



Communication for Social Change Annual Report – 2006

Communication for Social Change is a process of public and private dialogue through which people themselves define who they are, what they want and how they will work collectively with their communities to get what they want and need in order to improve their own lives. It is based on principles of justice, equity, tolerance, diversity, unleashing previously unheard voices, local ownership and participation.



If there is one thing that throughout history should never be underestimated, it is the capacity of the human spirit to soar. There are innumerable examples of individuals over time who stand out as heroes – people who go beyond common expectations of action, dedication, service or innovation, or who commit singular acts of bravery,

inspiration, or leadership that can tip the scales of change. But it is when whole communities galvanize their dreams, desires, needs and resources toward a common goal that lives truly can be changed – simply and steadfastly, grandly and forever.

Whether individual or collective, the common denominator of successful change is communication. An effective orator compels action with a stirring speech. An idea takes root the more people hear of it. The more that ideals and values are shared, the more powerful the impact of those ideals. The more people who share a call for change, the more likely that action will be taken to make that change.

The Communication for Social Change initiative was founded and operates on the belief that if the people affected by a crisis are included in the response to that crisis, then the response will be achieved with greater impact and longevity. More specifically, that innovative communication processes are critical to bringing about the change that can improve the conditions of people and communities in crisis.

It is important to understand that the CFSC regards communication as a process and not a series of products, messages, marketing tools and technologies, and that the essence of communication that has meaning, purpose and impact is dialogue. We remember always that the origin of the word communication is *communio*, which means sharing and participating. When it comes to addressing the issues of development, that means dialogue among community members, between communication practitioners and community members, and between institutions dedicated to development and the individuals they serve.

In the year 2006 the examples of innovative communication efforts around the world that helped change lives and improve the lot of marginalized people provide both inspiration and ammunition to continue the battles against seemingly intransigent illnesses, alienation and poverty. The thread that links them together is this simple but powerful notion of dialogue rooted in affected communities.

When the King of Nepal seized absolute power in February 2005 he disbanded democratic parties and banned media outlets from airing anything but music. The country's network of community radio programmers reaching 65 percent of the population then proceeded to "sing" the news and remind citizens of their rights. In April 2006, 4 million out of a total population of 22 million took to the streets in peaceful protest. Democracy has been largely restored.

In northwest regions of Niger, nomadic Tuareg and Peuhi communities historically gather every year to celebrate their cultures and overcome their problems through at grand gatherings called "Salt Cures." In recent years growing populations and water shortages have left these groups of herders, farmers and ranchers competing for scarce resources, sometimes with violent results. This year a German-funded effort is helping these groups to return to their traditions of dialogue and problem-solving to diffuse these and future conflicts.

The year 2006 also saw the acknowledgment of one of CFSCs original supporters, Mohammad Yunus of Grameen Bank, with a Nobel Peace Prize for his groundbreaking

microfinancing program that, among its many successes, helped provide mobile phones that would be managed collectively by rural communities in his country of Bangladesh. Of his inspiration he says, “These millions of small people with their millions of small pursuits can add up to create the biggest development wonder.”

These are examples of communities of people taking charge of their destinies by designing and executing communication processes that make sense to them in order to move toward a communal goal – of democracy, of understanding, or of connection. For who knows best what social or political influences affect the behavior of their community members? Who knows best what means of dialogue works best to reach the most people? Who knows best who can be trusted and why?

When addressing issues of development communication efforts have often relied on methodologies and messages designed and executed by representatives outside the communities they seek to assist. While there is no question that the goals of these efforts are admirable, their failure often to accomplish what they set out to do is indication that something is amiss.

It is largely in response to this “gap” between methods and goals, and the fact that many development communication practitioners are searching for a better way to meet the challenges of illness, violence and poverty that the CFSC Consortium was established.

Communication for Social Change is a way of thinking and practice that puts people in

control of the means and content of communication processes. Based on dialogue and collective action, CFSC is a process of public and private dialogue through which people determine who they are, what they need and what they want in order to improve their lives. It has at its heart the assumption that affected people understand their realities better than any experts from outside their society, and that they can become the drivers of their own change – change that will be a lasting and more vigorous one.

The idea that people want to be able to control their own destinies by making the decisions that affect their lives is as old as the democratic urge. While many development communication efforts already employ some of the principles of communication for social change, there have never been comprehensive resources – academic, theoretical or methodological – to fully carry out plans that engage the people they are meant to serve. Recent developments in information technology and privatization of media have further added to the difficulties for poor communities to take charge of the information they receive and decide how it is used.

The time was ripe for the Communication for Social Change Consortium. The challenges since its inception in 1997 as a program of the Rockefeller Foundation have been threefold: **to build the theoretical underpinnings of communication for social change; to build capacity in monitoring and evaluation of communication for social change efforts; and to influence the field of development so that participatory communication becomes a full part of mainstream development practice.** All the while seeing that the primary players – and beneficiaries – of efforts to improve their lives are the people who are most affected by them.

Theoretical Underpinnings – Grounding the Practice

Without resources to capture the experiences of communication for social change efforts in the far corners of the world, the field has lagged behind other communications methods in its academic and technical maturity. We recognized early on that there was a gaping hole in the compilation of literature on this subject – there was no central reference where people could go to learn about the theoretical evolution of this field.

This year the CFSC agenda took a leap forward with the publication of *Communication for Social Change: An Anthology of Historical and Contemporary Readings*. For the first time there is, in one place, a picture of how CFSC thinking was born, how that discipline has matured, which disciplines contribute to CFSC theory and how these contributions have influenced current thinking and practice.

It is a collection of the writings of more than 150 key academics and practitioners from more than 40 years of thinking and action in the field and around the world. The publication of this anthology is an achievement in itself, and demonstrates the extraordinary intellectual and practical foundations of the field of Communication for Social Change, along with the historical roots of CFSC principles and pioneering thinking.

Many of the articles are published here for the first time in English and exhibit the rich and profound thinking on the subject from other parts of the world, especially Asia and Latin America. Published initially in English, the anthology will be translated into

Spanish, French and other languages in the future. We expect it will provide a backbone of information for the field, and allow us to serve better as a focal point and repository of ideas and practice for those working in CFSC globally.

Complementing this text is the CFSC online Body of Knowledge – a resource of case studies, best practices and strategies from communication practitioners and academics around the world. In 2006, nearly 1000 new resources, articles and contacts were added to this compendium. It is used – and contributed to – by practitioners who access it through the Consortium’s website from anywhere in the world.

Monitoring and Evaluation – Capturing Change

One of the biggest challenges of the field has been how to monitor practices that often depend on decentralized activities in remote areas of the world, and evaluate whether or not they are working. While this information is essential to validating those practices and assuring more widespread and successful replication, CFSC methods have only rarely been gathered, measured or reproduced. And more often than not, the models available for evaluation involved predetermined objectives, indicators and techniques of measurement applied from outside sources.

In 2005 the Consortium published three guides to Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation that highlight the questions of what is being measured, for whom and why, and who should be involved at different stages of the process and how. They represent some of the first attempts to offer technical models for evaluating the impact of community communications efforts. These guides are now being used widely by

development organizations and made available on their websites. USAID and Unicef have been using them for communications training in Ethiopia, Zambia and other countries of eastern and southern Africa. Their use by a worldwide range of practitioners will provide feedback, new sources of research and contributions to future writings in the field.

In Ethiopia, where the Consortium has established a close working relationship with Unicef, these CFSC models of practice are being put to the test. Trained facilitators are collecting, documenting and interpreting data on community dialogues around HIV/AIDS behavior. The goal is to develop approaches and communication tools that would complement those already being used.

In this case, 2200 youth clubs in poor, rural communities are the main actors in developing strategies for effectively combating HIV/AIDS locally, where gender roles and traditional practices that diminish the roles of women are major obstacles to controlling the spread of the disease. Gathering around traditional coffee ceremonies, groups of young men and women freely discuss the social and economic issues that contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS, along with the pros and cons of control efforts to date and their ideas for new approaches.

Similarly, in Zambia two communities of Kabira and Kapwe are applying these CFSC methodologies to stimulate a movement where everyone in each of these communities would know their HIV status. The goal would be to eliminate the stigma of HIV testing. The processes and measured outcomes of these two efforts will be an important

contribution to the design of future CFSC programs.

Influencing the Field – Moving Toward Participation

Many principles of CFSC are already used, at least in part, in communication efforts by development agencies worldwide. But most rely more heavily on techniques and approaches that attempt to change individual behaviors to achieve a particular outcome. A primary goal of the CFSC Consortium is to influence the field of development communications so that their efforts might find greater success and sustainability through including the concerns, the ideas and practices of the people affected.

In many cases that has meant partnering directly with some of the major players in the development arena and assisting or advising in the practice of communication for social change methods. Having achieved a substantial array of partnerships thus far, the consortium this year added to the list of agencies interested in utilizing CFSC to increase the chances of success in their communication programs.

In 2006 the Consortium began a major project with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) called “Communication for Empowerment: Developing Media Strategies for Vulnerable Groups” designed to root UNDP and other development strategies in an understanding of the information and communication needs of people living in poverty. Along with UNDP and UNESCO the consortium is preparing ideas for more effective coordination, planning and incorporation of communication strategies into national-level development assistance plans. These will be presented this year at the Communication for Development Roundtable in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Interest by development agencies in the field of CFSC has been further fueled by the persistent difficulties in addressing major health issues through standard communication practices and the reemergence of other maladies thought to have been brought under control – specifically HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and polio.

This sentiment was reflected at the IXVI International AIDS Conference in 2006 when the Executive Director of UNAIDS, Dr. Peter Piot, stated that “an AIDS response that is not as embedded in advancing social justice as in advancing science is doomed to failure.” Underlying this statement is the realization that the resources and technologies that have, in many cases, been successfully mobilized are not having the impact that they could because of social and structural obstacles. This realization gives credence to the strategies of CFSC and the consortium’s president has been invited to sit on a commission to think through the long-term communication challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic over the next 25 years.

Like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis is a disease that carries with it significant stigma for those affected by it. Often the two diseases go hand in hand. Both disproportionately affect the poor in developing countries, and contracting the disease often results in isolation and discrimination by family members, employers and even health care workers, further reducing a patient’s access to treatment, and increasing their unwillingness to seek treatment. The difference, however, is that unlike HIV/AIDS, TB is curable.

The World Health Organization’s global Stop TB campaign was recharged this year at the World Economic Summit in Davos, Switzerland with the launch of an unprecedented

and coherent 10-year strategy to control tuberculosis. Part of this effort is the new global Advocacy, Communication and Social Mobilization (ACSM) group of which the Communication for Social Change Consortium is an integral part. Its role has been to help determine the communications strategy at a country level over the course of the 10-year strategy. The CFSC representative, James Deane, is the only communications expert to ever serve on the global TB technical advisory group.

Because stigma results in part from misinformation or lack of information, a communications element is now considered essential to the success of the TB strategy. Finding and encouraging people with the disease to come forward and seek treatment when there is so much at stake for them presents a challenge. A major component of communications strategy will be both simple in theory and complex in practice – to convince people who have a cough for two weeks to seek treatment, and to encourage those in treatment to adhere to it.

In part because of the success of polio eradication efforts to date, the race is on to achieve the complete eradication of this preventable disease. But the regions where polio continues to be a problem are those where traditional communications methods have failed, and possibly even contributed to the intransigence of suspicious attitudes and perceptions toward efforts to combat the disease.



As the success of eradication programs has reduced the visibility of the disease, the challenges become those related to poverty, marginalization and, again, stigma. Increasingly complex social, political and religious factors such as low levels of access to public services, significant poverty, low educational levels, and strong interpersonal and culturally specific communication processes that resist outside influence have conspired to make the last areas where polio has taken hold immune to traditional eradication communication programs.

Because it is precisely this type of problem where the CFSC emphasis on community participation in communications efforts can have the greatest effect, the CFSC has undertaken the development of participatory strategies along with USAID and the John

Snow International Research and Training Institute to strengthen the communication actions required to reduce or eradicate polio. Ultimately the aim is to catalyze a social movement in which immunizing children against polio is normal and expected for all citizens in affected areas. This effort is focused on communities in Nigeria and India, where both countries have seen a recent resurgence of polio cases.

This year also the United Kingdom's Commission to Eradicate Poverty enlisted CFSC as part of a group that would implement the Commission's recommendations to address persistent poverty in African countries. In this role the Consortium is involved, along with the BBC, The World Trust and Panos, in designing a media agenda for the Strengthening African Media program driven by regional media and media support organizations.

Finally, the CFSC has been invited by several Nordic countries to cohost a Communication for Social Change forum in Mozambique with government, nonprofit and civil society leaders.

Training the Next Generation – Expanding the Ranks

While we've made important progress toward our goals within the past year, it has also become clear that training and preparing the "next generation" of practitioners in this field and in communities around the world must be a priority of the consortium. Only by expanding the ranks of CFSC practice can we expand the reach of its efforts. It is also necessary to elevate the training and expertise of communications practitioners to

appropriate academic standing so that they can become more effective and respected partners in development efforts.



Currently some 2000 academic institutions offer “social communication” studies and specialized departments. But the content of these programs is mass media and advertising-oriented and has little to do with social change and development. Our goal is to strengthen existing programs or create new ones in Communication for Social Change at the Master’s degree level in every region of the developing world. Centers of excellence would be located in Africa, Asia and Latin America, providing new practitioners with the communications theory, practice and tools to work in development programs in their countries.

Toward this end, in late 2005 the Consortium gathered 12 universities from around the world that offer studies in Communication for Social Change to draft an agreement to work together, share their expertise, and expand the scope and reach of their efforts. Over the past year they have developed a university network offering masters and other courses in communication for social change – a network that enables universities to share curricula, resources and innovation in the field. Universities in the Philippines, Colombia, Argentina, India, Sweden, Denmark, the United States and the United Kingdom are participating. It is the only educational network of its kind in the world and represents a major step towards building a more solid international academic foundation for this field.

In addition to facilitating this project, the Consortium's role over the past year has been to develop with the universities the programs and curricula that would bring new practitioners into the field and train current ones in the principles of CFSC. These include a 16-week university based master's level course that is currently being tested in several universities in industrialized and developing countries. In addition the Consortium is developing a shorter three-week course for practitioners, along with awareness sessions for key professionals in schools of public health, social work and aid agencies.

A promising element of this plan is the work with Ohio University in the United States, which specializes in distance learning programs, to develop an online course in communication for social change that could be accessed by communication and

development practitioners living and working in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Discussions are currently underway with 9 other universities, including an alliance of three European universities that support a learning exchange with three “southern” schools.

In addition, the Consortium will operate a CFSC Fellows and small research grants program that partners with universities, NGOs and communities of poor people. The first fellowships will be offered through the Universidad del Norte in Baranquilla, Colombia and will allow eight graduate students from across Latin America to study Communications for Social Change methods and practices.

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With all of the suffering that exists in so many parts of the world, those of us with means feel an obligation to do what we can to ease that suffering, or provide the resources to do so. It is a good and honest instinct and inclination. But that instinct should never be confused with the idea that we know best how to resolve another person or community’s conflicts. We can offer what we know, and the tools that we have. We can offer up the best of our experience in similar situations. But unless we walk in another’s shoes, along their path, we will never know the best way to walk forward.

Development programs that seek to improve the conditions, health or economic security of poor people in desperate circumstances are the industrial world’s way of reaching out to help. But they, by their own admission, can do better and they are searching for ways to do that. Discrimination, and disease, hopelessness and suffering still disproportionately affect poor and marginalized communities.

Because members of a community are suffering, however, doesn't mean that they have given up their humanity – their cultural traditions, their individual and social connections, or their unique and profound sense of their own worth.

When it comes to offering assistance, one of the most effective tools that we can offer is communication – listening, gathering, hearing and learning from the experiences of those we seek to assist. And one of the most effective outcomes of communication can be letting a community find its own way, with appropriate assistance, toward a solution to the challenges it faces – allowing them to own the process and the means of moving toward their goals. It may take longer. It may not be easy. It may stumble along the way. But when this process works, the results can be life altering and long lasting – even revolutionary.