



## SIN COMUNICACIÓN NO HAY DESARROLLO

A summary of the regional Latin American report "Without communication, there is no development"

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Representatives of various Latin American organizations engaged in communication and committed to development gathered in Lima from August 24th through 26th, 2006, in preparation for the WCCD. Here we present a summary of the topics shared and reflected upon during that gathering.

In a complex world, ruled by inequality and discrimination, communication must be recognized as a specific specialty and a key factor to build development and democracy.

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### 1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### Diversity and capacity to evaluate and reflect

Latin America has gathered vast experience on communication for development in the last few decades. The large diversity of strategies, objectives, spaces and operating manners have led to less simplistic and more complex interventions that symbolize new features of a demanding professional activity, unsatisfied with the view of communication as a tool or as the elementary production of materials.

We have accumulated assessment-based knowledge, which allowed us to build knowledge in both dimensions and then, link them. Our main concern has always been to be where inequality and discrimination are. Thus, the world of communication for development has seen the surge of quantitative and qualitative research on the incidence of inequality and discrimination, as well as strategic thinking toward growth, with the capacity to create methods and materials for innovation.

Contributions: participation and strategic diversity in the search

## for change

Notwithstanding the fact that the economic development models implemented throughout history have not achieved great success, communications have allowed for meaningful and concrete progress locally and nationally; maintained a shared willingness in favor of citizen participation in social change, keeping an everlasting ray of hope over the future. However, one aspect that remains our most common concern in countries such as Peru, in contrast to the developing world, is the large gap between life's actors, space and dimensions. Peru endures the greatest disparity in the world. In this regard, we require more changes than our seemingly 'modernized' societies appear to have. Because of the above, we do not understand why international cooperation decreases in our continent, undervaluing the existing inequities which play such an important role in development.

We have learned to work using dynamic and ever changing strategies explained by the attention we placed in the definition of our proposals, centered around the beneficiaries of the project, identifying them as the specific actors in development, whether children, women, young people, social organizations, native communities and other movements. We have always tried to achieve communication with the participation of the people. We believe this to be the way to arrive at commitments and motivations for change beyond the expected. In this sense, our proposals were able to adapt to the social and cultural characteristics, as well as with the demands for change from the people. Similarly, the various topics that were discussed played a significant role in defining interventions and impact to generate changes. At the same time, however, the quest for change did not just center around people, but also institutions and power centers. We have even tried to influence the large media, making up new roads for social commitment.

## Sustainable rural development

Under the existing inequalities, the rural segment is the sector most severely affected by the unfair circumstances, highlighted by poverty, abandonment and discrimination. Low values are placed on the urban segment itself in more economic terms. The visibility of the rural segment, as a segment in need of urgent attention, is low, and this reinforces its remote location. Latin America started working in favor of the rural segment with the help of FAO in the 1950s. This emphasis slowly decayed as the responsibilities migrated toward the governments and civilian organizations. Projects and policies implemented, particularly those run by the State, have emphasized development, without relying on communication. This perspective is being rerouted now looking for tighter communication links in each country and making the rural world

everyone's problem. There is sustainable progress this time and the communities themselves seek to participate and define their presence and establish direct relationships with the State, playing a role in the election process, thus guaranteeing its sustainability.

## 2. LESSONS LEARNED IN HEALTH

### Achievements and contributions attained by communication

Health communication has led to concerns for self care and prevention among the population, which include seeking medical care at health centers and decreased mortality risks in various fields. It is interesting to note the UNICEF experience, which attained lower mortality rates in rural areas of countries such as Peru, using communication as one of their integral strategies. The demand for health care is currently higher than the health offer.

Communication surveillance and lobbying have led to improvements in stateside health services for populations at higher risk, with their cooperation. This type of progress has been most noteworthy in impoverished areas in Andean countries, motivated by public pressure arisen from society-motivated communication.

Behavior changes under difficult or urgent health situations have been possible thanks to communication and citizen campaigns. This has been the case with the cholera epidemic in Peru, the VIG/AIDS networks and campaigns regarding prevention and homophobia questions in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Colombia. Changes in citizens' subjectivity have also been attained, through producing and broadcasting soap operas on the radio (and some via video) on health and sexuality in Central America, particularly in Costa Rica.

Communities have shown a tendency to participate in health center activities by making decisions, assuming responsibility over certain activities and suggesting changes. This has been observed both in the rural and in the urban segment. Participative communication throughout the continent brings about commitments in society, thus transforming them into health actors. Community and educational radio stations play an important role in this situation.

Health has become an issue in the public agenda, as well as a topic for family, group or local conversations, in response to programs on the radio, in the mass media, street and participating relationships with social

organizations, communities and the public. Mass media today, such as the one in Peru and Colombia approach these issues more frequently than ever. Some media have already assumed the health agenda as part of their commitment to development. For example, El Comercio newspaper in Peru and El Tiempo in Colombia. In Brazil, children's health is a topic commonly assumed by journalists and media. Public journalism in health has been able to make changes in this field since public and private universities committed to this.

Traditional strategies in health communications are improving day by day. Work is no longer conducted on simplistic strategies nor observing only the superficial quantitative effect. A quest for quality in health care and results is now in progress.

## Challenges

- Increase dialogue and agreements at national level, among various segments and topics because the intervention arena is large, there is a great deal of fragmentation and too few links among the various topics and approaches.
- Publicly present to the media and to society sexuality-related health topics, which tend to cause public resistance.
- Uphold the rights of the citizens to a public education in health and respect for disease problems and situations.
- Allow for communication to be a regular and continued practice among health personnel. Do it by means of training and deliberate meetings.
- Conduct research to allow the people to see subjective, individual and collective perceptions on health, and how to deal with them to guide our work.

## Recommendations

- Medical personnel should regard the beneficiary not as a patient, but as a health citizen. He/she is not only an individual with rights, he/she is also a leading actor/actress, capable of changes regarding his/her own health and influencing on other people's health.
- Highlight the importance of the cultural aspect of health, paying more respect to diversity and to the changes elicited from diversity. Recognize diversity from its own components and think of health beyond the single

more “scientific” or western point of view.

- Keep participation as the axis of health work, not only as opinions but also in the decision making process. Participation must operate from the central level on down, but also at the regional and local process, where health priorities become the result of specific decisions of each type of environment.
- During result assessment, qualitative indicators must be taken into consideration. These include change process that people undergo, changes in the process of communication and the richness of the contents of the involved stories.
- Dialogue process must involve different actors, not only at the central government level but also from various organizations, including institutions, the population and the citizens that are most vulnerable in this particular topic.
- Disseminate among all health and cooperation professionals the various communication models and practices to be established, helping them define –in a different way- their communication priorities toward economic investment and human resources. The goal is to involve the specific institutional reasoning in the attainment of changes.
- The communication intervention should be made up of comprehensive, encompassing intervention strategies.

### 3. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNABILITY IN THE WORKS

#### Achievements and contributions of communication

Our work has shown that making democracy prevail in our society is a goal of development, not just a topic. Change cannot take place without it. At the same time, relations are built to encourage interest and participation of the population in development actions. The aim is to achieve a democratic governability, communicative and efficient to change. Thus, development becomes a public concern for many, not to be limited to infrastructure work but with the beginning of a human perspective for the defense of life and equity.

Great emphasis has been placed on the issue of governability in Latin America, widening the scope of action to five axes of intervention: communication in democracy, social control over public power; deliberating public opinion; role of public communication and democratization of the communication means. Therefore, no one would

deny that democracy and development are not possible without adequate communication. This is a collective consensus and many organizations within society have committed efforts to this effect.

A wide array of creative and publicly successful experiences have been conducted, such as citizen journalism (Colombia and Peru), media watch (Guatemala, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Venezuela) and citizens' watch (Peru) have managed to establish relationships among citizens, ruling class, journalists and media. This has made communications democratic and has laid the legal foundation for a transparent communicative relationship, interested in contributing toward development. The creation of laws to access information in Mexico and Peru, for example, worked well in this aspect.

Some topics found ways to be placed in the public deliberation agenda, establishing an influential relationship over national and local government, who were forced to pay attention to urgent social problems. When public debate is generated, the topic to be approached becomes key and allows for decision making for development, thus providing support to an opinion. This was achieved in Peru on health topics and the relationships between rulers and the people. In Colombia, a similar achievement took place during election processes.

Communication contributes to the de-centralization process, which in turn is highly meaningful for decision making for specific development. Allows for local and regional citizens' watch. Allows for citizens patrol at a more regional and local level. Allows for local surveillance of the media. This topic has been added to government institutions of de-centralization.

Legislation that promotes or demands citizen participation on the act of governing helps to achieve the goals of development and brings about better relationship between the ruling class and the people. Radio and television by-laws in several countries, some of them successful as in Peru, some on the road to success (such as Mexico) set a work strategy in this regard.

## Challenges

- Get the government and the economic segment to release information, thus allowing all of society access to information and the capacity to remain vigilant of government systems.
- Issue public policies for communication toward development, demanding

that both political parties and the ruling class be able to create and use where needed.

- Legislation that promotes or demands citizen participation in the act of governing helps the political change in the cultural aspect and contributes to citizen decision making in favor of the objectives traced by development. This, however, must be placed in the limelight.
- Design better strategies for the communication proposal of political candidates to become a key indicator during political elections.
- Make proposals for better use of government media, as far as its goal and public management. Government media should be responsible for building the concept of citizenship and redefining democracy, as committed to development.
- Define public communication policies in favor of governability, for public officials and political parties, with the participation of links between the ruling class and the people, as a fundamental aspect in development.
- Influence in undergraduate programs to prepare their communicators better in the field of democratic political action and governability.

## Recommendations

- Establish that the permanent practice of pluralism and debate become the central communication criterion to allow for common agreements. Define accurately the designs that will support these actions. This is not about creating antagonism, but being all-inclusive from the design stage.
- Promote and legislate citizens' watch of media and government with the support of widespread public debate.
- Placing the topics of development in the public agenda must become a goal in the relationship between communication and development, while working on financial support policies in this regard.
- Guiding the communication relation toward democratic development between the ruling class and the people through widespread and creative participation is important.
- Clearly define the communication traits a democratic official should have. Similarly, define the bases for public democratic media functions.

## 4. MID TERM AND LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY

### Achievements and contributions

Communication has its own history. It played an important role in Latin America to revert repression and inequity processes, widening and defining its course of action. It has helped to build consensus among various segments of society, thus guaranteeing sustainability. Gender equity has been a successful axis in development, increasing women participation in different aspects of life, including political participation (throughout Latin America), as well as the inclusion of children's rights (UNICEF in some countries, ANDI in Brazil).

Poverty reduction has been defined as a priority in this continent and it has even achieved sustained media coverage by some. Conflicts between some mining companies and other energy-related ones have provided a great opportunity to create awareness on the poor and their rightful demands, through campaigning (Oxfam International) or the search for direct and understanding dialogue between both parties. This has received journalistic and political support (Ombudsman Offices) or with partnerships, which led to economic and corporate support to resolve the local problems of poverty (areas in Peru).

Communication has highlighted the role played by culture and people's subjective perceptions in development, allowing for changes that take these into consideration. This is the case of radio soap operas (Central America) and comic books (Peru) that reach large segments of the population.

Communication is perceived from multiple strategies, media, and social pressure, which increase its capability to influence in favor of equity and dialogue. In this regard, the capacity to design, assess and encompass achievements and lead the process has been developed. Strategies that arouse from diverse components are the ones, which achieved a higher level of success.

Communication alliances have gone beyond territorial borders, with a high value placed on continental networks of communication and information. In this manner, sharing experiences and assessments is indeed improving the capacity and quality of the communication intervention.

Community and educational media have approached the social movements, forming alliances with them, and from here with other



institutions, thus increasing their area of influence. These media are being heard and the topics generate family and local communication meetings with social pressure, particularly in the rural areas.

Citizen participation is a key factor in attaining good results in social changes. Sustainability is, then, maintained by the population itself, who is interested and involved in development through communication strategies.

## Challenges

- Development proposals lack public visibility, particularly those that arise in rural areas. Conditions must be created for all the actors to learn and debate these proposals and create an agenda for development. In the political arena, there is a need to build another model of development for the country, with actors who communicate among each other and build consensus. In order to achieve this, we need to get people to uphold this need.
- Increased specialization of topics has led to the partition of the intervention, with communications becoming a secondary appendix. To avoid this, we must “cross-cut” communications, to recover its communicative and linking function.
- Relations among continents are an important challenge to take forward. We must keep open and motivating spaces for exchanging and assessing practices and experiences from different countries. Similarly, a permanent means of communication must be kept with cooperation organizations.
- Strengthen participation of actors and their communication capabilities, to generate dialogues and social inclusion. Through this, subjects will become empowered and generate communities capable to conduct their own transformation processes.
- Although significant progress has been made to understand the association between communication-culture-development, we must work on fine-tuning it and programming it as social and cultural capital toward development.
- Get communication to encompass those programs of subjects and institutions, which are an important part of building development agendas.

## Recommendations

- The views of communication for sustained development must respond to mid term projects, with a future projection. Negotiations should be conducted with the international cooperation entities for long-term sustainability toward regional and local development. Permanent communication between the North and the South is a needed communication platform at world level, which encompasses the local sector.
- Develop our own agenda for communication and development, starting with the individuals and their own definitions, where they would be the center of dialogue with society, cooperation agencies and the government.
- The sustained development agenda must bring forth the challenge for inter-cultural dialogue that addresses the diversity existing in Latin America. This is why the term Multiple-Approach Development is used. This proposal must become real by means of achievements and results.
- Participation of various actors in the definition of public communication policies for development and looking to implement these policies. These public policies should be useful to influence and sustain communication that is strategically linked to sustained development.
- Empower the rural sector to uphold the need to have their own communications means in their areas and in those that have been deprived from access to communications. Participation in the media and ownership of media is important. It is also important for the rural sector to be known at national level through mass media and communicator networks.
- Promote communication as a tool to favor dialogue and negotiation, to avoid reducing the issue to a mere economic dimension.

## 5. COMMUNICATION MEANS: A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF CHANGE

### Achievements and contributions

Alternative communication from educational and community radio stations and other media, continues to promote citizen participation, bringing up topics of development and creating an opposition to social inequalities and political verticality.

In addition to the media, communication spaces of citizen movements are an expression of participation and public impact. Several experiences and their specific achievements are available in this area. Pressure on city officials and consensus among the population are attained, such is the case of Citizen Caravans in Peru. A culture of deliberation is being formed.

Some initiatives currently deal with influencing on mass media to get them to open up and include development topics in their agenda. This proposal has led to good results in several countries. Along this same line of interest, training is being provided to journalists from different media on different topics, as well as in public journalism, such are the cases of ANDI in Brazil, Nuevo Periodismo Foundation in Colombia and Citizen Journalism in Medellin, Colombia and Peru.

Progress has been made in some countries with the legal basis for information transparency, demand for information quality and production and adherence to ethical codes. Functions and responsibilities have been more clearly defined for the media, public and private, and ethical codes are being created in the media by sector (Council of Press and Citizen Watch, both in Peru). Participative regulations and self-regulations allow for clear and better definitions and demands to mass media.

Innovations in educational entertainment in mass media often pose questions to people and family regarding attitudes and commitments leading to social changes (Citurna Producciones sobre TV Infantil in Colombia). Progress is also noted in educational soap operas for development, mentioned above. Interventions are being conducted, not only in the informational level, but in the formational aspect, as well.

## Challenges

- Encourage study and public consideration on new and old development models given the current lack of knowledge prevailing. Identify the models currently under application and evaluate their efficacy. A conceptual framework and operating procedures are needed in this regard.
- By having undergone a development model, which did not take into consideration the involved populations, Latin America is now lacking direction. Public debate on this issue is thus important and must be achieved with the support of the media.
- Increase the capabilities of alternate media, from assessments and recommendations, to respond to the increased social change. The goal is to produce sustainable communication projects that guide the practices of

these alternate media.

- Little knowledge and debate is still available on media reception. Ratings only respond to simplistic tuning methodologies and not to impact or credibility. We need new methods that measure qualitative and quantitative results fairly.
- Create areas for debate on the importance of mass media and evaluate their possibilities of change, in light of the experiences that Latin America is undergoing.

## Recommendations

- Clearly distinguish communication for development with participation and impact to generate changes from institutional publicity or propaganda, particularly at the political level. The first one leads to thinking and changing under a permanent dialogue and the second one leads to persuading and enchanting.
- All communication proposals must operate under the assumption that they are everybody's right. It should be based on dialogue that expresses diversity, must guarantee plurality and bring about topics of public interest.
- Public policies for communication for development must be proposed jointly with the government or in an attempt to influence them, focusing on the social actors as the co-managers of development from the citizen participation perspective.
- Communication must be seen as a social process that promotes dialogue and liaison among the members of a society.
- Conduct research on the communication actions, analyzing the impact and models of communication required for social change, according to the demands that arise.
- Maintain and increase citizens' watch on the media and on the communication and development processes.
- Need to create international observatories of media and communication processes for development, with an impact at continental level and searching for the necessary links.
- Create a follow-up and continued exchange mechanism in the region for participating communication for development after the Congress in Rome.

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