UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Presentation of Communication for Development (C4D)
interagency report to UN General Assembly

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Je voudrais vous rappeler que la Résolution de l’Assemblée générale 51/172 de 1996, « Insiste sur la nécessité de soutenir les systèmes de communication réciproque, qui facilitent le dialogue et permettent aux communautés de prendre la parole, d’exprimer leurs aspirations et leurs préoccupations et de participer aux décisions concernant leur développement. » De plus cette Résolution « Estime que les acteurs concernés du
développement à l’échelon national, notamment les responsables et décideurs à tous les niveaux, devraient accorder davantage d’importance à la communication pour le développement, et les encourager à en faire, de façon appropriée, une composante de tous les projets et programmes de développement. »

Thus, Communication for Development is brought about by people who are involved in participatory communication processes that facilitate the sharing of knowledge in order to affect human development. There is no universal formula capable of addressing all situations. Therefore, communication for development and social change initiatives should be based on, and respond and adapt to the prevailing cultural, social and economic context. The common factor to all efforts for successful sustainable development is the type of communication which places the people, who are most affected, at the centre of the discussions, debates, choices and decisions needed to guide their own development.

Fourteen years after the adoption of the original resolution, humanity holds within its grasp some of the most powerful communication and information
technologies ever invented, enabling us to make the world a smaller place, as well as providing us with gateways to knowledge and pathways to information. This means that we are better equipped with technological capabilities not only to localise our efforts on communication for development but also to engage multiple international coalitions to deal with major global sustainable development issues, such as, climate change and its effects, water and energy crisis, resource depletion, etc., thus allowing us to shift the paradigm of communication for development to a global scope with potential for coordinated local actions.

However, to harness the potentials of ICTs in order to empower people in their efforts to communicate for sustainable development, requires conducive legal environments to access information and commitments by public bodies to put them into practice. In some countries there are legal inhibitions to seek information or when legal provisions are available, reluctance to capacitate public institutions to provide information at the request of those who are affected by development. For a transparent and inclusive process of communication for development we certainly need good freedom of information laws backed up by systematic measures to
make citizens aware of their rights and to make officials aware of their obligations. It is in part for these deficiencies that ICT enabled communication have been used relatively marginally as partners in the development process at the local level in many countries. Now it is time to recognise the potential and power of these instruments and to utilize them to unshackle people from their “unfreedoms” – as Nobel Laureate Amatya Sen calls them. It is time to actively engage such people in our efforts for sustainable development. For example, in the context of mitigation of and adaptation to effects of climate change, our task should be to enable local communities to view sustainable development from a global perspective, with a commitment to preserving the planet for future generations. Communication for sustainable development, should therefore, enable people to effectively utilize society’s entire communication system, including interpersonal, social, community, and organizational networks as well as conventional and electronic media, in a way that enhances their freedom to discuss, debate and act in pursuit of collective wellbeing, without depleting the resources needed for our future generations.
It is in the light of the above that we need sustained efforts to create an enabling environment for inclusive communication for sustainable development which at the country level requires:

- A free, independent, pluralistic and professional media system through which open dialogue and debate can occur;
- Access to information held by public bodies and development agents;
- Journalists with a comprehensive multidisciplinary education capable of placing complex facts in a particular social context;
- Open, transparent and accountable governance that encourages public debate, discussion and input;
- Broad public access to a variety of communication media and channels, as well as a regulatory environment that promotes non-discriminatory licensing for local radio and low cost universal access to Internet and telephone services; and
- An open society in which all groups and sectors are able to participate fully in development discussions, debates and decision-making processes.
That said, I draw your attention to the United Nations reform initiative “Delivering as One”, which requires UN agencies to work together at country levels to help Member States create the necessary environment capable of fostering communication for sustainable development. Specific diagnostic tools, including UNESCO’s Media Development Indicators, can be used to assess capability gaps and eventually to guide interventions to foster the enabling environment for inclusion in national planning exercises including the United Nations common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

Finally, I would like to add that, in designing UNDAFs in each country, attention should be paid not only to negotiations between the government and UN agencies, but also to the role of other non-state actors and civil society at large in such negotiations, as they are the real actors in communication for sustainable development. In our view, taking the UN Interagency Round Table on Communication for Development to country level would be a good first step to realise this goal.
Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs,

Le thème de la prochaine Table ronde inter-agence des Nations unies, sous l’égide du l’UNICEF, se concentrera sur l’avancement des droits des filles adolescentes par le développement de la communication. Je vous invite tous à nous rejoindre dans le but d’évaluer des priorités liées à la communication nécessaires pour contribuer à l’élimination des obstacles à la paix et au développement durable.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.
Thank you for your attention.