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Communications for Development of Water, Sanitation, and Infrastructure Projects

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INTRODUCTION

Ten years after the World Bank institutionalized the use of Communications for Development, the Water and Sanitation Program for Latin America and the Caribbean and the World Bank office in Peru held the “Constructive Dialogue: Communications for Development of Water, Sanitation, and Infrastructure Projects in Latin America” workshop on November 23-25, 2009.

This workshop aimed to equip participants from 21 countries in the region with tools and methods for effective Communications for Development within the scope of Water and Sanitation Program for Latin America and the Caribbean projects. By summarizing the content and lessons learned from this workshop and its full report, this briefing aims to promote a deeper understanding of this field.

DEFINITION AND ADDED VALUE

Communications for Development is a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about seeking consensus-based change at different levels, including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating, and learning, for sustained, participatory and meaningful change. It is not public relations or corporate communication.¹

In a nutshell, Communications for Development:

- builds trust through dialogue, transparency, mutual respect, and strong evidence;
- uses a mix of communication techniques, channels, and approaches to advance positive individual and social change;
- engages and empowers multiple stakeholders (that is, individuals, the community and mass and interactive media) to achieve greater participation in the development process and to make interventions sustainable;
- has four main strategies:
 - Advocacy: ensures the perspectives of marginalized communities inform policymaking.

KEY FINDINGS

- Evidence shows that projects with a strong Communications for Development component are cost-effective.
- Communications for Development helps reduce risks and enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of WSP projects.
- Communications for Development can contribute to democratic governance and accountability.
- In order to maximize impact, water and sanitation projects should use Communications for Development tools and methods.
- Effective Communications for Development demands appropriate economic and human resources.
- There is a need for further research into water and sanitation projects in relation to the use of Communications for Development.

- Behavior Change Communication: aims to help adopt and sustain desired behaviors.
- Communication for Social Change: seeks to empower communities to influence social norms.
- Social Mobilization: engages civic society organizations to work toward a common social cause.

This field of communications could help guide future planning and implementation of Water and Sanitation projects. For example, Communications for Development can contribute to:

- The preservation of the cultures of participating communities.
- The creation of mechanisms for expanding public access to information and services.

¹ The Communication Initiative (2006): Rome Consensus, [Online] available from: <https://www.comminit.com/?q=la/node/196336> [Accessed 26 May 2011]

- The development of local capacity.
- Policy drafting and impact assessments.
- Democratic governance and accountability.

ACTION

At the World Bank, we understand that development is not possible without participation and that participation cannot be fostered without appropriate, timely, and relevant communication strategies. In 1998, the use of Communications for Development in project execution was institutionalized and it was decided that, in order to achieve more positive and sustainable outcomes, ongoing dialogue needed to be established and maintained with the various social actors involved in development processes, ranging from metapopulations (groups of spatially separated populations) to project executors.

The following summarizes the four key challenges faced when bridging the gap between Communications for Development principles and the implementation of Water and Sanitation projects in the region:

- 1) Team work:
 - Promoting internal communication platforms that facilitate the organization of project-related information, so that it can be communicated in a timely manner to all involved parties.
 - Ensuring that users and managers take ownership of projects to guarantee their sustainability.

2) Key stakeholders' involvement:

- Challenging the “top-down diffusion” communications paradigm through win-win, participatory, and effective experiences.
- Making the most of oral traditions and putting technical information in non-technical terms.
- Mobilizing different government and civil society organizations (including representatives from different faith groups, trade unions, and political parties).
- Developing and building the capacities of social actors (including children), so that they can oversee project components.
- Promoting proactive media involvement, rather than having a reactive (to public scandals, etc.) media.

3) Evidence-based practice:

- Conducting sound research to help reduce potential social and political conflict.
- Institutionalizing knowledge-management, placing emphasis on both positive and negative lessons learned.
- Assessing the impact of communication through pre and post-studies.

4) Resources:

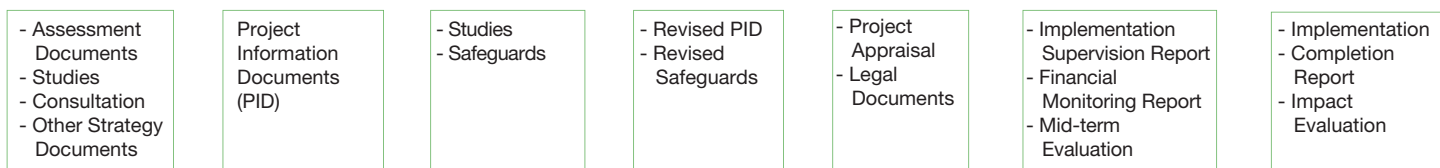
- Enhancing the value of Communications for Development in the project cycle, including an actual budget with specific financial resources.

Chart 1: The Project Cycle and Communications for Development Phases²

Project Cycle Phases



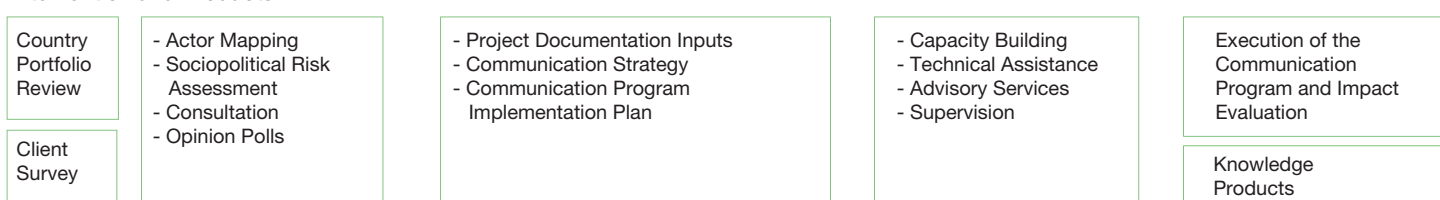
Related Documents



Communication for Development Program Phases



Intervention and Products



2 Adapted from Mefalopoulos, P. (2009): Development Communication Sourcebook: Broadening the Boundaries of Communication. World Bank: Washington, D.C.

Experience has shown that most projects fail because communications are not integrated into the staff's work sequences. Chart 1 illustrates how Communications for Development could correlate with the seven phases of the World Bank project cycle.

CASE STUDIES

The two experiences outlined below³ show different strategies to tackle the above-mentioned challenges.

1. Application of "Citizens' Report Card" to inform dialogue-based services (Pakistan)

The city of Karachi is divided into 18 towns, each with administrative autonomy. It has 5.2 million direct connections and 1 million joint connections. Out of 376 settlements, only 150 are officially recognized by the government.

Water is an asset that has been politicized in Karachi. Deteriorating services, weak community relations, and a lack of accountability mechanisms were some of the factors that shaped the context in which this project was launched.

The process started with the adoption of a corporate strategy for the water and sanitation public company, which included corporate governance principles and performance indicators. With the aim of making this process more transparent and more localized, the corporate strategy also included a Communications for Development strategy to strengthen citizen engagement mechanisms and media involvement. To inform the communications strategy, colleagues in Karachi decided to use the Citizens' Report Card.

How Does the Citizens' Report Card Work?

- Citizens' Report Card combines qualitative (focus groups) and quantitative (surveys) research methods to collect feedback on the quality and adequacy of public services from end-users.
- The final report serves as a point of departure for discussion and corrective action. That report is written at two different levels (for technical audience members and for the general public) and published widely to create spaces for knowledge-sharing and coalition-building.
- The Citizens' Report Card also provides a summative satisfaction score that allows quantitative comparison of different services.

Citizens' Report Card proved to be a simple, yet effective, method. Project managers and implementers, as well as government and community representatives, moved from confrontation to interaction and cooperation.

Ownership was another crucial consequence of using Citizens' Report Card, as members of the public felt their views were incorporated in the reform of services in an objective and systematic manner. The media also decided to play a critical role in this reform, as they were obtaining high quality and credible stories in a timely manner.

2. Development of social marketing tools to better understand and respond to the needs of local sanitation markets (Peru)

During the 1990s, the Peruvian Government invested only 15% of its water and sanitation budget in small towns and rural areas. Between 2006 and 2010, it executed only 54% of its planned budget. On top of high levels of inequity and underspending, investment on water and sanitation is publicly considered inefficient and levels of customer satisfaction remain low.

In this context, the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program in partnership with national and local authorities, the private sector, NGOs, and selected communities tested the 'Creating Markets of Sanitation' initiative between 2007 and 2010.

In order to build an equitable and sustainable relationship between supply and demand, this initiative developed a set of tools, one of which was a needs-based, attractive and accessible 'sanitation package'.

Based on ideas and recommendations collected through market research, the package was promoted through the following cycle: a technology catalogue; installation and maintenance of services; micro-financing services; and information and educational tools that aimed to encourage positive attitudes toward and practices and knowledge of sanitation services. Those tools included promotional campaigns (for example, door-to-door messages); training (of local leaders, community sales promoters, schoolteachers and healthcare workers), and post-sale educational activities.

After 24 months of sustained promotional activities, and almost a further year of sanitation market development, this initiative identified:

- around 9,000 households that have improved their sanitation services;
- that the number of households without access to sanitation has decreased by 35%;
- that 90% of clients are satisfied with hardware store goods and services, 86% with provider services, 80% with the micro-financial institutions' services and 76% with communal promoter performance.

Changing people's circumstances from those of beneficiaries (waiting for solutions) to those of active consumers (creating solutions) proved to be a challenge. Research provided project leaders with a powerful insight: rather than health-related benefits, the most important family motivator for investing in sanitation is social status, as water and sanitation systems are perceived by the target audience as symbols of progress. This pilot project also showed that local entrepreneurs are not only looking for profits, they also have a commitment to their communities, because they want to live in a place of which they feel proud.

³ For further case studies, please read the full report.

IN BRIEF

- Communications for Development builds trust through dialogue, transparency, mutual respect and strong evidence.
- Communications for Development is more effective when it (a) combines rational, emotional and evidence-based arguments; (b) promotes a sense of ownership of local services and infrastructure assets; (c) uses mass and interactive media; (d) brings into play internal and external communications; and (e) keeps media stories nationally consistent, but locally relevant.
- Communications for Development can help project managers and implementers, as well as government and community representatives, to move from confrontation to interaction and cooperation.
- Effective Communications for Development requires appropriate resources.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- The Communication Initiative: www.cominit.com
- Consortium for Communication and 'Glocal' Change: www.orecomm.net
- FAO's Communications for Development: www.fao.org/nr/comdev
- Panos Institute: www.panos.org.uk
- World Bank's Communications for Development: <http://go.worldbank.org/5CHGCEWM70>

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Contact us

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