, develop synergies between organizations, reduce duplication, subject initiatives to peer review and identify gaps in provision.
- Other consultation and participation processes could be developed to subject communication for development strategies and interventions to analysis and comment from organizations and partners who have a direct link to/legitimate constituency within the poorest groups.
- A Communication for Development policy forum focused on discussion and identification of joint policy action between UN agencies on specific communication for development issues (e.g. freedom of expression legislation, enabling broadcasting environments for community media, enabling policy environments for ICTs etc).

- Identification of mechanisms for mainstreaming of communication for development (see next bullet).

Such a mechanism would operate in the recognition that its purpose is not to control or corral all communication for development action in a country, but to create an environment for ensuring complementarity, learning, cooperation, creativity and peer review. Such a mechanism could in many cases best be established as part of a multi-stakeholder partnership..

#### **D. Mainstreaming communication for development whilst at the same time building human capacity**

As outlined in this report, communication for development is diverse, complex and is integral to all development sectors. There are consequently strong arguments for mainstreaming communication for development and ensuring that communication for development considerations are structurally considered within virtually all development programming. The proposals related to the CCA/UNDAF process should go some way to achieving this.

However, there are also strong arguments against mainstreaming. The experience of mainstreaming in other sectors, such as gender and (in the early 1990s) HIV/AIDS, suggest that the issue suffers from having no champions, no dedicated human capacity and no concerted programming attention or prioritization. It can become instead a tokenistic tick box and the necessary adaptation to rapid change suffers. For communication for development programming to be properly prioritized and implemented at national level, specific, qualified and dedicated staff need to be appointed at national level. Such human capacity is almost entirely lacking at present. Where it does exist it often resides as a side activity of communication and advocacy officers or at a junior level. It is proposed that significant, serious and sufficiently senior level dedicated staff with an understanding and experience in communication for development be appointed within the development system at country level .

#### **E. Development of common indicators against which work of communication for development can be measured**

A recommendation should be made for the development of a framework and parameters for supporting national partners to agree common indicators against which work of Communication for Development can be measured. Examples of such indicators are already effectively outlined in the UNESCO report (Annex, Section 7). It is proposed that both the process and framework developed through UNDP's Governance Indicators project should be drawn on where relevant. Some of the most relevant indicators drawn from this project are reproduced in Annex 1.

#### **F. Support mechanisms that encouraging independence and innovation in communication for development**

Communication for development has proven a complex arena for development support. It is fast moving, cuts across different sectors and, like civil society, large parts of it are best supported in ways that maintain its independence from government and from other development authorities.

The decision by the UK Department for International Development in 2006 to create a specific mechanism – a £100 million Governance and Transparency Fund – to support plural media and civil society, was in part a recognition that exceptional support structures are necessary to support components of this sector.

A key balance for development institutions and for communication for development practitioners will be to balance the need for greater coherence and harmonization of development efforts whilst ensuring the independence and innovation that the sector possesses at its best is maintained. It is recommended that for relevant communication for development activities (particularly in the field of governance), specific mechanisms outside of budget support and allied systems need to be developed and support to them increased.

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## **ANNEX II: ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND THE MEDIA: GOVERNANCE INDICATORS**

Selected from Measuring Democratic Governance: A Framework for selecting pro-poor and gender-sensitive indicators, UNDP, 2006, pages 29-31

### **11. Access to information and the media**

#### **11.1 Definition and scope of the area**

A well-informed citizenry is a key component of democratic governance. Access to information is fundamental in bolstering democratic principles of openness, transparency and accountability and in eradicating poverty. Information can empower poor communities and strengthen their position when dealing with government. The media (especially press, radio and television) play a key role in providing citizens with information.

#### **11.2 Key questions**

Many desirable attributes of the media in a democracy and of the right to official information are both gender- and poverty-blind, e.g. a free and independent press, journalists able to work without harassment or intimidation, citizens protected from unwarranted press intrusion.

In order to understand what is meant by a pro-poor, gender sensitive media or right to information it is necessary to:

- Review what information poor men and women require to participate in public decision-making processes and achieve full citizenship.
- Resolve how this information is best made available and accessible to them in different national and local contexts.
- Assess whether the media provide this information in an appropriate fashion.

Pro-poor

- If right to official information legislation is in place, are poor people using it?
- Is official information made available in form that is useable with low levels of literacy?
- Is it possible to waive or reduce any charges for information in order to ensure that poor people are not blocked from access in practice?
- Is information produced in a form that is useful to the poor in terms of content and accessibility?
- Has the government developed special programmes to raise awareness of the right to information among marginalised groups? (i.e. the South African and Indian right to information laws explicitly require public education programmes to be developed which target marginalised groups.)
- Do systems exist for providing information in rural areas through community radio,

mobile phone provision or local internet access points?

- Do mechanisms exist that enable the poor to articulate their own information requirements and needs?
- Do public officials travel to rural areas to answer questions and participate in discussion?
- Which media are used by the poor as sources for news and information?
- Do the poor trust the media?
- Of those languages used by the poor, what proportion serves as the means of communication for at least one daily newspaper/radio/TV programme?

Gender sensitive

- If right to official information legislation is in place, is it being used by men more than women?
- Is information provided that is relevant to women? Is such information available in a way that allows women access without being controlled by men?
- Are the gender implications of official information made explicit, i.e. budgetary information should reveal how taxation and public expenditure affect men and women differently?

- Is official information transparent about discrimination against women and marginalised groups, e.g. by demonstrating an awareness of how these groups' needs are, or are not, being addressed? This is particularly important in sectors like health and education.

- Do mechanisms exist that enable women to articulate their own information requirements and needs?
- What proportion of press, radio and TV journalists at national level are women?
- What proportion of senior media executives at national level are women?
- What is the extent of media coverage of issues that might be of direct interest or relevant to the situation of women e.g. child and reproductive health (including nutrition and access to clean water); domestic violence.

UNDP has produced specific guidance for developing and selecting indicators related to the effective implementation of a right to information and the implications for the poor and women, A Guide to Measuring the Impact of Right to Information Programmes (2006) which can be accessed at the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre's website at <http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/>.

ILLUSTRATIVE PRO-POOR INDICATORS	POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES
<p><b>Poverty-status disaggregated</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Percentage of poor households possessing a radio and/or TV.</li> <li>2. Percentage of poor households possessing a mobile phone.</li> <li>3. Percentage of schools in poor districts with access to the Internet.</li> <li>4. Number of requests for official information from people in poorer areas of the country.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Percentage of poor households possessing a radio and/or TV.</li> <li>2. Percentage of poor households possessing a mobile phone.</li> <li>3. Percentage of schools in poor districts with access to the Internet.</li> <li>4. Number of requests for official information from people in poorer areas of the country.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Specific to the poor</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use of radio, TV, mobile phone, Internet and press as information sources by the poor.</li> <li>2. Coverage by the media of issues that affect the poor.</li> <li>3. Evidence that state institutions are adopting information and communication mechanisms that are relevant to the poor when making information public about their policies and actions.</li> <li>4. Evidence that the regulations enabling right to information do not restrict access by poor people, e.g. high fees for access to official information.</li> <li>5. Evidence of awareness raising programmes on the right to information targeted at poor people.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Survey data matched with census data</li> <li>2. Qualitative analysis of mainstream media programmes especially those that are most used by the poor</li> <li>3. CSO assessments and qualitative / quantitative analysis of major information sharing initiatives</li> <li>4. Qualitative analysis of the legislation and guidelines for providing access to information</li> <li>5. Administrative data and CSO reports, survey data</li> </ol>

ILLUSTRATIVE PRO-POOR INDICATORS		POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES
<b>Implicitly pro-poor</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of legislation providing a right to official information and its effective implementation.</li> <li>Existence of CSOs acting as information intermediaries for the poor, i.e. transforming information for the poor by using appropriate tools</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative and quantitative analysis of national laws. Freedom.org (<a href="http://www.privacyinternational.org">www.privacyinternational.org</a>) maintains a global database of countries with right to information legislation</li> <li>Administrative data on number of CSOs registered with such a mandate, international and national qualitative reports</li> </ol>
<b>Chosen by poor</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived information deficit about political life and actions of the government among the poor.</li> <li>Perception of whether the mainstream media cover issues that are of interest and relevant to the poor.</li> <li>Level of trust in State Broadcasting Corporation and other media among the poor.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey data (Annex 1 [11])</li> <li>Survey data</li> <li>Survey data (Annex 1 [12])</li> </ol>

ILLUSTRATIVE GENDER SENSITIVE INDICATORS		POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES
<b>Sex disaggregated</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of Press, radio and TV journalists at national level who are women.</li> <li>Proportion of women/men that have requested official information.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data collected from media outlets</li> <li>Administrative data (although sex of the requester may not be recorded)</li> </ol>
<b>Gender specific</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of media coverage on issues that are of importance to women (e.g. child/ reproductive health and domestic violence).</li> <li>Evidence that the gender implications of official information are made explicit, e.g. how the budget affects men and women differently.</li> <li>Evidence that the provision of official information is gender sensitive as a result of being disseminated through different channels for men and women.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative analysis of mainstream media, CSO sources, interviews with senior media executives from selected media outlets</li> <li>Focus group discussion with selected officials from key government ministries</li> <li>Qualitative analysis of information programmes on men's and women's issues, including an assessment of whether the channels used are appropriate</li> </ol>

<p><b>Implicitly gendered</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Existence of legislation providing a right to official information and its effective implementation.</li> <li>2. Existence of CSOs acting as information intermediaries for women i.e. analysis and dissemination of information that has special relevance to women.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of national laws. Freedom.org (<a href="http://www.privacyinternational.org">www.privacyinternational.org</a>) maintains a global database of countries with right to information legislation</li> <li>2. Administrative data on number of CSOs registered with such a mandate, international and national qualitative reports</li> </ol>
<p><b>Chosen by women</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Percentage of women who say that they receive adequate information from the government and the media on policies and laws that affect them.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Survey data</li> </ol>

## Draft Plan of Action

# 3.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** Reducing poverty by achieving the MDGs is a mission shared by all UN agencies. To this end, it has been unanimously recognized that reducing poverty in all its forms must necessarily involve a multi-dimensional approach that is predicated on achieving not only an adequate standard of living, but other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. Communication for Development, a socio-cultural process which puts the people most affected at the centre of decision-making around their own development, can play an important role in fostering dialogue, facilitating information and knowledge sharing, building understanding and consensus around collective action, and amplifying the voice and influence of people in policy processes (Servaes et al 2006).

**1.2** As has been emphasized, Communication for Development works most effectively when the requisite enabling environment is in place. Elements of such an enabling environment include: a free, independent and pluralistic media system, where media are accountable to their audiences and through which open dialogue and debate can occur; open, transparent and accountable government that encourages public discourse, broad public access to a variety of communication media and channels, as well as a regulatory environment that promote non-discriminatory licensing for local radio and low-cost universal access to the Internet and telephone services; and an open society in which all groups are able to participate fully in development decisions, debates and decision making processes (Servaes et al 2006)

**1.3** Freedom of expression constitutes a fundamental right that must be respected if the MDGs are to be attained. The Millennium Declaration has reaffirmed the commitment “to ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information.”

**1.4** A free, independent and pluralistic media is a fundamental element of democratic participation, accountability, good governance and the fight against corruption, all key contributors to poverty reduction (UNESCO et al 2006). By acting as a conduit of information between corporations, government and the population, free media acts as a watchdog against poor government, at the same time highlighting areas requiring the government’s urgent attention.

**1.5** Media also ensures enhanced engagement among citizens and with government at different levels, from local to national, and facilitates public debate on

development. Whether public, private or community, the media, depending on the disciplinary knowledge they can acquire, provide access to and interpretation of vital information on key development issues – such as poverty, sustainable development, agriculture, education and health.

**1.6** That communication can play a key role in reducing poverty and fostering development is well understood by the international development community, and a myriad of interventions over time have sought to strengthen media systems and capacity in developing countries. However, in some cases, the sheer proliferation of actors working in an un-coordinated manner at different levels has imposed a high transaction cost on development partners and would-be beneficiaries of development.

**1.7** A more holistic approach by the UN system, predicated on coherence and enhanced collaboration, can significantly strengthen the enabling environment for Communication for Development within developing countries, and foster more effective partnerships with and among the wider development community. Putting in place such an enabling environment constitutes a critical agenda around which the UN system can rally.

**1.8** The purpose of this Action Plan is to articulate a common UN strategy for collaboration in the next two years, as a first step towards strengthening the role of Communication for Development as a key component of UN system programming. It is being developed in response to a proposal from participants at the 9th inter-agency Round Table on Communication for Development, held in Rome, Italy in September 2004. Its focus is two-fold: first, it proposes strategies for in-country collaboration towards strengthening communication capacities of different groups (such as media professionals, communities, government representatives and officials) as well as structures (policies, infrastructure, etc); second, it proposes ways of rooting Communication for Development in the UN globally.

## 2. VISION & MISSION

### 2..1. Vision:

**2.1.1.** UN Country Teams working together “as one” to strengthen communication and information systems and their capacities to make Communication for Development meaningful and relevant.

**2.1.2.** Communication for Development internalized as a central pillar of the UN’s strategy for meeting the MDGs, and an integral component of strategy, planning and programming.

## 2.2. Mission:

2.2.1 Jointly implement capacity building, awareness raising and policy advocacy programmes at scale in 5 – 10 pilot countries.

2.2.2 Strengthen mechanisms and systematize collaboration at headquarter level and develop standards, guidelines, indicators to ensure enhanced impact.

## 3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 To strengthen UN inter-agency collaboration around Communication for Development at programmatic level, in line with the principle of country ownership at all levels (country, regional, headquarters).

3.2 To strengthen communication and media systems and capacities towards greater citizen participation in the development discourse and public sphere.

3.3. To establish a common understanding of, and approach to, Communication for Development in the UN system, by developing standards, guidelines, indicators and other norms.

3.4 To strengthen existing country-level diagnostic and programming mechanisms (UNDAF/CCA, PRSs) to include Communication for Development audits/ needs assessments as an integral component.

## 4. PRINCIPLES

- A strategic, joined-up approach
- Harness the specialization of different agencies, build on what each is doing well to foster synergies
- Focus on a few well-defined areas of collaboration
- Prioritize actions and interventions for maximum impact
- Country focus is key, supported by international advocacy
- Emphasize implementing at scale
- Seek to build local capacity in a sustainable way
- Ensure partnership within and beyond UN system, harness non-UN Communication for Development initiatives
- Develop robust mechanisms for monitoring impact reflecting the UN's core values

## 5. THEMATIC PROGRAMME FOCUS

Building on existing efforts, the Action Plan will articulate joint UN inter-agency collaboration in the following thematic programme areas:

## 5.1 Creating an Enabling Environment for Communication for Development:

Undertake policy advocacy; provide technical assistance in preparing legislation on freedom of information, editorial independence of national broadcasting services and independent community broadcasting services; harness the role of national broadcasting services to enhance policy formulation; provide support to build pluralistic and democratic media systems that enable audience engagement in public service, private and community media.

5.2 Strengthening Capacities and Skills: Build institutional capacity (vocational, tertiary, in-house, etc) to deliver high-quality training; target different user groups (media and information professionals, government officials, youth, urban and rural communities, etc); develop issue-specific training to enhance disciplinary knowledge among media practitioners for a better understanding of development (e.g. the MDGs, economic development, agriculture, health, sustainable development, etc).

5.3 Enhancing Public Participation in Policy Making: Open up existing systems and channels to greater citizen participation; especially focus on ensuring stronger participation by women in the development debate; harness ICTs to enhance information sharing and citizen engagement.

5.4 Mainstreaming Communication for Development in UN System: Raise awareness and develop a common understanding; advocate for Communication for Development to become a core UN staff competency; develop mechanisms to enhance collaboration; develop and retail system-wide indicators to measure the impact of communication in helping meet the MDGs.

The Action Plan will be implemented at two levels: within selected developing countries and at global, headquarter-level.

## 5.5 Country-level Actions:

5.5.1 UN Country Teams will be responsible for: integrating communication in the UNDAF/CCA and PRS processes, financing and implementing programmes at scale, building national systems and capacities, spearheading in-country advocacy, and providing technical assistance.

## 5.5.2 Proposed initiatives:

- Pilot the integration of communication audits/ needs assessments into UNDAF/CCA.
- Deploy joint inter-agency UN technical assistance to help understand the linkages between freedom of expression and poverty reduction and in doing so strengthen

people's participation towards achieving the MDGs.

- Develop a holistic capacity building programme to enable different types of media to verifiably help meet MDGs, and different citizen groups to engage with the MDGs<sup>41</sup>.
- Establish dedicated Communication for Development capacity building funds within UNCTs.
- Establish coordinated institutional capacity building initiatives to develop disciplinary knowledge among media and communication professionals.
- Develop communication training programmes for government officials/ senior policymakers, and operational staff across government departments (to help build governmental capacity, sensitize on freedom of information, etc)<sup>42</sup>.
- Develop, identify funding and jointly implement public service broadcasting of parliamentary debates as part of a broader effort to promote the right to know and citizen participation in policy making.
- As part of a broader policy advocacy effort, organise (with government and other in-country partners) a national conference/ high-profile event to highlight the key role of communication in delivering MDGs.
- Strengthen existing UN advisory services to assist governments in internalising freedom of information and community broadcasting policies so as to encourage the necessary legal frameworks at national level.
- Improve communication staffing complement of UNCTs<sup>43</sup>, and introduce Communication for Development as a core competency among field staff.
- Include system-wide methodology and indicators for assessing the impact of Communication for Development on achieving the MDGs in all projects and programmes at inception.

## 5.6 Headquarter-level Actions:

**5.6.1** Globally, UN agencies will be responsible for: undertaking advocacy to mainstream Communication for Development; establishing system-wide norms and standards; developing indicators and monitoring progress; and sharing good practices.

### 5.6.2 Proposed Initiatives:

- Establish an Inter-Agency Technical Working Group on Communication for Development, to advise on programme design and implementation, develop norms and standards, develop indicators and monitor progress on an ongoing basis.

41. The capacity building programme should address capacities of different groups, and address different themes (e.g. maternal mortality, governance, ICTs for knowledge creation/sharing). Training should be tailored to specific country needs, and such programmes should be designed in such a way as to be sustainable by emphasizing the building of local capacity, in universities, etc.

42. Such programmes should build on existing efforts (e.g. UNDP's governance-related training)

43. This could involve developing specifications for minimum requirement for each UNCT (e.g. a P-level communication officer working across agencies, setting up of in-country UNCT working group/ task force)

- Develop a common understanding of Communication for Development among UN agencies; increase awareness; sensitize high-level UN decision-makers.
- Establish the requirements for making Communication for Development mandatory in the inception and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all development programmes and projects.
- Designate the Round Table as the main UN system-wide forum for biennial reporting to the General Assembly on progress in implementing the Action Plan.
- Develop and disseminate system-wide guidelines for common terminology.
- Develop detailed proposals on how communication can become an integral part of the CCA, UNDAF, PRSs and other national development frameworks<sup>44</sup>.
- Develop operational guidelines for including communication audits/needs assessments in CCA, and for including communication programming in UNDAF programmes and PRSs<sup>45</sup>.
- Collect audiovisual material on Communication for Development produced by different UN agencies into one repository accessible by broadcasting services and different audiences.
- Commission research to systematically identify Communication for Development good practice; disseminate widely.
- Develop system-wide communication development indicators, to measure the impact of communication on improving the enabling environment for meeting the MDGs; document and disseminate widely; roll out training in use of the indicators.
- Introduce Communication for Development as a core competency among agency staff, and advocate for courses to be developed as a mandatory offering to managers.

## 6. EXPECTED RESULTS

**6.1** Communication for Development harnessed as an integral part of UN system planning and programming towards meeting the MDGs.

**6.2** Communication for Development integrated into in-country diagnostic and programming instruments.

**6.3** Holistic in-country capacity building programmes implemented by UNCT and non-UN partners to facilitate the development of pluralistic communication and information systems capable of engaging people in their own development.

**6.4** Enhanced understanding of and commitment to Communication for Development by governments.

44. Dovetail this with the ongoing system-wide review of the UNDAF process.

45. Build on work already underway (such as UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, World Bank, etc)

## 7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

**7.1** The UN Technical Working Group on Communication for Development will review progress in developing and implementing the Action Plan periodically. An interim review of lessons learned will be conducted during the 11th Round Table.

**7.2** There will be two levels of Monitoring and Evaluation, built into all activities at inception:

- The Action Plan itself
- A broader evaluation of communication's contribution towards putting in place the enabling environment for meeting the MDGs

## 8. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS<sup>46</sup>

**8.1** Commitment indicators:

- Evidence of a common understanding, approach and strategy
- Evidence of resource allocation
- Commissioning of papers
- Development of operational plans
- Initiatives to strengthen mechanisms
- Establishment of UNCT Communication for Development training funds
- Funding in place or being sought
- Publication of operational guidelines

**8.2** Impact Indicators<sup>47</sup> :

- Number of UNCTs implementing joint Communication for Development programming
- Number of UNCTs using communication audits/ needs assessments
- Number and quality of training programmes implemented
- Number of countries in which parliament is broadcast via state channels
- Number of countries putting in place Freedom of Information laws/ regulation
- State of in-country media environment (plurality / diversity of ownership, participation of women, community broadcasting environment, etc)
- Capacity building – number and scope of media and communication training institutions offering training in disciplinary knowledge (E.g. Sustainable Development, Environment, Health, Science Communication, Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, etc)

## 9. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

- The UN Inter-agency Round Table on Communication for Development
- The UN inter-agency Technical Working Group on Communication for Development
- Communication for Development structures within UN Country Teams

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46. These are indicative and subject to further development.

47. Baseline to be established by communication audits/ needs assessments

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