

# Communication for Social Change and Development University Network

## Los Baños Statement

In September 2005, faculty and graduate students from 12 universities in Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, all with masters degree programmes in communication for social change and development, met in Los Baños, Laguna, the Philippines, at the invitation of the Communication for Social Change Consortium. The Consortium is made up of practitioners and scholars dedicated to building local capacity in marginalized communities.

The main objective of the seminar, hosted by the University of The Philippines Los Baños College of Development Communication (UPLB CDC), was to share experiences and details of each university's program, discuss the various approaches to communication for social change and development identified at previous Consortium meetings, and to establish a network of universities and academics that will support the strengthening of this interdisciplinary field throughout the world. To date there are few degree programs training students for this field.

During the meeting, principles of communication for social change were identified as common ground for establishing collaboration among the academic institutions and the Communication for Social Change Consortium. These principles include, in part, the belief that communication is a participatory process that can empower people to collectively identify their problems, make decisions, harness resources, and manage conflict for self-renewing societies. Dialogue, voice, and debate are essential elements of the process, and necessary for reflecting on issues of power and culture, which are at the centre of development and collective action. Communication is central to social change and development when pursued as a process of participation that elevates marginalized voices and advances equity, social justice, and tolerance.

The seminar participants decided to create a Communication for Social Change and Development University Network that would help to spread the principles of communication for social change and development, provide mutual support among existing programs, and legitimate the work of these programs in both academic and practitioner communities. The immediate plans of the network include:

- **Organizing:** developing a web-based virtual community among the universities in the network, and the larger circle of professors, students and other academics focused on learning more about the ways in which communication interacts with social change, supporting each other in finding resources for scholarship; and moving the principles out to other programmes.
- **Research:** working together on research projects, collaborating on conferences, papers, publications.
  - Priority foci for research:
    - Theory: examining theories of democracy, analyzing conflict and power, combining communication with political philosophy, cultural studies, sociology and other disciplines.
    - Methodology: exploring program design and evaluation.
    - Learning and Training: cataloguing and assessing learning initiatives.
  - Initial activities:

- Conducting literature reviews and project classifications.
  - Researching definitions of “social change.”
  - Developing and validating ways to measure participatory communication.
  - Organizing conferences on research in communication for social change.
  - Formulating a strategy to obtain research funding.
- **Exchange:** facilitating exchanges of students and professors, resources and materials.
  - Multiple levels:
    - Personal: individual and informal commitments to mutual support in teaching, curriculum development, research and other areas.
    - Institutional: University to university, signing “memorandums of understanding” early in 2006.
    - Project: university and university/practitioner collaboratives.
  - Initial Activities:
    - Graduate student and faculty exchanges through bilateral agreements or established programs.
    - Joint seminars.
    - Formation of evaluation and support teams, especially for new and proposed programmes
    - Open access and sharing of critical materials, including the CFSC Consortium Body of Knowledge.
    - Encouraging co-publishing, co-editing of materials.

To advance social justice, sustainability, and democratic values the members of the network will mentor a new generation of specialised communicators dedicated to the principles and values of participatory communication for social change and development.

The universities listed below commit to work in partnership with the other members of the network and agree to move forward this statement, to establish the agreements and to conduct concrete activities in the field of communication for social change studies.

Los Baños (The Philippines) September 30 2005

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