Arts & Media

Leading Inclusive Development using Media and Communication

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Communication for Development Roundtable

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Understanding Communication for Development

Communication for Development (C4D) is a growing discipline that has made significant progress in tackling communication challenges in development in the past three decades. Based on the premise that communities understand their problems better and that their involvement in communication is crucial for improved development outcomes, C4D programmes involve disadvantaged communities and stakeholders in social projects and initiatives through a variety of media strategies. This approach also has the advantage of opening up opportunities to lead development processes in a more inclusive way, thanks to the adoption of a communication design that is relevant to communities.

The theoretical field of C4D is a contested one with its origins in Modernisation approaches that attributed the problems of poverty, poor health and limited education to developing countries, and advocated for solving these through technocratic solutions devised in industrialised nations. However, the approach to C4D has changed considerably in recent times. Today, there is a consensus among scholars and practitioners that local knowledge and community mobilisation are crucial for social change and development.[1] C4D scholars position Participatory Communication (PC) and Communication for Sustainable Social Change (CSSC) [a mix of interpersonal communication, participatory communication, mass communication, and ICTs – information and communication technologies] as the approaches that are crucial for 'sustainability and lasting impact' in social change and development.[2] There is a renewed focus on making communication interventions community driven in order to make them sustainable. A more inclusive leadership in development can therefore be facilitated also through the application of C4D programmes.

The UN recognises three different perspectives on the role of C4D: first, where experts believe in its transformative potential to 'facilitate shifts in power relations' and contribute to positive 'social transformation led by those most affected by development policies'; second, where experts treat C4D as a process that encourages communities to 'inform decisions that are the province of policymakers advised by technocrats'; and finally, a 'consensus perspective' that favours a mixed approach harnessing 'vertical as well as horizontal communication to inform decision-making'.[3]

These perspectives are aptly reflected in various C4D initiatives of international organisations. For example, UNICEF considers C4D to be critical for achieving multiple objectives in a development scenario. These range across advocacy, community engagement, behavioural and social change and humanitarian action.[4] A UN report has defined C4D as 'a social process that promotes dialogue between communities and decision-makers at local, national and regional levels. Its goal is to promote, develop and implement policies and programmes that enhance the quality of life for all'.[5]

1   Oscar Hemer and Thomas Tufte, *Media and Glocal Change* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: CLACSO, 2005), 11-17; Srinivas R. Melkote and H. Leslie Steeves, *Communication for development in the third world: Theory and practice for empowerment* (New Delhi, India: Sage Publications, 2013); Jan Servaes, "How 'sustainable' is development communication research," *The International Communication Gazette* 78, no. 7 (2016): 701–710.

2   Servaes, "How sustainable", 704-705.

3   Elizabeth McCall, *Communication for development: Strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2011), 2

4   "Communication for Development (C4D)," UNICEF website, accessed October 30, 2019, https://www.unicef.org/cbsc/

5   McCall, Communication for, v.

USAID has looked at C4D and Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC), in particular, from the perspective of building strong ties between the state and society and to improve the effectiveness of government programmes in Africa. Their study of SBCC interventions in a variety of developmental contexts across Africa found community participatory approaches more appropriate for behaviour change objectives. Their analysis of literature in this area revealed the ineffectiveness of top-down approaches that did not involve local communities; dialogue, on the other hand, was found critical for building and restoring trust among all different stakeholders and community members.[6] C4D interventions have also aimed to empower civil society members and organisations to communicate and represent their interests as well as influence policies effectively. Such initiatives have also helped civil society organisations to learn contemporary communication techniques and skills and have created more 'opportunities for socio-political participation and social change'.[7]

Belgium Development Agency BTC argues for the incorporation of C4D throughout the development project cycle. The agency believes that this approach improves development outcomes significantly.[8] Another area that has benefitted significantly from C4D is agriculture and rural development. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) maintains that sustainable development and social change can only be achieved with the active participation of stakeholders throughout a development project cycle, and C4D is critical in development as it embodies that approach. According to FAO, C4D involves a host of participatory techniques and media, including creative mediums like film, drawing, audio programming and modern ICTs, to provide 'equitable access to information, knowledge sharing and inclusive decision-making for farmers and rural communities.'[9]

In essence, through a variety of community media and strategic communication interventions, C4D has not only been instrumental in community empowerment and advocacy, but has also facilitated social mobilisation and action. C4D has been employed to achieve several objectives in development situations; whether an organisation or a group is aiming for social mobilisation or using C4D to build consensus around a development initiative depends entirely on its mandate. Community media techniques and communication strategies vary depending on the development scenario. What stands true, however, is that community and stakeholder involvement and participation are central to C4D initiatives. This is an important factor that also enhances the idea of an inclusive leadership in development.

Photo by Allie Smith on Unsplash

6 Gregory Pirio, *Improving development outcomes through social and behaviour change communication: Applying a governance lens* (USAID, 2019), 4-8

7 Rafael Obregón and Jair Vega Casanova, *Voices with purpose: A manual on communication strategies for development and social change* (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung FES, 2019), i-vii

8 BTC Belgian Development Agency, *Communication for development: Dialogue and involvement to achieve sustainable results* (2016), 1-7

9 FAO, *Communication for rural development: Guidelines for planning and project formulation* (2014), 1-8

C4D Roundtable

The 3rd C4D Roundtable held in Australia took place in June 2019. Once again, a group of researchers from Australian universities and practitioners from both not-for-profit and private organisations came together to share knowledge and experience on the study and practice of Communication for Development. This Roundtable was organised as a side-event to the RDI (Research for Development Impact) Network Conference, hosted at La Trobe University in Melbourne on 12th-13th June.

The focus of this year Roundtable, in particular, was to review and discuss the different uses of the media and communication in 'leading inclusive development'. Within this framework, participants shared their experience in either implementing or investigating media and communication interventions designed to engage citizens (in general) or disadvantaged and marginalised groups (more specifically) in participating and having a voice on issues that affect them.

This event was also a means to broaden the network of individuals and organisations that has been created through the establishment of a biennial C4D Roundtable series that started in 2015 with the Communication for Development Approaches in the Australian NGO Sector and Academia side-event to the 2015 ACFID University Network Conference (Melbourne), and the Media Approaches to Communicating for Development side-event to the 2017 RDI Network Conference (Sydney).

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Inclusion in Practice

Appetite for change – Interactive storytelling inspiring healthy eating among children in the Pacific Islands

Presenter: Allan Soutaris, Head of Technical Innovation – SecondMuse

SecondMuse is an organisation that strives to build resilient future economies – economies that provide for both people and the planet. Its process of understanding innovation ecosystems is based on a deep and purposeful engagement with the actors within the ecosystem. The SecondMuse team does this by applying a mixed-method approach that draws on sociological, anthropological and design research techniques. These efforts result in a 'diagnosis' of the ecosystem, identifying both strengths as well as opportunities to leverage additional value within the community of innovation.

In partnership with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's innovationXchange, SecondMuse developed the LAUNCH Food programme, which saw the creation of *Beyond the Stars* and *Our Special Island*. These innovative projects piloted how game-based education and emerging technologies can inspire healthier eating habits among school children in the Pacific.

More specifically, the projects explored how interactive and immersive technologies, including Virtual Reality (VR), could be used to reconnect children with traditional foods in the hope of creating happier, healthier lifestyles. From their inception, these projects were created to complement and support regional and national health programmes. They were designed in partnership with the Fijian and Tongan Governments, as well as with local partners and experts on the ground.

Project lead, Allan Soutaris, spoke about the journey from project birth to implementation, revealing the evaluation results from the two very different Pacific nations. The activities were first started by visiting schools in Fiji and Tonga to learn and understand the education systems. After the assessment was completed, creative studios S1T2 (*Beyond the Stars*) and Millipede (*Our Special Island*) developed storylines that were based on traditional stories and cultural legends of the Fiji and Tonga communities. The technology was designed to capture healthy practices, games and learning practices for students. Stories were told to students in a virtual form first, and shown in storybook form later. Students were then asked to make choices in relation to keeping healthy, practising a good lifestyle and eating nutritious foods.

This project shows how VR and other emerging technologies can be adopted to direct processes of engaged education with its users, enabling communities to lead their learning path. Allan and his team are working with the Ministry of Education, both in Fiji and in Tonga, to introduce the programmes further into the countries' school curriculum.

Photo by Scott Webb on Unsplash

Media capacity building in the Maldives at a moment of political transition

Presenter: Dr. Steve Sharp - TME Media & Education Services

TME Media & Education Services is an independent media company based in Sydney, Australia, and run by journalist and multimedia producer Steve Sharp. TME provides media training, curriculum development, multimedia production and strategy services to clients in Australia and overseas.

2018 was a year overflowing with national elections, many of them rigged and plagued by violence. In the communications sphere, online information warfare has become a feature of pre-poll political competition. In this context, the peaceful transition of power in the atoll archipelago of the Maldives is a success story following a decades-long history of authoritarian government and, since 2013, the erosion of democratic checks and rising corruption.

Both the presidential elections in September last year and the parliamentary elections in April this year took a decisive democratic turn – a development which bodes well for the possibilities of widespread reform and the broadening of participation by disadvantaged and marginalised citizens. Development organisations - including UNDP - have emphasised the role Maldivian media must play in peaceful and inclusive development given its highly polarised political culture and unresolved governance issues such as a compromised judiciary.

To take Maldivians with it on its reform journey, the new government faces many challenges. Not least of which will be accounting for the abuses of the past without destabilising the transition. Likewise, media personnel and especially frontline journalists can give Maldivians a voice in the transition but only after navigating the impact of elite political conflict on media professionalism, given that many media outlets are owned and funded by political parties and donors.

In this presentation, Dr. Sharp reported on a UNDP project implemented during the election period that sought to drive professionalisation among media personnel by promoting conflict and gender sensitive reporting at election time and over the full electoral cycle. Making reference to the United Nations goal that both developed and developing countries attain economic growth and that each country's Human Development Index is improved, Sharp emphasised how Maldivians have been subjected to a long history of authoritarian governments coupled with corruption and abuse of power. A shift was noticed, however, through the 2018 elections, when every citizen had the opportunity to vote.

Dr. Sharp examined how the youth in the Maldives engaged with social media during the elections. He also assessed the public impact of the voter education campaign by UNDP and Transparency International implemented before the elections. A report has been produced from this work.

Photo by Ishan @seefromthesky on Unsplash

Creating children's storybooks as a mechanism for building community voices

Presenter: Bill Pheasant, Communications Director – Children's Ground

Children's Ground is a social change organisation that works to provide stable, long-term community-led development based on the aspirations and priorities of First Nations communities in Australia for their children. Despite significant economic growth, pockets of entrenched intergenerational poverty and inequity remain across Australia. Decades of extensive government and non-government programmes and services have failed to overcome Australia's greatest humanitarian crisis. The Children's Ground model has been developed to be an integrated, locally-led and -designed approach with and for communities experiencing extreme poverty and inequity, combining international best-practice with deep grassroots experience, resourced at a level that enables excellence in learning, wellbeing and development.

In the past year, Arrernte children and families, alongside educators and artists, have engaged in the use of photography to facilitate a First Nations approach to education, embodied by "Learning on Country." Images were taken to document lessons on country, locations, people and elements of their indigenous language. The photos produced by way of this process have been converted into artworks through the use of iPads, captioned in Arrernte language, and have now become resources to develop literacy for early years learning (ages 4-6) in Central Australia. These outputs show a deep integrated cultural knowledge of stories, language, location and history, developed through the engagement of the children.

Bill Pheasant informs the audience that Children's Ground was started six years ago and their plan is to remain backing the community for the next 25 years. The books are one of the integrated elements of the learning and wellbeing platforms, and will serve as a learning process for children where their culture can be preserved. The books were also designed to improve reading skills. The families are determined to teach their children their language and culture in order to preserve it. They want their children to learn their language, know more about their land, their law and customs they have inherited from their ancestors. In the process of creating the books, indigenous children have been engaged in creating the photos and artworks that were later published in the books, which will become part of their school curriculum.

The first series of books featuring these images was launched in Mparntwe/Alice Springs in May 2019, and it is being made available for sale as a small enterprise to benefit the artists involved. Some significant orders have been made which will benefit the community through royalty income and enable additional resources to be created.

Photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

Video for Change Impact Toolkit

Presenter: Anna Helme, Co-founder – EngageMedia

EngageMedia is a non-profit media, technology and culture organisation that uses the power of video, the Internet and open technologies to create social and environmental change. It harnesses old and new media to assist movements challenge social injustice and environmental damage, as well as to present solutions. EngageMedia works with independent film-makers, journalists, technologists, campaigners and social movements to generate wider audiences for stories of social change, to intervene in the public discourse and to move people to action. They demystify and provide strategies for the effective use of video distribution and engagement technologies; connect video makers and activists to media distributors and audiences; and form peer networks of media-makers, technologists and campaigners.

Anne Helme introduced the Video for Change Impact Toolkit, a handbook for impact film-making from a social change perspective, collaboratively produced by EngageMedia and the Video for Change Network along with consultant researchers and activists from around the world. The toolkit is designed to build capacity within video productions made by and/or with affected communities, working towards social and environmental justice.

Video is a powerful tool that challenges power. Activists and journalists came together to create videos on topics that can bring change. The toolkit teaches people how to develop videos, ethics and methods and also from research to engagement. There are stories in the toolkits that one can learn from. This online resource illustrates the practical components of video for change and brings to light the importance of its ethos on community participation.
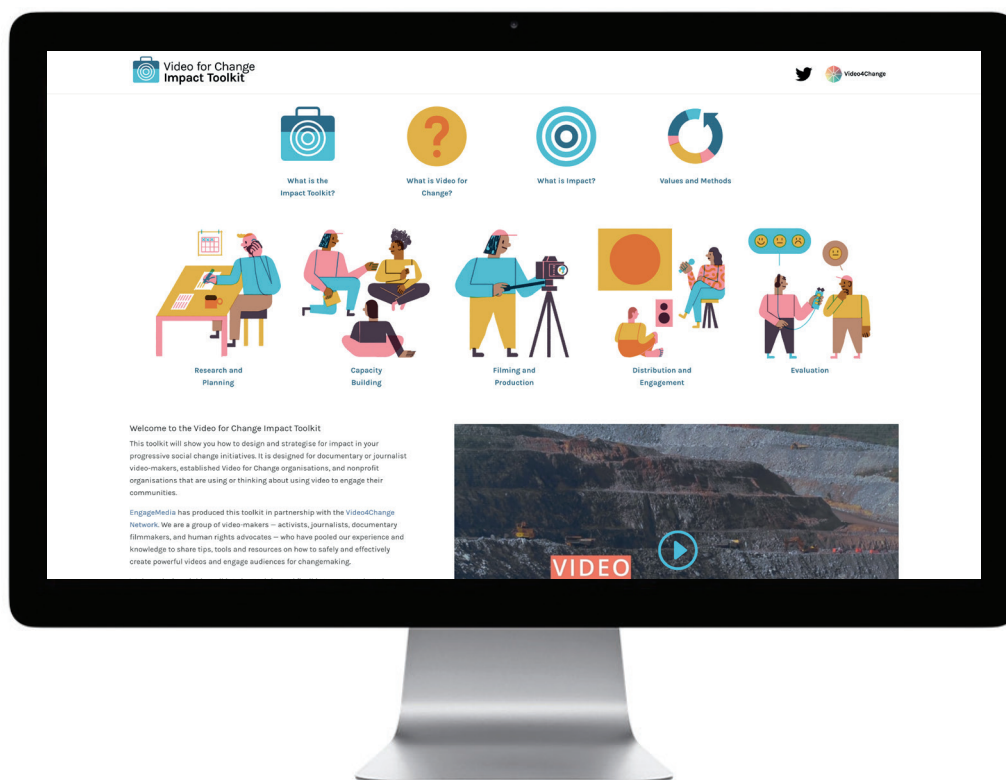
Useful resources

Hemer, Oscar and Thomas Tufte. *Media and Glocal Change. Rethinking Communication for Development.* **Buenos Aires, Argentina: CLACSO, 2005.**

In this edited book, the authors explore whether and how communication can be used to empower people, and to improve their everyday lives and those of their fellow community members. The chapters presented are useful for understanding various facets of C4D from its evolution, history, and its ever-changing socio-cultural and political dynamics in the age of globalisation. It provides a critical reflection on how communication, especially development communication, operates in the context of globalisation.

Melkote, Srinivas R. and H. Leslie Steeves. *Communication for development in the third world: Theory and practice for empowerment.* **New Delhi, India: Sage Publications, 2013 (2nd edition).**

This book provides an overview of the field of C4D, including its progress over the last century and its present challenges. The authors look at this discipline from the perspective of marginalised groups in developing countries. The book details several theories in development and communication, including Modernisation, liberation theology, and the participatory approach, and discusses the significance of spiritual movements for C4D in South Asia, Africa and Brazil. It provides new insights into the conceptualisation of Communication for Development and how this field can change through a focus on empowerment.

Servaes, Jan. "How 'sustainable' is development communication research," *The International Communication Gazette* **78, no. 7 (2016): 701–710.**

This paper analyses C4D from the perspective of sustainability. The author explains what is defined as sustainability and why it is important in development. The paper argues that a focus on sustainability will allow us to understand the complexities of communication research in development. It provides an historical view of the development field and analyses existing tensions in development communication. It also gives an insight into various methodological and conceptual challenges in this area.

McCall, Elizabeth. *Communication for development: Strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations.* **New York, USA: United Nations Development Programme, 2011.**

This report provides an insight into how the UN view C4D. It outlines the C4D approaches that are used by various UN agencies. It demonstrates how C4D is integrated into various UN programmes and policies. It argues for integrating C4D approaches into programme-planning and allocating more resources for making development initiatives community-centric. C4D is positioned as a discipline that improves the effectiveness of UN programmes, especially from the perspective of policymaking and communities.

Photo by Plush Design Studio on Unsplash

UNICEF. *Communication for Development (C4D).* www.unicef.org/cbsc/.

This Communication for Development webpage on the UNICEF website provides information on the areas of C4D that the agency's work focuses on. One gets a detailed account of how UNICEF is working with C4D in the areas of advocacy, community mobilisation, behaviour and social change, communication with children and humanitarian situations. It provides links to several resources on the application of C4D in a variety of developmental situations and contexts.

Pirio, Gregory. *Improving development outcomes through social and behaviour change communication: Applying a governance lens.* **Washington DC, USA: USAID, 2019.**

In this report, the author examines how C4D can be used to improve governance in Africa. This analytical study on Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) reviews best practices in SBCC initiatives by African governments. The study recognises C4D as crucial for building trust between the state and society and aims to understand how African governments are using SBCC campaigns in their development initiatives formulated for citizens. The report is designed to inform USAID programming that works to achieve better development outcomes by improving governance standards. It specifically focuses on SBCC to build foundational understanding for its staff and various stakeholders. It examines a range of examples across several development areas including health, climate change adaptation, agriculture, and food security.

Obregón, Rafael and Jair Vega Casanova. *Voices with purpose: A manual on communication strategies for development and social change.* **Windhoek, Namibia: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2019.**

This informative manual is a useful handbook for civil society organisations. In this publication, the authors illustrate various facets of C4D and provide practical tips on designing and implementing C4D programmes. The manual has been created for African civil society actors, including trade unions, women's organisations, human rights activists and youth leaders, to provide guidance on how to design C4D campaigns to address their communication needs. It also aims to empower civil society actors to effectively articulate, represent and advance their interests, causes and goals in the policymaking process, and to guide them in using modern communication methodologies to broaden opportunities for socio-political participation and social change.

BTC Belgian Development Agency. *Communication for development: Dialogue and involvement to achieve sustainable results.* **Brussels, Belgium: BTC, 2016.**

This manual has been designed to inspire BTC staff and other development practitioners to integrate C4D in development projects. While recognising that C4D impacts development outcomes positively, it provides practical guidelines and tools to integrate C4D throughout the project lifecycle. According to the authors, this publication is useful for a range of communication purposes in development, including i) strategies for the adoption of new practices ii) community mobilisation and building change agents; iii) socio-cultural interventions towards healthy behaviours; iv) capacity building of development organisations; v) informing and influencing policies and dialoguing with policymakers; and vi) stakeholder participation.

FAO. *Communication for rural development: Guidelines for planning and project formulation.* **Rome, Italy: FAO, 2014.**

This document is appropriate for professionals involved in rural development projects and programmes and for those who recognise the value of C4D in improving such projects. These may include managers, facilitators, community workers, farmers, project planners, etc. The handbook provides guidelines on integrating C4D in the project cycle to improve project outcomes. In particular, it seeks to provide practical advice on formulating and designing C4D activities in the early stage of a project. It recognises that C4D can positively impact outcomes when it is systematically introduced in a project. It encourages professionals to use C4D for bringing key stakeholders and development workers together to improve dialogues on rural development initiatives.

Further readings

Garrido, Maria, and Stephen Wyber. *Development and Access to Information.* The Hague, The Netherlands: International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2017.

Melkote, Srinivas, and H. Leslie Steeves. "Place and role of development communication in directed social change: A review of the field," *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 10, no. 3 (2015): 385-402.

Noske-Turner, Jessica, Jo Tacchi, and Vinod Pavarala. "Becoming visible: an institutional histories approach to understanding the practices and tensions in communication for development." In *Communication in International Development*, edited by Florencia Enghel and Jessica Noske-Turner, 115-133. London, UK: Routledge, 2018.

Servaes, Jan. *Communication for development and social change*. New Delhi, India: SAGE Publications, 2008.

List of C4D Roundtable participants

Full name	Job title	Organisation
Valentina Baú Roundtable Organiser	Senior Lecturer & Researcher	University of New South Wales (UNSW)
Ta Rath	Team Leader, Cambodia	ABC International Development
Steve Sharp	Owner	TME Media & Education Services
Matt Abud	Media Development Consultant	
Heather Jarvis	Lecturer	RMIT
	Doctoral Researcher	Swinburne University
Allan Soutaris	Head of Technical Innovation	SecondMuse
Lisa Smyth	International Communication Consultant	
Bill Pheasant	Communications Director and Senior Strategist	Children's Ground
Belinda Glover	Doctoral Researcher	RMIT Digital Ethnography Research Centre
Madeleine Flint	Communications and Policy Advisor	Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)
Tim Watkin	Head of Government Relations and Communications	Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)
Marian Reid	NGO Communications Adviser	
Anna Helme	Co-founder	EngageMedia
	Doctoral Researcher	University of Melbourne
Margarette Roberts	Media for Development Consultant	
Janet Craven	International Public Advocacy Lead	Australian Red Cross
Karen Ovington	Assistant Director	Office of Development Effectiveness, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)