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DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Communication for Development

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Communication for Development (C4D) supports development and/or social change by promoting voice, participation and access to information and ideas. It facilitates dialogue, and does not just disseminate information in a linear way. C4D underpins transparency and accountability, collective action, and the shaping of attitudes and norms. It is used in many sectors – to enhance health, governance, livelihoods, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response, for example. C4D draws on a range of communication platforms and a strong understanding of the sociocultural context.

This brief offers a concise introduction to the concept of 'Communication for Development' (C4D). It is designed for those who are new to the idea, including policymakers interested in incorporating C4D into their programmes. It addresses three main questions: What is C4D? How is it used in international development? And what are some of the common pitfalls associated with the use of C4D?

Understanding C4D

C4D is a broad term used to describe the various forms of communication required to facilitate development and/or social change. It extends beyond the provision of information. It encompasses two-way processes of engagement, and the sharing of ideas and knowledge across a diverse range of communication platforms. It involves a strong understanding of the sociocultural context to identify communication needs, relevant messages and appropriate content.

The UN defines C4D as follows:

> "Communication for development stresses the need to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development" (UN General Assembly Resolution 51/172, 1996).

Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada (1998: 63) set out a more comprehensive definition, encompassing a range of approaches:

> "Communication for development is the use of communication processes, techniques and media to help people toward a full awareness of their situation and their options for change, to resolve conflicts, to work towards consensus, to help people plan actions for change and sustainable development, to help people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to improve their condition and that of society, and to improve the effectiveness of institutions."

Common elements of the many C4D definitions and approaches include the following:

- **Understanding the context:** There is a recognition of the need to understand the sociocultural context to ascertain the information needs of individuals and communities and the social norms, policies and environment in which the communication takes place.

- **Outcomes and processes:** C4D initiatives prioritise not only outcomes and results (e.g. behaviour change), but also the processes by which transformation and empowerment occur (e.g. changes in power relations and resource distribution).

- **Toolkit of approaches:** C4D programming draws on a 'toolkit' of approaches to adapt to diverse contexts, problems and priorities.

- **Multiple platforms**: Similarly, C4D initiatives recognise the value of diverse media and communication platforms – interpersonal, participatory and community media, mainstream mass media, and ICTs. They recognise the different strengths and weaknesses of these platforms for reaching various target populations.

- **Horizontal communication:** There is a recognition of the need for two-way communication and dialogue between communities and development partners. Participatory approaches to C4D are seen as most effective at changing knowledge, beliefs and behaviour.

C4D approaches in international development

C4D activities and initiatives focus on dialogue, participation, voice, and knowledge and information sharing. C4D's diverse applications include fostering public dialogue, promoting social inclusion and equality, and delivering humanitarian assistance.

Behaviour change and health

C4D tools and techniques are often used to promote change in the attitudes, opinions and behaviours of individuals and communities. C4D has been used for **health promotion**, for example, with the goal of providing and maintaining the conditions

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that make it possible for people to make healthy choices, at individual and community level (UNAIDS 2001). Health promotion communication includes information dissemination, peer education, and social mobilisation. Initiatives have focused on sanitation messages, maternal health (including pre-natal care and birth preparedness), and STIs. Many of these initiatives use a combination of entertainment and education ('edutainment') to provide information in an engaging and non-confrontational way.

'Edutainment' – HIV prevention in South Africa

Edutainment approaches have proved beneficial in highlighting problems and solutions in non-confrontational ways, and promoting family and community debate. The long-running Soul City television series is a prominent example of edutainment. It has highlighted issues including HIV/AIDS and safe sexual behaviours, child abuse, rape and domestic violence. It uses radio drama and information booklets as well as TV episodes.

Evaluations show that Soul City has reduced HIV infection rates: viewers are more likely than non-viewers to use a condom when with a regular sexual partner (Goldstein et al. 2005; Tufte 2001).

For more information, see: www.soulcity.org.za

Governance

C4D is also used in initiatives related to governance and democracy, particularly in amplifying the voice of poor and marginalised groups and enabling citizens to **participate** in political processes. Donors have frequently focused on information sharing as a means of promoting transparency and accountability.

Citizen participation – Afghanistan's Open Jirga

C4D initiatives in Afghanistan have sought to improve public deliberation and interaction between citizens and political leaders. Open Jirga is a multimedia platform for political discussion that was developed by BBC Media Action and the state broadcaster, with support from DFID (BBC Media Action 2012). Broadcast on television, radio and online, the programme is hosted by a well-known Afghan BBC journalist and enables community representatives to question national leaders on a range of topics.

In a special episode in March 2013, President Karzai responded to questions on his government's performance, Afghanistan's international relations, and the peace process. The studio audience was drawn from many provinces and ethnic groups. A similar episode in 2014 enabled audience members to question candidates ahead of the presidential elections.

For more information, see: www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/where-we-work/asia/afghanistan/open-jirga

Organisations such as BBC Media Action and ABC International Development have used C4D to support diverse communication platforms, and a **free and independent press**. These initiatives aim to help provide checks and balances on state power, and to support transparency and accountability. These C4D approaches tend to focus on generating an enabling environment and strengthening the capacity of key sectors such as state media. They can include activities such as reforming and deregulating telecommunications, increasing journalistic and editorial standards, and promoting public service broadcasting.

Where mainstream mass media is censored, social media can offer a platform for dissenting voices through **citizen journalism**. Citizens increasingly use mobile internet and social media to bear witness to human rights abuses (Comninos 2011), especially in conflict situations. Donors are leveraging citizen journalism to monitor conflict and elections.

Citizen reporting and election monitoring

After the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya, there was a strong focus on mitigating election-related violence in the lead up to the 2013 election. The Uchaguzi platform – which had been used to monitor elections in Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia – was employed to collate crowdsourced electoral observations.

Uchaguzi enabled citizens to report incidents or concerns through SMS, Twitter, Facebook, or email. These reports were edited, translated and mapped by humanitarian volunteers, before being sent to field teams of observers and law enforcement officers.

During the 2013 Kenya elections, more than 5000 reports were submitted to the Uchaguzi platform on issues such as attempted intimidation and coercion, the mishandling of ballots, and instances of violence (Trujillo et al. 2014).

This collaboration between citizens, electoral observers, humanitarian agencies, civil society and law enforcement enabled real-time election monitoring.

For more information, see: uchaguzi.co.ke

Livelihoods

C4D has also been influential in the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in rural areas. Donors such as the FAO have harnessed ICTs, particularly mobile technologies, to increase agricultural productivity and promote food security by giving farmers access to new markets and price information, placing them in a stronger bargaining position and facilitating information sharing (FAO 2014).

Disasters

C4D has been applied in disaster risk reduction and response, such as in early warning systems and communication about emergency preparedness. Further, humanitarian responders are increasingly using ICTs as both a source of information during emergencies, and as a tool for aid delivery.

ICTs for disaster response – Haiti earthquake

Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, relief workers used social media and mobile phones to gather and share information. A platform called 'Ushahidi' was used to help collect eyewitness information, and to process and map data from many sources.

Local people were encouraged to send reports through SMS, Twitter or Facebook. They reported the locations of trapped people, medical emergencies, looting, and the need for food, shelter and water. International volunteers then collected the reports and used GPS coordinates to plot them on real-time maps. These maps were then made available to humanitarian response teams to help target their efforts and ensure best use of limited resources.

See www.ushahidi.com. For more case studies on social media in complex emergencies see Skuse, Brimacombe & Rodger (2014).

Common pitfalls

The concept of C4D is frequently misunderstood. For example, although the 2006 World Congress on Communication for Development noted that C4D is ''…not public relations or corporate communication'', that distinction is not always appreciated. It is important to distinguish between the communication *of* development (communicating the work of development agencies and institutions) and communication *for* development.

In addition, C4D is sometimes misused to promote technological innovation as a panacea – focusing on 'information poverty', and on ICTs as the solution to structural inequalities (Wilson 2002). If approaches to C4D do not understand the 'digital divide' as a symptom of broader inequalities, they may help obscure the underlying problems.

Further, C4D approaches can overlook the potential of communication platforms and technologies to be used for harm (Leye 2009). In addition to promoting positive messages, it is important to limit the spread of inaccurate information (such as rumour and myth) and messages that promote hatred and violence (Sigal 2009).

Researchers and practitioners can help prevent the concept's misuse by critically questioning how it is applied.

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