



IN THIS ISSUE

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"Do you think you can take over the universe and improve it?"

Lao Tsu, 6th century BC [1]

It was a short piece by Ariel Dorfman published by the Argentine newspaper *Página/12* on December 27, 2005, that led me to think of the year by then about to end in terms of communication for development. The article, entitled "An SOS for the New Year" [2], started on provocative note: "My sole certainty for 2006 is that every prediction will end up being nonsense. After all, if they had asked me, by the end of 1905, to anticipate the next year's events, could I have predicted the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 or the even more devastating seism that shook Ecuador a few months before that? Or the tsunami that desolated Honk Kong? Or blacks rioting in Atlanta demanding equality, and workers' mutinies in Stockholm claiming bread? No way".

Disasters and emergencies were one of the "top 10 health issues of 2005" according to the World Health Organization [3]. An article by Theresa Braine published online by the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) states that "From January to October 2005, an estimated 97,490 people were killed in disasters globally and 88,117 of them in natural disasters, according to the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED)" [4].

After discussing the incidence of the increase in the world's population, poverty, inequity, development, industrialization and global warming as factors related to the impact of these disasters, Braine highlights a communication-for-development-bound event noted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in its *World Disasters Report 2005*, in which "a simple phone call saved thousands of lives when the giant tsunami waves hit India in 2004. A fisherman's son named Vijayakumar Gunasekaran, who lives in Singapore, heard about the tsunami early on the radio and phoned relatives living on the east coast of India. Following his warning, all 3,630 residents evacuated their village there before the waves arrived".

Which brings me back to Dorfman's piece, and this issue of *Globala Tider*

The fact that the *ability to listen to critical information* (a reference to the

ISSUE 3
February 2006

tsunami on the radio) could lead to *action in the form of communication* (a phone call to warn relatives further away), which in turn transformed into *networked communication* (villagers warning each other), resulting in many lives saved in the midst of a catastrophe, speaks to me about *hope* [5].

The hope that through improved and consistent education, training and advocacy in the field of communication for development, a positive, tangible impact can be made in the lives of many. What predictions cannot foresee, communicative action can definitely prevent.

In this edition of the webmagazine, we are pleased to present a unique gathering of accomplished guest contributors from different parts of the world. James Deane discusses the need to bridge the gap between successfully promoting communication for social change among development and donor organizations at the policy level, and achieving concrete coherent results in terms of what they actually do in practice.

Helen Hambly introduces us to teaching and learning communication for development in Canada. And it is through her that we obtained kind permission to publish Paul MacLeod's compelling introduction to the Fogo process - a groundbreaking participatory communications initiative that empowered people through the use of film and video in the late 1960s, in what was then one of the least developed regions of Canada. Nora Quebral, a leading figure in the field in the Philippines, discusses the ethics and specifics of educating communication developers in a borderless, global world. Cel Cadiz, from the Philippines as well, introduces us to the close relationship between the development of teaching and learning *devcom* in her country and Nora Quebral's professional trajectory.

We also welcome Malmö University's graduates from the 2002 and 2003 Master courses in Communication for Development. César Bazán, from Peru, discusses how a communications framework to advance the trial of HIV/AIDS vaccines should be established. Gabriella Westberg, from Sweden, examines a development digital broadcast initiative set in Nepal. Sara Johansson, from Sweden as well, takes us *back to the Balkans* and looks into the role of personal narratives in group contexts as a tool for reconciliation. Also devoted to the Balkans is journalist Andrew Finkel's contribution, looking into some of the highlights of the workshop "Towards a New Balkan Cultural Studies" that took place in Istanbul in October 2005.

Asking himself about hope, Dorfman ended his article looking back again into 1906 for a clue, and tells us that it was then that the Morse-coded SOS signal was adopted [6]. "Anyone who distinguished Three Dots Three Lines Three Dots in a Morse telegraphic transmission would know, with certainty, transcending the barriers of language and the pitfalls of nationality, that someone was asking for help".

As you delve deeper into this new year, we hope that this issue of Globala Tider will act, if not as an SOS or a warning phone call, to inspire and

inform your activity in the field, be it as teacher, learner, practitioner, researcher, or advocate. Please help us disseminate its contents, and do not hesitate to contact us with your comments, questions and suggestions while we prepare the fourth issue of the webmagazine –a special edition on HIV/AIDS communication, edited jointly with Thomas Tufte, from Roskilde University- which will be online in June 2006.

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[1] Quoted by Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2001) in *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions*, Sage, London.

[2] Retrieved from www.pagina12.com.ar Original version in Spanish. The translation is mine. For more information about Ariel Dorfman, a Chilean novelist, playwright, essayist, journalist and human rights activist, visit <http://www.adorfman.duke.edu/>

[3] See http://www.who.int/features/2005/health_survey/en/index.html

[4] Theresa Braine, "Was 2005 the year of natural disasters?". See <http://www.paho.org/English/DD/PIN/pr060109.htm> and bear in mind that those figures do not take into account those killed in the 26 December 2004 earthquake and tsunami in Asia: they refer only to the earthquake in Kashmir, Pakistan, the hurricane season in Central and North America, and the famine in Niger.

[5] For my definition of choice of hope in the current context of communication for development, see Paulo Freire (1993) *Pedagogy of hope/Reliving Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

[6] For a compelling account of the 'Morse telegraphy era', and an in-detail introduction to "a medium which in the 19th century had created a revolution in world communications", see Tony Smith, "Morse: the end of an era?", UNESCO courier online, available at http://www.unesco.org/courier/1999_08/uk/connex/txt1.htm

2006-02-02

