

**University of New South Wales**  
School of the Arts & Media

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Institute for Human Security & Social Change

COMMUNICATION FOR  
DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES IN THE  
AUSTRALIAN NGO SECTOR AND  
ACADEMIA

3 June 2015

Proceedings



## Introduction

In June 2015, a group of academic researchers from Australian universities and practitioners from Australian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) came together to discuss the use of communication for development (C4D) in their present and future work. The seminar was organised as a pre-conference to the ACFID (Australian Council for International Development) University Network Conference, held in Melbourne on 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> June. The aim was to provide a platform for international development actors involved or interested in communication for development to share experiences, lessons learned and recommendations that could contribute to an improved practice. With the additional aim of strengthening the value of the practice, the event wanted to facilitate connections between practitioners and researchers on C4D-related research projects.

Another purpose of this seminar was to offer a space to those with an interest in the field of C4D and planning to kick-start new C4D activities, to put forward questions related to programme design and brainstorm ideas with a specialist audience.

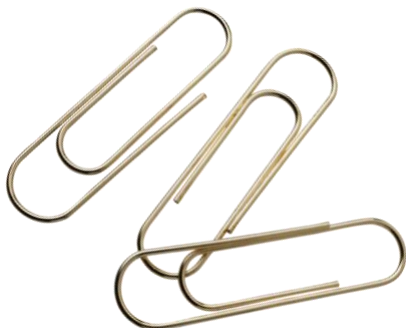
The event was a rare opportunity to gather knowledge on the status of C4D work among Australian NGOs and research institutions, and to create a network of organisations where that knowledge can be regularly exchanged.

## Event format

The seminar consisted of two main sessions:

### Presentations

During this session, selected participants gave an informal 15-minute presentation on their organisations' work or research project in the area of C4D.



### C4D Jam

This part of the seminar provided participants with the opportunity to ask specific questions that could be useful in the development of their programme/project activities in the field of C4D. Facilitated by the event organisers, this interactive session saw participants engaging in a group conversation around each question's topic. Everyone was encouraged to share knowledge, perspectives and experiences that were helpful to develop new ideas.

The session turned very soon into a learning experience on different C4D approaches, methodologies and contexts for the whole group. It also served as a reflective moment on the practice, as participants discussed issues of ethics, power, inclusion and participation, which are critical to the domain of communication in development.



## Experiences from the field

The first session was rich with information on C4D work from Australia-based research institutions and NGOs thanks to the presentations that participants gave to share their projects. Each one was followed by a short Q&A session.

This section of the proceedings provides details on the presentations held during the event and some of the key points arising from those, often in connection to the questions put forward by the audience.

### *Evaluation and learning in Communication for Development Findings from two industry partnership programmes*

**Presenter: Jessica Noske-Turner, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)**

RMIT is currently engaged in two industry partnerships to investigate evaluation and learning in communication for development (C4D). The first, 'Mobilising Media for Sustainable Outcomes in the Pacific Region', partners with ABC International Development and PACMAS (Pacific Media Assistance Scheme) and focuses on the Innovation Fund (IF) programme. The second project, 'Evaluating Communication and Development: supporting adaptive and accountable development', partners with UNICEF and aims to co-develop evaluation approaches that marry an emergent, adaptive and learning-based approach to evaluating C4D with an increasingly dominant results-based management agenda. Working concurrently at such different scales, from the very grassroots through to one of the major global development agencies, provides a unique opportunity to consider both the different contexts of learning and evaluation, as well as the common themes, such as the centrality of capacity development, the eternal challenges of resourcing evaluation, and the question of 'evidence'.

The purpose of Jessica's presentation was to bring together the two programmes and explore areas of overlap, as they often operate as two separate projects:

- Project 1: Mobilizing Media for Sustainable Outcomes in the Pacific Region (ABC ID Partnership Project). This research project focuses on the PACMAS Innovation Fund – particularly the design and evaluation of small-scale projects funded through the IF. As part of this project, a toolkit was developed for evaluation and learning in order to improve the application process for small grants applicants to programmes like the IF, as well as support for project design and M&E throughout. A core part of this project was capacity building, with a focus on small organisations that are often applying for their first grant.
- Project 2: Evaluating Communication and Development (UNICEF Partnership Project). This project began with a historical mapping of institutional understanding of C4D practices at various points along a timeline. The research team undertook a mapping exercise that indicated both top-down language/terminology changes from the UNICEF head office, as well as changes in C4D approaches and practice in response to local experiences and events. This was then transposed onto changes in C4D evaluation to understand how C4D evaluation has remained static despite a number of changes in approach/terminology. Participatory Action Research was used to bring evaluation approaches up to date with the changes.



Some of the challenges observed included:

- Resources (now that C4D is mainstreamed in UNICEF, there is constant negotiation regarding access to funding for C4D work and evaluation)
- Capacity
- Existing frameworks
- Evidence (pressure to show evidence as worthy of programme budget)

Focus areas:

- Increasing participation
- Rapid assessment tools (especially when considering the resource challenges)
- Capacity building (UNICEF and government counterparts)

Jessica identified as links between the two projects: (1) capacity building; (2) promotion and sanctioned space for learning and reflection; (3) scarcity of resources and need for feasible and realistic approaches; (4) pressure for evidence.

*Exploring story-driven participatory video with mobile technology  
as a pathway for citizen mobilization in South Africa*

**Presenter: Tamara Plush, University of Queensland**

Personal stories can be transformative for both the storyteller and the listener. This connection to the personal enables dialogue and mutual understanding that has the potential to serve as a catalyst for social change. However, despite its value, visual storytelling practitioners often find it difficult to incorporate the personal in collaborative, community-driven storytelling processes such as participatory video (PV). It was with such intent that researchers partnered with community mobilisers in Cape Town, South Africa, to develop a story-driven PV process inclusive of mobile technologies. The mobilisers' aim was to use the process in their work on health, violence and gendered inequalities in the city's informal settlement and township contexts. Four elements lie as cornerstones to this process: group development and relationship building; appropriate technology; personal and collective storytelling; and dialogue and listening.

Reflecting on these elements and the lessons learnt from such an approach, Tamara talked about this <sup>[11]</sup> participatory video project, which was undertaken in collaboration with Thea Shahrokh from the Institute of Development Studies and Joanna Wheeler at the Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation. Together, they partnered with Sonke Gender Justice staff in Cape Town to explore how they could integrate participatory video in their work with people living in a context of gender inequality and violence.

The first step of this project was to conduct visionary meetings with Sonke focusing on community engagement and mobilization. Through these meetings it became clear that the organisation wanted to focus on story based participatory video. This approach is more drama-based and is a useful way of working in violent contexts, as it allows for the portrayal of situations in a unique way, which is more likely to promote positive transformational change. It also became clear that Sonke wanted to use mobile phones for the production of these participatory videos.



The following step was to put together a toolkit and book outlining the phases of the facilitation training (Training of Trainers process). There were four key focus areas: (I) Group development and relationship building, (II) Appropriate Technology, (III) Personal and Collective Storytelling, (IV) Dialogue and Listening. It is important to weight these four elements to produce the best design.

The toolkit was implemented in Phases. Phase I included an introduction to storytelling; Phase II framing the story from the personal to the collective; Phase III technically bringing a story to life; Phase IV developing story content; Phase V technically building the story; and Phase VI speaking dialogue and listening. You can read more about this project on *Media Development* journal, 2015, 3.

### *An overview of ABC international development work and approaches*

**Presenter: Jessica List & Sam Freeman, ABC International**

Australian Broadcasting Corporation International Development (ABC ID) is the international development branch of Australia's national public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Jessica and Sam provided an overview of the work implemented by ABC International Development across a range of projects with a focus on Communication for Development approaches.

In particular, ABC ID offers support in the following areas:

- 1) Capacity building of national broadcasters - ABC ID works with national broadcasters to improve their technology, build staff skills and improve their understanding of public interest broadcasting;
- 2) Developing and producing media content that tackles key development issues - this includes issues such as health, education, climate change, governance and violence against women;
- 3) Disaster response and risk reduction - media and communication can play an instrumental role in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and response;
- 4) Research and Community outreach - ABC ID collaborates on research programmes to gather deeper insights and understanding of the context, culture, interests and needs of people across Asia-Pacific.

The capacity building work carried out by the organisation often leads to local trainees producing C4D content, such as in the case of the PACMAS NCD (non-communicable diseases) animation training held in Melbourne and Suva. There is also a team of eight full-time international and local researchers who design and conduct research around projects activities and monitoring & evaluation. ABC ID uses innovative approaches to reporting and dissemination of research to make findings accessible and practical information available, an example of which is the support the organisation provided to the Papua New Guinean national broadcaster through their *Citizen Access to Information* report.

*"We take a C4D approach in our work...our C4D approach aims to empower and connect communities by giving them a voice and a platform for those voices to occur."*

Some of the programmes ABC ID is presently involved in include:

- Burma/Myanmar: this project focuses on maternal health communication as a pilot programme and has been expanded to include a 20-episode health communication drama;



- Cambodia: a radio talkback show to assist citizen engagement and promote two-way dialogue. One aspect of this is a youth voice project in Battambang made up of six segments. The topics featured on the programme have led to behaviour change and increased voice for positive contributions to political processes in Cambodia.
- Papua New Guinea: this project is run in partnership with the national broadcaster and it focuses on content creation. One of the media outputs connected to this project is 'yumi go wer', a monthly talk show where citizens have the opportunity to speak with leaders and those in power about issues that matter to them. This multi-platform approach promotes informed discussion about relevant governance issues. It is a live panel radio show recorded in front of a local audience, addressing topical issues related to governance; it rotates through provinces and gives the public an opportunity to call/text in to pose questions.
- Pacific: the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), which includes the Innovation Fund. This is a ten-year commitment from the Australian Government to media strengthening, aimed at supporting better governance in the Pacific.

*Communicating with Communities (CWC): new professional roles, stories from the field and lessons learned from RedR Australia Standby Register programme*

**Presenter: Hamish Weatherly, RedR Australia**

RedR Australia is a not-for-profit organisation and a Standby Partner for the UN that deploys experts on mission into disasters and emergencies as surge capacity. There are two phases in the deployment process: (i) ahead of a crisis (ii) when disaster strikes. Communication is crucial in times of disaster as food/water/shelter, as a cyclical process of gathering (listening), analyzing (thinking) and sharing (speaking) communities needs. If effectively implemented, this continuous cycle leads to outcomes such as efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the emergency operations.

The organisation has been engaged in Communicating with Communities (CWC) work through its Standby Register programme. CwC is an emerging field of humanitarian response that seeks to meet the information and communications needs of people affected by crises. Hamish, one of RedR Australia global emergency deployee, discussed his stories from the field and his experience with CWC.

Examples of field applications discussed by Hamish include:

- Philippines (Haiyan/Yolanda): a context in which there was relative freedom of movement, established communication channels, relative freedom of information, existing functional service delivery models and a collegial atmosphere. UN OCHA was deployed to the Philippines in a coordination role, with a focus on the humanitarian system as a whole. Internews was already working in the country and had established a radio station. The question faced in that context was how to add value to these existing services, and how to create a more rigorous system from what was already in place.

Since the Catholic Church had a monthly newspaper that reached the majority of people in the province, a decision was made to link the radio station and the newspaper together for the purposes of information dissemination. The Philippines already had, fortuitously, a committed



humanitarian NGO structure; hence, the challenge there was more related to bringing these committed groups together to produce an effective response.

- Myanmar: the context was one of complex emergency in a highly sensitive environment, as the population viewed humanitarian actors as parties in the conflict. This required an approach that focused on training and technical support. In contrast to the Philippines, there were limited broadcast options in the country. Hence, the challenge was to find sufficient technical support to persuade people to prioritise humanitarian information over other content.

Three lessons to be learnt from these experiences:

- (1) customize your approach to context,
- (2) the conversation should be controlled by communities not by humanitarians,
- (3) don't shoot for the moon, at least at first: start simple and build from there.

### *Communication for Development in Peacebuilding*

**Presenter: Valentina Baú, University of New South Wales**

While a number of organisations - including agencies such as UNICEF - have begun to extend their focus to this area of practice, research on communication for development has not yet provided a framework that defines the role and the scope of C4D in the aftermath of violence. While fields such as media & conflict, peace communication and ICT in peacebuilding relate, for some aspects, to this domain, it is crucial to recognise 'C4D in Peacebuilding' as a definite discipline and practice. This presentation wanted to shed light on some of the notions that relate to this area of work. At the same time, it introduced recent findings as well as prospective research directions that are aimed both at strengthening the value of C4D in peacebuilding, and at uncovering the effectiveness of a C4D approach in addressing specific issues related to post-conflict environments.

One of Valentina's research interests lies in exploring the experience of war and conflict in people's lives, while analysing the role that C4D plays in building peace and restoring communities' social fabric. There has been limited research on this area. With the exception of the work of Rodriguez (2000, *Civil society and citizen media*), some notable grey literature includes:

- 2010 Communication for Peacebuilding, Search for Common Ground
- 2013 Conceptualising Communication for Peace, Hoffman
- 2013 C4D Interventions in fragile states, Skuse et al. & AusAID
- 2013 Global mapping of C4D interventions in peacebuilding and conflict, UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) programme

Valentina argues that a C4D in Peacebuilding approach moves from a media/journalism framework to one that places community and social development as its primary goal. Incorporating this approach in peacebuilding enables different actors to be heard in the process, particularly at the community level.

In recent years, Valentina's work has looked at the use of participatory media in peacebuilding. Her research and analysis frameworks are built around individual change, relational change, social change and the contribution of participatory video to conflict transformation processes. Her 'Communication



for Social Change in Conflict Transformation Model' (*Community Development Journal*, 2015, 50:1) provides a useful starting point for both researchers and practitioners who intend to explore further the use of participatory media in peacebuilding.

***C4D and Gender in the Pacific – Exploration of two emerging research projects***

**Presenter: Tait Brimacombe, La Trobe University**

This presentation provided an overview of current and prospective research projects undertaken at the Institute for Human Security and Social Change, La Trobe University. In response to Tait's PhD research into the intersections of Gender and C4D in the Pacific, two research projects have been designed to further this work. The first one, 'Communicating Gender for Social Change in Melanesia', examines case studies of effective communication practices that seek to challenge gender norms and stereotypes and/or promote gender equality. In doing so, this research explores how C4D techniques and/or communication platforms are being utilised in an attempt to shape attitudes and beliefs around gender in the Pacific, with the aim of promoting social change. The second project, 'Online and Offline Processes of Advocacy and Activism', responds to recent research on ICTs and social media use in the Pacific and wants to explore the use of online platforms by young women in the Pacific for networking, advocacy and dialogue, with a view to mapping some of the links between young women's online and offline activities.

***Climate and Oceans Support Programme in the Pacific***

**Contributor: Lily Jade Frenchman, Bureau of Meteorology**

As part of the Climate and Oceans Support Programme in the Pacific (COSPPac) – a \$32m project funded by DFAT (Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade) and run out of the Australian Bureau of Meteorology – a mix of scientists and development practitioners work together with partners in the Pacific islands to develop capability in climate science. A significant element of this is working with partners in Pacific Meteorological Services to build their capacity to communicate their own scientific climate and weather information. This is particularly crucial as they are the gatekeepers (or 'bridges') of this information in-country. COSPPac takes a multi-prong approach to training in climate communication, including direct/formal training in topics such as stakeholder engagement and communication skills, and informal training including modeling communications best-practice and partaking in mentoring. Lily shares that they have received particularly emphatic, positive feedback regarding the incorporation of communications training into an area that has often focused purely on the science.





## C4D Jam

The second session of the seminar offered a space for debate on the current approaches in C4D practice, and some of the ethical issues that arise in the field.

This section of the proceedings presents some of the points that were addressed and discussed during this group conversation.

Question1: What does #inno4dev mean for C4D? Innovation is trending in development - what can we learn about this trend by examining it through the lens of C4D? (Jessica Noske-Turner)

C4D includes a plethora of communication channels that are changing rapidly and regularly. The challenge, therefore, lies in carrying out an effective analysis and conceptualization of the communication ecosystem that is evolving constantly. How can we break down the different channels? What do people rely on for information? What do people trust and for what reasons? What stage of the disaster response will they rely on communication technology, and for what purposes?

There is a need to bring together technology, media and civil society for cross-fertilisation, particularly between civil society and technology.

From a funding perspective, there is often a reluctance to fund C4D projects that have proven to be successful. This is due to the fact that donors tend not to fund the same activity twice and show an inclination towards 'innovation'. So while funders' goal is innovation, communities' preference involves ongoing trust and continuity in their relationships, which are more likely to lead to sustainability. These two views are often in conflict with one another in the implementation of a communication for development project. The question we need to ask ourselves is: do communities want a new idea to be introduced to them every three months? Success and evidence is not always rewarded above and beyond this churn of innovation in communication technologies. Yet, there seems to be a need to rebrand and re-label work as something 'new' and 'innovative', and to constantly change the language.

John Wallace, director of the Asia Pacific Journalism Centre, shared a reflection on the Centre's work, which promotes economic literacy and capacity building for journalists. Reporters participating in these programmes want more training and they want to receive it locally. Yet, in order to receive funding, each year the Centre needs to develop new ideas on how to make its work 'sexy' and 'on trend'. On the one hand, this preference for innovation encourages the organisation to modify and improve the product, but on the other hand it is exhausting and often comes at the expense of being able to offer continuity.

Question2: New Communication technologies offer opportunities for inclusiveness, but how can we remain loyal to the media and communication ecologies of communities and to what extent can we bring in new technologies? What impact can they have? (Valentina Baú)

Tamara Plush from the Centre for Communication for Social Change (CfSC) at the University of Queensland suggests that caution should be observed. An Action Aid research project conducted on the



Nepalese border with the aim of studying the introduction of technological innovation showed that men used the technology primarily to access pornographic content, and changed their approaches to sexual interaction as a result. More honest and open discussions are needed in order to consider both the positive and negative implications in the use of these technologies.

So the issue remains on whether practitioners should bring in new technologies, or simply find ways of engaging with the technologies that are already there.

Question3: How does media development fit in with C4D? (John Wallace)

Firstly, there is the necessity to acknowledge that commercial media are often damaged, but they still need to be present. Public/state media are often reliant on ratings; this leads to the inability to challenge governments on issues such as corruption. So what can we do to improve the situation? Is it sufficient to accept the fact that we are working in an imperfect environment?

As Tamara Plush highlighted, **voice-based approaches are often flawed in that access and voice are often conflated. There is always a gatekeeper present somewhere.** There is a need to understand how voice is defined in a development space. The World Bank definition of voice tends to concentrate on first order voice, that is the opportunity for people to narrate their own lives. However, theorists such as Nick Couldry argue that there is a need to understand the reasons why individuals do not have voice in the first place, and work on challenging and changing the factors that are keeping that voice from being heard. There is a need for a more nuanced understanding of power beyond black and white terms.

Question4: Talks around participation have been prominent on the development agenda since the 1990s. Yet, when one looks at mainstream practice, not much has changed. How can we work within a mainstream organisation and still advocate for the resources needed to do participatory communication? (Tait Brimacombe)

Institutional barriers exist regarding the prioritisation (or lack thereof) of communication within development. There is a need to unpack, firstly, whether practitioners are coming from a development background or from a communication background.

When planning a development intervention, it is crucial to put forward the question: how do we build the C4D component of this programme? While it may not be possible to see a shift in the whole sector, we can begin by taking small steps forward. It is only once enough C4D practitioners and researcher will be able to participate in the system, that communication for development as a recognised practice will have enough voice/power to change how the system operates. Once C4D is better incorporated into mainstream development, we will begin to see meaningful changes.

Question5: What does social change mean? What are the different understandings that both practitioners and researchers have of this term? (Samantha Ryan)

There is an assumption that social change is inherently positive, and this is not always the case. When too much



attention is centred around individual attitudes and individual behaviour change, the focus often shifts away from some of the structural and external factors that are driving those particular attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, there is a need to re-direct the focus from individuals to the collective/community level.

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As an additional part of the seminar, Amanda Lawrence - Research and Strategy Manager for the Grey Literature Strategies and Australian Policy Online (APO) projects at *Swinburne University of Technology* - talked about her work with APO in collecting and disseminating research and information on development issues.

Amanda introduced the role and value of grey literature for public policy and practice and focused on the question: how can we provide better access to research and information on policy and practice issues? Much of the most valuable material is 'grey literature'; this term is used to refer to publications and resources produced by organisations rather than academic journals or publishing houses. The vast majority of research from and about developing countries is produced in the form of grey literature. Yet, these resources are not easily discoverable, are hard to evaluate and lack large-scale collection and management, resulting in wasted time, duplicated research and poor knowledge exchange.

The current push for evidence-based practice, open access movement with a focus on scholarly communication, and an increasing use of research by lobby groups and organisations have changed the nature of digital publishing and online communication. Hence, it has become easier for organisations to become research producers, publishers, disseminators and collectors. This has raised the amount of information being shared online.

Studies have indicated that the hardest information for researchers to find online include evaluations and technical documents, despite the great value of this literature (particularly for development research). One of the primary issues for researchers is the inability to find relevant published material, and the time spent in what often results in fruitless searching. Many researchers have explained that they simply do not know what exists out there and how to find it. Most reports are placed in individual/organisation websites and accessing them requires searching across an enormous number of materials. There are a plethora of small collections which makes searching for information time consuming. NGOs and governments do not have access to peer review journal material.

Amanda argues that publishing is a form of communication, and that there is a need to make all published material available more readily. This will allow researchers to save time looking for evidence. Her projects explore how online information repositories can be used as a way of collating content and information - including grey literature, reports, and evaluations - that are of relevance to a wide variety of development audiences, both academic and practitioner. In her talk, she explained how ICTs (particularly the internet) can be used to provide developing countries with the ability to both communicate and disseminate policy and programmatic information, and to access similar information from other sources.



## List of participants

Full name	Job title	Organisation
Adrian Middleton	Communication Consultant	Monash University
Amanda Lawrence	Research and Strategy Manager, Grey Literature Strategies & Policy Online	Swinburne University of Technology
Charles Mphande	Senior Lecturer	Victoria University
David Fisher	Project Assistant	Asia Pacific Journalism Centre
David Nolan	Senior Lecturer, Media and Communication	University of Melbourne
Frances Gamble	Team Support Officer: International Engagement	Oaktree
Hamish Weatherly	Emergency response expert	RedR Australia
Inca Dunphy	International development practitioner	
Jessica List	Project Manager, Cambodia Communications Assistance Project	ABC International Development
Jessica Noske-Turner	Postdoctoral Fellow	RMIT
John Wallace	Director	Asia Pacific Journalism Centre
Katie Morris	Deputy Head of International Engagement	Oaktree
Lily Jade Frencham	Climate and Oceans Support Program in the Pacific (COSPPac)	Bureau of Meteorology
Lisa Miller	Student	Victoria University
Lyn Larkin	Communications and Media Coordinator	ACFID (Australian Council for International Development)
Marian Reid	Communication Consultant	
Mark Eby	Filmmaker and PhD candidate	RMIT
Matt Abud	Communications, Media, Development Consultant	Freelance



Sam Freeman	Researcher	ABC International Development
Samantha Ryan	Centre Facilitator, Centre for Communication and Social Change	University of Queensland
Samy Mounir	Talent Acquisition Advisor - International Emergency Response	RedR Australia
Tait Brimacombe	Research Fellow	La Trobe University
Tamara Plush	PhD student, Centre for Communication and Social Change	University of Queensland
Valentina Baú	Lecturer and researcher	University of New South Wales

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