CommGAP

Towards A New Agora

Communication for Governance
and Accountability Program (CommGAP)

POVERTY REDUCTION WITH STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION:

Moving from Awareness Raising to Sustained Citizen Participation

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About CommGAP

The Agora was the heart of the ancient Greek city—its main political, civic, religious and commercial center. Today, the Agora is the space where free and equal citizens discuss, debate, and share information about public affairs in order to influence the policies that affect the quality of their lives. The democratic public sphere that the ancient Agora represents is an essential element of good governance and accountability.

The Communication for Governance & Accountability Program (CommGAP) seeks to promote good and accountable governance through the use of innovative communication approaches and techniques that strengthen the constitutive elements of the public sphere: engaged citizenries, vibrant civil societies, plural and independent media systems, and open government institutions. Communication links these elements, forming a framework for national dialogue through which informed public opinion is shaped about key issues of public concern. CommGAP posits that sound analysis and understanding of the structural and process aspects of communication and their interrelationships make critical contributions to governance reform. CommGAP is funded through a multi-donor trust fund. The founding donor of this trust fund is the UK's Department for Internationals Development (DFID).

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Table of Contents

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APR	Annual Progress Report
CBA	Centre for Budget Advocacy
CBO	community-based organization
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CJA	Committee for Joint Action
CMED	Central Monitoring and Evaluation Division
CONPES	National Council for Social and Economic Planning
CPA	Country Poverty Assessment
CPAR	central public administration reform
CSO	civil society organization
CSPG	Cross-Sectoral Planning Group
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DCEP	Development Communication Enhancement Program
DCEP	Development Communication Enhancement Program
DCEP	Development Communication Enhancement Program
DDC	District Development Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DPMAS	District Poverty Monitoring and Analysis System
EGPRS	Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy
ENAHO	National Household Survey
EUMAP	EU-Moldova Action Plan
GBS	General Budget Support
G-JAS	Ghana Joint Assistance Strategy
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GPS	Ghana Partnership Strategy
G-RAP	Ghana Research and Advocacy Program
GSPS	Growth and Social Protection Strategy

GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
IAP	Immediate Action Plan
ICTs	information and communications technologies
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IEC	information, education, and communication
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEI	National Statistics and Information Institute
IPA	Institute for Policy Alternatives
ISD	Information Services Department
ISD	Information Services Department
ISODEC I	ntegrated Social Development Centre
IT	information technology
JAS	Joint Assistance Strategy
LAC	Latin American and Caribbean
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MDBS	Multi-Donor Budget Support
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MET	Ministry of Economy and Trade
MPEE	Ministry of Planning, Economy and Empowerment
MPSR	Ministry of Public Sector Reform
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NDF	Nepal Development Forum
NDP	National Development Plan
NDPC	The National Development Planning Commission
NEPAD	New Partner for Africa's Development
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NIMES	National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy
NLSS	Nepal Living Standards Survey
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSGRP	National Strategy for Growth and Reduction in Poverty
PAF	Poverty Alleviation Fund

PED   Poverty Eradication Division
PER   Public Expenditure Review
PMAS   Poverty Monitoring and Analysis System
PMIS   Poverty Management Information System
PMS   Poverty Monitoring System
PO   partner organizations
PRS   Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP   Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSRCP   Public Sector Reform Development Communication Program
PSRL   Programmatic Social Reform Loan
RIFE   Federalist Intercommunication Network
SGPRS   Strengthened Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy
SINERGIA   National System of Evaluation of Public Sector Performance
SWOT   Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TAS   Tanzania Assistance Strategy
TWG   technical working group
UNDP   United Nations Development Program
UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund
VDC   Village Development Committees

Executive Summary

The role of communication in Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) processes has evolved since 2000. The introduction of new communication channels for public policy debate has empowered a wide array of stakeholders who previously were absent or marginal in the development agenda. Initially, consultations were mainly a donor-led requirement, often done to access Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) funding quickly. This experience led to the recognition that more can be gained by working in partnership with other stakeholders.

This publication updates a 2005 review of communication in PRSs. It includes four country case studies (Ghana, Tanzania, Moldova, and Nepal) and a regional analysis of Latin America and the Caribbean. It explores how the use of strategic communication has expanded beyond the PRS and is now being integrated into national development planning and implementation. Many of these strategies are shifting their focus from a "dissemination and publicity strategy" to a "communication program" that emphasizes information intervention beyond the traditional campaign, workshop or seminars. Compared with the 2005 review, the main difference is the institutionalization of communication, moving beyond the one-time experience for the first set of PRSs to broader, deeper sustained communication in support of poverty reduction and national development strategies. A second major difference is expanding beyond communication and participation in PRS formulation to PRS implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Enhanced communication has evolved hand in hand with enhanced citizen participation. Both have been increasingly integrated into policy planning, budgeting, and government processes more generally. Citizens increasingly are making the leap from policy awareness to demands for accountability. Tools such as participatory budgeting and planning as well as citizen monitoring have proven to be more successful and sustainable longer term than consultation alone.

Experience with coordinating stakeholders in a more participatory approach to PRS points out two key challenges. First, clear lines of communication need to be established between the central PRS unit and other parts of government, particularly line ministries and local government. Second, clear links must be articulated between the PRS and other national development strategies and processes.

One of the more important factors for strengthening communication and participation in PRS processes is giving it a strong institutional home, one that has the power and prestige to lead and coordinate the process. This work often took the form of a committee in a central agency. Donors often worked together to support a stronger institutional base for ongoing dialog about national development strategies, one that would be sustained after the PRSP.

Sector working groups also are proving useful in facilitating coordination among PRS participants. These groups often are initiated by the PRS unit, but they are composed of representatives of relevant sector line ministries, local government, civil society organizations (CSOs), and donors. Sector working groups help focus development planning on sectoral program priorities. This focus on technical issues helps find common ground, but it may give greater voice to technical experts than the general public if the latter are not adequately involved or represented.

All four case study countries developed a communication strategy specifically for the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). A PRSP communication strategy provides the basis for considering how all the relevant groups can be encouraged to participate most effectively in the formulation of the PRS. It specifies the processes, institutional roles, communication channels, and other aspects of communication in support of the PRS. Sometimes it also sets consultation standards.

The role of the media and civil society in influencing development policies are related and mutually reinforcing. In fact, the media often play a greater role in making information widely available, increasing citizen knowledge and awareness, explaining policy issues, and giving citizens voice.

Capacity building should be part of a long-term and ongoing package of support for the design and implementation of the PRS communication strategy. Capacity needs to be enhanced across all government departments that disseminate information on government policy. Capacity building of the media likely requires long-term donor support to improve the quality of reporting on macroeconomic policy issues. Civil society more broadly also can benefit from donor support to assist with the cost of networking and consultation activities.

The challenges of communication in national development strategies—both within and between government, civil society, and donors—correspond to some of the key challenges of the PRS initiative, how to create a genuinely participatory, and comprehensive process. Donor harmonization and aid coordination have improved government-donor relations, but both parties need to forge a new relationship with civil society for the more ambitious agenda to promote good governance. The rise of new information technologies has helped make civil society even more central in the national development debate. Improving communication can provide opportunities to reconfigure the relationships among government, donors, and civil society.

1. Communication in Poverty Reduction Strategies

The need for a deeper understanding and use of systematic communication has grown substantially during the last decade. One of the many reasons for this growth is the increase in information and communications technologies (ICTs) that has enabled more people to connect in more ways than ever before. This increased connection has dramatically changed the approach to development. Information has become more available to everybody, ranging from the poor farmer in a remote village of a developing country to the influential advocacy group in the capital city of an industrial nation. ICTs have enhanced peoples' awareness, raised their expectations, mobilized them, and empowered them to make much greater demands not only at the project level, but also at the national policy level, including national development and poverty reduction strategies.

How has this engagement affected the approach to development? Policy makers and practitioners now realize that communication is one of the major elements of development and governance. Governance is not always identified as a communication challenge. Communication often is discussed in the context of participation, political economy, transparency, or accountability. These issues are taken into consideration to improve service delivery, achieve financial soundness, or ensure strategic national planning for development and poverty reduction.

1.1　The Evolution of Public Participation in the PRS Process

The introduction of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in 1999 as part of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative formalized the engagement of nonstate stakeholders and the general public in designing national development plans. The PRSP process includes a participatory approach as one of its core principles. The *World Bank Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty* identified empowerment as one of the two pillars of economic development, along with growth. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also were launched in 2000. These two initiatives led to a more participatory approach and a renewed focus on poverty reduction, with MDGs being the goal and PRSPs being the approach.

Two of the core principles of PRSP process are that these strategies should be "country-driven and owned, predicated on broad-based participatory processes" and "results-oriented, focusing on outcomes that would benefit the poor."[1] Of the many dimensions of poverty, the PRSP approach emphasizes the dimension of empowerment defined as "the capability of poor people and other excluded groups to participate in, negotiate with, change, and hold accountable institutions that affect their well-being." In fact, the PRSP process includes this engagement as one of its core principles:

A PRSP will describe the format, frequency, and location of consultations; a summary of the main issues raised and the views of participants; an account of the impact of the consultations on the design of the strategy; and a discussion of the role of civil society in future monitoring and implementation.[2]

The formal emphasis on empowerment, participation, and outcome-based progress monitoring in the design and implementation of PRSPs generated a lot of energy and enthusiasm among communication and social development specialists. Civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and the media began promoting dialogue and discussion on poverty and development issues in the context of PRSPs. To ensure and promote the participatory aspects of PRSPs, communication and information-sharing processes also have evolved and been integrated into national development planning.

Over the past 10 years, more than 90 full and 50 preliminary or interim PRSPs have been prepared. The PRSP approach is by now well established in a substantial number of countries and has been associated with notable advances in country ownership, making poverty reduction more prominent in policy debates, and facilitating open dialogue. As countries began to implement PRSPs, early experience and lessons were captured in the 2005 publication, *With the Support of Multitudes*.[3] This book identified major emerging issues in efforts to create national ownership and ensure broad participation, including the following:

- Information was lacking about the strategies being developed and implemented.
- Trust and confidence in the process were lacking.
- Participatory exercises were still too often public information campaigns involving top-down dissemination and a few workshops and seminars.
- Communication processes often came to an end once the PRSP was finalized because of insufficient efforts to institutionalize systems for continued citizen engagement and regular flows of information.

Another 2005 review also raised concerns about the quality and depth of this participation process. It stated that:

The PRS process has opened space for stakeholders to engage in a national dialogue on economic policy and poverty reduction. However, participation has often been broad rather than deep, and was initially focused primarily on PRS formulation. While parliaments and poor people were not always fully engaged in the PRS process, parliamentary involvement has been increasing, and countries are taking steps to engage a broader cross-section of the population in the PRS process.[4]

Concerns have been raised that the "patterns of ownership are asymmetrical." In fact, studies show that

While the executive and parliament tend to be more involved in the formulation of the budget than in the PRS, civil society and the public often have less opportunity for meaningful engagement in the former than the latter. Thus, one of the principal challenges in promoting links between planning and budgeting processes rests on aligning ownership across various groups of stakeholders.[5]

To strengthen public dialogue and debate in PRSPs, the media's role to make national development plans and strategies more inclusive and effective has been growing. *In Making Poverty the Story*, Panos London emphasized "the need for policy actors to recognize the potential of the mass media to raise the level and quality of public debate on poverty reduction in low-income countries."[6]

Over the last decade, developing countries urged the donor community to improve its aid coordination efforts. The Paris Declaration, endorsed in March 2005, set the stage for greater donor harmonization and coordination. The Paris Declaration is an international agreement endorsed by more than 100 ministers, heads of agencies, and other senior officials that committed countries and organizations to increase efforts in harmonization, alignment, and management of aid for measurable results through indicators.[7]

Governance also became a major focus of World Bank and other donors. Although governance on the supply (government) side was already a priority, the last 10 years have seen the rapid emergence of demand-side governance. This citizen governance includes the increasing use of social accountability tools to promote transparency, accountability, and participation, which also have influenced PRSPs and development programs more broadly. All of these trends converged in the past decade to put greater demands on the communication processes that support PRSPs.

1.2   The Evolution of Communication in the PRS Process

Communication is more complex and requires deeper engagement when it addresses such challenges as securing political will, promoting good governance, or allowing open dialogue on policy planning or implementation of those plans. Communication planning has to take into account deeper sociopolitical and structural factors than required when concentrating on traditional interventions, such as awareness campaign; behavior change communication; information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns, communication for social change; or media relations.

Institutionalizing the free flow of information between policy makers and citizens is a major challenge of communication in PRSPs. In addition to the political aspects, communication capacity within the government is a key need to promote this information flow. The need for communication with its "strategic" interventions was recognized as one of the key elements to promote participation in the PRSP process. An approach to "strategic communication in PRSP" (see box 1.1) was developed with an understanding that "the strategic use of communication tools can help ensure this process of inclusion by sharing knowledge and ideas and by enhancing the potential for informed debate and feedback at all levels of society."[8]

Box 1.1: Strategic Communication in the PRSP

Strategic communication is much more than merely disseminating information to people to inform them about the PRSP. It is the active solicitation of their perspective to consider options that can shape the formulation of policy. This process ensures that the mechanisms are in place for a two-way flow of information that can build consensus among stakeholders about the development agenda. To ensure this two-way flow of information, it is necessary to consider both internal and external factors that influence human communication. Internal factors include various human aspects, such as culture, psychology, behavior, and attitudes, while external factors include various technological or nontechnological vehicles, such as print and broadcast media, information and communications technology, folk media, and interpersonal, face-to-face or group communication.

Source: Mozammel et al., *PRSP Sourcebook* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002), p. 3.

The following tasks are essential for engendering strategic communication for national development.

- Develop a two-way information flow between the government and nongovernment stakeholders, such as the media and CSOs.
- Foster more effective communication during implementation of national development plans or strategies. This will build linkages between planning, budgeting, and monitoring the implementation of these plans or strategies.

- Emphasize empowering stakeholders through information sharing.
- Design and implement communication programs based on a diagnostic of the information environment. It should focus on political economy and broader governance challenges as well socio-cultural and attitudinal factors.
- Support an enabling environment for communication by recognizing and establishing an effective communication sector with public and private sector engagement.
- Institutionalize communication within government systems and build the capacity of government and nongovernment stakeholders to undertake strategic communication.
- Strengthen internal communication within government and nongovernment stakeholders, such as the media and CSOs.
- Ensure that adequate financial resources are provided to undertake communication interventions that go beyond traditional communication activities such as information campaigns, public relations or media relations.[9]

A series of key steps should be considered when designing a national communication strategy. This process begins by establishing a clear set of communication objectives followed by communication research, information sharing, and dissemination; selecting audiences, messages, networks, channels, and feedback; and identifying human and financial resources.

The need for planned communication has been emphasized in monitoring systems to ensure that programs for fighting poverty and achieving growth actually are implemented. It is now emphasized that:

> … PRS monitoring system must develop outputs that are tailored to the needs of the various decision makers and users and are timed to feed into policy cycles. Making information accessible to various audiences requires presenting monitoring data in both technical and non-technical ways, which is often a new skill for governments.[10]

The evolution of communication in national development planning and monitoring of development interventions is taking different forms. As in other areas of communication, especially at the project or program level, the paradigm shift of communication approach at the macro level is accelerating:

> It shifts the emphasis from information dissemination to situation analysis, from persuasion to participation. Rather than substituting for the old model, it is broadening its scope, maintaining the key functions of informing people and promoting change, yet emphasizing the importance of using communication to involve stakeholders in the development process.[11]

Communication often is not seen as a tool that can address these challenges because they are identified as governance or political economy issues, such as ownership, commitment, transparency, or accountability. Communication often is viewed only as a "vehicle" rather than an "element" of the development process.[12] This is one of the most important reasons for the failure to fully exploit the potential of strategic communication tools and techniques to address these development challenges. In fact, these are all communication challenges in which information sharing is critical to overcome impediments linked to structure or process.

Country experience and lessons from case studies show that different levels of communication contribute to promoting a culture of openness for dialogue and debate on national development and growth. Communication is a cross-cutting element that involves different government systems and processes, such as planning or budgeting. For example, the Ghana Development Communication Enhancement Program

(DCEP) is focused on decentralized communication interventions within the public sector across horizontal and vertical levels of government (see box 1.2). This intervention includes communication systems for local government offices that are expected to enhance accountability at the grassroots level.

Box 1.2: Ghana's Approach to PRS Communication

Ghana is establishing a DCEP with the support of the World Bank. It takes a multi-prong, holistic approach to communication, seeking to embed good communication practices into broader governance reforms and open up the national policy process to broader inputs. It has adapted its planning guidelines to mandate the incorporation of communication objectives into sectoral strategies. The National Development Planning Commission audits these strategies, and if they do not contain a convincing communication approach, they may be returned for revision. This process is accompanied by initiatives to strengthen the capacity within the communication sector, including capacity-building programs for media on development issues.

A number of countries, including those that have developed PRSPs, are moving toward mainstreaming communication in national development processes beginning with the clear articulation of a communication program in the national development plan. They emphasize systematic and continuous communication between key stakeholders inside and outside the government. The national development process engages state and nonstate accountability institutions and provides space for creating open and inclusive dialogue by involving the media and CSOs.

1.3   Scope, Purpose, Audience, and Structure of This Publication

This publication explores how communication is being integrated into national development planning and implementation. Many of these plans are shifting their focus from a "dissemination and publicity strategy" to a "communication program" that emphasizes information intervention beyond the traditional campaign, workshop or seminars.[13] This focus involves taking a more analytical approach to understanding a wide range of issues before selecting a vision, objectives, messages, or channels for communication activities.

This publication focuses on experience over the last five years. Compared with the 2005 publication that covered communication in the first set of PRPSs,[14] the main difference in the second set of PRSPs is the institutionalization of communication, moving beyond the one-time experience for the first set of PRSPs to broader, deeper, and sustained communication in support of poverty reduction and national development strategies. A second major difference is expanding beyond communication and participation in PRS formulation to PRS implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

The target audience of this publication includes all those responsible or interested in communication and participation processes in support of PRSPs and national development strategies. This includes PRS teams, World Bank country management teams, and government staff. The primary purpose of this publication is to provide an analytical framework, review experience in a set of countries, and offer lessons on communication policy and practice.

This publication has three more chapters. Chapter 2 presents a framework for communication that contributes to opening up government processes and promoting sustainable interaction between the government and its citizens to achieve national development goals. It discusses ways to broaden and deepen communication across the government, different levels of communication within and outside the government, and between state and nonstate stakeholders. It elaborates on a "platform approach" to participatory planning.

Chapter 3 includes case studies from four countries—Ghana, Moldova, Nepal, and Tanzania—that have prepared and implemented PRSPs more than once. The case studies capture lessons and experience on how communication has evolved in the context of national development planning, including PRSPs in both the design and implementation phases. The studies describe specific approaches, tools, and systems that have been used to first introduce and later scale up communication in promoting public dialogue and debate on poverty, development, and growth over last decade. The case studies analyze a range of issues, including poverty monitoring, media and civil society, budgeting, the multidimensional relationship among stakeholders, the institutional framework, and sectoral issues. They also discuss different challenges and offer suggestions for strengthening communication in development efforts. Finally, this chapter presents a regional analysis of communication in PRSPs from the Latin America and Caribbean region. It analyzes the evolution of PRSPs in the region and discusses communication systems and processes that have contributed to greater openness and citizen participation in the development dialogue and poverty reduction in a number of countries in the region.

Chapter 4 provides cross-cutting analysis of the country case studies using the framework from chapter 2. It reviews recent experience with strategic communication in search of lessons about what works well and what does not, factors that help or hinder communication, and how communication can be improved. It provides lessons on communication policy and practice.

2. A Framework for Communication in Support of Poverty Reduction Strategies

Marcus Cox and Nigel Thornton[15]

2.1   Communication and the PRS Initiative

Under the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) initiative, developing countries commit not only to preparing a comprehensive strategy for pro-poor growth, but also to fundamentally changing the way in which development policy is made. Preparing and implementing a comprehensive development strategy requires opening up the processes of government and encouraging ongoing interaction between government and citizens. This creates major new communication challenges that development practitioners are only just beginning to tackle.

Good communication is essential to the PRS approach at a number of levels. A good strategy must be responsive to the needs and preferences of citizens. Governments seek public input through such techniques as participatory poverty assessments and consultation processes. Policy proposals need informed public debate by the media, civil society, and parliament. They should be improved continually on the basis of citizen feedback, obtained from participatory monitoring processes. In sum, the policy process needs to be democratized. As one report puts it, "Communication processes form the lifeblood of politics: they are central to the creation of a healthy, vibrant civil society and efficient, more equitable economies."[16]

Good communication is both instrumental in improving the quality of development policy, and an intrinsic part of the development process itself. Poor people need to be informed about development initiatives and the opportunities available to them, to empower them to become actively engaged in the development process. Information, knowledge, and the free flow of ideas are essential to creating active citizens who are able to fulfill their potential and become active agents of change.[17] This enhanced citizenship, in turn, strengthens the democratic process. As citizens become more informed about and involved in the development policy process, it creates a virtuous circle of rising expectations and stronger accountability. This helps to sustain the political will needed for implementing complex policy initiatives.

The PRS approach poses significant communication and implementation challenges across government. Implementing a comprehensive national development strategy requires coordination across public sector agencies and all levels of government. For many developing countries with fragmented administrations, this coordination requires a major change in the culture of government. Among the challenges of implementing a PRS, developing countries need to

- create a policy process able to prioritize among competing objectives;
- integrate planning and budgeting processes to make the budget an effective policy tool;
- strengthen collaboration and coordination across line ministries to improve policy coherence and facilitate joint programming and cross-cutting initiatives;

- undertake complex reforms in public financial management and public administration;
- strengthen relations between different levels of government, often by giving greater autonomy to local governments over spending decisions while ensuring they remain accountable for development outcomes; and
- introduce a culture of managing for results by institutionalizing continuous monitoring of development initiatives, and ensuring that evidence on outcomes is used to guide policy making and expenditure decisions.

All of these reforms involve a broadening and deepening of communication across government.

The PRS initiative was first conceived as a mechanism for opening up the development policy process to greater participation by government, civil society, and the poor. PRS guidelines called for broad participation in their preparation, implementation, and monitoring. In many countries, however, the first PRSs were developed through *ad hoc* mechanisms, outside the normal planning processes. Although some countries made considerable efforts to seek input from citizens, these consultations tended to be single efforts or *projectized*, that is, they occurred over a defined period of time during PRS formulation and declined quickly once the strategy was approved.

With many countries now into their second or third PRSs, the process has matured considerably. Donors have become less prescriptive in their requirements, allowing partner countries more flexibility to craft the process according to their own practices and traditions. This flexibility has enabled much greater country ownership. Many countries have made significant progress with integrating the PRS into their policy-making and planning processes.

The next challenge for PRS countries is to institutionalize participation throughout the policy cycle of policy making, planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring. It may be useful to think of the PRS not as a type of planning document, but as a style of planning. Its goal is to integrate participatory, democratic processes with technically proficient planning, budgeting, and implementation mechanisms. In this chapter, this combination is called democratic planning.

For many countries, democratic planning involves a profound change in the culture and style of government. The challenge is not just technocratic, but a question of intensifying democratic politics so that they are robust enough to resolve competing priorities and generate outcomes that are seen as legitimate. As the PRS process has matured, the communication challenges it raises have become correspondingly more complex. For first-generation PRSPs, communication initiatives usually were limited to two areas: collecting public inputs into the strategy, and disseminating the strategy. Both were one-time activities linked to strategy formulation.

This chapter considers communication needs throughout the policy cycle. Communicating for development is no longer a task to be left to a handful of specialists in the PRS unit. Rather, a communication dimension needs to be built into multiple government processes. Good communication practices need to become institutionalized, by embedding them in the rules and procedures that govern policy making, budgeting, and implementation. This is an ambitious undertaking, involving significant changes in the culture of government. There is no right way to go about this process, even in countries that have a strong political commitment to open government. This process is usually contested and negotiated. Although international comparisons can provide useful examples of good practice, countries need to adapt these lessons to their circumstances.

> ## Box 2.1: Strategic Communication and the PRS: A Three-Pronged Approach
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> Strategic communication for development around the PRS likely involves three types of activity.
>
> **Communicating the PRS.** Many countries have established a communication unit within their PRS agency. This unit is responsible for organizing participatory processes of PRS formulation and for disseminating the PRS through the production of simplified versions or information products suitable for the public.
>
> **Institutionalizing good communication practice.** Democratic planning requires opening up government processes across the policy cycle. This requires changing practices across a range of public agencies. Some countries have begun to think about how to institutionalize good communication practice through the rules and guidelines governing planning, the budget process, program implementation, service delivery, and monitoring.
>
> **Creating an effective communication sector.** Communication in the public sphere is a sector in its own right, with its own legal framework and organizational structure. Building up capacity within the communication sector might involve such initiatives as strengthening the legal environment governing freedom of information, the media, and civil society; integrating communication into management training programs; or strengthening economic literacy among journalists and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

This chapter provides policy makers with options and suggestions on institutionalizing good communication practice. Section 2.2 discusses communication needs at three different levels: in the political sphere, across government, and with the public. Section 3.3 suggests a platform approach,, moving from exchange of information to participatory processes. Section 3.4 maps out a range of possible sites for institutionalizing communication. It also offers suggestions to strengthen the communication sector in government through legal reforms and capacity building.

2.2   Communication Levels

It is useful to begin by distinguishing three different levels at which communication needs to take place: in the political sphere, across government, and with the public. This distinction will help policy makers to develop communication objectives and strategies appropriate for different target audiences.

In the Political Sphere

It is widely recognized that political will is essential to sustaining commitment to a national development strategy through complex implementation processes. Poverty reduction is a highly political process involving large-scale redistribution of resources. It inevitably generates winners and losers, and resistance from vested interests. It is most likely to be successful if it attracts support from a cross-section of the political leadership. Yet in many developing countries, poverty reduction fails to command political attention.

Political will is not entirely an exogenous variable. It can be consciously created and sustained by engaging political actors in the planning process. Communication involving parliaments (whether in plenary, parliamentary committees, or individual members), political parties, and the media can increase the political traction of development strategies. The more that political parties articulate their approach to development and compete on the basis of their development record, the more momentum will be created to support the PRS. The government officials responsible for managing the PRS process need to engage with political actors to build a consensus supportive of national development goals.

Across Government

One of the biggest challenges facing many PRS countries is organizing complex implementation processes across a fragmented administration. Information on development needs and proposed activities needs to be collected from numerous agencies and fed into the strategy-setting process. The PRS needs to be communicated effectively across government to encourage broad ownership. PRS goals and priorities need to be integrated into the budget process. Line ministries need to work together on cross-sectoral objectives. Countries where regional government enjoys policy and budgetary autonomy need a process to align national and regional development goals and strategies. Policy makers need to establish effective accountability over local service delivery agencies. Complex reform processes in such areas as public administration and public finance need to be implemented across government.

All of these processes raise major communication challenges. Many developing countries have fragmented administrations, with public institutions inclined to protect their autonomy by hoarding information. Overcoming this requires major changes to institutional cultures, which will take significant time. But it can be encouraged through processes that mandate, incentivize, or facilitate the exchange of information across government, and encourage agencies to work together in support of national development goals.

With the Public

Countries seek to encourage greater awareness of, and engagement with, the PRS process among citizens and CSOs for numerous reasons. The more that interest groups—the private sector, farmers, trade unions, churches, universities, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—engage with the policy process, the more likely that it will produce results that are responsive to the needs of society. Public engagement with implementation and monitoring processes provides government with the information and feedback required for continuous improvement. Public engagement strengthens accountability and sustains momentum. Furthermore, many development policies seek to bring about behavioral change among society at large or among specific groups. For example, programs to boost primary school enrolment, control HIV/AIDS, or improve agricultural productivity all depend on persuading people to change their behavior. A useful first step for planning effective communication around the PRS is to think through communication goals in connection with each of these three levels, along the lines of table 2.1.

Uganda is a PRS country that has developed a highly structured communication plan (see table 2.2) as part of its National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (NIMES). The plan identifies different stakeholders, their information needs, and the communication channels available to meet them. Although Uganda has not yet had found the resources to implement the entire range of communication activities, having a communication plan enables it to use its resources efficiently.

Table 2.1: Selecting Communication Objectives at Different Levels	
Level	**Possible Objectives**
Political sphere	• Build and sustain political will for poverty reduction by seeking approval of the PRS by government and opposition parties. • Involve parliamentary committees in reviewing PRS implementation to strengthen awareness and democratic accountability.
Government	• Improve links between planning and resource allocation. • Strengthen coordination between line ministries on cross-sectoral objectives. • Ensure regional and local governments are coordinated with national development goals and strategies. • Generate a consensus across government on the need for service delivery reform.
Citizens	• Increase public awareness and understanding of development goals. • Encourage informed public debate on development policy choices. • Involve local communities in monitoring service delivery.

Note: PRS = Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Table 2.2: Uganda's Communication Plan		
Stakeholder	**Information Needs**	**Communication Channels**
Citizens	• Evidence of improved service delivery	• President's State of the Nation Address • Constituency reports • Local council meetings • Field promotions • Community information centers
Parliament/ political leaders	• PRS performance • Accountability of public resources	• Audit reports • Sector and PRS pillar review reports • Consultative sessions • Progress reports
Local government	• Local government performance on service delivery • Local government revenue and expenditure performance	• Regional consultations • Brochures and fliers • Advertisements • Sector working groups
Civil society	• Evidence of good governance, security, and citizen satisfaction • Access to government plans and programs	• Civil society working groups • Consultative sessions • PRS progress reports • Websites, brochures, and flyers • PRS events

Table 2.2 continued from 13

Stakeholder	Information Needs	Communication Channels
Private sector	• Performance of policies • Private sector growth • Country's stability	• PRS events • Media • Consultative workshops • Policy reports
Sectors	• Sector policy, program, and project performance • Local government performance on service delivery	• Sector working groups • Project inspection • PRS activities • E-mail and telephone • PRS progress reports
Development partners	• Efficiency and effectiveness in implementing PRS	• Advertisements (news supplements) • News stories • Project inspection (spot check) • Websites • E-mail and telephone • Progress reports • Working sessions • PRS events

Source: **Government of Uganda, "Poverty Eradication Action Plan – Communication Strategy", 2006**
Note: PRS = Poverty Reduction Strategy.

2.3   A Platform Approach to Communication

A culture of open government is more likely to develop in stages than all at once. As public agencies become used to more openness, the preconditions are established to further deepen democratic planning. For reformers, this means that a platform approach may be the most effective strategy, that is, a reform process that begins by analyzing current attitudes within government toward communication, and then pursues reform goals through a series of discrete, achievable phases. It is unlikely that all countries would follow the same sequence, but experience suggests that the following three stages may be typical.

Stage 1: Soliciting public opinion. Government obtains the information it needs from citizens for policy making through non-participatory tools, such as opinion polls and household surveys. It then informs the public of the policy decisions it has made. This limited approach allows policy makers to collect the views of different segments of the population and to test public reaction to policy proposals. It is, however, essentially a one-way process.

Stage 2: Opening up government. Government allows the public to scrutinize not just its policy decisions, but also its internal processes. Information on how policy is made and resources are allocated becomes more readily available. Public agencies come to recognize that encouraging greater public understanding of their internal processes improves organizational performance. For example, they may circulate draft papers to collect input from stakeholders into policy decisions, which builds ownership of the resulting policies. It also may involve publicizing the government's own objectives and targets, to encourage greater accountability.

Stage 3: Participatory government. Participatory government involves a genuine partnership between government and citizens. Government invites the public, through organized interest groups and

other civil society groups, to become directly engaged in policy making and implementation. Citizens participate in analyzing development challenges, determining national priorities, debating policy options, monitoring budget allocations, and providing feedback on programs and services. Ideally, civil society groups also should be involved in defining the participatory process. This form of public involvement requires a high degree of trust between government and civil society.

In table 2.3, the terms "inform, illuminate, and involve" show the relationships among these three stages. The stages represent the maturing of democratic planning practices, as the simple transfer of information evolves into reciprocal, influencing relationships.

Table 2.3: A Hierarchy of Communication Objectives	
Phase	**Characteristics**
Inform	• Government provides citizens with basic information on policies and services. • Government collects information needed from the public for development planning through household surveys, opinion polls, and consultative processes.
Illuminate	• Government begins to expose its own decision-making and implementation processes to external scrutiny. For example, it may provide information about how budget priorities are set or publicize performance targets for service delivery institutions. • A culture of openness is introduced gradually through legal such processes as freedom of information. • Government comes to recognize that greater openness and public understanding of government benefits rather than threatens effective policy making and implementation.
Involve	• Government invites the public, through organized interest groups and other CSOs, to become active participants in policy making and implementation. • Citizens help to analyze development challenges, determine priorities, debate policy options, monitor budget allocations, and provide feedback on programs and services.

Note: CSO = civil society organization.

Those responsible for the PRS process may find it helpful to locate their country's practices and traditions within this continuum, and to set goals for what level and style of communication they would like to achieve over which time period.

2.4   Institutionalizing Good Communication across Government

Good communication supports a national development strategy (see box 2.2). What can be achieved, through communication campaigns managed from the center is limited, however. If the goal is to introduce a culture of democratic planning, then good communication must become part of the standard operating procedures of many different government agencies.

Box 2.2: Supporting a National Development Strategy

How does good communication support a national development strategy?

- It promotes ownership of the strategy across the political spectrum, facilitating policy continuity.
- It facilitates debate on national development goals, improving the quality and the responsiveness of development policy.
- It encourages public sector agencies to collaborate in pursuit of common development goals.
- It links the national development plan to the budget process.
- It promotes consistency with sectoral and regional development plans.
- It makes public service agencies more accountable for their performance.
- It establishes a cycle of continuous feedback from the public to development initiatives, making policy more responsive and informed.
- It coordinates complex implementation and reform processes across different public institutions and levels of government.

Many countries have entrusted a unit in central government with communicating the PRS. These units typically engage in awareness raising and dissemination activities, such as conducting seminars or producing documents that explain the PRS in plain language suitable for the media and general public.

A key challenge for development communication is to ensure that good communication practices are introduced into policy making, planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring systems. The rules and procedures that govern these systems should mandate, facilitate, or create positive incentives for good development communication. Good communication is also reinforced by other good public sector management practices. The introduction of new communication initiatives alone will not be effective, unless accompanied by the following:

- Effective **leadership**, which produces clear and authoritative statements of organizational visions and goals, and which promote a culture of openness in internal management.
- Effective **program and project management**, which is critical to good communication practice in two respects. First, strategic communication depends on good project-cycle management, particularly with respect to planning and review and in the management of risk. Second, established procedures for project-cycle management can help to mainstream strategic communication within public sector organizations—for example, by requiring all managers to undertake a basic stakeholder analysis and outline a communication plan for their project or work area.
- Effective **knowledge management**, which encourages the use of feedback and monitoring results to support organizational development, learning, and performance.
- Proactive **partnership building**, in which public sector agencies recognize that open and respectful partnerships with their clients and external partners, based on shared goals and mutual trust, are central to achieving their own organizational objectives.

Opportunities to institutionalize development communication can be found throughout the policy cycle. The remainder of this section maps out different institutional sites and some of the possibilities they

offer to strengthen communication processes. If the PRS's exact role and function is clear to all stakeholders, this clarity could overcome resistance and increase engagement. The section provides suggestions on communication for each of the five stages of the policy cycle illustrated in figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Communication Stages during the Policy Cycle

- Define the strategy
- Planning
- Mobilize resources
- Organize implementation
- Monitoring and evaluation
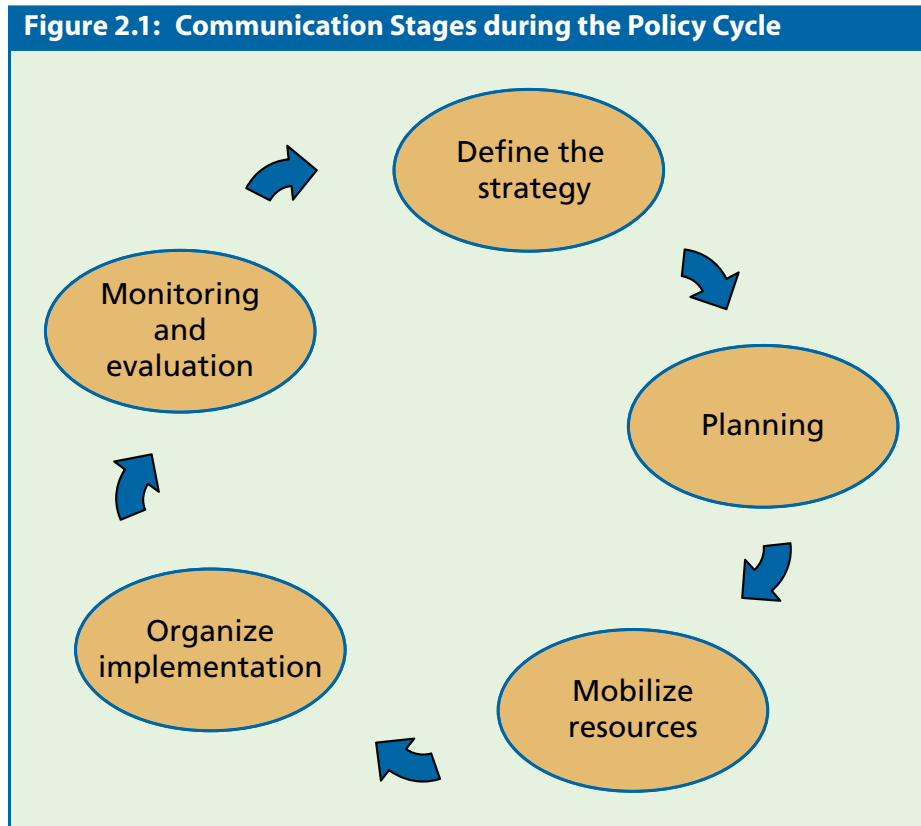
Policy Making and Strategy Development

Policy making and strategy development require communication across all three of the levels outlined in section 2.2: in the political sphere, across government, and with the public. Policy needs to be responsive to the needs and preferences of the public. It should be formed on the basis of inputs from across government. To create the momentum for implementation, it should attract active support from the political class.

Following are some options for institutionalizing good communication around policy and strategy formulation.

The agencies responsible for developing the PRS could involve a range of stakeholders in preparing analytical inputs into the strategy. A shared understanding of the development challenges facing the country is essential for collaboration and good communication. They should invest in joint analytical work to build a common knowledge base, and involve CSOs, including universities and research-based NGOs, to encourage debate on policy choices beyond government. Many countries have invested in participatory poverty assessments through which CSOs collect inputs from poor men and women to provide a qualitative understanding of poverty. By encouraging a wide range of people to think about poverty, these qualitative assessment tools develop consensus on needs and priorities, and they provide an invaluable source of information for policy makers.

The agencies responsible for the PRS should also involve parliament, parliamentary committees, and individual parliamentarians in its formulation. In most PRS countries, parliaments have had relatively little involvement in development policy, in part because of a lack of capacity.[18] Parliamentary review of draft national or sectoral development strategies, in plenary or committee, provides an opportunity to engage politicians and build parliamentary capacity. This review effort can be linked to subsequent parliamentary review of monitoring results to sustain involvement. Partnerships between parliamentary committees and CSOs, particularly research and advocacy NGOs, can overcome capacity constraints while supporting the democratic process. Secure commitment from leading opposition parties to the national development strategy to preserve policy continuity through the electoral cycle. Box 2.3 describes how Uganda and Ghana involved parliament in their PRSPs.

Box 2.3: Involving Parliaments in PRSPs

In **Uganda**, parliamentary involvement in the PRSP process has been relatively high. Parliament prepares comments on draft strategy documents and annual progress reports. It participates in the budget process and the formulation of development policy through a Finance, Planning, and Economic Development Committee. Performance reviews done jointly with donors under the budget support facility are regularly reported to parliament. Parliament approves a number of key appointments to development policy posts and approves each aid loan. Parliament has its own research department, with 16 researchers, which assists parliamentarians to formulate positions on policy matters.

Most parliaments have little capacity to become substantively involved in development policy. One study of **Ghana** found that "Out of 200 parliamentarians, only the Majority and Minority leaders and the two deputy speakers have an office in Parliament, only 10 parliamentarians have assistants, committees do not have a pre-allocated budget for operations and their meetings take place in the lobby or hallway. Many parliamentarians do not have an understanding of budget issues and parliamentarians do not receive any training at the beginning of their mandate."[a] Investments in building parliamentary capacity, particularly support services for parliamentary committees, are critical to achieving stronger political engagement with development policy.

Source: Bedi et al., *Beyond the Numbers.* 2006

Note: a. Azeem et al., "Evaluation of DFID Country Programs—Country Study: Ghana" (November 2005).

The lead PRS agencies should also inform line ministries and regional governments in detail about how the strategy formulation process works and how the national development strategy is intended to relate to sectoral and regional strategies. In many countries, the PRS is poorly aligned with other strategy documents, creating confusion as to whether the policy process is top-down or bottom-up in nature.

Planning and Budgeting

Integrating planning and budgeting is both a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand, integrating the planning process with the budget often is difficult. In cases in which planning is done without a close institutional link to the budget, it tends to produce lengthy lists of desired projects without accurate costing or prioritization. Momentum for implementation is quickly lost if a mechanism is lacking to transform the PRS into spending decisions. On the other hand, the budget process can provide a powerful source of positive incentives. All public sector agencies need to bid for resources in the annual and medium-term budget process. The rules governing access to resources can be used to encourage line agencies to relate their proposed programs to national development goals and to present evidence on results.[19] They also can be used to encourage effective communication in the following ways.

PRS countries should introduce planning guidelines that require line ministries to involve stakeholders and the public whenever they develop significant new policies and strategies. They should take care to create incentives for real consultation and avoid tokenism. Check-a-box consultations quickly lead to public cynicism. Guidelines can list steps to include in the consultation process. For example—

- Agencies should put as much information as possible into the public domain on the subject matter of the consultation, to enable participants to inform themselves and make substantive contributions.
- Agencies should make it clear to participants how the consultation process will work and how decisions ultimately will be made.[20]
- Agencies should hold consultations before drafting the strategy, rather than seek comments on an existing draft. This makes it more likely that participants will see the process as worthwhile, and that their inputs will influence the results.
- Agencies that plan to circulate materials for comment, should ensure that they are written in plain and accessible language. They should be distributed sufficiently in advance of deadlines to give CSOs time to consult with their constituencies and prepare their response.
- Agencies should ask CSOs to demonstrate that their input is genuinely representative of the views of their constituents.
- Agencies should provide feedback to those who have been consulted to prevent disillusionment in the process. Ideally, this should include publishing summaries of the input received and what influence it had on outcomes.

Good consultation processes can be resource intensive. Agencies should budget for the costs of participation in policy making. They also need the discretion to decide what level of participation is appropriate for different decisions. Planning guidelines should not be too prescriptive.

Most countries provide public agencies with guidelines or regulations explaining how to apply for funding under the budget process. These guidelines can be used to encourage good communication practices. For example, when new programs are submitted for funding, agencies can be required to describe the consultation processes they have undertaken and justify why the particular communication approach was appropriate for the program in question. For ongoing programs, they can be asked to present evidence that feedback from the public has been sought through participatory monitoring exercises.

The effectiveness of such incentives will depend on the nature of the budget process and the progress of reforms. Performance-based budgeting, in which agencies bid for funds based on the performance of specific programs, creates a stronger set of incentives. In cases in which the budget is prepared on a historical or

incremental basis (that is, it consists only of minor adjustments to the previous year's allocations) and in which budget releases are unreliable, it is more difficult to use the budget as a tool of policy.

Creating incentives for good communication, however, does not necessarily depend on a technically advanced budget process. In any system, it should be possible to require agencies to justify their resource bids by relating them to national development priorities and by providing evidence of their program's performance. This requirement creates a demand among public sector agencies for feedback from their constituents to demonstrate program value.

To encourage compliance with rules and procedures, budget submissions also should be subject to external scrutiny. In some countries, a parliamentary committee reviews these budges. More commonly, a policy unit in the Ministry of Finance or Planning provides a challenge function, ensuring that line agencies take the process seriously.

Many PRS countries have gone through a process of decentralization, giving more autonomy to regional and local governments. Lower levels of government may be given greater discretion over their budget's composition, provided that they support national development goals. Some countries require local governments to introduce elements of participatory budgeting, that is, to involve local communities directly in selecting development projects and initiatives that affect them. Even in cases in which the funds involved are relatively small, participatory budgeting can be a powerful tool for encouraging communities to engage actively in the development process. Communities are required to assess their needs and go through a process of identifying priorities. They also can be involved in managing and monitoring expenditures.

To play this role effectively, citizens need to be educated on how the budget process works, especially on the need to prioritize and work under a hard budget constraint. If participants are not aware of requirements, their participation tends to generate long wish lists of spending proposals, leaving people with the impression that their input has not been taken into consideration. The solution is to ensure that participants are informed about how the process works and told who ultimately will make decisions. By investing in the capacity of NGOs and local community groups to educate participants, PRS countries can facilitate this process.

Implementation

Implementation processes also benefit from good communication. Many PRS initiatives require coordinated action across different government agencies. In cases in which cross-sectoral programs require joint implementation by different government departments, turf rivalries and conflicting ministerial agendas often get in the way of implementation. Good communication can reduce conflict and encourage different agencies to work together in support of common goals. Useful techniques may include the following:

- Political leaders and senior public servants need to provide clear, public messages on the importance of cross-sectoral issues to achieving national development goals. Strong political support may be needed to encourage agencies to cooperate effectively.
- Line agencies need to establish good frameworks for cooperation that clearly define their respective roles and obligations.
- Line agencies should be encouraged to produce a common set of indicators to monitor their progress toward joint objectives and to report jointly.
- Partnerships should be externally monitored to ensure that problems are brought to light and addressed.

Cross-government communication is essential for horizontal governance reforms. For example, public administration reform programs may attempt to change institutional cultures, introduce new performance incentives, reorganize hierarchies, or introduce management information systems. Those affected by these initiatives need to understand and accept them, or they inevitably will fail. Those responsible for managing administrative reforms can support the initiatives with communication designed to promote new attitudes and behaviors.

This is not just a question of selling the reforms to public servants. It may involve more active techniques, such as seeking out key leaders and opinion makers to act as champions of the reform process, and ensuring that stakeholders are consulted and given a chance to contribute to program design. The more that public servants feel they have been involved in identifying problems and solutions, the more likely they are to support the reform process (see box 2.4).

Box 2.4: Quality Standards for Communication

A quality communication program is one that—

1. **Is evidence based:** it defines what works in this context and elsewhere.
2. **Analyses trend data:** it includes trends and interests in the people involved, the issue being addressed, and plans and activities of other organizations.
3. **Focuses on promoting informed dialogue and choice:** it encourages more public discussion and more accurate information in those discussions.
4. **Effectively frames an issue:** it positions the issue in relation to major concerns of the people.
5. **Is ethical, clear, and open in its involvement:** it has an open agenda, as well as clear and public statements of values and objectives.
6. **Works in partnership:** it ensures that donor resources are used to support communication by partners rather than to impose specific products.
7. **Supports local ownership:** it involves the people who are most affected by the issue in decisions related to the communication intervention.
8. **Has a structured planning framework:** it has steps that can be outlined and explained.
9. **Puts substantial resources into evaluation:** it provides at least 10 percent of its budget for evaluation.
10. **Works for sustainability:** it ensures that achievement of the objectives will lead to long-term change and that its resource base provides long-term basis for action.

Source: The Communication Initiative, "Quality standards for strategic health and development communication", August 2002: http://www.comminit.com/en/node/1894 (accessed 13 June 2011).

Many development goals involve changing the behavior of the public or educating them on the opportunities available to them. Examples include the following:

- Persuading parents on the importance of educating their children and breaking down cultural barriers (such as gender discrimination) to universal primary enrolment
- Changing behavior in hygiene, infectious disease control, or child health

- Providing agricultural extension services, where farmers need to be persuaded of the benefits of new crops or technologies (see box 2.5)
- Providing commodity producers with information about prices to enable them to participate in the market on fair terms

Box 2.5: Communication and Agricultural Programs

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization offers the following checklist of questions to help those involved in preparing agricultural programs determine the appropriate form of communication to support the program.

11. Will the project depend for its success on the intended beneficiaries making significant changes in the way they live and work?
12. Has research been done among the intended beneficiaries?
13. Have beneficiaries been systematically consulted regarding their knowledge, attitudes, and practice, and their capacity to carry out the changes foreseen for them?
14. Will people with less education need to acquire new knowledge and skills?
15. Apart from the immediate project beneficiaries, are there other sectors of society whose informed and positive action could contribute to the success of the project? Typical examples are the religious and educational authorities, but others may have influence over the beneficiaries.
16. Might it be possible to enlist the support of these influential groups by communicating with them about the need for their help?
17. Are government staff sufficiently informed, motivated, and well-trained?

Source: Food and Agricultural Organization, "Guideline on Communication for Rural Development", 1989: http://www.fao.org/docrep/t7974e/t7974e00.htm (accessed 13 June 2011)

Efforts need to be made to communicate with frontline service providers, including teachers, health workers, and agricultural extension officers. These officials are the point of contact between the state and citizens. They need to have a good understanding of the issue in question to adapt their behavior accordingly and pass on that knowledge to the community.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Many PRS countries have developed national systems for monitoring and evaluating the performance of their national development strategies. These systems offer various opportunities to institutionalize effective communication around the production and dissemination of monitoring results. The institutional design of monitoring systems is discussed in detail in the 2006 World Bank publication *Beyond the Numbers*.

PRS lead agencies should invite external stakeholders—including CSOs, academics, and private sector representatives—to participate in committees that oversee PRS monitoring and analyze results. These

committees provide opportunities for institutionalized dialogue. Involving nongovernment actors offers both a means of collecting feedback from external sources and of disseminating monitoring results through civil society channels. NGOs in particular have a comparative advantage in qualitative studies, using such tools as service delivery surveys and participatory assessments.

The government can use the monitoring system to provide feedback to public sector agencies on their performance. *Beyond the Numbers* indicates that, in many PRS countries, incentives for public sector agencies to generate and share monitoring information are weak. In cases in which agencies submit monitoring information to comply with administrative rules, but do not see what is done with the data, these agencies are unlikely to take the process seriously. A useful technique for sustaining their engagement is to provide feedback on monitoring results in a useful form. For example, in cases in which local governments submit data on local service delivery, the central government should publicize the information at a level of disaggregation that allows local governments to compare their performance with others.

Ministries of finance should involve civil society in budget monitoring using public expenditure tracking surveys and other tools. In systems in which budget reporting is not yet well established, independent scrutiny of cash releases and expenditures can provide an incentive to improve public financial management and help to build the legitimacy of the budget process.

PRS lead agencies should develop a strategy for putting monitoring results into the public domain in a format that will attract the interest of the media and the public. Many PRS countries produce long and technical monitoring reports full of dense statistical data and development jargon. These documents are produced for administrative purposes or for submission to donors, but they are not effective communication tools. Putting monitoring results into the public domain means interpreting the data and explaining it in plain language. Communicators should make an effort to turn the information into meaningful stories. Small annual movements in poverty indicators may not mean much to the public, but accounts of which development programs are succeeding or failing and why, or how different regions or sectors of the economy are performing, are likely to attract attention.

External stakeholders, including academics and policy-oriented NGOs, may be able to assist in interpreting monitoring results and turning them into products suitable for the media and the general public. In industrialized countries, governments rely heavily on such intermediary organizations to interpret complex policy issues for the public.

The release of monitoring outputs should be timed to feed into key points in the policy cycle. For example, if parliament conducts annual hearings or debates on the PRS, then monitoring products can be designed specifically to meet the needs of that process. Alternatively, the release of information might be timed for a particular point in the budget cycle and to influence decisions on spending priorities. This will help ensure that the results are taken seriously.

Local governments and service delivery agencies should be encouraged to provide information on their own performance to local communities. For example, municipalities, local schools, or health clinics can be required to post information on their budget or their performance against service-delivery targets on local bulletin boards. This boosts accountability and encourages agencies to be responsive to local needs. In Bolivia, local "vigilance committees," composed of representatives of CBOs, are legally empowered to scrutinize local spending and service delivery under a law on popular participation.

Creating an Enabling Environment for Development Communication

A final dimension required for a strategic approach to communication for development is to develop an effective communication sector. This likely includes two different components: (i) putting in place the laws, procedures, and institutional culture required to facilitate the flow of information on government performance; and (ii) developing institutional capacity, both within and outside of government, for effective communication.

In most countries, laws and regulations govern information flows about government activities and performance, and explain the rights of citizens and CSOs to access information and engage in public advocacy on policy issues. Typical laws include the following:

- Freedom of information legislation
- Regulations governing the independence of the media including libel laws
- Regulations governing the establishment, registration, and financing of NGOs
- Laws and procedures governing the sharing of information by public agencies, including rules on budget transparency

An appropriate legislative framework may be necessary for open government and democratic planning, but it usually is insufficient. Many countries have relatively permissive legal environments but no culture of sharing information. Specific measures may be needed to encourage public agencies to perceive effective communication as an opportunity rather than a threat. This might include incorporating communication into public sector training programs and performance management practices.

Many PRS countries have limited communication expertise within government. Strategies for building up capacity could include the following:

- Incorporating communication into training programs for public sector managers
- Encouraging public sector agencies to engage communication experts
- Encouraging the development of networks of communication professionals across government and the private sector
- Encouraging relevant ministries to budget resources for communication activities
- Encouraging the emergence of private sector organizations (whether commercial or nonprofit) able to support public sector agencies with communication expertise

Investing in new technologies, in particular, access to the Internet, can greatly enhance government's capacity to communicate with the public. E-government initiatives—using websites and online procedures for accessing information and services—can transform the nature of the relationship with citizens (see box 2.6). The technology needs to be appropriate to the society in question, however. Many PRS countries still lack wide widespread Internet access.

The government needs to use other organizations to communicate its messages. Investments in building up communication capacity outside government may be at least if not more valuable than building up in-house capacity. The following are among the most important actors.

Box 2.6: The E-Local Project, Mexico

Mexico's E-Local Project promotes access to public information in a government system that historically has been closed to citizens. It works to improve communication across government—at the federal, state, and municipal levels—and between government and citizens. It is the first national initiative to encourage the use of information technology (IT) in municipalities to share information to "strengthen democratic governance, improve municipal management tools, and promote an 'authentic federalism' in Mexico." The project has two main components:

18. Two public portals, one federal (INAFED) and one for states and municipalities (www.e-local.gob.mx), provide access to relevant information about the various actors at the municipal level, as well as other municipalities and states in Mexico, Latin America, and beyond.

19. The Federalist Intercommunication Network (RIFE), which is restricted to federal, state, and municipal government officials. The purpose of RIFE is to integrate access to forums, thematic virtual communities, a consulting system, and knowledge management for mayors (Virtual Mayor). The RIFE also helps municipalities create their own website, hosted at no charge by INAFED servers.

20. The E-Local Project claims to have significantly reduced the cost of sharing information across government and with citizens. It has increased the ability of government to respond to service delivery challenges in a timely and integrated way. The federal programs of electronic government (E-Government) and national connectivity (E-Mexico) provide the strategic framework and guidelines, but with E-Local, municipalities have specific responsibility for information sharing and citizen engagement, which in turn strengthens their accountability.

Source: Gilberto Garcia Vazquez, "Project E-Local: Internet for all Municipalities: an innovations in technology and governance case study", Harvard University: http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/cache/documents/6785.pdf (accessed 13 June 2011).

Intermediary organizations: In many countries, academics, chambers of commerce, or advocacy-oriented NGOs act as intermediaries between government and the public. They help to explain development challenges and policy choices and to interpret government performance. Governments often depend extensively on external actors to explain complex issues in plain language. Government communicators should foster links with such organizations and ensure they have access to the information they need.

The media: Many governments have recognized the need to invest in economic and policy literacy within the media. Donor funding may be available for media capacity building, often in specific areas like

interpreting budgets. Many PRS countries report that it is difficult to interest the media in development issues. The problem may include the lack of capacity among journalists as well as the lack of time to investigate complex issues. Communication professionals can address this challenge by cultivating links with journalists and preparing materials in a form that facilitates reporting.

Other CSOs: NGOs, business associations, trade unions, churches, and community groups all may have an interest in the outcomes of development policy. Many of these organizations generate useful information on development challenges and outcomes, and they can act as conduits for information flows between government and citizens. Communicators in government should think carefully about how strategic partnerships with such organizations can improve their outreach capacity. In many countries, capacity constraints have prevented parliament from playing an active role in the policy process. Strategic alliances between parliamentary committees and NGOs may address this issue. Such alliances provide NGOs with a platform to engage in policy debates and provide parliamentarians with access to research and analysis.

Civil society funding: One of the constraints facing civil society may be funding patterns. Many NGOs rely on short-term project funding from donors, which makes it difficult for them to pursue their core mandate or develop their capacities. Some donors have begun to develop special funds to boost civil society capacity on research and advocacy. NGOs are often most effective when they work together in networks, which in turn may be influenced by funding modalities.

Donors: A final area to consider in the development of an effective communication sector is the behavior of the donor community. First, donors are an important source of information on development programs, but they are not always transparent about their operations. Development partners should consider making donor transparency part of the national aid-effectiveness agenda.

Second, many of the information products produced by government, such as PRS Annual Progress Reports (APRs), are mandated by donors and subject to formal requirements that make them inappropriate for domestic use. Most APRs are written in highly technical language and have limited distribution beyond the donor community. When possible, donors should try to use regular government reporting mechanisms and products, rather than imposing additional, stand-alone reporting requirements.

Third, donors have a tendency to dominate the national policy dialogue, crowding out domestic voices and accountability processes. For example, annual performance reviews under multi-donor budget support arrangements may dominate the national policy dialogue, to the exclusion of national voices. If donors are serious about promoting democratic planning, they must be willing to leave space for domestic political processes to determine development policy.

3. Country Case Studies

3.1 Ghana[21]

Michael Kottoh and Kafu Kofi Tsikata

Summary

*T*his case study is a review of initiatives, progress and challenges at making development communication integral to Ghana's poverty reduction efforts over the last decade. The focus is on the period 2003 – 2008.

From the inception of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) in 2003, there has been a significant increase in the use of participatory communication to drive public policy and accountability in governance in Ghana, thanks to an active civil society, a vibrant media, and a supportive donor community on the demand side and a generally responsive government on the supply side. Major institutional challenges within state agencies have limited the range of impacts, and government has recognized a need to move beyond program-based communication efforts and instead has been seeking an institutional solution.

Under the GPRS II, the Development Communication Enhancement Program (DCEP), a reform initiative designed to overhaul the entire public sector communication system, became the most important policy initiative even though its implementation was delayed by funding difficulties. A unique feature of the DCEP was its focus on decentralizing public sector communication across horizontal and vertical levels of government within an integrated institutional and legal framework. This included plans for enhanced communication systems for local government offices. Here, improved communication could greatly bolster grassroots accountability, as current government guidelines for district-level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) planning need to strengthen their communication content.

The Ministry of Information already possesses a network of public relations offices in all government ministries, departments, and agencies, as well as a significantly decentralized Information Services Department (ISD) with offices in each of Ghana's 10 provincial capitals, 80 district-level offices, and 50 information centers. Although this represents an opportunity to facilitate broader civic participation in governance, Ghana's big challenge is to build the required political will, financing, and technical capacity to overhaul, add to, and develop these structures into a sustainable development communication system. Besides government reform efforts, encouraging cases of development communication have been applied strategically to ensure accountability in the development process. Cases from government, civil society, the media, and donors are cited.

Background

In 1992, Ghana returned to constitutional democratic rule after five military governments since independence, and it has since become a much-admired Africa democracy. Ghana is presently one of the most promising economies in Africa. Poverty declined from 52 percent in 1992 to 28 percent in 2006;[22] and Ghana is likely to be the first African nation to achieve the MDG goal of halving its poverty ahead of the 2015 target. Real GDP growth averaged 5 percent during 1983–2005, and 6 percent since 2005. Cocoa and gold exports have been the main drivers. Following successful HIPC debt relief in 2004 and further debt cancellations by donors, Ghana's external debt, about $7 billion in 2001, was cut to $1.5 billion (2006) as continued macroeconomic and financial sector stability offered Ghana a healthy debt outlook and enhanced prospects for direct foreign investment. Conditions for the private sector are among the most improved in Africa as Ghana ranked among the world's 10 best reformers for doing business in 2006 and 2007.[23]

Ghana closed the decade on a promising note. In 2010, the economy transitioned from low-income to lower middle-income, after a rebasing of the national accounts. Also in 2010 the country commenced production and export of oil in commercial quantities, after major discoveries were made 2007. Proceeds from oil are expected to significantly reduce the country's dependence on aid and help accelerate development.

Ghana still has significant hurdles to overcome. These include scaling-up infrastructure development in crucial areas like energy, transport, and ICT; accelerating decentralization and public sector reform; managing rapid urbanization; and dealing with low agricultural and industrial productivity with extra attention to education, health, job creation, and water and sanitation.[24]

Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I)

GPRS I covered the period 2003–05. The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) was responsible for coordinating the preparation, implementation, and review of the GPRS. Although the government's goal of macroeconomic stability was achieved, performance reviews indicated that economic policy and management under GPRS I failed to provide enough space for addressing high-growth issues, as well as insufficient attention to gender equality, inclusion, and social protection.[25] Policy makers were criticized for focusing on macroeconomic stability, which could be attributed to the fact that GPRS I came in the wake of major economic shocks and a threatening national debt situation in 2000–02. Careful review shows that the policy's preparation was characterized by ineffective engagement of critical stakeholders in civil society, the private sector, and parliament during its creation and this limited national ownership.[26] In effect, the major weakness of GPRS I was a development communication gap during its preparation.

Ghana Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II)

Building on the macro-economic performance and lessons of GPRS I, Ghana introduced the GPRS II (2006–09) in 2005 with the overarching goal of attaining middle-income status (by raising per capita income from US$400 to US$1,000) by 2015 within a decentralized, democratic environment. GPRS II was built on three thematic priority pillars: private sector competitiveness, human resource development and good governance and civic responsibility. The preparation of GPRS II improved on the participatory lapses that characterized GPRS I. Using a well-structured GPRS Communication Strategy, the policy-making process became accountable to a more diverse range of public interests.

Donor Harmonization and the Ghana Joint Assistance Strategy

A positive outcome of Ghana's PRS process has been the harmonization of donor support for national development, with the Multi-Donor Budget Support (MDBS) providing national budget assistance since 2003. The Ghana Joint Assistance Strategy (G-JAS), is the multi-donor framework that guides this harmonization. G-JAS is framed around the Ghana Partnership Strategy (GPS), adopted at the Consultative Group/Annual Partnership Meeting in 2005. The GPS—which provided a framework for monitoring the effectiveness of development assistance supporting the GPRS II—consists of a results matrix for mapping development partner-funded activities to GPRS II policy priorities, an annual harmonization action plan, and an overview of external assistance, detailed by the GPRS II pillar sectors. With this approach, about 95 percent of annual official development assistance flows to Ghana are channeled through the national budget.

The communication framework of the G-JAS encourages extensive dialogue beyond government and development partners. In its preparatory phase, CSOs were encouraged to make inputs and share information on what should be the priority areas. Civil society also is monitoring the implementation of G-JAS. This dialogue has led to a redefinition of the government's role in aid effectiveness. The government has tasked itself with developing an aid and external resource mobilization strategy that will provide guidance for development partners, an important move that could strengthen government's role in encouraging donor accountability to the poor.

Scaling-Up Development Communication

The GPRS Communication Strategy

Developed in 2003 by the NDPC, the GPRS Communication Strategy was first used to support the implementation of the first GPRS (2003–05), and revised in 2005 to play an enhanced role in the implementation of the GPRS II (2006–09). Its target audience included all significant stakeholders in the development process: government ministries, departments, and agencies, including local government; parliament; civil society; the private sector; development partners; the media; community and traditional leaders; and the general public.

The GPRS Communication Strategy had two main objectives: (i) to create awareness about the goals and objectives of the GPRS, solicit stakeholder support, and to promote a sense of ownership; and (ii) to regularly inform stakeholders and the general public about GPRS progress.

The strategy was built on a decentralized approach to implementation at three levels (national, regional, and district/community). Each of these levels had an explicitly defined communication channel and specific messages that identify their unique roles in the PRS process. An elaborate action plan with a strategy matrix indicating critical inputs and expected outcomes was designed to guide implementation over the entire PRS process.

Parliament, the media, civil society, and the general public are the PRS's key focal points on transparency and accountability issues. For these agents, communication messages were emphatic in stating precisely what processes of transparency and accountability exist within the GPRS. This thematic awareness creation was meant to plug these agents into the M&E mechanisms of the GPRS. The assumption was that once continuous two-way communication has been made possible between government and other stakeholders, complemented by a vibrant mass media, this thematic emphasis would promote accountability from the bottom up. The strategy also outlines a detailed process for engaging stakeholders in participatory monitoring of the effectiveness, pace, and scope of the GPRS.

A project steering committee located within the NDPC coordinated implementation of the communication strategy. One of its key functions was the delivery of decentralized training workshops on the communication strategy to national-, regional-, and district-level government information officers, a systemwide capacity-building mechanism that helps implementers at all levels to be knowledgeably involved as facilitators of the communication process.

Even though work on the GPRS communication strategy began in 2003, its usefulness under GPRS I was limited by an incoherent approach to implementation. To correct the failure of GPRS I to account for a range of public policy interests, the preparation of GPRS II was driven by an impressive participatory policy-making mechanism (see box 3.1).

Box 3.1: From GPRS I to GPRS II: Scaling-Up Development Communication to Ensure Accountability in Policy Making

Unlike the GPRS I, which had limited participatory policy making, the GPRS II corrects this account-ability lapse through engagement of diverse policy interest groups. The planning process began with the formation of technical working teams, known as Cross-Sectoral Planning Groups (CSPGs), initially organized around the five thematic areas of GPRS I for review work, and later around the three pillars of the GPRS II for policy input. CSPGs include state and nonstate actors from government institutions, professional bodies, research institutions, think tanks, NGOs, CBOs, the private sector, organized groups and associations (such as labor unions, youth and women coalitions, and so on), outstanding individuals with proficiency in relevant fields, and development partners. It had some of the best representation of nonstate actors in Ghanaian public policy making.

Each group was chaired by an individual elected by the group and was facilitated by a consultant who provided technical guidance, assisted by a research associate. The groups worked according to the following terms of reference:

- To determine the programs, policies, and plans to be carried over from GPRS I to GPRS II
- To review policies, programs, and projects to identify any missing links and propose new initiatives
- To mainstream cross-cutting issues, such as the environment, gender, employment, ICT, disability, HIV-AIDS, and population into the thematic areas
- To integrate international commitments such as MDGs, the Millennium Challenge Account, the New Partner for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the MDBS into the various thematic areas
- To identify national priorities for the theme under consideration
- To develop relevant strategies for achieving the objectives in the GPRS II

Each CSPG's deliberations were collated into a report. After the work by the CSPGs, the NDPC facilitated nationwide communication outreach using a public consultation program. The new thematic areas were proposed through a range of multimedia channels (radio, television, newspapers); national-, regional-, district-, and community-level public forums; workshops; and focus group discussions. The feedback from the consultations was synthesized into a national consensus document that finally gave legitimacy to the GPRS II and its three priority areas.

Source: Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (Accra: NDPC, 2005).

Beyond policy making, however, the rigorous application of strategic communication in GPRS II implementation has been less impressive. Although the GPRS II clearly acknowledged a need to enhance development communication, implementation did not meet expectations of the communication strategy. This was largely due to an overall weak public sector communication system and compounded by the institutional challenges of decentralization (for example, low local government capacity for program implementation and weak M&E). In the face of this systemic challenge, Ghana opted for a systemic solution. Instead of the usual practice of side-stepping the bottlenecks to go ahead with poorly planned communication interventions, the government embarked on a Development Communication Enhancement Program (DCEP). The DCEP was prioritized as a public sector reform necessity with a focus on decentralizing government communication functions.

Toward a Holistic Approach: the Ghana Development Communication Enhancement Program

The aim of the DCEP was to support government communication horizontally—through coordinating communication across ministries, sectors, and agencies—and vertically, by strengthening the coordination of communication strategies, approaches, and methodologies at the national and regional levels. It constituted a crucial part of Ghana's public sector reform process given that no effective reform is possible without a dynamic communication system that enables all stakeholders to have a voice in the way decisions are made and implemented. Government recognized that DCEP success required a communication paradigm shift from message propagation to communication for social consensus building and development effectiveness.[27] This emphasis on participatory approaches was designed to place communication at the heart of the accountability challenge.

Although elaborately planned, getting funding for the DCEP was a challenge. In 2008, the World Bank approved funding support to kick-start implementation under the Bank-supported Economic Management Capacity Building Project. The World Bank support enabled some aspects of the program to take off but it is not clear what the key results and impacts have been.

Institutional Aspects of Communication: The Special Role of the Ministry of Information

Traditionally, the government's information dissemination organ, the Ministry of Information, has the responsibility of providing communication to all other ministries and state agencies. It performs this vital role through the public relations units of ministries, departments and agencies, the Information Services Department (ISD) and other state-owned media organizations.

Set up as the Ministry's chief public information and outreach arm, the ISD has offices in each of Ghana's 10 regional capitals, more than 80 district-level offices, and 50 information centers. Its central mandate is to create awareness of government policies, programs, and activities, and to provide public relations support to government ministries, departments, agencies, and Ghana's mission abroad. Until recently **[starting the year 2000]**, when a liberalized, fast-growing media industry began to dwarf ISD's presence in the country, it had been one of the most recognized information institutions in the country. As the Ghanaian public becomes familiar with multiple commercial media channels, the government has been forced to reroute its communication through popular channels to maximize outreach. Consequently, the ISD's role has been scaled back even more. Given its strategic significance, however, the ISD must find new spaces, both within government and in the wider public sphere, to assert its relevance.

The institutional reform envisaged under the DCEP was designed to strengthen and utilize the decentralized institutional infrastructure of the ISD as the platform for development communication at the local level. The key effort in this regard involves the establishment of development communication units at the district levels to connect deeply with communities. Under the DCEP, the Ministry of Information's special role in coordinating public sector communication involved the following:

- Mainstreaming development communication across the public sector
- Initiating an overall development communication policy with a strategy
- Setting guidelines on quality and performance standards
- Developing infrastructure to support development communication in all sectors
- Building human and technical capacity to decentralize development communication, especially at the district level
- Establish effective M&E mechanisms of public sector communication system.

Even though the Ministry did not have the capacity to implement the DCEP, its coordinating role as envisaged under the reform process is what possibly will redefine the paradigm for public sector communication. The Ministry could provide a strategic framework for mainstreaming inclusion, voice, and social accountability in the public policy process, as well as securing ownership and sustainability of sectorwide reform programs. The Ministry of Information's low capacity was compounded by its dependence on the Ministry for Public Sector Reform, which was mandated to provide technical support for DCEP implementation design but lacked the technical capacity and expertise in communication.[28] The Ministry of Information needs to build political will that recognizes the centrality of communication to good governance by allocating the required funding and pursuing a results-focused process. Sorting out the linkage between the ministries and building this political will could make Ghana's public sector communication system a model for other countries.

Public Sector Reform Development Communication Program, 2005–08

In 2005, Ghana launched a Public Sector Reform initiative. The reforms aimed to achieve efficient and cost-effective public services that would improve the living conditions of the poor and make public organizations more responsive to the needs of the private sector. It had its roots in the GPRS II, which made promotion of good governance a strategic pillar for achieving economic growth and poverty reduction. The Ministry of Public Sector Reform (MPSR) was the institutional coordinator of the sectorwide reform process, which was guided by a Comprehensive Work Program.[29]

Reforms can be difficult to achieve when not communicated effectively (see box 3.2). Therefore, Ghana's Public Sector Reform Development Communication Program (PSRCP) had an integral strategic communication component to communicate the relevance, approach, and implications of the reforms to a wide range of stakeholders inside and outside the civil service. Ensuring ownership, participation, and social accountability are the core targets of the PSRCP.[30]

Between 2005 and 2008 the Ministry initiated several communication interventions throughout the country using face-to-face sessions and staff receptions, mass media advertorials, news reports, talk shows, and electronic mailing. The Ministry also published brochures and a special journal on public sector reform, and organized press conferences, dinners, launch briefings, and two flagship events: the President's Excellence Awards, which rewards excellence within the public sector annually, and the Public Services Week Celebration.

Box 3.2: Petroleum Sector Deregulation and the National Health Insurance Scheme: Comparative Cases in Reform Communication

In 2005, the government of Ghana deregulated its control over the country's petroleum sector amid protests by a coalition of opposition political parties (the Committee for Joint Action [CJA]). Clearly an unpopular decision at a time when world crude oil prices were rising, the policy's implications were that consumers would absorb the direct impact of nonsubsidized market-based pricing.

As the debate raged, an interesting episode in strategic policy communication began to unfold. At university campus rallies across Ghana, the CJA made presentations with elaborate statistics to enhance their message as students subjected their presentations to rigorous analytical interrogation. Government communicators skillfully argued the rationale for the policy. As the tough policy was pushed through, a surprising sense of goodwill became apparent for the government's action. Government communication of the policy had been effective in crafting a message that was well targeted at the masses through popular radio. In an Afrobarometer policy survey conducted at that time by the Center for Democratic Development, almost 60 percent of Ghanaians said they would support tough policy reforms, if those reforms would improve the economy. What was significant about the deregulation debate was not that the policy has been successfully implemented with mass consensus, but that even though citizens felt the impact of a market-pricing regime, large numbers of average Ghanaians were informed on its pros and cons.

Unlike the petroleum deregulation policy, another initiative to reform Ghana's public health financing under a new initiative to introduce a National Health Insurance Scheme encountered planning and operational bottlenecks. They could have been avoided if policy makers had utilized strategic communication to obtain and integrate crucial public feedback. The challenges facing the Ghana Health Insurance Scheme reveal the strategic importance of having a decentralized, local-level public communication system in place. Although the assumptions driving the scheme made welfare sense, they failed to thoroughly grasp the intricacies of operationalizing this among the poor at the community level, where most bottlenecks occur. Although effective messaging may be enough for many macrolevel reforms like petroleum sector deregulation, reforms that involve microlevel action by citizens, such as health insurance, require more than effective messages on welfare benefits. They require a decentralized and sustained local-level communication process that can solicit feedback for effective implementation.

The excellence awards provided a boost to the communication process as it helped citizens and public sector staff to appreciate the message more tangibly. The Public Service Week offers the best opportunity for impact through nationwide information, education, and communication activities. An annual Chief Director's Meeting brings together all senior-level directors of the public service to brainstorm on the way forward with reforms. Specially designed communication interventions target the country's donors to allow them to appreciate the impact of their support.

Noting that public sector reform would be difficult if communication interventions were limited to the public service, the MPSR transformed its Client Service Charter in 2007. This charter previously had been used to educate public sector staff about service improvement. It subsequently was made into a Citizen's Charter with an expanded message on the rights and roles of both citizens and the public sector in the

reform process. Effectively communicating the message of the charter is now a key focus of the Ministry's communication program and will require a larger communication effort, which has yet to materialize.

Poverty Monitoring Communication Initiatives

The Ghana Living Standards Survey: Every seven years or so the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) conducts the Ghana Living Standards Survey. By far the largest poverty monitoring process in Ghana, its main communication components are the media launch and public dissemination of the final report. The GSS uses a dissemination tour of regional capitals where it organizes public workshops to communicate the content to key audiences. The report is distributed to public institutions, universities and research centers, CSOs and development partners. It is also sold to the public, although accessibility could be improved if it were subsidized.[31]

Annual Progress Report (APR) on the GPRS: Another important poverty monitoring process is the NDPC's APR. It is disseminated to poverty interest groups, development partners, and all relevant public agencies engaged in GPRS implementation. The APR is a participatory review mechanism at the government agency level. The data used in preparing the report comes from sector ministries, departments and agencies, and metropolitan, municipal, and district assemblies. By design, each sector and district M&E process is required to be involved in a participatory review with stakeholders, but this review often is ineffective because of M&E system bottlenecks.[32] Once compiled, the NDPC organizes a series of regional workshops to disseminate the findings. Participants are drawn from the country's 10 regional and 138 district Planning and Coordinating Units, regional and district coordinating directors, budget officers, and CSO representatives who provide critical feedback.[33] To improve M&E, the NDPC has issued "Guidelines for Preparation of the District Monitoring and Evaluation Plan." The plan emphasizes a shift from implementation-based M&E (concerned with activity implementation) to results-based M&E (assessing whether real changes have occurred).

The Ghana Joint Assistance Strategy (G-JAS): Since 2005, donors have partnered through the G-JAS to develop a multidonor Results Matrix for overall monitoring of multidonor budget support. This matrix is built around a multidonor communication process that enables all donors, together with government and civil society, to publicly review GPRS II progress and poverty interventions on an annual basis. Because it is often done in the presence of the media, and the results are published, public interest groups are brought in to select the key messages, thus providing a basis for demanding accountability not only from government, but also from donors.

Civil society initiatives: Civil society involvement in poverty monitoring came into the mainstream in the late 1990s, beginning with the civil society–led Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative, which was supported by the World Bank and the government of Ghana (see box 3.3).[34] In 2004, Ghana HIPC Watch, led by the SEND Foundation, became a nationally recognized civil society framework for tracking the disbursement and impact of HIPC debt relief funds that were intended for propoor expenditures. Using an advocacy-based communication approach, the initiative strengthened the participatory M&E capacity of 25 NGOs and faith-based organizations to collaborate and monitor the impact of the HIPC fund on the poor in 25 districts in northern Ghana, with findings widely publicized through the newsletter *Ghana HIPC Watch.*[35]

Box 3.3: The Social Accountability Initiative: Highlighting Voices of the Poor through Multilevel Communication

In 2004, the Institute for Policy Alternatives (IPA), a Ghanaian think tank, launched the Social Accountability Initiative to support social accountability activities by civil society, parliament, and public institutions. By using citizen-based tools, such as community score-cards and citizen report cards, and engaging with the poor in community-level conversations, the initiative is able to highlight voices of the poor, and communicate these through a range of innovative communication approaches.

Once the monitoring is done, IPA organizes dissemination and accountability forums at the local, regional, and national levels. A multimedia forum is created during which public service providers and the public mutually confront the issues raised in *Voices of the Poor*. Simplified versions of the report are issued to members of the press who feature prominently in the process. Media reports and discussions are initiated and high-level meetings are held to communicate the findings directly to public institutions and parliamentary oversight committees that have the power to effect accountability and change. Parliament's oversight role is taken even more seriously with a special training program in social accountability, which the IPA runs for embers of parliament.

IPA also uses a communication-based advocacy program that forms a partnership with five main local associations (for the disabled, widows and orphans, street children, pensioners) with more than a dozen media firms. In 2006, IPA's *Voices of the Poor* became the largest survey of the poor in Ghana, covering 4,135 respondents in six clusters of the poorest sections in all 10 administrative regions. This creative use of a simple communication intervention to link community voices to public service providers not only has stimulated the demand side of the accountability equation, but also has promoted evidence-based learning that can stimulate the supply side.

Source: authors, based on interview with IPA staff

Donor initiatives: Consistent with the harmonization of government support for poverty reduction, a number of international donors have harmonized their support for civil society monitoring with the creation of the Ghana Research and Advocacy Program (G-RAP, www.g-rap.org). G-RAP is a pooled research fund jointly supported by four donor countries (Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) with a focus on strengthening civic engagement in the GPRS by enhancing the capacity and autonomy of NGOs to conduct evidence-based research (see box 3.4) and advocacy that informs the GPRS pro-poor policy process and monitors its implementation. An important communication intervention is G-RAP's requirement that findings be published and disseminated to relevant audiences. The level of emphasis that G-RAP places on actual targeted communication rather than just publication and dissemination of findings is not clear. Since its inception in 2004, G-RAP has worked with more than 20 of the country's most respected civil society and research organizations. All these organizations have stimulated the demand side of the policy and accountability process.

Box 3.4: GhanaInfo Database: An M&E Information System

A crucial component of evidence-based M&E is the management of effective feedback mechanisms that in turn is contingent on a good data dissemination system based on a comprehensive database. A well-functioning IT-based monitoring information system is required to effectively and efficiently enter data and assess the success and impact of poverty reduction strategies and provide evidence. The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), in collaboration with the NDPC, launched the GhanaInfo database in July 2005. GhanaInfo provided a comprehensive national socioeconomic database for compilation and dissemination of indicators required for monitoring the GPRS II at district, regional, and national levels. Under the initiative, capacity building programs for staff of local- and national-level government agencies have enabled them to access and use the database to improve the quality of M&E in the public sector

Sources: Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy, (2005); "Guidelines for Preparation of District Monitoring and Evaluation Plan" (NDPC, Accra, 2006).

From Raising Awareness to Domestic Accountability

Until recently, the policy-making process has been a closed process. The public sector typically has withheld public policy from the public, a situation attributable largely to a historically weak culture of public policy communication, and partly to a perception among policy makers that sharing information reduces their control over policy. As Ghanaian democracy matures, and as media and civil society become more dynamic, public policy awareness among the general population has greatly increased. People are more aware of public policies that tend to have significant impacts on their lives, such as policies on utility and public goods pricing, agriculture, health, education, microfinance, urban congestion, and taxation. Public policy awareness also has improved in rural areas where local radio stations are proliferating and are linked to major urban radio networks on which daily policy debates are intense. These improvements, however, are not enough to stimulate demand for real accountability.

Surveys of the Ghanaian populace, in 2005 were indicative: 71 percent of respondents said that they have an interest in public affairs, but 65 percent said that the issues are often difficult to fully understand.[36] Awareness may be improving, but the majority of the population is still poorly informed. This lack of information has implications for citizen ability to demand accountability.

Ghanaians increasingly are making the leap from policy awareness to demands for accountability. The Ghanaian media stimulate significant awareness by offering various platforms for extensive discussions on the demand for accountability. Unified action by citizen associations appears to be more effective for demanding accountability than actions by individuals. Getting more individuals to feel informed and empowered to demand accountability on their own initiative is just as important. The media and civil society will be crucial in this dynamic. Constantly keeping the communication lenses focused on accountability issues will enlighten people to engage in policy debates, as well as offer them feedback mechanisms to channel their demands.

Civil Society, Poverty Monitoring, and Budgets

Civil society groups increasingly have become involved in poverty monitoring and tracking of budget expenditure over the last decade. The practice has emerged as an integral part of the PRS process and of increased harmonization of donor support for the GPRS through MDBS. That system offers a comfort zone for civil society to design and execute accountability measures with a fair degree of legitimacy and space. The multiple interests in this dynamic also aids civil society monitoring because the government tends to be more open. G-RAP offers an excellent example of donor interest in monitoring their budget support, and demonstrates how this is strengthening civil society's capacity to engage in enhanced and relatively autonomous monitoring.

The Centre for Budget Advocacy (CBA), created by ISODEC, a local NGO, focuses on improving the national budget process and efficient use of public resources. CBA spreads budget activism and promotes a better budget process through the following:

- Consultation and stakeholder participation
- Accountability of public officials
- Transparency in public financial transactions through the tracking of central government transfers to local government authorities[37]

The Institute for Democratic Governance, a think tank, also organizes an annual National Participatory Budget Conference, which is a development communication platform on the national budget. Civil society groups, including several grassroots associations, converge to engage officials from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, to share information, and to learn about critical inputs needed for enhanced budgeting.[38]

Government–Civil Society Relationships

Government–civil society relations have improved greatly since Ghana returned to democratic rule in 1992, but it was not until 2002 that the process of creating the GPRS offered an unprecedented opportunity to close the gap significantly. The PRS framework emphasized country ownership of the policy-making process and required extensive dialogue with national interest groups. This naturally offered a platform that the civil society utilized to provide inputs into the country's new development framework. Since then, engagement has deepened as the GPRS and its poverty focus provide several areas of agreement between CSOs and government. Occasionally, some CSOs, particularly those working on sensitive issues like anticorruption and accountability, do have confrontations with government, but these are expected in an open democracy. To improve this relationship, the government will have to do more in terms of creating better institutional openings for engagement across all sectors. Also, enhancing government development communication will be crucial.

Donor–Civil Society Relationships

Most of Ghana's donors understand and appreciate the value of civil society engagement and have been influential contributors to the growth of that civil society. Donors normally create more space, direct and indirect, for civil society. They continually have encouraged the government to do the same. Several donor-funded projects, which are delivered outside the government bureaucracy, tend to be administered in partnership with civil society groups. Since 2005, civil society has participated in the annual Consultative

Group Meetings of Government and Development Partners, a high-level platform on which crucial policy reviews and donor commitments are made. In what used to be a two-party engagement between government and donors, civil society has become a third party with substantial input on behalf of citizens and as a voice to hold the government-donor partnership accountable for outcomes. In cases in which the government is unable to confront donors for economic diplomacy reasons, civil society has stepped in and has been able to influence donors to consider alternative policy directions. By creating G-RAP, donors have found an exemplary way to encourage civil society to pursue evidence-based monitoring and checks not only on government but also on donors. The G-RAP also monitors the quality of support that donors deliver under the MDBS. Civil society needs to improve the depth of its monitoring of the work of donors in the country.

The Mass Media

The Ghanaian media, one of the most vibrant in Africa, has been a crucial facilitator of the evolving accountability agenda in the country. Apart from communicating the work that all other stakeholders do on social accountability, the media, through its own programming, stimulates the public to directly demand accountability from both government and nonstate actors. Through multimedia approaches—such as opinion polling, listener phone-in radio, and television programs, discussions, and investigative and documentary reporting—the mass media has facilitated social accountability, sometimes with breakthrough results.

The biggest challenge for media organizations is to build their capacity to understand and effectively communicate complex policy issues, while reducing the risks associated with defamation suits that result from flawed investigative journalism. This threat has deterred the media from investigating sensitive accountability issues.

Access to and Freedom of Information

Efforts that help to open up governments, public offices, and intergovernmental organizations to public scrutiny are likely to aid progress on anticorruption.[39] Ghana's 1992 Constitution makes clear provisions for freedom of speech and expression, which includes freedom of the press and citizens' right to access information.[40] Freedom of expression has improved since 1992 with repeal of the Criminal Libel Law in 2001. In 2006, a Whistle Blowers Act was passed to empower citizens to disclose information relating to fraud and to illicit or unethical conduct or practice. But within a year of its enactment, only five cases had been reported under the Act (in spite of numerous corruption-related reports in the press). Perceived flaws in the act, which fails to guarantee the whistle blower maximum protection, could undermine the act's usefulness.[41] The need for a Freedom of Information Act has become critical to improving Ghana's environment for free communication.

Since 1999, Ghana has had a draft Freedom of Information Act, which was revised in 2003 but has not yet been enacted. Experts note that even though government emphasizes its commitment to passing the law, it lacks the capacity to implement it.[42] The government's position is that the overhaul of public sector communication and information systems is a prerequisite to justify the passage and usefulness of the law. The Rights to Information Coalition, an advocacy group that has been campaigning for the law, argues that the government is paranoid about opening information to public scrutiny.[43] But other initiatives by government are encouraging. An annual People's Assembly with the President (2001–08) and a regular "Meet the Press Series" (since 2001) place the president and cabinet ministers, respectively, under direct public and media scrutiny.

The challenge in Ghana transcends arguments for legal legislation. The most crucial bottleneck has to do with reform of public sector communication and improvement in public sector decentralization, particularly at the district level. Any advocacy for legal reforms therefore must go hand in hand with accelerated support for initiatives that, like the DCEP, are focused on systemwide institutional solutions.

Conclusion

Development communication is gaining ground in Ghana. The GPRS and its multi-stakeholder consultative framework have been the main catalysts since 2003. More important, Ghana's maturing democracy has strengthened the environment for free expression and civic participation. The numerical growth of CSOs and competition among them has added to the momentum for social accountability as many CSOs introduce community-based accountability tools, such as citizen report cards and community scorecards. The budget and public expenditure monitoring process generally has improved, but institutional problems of national and local governance, including perceptions of public sector corruption, remain. This is an area that needs greater action, especially at the grassroots level at which reliable information on government expenditure is scarce. A big challenge for Ghana remains: Although several government programs have well-intentioned frameworks for civic and stakeholder participation, the absence of an efficient public sector communication system generally impedes information flows and limits the usefulness of such participatory frameworks. This challenge which was expected to be resolved under the DCEP, should be the focus of any Post-DCEP reform

Financing remains the biggest challenge for any major reform initiative, although efficiently managing a results-based reform process may be an even bigger issue once implementation starts. A lot of these concerns hinge on the Ministry of Information, which holds the mandate to coordinate any reform process. As a coordinating body, the information ministry requires substantial overhauling. Maintaining focus on the core goals of reform will be crucial as the transition from a traditional government information establishment to a modern development communication system can be a daunting institutional change process. Under the current design, it is not clear how the change process will be managed. The role of CSOs is important because it will contribute a demand side to what is presently a largely government-driven effort. Above all, government political will is a critical factor.

3.2 Moldova

Steliana Nedera

Summary

The implementation of the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EGPRS) has enabled a strategic approach to communication in the framework of policy-making processes (policy preparation, implementation, and M&E). The examination of the processes and tools used for the EGPRS shows that the government was willing to strengthen communication. Strategic communication generally was well received. The support provided by Moldova's development partners during EGPRS implementation was particularly important.

The government has drawn positive conclusions from the implementation of the EGPRS and other strategies with respect to the multitude of priorities, M&E challenges, and good practices in communication and participation. The lessons learned were applied to the development of the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2008–11 that followed the EGPRS. The NDP enjoyed a better institutional environment under the leadership of the prime minister, supported by his office's guidance for coordination of policies and development assistance, and a new and expanded National Participation Council. The implementation of the NDP revealed that the capacity of public administration bodies is not strong enough for smooth functioning of strategic communication.

The central public administration reform that started in 2006 opened up opportunities for capacity development at all levels of the civil service and for improvement of the regulatory and legal framework. For strategic communication mechanisms, tools, and products to function in the longer term, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity for communication in the central and local public administration, and in CSOs. This means that an agreed platform is needed for participatory processes and communication, organizational settings and skills, and adequate financing. The NDP has the necessary provisions to further develop these capacities.

The Office of the Prime Minister makes continuous efforts to streamline communication inside the government, and to develop a comprehensive participation and communication approach that would integrate ongoing efforts into a broader conceptual framework, to develop civil service capacity for communication, designate specific units to be in charge of communication, and create mechanisms for collaboration. These efforts are a good beginning for a comprehensive capacity building process in the government.

Background

Moldova became a parliamentary republic in 2000. Since then, Moldova has enjoyed relative political stability and sustained economic recovery, with 6 percent average annual GDP growth during 2000–08. Reform efforts continue in a number of areas, particularly on further decentralization and local autonomy, health insurance, regulatory reform, judiciary reform, and central public administration. Through monetary and fiscal policies and improved management of public finances, the government is working to reduce both domestic (especially social) arrears and external public debt. The government appointed in 2009 has moved

quickly to formulate and adopt a package of policies and measures to fight the consequences of the economic crisis and to strengthen Moldova's relations with international partners.

The main feature of the economy is labor-related out-migration. An estimated one-fourth of the active labor force was working abroad at the end of 2008. With a majority of migrants coming from small towns or villages where poverty rates are the highest, migration is both a consequence of poverty and a key strategy for coping with it. Migrants' remittances are estimated at one-third of GDP, and they are spent mainly on current consumption needs of households. The negative effects of migration may come to overshadow the positive ones: Migration reduces the size and quality of the labor force in the country, reduces the base for contributions to the pension system, and undermines both family and community structures.

Regulatory reforms led by the Ministry of Economy and Trade (MET) have simplified the legal framework. Policies need to be enacted to encourage the investment of remittances and the return of skilled migrants. An Investment and Export Promotion Strategy for 2006–15 has been approved, including components on state investment policy such as promoting public-private partnerships. The strategy is expected to encourage investment of remittances. These will be important building blocks in overcoming the development gap between the capital city and the rest of Moldova. The government is preparing a regional development program aimed at fostering direct investment outside the capital city to reduce poverty and regional disparities.

The government recognized the need to focus on the priorities of one NDP, the successor of the EGPRS and Moldova's Action Plan with the European Union. The challenges of reform of the central public administration, launched in early 2006, are multifaceted, and include eliminating overlaps, inefficiencies, and conflicts of interest; creating linkages between strategic planning and budgeting process; establishing a single M&E system; and building policy-making capacities.

The Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (2004–07)

The first PRSP (the EGPRS) was approved in mid-2004. The decision to develop a PRS came as a result of dialogue with the World Bank and other international financial institutions. The EGPRS took into account the MDG national targets and featured the monitoring of MDG national indicators. The government and its development partners concluded that the agenda was too broad and too ambitious, and that it did not focus attention and energy on selected key problems that would generate visible results by the end of implementation.

The EGPRS preparation process benefited from the active participation of CSOs and citizens through a wide array of tools and events. A communication and participation process involving all interested parties accompanied the implementation of the strategy. The main vehicle was the Participation Council, established in September 2002, which led and coordinated the participation agenda. It included representatives of civil society groups, members of Parliament, line ministries, and donors. The work of the Council was supported by a Secretariat (the executive body of the Council). During EGPRS implementation, the Participation Council facilitated the participation of all interested parties at the national and local levels through the following:

- Ensuring transparent implementation of the EGPRS
- Mobilizing and involving interested parties in the EGPRS implementation process
- Facilitating the participatory monitoring and independent evaluation of the results
- Elaborating and implementing the communication strategy

The Participation Council initiated and supported development of the EGPRS Communication Strategy. The strategy had two parts: (i) informing all parties about EGPRS implementation, and (ii) ensuring independent M&E of the EGPRS. The main responsible organizations for the implementation of the Communication Strategy were central administration bodies. The Secretariat provided support for the implementation of the Communication Strategy.

EGPRS-related information was disseminated through monthly printed information bulletins, television programs, weekly programs on national radio ("EGPRS—Steps to a Better Life"), a website (www.scers.md), and e-mail. The first EGPRS progress report was produced in a brief, user-friendly version.

Monitoring the EGPRS included the following activities and products:

- The MET led overall monitoring of the EGPRS.
- Line ministries provided regular reports to the MET.
- Local public administration bodies provided information to the MET and administrative statistics to line ministries.
- MET prepared EGPRS progress reports.
- MET produced analytical "Poverty and Policy Impact" reports.
- State bodies with civil society piloted innovative studies and reports.
- Civil society groups prepared independent monitoring reports.

The Main Achievements of EGPRS Participatory Monitoring

The MET prepared EGPRS Progress Reports for 2005 and 2006. These reports were presented at national forums uniting public officials, CSOs, and donors. Progress reports and other reviews and implementation-related information were posted on the website. The Poverty Fora of March 2006 and June 2007 were successful, and the audience gave credit to the government's informed and honest reports on poverty in Moldova. The main conclusions of the 2006 progress report were that the resources allocated were not sufficient to achieve the strategy objectives.

At the local level, some work was done in 2006 to strengthen monitoring capacity in three pilot *rayons* (District level administrative unit that includes a number of villages and towns) (Basarabeasca, Rezina, and Nisporeni) to update and expand on the monitoring indicators to measure progress at the *rayon* and community level, and to create databases under an UNDP project. Training and seminars were conducted and equipment was procured, but this work has not yet had an impact at the subnational level.

A positive development was the 2006 launch of the DevInfo Moldova online database that was used for monitoring. It contained a user interface and digital maps up to the commune level. The launch was followed by a seminar to train public officials from most central public administration bodies. DevInfo Moldova was presented at seminars in the three pilot rayons.

An MDG needs assessment was carried out to mainstream the MDGs into the next medium-term development framework and into government priorities. An awareness campaign on the MDGs started in 2006, including nationalized icons, billboards, audio, and video spots. From an analytical as well as from a communication point of view, this work helps link the long-term and the medium-term development goals of the country.

A new instrument, Citizens' Voice, tested citizen participation in the evaluation of policy impacts at the local level. The tool showed that it can contribute to better interaction between local authorities and members of the community.

An independent study on the impact of the EGPRS, "Analysis of impact of policies in the opinion of the citizens," provided many inputs to the preparation of the next medium-term strategy, the NDP. This 2006 study aimed to encourage greater awareness and engagement of citizens in the evaluation of the impact of policies at the national level. The study was based on a public opinion survey and focus group discussions.

The study showed a rather low level of citizens' awareness about the EGPRS and other national strategies. The level of awareness increases dramatically with higher levels of education. The study shows that the level of support for national strategies depends on citizens' level of information. Income is an important factor influencing the level of information. Poor people, working hard to make more money, barely have time to inform themselves. The rural-urban divide is not significant, but the urban population tends to have greater access to information. The most important source of information is television, then radio and print media. Interestingly enough, local public authorities are not considered a source of information although they should play an important role in informing the population. It is encouraging that citizens showed willingness to participate more actively in solving society's problems. The report recommended the analysis of existing communication strategies at the national level and better coordination among the central public administration.

Implementation and Resources

The number of other external and internal development strategies posed a challenge to EGPRS implementation. In 2005, an action plan was signed between the government of Moldova and the European Union (EU-Moldova Action Plan [EUMAP]). The EUMAP was seen as an important strategic framework by the government, and it contained a number of strategic objectives and activities that were to be implemented by line ministries. To a significant extent, these objectives coincided with the objectives of the EGPRS. The coordinator for the EUMAP was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which developed a coordination framework for other ministries, collected periodic reports from them, and put in place a separate monitoring framework. Gradually, as the implementation of these two strategies was moving ahead, the government recognized significant duplication.

Another framework strategy that required implementation, coordination, and monitoring was the government's own program approved by the Parliament, the "Moldovan Village," a local development strategy for 2005–15, which includes a number of sector development strategies. These national programs and strategies have similar social and economic development objectives. Nonetheless, every program had its own monitoring plan and different bodies responsible for coordinating monitoring inputs and reporting. These arrangements have put an additional burden on the public officials in charge of reporting and thereby have weakened analysis of program implementation, making it more formal and less substantive. The EGPRS agenda was not well matched with resources. The effort to direct donor resources and to pledge funds toward EGPRS areas was not successful. The government did not have enough capacity and mechanisms to lead this process in a sustained manner. The prioritization done in the EGPRS helped to some extent. Donors started to develop their strategies and action plans following the EGPRS agenda, but the results of this coordination did not bear fruit during the period of EGPRS implementation.

Capacity Building

The central public administration reform (CPAR) started during EGPRS implementation. Existing staff were threatened by change (staff reductions, creation, and elimination of units) in the general context of limited capacity in the government and high turnover of more skilled staff. This capacity to implement the EGPRS, as well as the capacity to coordinate horizontally and vertically within the government, was relatively weak. Donor support provided to EGPRS coordination, monitoring, and evaluation helped develop some capacity and models for coordination, but the maintenance of this capacity over the long term is questionable without stability and motivation among the civil service.

Promotion of all the strategies that run parallel to the EGPRS by their focal points and coordinators in the government led to fragmentation of government efforts and resources. This fragmentation of communication efforts made perception and support by the public more difficult. The focus on the EGPRS was diluted.

EGPRS communication products and achievements would have been impossible without the Participation Council. Its role in developing and supporting communication channels (government and civil society, government and donors, and civil society and donors) is indisputable. A number of innovative communication products that were developed need continuous support from the Participation Council and donors, as the government cannot retain skilled staff and does not have sufficient financial resources.

The National Development Plan (2008–11)

The government developed an NDP that would unite national development priorities and would be used by the government in dialogue with all its development partners. From a communication point of view, one common strategy would also facilitate better understanding and greater awareness by citizens of the development priorities.

The new strategy set development objectives for 2008–11 and aimed to serve as a unique tool for integration of objectives from several strategic frameworks (including national MDG commitments) for alignment and coordination with the medium-term budgetary planning process (the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework [MTEF]) and for the integration of external technical and financial assistance. The NDP acknowledges the value of participation of civil society and makes provisions for a communication strategy.

The structure of the NDP is different from the EGPRS. The strategic part includes a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis and proposes five national midterm priorities.

- Strengthen a modern democratic state, based on the principle of rule of law.
- Settle the Transnistrian conflict and reintegrate the country.
- Increase national economic competitiveness.
- Develop human resources, increase employment, and promote social inclusiveness.
- Promote regional development.

Participation is recognized as one of the three key approaches to operationalize the NDP. The plan provides for a M&E system (organized by strategic priorities), using a common system of quantitative and qualitative indicators. M&E are to be carried out by each central public administration authority, which

will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the NDP objectives, monitoring, and revision of the NDP action plan.

Institutional Framework for Participation

When the decision to develop the development plan was made, MET first drafted the NDP, along with a concept for participatory activities necessary for NDP elaboration and presented it to the Participation Council. The Ministry then conducted public consultations with civil society and donors on the draft NDP through a national forum in June 2007. The concept for the participation process in the NDP was presented and discussed at the forum. The forum was followed by a series of 25 public debates at the national and regional levels, involving representatives of the central and local public administration, academia, the private sector, NGOs, mass media, trade unions, development partners, and embassies. The goal of public debates at the subnational level was to ensure that priorities proposed by the government were linked with local issues.

The government recognized the value added by the EGPRS participation activities and the need to continue them in the NDP. The government showed clear and strong intentions to simplify existing mechanisms for consultation with various groups and to make the practice of involving civil society in the development, implementation, and M&E of policies a permanent, integrated, and sustainable one. Thus, the government instituted a new National Participation Council to substitute several existing councils for consultation and to extend its area of activity to a number of strategic documents, not only the NDP.

The new Council is a consultative body of the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Planning, led by the Prime Minister. According to its new bylaws, the National Participation Council "functions in recognition of the value of civil society and to ensure the participation of civil society and the private sector in the process of elaboration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies." The Council aims to develop and promote the strategic partnership among public authorities, civil society, and the private sector to advance participatory democracy in Moldova through enabling communication and participation at all stages of decision making. The Council supports minimum consultation standards with stakeholders in the central public administration and helps institutionalize the principles of participation, primarily in ministries that already have policy units. The positioning of the Council under the auspices of the prime minister gives it additional importance, enabling various groups to obtain direct access to policy makers.

The Council's role in the NDP is to monitor its implementation, carry out independent reviews and evaluations, facilitate public debates, support the coordination of development assistance with identified strategic priorities, and prepare annual reports on participation. The Council also has to create the institutional framework for consultation for the central public administration. This includes development of consultation standards in policy development and building the necessary capacity for meeting those standards, as well as feedback on draft policy documents. The Council's decisions are considered recommendations by the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Planning, which has the power to approve or decline them.

The government made public the proposals for the new Council and conducted public discussions with various groups. In July 2008, an invitation was launched to all groups (employers' associations, trade unions, CSOs, networks, alliances, coalitions, unions, umbrella organizations) to nominate representatives to the new Council. Representatives of Moldova's development partners were invited to the Council as observers.

Communication Strategy

The government has developed a communication strategy to develop the NDP, which identified the main channels of communication, the interested parties, and the main communication products: print materials (brochures, reports, public briefs, information bulletins), radio (thematic and information programs), television (news and programs), print media (news, articles, interviews, press briefings and press clubs), the website (news, articles, electronic versions of the publications), and events (seminars, round tables, debates, national forums). The strategy identified the Participation Council as the main partner in this process, but it emphasized that central and local administrative bodies have to play an active role. The motto for the strategy was focused on the fact that strategic communication is much more than a simple task to inform society. It has to generate feedback and move to act. The strategy has set minimum standards for consultation in defining the NDP. These standards ensure clarity, the minimum time frame in which they can be accomplished, and access to information. The standards define the content of the information, the schedule of the consultation events, avenues for information circulation (website, information bulletins, etc.), and the obligations for central executive bodies to confirm the receipt of inputs by e-mail.

Relationships among the Main Actors

Government–Donor Relationships

Donors are part of the Participation Council. Donors have been part of EGPRS development and had access to the government to communicate their messages on the EGPRS. The MET has developed a list of needs for technical assistance and support that was circulated to donors on an annual basis. Similarly, the MET developed a format for annual reporting on the EGPRS by donors. The information on how donor support is directed toward EGPRS priorities began to be organized in a structured way.

    The same type of organized communication was put in place for the EUMAP, where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was coordinating the reporting to the European Union. In this way, donors had to decide what strategic framework to focus on, and support. As mentioned, the priorities were largely the same in both strategies, and thus very often they reported on both strategies.

    During the EGPRS implementation process, not much progress was achieved in directing donor resources to the PRSP areas that were in need of support. One reason for this slow progress was the presence of multiple strategies, and thus the efforts and communication of the government was fragmented. Even when the donors made efforts to plan their resources according to PRSP priorities, by the time they started to implement projects and programs, the EGPRS time frame came to an end.

    Several donors—the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and later Swiss Development Cooperation —used the platform of the EGPRS to combine efforts and resources in a joint program to support the development and M&E of strategies, focusing on the capacities of various actors and their interaction. The program started in 2004 and had a comprehensive approach to support the MET in its coordinating role, the specific roles of line ministries, local authorities, and civil society. Activities encompassed building capacity of public officials, development of a communication strategy, rollout of communication activities, support of Participation Council activities, research and analysis, and the launching of the EGPRS monitoring platform.

Program implementation moved rather slowly because of changes in national counterparts and insufficient staffing in the MET. Development of staff capacity in the MET and other ministries was delayed because of the launch of the Central Public Administration Reform, which started with a wave of personnel reductions in central public administration bodies.

At the end of 2006, the World Bank and the European Union jointly called a Consultative Group meeting of donors and the government of Moldova. The priorities presented by the government at the group meeting emerged in a consistent manner from the priorities identified in the EGPRS. Donors pledged significant funds in support of government priorities.

Donors also supported the government's development of an NDP for 2008–11 as a single platform that could be used by all donors in their dialogue with the government. A number of donors have signed a 2006 Framework Agreement whereby both parties committed to coordination principles and good practices. Moldova adhered to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and carried out a baseline survey in 2006.

Donors in Moldova hold monthly meetings and they started to invite high-level government officials to such meetings to discuss progress in NDP preparation and coordination. A small unit under the first deputy prime minister was created in 2006 to help lead activities related to government-donor coordination. This unit later was institutionalized as the office for coordination of technical assistance.

In early 2010, donors supported the organization of a second Consultative Group meeting of the donors and the government of Moldova. Significant support was pledged for the reform process and economic recovery. The donors and the government also have signed the "Partnership Principles," a document that confirms efforts to align donor assistance with national priorities, to use national systems and structures, and to commit to donor coordination.

Government–Civil Society Relationships

The Participation Council of the EGPRS and NDP is an institutionalized mechanism for the government and civil society to meet and communicate. CSOs took part in many events to express their opinions on the proposed strategy. They were invited to national forums to review progress on EGPRS implementation and to discuss the draft NDP.

Civil society had substantial representation in two national forums reviewing EGPRS progress. The second forum presented the draft NDP. In comparison, the inputs from civil society were not organized and were relatively limited in number and content. One of the reasons was that CSOs were invited and took part in the development of the draft NDP before the forum and therefore did not have many critical comments to offer.

CSOs also take part in communication and participation mechanisms lead by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the EUMAP. Several roundtables were organized and an independent monitoring report was prepared on the EUMAP.

The Social Sector Network is well developed and its dialogue with the line ministry is solid and consistent. It has established mechanisms to communicate its views on national policies and legal drafts either through this direct channel or, as in the case of the EGPRS and the forthcoming NDP, through the Participation Council, in which the Social Sector Network is a member.

CSOs in Moldova have reached a stage at which they need to develop greater capacity to consolidate their views and conclusions and be able to represent their groups in policy dialogue and preparation processes. The experience of the Social Sector Network with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection shows that good and permanent channels have to exist between civil society groups to be able to mobilize them, conduct internal discussions, and generate consolidated responses that are representative of larger groups rather than the views of only one organization. To conduct policy-related work, think tanks or resource centers with analytical capacity should have the trust and recognition of other NGOs.

Donor–Civil Society Relationships

In the last several years, donors have reduced many grant programs that in the first years of independence helped establish and develop NGOs and CBOs. Institutional development has little donor support. At the same time, the domestic sources of funding for NGOs are not well developed. Thus, there is a feeling that donors do not pay enough attention to the priorities of the sector when designing interventions to support civil society in Moldova, and a dialogue needs to be cultivated and maintained.

Donors have been supporting CSOs to carry out independent monitoring of the EGPRS's implementation. Think tanks have done a lot of analytical work on both the EUMAP and EGPRS with support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Eurasia Foundation, and other donors. Civil society has not positioned itself as the proactive party in relation to the donor community in many instances. Such feedback is informal and provided through bilateral meetings.

In the context of the civil society contributing to the development policy and good governance, a new initiative was announced in 2007—that is, the State of the Nation Report. This initiative was co-funded by DFID, the Eurasia Foundation, and the Balkan Trust for Democracy. The initiative proposed to increase the role of civil society in policy making through joint analytical and advocacy activity. Such research can contribute additional analysis to policy development in such areas as demography, environment, and internal migration.

3.3 Nepal

Achyut Wagle

Summary

Nepal implemented its 10th Five-Year Plan (2002–07) as its PRSP. The plan period began when the armed conflict had spread nationwide. The peace process began toward the end of the plan period. During these dramatic political developments and instability, the development agenda was marginalized. The 10th Plan was innovative in its formulation process, however. It tried to adopt a participatory approach from the beginning of the consultation process. The National Planning Commission (NPC) created the Central Monitoring and Evaluation Division (CMED) to facilitate communication among stakeholders and to monitor progress in poverty reduction. An important step was the introduction of a comprehensive communication system named the Poverty Monitoring and Analysis System (PMAS) with components, such as implementation and outcome monitoring, impact assessment, and advocacy strategies.

Some other programs—like the MDGs, the MTEF, and the Immediate Action Plan (IAP)— have not only significantly contributed to communication among stakeholders, but also have helped to achieve poverty reduction. One of the four main pillars of the plan included the marginalized and vulnerable parts of society—women, dalit (down-trodden), and janajatis (ethnic minorities)—as the targets of the development programs. The programs focused on these groups were implemented through the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) and have remained largely successful.

It was not easy to effectively communicate the contents and intent of the plan during the national conflict. First, the presence of the NPC being limited to the capital area remained the main obstacle for nationwide stakeholder participation in the planning process, particularly at the grassroots level. The armed conflict limited state access to a few districts or regional headquarters. Many donors with a democratic precondition for aid suspended their financial assistance because of direct rule by the king for most of the five-year plan period.

Despite these obstacles, some interesting developments took place during the plan period. People's awareness increased significantly, and they started to organize under the common objective of interest articulation and group well-being. This helped to bring poverty issues to the forefront of policy dialogue. More important, media growth, particularly of community and cooperative radio stations across the country, provided voice even for the illiterate. The emergence of civil society activism and watchful media covering a wide range of issues made up for shortfalls in communication and dissemination mechanisms set up by government.

The interim 2006 constitution proposed a federal structure. If that structure is adopted, the provincial planning units may facilitate decentralization. These units should have adequate independence and resources. Nepal needs to explore and replicate success stories in communication practices. Community mobilization approaches followed by the PAF and effective media mobilization strategies employed in Financial Sector Reform Project could serve as the models for future planning and implementation in development communication.

Background

Nepal became a federal republic on May 28, 2008. It abolished the monarchy of the Shah Dynasty that had ruled since Nepal's unification in 1768. Nepal attained relative political stability after the people's movement in April 2006 that not only forced the king to reinstate the parliament dissolved four years earlier, but also brought Maoists into the political mainstream, thereby putting an end to the decade-long armed conflict. The signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between the government of Nepal and the Maoists, relatively peaceful Constituent Assembly elections in April 2008, and the peaceful transfer of power to the Maoist-led coalition government have raised, albeit with cautious optimism, prospects for lasting peace. The Maoist-led government resigned and a new coalition was formed under the leadership of the United Marxist-Leninist party in May 2009.

After reinstatement of a multiparty democracy in 1990, Nepal embarked on the path of economic liberalization, structural and institutional reform, and decentralization. The average annual growth rate between 1991 and 1996 was 5.2 percent. But the armed conflict that began in February 1996 and spread to the entire rural hinterland took a toll on the country's economy. Absence of political stability and rapidly spreading armed conflict destroyed communication, transportation, and other infrastructure, mainly in remote areas.

Nepal's economic direction is unclear. The process of reform, liberalization, and privatization that was started in the early 1990s has stalled. Although the ruling political elite is convinced of the importance of reform and understands that Nepal has but no alternative to integrate with the global economy, the vast majority of Communists in parliament and the administration have impeded the process, especially privatization. For example, the government presented its highly populist, but unsustainably large, deficit budget in September 2009. It took five months for the budget to get through the parliament mainly because of Maoist objections. The government is not ready to discuss the issue of privatization, for example, of the two largest public sector commercial banks—Nepal Bank Limited and Rastriya Banijya Bank—which own nearly 60 percent of the country's total banking assets. These two banks have recovered their financial and operational health during last four years under the external management teams that were established as part of donor-funded financial sector reform program. Labor law reform, civil service reform, reduction of government dependence on domestic borrowing, and other reforms do not seem to be gathering momentum.

The post–civil war economy of Nepal faces the challenges of reconstructing the infrastructure and public amenities that were destroyed during the war, restarting development that was completely stalled by the conflict, and providing immediate relief to people who are facing acute inflation and shortages of basic necessities. But to embark on actual growth, conceptual clarity on the policies of the Maoist-led government are needed. To meet the cost of massive reconstruction, initiation of large or midsize hydropower projects and construction of other infrastructure, Nepal must attract large amounts of foreign investment. This is possible only when investors have full confidence in the government. Industrial relations and security are vital concerns.

Nepal's PRSP

The plan was a well-articulated policy and program document, but the timing of its adoption and implementation was unfortunate. First, the security situation had become precarious by 2002 because of the Maoist insurgency. There were no local- and district-level elected bodies as the five-year term of officials elected in

1997 expired. It was impossible to hold new elections as most of the countryside was under rebel control. Second, even in the center, a political vacuum existed when parliament was dissolved in May 2002. The 10th Plan was adopted in July 2002 and, in October, the king sacked the elected prime minister and began a series of changes in the government. Third, the economy had negative growth of −0.6 percent during 2001/02. Industrial output and exports declined sharply mainly because of the lack of security.

The 10th Plan was based on the following four pillars of the PRS:

1. Sustained high and broad-based economic growth, focusing on the rural economy
2. Social sector development with emphasis on human development through a renewed emphasis on effective delivery of basic social services and economic infrastructure
3. Targeted programs with an emphasis on ensuring social and economic inclusion of the poor, marginalized groups, and backward regions
4. Vigorously pursuing good governance both as a means of delivering better development results and to ensure social and economic justice

Under these four pillars, the Plan also stressed strategic cross-cutting approaches with regard to the following: (i) redefining the state's role and limiting public interventions; (ii) enlisting the private sector to play a leading role in employment and income generation, together with NGOs and CBOs, in complementing government efforts in service delivery in key areas; (iii) promoting community participation in and management of activities at the local level; and (iv) accelerating the decentralization process.

Instead of announcing the 11th Five-Year Plan, the government adopted a three-year interim plan (2008¬2010) in view of country's ongoing political transition. Another three-year plan is being considered. The first priority of the interim plan is to give special emphasis to relief, reconstruction and reintegration followed by expansion of employment opportunities. It has continued a number of poverty alleviation programs that were the main goals of the Tenth Plan. Other strategies of the new plan are to increase propoor and broad-based economic growth, promote good governance and effective service delivery, increase investment in physical infrastructure, adopt an inclusive development process, and carry out targeted programs.

PRSP Communication

The NPC of Nepal, without any functional network at the local level, has the responsibility for preparing national development plans and allocating resources for development activities. Therefore, Nepal's planning process has been criticized for being top down, with little participation of, and feedback from, key stakeholders, such as local government, beneficiaries, civil society, and development partners at any stage of plan formulation, implementation, or review. Therefore, these plans lacked wider ownership and did not adequately focus on implementation or M&E.

Because other programs like the MDGs, the MTEF, and the IAP also were linked to the PRS, it was imperative to have an effective communication strategy. Despite its inherent shortcomings in a system in which an entity at the center decides development plans and priorities even for the grassroots level, the 10th Plan made considerable efforts to adopt a participatory and more bottom-up approach in preparing the Plan, including the logical framework, and identifying the prioritized programs and projects as well as monitorable indicators. Feedback from such consultations was used to finalize the plan's objectives, targets, policies, and programs.

The 10th Plan emphasized the increased involvement of local bodies—District Development Committees (DDCs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs)—and communities in the planning, implementation, and management of local-level activities. NGOs and CBOs provided service delivery and community mobilization. Even more important, local communities were expected to be directly involved in the management of village-level service delivery.

The Poverty Monitoring and Analysis System

The NPC established a comprehensive system of communication—the PMAS—to coordinate, consolidate, harmonize, and analyze data from existing and new poverty monitoring mechanisms, and to communicate results to provide feedback into the policy-making process. The PMAS outlined the necessary components for such a system of input and output monitoring, which required coordination among ministries, district-level agencies, and the NPC's CMED of the NPC. It sought to accomplish this through five key functions: (i) implementation (or input/output) monitoring, (ii) outcome or well-being monitoring; (iii) impact assessment; (iv) a Poverty Management Information System (PMIS); and (v) communication and advocacy.[44]

Poverty Management Information System

This system aspired to achieve national ownership by establishing a PMIS to actively involve stakeholders in data collection, analysis, dissemination, and review; implementation of PRS; and harmonization of existing studies and data on poverty. Part of the PMIS includes coordinating and harmonizing the many different systems of poverty monitoring in the country, as well as coordinating efforts to monitor the PRSP and the MDGs. The most important aspect of the PMAS from the viewpoint of decentralization and deepening of the communication process is the introduction of the District Poverty Monitoring and Analysis System (DPMAS).

To scale up and institutionalize communication outreach and participatory processes in the implementation and monitoring of the PRSP, communication and advocacy were incorporated as major components of the PMAS. This was expected to facilitate a two-way process of information flow through lose collaboration with the media, parliament, NGOs, CBOs, and other important stakeholders. Specific objectives were to achieve the following:

- Create awareness of poverty reduction goals and activities
- Facilitate participation and enhance trust among stakeholders
- Create consensus and build domestic constituencies to sustain poverty reduction efforts
- Incorporate the oversight function of CSOs, including the media and advocacy groups
- Manage expectations about the poverty reduction process

Some other mechanisms formulated for effective implementation and monitoring include preparation of an annual poverty monitoring report, initiation of special monitoring mechanism for social inclusion and regional development, establishment of four monthly intermediate output indicators for public expenditure, initiation of the IAP, and decentralization. Most of these programs could not be accomplished as planned, however, mainly because of intensified insurgency during PRSP implementation. The absence of parliament also caused difficulty in holding proposed programs like town hall discussions and legislature–civil society dialogue.

Deliberate efforts were made to improve the quality of development information and consolidate data collection. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) carried out a Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS)

in 2003–04 and has conducted annual Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys since fiscal year 2003 in the health, education, public works, and transport sectors. The CBS produces Nepal Info, a CD-ROM, with annually updated information, including MDG and PRSP indicators. To increase the stakeholder's access to development information, information on PRS activities has been made publicly available through the NPC website.[45] A Poverty Information Center with an active outreach program began in 2005.

The Poverty Alleviation Fund

Because the main objective of the 10th Plan is poverty reduction, one of the main strategies for achieving this goal is to eliminate extreme poverty. Extreme poverty exists among geographically remote, socially excluded, and economically vulnerable people. As the means to reach to these groups, the 10th Plan identified "targeted programs" as one of the four pillars of the Plan. To implement these targeted programs, the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) was instituted in 2003.

The PAF is guided by the principle that the poor are the best source of information and the most able to manage their own needs and resources. The PAF works in 24 districts providing resources directly to specifically identified target beneficiaries—the marginalized communities, poor women, *dalit* (down-trodden), and *janajatis* (ethnic minorities)—for self-employment, income-generating activi¬ties, and im¬proved quality of life. It endeavors to address exclu¬sion focusing on the most de¬prived and poverty-stricken areas.

The working modality of the PAF has been to forge partnerships with development partners, social mobilization, technical assistance, and capacity building through partner organizations (POs). POs are selected from among CBOs, NGOs, private sector organizations, and local government organizations (DDCs and VDCs). An effective communication and coordination mechanism was an integral part of PAF activities. These activities range from awareness, empowerment, partnership forging, and institutional capacity building to development of a system of participatory poverty M&E and advising the government on poverty alleviation.

PAF Communication

The PAF uses a multistakeholder approach. Its policy-making and administrative structures require an effective communication mechanism and inclusion of all relevant stakeholders. The process also created a platform for PRS communication among a cross-section of society.

At the district level, mechanisms involve POs, CBOs, government representatives, and beneficiaries. Information sharing, awareness creation, capacity building, and participation in development processes are supported by national PAF radio programs (weekly) and television programs (biweekly) as well as by some local radio stations. Success stories about common people's increased capacity in breaking the vicious circle of poverty are quite popular with the audience.

Relationships among the Major Actors

Government-Donor Relations

Nepal's development process often is described as donor-dependent, donor-driven, and, sometimes, donor-dominated. Nevertheless, the importance of donor support cannot be overemphasized. For example, the

national budget of FY 2007/08 proposed to finance 26.5 percent of annual expenses from external grants and loans.

For the last several years, the Nepal Development Forum (NDF) has provided the basis for government-donor relations. The NDF 2002 meeting, the first to be held in Nepal, provided a platform for donors to reach a consensus to agree to align their assistance under the PRSP framework. The last NDF was held in May 2004 in Kathmandu and PRSP implementation and harmonization of external assistance were among the main topics of deliberation.

For PRSP implementation, Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), DFID, Norway, and the World Bank pooled resources to support the joint NPC–Ministry of Finance's strategic communication program. A small number of external partners that were providing the budget support make up a Reform and Development Group, which is co-chaired by the government and the World Bank and includes representatives from the NPC, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Denmark, the IMF, Japan, Norway, and DFID.

A number of exercises have harmonized external assistance. Donors are beginning to rely on Nepal country systems. For example, budget support relies on Nepal's fiduciary systems. Disbursements are gradually being aligned with the annual budgetary framework. External partners are increasing their support for conducting joint missions and donor coordination gradually has been increasing. The government has implemented an aid integration process to synchronize external development assistance with the annual budget formulation process. This process was included in the 2004 IAP, but the progress was significantly stalled by the political situation.

The increased level of harmonization is reflected in the formulation of the recently adopted Interim Plan. Major external partners like the World Bank, UNDP, and the European Union announced their own support strategies for three years. The ability to channel all external assistance through one window and to implement the Aid Integration Process by introducing adequate bylaws is pending.

Government–Civil Society Relations

Nepalese civil society lacks conceptual clarity. After democracy was restored in 1990 and political openness increased, the strength of existing organizations grew rapidly and new NGOs, professional organizations, interest groups, and pressure groups proliferated. About 21,000 NGOs are registered in Nepal. The proliferation of NGOs is taken to be an index of democratic evolution. The specific sociology of the financial and institutional environment in which they operate, however, undermines these claims. In particular, the relationship between CSOs and their international patrons has important implications for democracy.[46]

These organizations have contributed significantly to the democratization and development of the country. In the context of PRSP implementation, the role of civil society did not achieve its potential. Immediately after adoption of the 10th Plan, the king took over state powers. Freedom of expression and civil liberties were curtailed. Almost all local level organizations had ceased operation because of armed conflict. In the highly uncertain political climate between 2002 and 2006, the primary focus of civil society was in gaining political freedom. Institutions like the PAF continued to work with local NGOs, self-help groups, and professional groups in the implementation of targeted programs. In many small-scale infrastructure projects, local government agencies work in partnership with user groups and local self-help groups. In many cases, like in clean energy, government support comes in the form of counterpart funds and subsidies.

Awarding the management of public schools to communities has increased the prominence and recognition of local NGOs and CBOs.

Unlike the earlier totalitarian regime, government-civil society relations have improved tangibly. Still, the major focus of civil society does not seem to be shifting from the hardcore political agenda. In the open political climate, many new groups and voices also are coming to the fore. If managed properly, this could be an opportunity to understand and address sectoral and regional development issues.

Media: The New Force

The return of multiparty democracy in 1990 ushered in an era of political freedom and freedom of expression. This openness attracted private sector investment in the media. During the last two decades, the media industry has grown exponentially in terms of number, quality, and outreach. Before this, media was government owned and offered only national-level coverage, daily newspapers (one each in English and Nepali), radio, and television stations. In addition to government-run media, Nepal now has about a dozen national-level daily newspapers published in Kathmandu, five television stations with satellite transmission, and about 230 radio stations spread across the country.[47] Out of 4,626 registered newspapers nationwide, 341 are dailies.[48]

This impressive growth of the media probably has made a greater contribution than any communication or monitoring mechanism put in place by government, donors, or civil society. Both print and electronic media are evolving with specialized and beat-oriented coverage. With increased competition among media, growth of professionalism and credibility are on the rise. In search of new issues by diverse media outlets, social, economic, and development issues from even remote corners of Nepal get space. This growth has made the public sector more transparent and accountable. Government ministries, major departments, and organizations have made provisions for spokespersons.

The emergence of radio stations, even in remote districts, has helped to overcome illiteracy and access barriers to information. More important, because these stations are local, they give prominence to local issues, local people, and local culture. Ownership patterns highlight three types of stations: community radio, cooperative radio, and commercial radio. Community and cooperative stations are more dedicated to development issues, articulation of local community interests, and advocacy of their causes. Information given by these local media outlets regarding the local market and price of agricultural products has greatly helped to increase market accessibility and profitability of rural people. These radio stations are highly important backward linkages as they would articulate the concerns of rural argo-producers so as to communicate the same to the policy makers for policy formulation as the concerns of people reach locally based government representatives.

Many television networks have programs that debate development issues. Most of these programs are modeled on public hearings or talk shows. The media's contribution to the PRSP pillars is significant. The media has increased transparency and accountability in government, created mass awareness, transferred appropriate know-how, and shared impressive success stories.

3.4 Tanzania

Waheeda Shariff Samji

Summary

Although Tanzania is considered one of the most improved countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with an abundance of natural resources, its major challenge lies in sustaining a level of economic growth that can significantly reduce poverty from its current rate of 36 percent. It is currently in Phase 3 of the PRS process, with the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction in Poverty (NSGRP) in its final phase. Much of the information and data related to this study were gathered in 2006–07, although the lessons remain valid.

The communication strategy of the NSGRP (2005–10) was focused on creating information flows between key stakeholders. Progress was made in streamlining information functions among agencies. Although a number of communication interventions took place under the first PRS, these were reduced significantly since the introduction of the NSGRP, in spite of having a communication strategy underpinning it.

Public awareness on poverty-related policies has seen some improvement. Although awareness levels about the NSGRP are relatively high, knowledge about content is much more limited. Citizen participation in the budget process is also limited. Hardly any work has been done on making the budget process more accessible, even to civil society. Civil society participation in policy preparation and monitoring has improved since the late 1990s, with government recognizing the value that civil society can add. Negotiations still are under way on the extent of freedom permitted by civil society. Private sector participation has been limited to input from trade organizations on tax and immigration issues.

The role of donors can be seen as both positive and negative, with some pressure exerted by donors to promote transparency and participation in policy and budgets. Donors have increased their support directly to the government budget at the expense of civil society, however, and have not been forthcoming in creating open information flows.

Communication issues pertaining to policy and budgets also face other obstacles, such as misspent funds, lack of expertise, short-term wins over long-term goals, and the lack of participation by the private sector. Issues tend to become overcomplicated when they could be relatively simple, and more people are involved than need to be.

Background

According to many international finance institutions, Tanzania is the most improved economy in Sub-Saharan Africa. It has a wealth of natural resources, particularly precious minerals, fertile land and relatively low levels of civil unrest. Its major challenge lies in sustaining a level of growth that can significantly reduce poverty. It is uncertain whether the country can indeed maintain this level of growth, or reach its development targets (as defined by the MDGs and the Mkukuta targets), particularly given the following factors:

- A high dependency on agriculture, which is underdeveloped
- A rich natural resource base, with marginal yields for the economy (such as mining)
- A poor infrastructure base, with periodic and long-term energy and water crises
- A high level of corruption and poor domestic accountability
- The continuing threat of HIV/AIDS
- High levels of inequality and unemployment
- A bureaucratic business environment and a weak financial sector
- High dependency on donor funds (more than 40 percent of the development budget)[49]

Despite macroeconomic growth, financial stabilization measures—such as privatization of state-owned companies, rationalization of the civil service, and withdrawal of food subsidies from consumers and farm input subsidies for farmers—had adverse effects on ordinary Tanzanians. In addition to inflation, prices are rising for basic necessities and poor infrastructure and lack of access to credit continue to hinder economic growth. The fastest growing sectors tend to be urban-based, thus further marginalizing the majority of the poor who are dependent on agriculture and live in rural areas.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy (2000–03)

In 2000, Tanzania embarked on a PRS under the enhanced HIPC initiative, initially driven by the World Bank and other multilateral financial institutions. This was a medium term strategy with a focus on reducing income poverty, improving human capabilities, social wellbeing, and containing extreme vulnerability. The PRS was expected to contribute to the longer term aspirations of Vision 2025 and the MDGs. Debt relief and other resources were channeled into education, health, water, agriculture, rural roads, the judiciary and land. Spending in these areas was expected to have a greater impact on poverty.[50] Cross cutting issues included rural development, environment, HIV/AIDS, gender, employment, and governance.

The Ministry of Finance and the Vice President's Office drove the PRS. It was underpinned by sectoral budget allocations to priority sectors, with a number of donors contributing to government budget support on this basis. The PRS was reviewed annually, with progress reports discussed at national policy forums. These were based primarily on studies carried out over the course of the year through the Poverty Monitoring System (PMS), including national surveys and the annual poverty and human development report. In the three years of implementing the PRS, the resources were not sufficient for the priority sectors to achieve their targets, and poverty and inequality remained high.

The National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (2005–10)

The NSGRP (or Mkukuta, as it is commonly known) was the second national framework focusing on poverty reduction. It was informed by the PRS, the PRS Review, the Medium Term Plan for Growth and Poverty Reduction, and the Tanzania Mini-Tiger Plan 2020, all of which suggest growth as a precursor to achieving the targets of Vision 2025.

Ownership of the Mkukuta has changed, with the Poverty Eradication Division (PED) now based in the Ministry of Planning, Economy and Empowerment (MPEE). This has raised the profile of the Mkukuta, giving it more prominence in a central ministry involved in all national planning and budgeting exercises.

The Mkukuta has adopted an outcome-based approach that requires all sectors and resources to achieve the growth necessary to reach development targets. It counts on the contribution of all sectors toward

specific outcomes on growth, improved quality of life, good governance, and equity. It pays increased attention to stimulating domestic savings, private investment, infrastructure development, human resource development, increased investments in quality education, science and technology, and an efficient government.

It also seeks to deepen ownership and inclusion in the policy-making process by recognizing the need to institutionalize participation and encourage public debate on growth, equity, and governance; pay greater attention to issues such as HIV/AIDS, gender, the environment, employment, governance, children, youth, the elderly, and the disabled; and address discriminatory laws, customs, and practices that marginalize vulnerable social groups.

This is a formidable list of targets, but the government also has set criteria for prioritizing the implementation of the NSGRP. Ongoing commitments and those that demonstrate collaboration between sectors have been prioritized, as have potential "quick-win" strategies that include, among other things, communication.

The Mkukuta Communication Strategy

The Mkukuta, unlike the PRS, is accompanied by a comprehensive communication strategy, outlining the key communication principles and initiatives to be undertaken for the strategy's duration. The development of the strategy emphasizes the importance of information sharing. The government requires information for informed policy dialogue and decision making. Civil society and politicians require information to participate in policy formulation and to guide implementation of poverty reduction initiatives. Development agencies need information for policy development and implementation. Citizens require information to assess government performance and responsiveness. The NSGRP Communication Strategy is based on national ownership, political commitment, right to information, accountability, and feedback on poverty outcomes. A broader and deeper understanding and analysis of poverty by a wider group of stakeholders will contribute to the goal of reducing poverty.

Donor Harmonization and the Joint Assistance Strategy (JAS)

Since the late 1990s, Tanzania has been making concerted efforts to harmonize donor aid to increase national ownership over development programs and to increase aid effectiveness. In 2002, the Tanzania Assistance Strategy (TAS) was launched, which was a medium-term aid framework to increase the predictability of aid flows, integrating external resources into the national budget, harmonizing processes, and improving capacity for external resource management. Some improvements have been made in public financial management and more donor support directed toward General Budget Support (GBS).

Most bilateral donors currently are engaged in providing budget support to the government directly through the treasury as part of the JAS initiative. The government has clearly stipulated that GBS is the preferred aid modality and that other modes of bilateral support are being phased out gradually. Tanzania has gained an international reputation as a model for aid harmonization, with donors coordinating themselves to interact with government collectively, rather than as separate agencies. Both the TAS and the JAS ultimately want to increase the effectiveness of aid and make significant headway on poverty reduction outcomes as defined in the outcome-based Mkukuta.
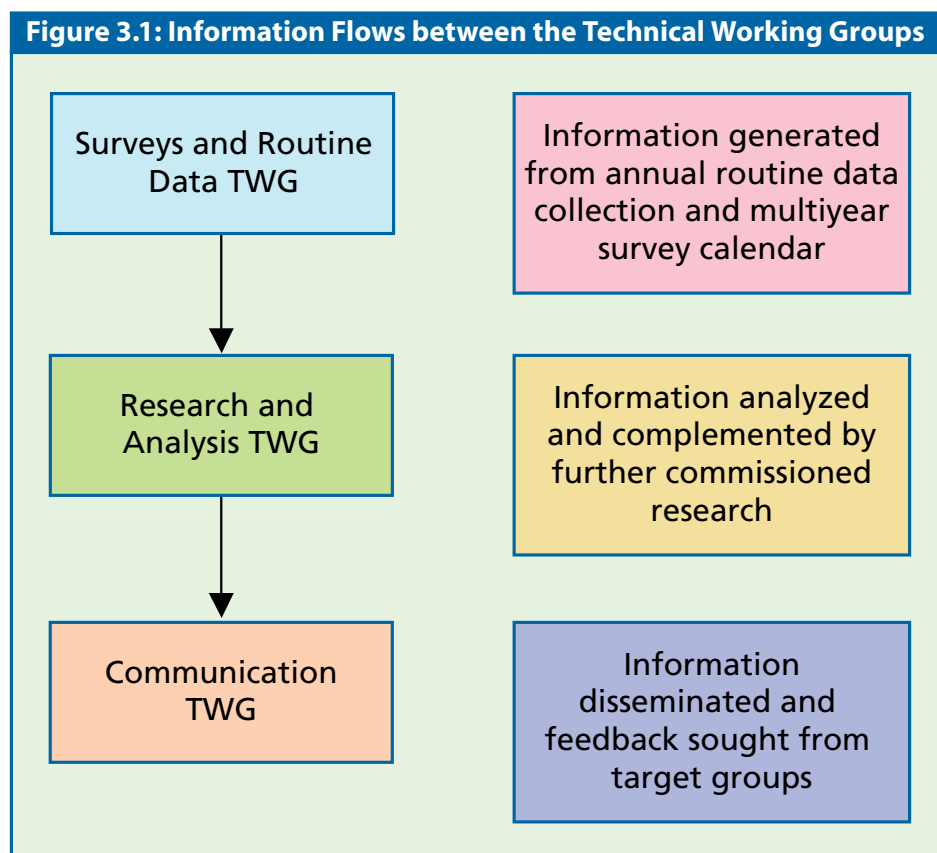
Institutional Aspects of Communication

The PMS is the umbrella under which national communication initiatives for poverty reduction and policy dialog reside. The PMS is based on committees and technical working groups (TWGs). It aims to provide technical skills and broad participation for national ownership. The TWGs were charged with producing

data and analysis for outcome reporting from the five initial priority sectors (health, education, water, roads, and agriculture).[51]

The PMS has been revised with the introduction of the Mkukuta in recognition of the need to support existing government reporting systems. Monitoring information continues to be generated from national survey data and routine data, complemented by research and analysis. Institutional arrangements have been streamlined, with some committees and working groups being combined to reduce inefficiencies and enhance continued participation. The three TWGs have expanded their membership similar to the Public Expenditure Review (PER) process. This enables participation from government, development partners, academic institutions, civil society, and the private sector in each working group.

Every key Ministry also has an appointed communication and information officer who sits on the Communication TWG. Most Ministries have developed communication strategies within the ministries, even though these tend to exist on paper and rarely are implemented. Of the three TWGs, the Communication TWG has been the least functional.

Key development partners engaged in the process include the United Kingdom, Scandinavian, the UNDP, the World Bank and the IMF. Nonstate actors include a number of local, urban-based CSOs, including Research on Poverty Alleviation,[52] the NGO Policy Forum,[53] international NGOs (including Save the Children and WaterAid), and private sector associations (trade unions; Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture). Although participation is much improved from what it was when the PRS process began in 2000, it still is limited in scope and representation.

Figure 3.1: Information Flows between the Technical Working Groups

Surveys and Routine Data TWG	Information generated from annual routine data collection and multiyear survey calendar
Research and Analysis TWG	Information analyzed and complemented by further commissioned research
Communication TWG	Information disseminated and feedback sought from target groups

Source: Mkukuta Monitoring Master Plan, 2006.

Poverty Monitoring Communication Interventions

Several communication interventions related to national poverty reduction processes were undertaken by different actors between 2000 and 2006. Earlier interventions tended to be ad hoc measures, driven primarily by development partners and civil society, and not part of a wider national poverty reduction communication strategy. Interventions that followed were more strategic, with specific target audiences and defined outcomes in mind. The intention behind many of the interventions was to create awareness, interest, and dialog on national development issues. Many of these interventions were aimed primarily at government stakeholders involved in the PRS process, creating documents that broadened poverty knowledge for policy makers at the central and local level (for example, the Household Budget Survey 2000/01; Poverty and Human Development Report 2002, 2003, 2005). It also included a number of awareness-raising events for government officers (such as the Poverty Policy Week and workshops for members of parliament) to increase meaningful participation in various policy processes.

In addition, since 2004, a number of different poverty status reports have been published. Various government policies have been translated into user-friendly language for public use. These have included the National HIV/AIDS policy and the Land Act. District government financial reports have been published in the national press to increase the responsiveness and accountability of local governments to the people.

Many of the significant interventions have used print media or workshops as the main tool, but the survey suggested that radio was by far the most important source of information, followed by word of mouth, newspapers, and television. There has been little concerted efforts or resources to reach more people in a coordinated manner through radio, television, the Internet, or mass media. These are relatively more expensive methods, but they are likely to reach many more people than the odd booklet. Significantly, hardly any communication aimed at mass audiences has been undertaken since the NSGRP was introduced in 2005 (see table 3.1). Almost all activities are routine activities that form part of the multiyear survey calendar and are disseminated to select audiences (usually government and donor agencies) for their use.

Table 3.1: Communication Interventions by Audience Type		
Year	**Mass Audience**	**Specific Audience**
Before 2002	PRS Booklets PRS Posters	
2002–04	PMS Website PRS Youth Campaign PRS Review National Consultations	PMS Website Poverty Policy Week workshops Household Budget Survey Poverty and Human Development Reports
2005–07		PMS Website NSGRP Booklets NSGRP water materials
2007–present		PMS Website PMS e-briefs Household Budget Survey Poverty and Human Development Reports

From Raising Awareness to Domestic Accountability

In the run-up to the development of the Mkukuta in 2004/05, a number of consultations took place with both the public and within the government. Many common issues were raised, but key among these was the issue of governance and corruption. All the consultations suggested that national ownership of the NSGRP was critical and that governance had to be firmly addressed.[54] Although the broader dissemination of information was appreciated, it was also felt that the collection and flow of data at the district and regional levels had to be improved to enable change in planning and budgeting.

Public Policy Awareness

In a survey carried out in late 2003,[55] The Survey attempts to determine whether the public was aware of key poverty reduction policies and services, particularly in light of the many awareness campaigns (for example, on HIV/AIDS, corruption) that had been implemented in previous years. The survey revealed that most people were aware of government policies in key poverty sectors, particularly those that affect them directly (for example, agriculture, local government reform, rural roads). The survey also revealed that although general awareness on policies was high, far fewer people were aware of the contents of the policies. For example, almost 97 percent of respondents had seen posters on HIV/AIDS, but few knew how to lodge an official complaint or had seen a local authority budget. More recently, public perception surveys suggest that only 2 in 5 people have heard of the Mkukuta (only one-third in rural areas), and of those who had heard of it, most thought that it was concerned exclusively with job creation.[56]

Poverty Monitoring and Budgets

The likelihood of budget groups having an impact on influencing budget policies and expenditure allocations depends on a number of factors, including (i) the political environment and the opportunities for engagement with the government, (ii) the legal and institutional framework determining access to budget information, (iii) the role played by international donor agencies, and (iv) the overall level of literacy and interest in budget issues among the public.[57]

The numbers of nonstate actors involved in budget planning and monitoring activities in Tanzania has increased in the last 10 years, mainly for the following reasons:

- The emergence of national development planning exercises such as the PRSP
- The increase of donor funds for budget support
- The increase of donor funds for civil society work on policy and domestic accountability

In Tanzania, it generally is accepted by civil society that networks play an important role in pushing forward policy agendas. Networks such as Tanzania Media Women's Association, Tanzania Gender Networking Program, and the Feminist Activists Coalition have been successful in advocating for policy change in the areas of sexual offences, land reform, and gender equity. That said, networks take time to develop, can be difficult to coordinate, and may result in a diluted point of view being offered (by virtue of agreeing on a lowest common denominator), with more distant members being marginalized. Networks can become too powerful, while not being representative of their constituents.

CSOs have an important role to play in collecting and disseminating credible, budget-relevant information from the government and making it accessible to wider user groups who can advocate specific issues.

This has been done to a limited extent for the Mkukuta, but no similar activity has been undertaken on budget literacy. The budget process is not widely understood among average citizens, and few attempts have been made to make it a user friendly.

In recent years, transparency and raising-awareness activities on policy issues have become common. In fact, communication strategies have become trendy, at least in theory, both among government ministries and CSOs. Most key ministries engaged in the Mkukuta process have developed their own communication strategies or have made their national policies more accessible to the public. Although these have been effective in putting those ministries' policies on the public radar, the commitment is lower to engage in a long-term process that might result in policy shifts.

Table 3.2: The Roles of Civil Society and Donors in Development Communication				
Civil Society		**Donors**		
Ideal	**Reality**	**Ideal**	**Reality**	
Collect information from donors and government	Information is not readily available from either source	Support the government with funds and technical assistance	Increased financial support for the government, hardly any technical support in communication	
Package information for specific user groups	Limited technical and financial ability to package information, particularly for mass audiences	Strategic support of civil society and the private sector	Financial support for non-state actors is shrinking with increased budget support of government	
Promote budget literacy	Limited capacity to understand budget process themselves	Create space for nonstate actors to interact meaningfully with government	Dominant and overpowering in development dialog, marginalizing civil society	
Engage with government for policy and systems changes	Somewhat restrictive environment, and tendency toward confrontation rather than collaboration with government	Make information on development planning and budget cycles available	Very little commitment to share information outside the donor circle	

Relationships among the Major Actors

Government–Civil Society Relationships

A study conducted in Tanzania suggested that the relationship between the government and nonstate actors was expanding and improving, and was characterized by increased communication, interaction and trust.[58] In the same study, some organizations suggested that although there were feelings of goodwill generally, CSOs still felt the need to be watchdogs over public investments, while also providing information and offering creative solutions to enhance development outcomes.

Civil society continues to be suspicious of government, with doubts as to whether information is truly shared. Recent legislation (the NGO Act, the Media Bill) is felt to be unduly restrictive, allowing the government to manipulate the role that civil society is able to play. Although civil society is considered a genuine stakeholder in the PER and Mkukuta processes, its credibility and authority is still questioned, and it is held to a higher standard than government agencies.

Donor–Civil Society Relationships

Donor agencies play key roles in the development of Tanzanian budget policies by contributing to the government through budget support and by providing funding to CSOs engaged in policy and advocacy work. The role of donors in the development agenda is widely viewed by CSOs as being dominant and overpowering, marginalizing the role of CSOs.

CSOs in Tanzania have described their relationships with donors as being cordial but not without issue.[59] Most NGOs receive project funding from donors, but with clear restrictions on funding operating costs, which generally is felt to be unsustainable for policy work. Other organizations admit to "altering" their project objectives and activities to fit donor agendas, as funding pools continue to shrink and donor agendas become more rigidly focused on policy work than on service delivery.

With the increase in donor support directly to the government budget, smaller pools of funds are available that allow CSOs to play their part in examining the use of these funds. In the spirit of harmonization, many donors who contribute to budget support also insist on creating multi-donor-funded programs to respond to CSO needs, hence the creation of "umbrella" funding organizations, such as the Foundation for Civil Society, the Tanzania Media Fund, and so on.

Although such agencies have played an important part in fostering the policy agenda among civil society, they are somewhat restrictive in the size and length of the grants available,[60] and the types of organizations that are able to apply. The types of projects that are funded are the typical workshops with limited scope and content, or HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns (which have reached a saturation point). Little movement has been made away from this short-term, low-impact work toward high-impact budget literacy campaigns and audience-oriented communication and advocacy work.

The private sector's role in budget monitoring and policy advocacy has been marginalized. Hardly any funding is available for the private sector to undertake activities in the arena, even though they are the best placed and most skilled to do so. Private sector representation in most TWGs is limited.

Donors need to ensure that their internal policies are not inimical to effective advocacy work, and add value. The following strategies can do this:[61]

- Put pressure on government to make budget information widely accessible
- Support organizations involved in budget oversight, such as the media and the Prevention of Corruption Bureau
- Make public their aid flows to the government budget
- Strengthen domestic accountability through local organizations and agencies
- Focus on strategic, long-term support to CSOs engaged in policy processes
- Create a role and resources for the private sector to meaningfully engage in the process

Broader Challenges

Enhanced communication is an integral ingredient to linking the various national development processes, particularly the Mkukuta and the budget. Joint efforts are required that will allow the two processes to be understood and accepted as equally important, not just within the government, but also among the

public. In itself, this is a challenge as the general understanding of communication as an activity is limited even among development practitioners. Communication activities seek to bring about long-term behavior change, but most development agencies continue to search for projects with short-term results.

Communication raises expectations of those who are being targeted. This can be difficult to manage. When done right, communication (particularly on a mass scale) is expensive, and currently these programs have no underwriters.

Financial Resources

The Mkukuta Monitoring Master Plan and budget allocated substantial government resources to the various TWGs, including the Communication TWG. Invariably, allocated budgets for all the TWGs, including Communication, have been underspent by as much as 50–70 percent in any given financial year.[62] Annual allocations continue to rise, with the expectation and desire that planned activities will be undertaken. Government allocations to the Communication TWG rose from approximately US$300,000 in FY 2001/02 to US$700,000 in FY 2005/06. These resources usually are not available to nonstate actors, unless specifically outsourced to them.

Access to Information and Government

Although Tanzania does not have a progressive law on public access to information, a number of reforms are currently under way to strengthen public participation and government accountability. Key reforms include local government reform, aimed at decentralizing power and resources, and public sector reforms, aimed at improving government performance. The State House established a Directorate of Information in the President's Office, and information officers have been designated in select ministries.

A study conducted in late 2004 found that access to information in Tanzania remains a challenge, not just within government institutions, but also within the civil society sector and selected privatized utility companies.[63] When information was requested, donors and the private sector were the most amenable to providing satisfactory responses, followed closely by central government, with hospitals, local governments, and NGOs lagging behind. It generally was felt by most participants in the study that, although information may have been available and unrestricted, organization representatives did not feel like they needed to divulge the information, and in some cases, deliberately withheld it.

The study also found that responsiveness to requests for information varied by the status of the requestor, with the ordinary citizen being the least likely to receive any response.

Many organizations involved in policy and budget work tend to be located in and around Dar es Salaam, but more than 90 percent of organizations that claim to engage directly with the government do so at the district level. The issue therefore, is not a restriction on access, but the extent of access to government.

3.5   Latin America and Caribbean

Mariana T. Felicio

Summary

This regional case study documents the shift in communication approach surrounding PRS and NDPs. Over the last decade, Latin America and the Caribbean have seen structural changes in the ways governments have communicated with citizens, in which donors have guided public policies, and in new channels that have been created for citizens to participate in public policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring.

The experience in the region is mixed. However, clear trends towards greater openness, transparency, and citizen participation emerge from the review. Greater ownership and commitment of the region's governments to eradicate poverty have been demonstrated through a shift from macrolevel policy design toward the development of sector specific strategies at the regional and local levels.

Evolution of PRSPs in the Latin America and Caribbean Region

Context

In the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Region, poverty and inequality remain overarching concerns despite efforts during the 1990s to stabilize the economy. Economic growth has been moderate, unable to eradicate pockets of poverty, and leaving the region with the greatest inequalities in the world. Although the region shows great variance, approximately 35 percent of the population in the region is below the poverty line, Chile being the least poor (15 percent) and Haiti the poorest (75 percent). Corruption has hampered economic growth by limiting investment and trust in the region. In 2003, LAC countries averaged 3.7 on a scale from 1 (most corrupt) to 10 (least corrupt).[64] A similar study revealed that respondents believe that corruption worsened between 2003 and 2006 in 13 out of 15 LAC countries.[65]

The growing focus on the need for good governance and greater transparency has created opportunities for citizens to play an increased role in national, regional, and global public policy debate, and in influencing parliamentarians, the media, and opinion leaders.[66] Since the early 1990s, the size, scope, and capacity of CSOs in the LAC region has increased. Their role in the public policy debate and development has been substantial, in part because of increased citizen frustration with public officials, which has been facilitated by the information revolution of the last decade.

PRSs emerged as a means to tackling poverty and inequality through the formulation and implementation of social policies and programs, reducing corruption through information dissemination and the increased involvement of civil society in influencing these policies. In LAC, more so than in other regions, these PRSs were linked to the HIPC Initiative.

Poverty Reduction Strategies in LAC (2000–10)

The discourse and actions surrounding the PRSs have evolved in terms of process and citizen participation. In large part, this change can be attributed to the role that empowerment of civil society and grassroots

actors has played in raising awareness of citizen rights, government duties, and greater development through partnership.

Communication has played an important role in empowering actors by opening channels of communication between state actors and various stakeholders. Some common features have been government-led consultations, institutionalization of communication channels within government, greater coordination within the donor community, social monitoring and tracking of PRS implementation, sectoral roundtables for policy prioritization and formulation, and implementation of social accountability mechanisms to strengthen transparency and governance.

Table 3.4 includes a stocktaking of PRSPs in the region and describes the extent to which civil society played a role in the formulation and implementation of policies and a list of the types of communication channels utilized during the process.

Table 3.3: Evolution of PRSPs in the Latin American and Caribbean Region	
Civil Society	
Role of Civil Society in Poverty Reduction Strategies	**Communication Channels**
BOLIVIA	
A preliminary version of the PRSP was submitted for discussion with civil society. The discussions made clear how important it is to take account of ancestral principles regarding the use of productive resources, principally water and land, and to reconcile these views with modern criteria while enhancing their competitiveness. The need to give the PRSP more of a production-oriented focus, particularly from the standpoint of small producers, was emphasized. Despite the advances to begin the decentralization process and to ratify it during the Dialogue 2000, it was possible to ascertain the importance of carrying out this process gradually and in a coordinated way between the various levels of State administration, involving not only the transfer of resources, but also institution building at the local level. Civil society emphasized the importance of strengthening public institutional soundness, having mechanisms for private participation that ensures efficient management and transparency in the administration of public resources, having an adequate framework accompanying the strategy, and disseminating information and applying existing regulations.	• Dialogue between the government and civil society at the national, regional, and local levels • Workshops sponsored by the government, such as the Government Listens Workshop • Implementation of a decentralized public management model with a municipal base and citizen participation • Monitoring of PRS through the (i) preparation of a periodic report describing the degree of progress and factors associated with that performance; (ii) dissemination of results; and (iii) institutionalizing feedback mechanisms for decision making

Table 3.3 continued from p.66

Civil Society	
Role of Civil Society in Poverty Reduction Strategies	**Communication Channels**
DOMINICA	
The Growth and Social Protection Strategy (GSPS) benefited greatly from three consultative processes: the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) consultative process, the Country Poverty Assessment (CPA) process, and the GSPS's own consultative process.	• Consultations with civil society • Involvement of Permanent Secretaries in strategy preparation through workshops • Regional focus group discussions with local authorities, NGOs, and CBOs
GUYANA	
The PRSP was the product of extensive consultations organized by the government. A public awareness campaign promoting the importance of citizen involvement in the consultation process was implemented via the mass media and through the mobilization efforts of PRS Regional Committees. A total of eight regional consultations were held. At each consultation, government ministers and technical staff provided overviews of progress and shortcomings of the implementation process. Their presence enabled them to promptly answer questions raised by participants. Approximately 440 persons attended the review meetings, which provided an opportunity for government officials to engage with representatives from parliament, political parties, neighborhood democratic councils, CSOs, and donor agencies. The consultations generated information that was utilized in sectoral planning at the national level. The medium-term poverty reduction program has incorporated many of these issues and recommendations.	• The establishment of the Donor Coordination Unit, a high-level committee consisting of representatives of donor agencies, mission heads, and line ministers • The PRS Steering Committee, including 2 representatives from government and 10 members of civil society from the trade union movement, NGOs, Amerindian groups, religious organizations, youth and women coalitions, and the private sector • The establishment of a PRS Secretariat tasked with developing and implementing the PRS with the support of civil society • The creation of Resource Teams by regions allowing for simultaneous consultations across the country

Table 3.3 continued from p.67

Civil Society	
Role of Civil Society in Poverty Reduction Strategies	**Communication Channels**
HONDURAS	
Civil society participation has been institutionalized through legislation establishing a PRS Consultative Council, including representatives of a wide range of civil society. PRSP consultations took place through six regional workshops. The PRSP consultative council submitted a draft of the report to CSOs and donor agencies. About 800 people participated in the consultation process including representatives from civil society, G-17 (a group of 17 donors to Honduras), and the PRSP council. PRSP materials were posted on the website of the Ministry of Finance at www.sefin.gob.hn/erp.html. The PRSP Progress Report incorporated several of the key inputs from the consultation process, including (i) strengthening the employment component; (ii) emphasizing participation and decentralization in PRSP implementation; (iii) increasing transparency in M&E; and (iv) improving the alignment of PRSP interventions with PRSP goals.	• Joint programming of meetings and definition of working methodology by various stakeholders • Meetings on the format of the PRSP and inputs for its development. • Regional consultations on the diagnostic sections in seven cities • Consultations on the completed PRSP and operational framework, which included meetings with civil society, technical groups, and NGOs • Discussions in sectoral working groups monitoring the principles of the Stockholm Declaration, which include Government, civil society and donors • Presentations to plenary sessions of the National Congress and to civil society from various regions • Presentation of the final PRSP document to government authorities and the presidential candidates of the various political parties • The Technical Political Commission, (made up of representatives of government, civil society, and political parties) reviewed the final draft • Public access to the PRSP via the Internet
HAITI	
The participatory approach adopted for drafting the PRS ensured broad-based stakeholder involvement. All activities took place in two phases. The first, which was called awareness building and consultation, took place at the departmental and sectoral levels. The consultation process included more than 2,000 people throughout the country. Officials elected at both the local and national levels, representatives of cross-cutting or targeted thematic areas, and in particular the most vulnerable groups actively participated in this process. The second phase of the process (the participatory phase) was conducted on a thematic basis in the municipalities and departments and at the national level with a view toward building broad consensus. This phase involved more than 3,000 participants from NGOs, business, government, cooperative associations, universities, financial institutions, farmer and producer associations, and artists.	• Participatory consultations and awareness building activities at the department and sectoral levels • Multistakeholder consultations, including government officials (both local and national levels), donors, and NGOs involved in roundtable discussions to develop sectoral action plans • Participatory monitoring through the involvement and coordination of various state entities, including the Economic and Social Programming Directorate, the Economic Research Directorate of the MEF, the Poverty and Social Exclusion Observatory, and the Research and Programming Units of sectoral ministries

Table 3.3 continued from p.68

Civil Society	
Role of Civil Society in Poverty Reduction Strategies	**Communication Channels**
NICARAGUA (2001)	
The government created the National Council for Social and Economic Planning (CONPES) in 1999. The Council has a mandate to advise the president on the formulation and evaluation of social and economic programs and policies, oversee these programs, make recommendations on the composition of the annual public budget, and facilitate consultations of national interest. In addition, CONPES leads most internal dialogues and follows up the commitments of Consultative Group meetings, the poverty strategy, and other such public policy issues as the national budget. The comments of those consulted and their recommendations for the strategy were included in matrixes.	• Discussions and consultations within the government through meetings of the Economic and Social Cabinets, technical staff from ministries, autonomous agencies, representatives from municipal and regional governments, and departmental secretaries • Consultations with civil society, mainly through CONPES • Discussions with bilateral donors and multilateral organizations
NICARAGUA (2005)	
In February 2003, local leaders and CSOs were invited to participate in the formulation of the National Development Plan (NDP). In July 2003, the National System for Coordination, Participatory Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation of the NDP, known as the PASE system, was set up to improve coordination, information, and citizen participation. A series of meetings were held to discuss the guidelines for departmental development plans that were formulated and presented to the executive branch by representatives of civil society, the private sector, and government at the national and local levels. In 2004, the PASE system supported Regional Development Councils to formulate their strategic municipal and department development plans in line with national guidelines of the NDP. Consultation meetings were held from September 2003 through 2004. The local initiatives resulted from citizen participation and bottom-up public-private dialogue. This process has been developed with the formation of development councils already established in accordance with the Law for Citizen Participation.	• The PASE system was set up to improve coordination, information, and citizen participation • The government and the international community established a mechanism to ensure the efficient use of internal and external resources through the establishment of Sector Forums (for example, health, education, production and competitiveness, governance, infrastructure, and social protection)

Sources: A review of PRSPs in Bolivia (2001), Dominica (2006), Guyana (2002), Haiti (2008), Honduras (2001), and Nicaragua (2001 and 2005). For the Guyana, Haiti, and Nicaragua sections, excerpts taken from *World Bank-Civil Society Engagement, Review of Fiscal Years 2005-2006* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2006).

Note: CSO = civil society organization; NGO = nongovernmental organization; M&E = monitoring and evaluation; MEF = Ministry of Economy and Finance; PRS = Poverty Reduction Strategy; PRSP = Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

The experience of formulating and implementing PRSs has been mixed. Sometimes, PRS processes have been rushed in part because completing a PRSP is a key condition for access to debt relief under HIPC. Such an expedited schedule hampered meaningful participation, providing insufficient time for iterative dialogue or for stakeholder contributions. In some cases, a fast process generated a bias in favor of elites and middle-class technocrats—such as donors, governments, and CSOs—that are better positioned to react to the accelerated pace of consultations, whereas those groups that need more time to develop a response (the poor, young and older people, minority groups, and the disabled) are at a disadvantage. In some very positive experiences, however, governments have taken a leadership role in opening spaces for two-way communication between themselves and various stakeholders across the government, within the donor community, and with citizens.

Impacts in Key Policy Areas

Communication has helped to substantially increase venues for greater citizen-government relations during the last few years. This is demonstrated by the use of social accountability interventions and participatory techniques for budget allocation, service delivery, and the design, implementation, and monitoring of PRSPs.

In recent years, increased citizen voice has resulted in these citizens having a greater impact on defining policy priorities and budget allocations of national-level policies, such as PRSs, regional and local-level programs, and sector-specific policies. In Brazil, more than 120 municipalities involve their citizens in participatory budgeting processes and the federal government established a national council for economic and social development with the participation of almost 90 representatives from civil society to provide advice to the president on key policy reforms. In Peru, citizens are participating in the definition of local, regional, and national budgets. With the enactment of the Popular Participation Law in Bolivia, 314 municipalities are required to involve their citizens in defining annual priorities and development plans.[67]

The Case of Haiti: Institutionalizing Participation in Sectoral Policy Formulation

In March 2008, Haiti became the most recent country in the region to approve a PRSP. Through the institutionalization of sectoral roundtables and dialogue, communication has played an integral role in the formulation and implementation of the PRSP. The Haitian government led a systematic and broad process of consultation with civil society through regional roundtables aimed at "how to reach the many who have less." The participatory process entailed two phases. The first phase involved 10 awareness-building, thematic, and departmental workshops in Port-au-Prince that brought together 350 participants, including government representatives, parliament, and CSOs. The second phase included thematic roundtables at the commune, department, and national levels in which performance indicators and specific actions were developed. The selection process of who should participate in the consultations was difficult because of the large size of civil society and its dispersed nature. It became a nine-month process involving 5,200 people.[68]

Four departmental validation forums set the stage for this process. They aimed at validating public policy proposals. More openness and participation on the government side was observed in certain thematic areas, such as human development (health, education, social protection) than in the planning and finance areas. Not surprising given their political nature, the most difficult roundtables were on the justice system and sate reorganization.

The facilitators in the PRS roundtable discussions played a key role in translating aspirations into action plans. The World Bank spent significant resources and time in communicating with facilitators and training them on poverty issues to provide them with the capacity needed to lead the sectoral roundtable discussions. Detailed priority action plans were developed around sectors and subsectors, starting with the objective in the PRSP. This entailed disaggregating macro issues into obstacles, resources, indicators, and specific actions for each issue; translating policies into concrete actions; and empowering stakeholders in the process. For example, table 3.4 is an excerpt from the PRS Action Plan to reform the public financial management system developed by a group of government representatives, CSOs, and donors. The lengthy process produced an 80-page matrix providing all stakeholders with a road map containing concrete and realistic steps toward implementing the PRS.

Table 3.4: Priority Action Plan, Telecommunication Sector							
Objectives	Actions	Fiscal Years	Financial Resources	Input indicator	Output indicator	Performance indicator	Imple-ment-ing agency
Improve transparency in fiscal reporting	Ensure information on the budget is disseminated	2007 onward	Own resources	TELECO intranet	Project expenditure report, financial statement	Transparency in financial management	TELECO

Source: National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction (Haiti, 2008).

In a fragmented and poor country like Haiti, the media contributed significantly to maintaining a dialogue and forging a social contract between the government and civil society. Most communication about the PRS process was transmitted through radio, newspapers, and electronic formats. The government was proactive in holding regular press conferences to inform citizens about their actions, helping to build trust between different stakeholders. Key stakeholders—such as community, CSO, and business leaders—volunteered as citizen monitors who had the dual role of participating in the consultation roundtables and monitoring the PRSP process.

Overall, the PRS process in Haiti has been a positive one. This can be attributed to the fact that it was a government-led (not donor-led) initiative, and genuine actions were taken to ensure participation in policy formulation. The use of matrixes to map out specific action plans, instead of imposing preconceived notions of how to implement policy, was a useful learning experience that resulted in empowering all stakeholders. Lastly, this process was financed out of government resources, another indication that the government was committed to a new approach toward policy making.

Policy and Budget Monitoring

National budgets frequently have been developed with limited or no involvement of citizens and have inadequately targeted the poor because of weak performance monitoring systems and poor quality and coverage of administrative statistics. The region does have many examples of policy M&E.

In Nicaragua, for example, a Parliamentary Commission was set up to monitor the Poverty Reduction Program. A technical assistance loan to implement the Poverty Reduction Credit leveraged significant bilateral funds for social accountability mechanisms, communication strategies, and participatory processes in areas of the PRS.

In Honduras, legislation establishing a Poverty Fund in 2002 created a PRS Consultative Council to advise the government on PRS spending and monitoring. In 2004, council membership expanded to include representatives of 12 constituencies and a comprehensive, online system was created to monitor progress in implementing the PRS. In 2005, the allocation of PRS funds underwent a national consultation exercise. The PRS fostered a wide range of social monitoring initiatives at the local level, including municipal commissioners in 173 municipalities, a social controller's network in 61 municipalities, transparency commissions in 45 municipalities, and citizen participation boards in 24 municipalities.[69]

Part of the evolution of government action has entailed a shift away from greater openness in the PRSP process alone to include a broader use of communication, citizen participation, transparency, and accountability mechanisms in other national-level development programs and policies.

In Argentina, after the economic crisis in 2002, the federal government worked with the World Bank, leading CSOs, and other donor agencies to increase public transparency and accountability in government programs. A workshop brought together 200 representatives of NGOs, labor unions, church groups, research centers, government agencies, and donor agencies to discuss experiences and approaches to participatory governance. These representatives helped launch the Social Monitoring Initiative to train and finance local CSOs to monitor government programs.[70]

In Colombia, the World Bank prepared a technical assistance Monitoring and Evaluation Loan to support the government of Colombia's effort to develop a centrally managed, budget-based M&E system seeking to establish appropriate linkages with budget figures throughout the budget cycle. The project aims to ensure that the National System of Evaluation of Public Sector Performance (SINERGIA) is further institutionalized. The initiative aims to strengthen the M&E institutional base, improve M&E coordination at the national level, raise the level and performance of M&E systems countrywide by strengthening their design and implementation, and enhance the supply of and facilitate the demand for M&E information within government, congress, and civil society, specifically to support budget decision making.[71]

One of the most comprehensive initiatives for better governance and transparency is Peru's Programmatic Social Reform Loan (PSRL). The loan sought to make social spending policy more open and to make more effective use of antipoverty expenditures. The program's key components are summarized in table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Components of Participatory Management and Monitoring in the Peru PSRL		
Initiative	**Objective**	**Actions**
Participatory Development Planning	Identify needs and priorities through a participatory process that serves as the basis for budgetary decision making.	The *Mesas de Concertación* (Discussion Roundtables) produced development plans.
Participatory Budget Formulation	Determine budget allocations as efficiently and transparently as possible by ensuring that budget decisions reflect priorities determined by consensus and removing information barriers between state and society.	Budget allocations are based on development plans.

Table 3.5 continued from p.72

Initiative	Objective	Actions
Open Budget Information	Easy access and use of public information to enhance budget analysis by citizens and public officials alike to enhance public knowledge and accountability.	The Financial Integrated Monitoring System was modified to supply budget information for the national, regional, provincial, and local levels. This "friendly window" was made accessible via the Internet to CSOs and local governments. Independent budget analysis was initiated by a think tank.
Ensure Reliable Information	Improve the quality and credibility of information systems by using autonomous and credible sources with external oversight.	The National Statistics and Information Institute (INEI) was regulated to ensure its independence and information reliability. A presidential decree was approved and enacted to standardize and centralize information produced and used by government ministries.
User Feedback on Services	Solicit opinions and feedback on the efficiency and effectiveness of services and monitor transfers from central to local governments.	Report cards were used to supervise protected programs. A pilot monitoring and accountability program was developed and supervised by the Ombudsman, the government of Peru and CSOs.
Measuring Transparency and Openness	Evaluate progress in transparency and openness in policy processes.	A transparency module was included in the Fourth National Household Survey (ENAHO) to establish a baseline.

Source: Mariana Felicio and Indu John-Abraham, "Peru: Towards a System of Social Accountability," *En Breves*, February 2004.

As demonstrated in the examples above, the trend in public policy debate, formulation, implementation, and monitoring in the LAC region has shifted from a macrolevel approach to a sectoral, regional, and local approach, making the impact of stakeholders much more operational.

Institutionalization of Communication

Communication channels for fighting poverty have been institutionalized through an array of methods, including periodic consultations, coordination groups, and working groups across government, and with and civil society and the donor community. One of the most noteworthy channels in the region started in 2000 with the creation of the National Dialogue in Bolivia. Another is Nicaragua's National System for Coordination, Participatory Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation (the PASE system), which ensured policy coordination within the government; yet another is the Donor Coordination Group (G-16) in Honduras.

The Case of Bolivia: National Dialogue 2000

Dialogue 2000 was organized around a social agenda to define mechanisms for the allocation and control of debt forgiveness resources under the HIPC Initiative. As a result of changes in society's expectations, the social agenda was broadened to also include the economic and political agendas. Under the social agenda, municipal workshops were organized at the local and territorial levels and departmental workshops were organized at the regional and functional levels. These workshops identified priority actions in road infrastructure, production support, education, health, basic sanitation, and land. They also identified problems

impeding poverty reduction, mechanisms and criteria for resource allocation, factors related to regional development, and an institutional policy framework required to fight poverty.[72]

The economic agenda organized sectoral workshops. These workshops considered problems and solutions to productivity, competitiveness, and capacity to generate employment. The following action areas were identified: technological innovation, state reform, promotion of private sector participation, productive use of HIPC II resources, and dialogue as a policy coordination mechanism.

The political agenda held departmental and national workshops. These workshops defined the institutional framework to fight poverty. This process brought together civil society, policy makers, and state representatives from the local, departmental, and national levels to discuss democracy, transparency, and citizenship.

A preliminary version of the PRS was presented to civil society in the Government Listens Workshop, which elicited proposals on how the government might be improved. This workshop was held not only on the PRS but also on the preliminary draft Law on National Dialogue and the Compensation Policy.

The results from these processes were used to identify and prioritize demands and formulate proposals to reduce poverty. The specific recommendations were as follows:

- Emphasize employment and production support
- Use health and education as centerpieces to guarantee the generation of future income
- Promote economic development as a prerequisite to broaden opportunities
- Invest in road maintenance and productive infrastructure
- Enhance access to credit for small producers
- Improve the quality of public services
- Address rural areas, water shortages, and inadequate property ownership rights

Instead of focusing on the strategy, the government paid too much attention to how resources for the implementation of the PRS were going to be distributed. The *Acuerdo Nacional* (National Agreement) was passed in 2001, institutionalizing the PRSP process, granting the transfer of funds to municipalities to implement the PRS. Little follow up occurred after this, however, partly because of the institutional crisis that began in 2002.

The Case of Nicaragua: An Evolution in Government Relations

Nicaragua was one of the first countries to formulate a national PRS, known as the Strengthened Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (SGPRS, 2001), allowing the country to receive financial assistance from the international community and complete the HIPC Initiative in January 2004. In 2002, a broad consultation process began to review and evaluate the consistency of the SGPRS in terms of meeting the needs of the population, obtaining a social and economic agreement, making a new NDP viable, and implementing needed reforms. Frustration persisted, however, because of the slow progress and lack of effectiveness in the fight against poverty. A new NDP was presented to civil society in September 2003 and to the international community at a Consultative Group meeting in October 2003 resulting in the Operative NDP for 2005–09.

Unlike previous top-down consultation processes, the NDP was the result of an intensive and extensive dialogue organized at the municipal, departmental, and national levels. Development councils at the

departmental level were established and cabinets were created for local strategic planning. The process facilitated ownership and coordination of stakeholders. Donors facilitated the process by working toward the harmonization and alignment of their action plans in terms of resource allocations, establishment of sector forums, and sectoral roundtables.[73]

Donor Harmonization

Several countries have pursued donor coordination to achieve greater aid effectiveness. In Nicaragua, for example, the government and the international community established a mechanism to ensure coordination through the creation of Sector Forums in 2003 and a Global Donor Forum in 2004, similar to those in Bolivia but at the national level. These spaces provided an opportunity for dialogue among governmental institutions, international financial institutions, cooperation agencies, and civil society, which increased harmonization and alignment of resources allocated to various sectors and activities. In May 2005, the government signed a Joint Financial Agreement on Budget Support with donor representatives, establishing the principles and mechanisms to finance prioritized goals and policy actions that will reduce poverty and inequality, and improve good governance. In 2007–08, during PRSP formulation in Haiti, the roundtables, workshops, and weekly meetings at which multistakeholders worked on action plans to implement the PRS greatly improved donor coordination of policies, improved budget prioritization and allocations, avoided duplication of efforts, and improved aid effectiveness.

The Case of Honduras: Institutionalizing Coordination among Donors

Concrete progress has been made in harmonizing and coordinating donors, and aligning overseas development assistance with Honduras' national programs and priorities. First, the National Congress approved the Law on Poverty Reduction Management, which aimed to create a framework that sustains PRSP implementation through 2015. The G-16, a group of bilateral and multilateral donors, has acted as a key coordination structure in this process, not only monitoring the fulfillment of investment programs and policy commitments made in the framework of the PRSP, but also acting as the counterpart for the harmonization process.[74] The G-16 and members structure is composed of the following different levels and functions:

- Ambassadors and Representatives Group: represents the political level of the G-16, including country ambassadors and resident representatives of the multilateral organization members
- Follow up Technical Group: represents the technical level of the G-16, including country representatives of the cooperation agencies and organizations represented in the G-16
- Sectoral Technical Level: represents the sectoral working groups internal to the G-16, including three working groups and 10 committees of sectoral donors

The thematic work areas include the PRS, budget, harmonization and alignment, transparency and good governance, education, health, security and justice, water and sanitation, agro-forestry, environment and risk management, gender, decentralization, and small and medium enterprises.

Additional participation by external stakeholders in specific situations is through the Tripartite Sectoral Technical Committees. To achieve goals and provide needed support for the country's development, G-16 representatives participate in government-promoted work groups, which consist of a regional dialogue and consultation process between government, civil society, and the G-16.

This mechanism ensures that policy decisions on policy formulation, budget allocation, and monitoring can be taken in a coordinated manner, improving communication channels within the donor community, between the donor community and the Honduran government, and between the donor community and civil society.

Civil Society and the Media

The role of the media and civil society in influencing development policies are related and mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, CSOs have been influential actors in public policy and in development efforts, especially in improving service delivery and accelerating progress toward achieving the MDGs. Their role in the public policy and development debate has been substantial, and it is likely to continue to increase in the coming years because of the ongoing information revolution. The expansion of democratic governance in the region and greater access to telecommunications have been key factors in this transformation.

Greater access to information has increased expectations, tools for scrutiny, and demand for change. In Argentina, following the economic crisis of 2002, civil society organized and demanded that the minister of economy resign his post, and he did. In Bolivia and Ecuador, civil society has been active in participatory M&E of social programs. In Colombia, an information system allowing citizens to monitor government expenditures is being strengthened. In Haiti, CSOs have been involved in an independent oversight committee to track the government's economic reform program.[75]

The media have helped civil society to influence the PRS process. In the case of Haiti, electronic media, radio, and newspapers were the most common forms of media used to support outreach efforts, particularly in remote areas. In Nicaragua, a communication strategy was developed by the President's Office called *Paginas Azules* (Blue Pages). This print newsletter provided space for civil society to give feedback on government policies. It was very costly, however, and after two years it became financially unsustainable. Moreover, the tool was never owned by the communities, which affected its sustainability.

The media has had its greatest impact through web-based tools that are cost-efficient and accessible. For example, a recent initiative in Honduras is replicating the experience of Poder Ciudadano (Citizen Power), a civil society network in Argentina, which created Infocívica (www.infocivica.org), a news agency that disseminates information generated by CSOs to the mass media. The Civic Journalism Agency in Honduras is a service provided by a CSO seeking to gather information from other CSOs. This information usually is not available in mainstream media, and the agency process it so that it can reach mainstream media and influence the public agenda. Because this agency is web based, journalists can easily access the news for publishing. Similar initiatives exist in Paraguay (www.scnoti+cias.org.py) and the Inter-American Network for Democracy (www.redinter.org).[76]

Finally, the media has helped raise awareness about both government-led and civil society–led initiatives. Many efforts have been made in the region to strengthen information systems and technology, particularly as they relate to M&E of government programs and expenditures. Some countries have designed a government approach driven by finance and planning ministries, while others are more focused on sector M&E systems. For example, in Mexico, the *Comisión Nacional de Evaluación* (National Evaluation Commission) was created to measure poverty. In Colombia, citizens and government officials are tracking government program targets and budgets through the institutionalization of a national-level M&E system.

Conclusion

The role of communication in PRS processes has evolved since 2000. The introduction of new communication channels in the public policy debate has empowered a wide array of stakeholders that previously were absent or marginal to the development agenda.

Initially, consultations were very much a donor-led requirement, often conducted to access HIPC funding quickly. In some cases, this experience led to the recognition that more could be gained by working in partnership with other stakeholders. As shown by popular surveys, however, the region's democratically elected governments have not satisfied the political, economical, and social expectations for democracy in Latin America. Frustration has opened spaces for greater civic participation in public policies and in demanding accountability from governments.

In some of the more progressive countries, other forms of communication were tested involving civil society, multiple sector ministries, and donors. Stakeholders that often mistrusted each other were given the opportunity to collaborate in roundtable discussions and working groups to decide priority areas and develop steps toward implementing macroeconomic policies. Various efforts to strengthen communication within and across government have been institutionalized, reflecting a long-term government commitment to greater transparency, participation, and communication with constituencies.

Some of the most successful experiences have occurred at the local and grassroots levels. Their dissemination through increased media channels have further empowered citizens. In Bolivia, for example, municipal fiscal decentralization has provided increased autonomy of local governments and has enabled strategies and policies to be formed on the basis of these priorities. Moreover, given the political instability in many countries, experience has shown that it is difficult to impose old national strategies on new governments, thus making it more realistic to institutionalize local-level initiatives.

Experience has demonstrated that the trend in public policy debate, formulation, implementation, and monitoring in the region has shifted from a macro level approach to one that is sector based, regional, and local in nature. Experience in the region also shows that although participatory spaces are possible through an instrument that is as comprehensive as PRSP, local and community-level participation and communication techniques are more likely to have a greater impact on public policy. Methodologies such as social monitoring and participatory budgeting and planning have proved to be more successful and sustainable long term, demonstrating greater potential for the future.

4. Lessons for Communication to Support Poverty Reduction

Warren A. Van Wicklin III

This chapter summarizes findings about strategic communication both within and between each of the three main PRSP stakeholder groups—government, donors, and civil society. It focuses on their roles in the PRS process, the communication challenges that they face, and some approaches that have been used to tackle these challenges. Examples are drawn from the country case studies. This experience provides lessons for the design and implementation of strategic communication to support future PRSPs and other national development strategies.

4.1 Overall Findings

The role of communication in PRS processes has evolved since 2000. The introduction of new communication channels for public policy debate has empowered an array of stakeholders that previously were absent or marginal in the development agenda. Initially, consultations were mainly a donor-led requirement, often done to access HIPC funding quickly. This experience led to the recognition that more can be gain by working in partnership with other stakeholders.

Enhanced communication has evolved hand in hand with enhanced citizen participation. Starting with PRPS, both efforts have been increasingly integrated into policy planning, budgeting, and government processes more generally. Citizens are increasingly making the leap from policy awareness to demands for accountability. Methodologies such as participatory budgeting and planning, and citizen monitoring have proven to be more successful and sustainable long term than consultation alone. The media stimulate significant awareness by offering various platforms for sustained discussions on the demand for accountability. Social accountability approaches have played a larger role in Latin America and Ghana than in the other case study countries.

Institutional Coordination Structures

Experience with coordinating stakeholders in a more participatory approach to PRS reveals two key challenges. First, clear lines of communication need to be established between the central PRS unit and other parts of government, particularly line ministries and local government. Second, clear links must be articulated between the PRS and other national development strategies and processes.

PRS Coordinating Organization

One of the more important factors for strengthening communication and participation in PRS processes is giving it a strong institutional home, one that has the power and prestige to lead and coordinate the process. This institutional home often took the form of a committee in a central agency. Donors worked together

to support a stronger institutional base for ongoing dialog about national development strategies, one that would be sustained after the PRSP.

- In **Moldova**, the main coordinating mechanism was the Participation Council, which led and coordinated the participation agenda. The work of the Council was supported by a Secretariat. A number of innovative communication products required continuous support from the Participation Council and donors. The positioning of the council under the auspices of the prime minister gives it additional importance, enabling various groups to obtain direct access to policy makers.
- In **Tanzania**, ownership of the PRSP improved when the Poverty Eradication Division was moved to the Ministry of Planning, Economy and Empowerment. This raised the profile of the PRSP, giving it more prominence in a central ministry involved in all national planning and budgeting exercises.
- In **Ghana**, the NDPC was responsible for coordinating the preparation, implementation and review of the PRS.
- In **Nepal**, the National Planning Commission has responsibility for preparing NDPs and allocating resources for development activities.

Sector Working Groups

Sector working groups are proving useful in facilitating coordination among PRS participants. These groups often are initiated by the PRS unit, but they are composed of representatives of relevant sector line ministries, local government, CSOs, and donors. Sector working groups focus development planning on sectoral program priorities. This focus on technical issues contributes to finding common ground, but it may give greater voice to technical experts than the general public if the latter is not adequately involved or represented.

- In **Ghana**, the PRS planning process began with the formation of technical working teams, known as CSPGs, initially organized around the five thematic areas of GPRS I for review work, and later around the three pillars of GPRS II for policy input. CSPGs include members from government, professional organizations, research institutions, think tanks, NGOs, CBOs, the private sector, labor unions, youth and women coalitions, individuals with proficiency in relevant fields, and development partners. It had some of the best representation of nonstate actors in Ghanaian public policy making.
- In **Tanzania**, the PMS is the umbrella under which national communication initiatives for poverty reduction and policy dialogue reside. The PMS is based on committees and TWGs. The TWGs were charged with producing data and analysis for outcome reporting from the five initial priority sectors (health, education, water, roads, and agriculture).
- In **Haiti**, through the institutionalization of sectoral roundtables and dialogue, communication has played an integral role in the formulation and implementation of the PRSP. The facilitators in the PRS roundtable discussions played a key role in translating aspirations into action plans. Detailed priority action plans were developed around sectors and subsectors.
- In **Bolivia**, the Economic Development Agenda organized sectoral workshops. These workshops considered problems and solutions to productivity, competitiveness, and capacity to generate employment. The following action areas were identified: technological innovation, state reform, promotion of private sector participation, productive use of HIPC II resources, and dialogue as a policy coordination mechanism.
- In **Nicaragua**, the government and the international community established a mechanism to ensure coordination through the creation of Sector Forums in 2003 and a Global Donor Forum in 2004,

similar to those in Bolivia but at the national level. These forums considered problems and solutions to productivity, competitiveness, and capacity to generate employment.

- In **Honduras**, three sectoral working groups and 10 Tripartite Sectoral Technical Committees include sectoral donors. The thematic work areas include the PRS, budget, harmonization and alignment, transparency and good governance, education, health, security and justice, water and sanitation, agro-forestry, environment, risk management, gender, decentralization, and small and medium enterprises.

Coordination of National Development Plans

Multiple, even competing poverty reduction or development strategies hampered communication and participation. Coordination of plans, even merging them into a single plan, was necessary.

- In **Moldova**, EGPRS implementation was complicated by a number of other external and internal development strategies. Promotion of all strategies running parallel to the EGPRS by their focal points and coordinators in the government led to fragmentation of government efforts and resources, led to fragmentation of communication efforts, and made understanding and support by the public more difficult. The government developed one NDP to unite national development priorities. From a communication point of view, one common strategy also facilitated better understanding and greater awareness by citizens of the development priorities.

Communication, Consultation, and Participation

Although a variety of approaches communicated PRS processes, effective communication was the result of a number of common factors.

Legal Framework

Efforts that open up governments to public scrutiny facilitate communication, transparency, and accountability. Legal frameworks provide the enabling environment for these efforts.

- **Ghana's** 1992 Constitution makes clear provisions for freedom of speech and expression, and citizens' right to access information. Freedom of expression has improved since the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law in 2001. In 2006, a Whistle Blowers Act was passed to empower citizens to disclose information relating to fraud and to illicit or unethical conduct or practice. Since 1999, Ghana has had a draft Freedom of Information Act, which was revised in 2003 but not yet enacted.
- In **Nicaragua**, local initiatives resulted from citizen participation and bottom-up public-private dialogue. This process has been developed with the formation of development councils already established in accordance with the Law for Citizen Participation.
- In **Bolivia**, with the enactment of the Popular Participation Law, 314 municipalities are required to involve their citizens in defining annual priorities and development plans. A preliminary version of the PRS was presented to civil society in a Government Listens Workshop, which elicited proposals not only on the PRS, but also on the preliminary draft Law on National Dialogue and the Compensation Policy.

Legal frameworks are not necessarily supportive of transparency and participation, for example—

- **Tanzania** does not have a progressive law on public access to information. Recent legislation (the NGO Act, the Media Bill) is felt to be unduly restrictive, allowing the government to manipulate the role that civil society can play.

Participation Framework and Process

Establishing a formal framework and process for PRS consultations helps ensure more effective participation by nonstate actors.

- In **Ghana**, the communication framework of the G-JAS encourages extensive dialogue beyond government and development partners. In its preparatory phase, CSOs were encouraged to make inputs and share information on what should be the priority areas. Civil society is also monitoring the implementation of G-JAS.
- In **Moldova**, the MET first drafted the NDP, along with a concept for participatory activities necessary for NDP elaboration and presented it to the Participation Council. The concept for the participation process in the NDP was presented and discussed at a national forum in June 2007. The forum was followed by a series of 25 public debates at the national and regional levels involving representatives of the central and local public administration, academia, the private sector, NGOs, mass media, trade unions, development partners, and embassies.
- In **Haiti**, the participatory approach adopted to draft the PRS ensured broad-based stakeholder involvement. All activities took place in two phases. The first, which was called awareness building and consultation, took place at the departmental and sectoral levels. The consultation process included more than 2,000 people throughout the country. The second phase of the process (the participatory phase) was conducted on a thematic basis in the municipalities and departments, and at the national level, with a view toward building broad consensus. This phase involved more than 3,000 participants from NGOs, business, government, cooperative associations, universities, financial institutions, farmer and producer associations, and artists.

Communication Plan or Strategy

All four case study countries developed a communication strategy specifically for the PRSP. A PRSP communication strategy provides the basis for considering how all the relevant groups can be encouraged to participate most effectively in the formulation of the PRS. It specifies the processes, institutional roles, communication channels, and other aspects of communication in support of the PRS. Sometimes it sets consultation standards.

- In Ghana, the GPRS Communication Strategy was first used to support the implementation of the GPRS I, and since 2005, has been revised to play an enhanced role in the implementation of the GPRS II.
- In Moldova, the Participation Council initiated and supported development of the EGPRS Communication Strategy for developing the NDP, which identified the main channels of communication, the interested parties, and the main communication products.
- In Nepal, the NPC established a comprehensive system of communication—the PMAS—to coordinate, consolidate, harmonize, and analyze data from existing and new poverty monitoring mechanisms, and to communicate results and provide feedback for the policy-making process.
- In Tanzania, the second PRS, unlike the first PRS, is accompanied by a comprehensive communication

strategy (the PMS), which is the umbrella under which national communication initiatives for poverty reduction and policy dialog reside. This strategy outlines the key communication principles and initiatives to be undertaken for the duration of the PRS.

PRS Communication Coordinating Organization

Beyond the PRS, one of the more important factors for strengthening communication in PRS processes is assigning a coordination organization to lead and coordinate the process. Often this process took the form of a committee.

- In **Ghana**, a project steering committee located within the NDPC coordinates implementation of the communication strategy. One of its key functions is the delivery of decentralized training workshops on the communication strategy to national-, regional-, and district-level government information officers, a systemwide capacity building mechanism that helps implementers at all levels to be knowledgeably involved as facilitators of the communication process.
- In **Tanzania**, the NPC created the CMED to facilitate communication among stakeholders and to monitor progress in poverty reduction. Every key ministry also appointed a communication and information officer who sits on the Communication TWG.
- In **Nepal**, the NPC was responsible for the PRS, including communication (namely, the PMAS). The strategy outlined the necessary components for such a system of input and output monitoring, which required coordination between ministries, district-level agencies, and the NPC.
- In **Nicaragua**, the PASE system was established to improve coordination, information, and citizen participation. The PASE system supported Regional Development Councils to formulate their strategic municipal and department development plans in line with national guidelines of the NDP.
- In **Honduras**, civil society participation has been institutionalized through legislation establishing a PRS Consultative Council. About 800 people participated in the consultation process, including representatives from civil society, a group of 17 donors, and the PRSP council.
- In **Guyana**, eight PRS Regional Committees organized regional consultations. Approximately 440 people attended the PRS review meetings, which provided an opportunity for government officials to engage with representatives from parliament, political parties, neighborhood democratic councils, CSOs, and donor agencies.

Civil Society Monitoring

Citizens and CSOs often used social accountability tools to open up the PRS process and to make government more accountable to the people. Two of the most popular tools are third-party monitoring of PRS implementation and independent budget analysis of the development budget.

- In **Moldova**, a new instrument, Citizens' Voice, tested citizen participation in the evaluation of policy impacts at the local level. The tool demonstrated its contribution to better interaction between local authorities and members of the community. An independent study on the impact of the EGPRS, "Analysis of impact of policies in the opinion of the citizens," provided many inputs to the preparation of the next medium-term strategy, the NDP. This study aimed to encourage greater awareness and engagement of citizens in evaluating the impact of policies at the national level. Donors have supported CSOs in their efforts to conduct independent monitoring of the implementation of the EGPRS.
- In **Ghana**, the IPA (a Ghanaian think tank) launched Social Accountability Initiative to support

social accountability activities by civil society, parliament, and public institutions. By using citizen-based tools such as community scorecards and citizen report cards, and engaging with the poor in community-level conversations, the initiative highlights and communicates the voices of the poor through a range of innovative communication approaches.

- In **Honduras**, the PRS fostered a wide range of social monitoring initiatives at the local level, including municipal commissioners in 173 municipalities, a social controller's network in 61 municipalities, transparency commissions in 45 municipalities, and citizen participation boards in 24 municipalities.
- In **Bolivia**, the law on popular participation empowers local vigilance committees, made up of CBO representatives, to scrutinize local spending and service delivery.

Budget Analysis

Budget analysis complements civil society participation and monitoring efforts to bring citizen voice into the budget process.

- In **Ghana**, the CBA, created by Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), a Ghanaian NGO, focuses on improving the national budget process and efficient use of public resources by spreading budget activism and promoting a better budget process through the following: (i) consultation and participation of all stakeholders; (ii) accountability of public officials; and (iii) transparency in public financial transactions through the tracking of central government transfers to local government authorities.
- Also in **Ghana**, the Institute for Democratic Governance, a think tank, organizes an annual National Participatory Budget Conference, which creates a development communication platform on the national budget. Civil society groups, including several grassroots associations, converge to engage officials from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to share information and learn about critical inputs needed for enhanced budgeting.

The Role of the Media

The role of the media and civil society in influencing development policies are related and mutually reinforcing. In fact, the media often play a greater role in making information widely available, increasing citizen knowledge and awareness, explaining policy issues, and giving citizens voice.

- In **Ghana**, the media has been a crucial facilitator of the evolving accountability agenda. Apart from communicating the work that other stakeholders do on social accountability, the media, through its own programming, stimulates the public to directly demand accountability from both government and nonstate actors. Through multimedia approaches, the mass media has found its own way to facilitate social accountability, sometimes with breakthrough results.
- In **Nepal**, The impressive growth of the media probably has made a greater contribution than any communication or monitoring mechanism put in place by the government, donors, or civil society. This growth has made the public sector more transparent and accountable. The emergence of radio stations, even in remote districts, has helped to overcome illiteracy and access barriers to information. The media's contribution to the PRSP pillars is significant. The media has increased transparency and accountability in government, created mass awareness, transferred knowledge, and shared impressive success stories.
- In **Haiti**, the media contributed significantly to maintaining dialogue and forging a social contract

between the government and civil society. Most communication about the PRS process was transmitted through radio, newspapers, and electronic formats. The government was proactive in holding regular press conferences to inform citizens about their actions, helping to build trust between different stakeholders.

One of the mediums in which the media has had the greatest impact has been through web-based tools that are cost-efficient and widely accessible.

- In **Argentina**, a news agency disseminates news generated by CSOs to the mass media. The CJA in **Honduras** is a service provided by a CSO seeking to gather from other CSOs information that usually is not available in mainstream media. The agency processes the information so that it reaches mainstream media to influence the public agenda. Similar initiatives exist in **Paraguay**.

Databases

Several country case studies cited the importance of a user-friendly database on development information.

- The **Ghana** Statistical Service, in collaboration with the NDPC, launched the GhanaInfo database in July 2005. GhanaInfo provided a comprehensive national socioeconomic database for compilation and dissemination of indicators required for monitoring the GPRS II at district, regional, and national levels.
- The DevInfo **Moldova** online database was used for PRS monitoring. It contained a user interface and digital maps up to the commune level. The launch was followed by a seminar to train public officials from most central public administration bodies. DevInfo Moldova was presented at seminars in the three pilot districts.
- In **Nepal**, the CBS produces Nepal Info, a CD-ROM, with annually updated information, including MDG and PRSP indicators. To increase stakeholder access to development information, information on PRS activities has been made publicly available through the NPC's website. A Poverty Information Center with an active outreach program began in 2005.

Parallel Public Sector Reform Processes

Quite often the move to more strategic communication for the PRS is accompanied by other public sector reform efforts. These efforts can facilitate the institutional changes that are often necessary to develop more strategic communication, but as in Moldova, reforms also can complicate the task.

- In **Ghana**, the government embarked on a DCEP, identified as a public sector reform with a focus on decentralizing government communication functions. It constituted a crucial part of Ghana's public sector reform process given that no effective reform is possible without a dynamic communication system that enables all stakeholders to have a voice in the way decisions are made and implemented. In 2005, Ghana also launched a Public Sector Reform initiative. The reforms aimed to achieve efficient and cost-effective public services that would improve the living conditions of the poor and make public organizations more responsive to the needs of the private sector.
- In **Tanzania**, a number of reforms currently are under way to strengthen public participation and government accountability. Key reforms include local government reform, aimed at decentralizing power and resources, and public sector reforms, aimed at improving government performance.
- In Moldova, the central public administration reform started during EGPRS implementation. Existing

staff were threatened by changes (staff reductions, creation, and elimination of units) to the government's limited capacity and by high turnover of more skilled staff. This capacity to implement the EGPRS, as well as the capacity to coordinate horizontally and vertically within the government, was relatively weak.

Capacity Building

Capacity building should be part of a long-term and ongoing package of support for the design and implementation of the PRS communication strategy. Capacity needs to be enhanced across all government departments that are responsible for the dissemination of information on government policy. Capacity building of the media likely requires long-term donor support to improve the quality of reporting on macroeconomic policy issues. Civil society more broadly can benefit from donor support to assist with the cost of networking and consultation activities.

- In **Ghana**, the delivery of decentralized training workshops on the communication strategy to national-, regional-, and district-level government information officers was a systemwide capacity building mechanism that helped implementers at all levels to be knowledgeably involved as facilitators of the communication process.
- CSOs in **Moldova** have reached a stage at which they need to develop greater capacity to consolidate their views and represent their groups in policy dialogue and policy preparation processes. To conduct policy-related work, think tanks or resource centers with analytical capacity should have the trust and recognition of other NGOs.

Relationships between the Major Stakeholders

Donor-Government Relations

The PRS approach demands new positioning from both government and donors through its central focus on the principle of national ownership. The potential gains are clearly substantial, but they require overcoming complex communication challenges along the way. Governments are expected to undertake a process of empowerment through which they begin to articulate their own terms and take leadership of the process. Operational principles for donor support have been developed in a small number of countries that are leaders in the PRS approach. They often include a stated preference for certain types of aid instrument, such as budget support, for predictable commitments and disbursements timed with the national budget cycle, or for donors to restrict their activities to a limited number of sectors.

Donor Harmonization

The diversity of donor interests poses communication challenges. Before coordination can take place, donors need to build lines of communication around common interests. Joint donor groups have been created in many countries, either in support of the national PRS, for example, around general budget support, or around detailed sector strategies within the national strategy. These groups allow donors to share information in a systematic way, engage in joint dialogue, and coordinate their support for government and civil society actors engaged in the PRS process.

- In **Ghana**, a positive outcome of the PRS process has been the harmonization of donor support for national development, with assistance to the national budget going through Multi-Donor Budget Support since 2003. Currently, the G-JAS, a multidonor framework, guides this harmonization. The G-JAS is framed around the Ghana Partnership Strategy, adopted at the Consultative Group/Annual Partnership Meeting in 2005.

- In **Moldova**, several donors used the platform of the EGPRS to combine efforts and resources in a joint program to support the development and M&E of national development strategies. Donors also supported the government's development of an NDP for 2008–11 as one single platform that could be used by all donors in their dialogue with the government. Donors are part of the Participation Council. Donor support directed toward EGPRS priorities began to be organized in a structured way. The donors and the government have signed the "Partnership Principles," a document that confirms efforts to align donor assistance with national priorities, to use national systems and structures, and to commit to donor coordination.

- **Nepal** has had a number of exercises to harmonize external assistance. For the last several years, the Nepal Development Forum has been the main basis for government-donor relations. Donors are beginning to rely on Nepal country systems. For example, budget support relies on Nepal's fiduciary systems. Disbursements gradually are being aligned with the annual budgetary framework. External partners are increasing their support for conducting joint missions and donor coordination has been increasing gradually. The government implements an aid integration process to synchronize external development assistance with the annual budget formulation process.

- **Tanzania** has gained an international reputation as a model for aid harmonization, with donors coordinating themselves to interact with government collectively, rather than as separate agencies. In 2002, the Tanzania Assistance Strategy was launched, which served as a medium-term aid framework to integrate external resources into the national budget, harmonize processes, and improve capacity for external resource management. Most bilateral donors currently are engaged in providing budget support to the government directly through the treasury as part of the JAS initiative. The government has clearly stated that GBS is the preferred aid modality and that other modes of bilateral support are being phased out gradually.

- In **Nicaragua**, the government and the international community established a mechanism to ensure coordination through the creation of Sector Forums in 2003 and a Global Donor Forum in 2004. In May 2005, the government signed a Joint Financial Agreement on Budget Support with donor representatives, establishing the principles and mechanisms to finance prioritized goals and policy actions that will reduce poverty and inequality, and improve good governance.

- In **Honduras**, concrete progress has been made in harmonizing and coordinating donors, and aligning overseas development assistance with government programs and priorities. The G-16, a group of bilateral and multilateral donors, has acted as a key coordination structure in this process, not only monitoring the fulfillment of investment programs and policy commitments made in the framework of the PRSP, but also acting as the main counterpart for the harmonization process since it began.

Government–Civil Society Relations

The PRS approach envisages a two-way relationship between government and civil society that not only enables the development of a nationally owned PRSP, but also contributes to the development of an accountability relationship between government and citizens. Relationships between these two spheres are

complicated by a number of communication challenges. In cases in which a dialogue has exited between NGOs and the state, it often has been characterized by mutual distrust rather than constructive cooperation.

- In **Ghana**, government–civil society relations have improved greatly since Ghana returned to democratic rule in 1992, but it was not until 2002 that the process of creating the GPRS offered an unprecedented opportunity to close the gap significantly. The PRS framework emphasized country ownership of the policy-making process and required extensive dialogue with national interest groups. This naturally offered a platform that civil society used to provide inputs into the country's new development framework. Since then, engagement has deepened as the GPRS and its poverty focus provide several areas of agreement between CSOs and government.
- In **Tanzania**, the relationship between the government and civil society is expanding and improving, and was characterized by increased communication, interaction, and trust. Some organizations suggested that while generally both sides had feelings of goodwill, CSOs still felt the need to be "watchdogs" over public investments, and also had a role in providing information and offering creative solutions to enhance development outcomes. Civil society continues to be suspicious of government, with doubts about whether information is truly shared. Although civil society is considered a genuine stakeholder in the PER and PRS processes, its credibility and authority is questioned and is held to a higher standard than government agencies.
- In **Moldova**, the government recognized the value added by EGPRS participation activities and the need to continue them in the NDP. The government showed clear and strong intentions to simplify existing mechanisms for consultation and to make the practice of involving civil society in the development, implementation, and M&E of policies a permanent, integrated, and sustainable one. The Participation Council is an institutionalized mechanism for the government and civil society to meet and communicate. CSOs took part in many events to express their opinions on the proposed strategy.
- In **Nepal**, government–civil society relations have tangibly improved. Still, the major focus of civil society does not seem to be shifting from the hardcore political agenda. CSOs have contributed significantly to the democratization and development of the country, but in the context of PRSP implementation, the role of civil society did not achieve its potential.

Donor–Civil Society Relations

Relations between donors and CSOs engaged in the PRS process can appear to be something of a one-way street, in which donors channel funds and other support to organizations seeking to engage in consultations and monitoring activities. The relationship often is reciprocal, with CSOs providing donors with a non-government view on the PRS and a relatively noncontroversial way to support government accountability to citizens.

Once more, this is a relationship characterized by a number of communication challenges. On the one hand, donors are understandably keen to articulate their support for civil society engagement by forging relationships around funding and other resource gaps. On the other hand, they need to take care to ensure that such relations do not compromise the vision of a nationally representative civil society. In return, CSOs need to fulfill their need for financing and information, but maintain a sufficiently critical distance from international donor agendas.

In some countries, donors have been a useful bridge between NGOs and government, supporting a quality consultation or monitoring process, and providing financial and technical support.

- Most of **Ghana's** donors understand and appreciate the value of civil society engagement and have been influential contributors to the growth of the civil society. Since 2005, civil society has participated in the annual Consultative Group Meetings of Government and Development Partners, a high-level platform through which crucial policy reviews and donor commitments are made. In what used to be a two-party engagement between government and donors, civil society has become a third party with substantial input on behalf of citizens and as a voice to hold the government-donor partnership accountable for outcomes.
- Donors created the G-RAP, a pooled research fund jointly supported by four donors with a focus on strengthening civic engagement in the GPRS by enhancing the capacity and autonomy of NGOs to conduct evidence-based research and advocacy that informs the GPRS propoor policy process and monitors its implementation. Since its inception in 2004, G-RAP has worked with more than 20 of the country's most respected civil society and research organizations.
- Also in **Ghana**, since 2005, donors have partnered through the G-JAS to develop a multidonor Results Matrix for overall monitoring of multidonor budget support. This matrix is built around a multidonor communication process that enables all donors, together with government and civil society, to publicly review GPRS II progress and poverty interventions on an annual basis. Because it is done in the presence of the media, and the results are published, public interest groups are brought in to select the key messages, thus providing a basis for demanding accountability not only from government, but also from donors.

Other countries have seen some tensions between donors and civil society on PRS processes.

- In **Moldova**, during the last several years, donors have reduced many grant programs that in the first years of independence helped establish and develop NGOs and CBOs. Institutional development has little donor support. At the same time, the domestic sources of funding for NGOs are not well developed. Thus, NGOs feel that donors do not pay enough attention to NGO priorities when designing interventions to support civil society, and a dialogue needs to be cultivated and maintained.
- In **Tanzania**, CSOs have described their relationships with donors as being cordial but not without its problems. Most CSOs receive project funding from donors, with clear restrictions on funding operating costs, which generally is felt to be unsustainable for policy work. Other organizations admit to altering their project objectives and activities to fit donor agendas, as funding pools continue to shrink and donor agendas become more focused on policy work than on service delivery. With the increase in donor support directly to the government budget, smaller pools of funds are available that allow CSOs to play their part in examining the use of these funds. The role of donors can be seen as both positive and negative, with some pressure exerted by donors to promote transparency and participation in policy and budgets. Donors also have increased their support directly to the government budget at the expense of civil society and have not been forthcoming in creating open information flows.

4.2 Conclusion

The challenges of communication in national development strategies—both within and between government, civil society, and donors—correspond to some of the key challenges of the PRS initiative, including how to create a genuinely participatory and comprehensive process. As improving communication facilitates greater collaboration, it can provide a catalyst to reconfigure relationships between stakeholder groups, bringing them together in new ways. Donor harmonization and aid coordination have improved government-donor relations, but both parties need to forge a new relationship with civil society for the more ambitious agenda to promote good governance. The rise of new information technologies has helped to make civil society even more central in the national development debate. Improving communication can provide opportunities to reconfigure the relationships among government, donors, and civil society.

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CommGAP

Towards A New Agora

This publication explores how the use of strategic communication has expanded beyond the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) and is now being integrated into national development planning and implementation. Many of these strategies are shifting their focus from a "dissemination and publicity strategy" to a "communication program" that emphasizes information interventions beyond the traditional campaign, workshop or seminars. Enhanced communication has evolved hand in hand with enhanced citizen participation.

Both have been increasingly integrated into policy planning, budgeting, and government processes more generally. Citizens increasingly are making the leap from policy awareness to demands for accountability.

The challenges of communication in national development strategies—both within and between government, civil society, and donors—correspond to some of the key challenges of the PRS initiative: how to create a genuinely participatory and comprehensive process. The rise of new information technologies has helped make civil society even more central in the national development debate. Improving communication can provide opportunities to reconfigure the relationships among government, donors, and civil society.

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