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### Information and communication technologies for development

## Communication for development programmes in the United Nations system

### Report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/130, including the recommendations of the tenth United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development

#### Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/130.

#### *Summary*

The present report has been prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and is being submitted to the General Assembly at the sixty-third session pursuant to Assembly resolution 50/130, as well as resolution 51/172 which, inter alia stressed the need to support two-way communication systems that enabled dialogue and that allowed communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that related to their development.

The text presents the engagement of United Nations organizations in the implementation of communication for development programmes and inter-agency collaborative mechanisms for effective and integrated follow-up of related actions.

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## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 50/130 the General Assembly recognized the important role of communication for development programmes in the United Nations system in enhancing the transparency of system-wide coordination within the United Nations system and also recognized the need further to facilitate inter-agency cooperation and to maximize the impact of the development programmes. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in accordance with that agency's mandate in the field of communication and with resolution 4.1, adopted by the General Conference at its twenty-eighth session, to report to the Assembly at its fifty-first session on the implementation of the resolution and on a biennial basis thereafter.

2. On the basis of this mandate, this report presents the engagement of United Nations organizations in the implementation of communication for development programmes as well as inter-agency collaborative mechanisms for effective and integrated follow-up of related actions.

## II. Tenth United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development

3. Representatives of the United Nations Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC), as well as academics, practitioners and other experts in the field of communication for development<sup>1</sup> contributed to the review of the existing communication for development coordination arrangement at the tenth United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development. The Round Table was hosted by UNESCO from 12 to 14 February 2007 in Addis Ababa.

4. The tenth Round Table, attended by more than 40 participants, was convened on the theme "Towards a common system approach for harnessing communication for development to achieve the Millennium Development Goals". It focused on practical and achievable interventions around which United Nations system organizations could develop a common approach, strategy and action plan for the implementation of communication for development practice.

5. The objectives of the meeting were to (a) increase inter-agency collaboration at Headquarters and United Nations country team levels, (b) strengthen awareness among United Nations system organizations on ways to measure the impact and effectiveness of communication for development, and (c) introduce mechanisms to harmonize communication for development programming approaches within the United Nations system.

6. The Round Table reiterated that communication for development is critical for the success of the Millennium Development Goals, acknowledged the vital role of the independent and pluralistic media in the process and presented two background

<sup>1</sup> The list of participants is available at: [www.unesco.org/webworld/media\\_development/10th\\_roundtable](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/media_development/10th_roundtable).

papers<sup>2</sup> to articulate that position and to emphasize that higher priority allocation for communication for development is essential for coherent and harmonized actions to take place at country level. The background papers, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNESCO, provided an overview of issues and made suggestions for improved inter-agency coordination at Headquarters and country levels.

7. The participants recognized the United Nations reform initiative, “delivering as one” as an opportunity to: (a) identify capacity gaps; (b) integrate communication for development practice in development planning, particularly through the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF), poverty reduction strategy programmes; and (c) introduce the use of diagnostic tools, such as media development indicators and communication audits in One UN pilot countries.

8. The Round Table took stock of relevant initiatives and activities being implemented by the United Nations system in the following three broad domains:

(a) Communication as governance or participation: amplifying citizen’s voice, enabling public debate and holding Governments to account using the media as an important constituency as well as a conduit for information;

(b) Sector-specific communication: responding to the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals using tailor-made communication approaches;

(c) Information and communications technologies (ICTs): the transformative capacity of ICTs facilitates information access and enables community participation; promotes the creation of enabling policy environments, innovative financing and multi-stakeholder partnerships, which are needed to reap the benefits.

9. Participants observed that the key methodology of communication for development needs assessments is missing from the current United Nations approach, particularly at country level.

10. In the United Nations system, communication in general is often viewed mainly in relation to channelling information downstream to promote specific mandates, methods and policy-related agendas, as well as to build public image and visibility and support for fund-raising.

11. Public information strategies are consolidated through the United Nations Department of Public Information, which has demonstrated growing accomplishment in responding to global issues in support of the Millennium Development Goals and ensuring that the work of the United Nations is known to specific audiences as well as the general public. While this is extremely important for the profile and development objectives of the Organization, it does not necessarily equal communication for development practice, which is participatory communication in support of development programmes focused on social change.

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO and UNDP, “Towards a common United Nations system approach: harnessing communication to achieve the Millennium Development Goals”, background papers prepared for the tenth United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 12-14 February 2007.

12. Systematic and operational linkages between the United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development and the United Nations Communications Group may improve awareness and capacity-building needs about communication for development practice in the United Nations system. It would also help harmonize United Nations programming priorities and communication activities.

13. Similar linkages with the United Nations Development Group may underscore the added value of communication for development in development planning, particularly within United Nations programming exercises, such as CCA/UNDAF. Integrating communication for development in upstream policy-setting will guarantee its consideration throughout United Nations priorities and responses.

14. A triangular relationship between the United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table, the United Nations Communications Group and the United Nations Development Group may lead to consideration for United Nations staff capacity enhancement, a coherent and system-wide communication for development policy and the systematic follow-up of Round Table recommendations at Headquarters and field levels.

15. The general recommendations of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and, in particular, those reached at the tenth United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development are:

(a) To impress upon senior-level decision makers of United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds the importance of prioritizing communication for development principles and methodologies in all programmatic areas, and the need to allocate human, technical and financial resources for this effort;

(b) To advise the heads of respective agencies, programmes and funds to integrate communication for development principles and methodologies into programme and project planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation; to ensure the incorporation of communication for development principles and methodologies, including needs assessments, into CCA/UNDAF guidelines, or equivalent exercises, so as to improve development results;

(c) To call upon the United Nations Resident Coordinator system to ensure greater coherence and coordination of communication for development at the country level;

(d) To establish a formal inter-agency mechanism promoting and enhancing communication for development within the United Nations system.

16. The participants agreed that the eleventh United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development would be co-hosted by UNDP and the World Bank in Washington, D.C.

17. The full text of the Addis Recommendations is found at the following URL: <http://www.unesco.org/webworld/en/10roundtable-recommendations>.

### III. Communication for development in the current United Nations context

18. Communication for development approaches and strategies in the United Nations system are as diverse and wide-ranging as development needs but are guided by General Assembly resolution 50/130 and by the definition provided in General Assembly resolution 51/172 which, inter alia, stressed the need to support two-way communication systems that enabled dialogue and that allowed communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that related to their development.

19. In other words, “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”.<sup>3</sup>

20. United Nations organizations that recognize and practise communication for development utilize its consultative and participatory approach to facilitate programme linkages; increase knowledge and awareness; build community and government human resource capacities; change behaviour and practices; shift attitudes and social norms; enhance self-esteem and self-efficacy in and among communities. The interventions largely benefit grass-roots and marginalized communities but have also been applied to manage change in the face of natural disaster, including epidemics and climate change.

21. Pluralistic media play a pivotal role by facilitating communication for development practice and enlarging two-way information flow from basic interpersonal communication to public discourse, debate and democratic participation, thus enabling the amplification of multiple voices, particularly as cultural values become transformed to adapt to rapidly changing environments.

22. Media capacity has direct implications for the United Nations system, particularly in the context of “delivering as one”, which is a prime opportunity for the introduction of national media development and the engagement of the media not simply as an information conveyor but as a partner in sustainable development.

23. Partnering with the mass media is essential and joint actions could contribute to the strengthening of investigative capacity and disciplinary knowledge among media professionals and institutions considering the impact that such limitations would inflict upon the public, particularly where information is inadequately researched and disseminated in societies challenged by complex development problems, for example, natural resources management, prevention of communicable disease, access to information and basic services.

24. UNESCO, UNDP and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) play a lead role in the implementation of World Summit on the Information Society action lines, which aim to foster greater participation and inclusion of stakeholders in the use of ICTs for development by addressing the digital divide, fostering

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<sup>3</sup> The World Congress on Communication for Development. The Rome Consensus: communication for development: a major pillar for development and change (Final version), January 2007.

enabling environments and building capacities to ensure the widest access to information and communication.

25. In line with the World Summit on the Information Society Geneva Declaration of Principles and Tunis Commitment, United Nations organizations have taken advantage of ICTs to model open-source platforms and communication channels for the enhancement of self-expression and access to information.

26. The platforms are for use by wide-ranging target groups, such as women (Dimitra project/the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), youth (the Voices of Youth/the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), indigenous people (e-Barrio ICT vision/UNDP), media professionals (audio-visual e-platform/UNESCO), rural communities (community e-centres/Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)). The participation of community multimedia centres (UNESCO) in such efforts is encouraged as their numbers continue to increase worldwide, with a total of 130 community multimedia centres introduced in 25 countries benefiting from the integration of radio and telecentre components that are promoting the creation of local content through community participation.

27. Using an open-source philosophy in which everything that is developed is free and can be customized for different user applications, UNICEF is promoting and piloting tools that include a mobile radio station (ROSCO) for use especially during emergencies; rural community Internet access and data collection by mobile phone (RapidSMS), and collaborative workspaces (UNIWIKI) for young people for sharing and creating content that can be accessed through multiple media platforms.<sup>4</sup>

28. However, ICTs can be beneficial only if equitable access to them is ensured through multiplatform and language solutions, appropriate applications and capacity-building. In addition, critical knowledge and analytical tools in media and information literacy can empower media and information users to objectively judge the value and credibility of the information supply.

29. While communication for development practice is used in field-level operations as an essential element of development programmes, for example, for agricultural development, there is concern that instead of using ICTs for technology-driven knowledge management, the transformative capacities of ICTs should be utilized to enhance the amplification of voice and dialogue.

30. The relevant communication for development knowledge and experience that exists within the United Nations system is managed by a small number of agencies and programmes which operate in independent rather than integrated approaches in relation to the mandate they have been entrusted. The terminology assigned to relevant communication approaches is therefore different, but the principle is always focused on leading a constructive dialogue and social change process in favour of improved livelihood conditions.

31. The biennial United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development seeks operational linkages with the United Nations Development Group and the United Nations Communications Group in order to explore the evolution of a mechanism, given the increasing interest of United Nations agencies

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.mepemepe.com/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://www.mepemepe.com/wiki/Main_Page).

in participating in the round tables, as evidenced at a workshop during the seventh annual United Nations Communications Group meeting, where participants expressed their interest in learning more about communication for development through systematic information-sharing and training.

32. The integration of communication for development in national development planning and the use of diagnostic media development indicators for that purpose would ultimately contribute to the creation of enabling environments and enhanced capacity of media professionals to independently and verifiably question the issues that are holding back Member States from meeting the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals.

33. Promoting freedom of expression and universal access to information, strengthening legal and regulatory environments, developing media capacity, raising media professional awareness, and strengthening accessibility of information to vulnerable groups are United Nations-oriented actions that support the enlargement of communication for development practice.

## **IV. Collaborative action among United Nations agencies, programmes and funds**

### **Creating enabling environments and giving voice**

34. This report does not pretend to provide an analysis of the communication for development practice in the United Nations system; rather it suggests that the formation of communication for development linkages within and among different United Nations organizations can reflect positively on programme-related results. A brief attempt is made in the following paragraphs to provide examples that demonstrate inter-agency collaboration using overall themes as benchmarks.

35. Pilot projects to inform poverty reduction strategies and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework with regard to possible ways of bringing the voice of marginalized communities, through media, to the development arena are being conducted by UNDP parallel to the scale-up of community multimedia centres in Africa, supported by UNESCO and its partners.

36. FAO participated in the One UN pilot projects in Albania and Tanzania, where a communication for development component was introduced with the aim of formulating a strategic framework and advisory system for farmer-responsive agricultural research, market orientation, income diversification, environmental protection and climate change adaptation. In Tanzania, the communication for development component stresses the use of gender-sensitive information and communication systems and methodologies for rural communities, participatory rural communication appraisals and the use of rural radio, ICTs and short message service messaging (SMS).

37. Assessment tools have also been developed:

(a) To measure the ability of communities to receive, communicate and act when informed through communication for empowerment exercises (UNDP);

(b) To improve information flows between central Government and local authorities (United Nations Capital Development Fund);



(c) To study media capacities at a national level through the media development indicators, with a view to addressing deficiencies (UNESCO).

38. Sector-specific, ad hoc communication for development practice responds to, for example:

(a) Reconstruction of refugee camps in Lebanon (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA));

(b) Bridging the digital divide and advising rural communities on affordable and appropriate access to information and communications technologies (ESCAP);

(c) Negotiating and disbursing financial resources to 46 national programmes where communication is specified as a key pillar to development and drawing from the experience of the United Nations system in doing so (the World Bank).

### **Survival, development and protection of children and women**

39. A renewed communication for development strategy in support of child survival and development aims to contribute to reducing child mortality by 40 per cent through practising behaviours such as early and exclusive breastfeeding, use of oral rehydration therapy, use of insecticide-treated nets by children and pregnant women, and hand washing at critical times such as before eating, after defecating, after cleaning an infant and before preparing food. The communication for development initiative in support of these key practices is led by UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) with non-governmental organization partners.

40. In Senegal, a community-centred and dialogue-based model has led to the public declaration of abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting in 3,000 out of 5,000 communities, marking a decrease by more than 70 per cent since 2006 compared to a drop of only 25 per cent in villages that did not use the dialogue-based model. The programme has been adapted in Burkina Faso, Djibouti, the Gambia, Guinea and Mali with UNICEF support.

### **Disease prevention: avian influenza**

41. In order to control the spread of avian influenza, in 2006 and 2007 UNICEF, in close collaboration with FAO, WHO, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office of the United Nations System Influenza Coordinator and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), provided support to Governments and civil society partners in 50 countries for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating large-scale communication campaigns. Monitoring data suggests that families engaged in backyard poultry production adopted measures, such as hand washing and thorough cooking of poultry, to protect themselves from the H5N1 virus. However, complex behaviours, such as improved biosecurity and responsive reporting of dead birds was not practised as widely. A medium to long-term communication for development intervention is required to ensure appropriate community practice.

42. In this context, the World Bank advocates a multisectoral approach focusing its role in communication around informing high-level politicians about possible

scenarios and the financial and social costs associated with immediate problems, such as the avian influenza threat. The World Bank helped ministries to create a communications response team and provided financial resources to design, produce and disseminate a variety of media campaigns; to include a multisectoral public response in the national programmes; to facilitate a communication role for the private sector; to train the media in the professional reporting of pandemics; and to secure high visibility for the institutional response.

43. In mid-2007, as a response to demands for strategic policy guidance and technical assistance in animal health communication, FAO established a communication unit based at the Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases in its headquarters to build a critical mass of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) communication specialists, conduct multidisciplinary research for strategy-building and provide technical assistance to strengthen communication capacities and competencies of member States to respond effectively to HPAI. The Communication Unit works closely with UNICEF and WHO. For example, smallholder farmers in rural Cambodia learned about local knowledge and perception of poultry disease in general and avian influenza in particular before involving communities in order to develop better communication strategies for bringing about behaviour change.

## **HIV and AIDS**

44. A United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/FAO project in Cameroon is utilizing communication for development methodologies and tools for behaviour change and community mobilization for reproductive health. Its objectives, among others, are to build the communication capacity of health agents and to raise the awareness of decision makers and the population at large on issues related to reproductive health and HIV and AIDS.

45. Given persistent high rates of HIV and AIDS in Eastern and Southern Africa, UNICEF worked with other United Nations agencies to strengthen communication capacity in 15 countries in the region to support and implement comprehensive prevention strategies for adolescents most at risk. Strategies included campaigns using the mass media, new technologies, community outreach and local networks as platforms for dialogue. The Sara Communication Initiative, a multimedia entertainment-education package focusing on healthy adolescent lifestyles, continued to be used across the region.

46. Sports for development was a vehicle for awareness and change in several countries (Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa and Swaziland) and children's parliaments and youth forums were supported in order to influence HIV and AIDS policies (Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania). Sport is also used as an innovative approach to mainstream sustainability principles and secure social change by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

47. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the capacities of communication professionals to produce and disseminate development messages on specific areas related to the Millennium Development Goals, including HIV and AIDS, poverty reduction, education for sustainable development and science communication were strengthened through training and support to specialized

networks, such as a UNESCO-supported global network of young television producers on HIV and AIDS.

## **Human rights**

48. UNDP in Ukraine has worked with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and IOM to initiate a dialogue with State authorities to address the growth in racist and xenophobic attacks on foreigners, including asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants. Using a rights-based and security-sensitive approach, support was mobilized from embassies and multilateral diplomatic missions, leading to, among other actions, a public repudiation by the President of the trend through the media.

## **Polio eradication**

49. Intensive communication efforts continued in 2006-2008 for polio eradication, especially in India, Nigeria and Pakistan. Each country adopted a unique strategy to reach underserved and hard-to-reach populations, taking into account local socio-economic contexts and cultural factors determining the uptake of oral polio vaccine. Data were collected across population groups to compare coverage rates and resistant households before and after the communication intervention, showing improved trust, increased knowledge and acceptance and proactive seeking of immunization for children. In Nigeria, immunization coverage rates increased in areas where community dialogues were introduced, while households refusing the vaccine decreased. In Pakistan, improved coverage of children was reported in areas with enhanced social mobilization activities to engage women, the primary caregivers, and other decision makers. In India, the number of children immunized in settlement areas with community mobilization committees was consistently higher than in areas where committees did not exist.

50. Communication efforts facilitated by community discussion, household visits, partnership with faith-based networks and the mass media have contributed to an increase in routine immunization coverage from 77 per cent in 2006 to 87 per cent in 2007 in post-conflict Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## **Protecting the earth and our environment**

51. The UNEP Online Access to Research in the Environment has enrolled over 600 institutions from more than 50 developing countries and provides reduced cost access to the latest in scientific research on the environment in partnership with WHO and FAO, Yale University and leading publishers.

52. UNEP is the lead agency for World Environment Day, the United Nations system's principal environmental observance. The theme for 2008, "Kick the CO<sub>2</sub> habit: towards a low carbon economy" focused on solutions, and in particular global efforts to mitigate climate change. UNDP is also producing an interactive public service announcement to drive viewers to a multilingual website on climate change: [www.12simplethings.org](http://www.12simplethings.org).

53. UNDP has used its role as trusted convener to bring together media stakeholders on the anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami to discuss the theme of communicating disasters. Following this gathering, a book presenting a kaleidoscope of perspectives as well as practical advice on how to communicate hazards and disasters was brought together, drawing on rich and varied experiences from the media, development and humanitarian sectors. The tools, technologies and methods vary, but there is consensus that to be effective, communication needs to be two-way, inclusive, participatory and sustained over time. It is not an add-on to other development interventions, but an integral component in its own right.

54. In Lebanon, the UNDP National Awareness Energy Savings Campaign promoted energy efficiency. One of the top advertising agencies developed pro bono the creative concept “Some turn-offs do save” and supervised the production of all media and advertising material. National broadcast and print media were mobilized for free airtime and media space, and ensured nationwide coverage. The campaign saw hundreds of spots broadcast on television and radio stations, billboards across the country, and print advertisement in magazines and newspapers. It was followed by an intensive information campaign detailing the potential out-of-pocket savings to each household and dollar-value savings to the national economy if simple steps were taken in people’s daily routines. The campaign won the prestigious Picasso Citizen’s Award for the most innovative and creative public service advertising in 2006.

55. UNESCO is promoting, among United Nations partners, the use of its model media resource and training kit, Media as partners in education for sustainable development, to initiate dialogue among stakeholders by focusing on key issues in sustainable development, namely climate change, depleting forests and fisheries, fresh water, biodiversity and pollution. The resource and training kit invites journalists and other media professionals to inquire into and investigate relevant changes that are required to accelerate gains for sustainable living. The kit can be translated and adapted to any local context, contains a DVD of films and audio clips and a CD-ROM of relevant information resources and has been discussed with members of the United Nations Inter-agency Committee on the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development.

56. UNDP supports the media and its environment in many innovative ways. In Sierra Leone, it partnered with the United Nations Integrated Office and the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists to create the first-ever media code of conduct, and also supported the creation of the United Nations Media Club, which has enhanced working relations with the media. In Kenya, UNDP has designed a four-year communication for development project which includes mentoring of young journalists, launching of media excellence awards and the development of a curriculum on communication and development for media training institutions.

## **V. Actions undertaken by United Nations agencies, programmes and funds**

### **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

57. FAO provides technical assistance to member countries in the identification and appraisal of communication needs and in the application of appropriate

participatory communication policies, strategies, media and messages to support agricultural and rural development. Communication for development support is given in a range of specialized subjects beyond research and extension, such as the right to food, avian influenza, natural resource management, HIV and AIDS, indigenous peoples' communication and rural livelihoods. Particularly at field level, this support is provided in collaboration with a number of United Nations agencies such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank. An independent external evaluation of FAO made specific reference to communication for development as a technical area which had continued to provide innovative concepts, methodologies and technical assistance for strengthening rural and agricultural communication networks.

58. In recent years, despite diminishing resources, FAO has pioneered a new strategy for communication for development capacity-building that focuses on strengthening the capacities of farmers and indigenous peoples' organizations and advocating for closer interaction between civil society and national development programmes. Regional approaches to capacity-building in communication for development have been promoted through a series of consultations, workshops and web-based platforms<sup>5</sup> which led to experience exchange on the application of communication for development in different contexts,<sup>6</sup> such as the application of communication for development to climate change adaptation, mainly through the Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative which focuses on natural resource management and rural livelihoods.

59. While FAO continues to provide communication for development technical assistance to its Member States, its field-level capacity faces limitations to integrate communication for development in the planning and implementation of programmes such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework/rural development or the FAO national medium-term priority frameworks. In this respect, the wealth of experience and lessons learned that have accumulated through the field programme need to be consolidated and conceptualized for integration into overall development assistance programmes.

## **International Telecommunication Union**

60. The ITU contribution to communication for development is largely shaped through the harmonization of ICT policies and guidelines to strengthen human and institutional capacity through a range of training, education and knowledge-sharing measures, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific island States.

61. The continued development of e-applications and the monitoring of trends and new developments in the information society provide decision makers and stakeholders with a comprehensive view of current telecommunications infrastructure needs and statistics.

<sup>5</sup> Central America: <http://www.comunicacionparaeldesarrollo.org/>; Rural Radio: <http://onda-rural.net/sitio/>.

<sup>6</sup> The results of the consultations are described in FAO. *A compendium of regional perspectives in communication for development* (Rome, 2007).

62. ITU plays an active role in the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, a multi-stakeholder partnership that includes OECD, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the World Bank, the four United Nations regional Commissions (the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), ESCAP, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)) and Eurostat.

63. Some of the notable initiatives launched by ITU to bridge the digital divide include the Global Cybersecurity Agenda, Connect Africa Initiative, as well as portals such as ITU ICT Eye and ITU Global View.

### **United Nations Capital Development Fund**

64. The United Nations Capital Development Fund relies on communication for development initiatives to advance its policy goals of strengthening local government capacity to improve delivery of infrastructure and services, to respond to the needs of local populations and to ensure transparency of decisions and budgets.

65. The Local Governance Support Programme in Timor-Leste, for example, is strengthening and improving information flows between the central Government and local authorities through a variety of communication for development interventions, including support to radio, Internet and print distribution, documentation of best practices and stakeholder engagement. The Programme is supporting initiatives that are helping local assembly members communicate more effectively about the responsibilities of government and to ensure that communities have full access to information about local budget execution. Training on basic communication principles and media relations is organized for members of the local assemblies to encourage greater links with the local and national media and more effective socialization of information on assembly work within communities. The Programme has also increased communications infrastructure at local village offices by installing public information boards for posting public documents.

66. In Ethiopia, where information- and experience-sharing between regions is one of the pillars of a new programme, the United Nations Capital Development Fund has supported the development of a local government manual in the Amharic language on planning and budgeting and has disseminated the manual throughout the country where experience-sharing through field visits is organized from region to region. The programme also seeks to formalize an approach to e-governance and local development by developing new regulations, reviewing existing policies (lessons learned) for their impact and replication on ICT, and including ICT into local government capacity-building.

### **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development**

67. The UNCTAD Communications and Information Unit recently organized training sessions to upgrade the communications capacities of selected civil servants from national administrations of developing countries. The main objective was to provide government officials with techniques that will enable them to communicate to the public at large on trade and development issues. The trainees learned how to

write different information products, such as press releases or web pages, as well as how to organize a communications campaign using the UNCTAD implementation of a specific programme on issues related to World Trade Organization accession as an example.

68. The UNCTAD capacity-building programme, the Virtual Institute on Trade and Development, strengthens university capacities in developing and transition countries to teach and research trade and development issues by (a) facilitating knowledge access using ICTs including for posting research and receiving peer review feedback, (b) helping universities to design and deliver locally relevant academic programmes, and (c) strengthening capacity to generate own knowledge through workshops, round tables, research and a fellowship programme. A particular attention is paid to the relevance of bridging the communication gap between research and policymaking.

69. The Community Empowerment Network is UNCTAD's community-based educational and monitoring tool which combines the techniques of social audit and citizen reports. The Network is an instrument to educate citizens about their rights and obligations and creates linkages between service providers and citizens to ensure an exchange of information and feedback. The Network process uses the community as its unit of analysis, and is focused on monitoring at the local/grass-roots levels. It promotes ownership of development projects, facilitates community monitoring and performance evaluation and is used mostly in rural areas. The Network solicits user perceptions on quality, efficiency and transparency, and generates direct feedback mechanisms between providers and users, building local knowledge and capacity, and strengthening citizen voice and community empowerment.

## **United Nations Development Programme**

70. UNDP addresses communication for development issues through the four pillars of its Access to Information work: strengthening legal/regulatory environments, developing capacity, raising awareness, and strengthening communication mechanisms available to vulnerable groups. Its approach to communication for development is rooted in its poverty reduction mandate which reflects a specific commitment to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and the broader objectives of the Millennium Declaration.

71. UNDP has recently led innovative developments in the fourth pillar in particular. The Oslo Governance Centre is piloting the use of communication for empowerment to help communities assess their capacity to receive information and, crucially, to communicate and act upon this information. In partnership with the Communication for Social Change Consortium and with funding from the United Nations Democracy Fund, this approach has so far been piloted at community level in Madagascar and Mozambique, where targeted activities will address the specific challenges identified in the audits. This exercise involves several United Nations agencies, government institutions and civil society organizations.

72. UNDP integrates communication for development across its practice areas, working on communication issues as a part of its programming, for example, capacity development support to elections. Before the 2007 elections in Sierra

Leone, it engaged the national media as a watchdog and to facilitate public debate on the electoral process. UNDP supported sensitization activities directed to the police and security forces, the media and the public prior to the 2007 legislative elections in Togo and a 13-episode anti-corruption television drama series entitled “Scam Files” produced by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commissions in Nigeria. In the Niger, UNDP contributed to the production of a music album highlighting the problem of corruption. To improve public awareness of the Millennium Development Goals, UNDP televised debates in Togo and trained young journalists in the Syrian Arab Republic. In Lebanon, the National Awareness Energy Savings Campaign promoted energy efficiency, mobilizing national broadcast and print media for free airtime and media space.

73. UNDP often takes advantage of specific events to provide entry points. It brought together media stakeholders on the anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami to discuss communicating disasters. It also leveraged the Africa Governance Forum to improve understanding by private sector leaders and journalists of good governance issues.

## **United Nations Environment Programme**

74. UNEP launched the Climate Neutral Network (CN Net) in February 2008 to mobilize the adoption and spread of climate neutral strategies by national and local governments, organizations and business. CN Net provides an online platform and a network for participants to present and exchange information and experiences. Initial participants included four countries (Costa Rica, Iceland, New Zealand and Norway) as well as cities, organizations and businesses. In collaboration with the Environment Management Group, for which UNEP provides the secretariat, UNEP produced the publication *Kick the Habit: A UN Guide to Climate Neutrality* to reinforce its work to promote climate neutrality globally, including within the United Nations system. Based on a UNEP-sponsored Environment Management Group proposal, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination agreed in October 2007 to work towards making the United Nations and its operations climate neutral. UNEP has established a Sustainable United Nations team to catalyse this transformation.

75. The Billion Tree Campaign, a partnership between UNEP and the World Agroforestry Centre, under the patronage of Kenyan Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai and H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco, was launched in late 2006 at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations in Nairobi, to promote environmental awareness through the medium of tree planting. In less than one year, Governments, cities, businesses and the public planted 1.5 billion trees. The campaign has been extended with the goal of planting 7 billion trees by the end of 2009.

76. By 2007, 275 financial institutions with assets of \$13 trillion had joined the UNEP and the United Nations Global Compact-facilitated Principles for Responsible Investment. According to the UNEP Sustainable Energy Finance Initiative, in 2007 capital flowing into the renewable energy sector had reached \$100 billion, up 40 per cent from the year before. The Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century, a global policy network that provides a forum for international leadership on renewable energy whose secretariat is hosted by UNEP,



revealed in its Renewables Global Status Report 2007 that more than 50 countries worldwide have adopted renewable energy targets, including 13 developing countries and many states and provinces in the United States of America and Canada. A report compiled by UNEP, the International Labour Organization and trade unions showed that more people are now employed in renewable energy industries than in oil and gas.

### **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

77. The UNESCO approach to communication for development encompasses capacity-building and policy advocacy. Its focus on promoting an enabling environment for freedom of expression and freedom of information, as well as the development of free, independent and pluralistic media to promote people's participation in sustainable development is human rights-based and advocates community media to enable people's voice and self-expression. Access to information representing a plurality of opinions is a prerequisite for people's empowerment and active participation in planning and decision-making. The media can provide access to information and inspire dialogue within enabling environments and with professional capacity, a challenge in many developing countries. In 2007, the Director-General of UNESCO condemned 171 journalist killings and urged all member States to comply with international law to end impunity, prosecute violators, and take part in a voluntary reporting procedure established by UNESCO to prevent the impunity of perpetrators and to improve the status of judicial inquiries conducted on each of the condemned killings.

78. The UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication allocated US\$ 3.7 million to 144 media projects in developing and least developed countries in 2007 and 2008 to build the capacities of media professionals, enhance the quality of media training institutions and foster community access to information. This contribution, along with the initiative promoting the creation of African centres of excellence in journalism education, will increase knowledge of journalists to investigate development and governance issues openly. UNESCO has established media development indicators that can be used by Member States to assess national media capacities, identify priorities for media development and help integrate communication for development in national communication development plans and strategies including CCA/UNDAF. A standard setting model journalism education curricula and a media resource training kit on education for sustainable development are some of the tools that have been produced to bridge media and development practices. Activities are implemented to broaden civic participation in the media by improving media literacy among users, fostering learning opportunities and promoting science knowledge through the media and ICTs.

79. Strengthening institutions that facilitate community access to information, particularly community multimedia centres, contributes to the dialogue on poverty alleviation, sustainable development, good governance, social inclusion and participative democracy. Thus far a total of 130 centres have been introduced in 25 countries: 11 in Africa, 5 in Asia, 7 in the Caribbean and 2 in Latin America. A major regional initiative to take community multimedia centres to national scale completed its first phase in Mali, Mozambique and Senegal with 70 community multimedia centres. Support was also provided for the development of libraries and

archives, and information service providers. Community multimedia centres combine traditional local media, such as newspapers, radio and television, with new technologies, such as computers, the Internet and digital devices. They are mostly community-owned facilities.

## **Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

80. ESCAP works in disaster reduction, natural resources and environmental management, tele-education and e-health with supportive connectivity and community e-centres. It provides technical assistance to member States and associate members to implement the regional World Summit on the Information Society action plan by initiating activities to promote and build ICT capacities to facilitate policy debate and create an enabling policy environment supporting ICT for development. To effectively coordinate regional level activities of all United Nations and international organizations concerned, ESCAP co-organizes the annual meeting of the Regional inter-agency Working Group on Information and Communication Technology jointly with ITU and the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity. It provides advice on appropriate and affordable access to ICT applications and services to meet the challenge of bridging the digital divide while reducing marginalization of rural communities lacking in appropriate ICT infrastructure. The concept of the community e-centre, a shared facility to provide access to ICT and ICT-related services has been recognized as a viable means to provide the benefits of ICT to the relevant communities. As a member of the global Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, it provides capacity-building to enhance monitoring of the information society, particularly in developing countries.

## **United Nations Population Fund**

81. Communication and advocacy are accorded priority in the UNFPA strategic plan, which emphasizes the engagement of advocacy and media outreach to support countries in advancing public knowledge, understanding and commitment with regard to the impact of population growth on sustainable development, education and maternal health and the gains that can be made through universal access to reproductive health services, including family planning and sexual health. Slow progress has been made towards improved maternal health (Millennium Development Goal 5).

82. Communication is crucial for access and appropriate use of health services that have been established to improve reproductive health. By shifting communication activities from information and education delivery to awareness-raising campaigns and influencing behaviour and attitude change, UNFPA is giving people greater insight and knowledge for sustained behaviour and practice and encourages the development of comprehensive, national advocacy and behavioural change communication strategies as a framework for all inputs that may harmonize national and donor efforts in behavioural change communication, including the framework of the United Nations common programming process.

83. UNFPA encourages the collection of baseline data for assessing the need for specific communication interventions and their impact. This includes analysis of communication and media audiences, socio-cultural research for the development of

culturally sensitive programmes and strategies and evaluation of such interventions. Capacity-building of health personnel and community members is also backed up by training in communication strategies and techniques, which is integrated in the curricula of schools of public health and medicine, social work, communication and journalism, and teacher training institutions.

84. UNFPA embraces the use of ICTs and new media, such as campaigns, web-based communities, mobile phones, multimedia presentations and other audio-video technologies to create awareness and promote population and reproductive health issues. Through the UNFPA-supported Women Deliver conference, held in London in October 2007, 2,000 high-level participants and outreach professionals drew the world's attention to the fact that too many women die in pregnancy and childbirth, and that it pays to invest in women's health.

### **United Nations Children's Fund**

85. Programme communication, now called communication for development at UNICEF, is a vital cross-cutting practice that promotes behaviour and social change to achieve programme and advocacy goals. Its results can be measured by: increased knowledge and awareness; improved and new skills; increased demand for products and services; improvements in service delivery (for example, improved interaction between service providers and clients); changes in behaviour and practices; shifts in attitudes, social norms and power relationships; and enhanced self-esteem and self-efficiency. The changes may also include strengthened national Government policies, persuading municipalities to allocate more resources for children's programmes, improving the interpersonal skills of health workers, changing the way journalists perceive and report on children's issues, or changing a community's perceptions of its problems through participatory engagement and empowering them to solve those problems.

86. A review of field reports since 2006 indicates that communication is helping to: strengthen community voices and connect them to upstream policy advocacy; motivate and mobilize civil society, community- and faith-based organizations; and engage parents and communities to raise awareness and foster positive attitudes and practices. Other positive effects include: strengthened national policies; allocation of more resources for programmes benefiting children by municipalities; and improved interpersonal skills among health workers.

87. Communication for development strategies are clustered around flagship initiatives for child survival and development, protection and participation and the realization of the rights of children and women. They range from participatory learning to mobilization of religious leaders and the use of new technologies. A four-year strategic framework and a capability development framework for communication for development will guide these efforts and strengthen technical capacities of staff, partners and counterparts through a process guided by the midterm review of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan and the transfer of the Communication for Development Unit to the Division of Policy and Practice.

## **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

88. The highly charged political context in which UNRWA operates poses significant challenges to the Agency's communications strategy. The Spokesman's Office, in coordination with the Office of the Commissioner-General, shapes messages to key audiences: refugees, the wider public through the five offices where UNRWA works, the parties to the conflict, host Governments, donors and regional and international audiences. It works with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process to coordinate messaging and organize media campaigns led by specific agencies, for example, UNICEF is leading the joint inter-agency communications campaign around back to school at the start of the school year and the WFP is leading the campaign on food insecurity. UNRWA takes the lead on World Refugee Day.

## **World Bank**

89. The World Bank Development Communication Division entered the United Nations round tables on communication for development in 2004 and has since been active in opening up dialogue and initiating proposals. It played an important role in bringing together hundreds of communication for development practitioners in the First World Congress on Communication for Development, co-hosted by FAO and the Communication Initiative partnership in Rome in 2006, and advocates the mainstreaming of communication for development policies and practices in international organizations and the use of communication-based assessments to enhance project design and sustainability.

90. World Bank effort to consolidate knowledge and strategies in this area was demonstrated through the First World Congress on Communication for Development, with the participation of nearly 1,000 members of civil society, academia and United Nations organizations. The outcome of the First World Congress on Communication for Development is summarized in the Rome Consensus: Communication for Development: a Major Pillar for Development and Change, which defines communication for development 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.

91. The World Bank designed a global programme in 2006 placing communication as one of the three central pillars in national programmes. More than 46 national programmes have negotiated financial disbursements to create communication response teams, media campaigns, commission media plans, train media professionals, and produce information material and so forth.

## **VI. Collaborative action of United Nations organizations with civil society**

92. Communication for development practice is known among civil society groups that work outside the modus operandi of the United Nations and national planning mechanisms mainly at the grass-roots level.

93. Civil society groups and non-governmental organizations should participate in defining national strategies for communication for development from the inception stages of planning.

94. Examples of collaboration with civil society include the following:

(a) United Nations Millennium Campaign held its annual mobilization Stand Up, Speak Out in October 2007, at which 43.6 million people, particularly in Asia and Africa, demonstrated their determination to hold their leaders to account regarding the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, nearly doubling the 2006 numbers that set a Guinness World Record. This year, the mobilization was carried out in collaboration with a wide range of partners, including faith groups, the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, the United Nations Department of Public Information and several United Nations country teams. Stand Up has provided a powerful, high-profile communication platform for many of the most disenfranchised and impoverished constituencies to have their voices heard at the highest levels.

(b) UNDP has leveraged the Africa Governance Forum to deepen the understanding of communications for private sector leaders and working journalists of good governance issues in Africa. The sixth forum, held in 2006, focused on the African Peer Review Mechanism, and UNDP and the African Peer Review Panel of Eminent Persons, in collaboration with the Media Institute of Southern Africa and the Reuters Foundation, organized a media forum that ran parallel to the conference. In 2007, UNDP organized a media dialogue during the seventh Africa Governance Forum, which had as its theme “Building the capable State in Africa”. Approximately 20 journalists from across the region took part in the event, again facilitated by the Reuters Foundation.

(i) At the First World Congress on Communication for Development, the Rome Consensus was adopted by nearly 1,000 members of civil society, academia and United Nations organizations.

(ii) UNICEF partnered with Google and One Laptop per Child to launch the Our Stories project, which seeks to collect and store five million stories from youth around the world. The initiative provides resources to create and share personal stories, starting with children in developing countries who are using One Laptop per Child computers or those who are working with UNICEF-supported radio producers to record and share interviews. Children are asked to record the stories of elders, family members and friends. Stories are recorded on location and each appears as a peg on a Google map, accompanied by some basic information and a photograph. Our Stories will serve as a global advocacy and information-sharing platform (<http://www.ourstories.org/>).

(iii) UNRWA meets regularly with civic society and refugee organizations in the five field areas in which the Agency works to coordinate communications and messaging. In the Gaza Strip, UNRWA enjoys a close working relationship

with a broad range of civil society organizations, human rights groups, charities and development agencies. In Lebanon, the reconstruction of the Nahr el Bared refugee camp has necessitated widespread consultation with local and national civil society organizations on communications as well as all aspects of development programming.

## **VII. Conclusions and recommendations**

95. In the context of the ongoing United Nations reform process it would be important to ascertain resource allocation to prioritize communication for development in all programmatic areas of agencies, funds and programmes including training of United Nations staff on communication for development in this domain.

96. The United Nations Inter-agency Communication for Development Round Table group seeks to establish formal linkages with the United Nations Development Group as an essential step towards ensuring a harmonized and coherent working approach. This is expected to resolve some of the common challenges, particularly those related to the prioritization of communication for development within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

97. The United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table assures cross-fertilization of ideas and opinion on communication for development with the United Nations Communications Group, thus emphasizing distinctions and complementarities that exist between communication for development programmes and programmes designed to heighten visibility.

98. Recognizing the Round Table as a formal United Nations inter-agency working group will allow the biennial Round Table to follow up not only on Round Table recommendations but also on progress in the integration of communication for development practice into relevant planning and programme delivery mechanisms in the United Nations and in systematic data collection and articulation of cross-cutting priorities such as gender.

99. Communication is more than a tool for generating and disseminating content and should be used to facilitate relevant social change processes. The growing number of designated communication for development focal points from practising and non-practising agencies, funds and programmes demonstrates the growing momentum of both need and interest.

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