

Communication for Marginalized and Isolated Groups

Report from Working Group 2

9 September 2004

Common characteristics of isolated and marginalized groups:

- Poor, lacking economic resources
- Live in isolated areas (remote rural areas, urban slums, mountains etc)
- Unemployed or self-employed
- Illiterate or semi-illiterate
- From minority ethno-linguistic groups
- Possess different customs and practices
- Powerless to participate in the decision-making that affects their lives
- Victims of violence, war, drugs, HIV/AIDS and diseases
- Speak minority languages
- Possess other characteristics (disabled, women, youth, aged etc)

Obstacles and constraints

- Lack of public awareness
- Lack of indicators, evidence and measurements of impact
- Lack of 'scaling-up'
- Issues related to participatory development communication practice (PDC)
- Training needs for PDC practitioners
- Institutional obstacles (UN, donors, governments etc)
- Lack of funding
- Structural obstacles
- Sustainability issues

Governments: context

- Governments have committed themselves to the MDGs. We are not going to meet the MDGs unless all actors recognize that communication with the poor is key to meeting them. More importantly, this is the principle identified by poor people themselves.
- Current government policies and trends are making the voices of the marginalized and isolated even more marginalized and isolated.

Recommendations to Governments: 1

Create a plural information society

- Create space for debate - shaped by civil society, private sector and media - on how to open up channels for the poor and marginalised and not ignore - or attempt to control - their voices
- Support transition from state to public broadcasting as an urgent priority
- Define the role of the national broadcaster
- Set up independent media regulators
- Remove barriers to self-expression in the media, so that linguistic and cultural diversity can be expressed in a freer media
- Create a supportive regulatory environment

Recommendations to Governments: 2

Support the voices of isolated and marginalized groups

- Provide a platform for their voices to be heard eg support community radio
- Encourage media to reflect the voices of the poor and marginalized so they can be heard by the government and publics
- Initiate consultative processes that include marginalized groups
- Support community-based organizations that can be vehicles for community self-expression
- Recognize different tools for cultural self-expression

Recommendations to communication practitioners: 1

- Recognize that people are partners not objects
- Create opportunities for people to generate and distribute their own materials
- Raise awareness of people's rights to express themselves
- Build capacity for community-owned media, in partnership with local media, NGO, professionals and local authorities
- Increase knowledge-sharing among all practitioners using ICT tools
- Train to become better communicators and facilitators

Recommendations to communication practitioners: 2

- Improve advocacy with decision makers
- Get feedback from the ground on projects using detailed surveys and thorough evaluation
- Improve sustainability of projects
- Build evidentiary base for decision makers in donor, development agencies and governments: this should include general principles, case studies and generic indicators – especially in relation to scale
- Set up a task force to carry out this work by the World Bank meeting September 2005 (Rome) and WSIS 2 (Tunis)

Recommendations to donors and development agencies

- Make communication for development a critical component in meeting MDGs
- Set up specialist communication for development units
 - To promote the importance of this work within their organisations
 - To promote communication for development with other donors/agencies
- Provide adequate M&E funding (both for programs and general good practice)
- Establish a 'good development donor' initiative
- Donors pressure governments to help build national policies, eg deregulation of media. Greater co-ordination and development of coalitions will help apply this pressure