

Overview of UN Inter-Agency Round Tables on Communication for Development

Background Paper

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**11th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on
Communication for Development**
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**UNDP
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DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of any UN agency, the World Bank, or an agreed inter-agency position.

ACRONYMS

AMARC	World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters
CCA/UNDAF	Common Country Assessment/UN Development Assistance Framework
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CTA	Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation
C4D	Communication for Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GA	General Assembly
IDRC	International Development and Research Council
IPAL	Instituto para America Latina
JCGP	Joint Consultative Group on Policy
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
RT	Round Table
UNPAEERD	UN's Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
UNAIDs	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCTD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPI	United Nations Department of Public Information
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Family Planning Association
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Inter-Agency Round Tables on Communication for Development began in 1988. At the time, UN agency designated communication staff were “rarely aware of each others objectives largely due to their focus on individual policies that reflected their work and guided their operational programmes and projects.”¹ The initial impetus behind the Round Tables (RTs) was to exchange ideas and experience in the area of communication for development (C4D) and promote cooperation among UN agencies. These objectives have remained a fundamental platform for discussion at all RTs. The Report of the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)² on Communication for Development quotes a participant from the 4th RT, held in Lima in 1993: “The Round Tables began as a club for people from industrialised countries but are now open to others.”³ The JIU report states that the RT was the only inter-agency “professional consultation mechanism on communication for development.” It points out that the RT process, whilst only in place for five years, had contributed to highlighting the importance of C4D.⁴

The RT process can be viewed in three broad evolutionary phases. The first phase comprises RTs 1-5. These early RTs were relatively informal and only those UN agencies with an active C4D component and selected CSOs specialising in this area were involved.⁵ In this phase, NGOs took the lead in organising two RTs. The second phase, encompassing RTs 6-7, was a transition period in which the RTs begin to take account of the JIU report’s recommendations, and their deliberations now form part of the UN Secretary General’s biannual report to the General Assembly on Communication for Development. Although the Secretary General’s report has continued to provide an important opportunity for participating UN agencies to report on their involvement in C4D, it has not been used as a tool for collective reporting and has not systematically addressed follow-up to recommendations from respective RTs.

RTs 8-10 can be said to fall into a third phase. They have sought to build on the UN’s renewed commitment to greater inter-agency collaboration, as reflected in the revised programming instruments (CCA/UNDAF) and in One UN. They have also had a sharper thematic focus and sought to demonstrate the importance of C4D in achieving the UN’s development priorities articulated in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals.

A number of themes recur across the RTs. Chief among these are: mobilising decision-makers’ support for C4D; training operational and policy staff at country and headquarters in C4D; and evaluation of C4D projects and the role of media in development. Revisiting themes has helped advance individual agencies’ thinking on key issues but has not led to any measurable mainstreaming of C4D principles across UN programming.

¹ Jayaweera Wijayananda’s speech at the opening of the 9th Round Table, Rome 1994.

² UN Joint Inspection Unit Report, 1994, Communication for Development Programmes in the United Nations System.

³ Annex III Synthesis of the IV Report on the Round Table on Development Communication, Lima, Peru (1993) cited by Francesco Mezzalama in the UN Joint Inspection Unit Report (1994).

⁴ The JIU report notes that ‘well-designed communication programmes improve understanding among the main actors of development, encourage co-ordination between agencies involved in development work and increase efficient and effective use of scarce resources’. It goes on to state that “it is regrettable that General Assembly Resolution 47/199 “Triennial policy review of operational activities for development within the United Nations system,” which deals with practically all development issues does not make any reference to communication for development programmes” (para.98).

⁵ UN agencies included UNESCO, UNICEF, FAO and UNFPA.

Follow up on conclusions and recommendations from the RTs to date has largely been ad hoc rather than systematic.

1. INTRODUCTION⁶

1.1. Changes in UN organisational and policy context since 1988

Ten Round Tables (RTs) on Communication for Development (C4D) have taken place since 1988, during which time there have been some significant organisational shifts within the UN. From a RT perspective two changes in particular can be seen as reflecting an institutionalising of its informal objectives and leading to greater cooperation and collaboration among UN agencies. However, the RTs have yet to take full advantage of these changes.

The first key organisational change was the emergence of new strategic planning/programming instruments - the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as part of the 1997 reform process. Guidelines for this new strategic planning approach were introduced in 1999 in response to the call from the Secretary General to articulate a coherent vision and strategy that allowed for a unified approach towards common goals.⁷ One UN, the second key change, emerged from the recommendations of the High Level Panel (2006) which was invited to explore how the UN system could work more coherently and effectively. To overcome systemic fragmentation across the UN, the panel made a number of inter-linked recommendations organised around four 'ones': One Programme, One empowered Leader and team, One Budgetary Framework and One Office. It was really only at the 10th and most recent RT in 2007 that participating agencies sought to build on/take advantage of this new unity of purpose and spirit of collaboration within the UN by agreeing to develop a common strategy as a first step towards strengthening the role of C4D as a key component of UN system programming.

A significant shift in policy emphasis took place within the UN between the 7th and 8th RTs. In 2000 the UN General Assembly endorsed a global development agenda which enshrined the Millennium Declaration. The latter articulated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the achievement of which has become the overarching goal for most UN agencies. RT 8 acknowledged the new global development landscape and its Declaration placed C4D within the framework of the Millennium Declaration by asserting that "human rights are an inherent part of all Communication for Development." The 9th RT stated that the MDGs cannot be achieved without "good communication" and stressed the need for new strategies and tools to be developed in support of the goals. This was re-emphasized at the 10th RT.

⁶ Reports from RTs 3 and 5-10, the Secretary General's Reports to the General Assembly on Communication for Development and other relevant documentation were reviewed for this report. In addition, telephone and e-mail discussions were held with various UN and NGO staff and 'C4D pioneers' who had some involvement with the RT process. A key constraint in conducting this review was the very limited institutional memory, particularly within UN agencies, of the early RTs that took place largely in the pre-digital age and prior to the review by the Joint Inspection Unit in 1984. This has inevitably constrained a full understanding both of the genesis of the RT process and the themes/outcomes of the early meetings.

⁷ These guidelines were revised in February 2007 to take into account new developments in aid effectiveness (World Summit Outcome Document, Paris Declaration), cross-cutting principles and comments from agencies and country teams. They also stress the inclusiveness of all UN agencies in the programming process and clarify accountability by encouraging the clear division of labour among UNCT members to improve efficiency of the process as well as accountability for the end product.

1.2. Trends in the global information and communication context

Since the inception of the Communication for Development Round Table in 1988 the global information and communication landscape has undergone a transformation largely due to two key factors – the democratisation process following the end of the Cold War and the rapid growth of horizontal communication due to availability of new communication technologies. Key features of this transformation include:

- rapid liberalisation and proliferation of the media, particularly of broadcasting, together with a subsequent decline in support for former state (monopoly) broadcasting;⁸
- greater use of new and more cost effective information and communication technologies;
- greater consideration in design of development strategies given to the media's role in reinforcing/countering the way in which vested interests and other political factors affect development interventions;
- a growing communication knowledge network facilitated largely by NGOs;
- and in the post 9/11 world, an increasing tendency on the part of some governments to withhold and censor information under the guise of national security.

There is evidence that RT discussions have taken account of some of these trends. The report from the 3rd RT notes “the dramatic spread of democracy of recent times, and the growing ill-repute of central planning were working in favour of more participatory decision-making at the local level and of communication as part of that process.” The 6th RT acknowledged the impact of media liberalisation at a local level and emphasised the role of community radio in promoting two-way dialogue. This RT also called for more experimentation with low cost technologies. The 8th RT highlighted the importance of community radio stations in Africa in helping disempowered people make important decisions about their own lives. The 9th RT reflected on both the potential and limitation of new Information and Communication technologies. Discussions recognised that mobile telephony was a powerful tool in bringing telecommunications within the reach of rural communities and in some contexts has enabled poor and illiterate people to earn income.⁹ This meeting also drew attention to a number of barriers that prevented poor people from accessing new technologies, particularly the internet. These included illiteracy, lack of basic infrastructure in rural areas, the relevance of available information, and few opportunities to input their own local knowledge.¹⁰

International NGOs such as Panos, AMARC, BBC World Service Trust and Communication for Social Change Consortium, and national NGOs such as Soul City, ANDI, and Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan have been at the forefront in promoting changes in the communication landscape and pushing the boundaries of C4D at international and national levels. Together with local partners they have implemented innovative practices in efforts to meet the communication needs of some of the world's poorest people. NGOs focusing on communication engage in a range of activities including initiating discussion on new laws/institutions needed for an independent and pluralist media, promoting the right to

⁸ Communication for Empowerment: developing media strategies in support of vulnerable groups, UNDP Practical Guidance Note.

⁹ The 9th RT report cites the Grameen Bank supported Village Pay Phone scheme as an example of an income earning activity for poor rural women.

¹⁰ Report of Ninth Round Table, pp 44 -47.

access public information, promoting the development of relevant information and communication technologies, research, facilitating the development of independent radio broadcasting, conducting surveys on the constraints to media pluralism and training of journalists. The Communication Initiative is a vibrant global knowledge network that performs an invaluable role in facilitating the transfer of up-to-date knowledge on C4D approaches and tools among a wide range of development actors. The extent of NGO participation in the RT process has varied in each event. NGOs are recognised by most participating UN agencies as essential partners, not just in developing relevant C4D policies and strategies at national level but, crucially, in transforming these policies into effective operational projects at local level.

1.3. Changes in focus and substance of Round Tables

All RTs to date have shared some common objectives – to exchange information and experience, develop common strategies and identify common mechanisms to consolidate networks. During the course of the RTs there has been a perceptible shift from information dissemination to a focus on C4D as a crucial enabler of effective community participation.¹¹ Since the inception of the RT process there has been a broad consensus among participating UN agencies on the general principles of C4D. In the early RTs, however, relatively few UN agencies considered C4D initiatives as an integral aspect of all sectoral activities.¹² In some UN organisations, communication was placed within the Information Division, which, as the JIU report pointed out, diminished the importance of the discipline. Following the 6th RT and the passing of General Assembly Resolution 51/172, there were increased calls for all UN agencies to include C4D as an integral component of development projects. Successive RTs sought to address this issue. However, it appears that only at the 10th and most recent RT in 2007 was there an acknowledgement that if resolution 51/172 was to be transformed from an aspiration into a reality it was necessary for C4D principles to be integrated into the UN's strategic programming guidelines – the CCA/UNDAF.

1.4. Common and recurring threads in themes and outcomes of Round Tables

An analysis of available agendas and reports reveal that some themes have recurred across several RTs.¹³ These have included (i) mobilising decision makers' support for C4D (ii) training (iii) evaluation and (iv) media/ new communication technologies. With the notable exception of the most recent RT (10th), follow up on conclusions and recommendations reached at these meetings appears to have been more ad hoc than systematic.¹⁴ This may have contributed to some themes being repeated in successive RTs. Nonetheless, revisiting themes allowed UN agencies to advance their own thinking in these areas and begin the process of developing common strategies for addressing key challenges.

Mobilising decision-makers' support

Convincing high-level decision makers of the importance of communication as a key element in development has been a constant concern of RT participants and appeared in some form in the deliberations of RTs 3, 5, 9 and 10. However, there is only very limited evidence to date that RT

¹¹ See Declaration of Ninth Round Table.

¹² UNESCO, UNICEF and FAO were among those UN agencies that prioritized C4D in projects.

¹³ Reports from Round Tables 1, 2 and 4 were not located.

¹⁴ UNESCO hosted a meeting of several UN agencies in December 2007 to follow up on the recommendations from the 10th Round Table.

discussions and recommendations have resulted in a higher profile of C4D in UN country programmes and national development strategies.¹⁵ RT 3 recognised the need for better strategies to communicate with decision makers and recommended as a first step that a survey of their attitudes, experiences, and expectations should be conducted. RT 5 featured a survey report of 39 decision makers, which revealed that key obstacles to application of C4D in projects included the need for more information on the impact, costs and benefits of communication.¹⁶ RT 9's action plan included advocacy as one of five cross-cutting priorities, and called for deeper engagement with policy makers to ensure that C4D was recognised as a central component in all development initiatives. The RT presented a number of new C4D initiatives, including supporting a World Congress on Communication for Development, which had as one of its principal objectives the attraction of high-level decision makers. However, many of those decision-makers did not attend the Congress. RT 10 made more substantive recommendations to move forward the process of mobilising support for C4D. It identified various high level forums, including the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), within the UN system as key advocacy targets. It also recognised that C4D principles needed to be integrated within the UN's strategic planning instruments, the CCA/UNDAF, if heads of UN agencies at country level were going to support C4D needs assessments and other communication initiatives as an integral part of development programming. A paper, illustrating the close alignment of C4D principles with essential elements for development effectiveness and indicating how C4D activities could be integrated into the UNDAF process, was presented to participants at the follow up meeting to the 10th RT.

Training

The need for appropriate training on C4D is threaded across all the RTs and is emphasised in the conclusions of the Joint Inspection Unit's report. After 20 years, relevant training to enable C4D to be integrated effectively into development programming remains a priority of the RT process. RT 3 reports unanimous agreement amongst participating agencies that training on C4D is required at all levels. The meeting discussed a joint UNESCO/UNFPA training initiative consisting of a concept paper and a series of case studies aimed at harmonising development communication approaches within the UN system. Participatory Communication Training was one of the three core themes of the 5th RT. Discussions confirmed that the UNESCO/UNFPA initiative had been developed into an orientation and resource kit that was circulated to UN agencies as well as selected NGOs and universities.¹⁷ It contained several modules including profiles on specialised agencies and NGOs, five case studies on how the participatory approach was used in different projects, and a database of approximately 300 projects. RT participants felt that while this comprehensive resource met the needs of development planners and decision makers, it needed to be made more relevant to grassroots-level users and oriented towards participatory training methods. The 6th RT called for the capacity of national and local institutions to be enhanced to enable C4D to be better integrated into development activities. The 7th RT recommended that the UNESCO/UNFPA kit should be updated. The 8th RT, while making no specific reference to the UNESCO/UNFPA kit, acknowledged the need to "develop toolkits that address the needs of different

¹⁵ The report from Round Table 10 suggests that there is still a very poor understanding of C4D at the highest level of decision making within the UN and that C4D "was viewed as a downstream dissemination function and unconnected with the design and implementation of projects," p. 25.

¹⁶ Report from Round Table 5, p. 1.

¹⁷ The kit was entitled 'Approaches to Development Communication: an overview and resource kit'. See report from Round Table Five, p. 2

audiences.”¹⁸ The Declaration¹⁹ from this meeting included a recommendation that tools from UN agencies and NGO implementers be collected and shared to identify and improve access to “proven tools” and reduce duplication.²⁰

The Communication Initiative has played an important role in this regard by using its network to collect and share C4D tools amongst NGOs and multilateral and bilateral agencies. The 9th RT also gave training similar prominence and included in its Declaration a recommendation that training initiatives should focus on “collaborative learning in C4D encouraging experiential, value-based, culturally sensitive training in Participatory Communication for Development and fostering a community of practice across the regions.”²¹ The stocktaking exercise by UN agencies at the 10th RT did not specifically follow up on this recommendation, although the need for such a community of practice was perhaps implicitly acknowledged in various issues such as the need for UN-system strategies for data collection. The subsequent follow-up meeting highlighted the importance of UN inter agency training for county level staff at all levels to better integrate C4D into policy and project development.²²

Evaluation

The importance of rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems was discussed in several of the RTs. At the 5th RT, participants stressed the need to develop reliable indicators to measure the impact of C4D projects particularly as donors wanted to see evidence of communication’s impact on development projects. The survey of decision makers indicated that evaluations had not “adequately brought out the measureable contribution of communication to development objectives.” The Tambuli Community Radio project in the Philippines was considered by several agencies to have developed indicators capable of measuring C4D’s contribution to the development process. The meeting recommended that an evaluation report should be compiled from empirical studies of UN agencies’ C4D projects and presented at the next RT. It is unclear which agency had responsibility for compiling these studies. The 6th RT report makes no mention of them. The 7th RT revisited evaluation and recommended the use of peer review to evaluate projects. The importance of community engagement in devising indicators and ownership of the evaluation process was emphasised at the 8th RT. The tension between donor and community indicator requirements was discussed at this meeting but no consensus was reached on the primary audience for evaluation.²³ The 9th RT reinforced the participatory nature of evaluation and for the first time called for impact assessments to include participatory baseline and communication needs assessments. Participants felt that these assessments should then inform policy development. The 10th RT included Monitoring and Evaluation as a priority component in a revised UN Inter Agency C4D strategy. Impact assessment is one of two core themes of the 11th RT to be held in March 2009. Discussions at this meeting should enable an assessment of the extent to which UN agencies have developed indicators capable of measuring the impact of C4D initiatives.

¹⁸ Report from Eighth Round Table, p. 70.

¹⁹ The 8th RT was the first to formulate a Declaration from the deliberations. It was included in its entirety in the report of the Secretary General to the General Assembly.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 11.

²¹ Report of Ninth Round Table, p. 9.

²² Report, Follow up to the Addis Recommendations United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting (2007), pp29-33.

²³ It was felt that the indicators required by donors may demand a level of research/analysis/resources beyond the community’s capacity while community’s requirements of indicators may fall short of donor’s needs (8th Round Table Report, p. 67).

Media in development

Most RTs have discussed the role of traditional and modern media in development. Their deliberations acknowledge that radio was and remains the most widely available and affordable mass medium for poor people. Participants at the 3rd RT concluded that community radio was a significant force in development. The 5th RT examined how traditional and new communication technologies could contribute to poverty alleviation. Radio, TV and new digital technologies were classified as modern communication technologies. Participants identified three criteria essential for the successful application of modern communication technologies in pursuit of poverty reduction – appropriateness, accessibility and sustainability. The 6th RT called for UN agencies and NGOs to contribute to the establishment of community radio in rural areas in Africa and to support the development of legal frameworks supportive of the media. The 8th RT included a number of examples of how local media, particularly radio, was used to stimulate debate and dialogue between individuals and communities on HIV/AIDS and other development issues.²⁴ The 9th RT, while confirming that in rural areas radio was often the only medium available, called for communication initiatives to make use of all communication channels available – mixing and matching traditional and new technologies to meet the needs of local people. The 10th RT recognised the transformative potential and capacity of ICTs.

2. FIRST PHASE: ROUND TABLES 1—5

RTs 1 - 4 preceded the JIU report (1994), and the learning that resulted from these meetings informed that report's recommendations as well as the conduct of future RTs. The 1st RT was organised by UNICEF in New York in March, 1988. The second was coordinated by CIDA/IDRC²⁵ in Ottawa in July 1989. The third was hosted by FAO in Rome in September 1991. RTs 4 and 5 were organised by NGOs - the fourth was organised by the Instituto para America Latina (IPAL) in Lima in 1993 and World View International Foundation took responsibility for hosting the fifth RT in Chiang Mai, Thailand in January 1995. Participants at the 5th RT agreed that all future RTs should be organised by UN agencies on a rotational basis. No reports from RTs 1, 2, or 4 have been located but references in related documentation as well as the report from the third suggest that these meetings were relatively small, informal events attended by selected UN agencies, donors and CSOs. They shared similar objectives, which were to exchange information and experiences, agree on the concept of C4D, and consider ways to achieve a greater profile for C4D with high-level decision-makers within the agencies.

2.1. 3rd Inter Agency Round Table²⁶

Twenty six representatives from UN agencies, donor organisations, NGOs and academia participated in the 3rd RT, organised by FAO. In addition to the themes set out below, the meeting considered the RT process and agreed that more representatives from developing countries as well as the private sector should be invited to participate in future events.

²⁴ The 8th RT report includes short overviews of Soul City (South Africa); Sustainable Community Radio Stations in Mozambique, the Tambuli Radio Project in The Philippines.

²⁵ International Development and Research Council.

²⁶ Rome, 3- 6 September 1991

Objectives²⁷

- i.** To share information and concrete experiences and lessons learned from them and to improve knowledge of the state of the art, as a basis for inter-agency collaboration.
- ii.** To develop some common strategies.
- iii.** To identify the mechanisms to continue and consolidate this informal network.

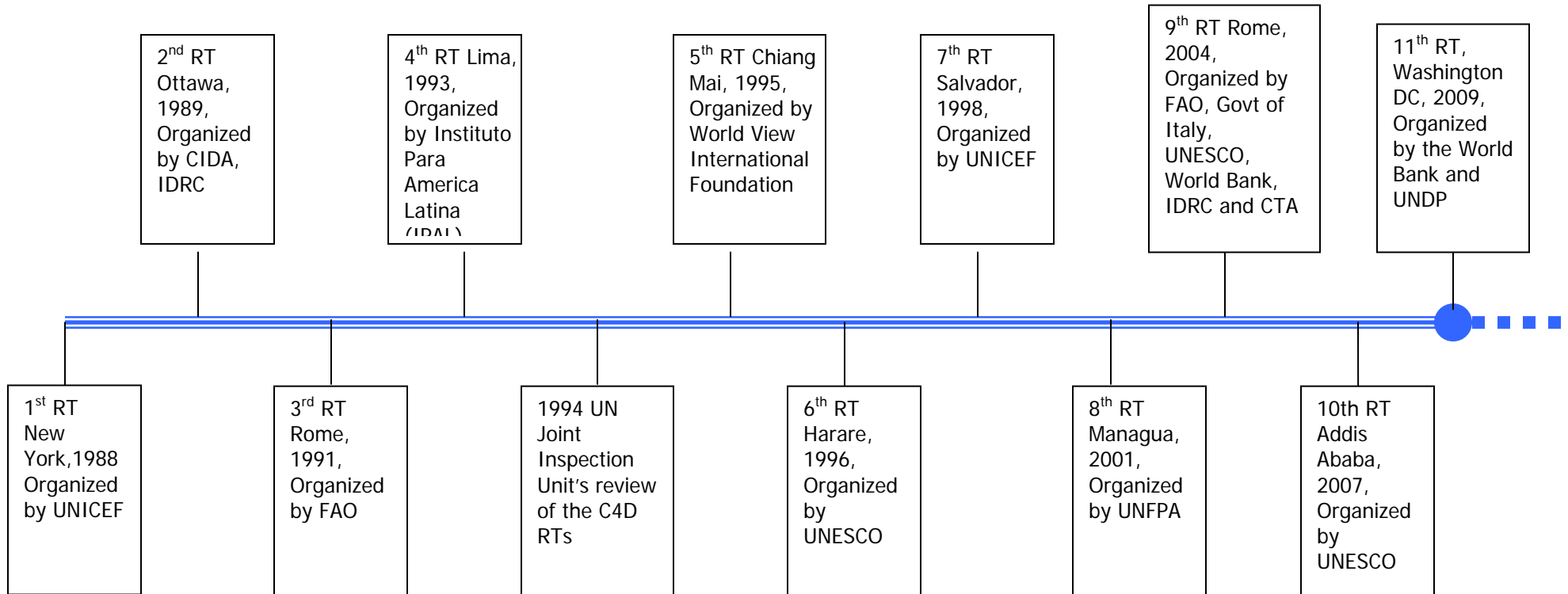
Themes

The Round Table addressed six key issues:

- i.** Communication with Decision-makers
- ii.** Communication for Participatory Development
- iii.** Communication as a Discipline: A Training Package/Curriculum Development
- iv.** Development Support Communication (DSC) for Africa
- v.** Media Approaches: the current situation of rural broadcasting
- vi.** Communication for Health

²⁷ Report of the 3rd Round Table on Development Communication (1991), p. 1.

Timeline of Inter-agency Roundtables on Communication for Development



Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Action

i. Communication with Decision-makers

Participants acknowledged that more time and effort needed to be devoted to communicating with decision-makers and agreed that effective strategies should be developed. As a first step a survey should be conducted of ‘typical’ decision-makers’ attitudes and expectations of communication for development.

ii. Communication for Participatory Development

Participants discussed a Communication for Development Case Study²⁸ and noted a number of key elements that had led to its success including good leadership and managerial capacity, the existence of community organisations, the integrated rural development focus which led to production of communication materials covering a wide range of development issues and the willingness of the Mexican authorities to listen to and enter into dialogue with local peasant associations. Participants also noted that training local people to produce and use communication materials and transferring the technical and operational aspects of communication for development to local organisations had posed few problems. However, transferring the cost of running the programme proved more difficult.

iii. Communication as a discipline

The meeting confirmed the need to harmonise development communication approaches within the UN system and endorsed the joint UNESCO/UNFPA initiative in this area. The meeting also identified the shortage of people skilled in development for communication as a major constraint to embedding the discipline within development and agreed that training was a priority. Participants agreed that a sub-group should be established to work on training and curricula development.

iv. Development Support Communication for Africa

The meeting acknowledged the enormous scale of communication needs in Africa and considered four development communication initiatives underway in the continent.²⁹ The RT concluded that it was vitally important to bring together the various initiatives in a concerted approach to respond to the development needs in Africa and that Africans should be involved both in identifying those needs and in determining how best they should be met. The RT endorsed approaches that advocated using and building local capacity. It was also noted that the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) was the correct channel through which to promote inter-agency cooperation and cost sharing. The RT endorsed the importance of the Communication Needs Assessment proposal and recommended that it should be included in the second phase of the UN’s Programme of Action for Africa’s Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAEERD).³⁰

v. Media approaches

The RT concluded that radio broadcasting was assuming a ‘new lease of life’ and in some countries was becoming a significant force for development. The Community Radio Approach was

²⁸ PRODERITH, Mexico supported by FAO.

²⁹ (a) Assessment of Africa’s Development Support Communication Needs (in the context of UNPAEERD); (b) proposed UNDP project for Regional Development Support Communication Services, Africa (c) An integrated Communication Strategy for Rural Development and Agricultural Production in the SADC Countries and (d) UNFPA Initiative for Training in Information, Education, and Communication for Population Issues in Africa.

³⁰ The first phase of UNPAEERD ran from 1986-1990.

considered a significant factor in this success and the meeting noted AMARC's influence in facilitating this approach. The RT recommended that UNICEF and FAO work on a joint rural radio training package aimed at promoting the programming approach, which was deemed to be successful in other countries.

vi. Communication for Health

The RT noted that strategies were based on building alliances, involving/mobilising various sections of society and intensive use of media, particularly radio. The meeting acknowledged the use of popular music and other entertainment forms that include health and social messages. Some viewed this approach as too manipulative while health communicators considered the use of entertainment channels entirely justifiable for topics such as HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy. The RT agreed that more time should be given to this theme at the next meeting.³¹

2.2. The UN's Joint Inspection Unit's review of the Round Table for Communication for Development³²

The report of The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on Communication for Development programmes in the United Nations system and the related comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination led directly to GA Resolution 50/130, which confirmed the importance of C4D in the work of the UN.³³ The JIU report provides a helpful analysis of Round Tables 1- 4.³⁴ It confirms that the original objectives of the RTs were primarily to share information and experience and propose areas for cooperation among the specialised agencies and other members. This report draws attention to a number of key issues including: (i) too much emphasis on programmes and projects and insufficient attention given to 'convincing decision-makers' and developing relevant strategies and policies and joint operations; (ii) the need to have more participants from developing countries and the private sector; (iii) the RT has been 'kept informal and inaccessible to many agencies' and points out that UNDP, the largest development financing agency of the UN system, did not participate in any of these Round Tables; (iv) the need for a more open forum whereby all agencies involved in development and humanitarian activities participate but participants from each agency should be limited to enable the RT to retain effectiveness and flexibility; and (v) the need to share learning gained in the RT more widely.³⁵

³¹ No report for the 4th RT was located and it is therefore unclear whether this issue was discussed in Lima. The 8th RT (Managua, 2001) focused on the role of communication in tackling HIV/AIDS.

³² 1994. JIU report on Communication for Development Programmes in the United Nations System: http://www.unsystem.org/JIU/data/reports/1994/en94_04.pdf

³³ GA Resolution 50/130: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N96/768/25/PDF/N9676825.pdf?OpenElement>

³⁴ In 1992 UNESCO requested that Communication for Development be included in the work programme of the UN's Joint Inspection Unit. UNESCO felt that a JIU review would enable (i) a distinction between public information and communication functions; (ii) an understanding of the concept of communication as a management process involving policy and decision-making organs and (iii) highlight the need for greater co-ordination among the UN specialised agencies.

³⁵ JIU report (1994) paras. 102 – 107.

Summary of JIU's main conclusions on RT process³⁶

- i. Better strategies for communication should be developed in co-operation with the decision-makers. The need for a joint effort was underlined. There was a further need to harmonise development communication throughout the United Nations System.
- ii. Training in development communication is crucial. Development communication needs in Africa are urgent. A shortage of trained people in development communication is one of the constraints facing developing countries.
- iii. The need for training packages for communication experts was reaffirmed. Differences in concepts and language used by various United Nations agencies in respect of development communication made co-operation difficult. There is a need for better understanding between policy-makers and practitioners.
- iv. The problem of communication should be approached at the project, agency and inter-agency levels.
- v. Short, on-the-job or in-service training for field staff should be provided. Training should also be organised by specialised agencies for their counterparts at country level. Several separate initiatives are being taken by different agencies. The RT was an ideal forum for discussing them and for trying to introduce some co-ordination.

The JIU report recommended that the 5th Round Table take decisions on the following points:

- i. Whether or not to constitute the inter-agency round table as a formal body; and if so, under which organisation.
- ii. If the round table is to be so constituted, whether or not the present composition of membership should continue: UN specialised agencies (selected, or all): communication specialists; private sector; NGOs.
- iii. Whether there should be a focus on regions or sub-regions whose communication requirements have not yet been adequately met. These needs have already been identified and regularly updated by a number of agencies.
- iv. The place and the agenda for future meetings; identify and agree upon institutions and participants from the regions.
- v. Ways and means of strengthening policies on Communication Programmes for Development establishing standard guidelines, spotting shortcomings and redressing deficiencies.³⁷

2.3. 5th Inter Agency Round Table³⁸

Initially the 5th RT, hosted by World View International Foundation, was scheduled to take place in Sri Lanka in October 1994 but because of political unrest the meeting was moved to Chiang Mai in Thailand. This was the second RT organised by an NGO and the only one to be

³⁶ Ibid., paras. 126 – 131.

³⁷ Ibid., para. 132.

³⁸ Chiang Mai, Thailand 25-28 January 1995

held in the Asia Region.³⁹ As a result of the rescheduling some representatives from major UN and other agencies were unable to attend - notably from UNFPA, UNDP and the World Bank.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, with over fifty participants, many from NGOs, it was the largest RT organised to date and the first to take place following the JIU review.

Objectives

In common with earlier RTs, objectives were:

- i. to share information and experience;
- ii. to develop common strategies;
- iii. to identify mechanisms to continue and consolidate the informal network.⁴¹

Themes

The RT was organised in two parts. Part One comprised plenary presentations and discussion on three themes:

- i. How Decision-Makers view Communication for Development
- ii. Participatory Communication Training for Sustainable Development.
- iii. Communication and the Environment.

Part Two was devoted to Working Groups which addressed (i) Training in Participatory Communication, (ii) How can Communication Technologies help the poor?, and (iii) The Role of Communication in Development. A fourth group comprising the representatives of specialised UN agencies, selected NGOs and universities associated with previous RTs then focused on the following key issues: (i) advocacy; (ii) the Clearing house on Communication for Development; (iii) high-level training in C4D; (iv) evaluation and cost-effectiveness; (v) the UNESCO-UNFPA Orientation kit; and (vi) the Joint Inspection Unit Report.

Conclusions and recommendations

Advocacy

Reaching out to high ranking and middle-level policy makers was considered an essential element of any strategy to highlight the impact of C4D and to secure the necessary funding for C4D projects. Decision makers were therefore considered the primary target of any C4D advocacy strategy, which should include four core inter-related elements: a policy paper, international fora, sectoral publications and ambassadors of good will.

Recommendations

- i. A draft position paper, supported by selected case studies, on linking communication to development to be prepared. The paper should be developed in such a way as to allow each specialised agency to define its own work and strategy.

³⁹ IPAL was the first NGO to organise a Round Table. It organised the 4th RT in Lima in 1993.

⁴⁰ Final Report of the Fifth Round Table Communication for Development.

⁴¹ Ibid.

- ii. The paper, together with the Survey, 'How Decision-makers see Communication for Development', should be circulated to the appropriate UN organs, specialised agencies, donors, NGOs.
- iii. Communication specialists should seek to publish papers in specialised journals. The Round Table report and associated papers could be published in the Devcom journal. Also suggestions to make greater use of the internet.

Clearing House on C4D

The RT had been made aware that publication of the *Development Communication Report* produced by the Academy for Educational Development was to come to an end and the entire database and files of the Clearinghouse disposed of. The group was greatly concerned at the dismantling of this service, which it noted had been of great value to UN agencies, NGOs and academic institutions working on C4D. A number of potential 'homes' for the database were suggested but it was recognised that preparation of a new site and securing funds to maintain it would take time.

Recommendations

- i. A suitable site should be identified for the Clearing House files and arrangements made to transfer documents.

High Level Training in C4D

Group members voiced the need to ensure qualified and professional people work in this area. New initiatives should include production of training materials for academic institutions, participatory communication teaching methods at university level.

Recommendations

- i. UNESCO was requested to examine its database on training institutions and identify those focusing on C4D at the graduate level and those that have adopted participatory methods.
- ii. UNICEF and UNESCO were requested to monitor further work on participatory training methods and materials.

Evaluation: cost effectiveness

The group stressed the importance of evaluating C4D projects – not least because of the need to attract funding. The need to develop more reliable, measurable indicators was also emphasised as donors wanted to see evidence of communication's impact on development projects and attempts to correlate communication inputs with economic data had been disappointing. The evaluation work of specific agencies noted particularly the Tambuli Community Radio Project in the Philippines supported by UNESCO. This project was seen as illustrating various social indicators that went some way to confirm communications' contribution to the development process.

Recommendations

- i. UNESCO to seek additional funds to conduct a survey on identifying possible social indicators and links to overall development.

- ii. An attempt should be made to compile a ‘state of the art’ evaluation report from UN agencies empirical C4D evaluation studies. This report to be presented to the next Round Table.⁴²

UNESCO-UNFPA Orientation Kit

The training package, ‘Approaches to Development Communication: an overview and resource kit,’ was felt by participants to be a comprehensive resource on C4D responding to the needs of development planners and decision makers. However, they agreed that more effort was needed to make the kit relevant to grassroots-level users and oriented more explicitly to participatory training methods.

Recommendations

- i. UNESCO to evaluate the kit in cooperation with those using it. A function of the evaluation would be to propose a new format with an emphasis on participatory methods, grass roots orientation and a broader selection of case studies.

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit

Group members considered the recommendations from the JIU report and confirmed the need to maintain the RT as a mechanism for networking and exchange of experiences. They were unanimous in stressing the importance of the informal nature of RT discussions and the participation of NGOs, universities, donors and the private sector.

Recommendations

- i. The overall responsibility for organising the RT should be assumed on a rotational basis by a UN agency involved in C4D. That agency may involve a relevant NGO, donor, or academic institute.
- ii. Wherever possible, the RT should be held in a developing country.
- iii. The organising agency should be responsible for the preparation of the RT report and for its submission to the relevant UN agencies. Additional distribution to be ensured by RT participants to relevant associates and institutions.
- iv. RT participation should be limited to experienced communication specialists and donor agencies involved in C4D.
- v. The next RT should be organised by UNESCO, if possible in an African country. The report does not note any specific themes to be addressed by the 6th RT.

⁴² No reference is made in the 6th RT report of this evaluation study. It is unclear whether the compilation of UN evaluation studies was ever completed.

3. SECOND PHASE: ROUND TABLES 6—7

This can be seen as a transition phase where recommendations from the 5th RT with regard to the organisation of, and participation at, RTs (see above) are implemented. Although NGOs specialising in C4D are still involved in RTs, UN agencies now take the lead in organising these events. GA Resolution 51/172, passed following the 6th Round Table, *inter alia*, recognised the importance of C4D processes within the intergovernmental processes of the UN system. Crucially, the Resolution called for development actors at country level to allocate increased importance to C4D and include it as an integral component of development projects and components.⁴³

3.1. Sixth Inter-Agency Round Table⁴⁴

This RT was organised by UNESCO. The Recommendations from the 6th RT, together with the Secretary General's first report on Communication for Development to the General Assembly,⁴⁵ led directly to the GA Resolution 51/172.

Objectives

- to share information and experiences to provide a solid base for inter-agency cooperation.
- to explore common strategies and identify mechanisms to improve (i) interaction between development actors, (ii) knowledge of the various UN organisations, governments and NGOs in line with the terms of resolution 50/130.

Themes

The RT focused on C4D at the grassroots and community level, and in particular the appropriate communication techniques, methods and technologies to increase people's participation and catalyse the creation and sharing of knowledge and skills – concepts separate and distinct from public information. The RT reaffirmed a point raised in the JIU report that only through participatory communication — that is open, two-way communication systems that enable dialogue – can communities speak out, express their needs, aspirations and fears, and participate in the decisions that concern their development.

The meeting emphasised the importance of defining national policies, strategies and programmes for building strong communication for development capacities and structures. It further supported the General Assembly's recognition that all people-oriented development programmes and projects should include a communication element.

⁴³ A/51/172: <http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/21351/11712967771A-RES-51-182.pdf/A-RES-51-182.pdf>

⁴⁴ Harare, Zimbabwe 2- 5 September 1996. The Harare Round Table was the first RT to be held following the passing of UN General Assembly Resolution 50/130 of 20/12 1995 - <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N96/768/25/PDF/N9676825.pdf?OpenElement>. By this Resolution the GA took note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on Communication for Development Programmes (1994) and requested the Secretary-General of UNESCO to report on the implementation of the resolution to the Assembly at its 51st session and thereafter on a biannual basis. (see Annex One)

⁴⁵ A/51/314.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

1. A Communication for Development element should be included in all programmes of the UN Special Initiative for Africa and sufficient funds allocated to each of these programmes.
2. Development partners and donors, when planning projects and constructing budgets, should ensure measures are in place to ensure long term viability of projects.
3. UN agencies, NGOs and national institutes should actively contribute to the development of community radio in rural areas and legal frameworks supportive of the media. Partnerships with aid 'organisations and donors are essential.'
4. Efforts should be made to study, experiment with and use low cost techniques in projects – particularly radio receivers powered by solar energy or mechanisms developed in Africa.
5. Governments, aid organisations and other partners should intensify their efforts to enable new information technologies to be at the service of development in Africa.
6. Financial resources should be identified to support the development of a multimedia 'kit' by the Zimbabwean chapter of the African women's media specialists. This kit would draw on the experience of Panos, UNICEF, FAO, UNESCO, UNFPA and other organisations.
7. The capacity of national and local institutions should be enhanced in such a way as to ensure communication is better integrated into development activities.
8. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and regional governments should continue to promote both at policy and operational levels the services provided by SADC's Communication for Development Centre.
9. UN agencies, government organisations and NGOs should share their methodologies and research results on C4D and, where possible, collaborate on research.
10. All participating organisations should support communication programmes that enable recommendations from UN global conferences to be more widely known.

3.2. Seventh Inter-Agency Round Table⁴⁶

This RT was organised by UNICEF and its report submitted to the Secretary General for inclusion in his report to the 56th session of the General Assembly.

Objectives

- To share information, experiences, lessons learned
- Develop strategies and common approaches
- To identify mechanisms for collaboration among participants.

Themes

The Round Table addressed four major themes on which working groups made recommendations.

⁴⁶ Salvador, Brazil 10 -13 November 1998

- i. Developing the concept of Communication for Development
- ii. Evaluation of specialised programmes
- iii. Knowledge strengthening
- iv. Communication and behavioural change through community media.

It was stressed that while the RTs periodically present an inventory on C4D, the activity is not yet sufficiently institutionalised across UN agencies.⁴⁷ The need to distinguish between different types of communication was emphasised. Terminology and definitions were proposed to distinguish each communication activity. This was seen as a prerequisite for developing an evaluation framework for communication programmes. The development of such a framework should be the focus of reinforced and more institutionalised cooperation among the UN agencies. Another priority identified was the need to expand the narrow framework in which C4D programmes were placed. The concept of C4D needed to be redefined in order to facilitate a wider acknowledgement of its part in social development processes.

The RT identified a number of challenges facing C4D practitioners. These included: the positioning of communication in a broader context of social change and human behaviour; working on communication issues in an evolving global media environment; managing the pressure to deliver quick results; evaluation of current C4D programmes; and identifying themes for inter-agency collaboration.

Conclusions and Recommendations⁴⁸

- i. The concept of a Task Force was adopted to promote communication as a fundamental element of development programmes. The role of the task force would be to (a) identify particular programme weaknesses, (b) provide the necessary information and propose models, (c) find ways to reinforce cooperation among UN agencies, donors, NGOs and universities, and (d) support the establishment of national task forces to promote the role of communication within the framework of development programmes.
- ii. The importance of research in C4D was acknowledged and the RT recommended establishing an ‘institutional platform’ specialising in the evaluation of each stage of project development. A Guide should describe how projects evolve, and in close cooperation with the specialised agencies and NGOs, indicate future trends. It was envisaged that such a guide would facilitate the ‘conception’ of programmes and the orientation of communication policies for the coming years.
- iii. Priority should be given to the development of a website to collect the results of applied research and C4D methodology. UNESCO was requested to develop documentation in the fields of development and participatory communication. In particular the guide – *Approaches for the development of Communication* should be updated.
- iv. A comparative study of the methodologies and operational approaches of the various UN agencies should be carried out. Such a study would also focus on the length of projects, their perspectives and impact. Evaluation should be encouraged through peer reviews.

⁴⁷ Report of the Seventh Round Table on Communication for Development, UNESCO 2000.

⁴⁸ Report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/172, including the recommendations of the Seventh Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development (A/56/221).

- v. The strategic role of community media was recognised and in order to improve knowledge of this sector the RT proposed an inventory of best practices and empirical models to facilitate training in community-oriented communication.
- vi. Support to the conception and realisation of communication programmes related to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- vii. The 8th RT should address C4D issues through the lens of HIV/AIDS. Issues proposed included evaluating the information programmes designed to halt the HIV/AIDS pandemic; development of methodologies to evaluate current communication programmes and using community radio to reach the disadvantaged.

4. THIRD PHASE: ROUND TABLES 8—10

RTs in this phase had a sharper thematic focus. Their deliberations suggest a much greater awareness of the need to anchor C4D within the changing institutional framework of the UN (the CCA/UNDAF and One UN) and also the need to demonstrate how C4D can contribute towards meeting organisational priorities such as human rights (8th RT) and the MDGs (9th and 10th RTs).

4.1. Eighth Inter-Agency Round Table⁴⁹

This RT was organised by UNFPA together with the Rockefeller Foundation, UNESCO and Panos and was attended by over 70 participants from various UN agencies, bilateral organizations and CSOs.

Themes

- i. Overview of the role of communication in development
- ii. The role of communication in HIV/AIDS programming

The meeting took place against a backdrop of a rapidly transforming international response to HIV/AIDS. The development of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the holding of the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, the Millennium Development Summit and other global developments meant that priorities had shifted and procedures changed as donors and policy-makers required action and results with increasing urgency. This RT represented an opportunity to incorporate the cumulative expertise of the development communication sector into the global response to HIV/AIDS. The questions examined at this RT concerned the role communicators would have to play in the future, whether current strategies, experience and knowledge were appropriate to slow the HIV/AIDS epidemic and under which circumstances they needed to be expanded. Key points from the discussion are synthesized in the Declaration (below), which was later presented by the Secretary General of UNESCO to the UN General Assembly.

The meeting opened with an overview of the role of C4D and HIV/AIDS in particular. Practice, evaluation and challenges were then examined through the lens of three specific approaches: Behaviour

⁴⁹ Managua, Nicaragua 26-28 November 2001

Change Communication, Communication for Social Change and Advocacy Communication.⁵⁰ RT participants appreciated the analysis of each approach and agreed that the priority was to promote common understandings, synthesise experiences and identify challenges and means of overcoming them. Participants emphasized the needs to involve communities in all aspects of the development and evaluation of projects that affect them.

The RT marked a decisive recognition that success in achieving sustained behavioural change on a scale required to tackle the pandemic was fundamentally dependent on social change and that communication strategies needed to focus on both.

Declaration of the eighth Inter-Agency Round Table on C4D

The Round Table asserted:⁵¹

- i. Communication for development is a powerful process that has shown success in agriculture, population, health, education and many other fields and has contributed substantially to social and economic progress and poverty reduction.
- ii. Communication for development is an essential process within human development and must be integrated in economic, political and social change. This process is more than information dissemination. It is a multi-strategy approach that involves and gives voice to all levels of society.
- iii. Communication for development is grounded in political, social and cultural contexts, guided by research and ideally owned by those affected.
- iv. Communication for development must create informed public and private debate by creating the space for people's voices to be heard.
- v. Human Rights are an inherent part of all Communication for Development.

On HIV/AIDS communication, the RT made the following observations:⁵²

- vi. HIV/AIDS communicators have been successful in broadening awareness, increasing knowledge of how HIV/AIDS is contracted, placing the epidemic in the context of human rights, increasing knowledge and demand for effective services and mobilising political support for national health plans.
- vii. Local, national and international communities, however, have struggled to make an impact on overall HIV/AIDS rates. Despite increased attention and concern the pandemic continues to spread:
- viii. Recognising this scenario, the Round Table believes that:
 - The HIV/AIDS pandemic presents unique and unresolved challenges for communication for development. In the continuing absence of a cure and a vaccine for HIV/AIDS, the capacity of people to communicate with each other is a critical part of containing the epidemic.

⁵⁰ See 'Communication for Development Round Table Report: Focus on HIV/AIDS communication and evaluation' (2001) pp. 39-61.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁵² Report of Director General of UNESCO on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 50/130, including the recommendations of the 8th Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development (A/59/207).

- Despite the success noted above, existing HIV/AIDS communication strategies have proved inadequate in containing and mitigating the effects of the epidemic.
- Progress in slowing the epidemic will require a multisectoral response and use of communication strategies to tackle the behaviours related to the spread of the epidemic and to address its causes (inequality, prejudice, poverty, social and political exclusion and discrimination, particularly against women).

The RT called for:

- i. The international communication response to be rooted in, and subject to, local ownership and agendas;
- ii. A redirection of increased resources towards more effective communication programmes based on the principles outlined above;
- iii. Programmes to be accountable to those they are designed to benefit;
- iv. Increased investments in capacity-building, training and research at the country level in communication for development strategies, evaluation and appropriate indicators; and
- v. A coordinated and concerted multisectoral international and in-country communication response among all partners, involving governments, NGOs religious leaders, donors, the private sector and particularly those living with HIV/AIDS.

Recommendations for immediate action

- i. the formation of an international coalition on HIV/AIDS communication strategies and tools. The work of the coalition will feed into the planning for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria;
- ii. the collection and sharing of tools from key agencies/implementers to identify and improve access to proven tools and reduce duplication;
- iii. the inclusion by UNESCO of the Declaration in its biennial report on communication for development to be submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

4.2. Ninth Inter-Agency Round Table⁵³

This RT was organised by FAO together with the Government of Italy, UNESCO, World Bank, International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA). It brought together some 150 participants from various development and media organisations as well as UN agencies.

Themes

Under the broad umbrella of sustainable development the RT focused on three specific thematic areas:

- i. Communication for natural resource management
- ii. Communication for isolated and marginalised groups
- iii. Communication in research, extension and education.⁵⁴

⁵³ Rome, Italy 6-9 September 2004.

⁵⁴ Communication for Development Roundtable Report (2004), p. 6.

The importance of C4D was acknowledged. There was a recognition that it had moved from a focus on information dissemination to community participation. Many national and international initiatives acknowledge that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) cannot be achieved without good communication and recognise that new strategies and tools must be developed.

The RT began with an overview of key challenges facing the world. These included the rapid spread of globalisation and the spread of information and communications technologies (ICTs); the increasing divide between rich and poor; the changing nature of the nation-state; the changing nature of the private sector; ecological pressure; the decentralisation of services; the explosion of media; and the emergence of new social actors.

The RT noted a number of principles shared and agreed on by all participants. These start from the belief that C4D is about people, who are the drivers of their own development. Further, it is a horizontal, two-way process that is about people coming together to identify problems, agree on visions for desirable futures and empower the poorest. It is about the co-creation and sharing of knowledge. It respects the local context, values and culture.

There was a general acknowledgement that the rapid expansion of ICTs had failed to bridge the gap between knowledge and information and that the poorest and most marginalised groups, especially in rural areas, were still largely excluded from the development process. The meeting acknowledged the rapid spread of mobile telephony, particularly in Africa but noted that radio, particularly community radio, remained the most widespread technology. A number of new initiatives on C4D were presented, including the proposed 2006 World Congress on Communication for Development. The meeting noted that communication is a means to sustainable development and not an end in itself. It established the basis for a working group/network to foster global partnerships on C4D and established a Plan of Action to be facilitated and monitored through the mechanism of the working group.

Declaration of the Ninth Inter-Agency Round Table on C4D

The RT asserted that C4D:

- i. is about people, who are the drivers of their own development;
- ii. contributes to sustainable change for the benefit of the poorest;
- iii. is a two-way process – it is about people coming together to identify problems, agree on visions for desirable futures, create solutions and empower the poorest.;
- iv. does not only apply to work with communities. It is an approach of equal importance to all stakeholders;
- v. is about the co-creation and sharing of knowledge;
- vi. respects indigenous knowledge and culture; local context is key;
- vii. is critical to the success of the MDGs.

The RT called for:

- i. A scaling up of initiatives to improve practice and policy at every level.
- ii. C4D initiatives need to be properly ‘enabled’ by adequate policies and resources – a long time scale needs to be considered.
- iii. National governments should facilitate a legal and supportive framework enabling the right to free expression and emergence of independent and pluralist information systems including the

crucial role of community media in providing access to information for the isolated and marginalised.

iv. Research on how to achieve and sustain the process and outcomes of C4D. This requires a participatory approach, a shared framework between development agencies and local stakeholders and community involvement in design, implementation and dissemination.

v. Evaluation and impact assessments should include participatory baseline and communication needs assessments. They should include self-evaluation by the communities themselves and be socially useful. These needs assessment should inform policy.

vi. Training initiatives should be focused on collaborative learning in C4D encouraging experiential, value-based, culturally sensitive training in participatory and fostering a community of practice across the regions. The Isang Bagsak learning process provides good examples from across Asia and Africa.

vii. Building alliances. There is a need for effective linkages which give voice to the poorest and have the ability to engage with policy and influence decision-making on sustainable development. To this end, special attention should be paid to fostering local, national and regional C4D processes.

viii. Information and consultation mechanisms should be set up to ensure coordinated action among UN agencies and other stakeholders at international level.

Recommendations and Plan of Action

- i. A working group/network to foster global partnerships on C4D will be established.
- ii. The following Plan of Action, agreed by the participants of the Round Table, should be facilitated and monitored by the above working group:
 - C4D advocates and practitioners commit themselves to a deeper engagement with policy-makers to ensure that communication is recognised as a central component in all development initiatives. This will involve a systematic coordinated effort to establish a clear, accessible body of evidence drawn from current best practice.
 - Donors and development agencies should set up well-resourced C4D units to implement initiatives within their organisation and to promote C4D with other donors and agencies.
 - Governments, donors and development agencies should require the incorporation of a communication needs assessment in any development initiative (and eventually devote a specific percentage of their budgets for this purpose - for example 0.5-1%).
 - Initiatives such as the world congress on C4D should be encouraged with the aim of building a concrete evidentiary base for decision-makers in donor, development agencies and governments.
 - The UN should set up an interagency group to analyse communication experiences, suggest improvements and develop a common approach to C4D.
 - Training Initiatives should be fostered in developing countries, building on existing experiences. Programs, materials and systems for C4D should be developed and shared. Participatory development communication should be integrated into existing development curricula.
- iii. FAO and UNESCO will monitor this process to ensure active participation of other partners.

4.3. Tenth Inter Agency Round Table⁵⁵

The RT was hosted by UNESCO and was attended mostly by representatives from UN organisations with some CSO participation.

Objectives

- i. To increase joint inter-agency collaboration at Headquarters and UN Country Team levels
- ii. To strengthen awareness among UN system organisations on ways in which the impact and effectiveness of C4D can be measured.
- iii. To introduce mechanisms to harmonise C4D programming approaches within the UN system.

Themes

The theme of the RT was ‘Towards a common system approach for harnessing communication for development to achieve the Millennium Development Goals’. Discussions focused on practical and achievable interventions around which UN agencies could develop a common approach, strategy and action plan for the implementation of C4D practice.

The RT reiterated that C4D is critical for the success of the MDGs, acknowledged the vital role of the independent, pluralist media in the process and presented two background papers⁵⁶ to articulate that position and to emphasise that a higher priority for C4D is essential if coherent and harmonised actions are to take place at country level.⁵⁷ Background papers prepared by UNESCO and UNDP provided an overview of issues and made suggestions for improved inter-agency coordination at Headquarters and country levels.⁵⁸

The following three broad approaches were used to take stock of the extensive range of initiatives and activities being implemented by the UN system:⁵⁹

- i. Communication as governance or participation: amplifying citizens’ voices, enabling public debate and holding governments to account using the media as an important constituency as well as a conduit for information.
- ii. Sector-specific communication: responding to the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals using tailor-made communication approaches.
- iii. Information and Communication 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-stakeholders partnerships, which are needed to reap the benefits.

⁵⁵ Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 12-14 February 2007.

⁵⁶ UNESCO and UNDP, ‘Towards a common United Nations system approach: harnessing communication to achieve the Millennium Development Goals’, background papers prepared for the 10th UN Inter-agency Round Table on Communication for Development.

⁵⁷ Report of the Director General of UNESCO on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/130, including the recommendations of the tenth UN inter-agency Round Table on Communication for Development (2008- A/63/180).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Report of the 10th UN inter-agency Round Table on Communication for Development (2007), pp. 15-23.

Participants noted that the C4D needs assessment methodology is absent from the UN approach, particularly at country level.

In the UN system, communication tends to be viewed 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.

Participants noted that public information strategies are consolidated through the UN Department of Public Information, which has demonstrated growing accomplishment in responding to global issues in support of the MDGs and ensuring that the work of the UN is known to specific audiences as well as the general public. While acknowledging the importance of this for the profile and objectives of the UN, participants agreed that this does not equate with C4D, which is participatory communication in support of development programmes.⁶⁰

The meeting observed that more systematic linkages between the Inter-Agency Round Table and the UN Communications Group may improve awareness and capacity-building needs about C4D practice in the UN system. It would also help harmonise UN programming priorities and communication activities.

Similar linkages with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) may underscore the added value of C4D in development planning. Integrating C4D in upstream policy-setting through strategic planning frameworks such as the CCA/UNDAF will ensure that it is considered in UN programming priorities and responses.

Participants felt that a triangular relationship between the Round Table, the UN Communications Group and the United Nations Development Group may lead to a system-wide C4D policy and the systematic follow-up of RT recommendations at Headquarters and field levels.

Participants agreed that the eleventh RT would be co-hosted by UNDP and the World Bank in Washington, D.C.

Conclusions and Recommendations⁶¹

The meeting requested the Chief Executives Board of the United Nations System:

- i. to impress upon senior-level decision-makers of UN specialised agencies, programmes and funds the importance of prioritizing C4D principles and methodologies in all programmatic areas and the need to allocate human, technical and financial resources for this effort;
- ii. to advise the heads of respective agencies, programmes and funds to integrate C4D principles and methodologies into programme and project planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation; to ensure the incorporation of C4D principles and methodologies, including needs assessments, into CCA/UNDAF guidelines, or equivalent exercises, so as to improve development results;
- iii. to call upon the UN Resident Coordinator System to ensure greater coherence and coordination of C4D at the country level;
- iv. to establish a formal inter-agency mechanism promoting and enhancing C4D within the UN system.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Report of the 10th UN inter-agency Round Table on Communication for Development (2007).

Follow Up on Recommendations of the Tenth Round Table

Representatives from seven UN organisations⁶² met at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris in December 2007 to review the recommendations from the 10th meeting in Addis Ababa. The meeting reported back on progress on advocacy initiatives, discussed wide-ranging policy and operational issues including sustainability and effectiveness and capacity development needs. Participants reviewed a draft paper on integrating C4D into the CCA/UNDAF. It was agreed that UNDP's Oslo Governance Centre would circulate a revised version that would take into account feedback from country teams in all the regions in early 2008. The meeting also discussed the structure of the bi-annual UN System Communication for Development Report to the United Nations Secretary-General and suggested that it could be used an important advocacy tool. There was general agreement that the report should emphasise collaboration and the contribution of C4D to the MDGs, human rights, good governance and joint programming with civil society. It should focus on what the UN agencies have been trying to do collectively rather than rehearse what each agency has been doing individually.

5. OUTCOME OF ROUND TABLE DELIBERATIONS

The extent to which specific recommendations have been implemented is unclear. Systematic mechanisms to follow up on recommendations have yet to be introduced. With the exception of the last (10th) RT, any follow up seems to have been ad hoc. In some instances it is not clear which UN agency had responsibility for following up on commitments made. It is also unclear whether participating UN agencies made additional funding available to implement recommendations. A more systematic follow up may have been seen by some as at odds with the stated informal nature of the RT. It is interesting to note that reviewing the status of recommendations from previous RTs does not feature as a specific item on RT agendas.

Since 1996 the Secretary General's biannual report to the General Assembly on Communication for Development has represented an important opportunity for those UN agencies that take part in RTs to provide an overview of their engagement with C4D to a global audience. In some instances this has permitted reporting on specific recommendations from the RTs.⁶³ However, to date the report has not been used as a tool for collective reporting by UN agencies and, with the notable exception of the recommendations from the JIU report, it has not systematically addressed key recommendations from respective RTs. The RTs have undoubtedly served to advance UN agencies' thinking on a range of C4D related issues and reinforced the need for a common strategy to harness communication in support of the MDGs. However, despite the two supportive General Assembly Resolutions⁶⁴ there is little evidence that they have contributed significantly towards institutionalising the principles and practice on C4D across the UN system.

⁶² FAO, ILO, UNCDF, UNICEF, UNDP, World Bank and UNESCO.

⁶³ For example, in its contribution to the Secretary General's report on Communication for Development in 2006, FAO included a specific section on follow up to the 9th Round Table.

⁶⁴ Resolutions 50/130 (1995) and 51/172.

ANNEX I: Recommendations from the Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on Communication for Development programmes in the United Nations System (1994)

<p>Policy and Budget</p> <p>1.(a)the policy of communication should be integrated within each department of an agency dealing with development and humanitarian assistance</p> <p>1. (b) the budgets of all the projects and programmes should contain a specific provision for communication activities</p>
<p>Communication Units</p> <p>2. Communication units should enjoy certain autonomy and have direct functional relations with the various organisational offices dealing with field activities.</p>
<p>Resources</p> <p>3. Donor agencies should be invited to provide adequate resources to support and expand communication activities, in particular for participatory development initiatives.</p>
<p>Coordination</p> <p>4. (a) Headquarters: an internal mechanism, e.g. focal points, should be established where departments would inform each about the communication work in their respective units. In addition there should a unit within the policy-making division of agencies to assume the responsibility of co-ordinating communication activities. This same unit should be the link at the inter-agency level.</p> <p>4. (b) Country Level: should be practical and flexible. Greater coordination should be sought by using the team of agency representatives within the RC system. A Communication Coordinating Committee should be established, including the Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) of the project, representatives from donors, govt, NGOs and community leaders to (i) formulate communication policies (ii) follow up on the implementation of these policies (iii) prepare a joint report on the contribution of communication to the success of the project.</p>
<p>5. Cooperation with NGOs: UN should work more closely with development-oriented NGOs at the grass roots level which have already proved to have sound communication channels with beneficiaries</p>
<p>6. Round Table Conference: Existing informal Round Tables should be better organised and regularised in order to cross agency boundaries which have been recognised as barriers. It should include all UN agencies, the regional economic commissions of the UN and take into account UNESCO's mandate on communication.</p>
<p>7. IPDC: The Intergovernmental Council of IPDC should look into the mandate of IPDC in order to enable it to respond more effectively to the needs of developing countries in the field of infrastructure and mass media training. As part of this process the following points should be taken into account: (i) improve the dissemination of IPDC programmes to agencies through more effective means of communication (ii) ensure that development communication training programmes attract more funding from within the UN and from external sources.</p>
<p>8. Training: in recognition of lack of trained communication experts the UN agencies should (i) develop a systematic approach to training which would benefit field workers/development specialists as well as communication planners; (ii) academic institutions in developing and developed countries should be encouraged to include curricula for development communication.</p>
<p>9. ACC Classification**: In recognition of the constant evolution in the area of communication and its strategic value in sharing information and knowledge the ACC programme classification on communication extended for UNDP use should be redefined to response to needs of the Member states. In addition to the class entries proposed by UNESCO, FAO and UNFPA should also be consulted in order to ensure an integrated and harmonized set of categories.</p>
<p>10. Peace Keeping Operations: In recognition that the UN has no specific structure in place for immediate action to deal with communication when a peace-keeping operation emerges, the Inspector convinced of the imperative to have a 'stand-by unit' equipped with communication experts to operate in the field and cover the entire spectrum of communication/information requirements. The Unit would be mobile and report to the DPKO, work closely with the UN/DPI benefiting from its existing decentralised structure, representatives of agencies, and other media to improve coordination a field level. UNESCO in particular and other specialised agencies and NGOs should be on call to put their expertise a the disposal of the UN</p>

**Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) now replaced by United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

ANNEX II: UN General Assembly Resolution: 50/130



United Nations

A/RES/50/130

General Assembly

Distr. GENERAL

23 February 1996

ORIGINAL:
ENGLISH

Fiftieth session
Agenda item 12

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

[on the report of the Second Committee (A/50/615/Add.1)]

50/130. Communication for development programmes
in the United Nations system

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Communication for development programmes in the United Nations system", 1/ and the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on that report, 2/

Noting the need for the improvement of the development of communication capacities within the United Nations system to ensure effective inter-agency coordination and cooperation,

Recognizing the pivotal role of communication in the successful implementation of development programmes within the United Nations system and in the improvement of the interaction among actors in development, namely, the agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, Governments and non-governmental organizations,

Recognizing also that the regional commissions can play a role, where appropriate, in the development of communication capacities for the development of developing countries,

Recognizing further the need for transparent and system-wide communication coordination within the United Nations system in order to improve the planning, formulation and execution of development programmes to benefit the international community, in particular the developing countries,

Aware of the need to intensify the efforts aimed at further reducing

Overview of UN Inter-Agency Round Tables on Communication for Development

administrative and other related costs in various activities of agencies, organizations, funds and programmes within the United Nations system and improving the effectiveness of programme delivery as regards development programmes of the United Nations system as a development partner in the development of the developing countries,

Noting that the Joint Inspection Unit will be preparing a separate study entitled "A review of telecommunications and related information technologies in the United Nations system",

1. Takes note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Communication for development programmes in the United Nations system" 1/ and of the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on that report, 2/ and, in this context, invites the Joint Inspection Unit to take into consideration the requirements of developing countries;
2. Recognizes 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, inter alia, for the development of the developing countries;
3. Invites the Committee on Information, in accordance with its mandate, and where appropriate, to consider this question at its forthcoming session;
4. Recognizes the need further to facilitate inter-agency cooperation and to maximize the impact of the development programmes of the entities concerned;
5. Also recognizes the role of effective communication in disseminating the outcome and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and in ensuring the effective flow of such information to various non-governmental organizations, including grass-roots-level organizations;
6. Encourages the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, as appropriate, to use informal mechanisms such as round-table conferences to improve communication for development programmes in the United Nations system;
7. Emphasizes the need for the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system to develop a systematic approach to capacity-building in the development of communication capacities, particularly with respect to the training of field workers and development workers and technicians as well as communication planners and specialists, especially in the developing countries;
8. Invites the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as Governments and the regional commissions, to consider identifying focal points for the purpose of facilitating dialogue in the exchange of information on communication on issues related to development so as to strengthen coordination and international cooperation in this area;
9. Invites all countries, in particular the donor community, to provide resources, as appropriate, to support initiatives on development of capacities for developing countries;
10. Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 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, 3/ to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on the implementation of the present resolution and on a biennial basis thereafter.

96th plenary meeting
20 December 1995

ANNEX III: UN General Assembly Resolution: 51/172



United Nations

A/RES/51/172

General Assembly

Distr. GENERAL

3 February 1997

ORIGINAL:
ENGLISH

Fifty-first session
Agenda item 96

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

[on the report of the Second Committee (A/51/604/Add.8)]

51/172. Communication for development
 programmes in the United Nations
 system

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General, 1/ aswell as the report prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the sixth Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development, held at Harare from 2 to 5 September 1996, and the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Communication for development programmes in the United Nations system" 2/ and the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination thereon, 3/

1. Recalls its resolution 50/130 of 20 December 1995;
2. Considers that informal round tables, such as the sixth Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development, organized at Harare by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, can constitute a notable mechanism of inter-agency cooperation and coordination for promoting and advancing communication for development, owing, inter alia, to their openness to partners outside the United Nations system and the outreach of their outcomes;
3. Recognizes the importance of addressing the issue of communication for development within the intergovernmental processes of the United Nations system, according to the respective mandates of the agencies concerned;
4. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General, 1/ and invites the agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system to take the recommendations contained in the report into consideration when planning and implementing

Overview of UN Inter-Agency Round Tables on Communication for Development

relevant projects and programmes, with the cooperation of the resident coordinator;

5. Recognizes the relevance for concerned actors in development at the country level, including policy makers and decision makers at all levels, to attribute increased importance to communication for development, and encourages them to include it, in an appropriate manner, as an integral component in the development of projects and programmes;

6. 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;

7. Acknowledges the interest in holding the next informal round table in the Latin American and Caribbean region, to build upon the meetings held in Asia and Africa, and invites interested States to cooperate with the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system in the convening of these informal round tables on communication for development, with the participation of the international financial institutions and the regional banks, at the country level;

8. Reaffirms the importance of resource mobilization, including financial cooperation, the transfer of technology and capacity-building for communication in development programmes and projects, and calls upon the international community and organizations of the United Nations system to assist developing countries in introducing technologies and innovative methods for enhancing communication for development;

9. Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in accordance with the agency's mandate, to inform the General Assembly officially, at its fifty-third session, under an appropriate agenda item, on the implementation of the present resolution, in accordance with the periodicity that was agreed upon in Assembly resolution 50/130.

86th plenary meeting
16 December 1996

ANNEX IV: Documents Consulted

- Report of Third Round Table on Communication for Development, 1991
- UN Joint Inspection Unit Report: 'Communication for Development Programmes in the United Nations System', prepared by Francesco Mezzalama
- Report of Fifth Round Table on Communication for Development, 1995
- Report of Sixth Round Table on Communication for Development (French), 1996
- Report of Seventh Round Table on Communication for Development, 2000
- Report of Eighth Round Table on Communication for Development, 2001
- Report of Ninth Round Table on Communication for Development, 2004
- Report of Tenth Round Table on Communication for Development, 2007
- Background Papers for 10th UN Inter-Agency Report - 'Towards a Common UN System Approach – Harnessing Communication to Achieve The Millennium Development Goals'
- Report: Follow-up to the Addis Recommendations United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting (3-4 December, 2007)
- The UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development – Brief Background
- Bridging the Gap: The United Nations Communication Group and the United Nations Roundtable on Communication for Development: 'Information Note for the Paris Meeting of the UNCG 16-17 May, Paris 2008)
- United Nations Communications Group: Report of the seventh annual meeting of the UN Communications Group, 16-17 June 2008
- UN General Assembly: 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 UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development (A/63/180)
- UN General Assembly: 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 ninth UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development (A/61/165)
- UN General Assembly: 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 eighth UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development (A/59/207)
- UN General Assembly: 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 seventh UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development (A/56/221)
- UN General Assembly: Implementations of the Recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit – Report of the Secretary General (A/54/223)
- UN General Assembly: Sustainable Development and International Economic Cooperation – Communication for development programmes in the United Nations System- Report of the Secretary General (A/51/314)

ANNEX V: Round Table Chronology

- 1988: ----- **First** RT held at UNICEF headquarters in New York
- 1990: ----- **Second** RT held in Ottawa coordinated by CIDA/IDRC
- 1991: ----- **Third** RT held at FAO headquarters in Rome.
- 1992: ----- **Request** by UNESCO and FAO for C4D to be included in the work programme of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)
- 1993: ----- **Fourth** RT, held in Lima organised by Instituto para America Latina (IPAL)
- 1994: ----- **JIU** report on C4D programmes in the UN system
- 1995: ----- **Fifth** RT, organised by Worldview International Foundation and held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, 25- 28 January
- Resolution 50/130 (20/12/95)** – UN General Assembly (GA) took note of JIU recommendations and comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and requested the Secretary General, in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO, to report on the implementation of the resolution to the 51st session of the Assembly and thereafter on a biennial basis
- 1996: ----- **First** report to the 51st session of the GA (29/08/96) on C4D programmes in the UN system
- Sixth** RT, organised by UNESCO and held in Harare, Zimbabwe, 2- 5 September
- Report** of the Second Committee of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation included a recommendation that the GA adopt a resolution on C4D programmes in the UN system which, inter alia, commended the C4D RTs as ‘a ‘notable’ mechanism of inter-agency cooperation and coordination for promoting and advancing communication for development, owing, inter alia, to their openness to partners outside the United Nations system and the outreach of their outcomes’
- 1998: ----- **Seventh** RT, organised by UNICEF in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil from 10 – 13 November
- 1999: ----- **54th** session of the General assembly (16/08/99). The Secretary General reports on the implementation of the recommendations of the JIU on C4D
- 2001: ----- **Eighth** RT, organised by UNFPA in collaboration with the Rockefeller Foundation, UNESCO, Panos in Managua, Nicaragua, from 26-28 November
- 2004: ----- **Ninth** RT, organised by FAO with UNESCO, Government of Italy, World Bank, IDRC and CTA in Rome from 6-9 September
- 2006: ----- **61st** Session of the General Assembly (19/07/06): Secretary General includes a Summary of main points and recommendations arising from the Ninth Inter-Agency Round table as part of his report on Communication for Development programmes in the UN system.
- 2007: ----- **Tenth** RT, organised by UNESCO, in Addis Ababa from 12 – 14 February
- UN** inter-agency meeting to follow up on recommendations from 10th RT; 3-4 December
- 2008: ----- **63rd** Session of the General Assembly (28/07/08): Secretary General includes a Summary of main points and recommendations arising from the Tenth Inter-Agency Round table as part of his report on Communication for Development programmes in the UN system