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HARNESSING THE UN SYSTEM INTO A COMMON APPROACH ON COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Jan Servaes

Abstract / In the UN system, conflicts and contradictions seldom concern the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as such, but rather the means of achieving them. These differences of opinion about priorities, and about how much and to whom development aid or assistance should be directed, could be explained by analysing the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions underpinning the general perspectives in the communication for development (C4D) field. Theoretical changes in the perspective on development communication (modernization, dependency, multiplicity) have also reached the level of policy-makers. As a result, different methodologies and terminologies have evolved, which often make it difficult for agencies, even though they share a common commitment to the overall goals of development communication, to identify common ground, arrive at a full understanding of each other's objectives, or to cooperate effectively in operational projects. Consequently, it is difficult for development organizations in general and UN agencies in particular to reach a common approach and strategy.

Keywords / advocacy / behaviour change / communication for development / community media / devcom strategies / diffusion / Millennium Development Goals / participatory communication / policy recommendations / United Nations

Most of the social change that takes place cannot be attributed to the UN. (Bjoern Foerde, director, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, Addis Ababa, 12 February 2007)

Introduction

Since 1986, United Nations agencies involved in communication for development (C4D) have used the informal format of biannual meetings 'to ensure understanding among UN agencies regarding the implementation of programs and projects that contribute to communication for development or use that specific approach to resolve development-related issues' (UNESCO, 2006). The 10th Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 12–14 February 2007. The theme was 'Developing a UN System-Wide Common Approach to Communication for Development in View of Achieving the Millennium Development Goals' (UNESCO, 2007).

The perception of UN agencies' contribution towards communication for development and different strategies to fast track the development process in developing countries were discussed in light of a search for a common UN system approach. The Plan of Action emphasized the need for 'UN Country Teams working together "as one" to strengthen communication and information systems and their capacities to make Communication for Development meaningful and relevant' (UNESCO, 2007: 73).

This article intends to provide the background and structure necessary to assess the contributions of the UN system at large as well as with regard to specific UN agencies in the field of communication for development. We question the objective of a common UN approach on communication for development, and conclude with a list of recommendations for policy-making and planning in the field of communication for development.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A New Start?

The UN first heralded the 1960s as the 'Development Decade', but its efforts stalled when organizations did not communicate with each other, enforce accountability measures or monitor progress (Bissio, 2003).

A series of UN conferences in the 1990s renewed the international commitment to development goals. One catalyst was the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, where leaders vowed to eradicate global poverty. Another was the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), organized in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005), which tried to find effective and innovative ways to put the potential of knowledge and technology at the service of development for all. WSIS was also the first international event that brought multi-stakeholders – governments, civil society, private interest groups and bureaucrats – from all over the world to reflect on the future of the Information Society from a people-centred, human rights perspective (Servaes and Carpentier, 2006).

However, the most important event from the perspective of the Millennium Development Goals was the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit. An independent advisory body was commissioned to identify MDG strategies and monitor their progress (<http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/GMIS/home.do?siteId=2>). The panel, directed by Professor Jeffrey Sachs and staffed by more than 265 experts from the public and private sector, released *Investing in Development*, a blueprint for attaining the MDGs, in January 2005 (Sachs, 2005). The MDGs were also the focus of the *Human Development Report 2003*, which urged the adoption of a 'Millennium Development Compact' to better mobilize development resources (UNDP, 2003). More than 80 developing countries have prepared reports on their progress towards attaining the MDGs. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted in a document on *Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration* that:

In four short years, the eight Millennium Development Goals . . . have transformed the face of global development cooperation. The broad global consensus around a set of clear, measurable and time-bound development generated unprecedented, coordinated action, not only within the United Nations system . . . but also within the wider donor community, and most importantly, within developing countries themselves. (UN, 2004)

Giffard and van Leuven (2006) argue that the MDGs differ from most international issues that engender tensions and disputes. Conflicts among countries or regions generally get more attention than cooperative endeavours. However, the MDGs transcend national and regional boundaries and have the endorsement of virtually every country. Plans to reduce poverty, hunger, disease, child mortality, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women are particularly relevant to the needs of developing nations. Others are equally relevant to developed nations – such as the prospect of ensuring global environmental sustainability, human rights, security and ultimately world peace.

Each MDG has its own set of targets and benchmarks that provide a measurable way to track its implementation (Busso et al., 2005; UNDP, 2006). Wealthy countries are asked to increase development aid, relieve the debt burden on poor countries and give them fair access to markets and technology. While Alston (2005) argues that, for development communication, the MDGs 'are the most prominent initiative on the global development agenda'; Waisbord (2006: 3) 'cannot help but notice that communication goals are absent. . . . While everyone seems to think that communication is important, apparently it is not crucial enough to make it into the [MDG] list.'

The MDG initiative follows decades of debate over how nations might collaborate on long-term strategies for a global social agenda. However, it has – once again – not seriously considered the important role communication for development could play.

One World, Multiple Cultures

In contrast with the more economical and politically oriented approaches in traditional perspectives on development (modernization and dependency), the central idea in alternative, more culturally oriented versions (multiplicity) is that there is *no universal development model that leads to sustainability at all levels of society and the world*, that development is an integral, multidimensional and dialectic process that can differ from society to society, community to community, context to context.

In other words, each society and community must attempt to delineate its own strategy to sustainable development. This implies that the development problem is a relative problem and that no one society can contend that it is 'developed' in every respect. Therefore, we believe that *the scope and degree of interdependency must be studied in relationship with the content of the concept of development* (developed further in Servaes, 1999, 2002).

Where previous perspectives did not succeed in reconciling economic growth with social justice, an attempt should be made to approach problems of freedom and justice from the relationship of tension between the individual and the society, and limits of growth and sustainability should be seen as inherent to the interaction between society and its physical and cultural ecology.

The World Commission on Culture and Development, chaired by Javier Pérez de Cuéllar (1995), started from similar assumptions. It argued that development divorced from its human or cultural context is growth without a soul. This means that culture cannot ultimately be reduced to a subsidiary position as a mere promoter of economic

growth. The report goes on by arguing that 'governments cannot determine a people's culture: indeed, they are partly determined by it' (de Cuéllar, 1995: 15).

The basic principle should be:

... the fostering of respect for all cultures whose values are tolerant of others. Respect goes beyond tolerance and implies a positive attitude to other people and a rejoicing in their culture. Social peace is necessary for human development: in turn it requires that differences between cultures be regarded not as something alien and unacceptable or hateful, but as experiments in ways of living together that contain valuable lessons and information for all. (de Cuéllar, 1995: 25)

More is at stake here than attitudes. It is also a question of *power*. Policy-makers cannot legislate respect, nor can they coerce people to behave respectfully. But they can enshrine cultural freedom as one of the pillars on which the state is founded.

Pérez de Cuéllar therefore advocates the principle of cultural freedom. *Cultural freedom* is rather special. It differs from other forms of freedom in a number of ways. First, most freedoms refer to the individual. Cultural freedom, in contrast, is a collective freedom. It is the condition for individual freedom to flourish. Second, cultural freedom, properly interpreted, is a guarantee of freedom as a whole. It protects not only the collectivity but also the rights of every individual within it. Third, cultural freedom, by protecting alternative ways of living, encourages creativity, experimentation and diversity, the very essentials of human development. Finally, freedom is central to culture, and in particular the freedom to decide what we have reason to value, and what lives we have reason to seek. 'One of the most basic needs is to be left free to define our own basic needs' (de Cuéllar, 1995: 26).

The *Human Development Report 2004* advocated the principle of *cultural liberty in today's diverse world* for similar reasons: 'The central issue in cultural liberty is the capability of people to live as they would choose, with adequate opportunity to consider other options' (UNDP, 2004: 17).

The same set of principles and values was adopted in the *United Nations Millennium Declaration* (UN, 2000) as well:

- *Freedom*: Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assures these rights.
- *Equality*: No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.
- *Solidarity*: Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.
- *Tolerance*: Human beings must respect one other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted.

- *Respect for nature:* Prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the precepts of sustainable development. Only in this way can the immeasurable riches provided to us by nature be preserved and passed on to our descendants. The current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption must be changed in the interest of our future welfare and that of our descendants.
- *Shared responsibility:* Responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development, as well as threats to international peace and security, must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally. As the most universal and most representative organization in the world, the UN must play the central role.

UN Agencies: Differing Perspectives, Conflicting Outcomes?

In the UN system, conflicts seldom concern the MDGs as such, but rather the means of achieving them. These differences of opinion about priorities, and about how much and to whom development aid or assistance should be directed, could be explained by critically analysing the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions underlying the general perspectives in the communication for development field.

The aforementioned theoretical changes in the perspective on development communication (modernization, dependency, multiplicity), have also reached the level of policy-makers. As a result, different methodologies and terminologies have evolved, which often make it difficult for agencies, even though they share a common commitment to the overall goals of development communication, to identify common ground, arrive at a full understanding of each other's objectives, or to cooperate effectively in operational projects. Consequently, it is difficult for development organizations in general and UN agencies in particular to reach a common approach and strategy. (Most of these theories and their implications for policy-making and planning have been further elaborated and explained in Servaes, 1999, 2002.)

Let's exemplify this argument further on three levels: (1) the difference between a top-down and a bottom-up model of communication for development, (2) different communication for development strategies used by UN agencies, and (3) the role and place of different interpersonal and communication media in communication for development approaches.

Diffusion (Top-Down) vs Participation (Bottom-Up)

The communication media are, in the context of development, generally used to support development initiatives by the dissemination of messages that encourage the public to support development-oriented projects. Although development strategies in developing countries diverge widely, the usual pattern for broadcasting and the press has been predominantly the same: informing the population about projects, illustrating the advantages of these projects, and recommending that they

be supported (Ronning and Orgeret, 2006). A typical example of such a strategy is situated in the area of family planning, where communication means like posters, pamphlets, radio and television attempt to persuade the public to accept birth control methods. Similar strategies are used in campaigns regarding health and nutrition, agricultural projects, education and so on.

This model sees the communication process mainly as a message going from a sender to a receiver. This hierarchic view of communication can be summarized in Laswell's classic formula, – 'Who says What through Which channel to Whom with What effect?' – and dates back to (mainly American) research on campaigns and diffusions in the late 1940s and 1950s.

The late American scholar Everett Rogers (1962) is said to be the person who introduced this diffusion theory in the context of development. Modernization is here conceived as a process of diffusion whereby individuals move from a traditional way of life to a different, more technically developed and more rapidly changing way of life. Building primarily on sociological research in agrarian societies, Rogers stressed the adoption and diffusion processes of cultural innovation. This approach is therefore concerned with the *process of diffusion and adoption of innovations* in a more systematic and planned way. Mass media are important in spreading awareness of new possibilities and practices, but at the stage where decisions are being made about whether to adopt or not to adopt, interpersonal communication is far more likely to be influential. Therefore, the general conclusion of this line of thought is that *mass communication is less likely than personal influence to have a direct effect on social behaviour*.

Newer perspectives on development communication claim that this is a limited view of development communication. They argue that this diffusion model is a vertical or one-way perspective on communication, and that development will accelerate mainly through active involvement in the process of the communication itself. Research has shown that, while groups of the public can obtain information from impersonal sources like radio and television, this information has relatively little effect on behavioural changes. And development envisions precisely such change. Similar research has led to the conclusion that more is learned from interpersonal contacts and from mass communication techniques that are based on them. On the lowest level, before people can discuss and resolve problems, they must be informed of the facts, information that the media provide nationally as well as regionally and locally. At the same time, the public, if the media are sufficiently accessible, can make its information needs known.

Communication theories such as the 'diffusion of innovations', the 'two-step flow' or the 'extension' approaches are quite congruent with the above modernization theory. The elitist, *vertical or top-down orientation* of the diffusion model is obvious.

The *participatory model*, on the other hand, incorporates the concepts in the framework of multiplicity (Servaes, 1999). It stresses the importance of cultural identity of local communities and of *democratization and participation at all levels* – international, national, local and individual. It points to a strategy, not merely inclusive of, but largely emanating from, the traditional 'receivers'. Paulo Freire

(1983: 76) refers to this as the right of all people to individually and collectively speak their word:

This is not the privilege of some few men, but the right of every [wo]man. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone – nor can he say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.

In order to share information, knowledge, trust, commitment and a right attitude in development projects, participation is very important in any decision-making process for development. Therefore, the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, chaired by the late Sean MacBride, argued that

. . . this calls for a new attitude for overcoming stereotyped thinking and to promote more understanding of diversity and plurality, with full respect for the dignity and equality of peoples living in different conditions and acting in different ways. (MacBride, 1980: 254)

In other words, this model stresses reciprocal collaboration throughout all levels of participation.

Also, these newer approaches argue, the *point of departure must be the community*. It is at the community level that the problems of living conditions are discussed, and interactions with other communities are elicited. The most developed form of participation is *self-management*. This principle implies the right to participation in the planning and production of media content. However, not everyone wants to or must be involved in its practical implementation. More important is that participation is made possible in the decision-making regarding the subjects treated in the messages and regarding the selection procedures. One of the fundamental hindrances to the decision to adopt the participation strategy is that it threatens existing hierarchies. Nevertheless, participation does not imply that there is no longer a role for development specialists, planners and institutional leaders. It only means that the viewpoint of the local groups of the public is considered before the resources for development projects are allocated and distributed, and that suggestions for changes in the policy are taken into consideration (Mozammel and Schechter, 2005).

Different Communication for Development Strategies Used by UN Agencies

In addition, UN agencies deploy different elements of communication strategies because they adhere to different mandates, objectives and methods. Distinct development communication approaches and communication means used can be identified within organizations working at distinct societal and geographic levels. Some of these approaches can be grouped together under the heading of the diffusion model described earlier, others under the participatory model. As most often no proper ontological or epistemological assumptions are considered, many approaches contain references to both diffusionist and participatory perspectives in obvious contradictory and illogical ways. Adam Rogers, head of Communications and Information at the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), aptly summarizes it as 'Participatory diffusion or semantic confusion':

Many development practitioners are avoiding the semantic debates outlined above in order to harness the benefits of both approaches. For them, what is most important is not what an approach is called, the origins of an idea or how it is communicated. What is critical is that we find the most effective and efficient tools to achieve the noble objectives outlined in the Millennium Declaration. (Rogers, 2005b: 183–4)

Since the so-called 'top-down' approaches have fallen out of grace in the highly political development aid community, many statements and reports are now advocating 'bottom-up' approaches with references to participation, empowerment and providing 'a voice for the voiceless'. Hardly anybody seems to be concerned about the implicit contradictions these forms of 'hybridity' pose at both theoretical and applied levels.

For instance, the Rome Consensus agreed at the World Congress on Communication for Development (Rome, 25–7 October 2006) states that:

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. (emphasis added) (at: www.devcomm-congress.org/worldbank/macro/2.asp)

However, major aspects of many projects and programmes currently being promoted and implemented are nothing but 'public relations or corporate communication' wrapped in participatory diffusion rhetoric.

The major approaches could be identified as follows (for more details, see Colle, 2002; FAO, 2004; FAO et al., 2004; Harvey, 2005; Jacobson and Servaes, 1999; Mayo and Servaes, 1994; Mefalopulos and Kamlongera, 2004; Oepen, 2006; Rogers, 2005a; Servaes, 2002, 2007; Servaes and Malikhao, 2004):

Extension/Diffusion of Innovations as a Development Communication Approach

The extension/diffusion of innovation approach is based on the modernization paradigm and Ev Rogers' diffusion theory. Extension is concerned with the staged process of technology transfer in a top-down fashion from researchers/experts (or other producers of innovations) to potential users of these research results. The conventional scope of extension remains in the agricultural field but the contemporary one has broadened to a wide range of subjects such as environmental issues, small business enterprise training and technology transfer. Therefore, the clientele served can be urban people as well. *This approach is to inform the audience or to persuade a behavioural change in a predetermined way.*

Contemporary variations re-examine the messages, the needs of the audience, the initial knowledge of the audience and the agenda-setting between the researchers and the farmers/clientele.

Network Development and Documentation

The dominant approach requires networking through computerized satellite telecommunication links or the Internet as a basic infrastructure. The provision of analytical and contextualized flows of information regarding development events and issues through telecommunication services or the Internet are designed, implemented and researched to support the process of development.

In news reporting this kind of networking allows journalists from the global South to voice their views and exchange news events from their perspectives to counter-balance the mainstream traffic of data and information flows from the North. Not only does this approach allow the peripheral-to-centre flow in the world system context, it also supports those in the peripheral-to-centre flow within the peripheral arenas themselves. New actors are thus identified, such as women, rural people and children in the developing world. This approach could contribute to interesting spin-offs, such as online training programmes, distance education, information exchange and the establishment of alternative networks.

ICTs for Development

Information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as computer and telecommunication technology, especially the Internet, are used to bridge the information and knowledge divide between the haves and the have-nots. Having access to the digital highways helps improve access to education opportunities, increase transparency and efficiency in government services, enhance direct participation from the 'used-to-be-silent public' in the democratic process, increase trade and marketing opportunities, enhance community empowerment by giving a voice to voiceless groups (e.g. women) and vulnerable groups, such as those who live with HIV/AIDS, create networking and income opportunities for women, access to medical information for isolated communities and increase new employment opportunities.

In developing countries, the local appropriation of ICTs is a *telecentre or multimedia community centre* consisting of desktop publishing, community newspapers, sales or rentals of audio and videocassettes and DVDs, book lending, photocopying, faxing and telephone services. Access to the Internet and World Wide Web can be optional. The use of the mobile and satellite telephony can help small entrepreneurs and rural farmers get access to information needed to improve their livelihood.

ICTs can be powerful tools for sharing information, but they often cannot solve the development problems caused by the underlying social, economic and political issues, nor can they change the existing power structures as the information available is not necessarily knowledge. In order to become knowledge, the information has to make sense to the people who receive this information (Gerster and Zimmermann, 2005).

Training/Education and Capacity Building/Strengthening

In cooperation with local training and development centres and universities, vocational and follow-up training systems are developed, implemented and evaluated.

This could be training for agency personnel and technicians, as well as the training of professional groups of journalists or development communicators. To improve the quality of output and bilateral communication flows, exchange programmes and networking are being developed. Communication manuals written by experts from first and third world countries serve as a guideline for scriptwriters, journalists and educational radio workers. These handbooks and multi-media kits (both in hardcopy or digital) are often the outcome of workshops and conferences held with local experts and practitioners.

Social Marketing

Social marketing is the application of commercial marketing techniques to solve social problems. It is also a multidisciplinary approach because it concerns education, community development, psychology and communication. Roy Colle stated that it is 'a process that assumes that what made McDonald's and Coca-Cola a world class success can also have a dramatic impact on the problems of high blood pressure, AIDS, child mortality in developing nations, and other circumstances related to patterns of behavior' (Colle, 2002: 51–2).

The process involves the planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes to persuade the acceptance of social ideas. The basic elements of the process lie on *product, price, place, and promotion* (Kotler and Dubois, 1994). The 'product' concept may be an object, idea or behavioural change in a favourable way. The 'price' concept is comparable to that of the commercial sector but it is conceived in social cost terms, such as missed opportunities, deviation from the established cultural norm, etc. 'Place' refers to the channels through which the ideas or the product will be transmitted. 'Promotion' refers to the use of mediated or interpersonal communication to make the product known among the audience or target groups.

Social marketers commit themselves to people's health and well-being; are not profit-oriented and are seeking a larger market share than the commercial marketers.

Edutainment (EE)

Entertainment education (EE) or the edutainment approach is a *hybrid* of participatory communication strategies and the diffusion model of communication. It combines the attraction of entertainment with educational messages to help educate, inform and encourage behaviour change to achieve development and social progress. This approach can employ traditional or indigenous media such as puppet shows, music and dance to promote issues in healthcare, literacy programmes, environmental protection and introducing agricultural practices.

These forms of communication can be integrated with electronic media such as radio, television, video and audiocassettes. The important point is that the programmes are produced locally to appeal to the local audience.

Another offshoot of this approach is applying social marketing strategies to help embed the development issues in melodramatic soap operas for radio and television,

which use real or fictional 'social models' to promote changes in lifestyles. These programmes are adapted to local cultural contexts and integrate entertainment with awareness raising and education. It is often used in the raising of awareness in complex issues such as HIV/AIDS. It brings particular health issues such as sexual practices in a private manner to people's home via the television screen.

Health Communication

The best representative of the health communication approach is the World Health Organization (WHO, 2003). In the past, WHO tended to employ development communication strategies based on the *social marketing approach and diffusion theory*. Current projects are more centred on bottom-up, grass-roots and *participatory models of communication in a mixed media approach*.

Three main strategies are being employed in this new approach:

1. *Advocacy*: Advocacy aims to foster public policies that are supportive of health such as the provision of biomedical care for treating illness, and prevention such as immunization, safe water and sanitation, maternal and child health and promoting of healthy lifestyles. Mass media and traditional media can play a strong advocacy role in creating public awareness and in bringing about action for health, and often target decision-makers as well as interest groups who in turn press for suitable policies. The effectiveness of their advocacy role, however, depends on the freedom the media enjoy and the influence they carry with the national political system and the public.
2. *Empowerment*: This strategy emphasizes the role of the community members in planning and managing their own healthcare. Furthermore, there has been increasing realization that knowledge alone is not enough for behavioural change; empowering people aims not only at fostering healthy lifestyles but also at enabling them to mobilize social forces and to create conditions including health supportive public policies and responsive systems, that are conducive to healthy living.
3. *Social support*: Since acceptance of new practices and favourable behavioural change need social approval, there is a need for building alliances between and networking with the many groups and agencies that work for and influence health and welfare. WHO organizes activities to train media professionals in health and in health education by running health promotion campaigns in all regions, and workshops at all levels and intensive courses to improve the planning and production of mass media programmes on priority health development subjects. WHO, furthermore, collaborates with UNESCO, UNICEF and other organizations on information exchange.

In other words, this new paradigm for health is *people-oriented*. A bottom-up process that pays due attention to the individual, the family and the community, but especially to the underprivileged and those who are at risk, such as women and children and the elderly.

Social Mobilization

Social mobilization, an approach associated with UNICEF, is a process of bringing together all feasible and practical *intersectoral* social partners and allies to determine felt needs and to raise awareness of, and demand for, a particular development objective. It involves enlisting the participation of all actors, including institutions, groups, networks and communities, in identifying, raising and managing human and material resources, thereby increasing and strengthening *self-reliance* and sustainability of achievements. It is a planned process that relies heavily on communication.

At the policy level, advocacy is used to assure the high level of public commitment necessary to undertake action by fostering a knowledgeable and supportive environment for decision-making, as well as the allocation of adequate resources to attain the campaign's goals and objectives.

At the grass-roots level, the primary aim is to inform and motivate community members through multiple channels, and to sustain the latter's active participation.

Information, Education and Communication (IEC)

For several decades, IEC has been associated with *population and family planning* programmes around the world. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) was among the first to use the term IEC, in 1969, in labelling its communication activities. Specifically, IEC has referred most frequently to the use of information, education and communication to promote adoption of contraceptives or other practices to limit births.

The *information* component brings facts and issues to the attention of an audience in order to stimulate discussion. It also concerns the technical and statistical aspects of development. Population information programme strategies in the future will be geared towards improving databases and research, linking population to environmental and other development issues, identifying the role of women in population and development, reiterating the case for family planning, maintaining media attention and political commitment and applying new technology to population information programmes.

The education component fosters knowledge and thorough understanding of problems and possible solutions. The formal and non-formal education subcomponents are to strengthen human resources by curriculum design and training to sensitize awareness and foster critical thinking of development issues and facilitate life-long educational goals.

The communication component is to influence attitudes, disseminate knowledge and to bring about a desired and voluntary change in behaviour.

In 1994, the IEC approach was linked to the concept of *reproductive health*. The focus on the use of condoms in males shifted to a focus on gender inequality, as males often decide on behalf of women. IEC has become closely tied with advocacy in developing reproductive health communication strategies and in other development communication contexts.

Institution Building

The institution-building approach provides developing nations with organizations, skills and facilities to carry out development communication. There are many national and international institutions that use this approach, for instance the Ford Foundation, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Canadian government. However, UNESCO is the UN agency most closely associated with this approach.

For the Ford Foundation and FAO, institution building took place at the G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology in Uttar Pradesh state in India in the late 1960s and 1980s respectively. The work consisted of both training staff abroad to upgrade communication competence and providing facilities for the university to produce radio programmes and other resources for reaching the farm and rural population. In the 1970s, USAID assisted the Guatemalan government in building two radio stations that were dedicated to supporting agricultural, nutrition and health activities in rural communities. In the 1980s, the Canadian government supported Indonesia to institutionalize special units in most major broadcast stations that were especially focused on development issues.

UNESCO has been one of the most consistent agencies in supporting institution building for development communication. The organization's former assistant director-general, Alan Hancock, explains the work of UNESCO as follows:

Some of the earliest UNESCO programmes emphasized professional training (initially in film, then in radio and television), following a model of basic training at local and national levels, intermediate skills training at regional levels, and advanced training through overseas attachments and study tours. The tradition is still very strong, although it has been modified over the years by a rising emphasis on community-based media practice, and the use of adapted, or appropriate media technologies. (Hancock, 2000: 62)

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)

Development communicators work to bring about change in the behaviour of people reached in the projects they undertake. Knowledge and attitude are internal factors that affect how human beings act. There are also other internal factors such as perceived social pressure/norms, gender, etc. An *enabling environment* such as the education system, policy and legislation, cultural factors, service provision, religion, sociopolitical factors, physical environment and organizational environment can also influence the knowledge and attitudes of the target groups.

Knowledge is internalized learning based on scientific facts, experiences and/or traditional beliefs. Experience shows that knowledge is necessary but not sufficient to produce behaviour change, which only occurs when perceptions, motivation, skills and the social environment also interact.

Attitudes in this perspective are feelings, opinions or values that an individual holds about a particular issue, problem or concern.

Development Support Communication (DSC)

The development support communication (DSC) approach is the systematic utilization of appropriate communication channels and techniques to increase people's participation in development and to inform, motivate and train rural populations, mainly at the grass-roots level.

This concept is a central one in FAO's approach to communication for development. The DSC branch was a subprogramme within FAO's Rural Development Programme. It employed the so-called DSC process model:

- Needs assessment/information gathering;
- Decision-making/strategy development;
- Implementation;
- Evaluation.

It emphasizes a multi-media approach, especially the integration of traditional and popular media, and campaign strategies.

There are two major lines of action. A majority of DSC field interventions still deal with communication components that support a variety of rural development, but increasingly DSC operations have become stand-alone projects. A new line is the support to national institutions in an effort to build in-country capacity to deal with all aspects of communication for development: from policy advice to appropriate communication research, from the definition of national communication policies and strategies, to the development of multi-media approaches and the choice of culture-specific media mixes.

HIV/AIDS Community Approach

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is cause and consequence of underdevelopment. For the past three decades of its existence, there appears to be growing consensus that focusing on the risky behaviours of individuals is insufficient when not taking into account the social determinants and deep-seated inequalities driving the epidemic. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) framework was published in December 1999 following an intensive consultation process in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Its conclusions were that:

- The simple, linear relationship between individual knowledge and action, which underpinned many earlier interventions, does not take into account the variation among the political, socioeconomic and cultural contexts that prevail in the regions.
- External decision-making processes that cater to rigid, narrowly focused and short-term interests tend to overlook the benefits of long-term, internally derived, broad-based solutions.
- There is an assumption that decisions about HIV/AIDS prevention are based on rational, volitional thinking with no regard for more true-to-life emotional responses to engaging in sexual behaviour.

- There is an assumption that creating awareness through media campaigns will necessarily lead to behaviour change.
- There is an assumption that a simple strategy designed to trigger a once-in-a-lifetime behaviour, such as immunization, would be adequate for changing and maintaining complex, life-long behaviours, such as consistent condom use.
- There is a nearly exclusive focus on condom promotion to the exclusion of the need to address the importance and centrality of social contexts, including government policy, socioeconomic status, culture, gender relations and spirituality.
- Approaches based on traditional family planning and population programme strategies tend to target HIV/AIDS prevention towards women, so that women, rather than men, are encouraged to initiate the use of condoms.

UNAIDS identified five interrelated factors in communications for HIV/AIDS preventative health behaviour: government policy, socioeconomic status, culture, gender relations and spirituality. These domains formed the basis of *a new framework* that could be used as a flexible guide in the development of HIV/AIDS communication interventions. Individual health behaviour is recognized as a component of this set of domains, rather than primary focus of health behaviour change. The UNAIDS/OCHCR (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) 2002 guidelines stress the importance of 'coordinated, participatory, transparent and accountable approaches' (UNAIDS, 2006). They emphasize that community consultation occurs in all phases of HIV/AIDS policy design, programme implementation and evaluation as well as protection for civic society and community groups. The importance of HIV information is recognized, with 'adequate HIV prevention and care information' presented as a human rights issue.

Community Participation

Communication for development rests on the premise that successful sustainable development calls for the conscious and active participation of the intended beneficiaries at every stage of the development process; for in the final analysis, development cannot take place without changes in attitudes and behaviour among all the people concerned. Participation involves the more equitable sharing of both political and economic power, which often decreases the advantage of certain groups. Structural change involves the redistribution of power.

Media used in participatory communication are among other things: interactive film and video, community radio and newspapers. The main theme is empowering people to make their own decisions. The *conscientization approach* of Freire (1983) showed how people will galvanize themselves into action to address their priority problems.

However, 'there are no panaceas in development. Also there are many failures that prevent real progress. . . . Success can only come with people collaborating on both the organizational and beneficiary sides' (McAnany, 2006: 22).

The Role and Place of Different Interpersonal and Communication Media in Communication for Development Approaches

The Eighth Roundtable summarized communication for development approaches under three headings: (1) behaviour change communication, (2) communication for social change and (3) advocacy communication (UNFPA et al., 2001).

We have argued that a distinction at five levels would be more appropriate (Servaes, 2005):

1. Behaviour change communication (BCC; emphasis on interpersonal communication);
2. Mass communication (MC; mix of community media, mass media and ICTs);
3. Advocacy communication (AC; mix of interpersonal and/or mass communication);
4. Participatory communication (PC; emphasis on interpersonal communication and community media); and
5. Communication for structural and sustainable social change (CSC; mix of interpersonal communication, participatory communication and mass communication).

For general definitions and assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of interpersonal communication and mass communication, see Knapp and Daly (2002), McKee et. al. (2000) or McQuail (2005).

At each level, different perspectives on the role and place of information and communication for development may apply. No single medium is better than any other. Often multi-media approaches are considered the most effective. However, change is seldom the result of exposure to media alone. Each type of media has to be assessed in its specific cultural context, and has its strengths and weaknesses.

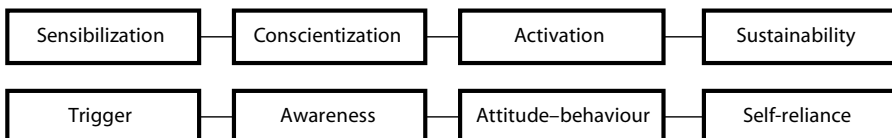
Therefore, each type should be assessed on a case-by-case basis: interpersonal communication vs mass media use; 'old' vs 'new' media; the role and place of community media; the role and impact of ICTs and so on.

At each of the five levels identified above, the two staged processes shown in Figure 1 have to be addressed in parallel ways.

Behaviour change communication is mainly concerned with short-term individual changes in attitudes and behaviour. It can be further subdivided into perspectives that explain *individual behaviour*, *interpersonal behaviour* and *community or societal behaviour*.

Behavioural change communication (BCC), mass communication (MC) and advocacy communication (AC), though useful in themselves, will not be able to

FIGURE 1



create sustainable development. Therefore, participatory communication (PC) and communication for structural and sustainable social change (CSC) are more concerned with long-term sustained community change at different levels of society. Sustainable social change can only be achieved in combination with and incorporating aspects of the wider environment that influences (and constrains) structural and sustainable change. These aspects include: structural and conjunctural factors (e.g. history, migration, conflicts); policy and legislation; service provision; education systems; institutional and organizational factors (e.g. bureaucracy, corruption); cultural factors (e.g. religion, norms and values); sociodemographic factors (e.g. ethnicity, class); sociopolitical factors; socioeconomic factors; and the physical environment.

Advocacy seems to be a key action word in the nowadays development discourse. However, there is no consensus on a definition of advocacy or the process of advocating. 'The key point is that advocacy seeks to increase the power of people and groups and to make institutions more responsive to human needs' (Wallack et al., 1993: 28). Advocates are usually 'issue' or 'programme' oriented and do not often think in terms of an ongoing process of social change. The resolution of an issue or the initiation of a programme are ends in themselves. Thus the primary aim of advocacy is to foster public policies that are supportive to the solution of an issue or programme. Since public policies must be viewed as an integral part of the social and economic development process, the kind of advocacy we would like to put forward is that which is participatory. The focus in this approach is on 'listening' and 'cooperation' rather than on 'telling what to do' and presumes a dynamic two-way approach towards communication.

Therefore, a general working definition of advocacy might be:

Advocacy for development is a combination of social actions designed to gain political commitment, policy support, social acceptance and systems support for a particular goal or programme. It involves collecting and structuring information into a persuasive case; communicating the case to decision-makers and other potential supporters, including the public, through various interpersonal and media channels; and stimulating actions by social institutions, stakeholders and policy-makers in support of the goal or programme. (Servaes, 1992: 2)

The communication media are critical in creating awareness, generating public interest and demand, placing the issue on the public agenda and building social support. They can play two kinds of advocacy roles: (1) they can support development initiatives by the dissemination of messages that encourage the public to support development-oriented projects; and (2) they can provide the decision-makers with the necessary information and feedback needed to reach a decision. Policy-makers usually respond to popular appeal, to pressure groups and to their own social network of policy- and decision-makers. Therefore, advocacy, political commitment and supportive policies are often themselves a product of social support systems and empowerment of people. *Advocacy should therefore be viewed in conjunction with social support and empowerment strategies* (for more details, see Servaes, 2000).

In other words, it should be emphasized once again that any of the communication for development approaches described here have to be carefully assessed for each specific context and particular cultural environment.

Policy Recommendations

The observations we have made in this article imply a number of policy consequences, which are further clarified in the following list, which builds, adapts and adopts recommendations made by others at a number of meetings and conferences (see, *inter alia*, CFSC et al., 2004; DFID et al., 2006; Servaes, 2006; UNDP, 2006; UNESCO, 2003).

General

- Communication for development is a multifaceted, multidimensional and participatory process through which people are empowered to control their own destinies. As such, it is vital that it not be only a key operational component of any development project or donor-funded programme, but must also be a mandatory consideration in the upstream design, planning and needs assessment documentation of governments, donors, implementing agencies and consultants.
- The MDGs should be addressed and assessed from a people's perspective. It is therefore essential to start from the perspective of local communities and to cooperate with organizations (UN, governmental, NGOs, the public and the private sector and civil society) that have developed a trust within a community.
- Culture is central to development and deserves greater emphasis in communication for development programmes.
- Policy-makers and practitioners alike should recognize that communication is a process, not a product or a set of technologies. It includes formal (e.g. campaigns) and informal (e.g. community participation), direct (e.g. media exposure) and indirect (e.g. communication in social networks) forms of communication.
- Communication must be seen as an essential element of every development project, applied in different ways and levels according to the needs and characteristics of the programme.
- Governments, donors and development agencies should require the incorporation of a communication needs assessment in any development initiative (and eventually devote a specific percentage of the budget to this purpose, e.g. 1 percent).

Context

Donor Coordination

Coordination between and among donors is vital in ensuring that communication for development initiatives, which often involve multiple sectors and partners, do not implement overlapping or redundant strategies.

Legal/Supportive Frameworks

Support for the furtherance of people-centred aid programmes will be better enhanced when national governments implement legal and supportive frameworks favouring the right to freedom of expression and the emergence of independent and pluralistic information and communication systems.

Policy/Regulations

While localization of development communication programmes is a desirable objective, policies should also emphasize broader implementation in scale in order to achieve both macro- and micro-level effects.

Institutional

Structure

Donors and funding agencies should invest in the development of human and technical structures, resources and capacities for development communication activities within implementing organizations and institutions. This investment should include, where feasible, the establishment of dedicated research, design, monitoring and production units, staffed and equipped to support development for communication and social change programmes. Continuous skills-based competency training for professionals, managers and practitioners is essential.

Training Initiatives (Capacity Strengthening)

- Training initiatives should be fostered in developing countries and would build on existing experiences, and materials for communication for development should be developed, regularly updated and shared.
- An emphasis on participatory development communication should be considered by universities and training institutions as a subject for integration into existing human development related curricula.
- Existing staff in development projects at all levels (professional, operational, policy and decision-making) should be given opportunities to comprehensively upgrade and improve their communication for development skills.

Research/Monitoring/Evaluation

- Communication monitoring and evaluation indicators must be an integral part of every project planning process at the upstream design stage.
- Similarly, within the terms of reference of any assistance programme, there is a need for the inclusion of requirements for research on longer-term change, not just short-term effects, and for systematic research to inform programme design.

Financial/Human Resources

Authorities, organizations and funding bodies delivering aid projects and programmes should ensure that an adequate percentage of all budgets are specifically allocated to enabling a communication for development element to be properly resourced and, therefore, comprehensively and successfully delivered.

Institutional Frameworks

Partnerships between policy-makers, practitioners, stakeholders and academics need to be fostered at all levels in order to facilitate dialogue about the needs, perspectives and resources allocated to development communication programmes. Such linkages would also raise the overall profile of the discipline.

Project/Programme Based

Time Frame

Donors should consider committing their project and programme resources on a longer-term basis (minimum five to 10 years) thus enhancing sustainability and enabling predesignated capacity-building benchmarks and goals to be achieved.

Appropriate Use of Communication Technologies

Communication media and processes should be utilized to facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding among stakeholder groups, and give visibility and voice to the poor, marginalized and indigenous, while the implementation capacity of implementing groups and individuals needs to be enhanced to ensure sophisticated and strategic decision-making in the uses of communication.

Give Visibility to the Poor, Marginalized and Indigenous

- Relevant communications technologies, along with appropriate training opportunities, should be accessible by marginalized groups, thus furthering their ability to interact with, and play an active role in, communication and development processes affecting themselves and their communities.
- Communities must be involved as key partners in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes in order to increase the relevance and appropriateness of communication efforts, as well as strengthening learning and capacity building.

An Academic/Research Perspective

- Communication for development advocates and scholars should commit themselves to a deeper engagement with policy-makers to ensure that communication is recognized as a central component in all development initiatives. This will involve a systematic, coordinated effort to establish a clear, accessible body of evidence drawn from current best practice.
- Universities are a significant knowledge, information and training resource for communities. Regional institutions need to be identified to strengthen into centres of expertise and technical support, including establishing a core curriculum, strengthening the faculty, creating new posts, providing research funds, supporting internships and establishing links with professional organizations. A network

and partnership of specialized research institutions, committed to stimulating and strengthening sustainable capacity for training and quality control in communication for development and social change, is needed.

- Research that addresses the achievement and sustainability of processes and outcomes of communication for development should be encouraged. This requires a participatory approach, a shared framework between development agencies and local stakeholders, and community involvement in design, implementation and dissemination.
- From a research perspective, different kinds of evidence exist for different types of outcomes. The evidence for social structural change (e.g. empowerment, equity, policy change) is largely of the anecdotal or qualitative type, and evidence for individual change (e.g. behaviours including participation, efficacy/self-confidence, gender attitudes) is predominantly quantitative. There is nothing wrong with anecdotal and qualitative evidence, but they invite different inferences. On the other hand, quantitative evidence may provide short-term advice, which is not reliable for long-term or contextualized recommendations. It is possible to quantify higher order changes, but to do so requires methodological approaches that few projects have the time, resources or donor support to undertake.
- Evaluation and impact assessments should include participatory baseline formulations and communication needs assessments. They should also include self-evaluation by the communities themselves and the concept of 'social usefulness'. They should be used to feed back at the policy level. There is a need for effective and convincing evaluation models and data to show evidence of the impact of communication for development. Sustainability indicators based on qualitative dimensions of development need to be emphasized, involving the potential of ICTs to collect feedback interactively. Research should also be reinforced in order to better identify communication needs.
- While many successful small-scale examples of communication for development exist, these need to be scaled up, thus improving practice and policy at every level. A focus on small-scale projects (pilot projects) is acceptable, but evidence-based and properly researched benchmarks need to be set.
- Training initiatives should be focused on collaborative learning in communication for development, encouraging experiential, value-based, culturally sensitive training in participatory communication for development and fostering a community of practice across the regions. In this context, education of journalists and communicators is crucial. Training institutions should be supported in order to ensure that the new generation of journalists and change agents has the commitment to tackle the crucial issues of societies in a professional and relevant way.
- More systematic and strategic fellowship and sponsorship programmes are needed, funded by national and international donor agencies, for scholarships for masters and doctoral-level training to build the cohort of people with development communication competencies.
- To develop and disseminate a better and more robust body of evidence on what works, considerations should be given to:

- Establishing a common set of indicators to be used in the evaluation of programmes that capture impact on participatory processes as well as on outcome measures.
- Improving online archiving of and access to 'grey literature' to better capture the plethora of outcomes descriptions and evidence that remains unpublished.
- Advocating for better editorial standards for published articles and documents.
- Developing a collaborative database or clearinghouse to assemble and assess evidence on social development interventions.

Conclusion

It should be obvious by now that *no all-embracing view on communication for development* is on offer. Neither theory nor strategy has achieved and maintained explanatory dominance. Each of the three development perspectives (modernization, dependency and multiplicity) described in this article and the two communication models (diffusion vs participation) still do find support among academics, policy-makers, international organizations, and the general public.

In general, adopted and updated versions of the ideas upon which the modernization theory is built – economic growth, centralized planning and the belief that underdevelopment is rooted in mainly internal causes that can be solved by external (technological) 'aid' – are still shared by many development agencies and governments. A *revitalized modernization perspective* in which some of the errors of the past are acknowledged and efforts are made to deal in new ways (as outlined in the multiplicity view) remains the dominant perspective in practice but becomes increasingly more difficult to defend in theory. On the other side, while the multiplicity theory is gaining ground in academic spheres, in practice it is still looked upon as a sympathetic though idealistic sideshow.

A variety of theoretical and applied communication for development approaches are available. However, as each case and context is different, none of these has proven completely satisfactory in the field of international development. Therefore, many practitioners find that they can achieve the greatest understanding by combining more than one theory or developing their own conceptual framework. Unfortunately, this often results in blurred and contradictory objectives, designs and perspectives, with claims about results or impact that are often not sustainable under scientific scrutiny.

At a more applied level, several perspectives on communication for development have been adopted and pursued.

1. A first perspective is *communication as a process*, often seen in metaphor as the fabric of society. It is not confined to the media or to messages, but to their interaction in a network of social relationships. By extension, the reception, evaluation and use of media messages, from whatever source, are as important as their means of production and transmission.
2. A second perspective is of *communication media as a mixed system of mass communication and interpersonal channels*, with mutual impact and reinforcement. In other words, the mass media should not be seen in isolation from other conduits.

3. The third focus is related to *intersectoral and interagency* concerns. This view is not confined to information or broadcasting organizations and ministries, but extends to all sectors, and its success in influencing and sustaining development depends to a large extent on the adequacy of mechanisms for integration and coordination. The recent decision to harness the UN system into a common approach on communication for development at the country level is recommendable in principle, but will need to be further clarified in view of the identified conceptual and methodological inconsistencies, as well as its logistical and organizational implications.

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