

The Role of Communication in Governance: Detailed Analysis

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Acronyms

BATF	Bangalore Agenda Task Force
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
GSDRC	Governance and Social Development Resource Centre
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHR	Office of the High Representative (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
PETS	Public Expenditure Tracking Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

1 Introduction

Prevailing views on good governance centre upon concepts of capability, accountability and responsiveness. They focus on the need for the full participation of citizens and civil society actors in governance and are predicated on the effective flow of information and dialogue between citizen, governments and other actors. Thus communication, information dissemination and dialogue are identified as key components of governance and a positive correlation between communication and good governance is assumed.

The aim of this paper is to examine the role (both positive and negative) that communication plays in promoting good governance by analysing available evidence and highlighting specific case studies, evaluation reports and academic articles detailing the impact of communication on governance. The purpose is to move beyond anecdote and conjecture, to review the evidence and provide a reliable basis for policies and programmes on communication for good governance.

This paper is structured as follows: Section Two provides an analysis of the relationship between governance and communication. Section Three reviews the kinds of evidence available and warns about the difficulties of establishing a causal link. Based on available evidence, Section Four provides an overview of the role of communication in government capability, accountability and responsiveness using a range of empirical data (where available) but relying heavily upon peer reviewed case studies. Section Five concludes with a summary of findings about the role of communication in good governance and identifies the factors which can encourage or impede a direct causal link.

2 Overview of the Relationship between Governance and Communication

2.1 New Concepts of Governance in Donor Agendas

Most major international donors and developing country governments now recognise that stable, democratic government and well managed public institutions are essential to improve the living conditions of poor people and combat poverty. Evidence from many countries demonstrates a strong association between good governance and improved investment, growth rates, better economic performance, improved adult literacy, a reduction in state corruption, and improved service delivery (ODI, 2006a). There is also a growing recognition that it is not enough just to have a well functioning and capable state, and that for quality public service delivery the state also needs to be accountable and responsive to its citizens. This broader conception of governance builds on concepts of rights-based development (GSDRC website) and development as freedom (Sen, 1999).

Many donors, including the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank, have taken steps to raise this broader conception of governance on the development agenda. DFID's conception of governance now places greater emphasis on the demand side of governance. It recognises

that citizens, civil society and political organisations are entitled to an active voice in how society is governed, how state resources are allocated and spent, and to effectively hold governments to account for policies and their outcomes. To do so, citizens and their representatives need information to make informed choices, and open channels of communication operating in both directions – from government to the citizenry, and from the citizenry to government.

The Overseas Development Institute has identified the arenas of this new conception of governance as:

- civil society where citizens organise to raise issues and exchange information
- political society where societal interests are aggregated into organisations that seek power and generate support for governments and policies
- bureaucracy through which government implements policies and interacts with citizens, business and civil society
- economic society and the judiciary

(Court, 2006)

Similarly, the World Bank has moved away from a statist view of governance to a broader view of governance based on: voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption (World Bank, 2006a).

2.2 Definitions of Terms

2.2.1 Good Governance

The new approaches to good governance bring together the demand and supply sides, so DFID's definition of good governance, for example, is not just about government, it is also about political parties, parliament, the judiciary, the media, and civil society. It is about how institutions relate to each other in order to make change happen (DFID, 2006). Good governance requires:

- state capability – the extent to which leaders and governments are able to get things done
- responsiveness – whether public policies and institutions respond to the needs of citizens and uphold their rights
- accountability – the ability of citizens, civil society and the private sector, to scrutinise public institutions and governments, and hold them to account¹

(ibid)

¹ Similarly, the Asian Development Bank defines the four elements of good governance as accountability, participation, predictability and transparency.

The World Bank defines governance similarly as the processes and institutions through which authority in a country is exercised. These are further defined as:

- the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored, and replaced
- the capacity of government to manage resources and provide services efficiently, and to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations
- respect for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them

(Kaufmann, 2007)

2.2.2 Development Communication

Communications for governance should be seen as part of the wider concept of Development Communication often referred to as communication for development or *devcomm*. The World Bank defines Development Communication as:

‘a process that facilitates the sharing of knowledge in order to achieve positive change in the field of development. It is about the effective dissemination of information and the professional facilitation of dialogue among stakeholders.’

World Congress on Communication for Development website

The Rome Consensus on Communication for Development defines communication for development as:

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

World Congress on Communication for Development, 2006

By distinguishing development communications as clearly distinct from public communication or public relations (involving one-way communication from government to the citizenry) development communication is seen as a democratic approach to communication – promoting two-way dialogue between citizens and the government (MPCC Initiative website).

In terms of activities, development communication includes:

- face to face communication or information activities such as counselling or extension visits
- community level communications such as theatre, role-playing, workshops, posters and other print materials
- TV, radio, film and video
- Internet and email communication programmes

- telecommunications-based projects

(DFID 2005)

Whilst some definitions of development communication (Paterson, n.d.)² see it as organised efforts to use communications processes and the media to bring about change, the World Bank and Rome Consensus definitions include a second concept, that of facilitating a spontaneous dialogue or debate³. The World Bank, for example, maintains that development communication involves:

‘creating mechanisms to broaden public access to information on reforms; strengthening clients’ ability to listen to their constituencies and negotiate with stakeholders; empowering grass roots organisations to achieve a more participatory process; and undertaking communications activities that are grounded in public opinion research.’

Development Communication Division, World Bank, n.d.

Danida develops this idea, defining communication in terms of structures and processes:

‘Development of free, open and plural media that provide the communication structures for a democratic dialogue between participants in a communication process; and development of communication processes that provide the context and way of channelling the dialogue.’

Danida, 2005

In short, communication is the means by which issues are diffused through society, for example through media channels, and the means by which the public participate as change agents through the articulation and delivery of communication messages.

2.3 Development Communication and Governance

The World Bank demonstrates how communication (defined as citizen engagement underpinned by access to high quality information) can act as an important contributor to good governance, depicting this link in a virtuous circle of transparency (see Figure 1). In this model information reveals the actions of policy makers, facilitates evaluation and monitoring, activism rises, and with it the level of public debate. Policy becomes more contestable and citizens are motivated by the possibility of holding the government accountable. Communication with the government becomes a two-way flow, generating further demands and more reliable information. The virtuous circle is completed as government practices become more open and more responsive to citizens (World Bank, 2006b).

² USAID’s policy on communication also seems somewhat diffusive rather than participatory with the focus specifically on active media programmes rather than participatory communication.

³ James Deane maintains that the perspective on communication has changed. The emphasis now is more on the process of communication (that is, the exchange of meaning) and on the significance of this process (that is, the social relationships created by communication and the social institutions and context which result from such relationships). With this shift in focus, one is no longer attempting to create a need for the information disseminated, but rather disseminating information for which there is need (9th UN Roundtable on Communication for Development, 2004).

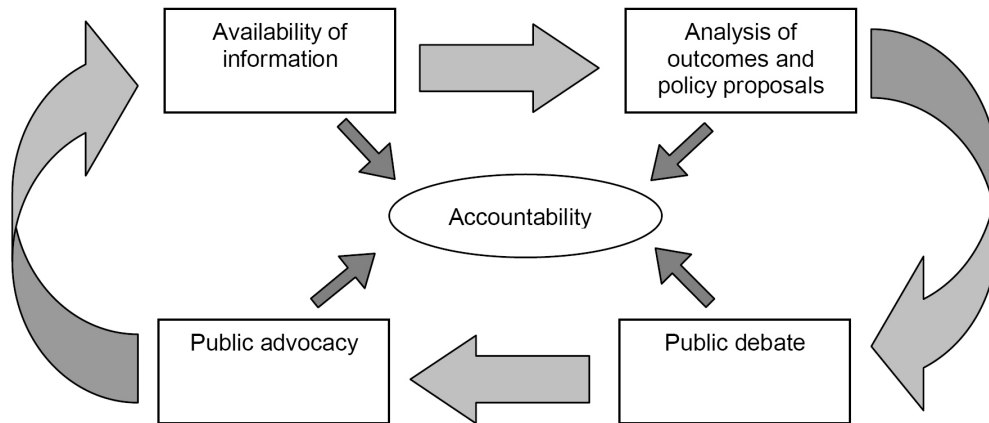


Figure 1: The Virtuous Circle of Transparency: From Disclosure to Responsiveness

(World Bank, 2006b)

Therefore, communication has a number of roles to play in fostering good governance. Communication can improve communities' ability to identify and articulate their needs and to measure government performance. It can improve government responsiveness by improving citizens' understanding of their rights and building their capacity to engage in public dialogue and public affairs. It can improve government performance by providing citizens with direct information on the performance of government and the information required to hold government to account. Communication can also build social capital by encouraging networks and social movements around particular issues. Communication is therefore seen as essential to all components of DFID's capability, accountability and responsiveness (CAR) framework and to the World Bank's definition of good governance.

2.4 The Role of the Media

There is a considerable amount of material related to the specific role that the media, as a component of development communication, can play in good governance. The Media Matters publication for the Global Forum for Media Development provides a recent overview of current literature and debates (Harvey, 2007)⁴. It demonstrates the sound basis in traditional political science for the idea that the media matters for good governance. As Amartya Sen outlines:

'a long tradition of liberal theorists from Milton through Locke to Madison to John Stuart Mill have argued that the existence of unfettered and independent press within each nation is essential in the process of democratisation by contributing towards the rights of freedom of expression, thought and consciousness, strengthening the responsiveness and accountability of governments to all citizens, and providing a pluralist platform and channel of political expression for a multiplicity of groups and interests.'

Sen, 1999

⁴ Other noteworthy sources include: Hyden and Leslie (2003); and Hyden and Ogundimu (2003).

Pippa Norris also highlights the importance of the media in promoting contemporary good governance. She maintains that the media acts as a watchdog over abuses of power, thereby promoting accountability and transparency; it acts as a civic forum for political debate, thereby facilitating informed electoral choices and encouraging participation; and as an agenda-setter for policy makers, thereby strengthening government responsiveness and promoting/encouraging capable governance (Norris, 2007).

Given that there is already a great deal of work available on the specific role of the media in good governance, this paper will concentrate on analysing the role of development communication, as broadly conceived, in good governance. In places we draw on the experiences of the media, for example, by recognising that Pippa Norris' concepts of the media as a watchdog, civic forum, and agenda-setter can also be extended to other forms of communication, but the focus remains on development communications.

2.4.1 Support for Communication and Good Governance

There is no shortage of support for development communications among donors. Indeed, the Panos Institute in a recent review found that there are a plethora of declarations, charters, agreements, pledges and other statements of principle setting out what should be done in the field of development communication (Panos, 2007). For example, DFID presents high level support for development communication with Hilary Benn, the former UK Secretary of State for International Development, stating that:

“good governance depends to a great extent on transparency and the free availability of information – both of which depend in turn on the media and civil society asking difficult questions of their governments...In theory, the better the information and the more diverse and comprehensive the sources, the better the decisions and the easier the scrutiny.”

Benn, 2007

The OECD, referring explicitly to E-Government, maintains that:

‘Information Community Technology can help build trust by enabling citizens’ engagement in the policy process, promoting open and accountable government and helping to prevent corruption.’

OECD, 2003

That said, support for the concept that communication can promote good governance is by no means universally accepted. There are cases where communications can serve to protect poor governance rather than promote good governance, for example, if communication acts as a protector of the state rather than the voice of the people, or if communication is subject to elite capture and is used to voice the views of one segment of society at the expense of other people’s rights and freedom. There is also an issue over the sheer multiplicity of voices now emerging in many countries, presenting governments with the challenge of mediating between conflicting demands. In addition, there are problems of causality where the link between good governance and communication is thought to be reciprocal – that is, in theory effective communication can promote good governance, but equally a freer government can promote more effective participation and communication. The direction of causality is not straightforward.

Shashi Tharoor highlights some of these issues. Referring explicitly to the media, he demonstrates how a free media cannot always be seen as virtuous. The media might be used as a substitute for democratic political expression and an irresponsible media or undue pressure from particular pressure groups could have a disastrous impact on politics. In his view, it is essential to establish an effective enabling environment for the media (Tharoor, 2007). Looking more broadly to communications, the World Bank similarly maintains that certain enabling factors are required to engender transparency, accountability and responsiveness. These include:

- the production and dissemination of good quality information
- disclosure of information as a critical factor in turning information into a tool for civic accountability
- an independent media
- an engaged civil society, in particular, civil society that is not subject to overbearing elite capture

(World Bank, 2006b)

Such issues require more substantive analysis, both to establish a direct causal link and also to identify what enabling factors are needed to create a positive correlation between communication and good governance.

3 Methodology: Establishing an Evidence Base

Before providing an overview of the evidence of a link between communication and good governance, it is useful to:

- identify exactly what is meant by evidence
- establish what evidence policy makers will find persuasive
- highlight the benefits of differing types of evidence

The UK Cabinet office offers a useful guide. It takes a broad view of what constitutes effective evidence, defining it as including:

'expert knowledge, published research; existing research; stakeholder consultations; previous policy evaluations; outcomes from consultations; costing of policy options; and outputs from economic and statistical modelling.'

Strategic Policy Making Team, Cabinet Office, 1999

This view is supported by a recent review of the types of evidence that policy makers find persuasive (Gamos, 2006). This review found that policy makers value a range of sources as a basis for policy, highlighting the value of different types of evidence for different purposes. For example, *"stories can be powerful in getting a message across; academic research is needed to justify decisions;*

and donors need data". Participants in the survey also called for new evaluation methods to strengthen the evidence for policy formulation (ibid).

This paper adopts a similarly broad concept of evidence, recognising the value of different types of evidence for different purposes; the paucity of hard empirical data on the link between communication and good governance; and the problems of establishing an empirically sound correlation.

3.1 Difficulties of Identifying and Utilising Evidence on Governance and Communication

There is clear value for donors in basing policy on objectively verifiable and statistically sound empirical data. However, there are a number of problems associated with the production of good quality, reliable hard evidence relating to the role of communications in governance. In short: communication inputs and governance outputs are difficult to quantify; attribution is problematic; it is difficult to define a specific target audience for initiatives that have an effect over a wide area and equally, as change happens slowly, it is difficult to measure impact over a short period; communication programmes are very often subsumed within other governance activities, making measurement difficult; and there is a reciprocal relationship between communication and good governance whereby communications can positively impact upon governance, but equally, improvements in governance can encourage development communications.

Daniel Kaufmann, amongst others⁵, argues that quantitative analysis can, and should, inform developments in the communication and governance sectors. He maintains that the same rigorous analysis and evidence-based policy-making that is applied to traditional economic and financial decisions should apply to governance issues as well (Kaufmann, 2007). Similarly, the World Bank counters the fallacy that governance cannot be measured with sufficient precision to be useful. The report states that the Worldwide Governance Indicators are transparent and that falling short of total precision does not detract from the usefulness and relevance of the data (World Bank, 2006a)⁶.

Such ideas remain contentious, with commentators questioning both the efficacy of empirical analysis on issues of governance and also the assumptions underlying both governance and communications indicators. For example, Danida argues that many important indicators of communication are not quantifiable – the number of people participating in a social network or in a specific form of communication is relatively unimportant compared to the quality of the relationships and dialogue within the networks. In such instances, qualitative indicators provide more meaningful measures (Danida, 2005).

The difficulties associated with empirical analysis demonstrate that, while it is possible to obtain empirical evidence establishing a direct causal link between communication and good governance, we should not rely solely upon such evidence but must also include case studies; opinion including academic think pieces and analysis; quantitative surveys, data, analysis; synthesis of existing material; and best practice policy papers. Including such evidence allows for a differentiated analysis of the connection between communication and good

⁵ Pippa Norris and Roumeen Islam outlined in detail below.

⁶ Kaufmann's argument and the Governance Matters report remain contentious with many commentators continuing to question the efficacy of empirical analysis in governance and the accuracy of the analysis.

governance by highlighting any factors that may promote or impede this relationship.

3.2 What Evidence Exists

There is a limited pool of empirical evidence that illustrates the impact and significance of communication in good governance, with much of the material focussing on qualitative discussion, the theory of communication and good governance, and case study analysis. Moreover, much of the evidence available comes from communications practitioners seeking to demonstrate impact rather than objectively question outcomes. Susan Abbot, referring explicitly to the media sector, states that:

'the media development field lacks a clear evidence base that illustrates the impact and significance of its activities, training programmes and advocacy work.'

Abbott, 2007

An additional problem is that much material related to the role that communication can play in good governance doesn't refer explicitly to development communication, but rather is subsumed within conventional analysis on governance, taking the form of participatory analysis, civil society engagement, analysis of e-governance and the role of the Internet.

This is changing with the increasing emergence of both qualitative and quantitative analysis to support the link between communication and development. The Communication Initiative [online], for example, provides summaries of 35,000 plus programme experiences, 200 reviews of strategic thinking pieces, over 75 individual change theories, and many evaluation results and planning materials. The website also provides an interactive, online network for views and opinions from a global community of more than 58,000 media development and development communication professionals (Feek, 2007)⁷. In addition, papers such as those by Kaufmann (ibid) and Islam (2003) outlined below provide empirical analysis of the link between communication and good governance.

3.2.1 Empirical Evidence

The most prominent pieces supporting a correlation between communication and good governance are outlined below. Each of these articles focuses on the media sector and its role as a channel of communication, and few refer to other more informal processes of communication through which the citizenry participate in governance. All the articles featured find a positive correlation between communication and good governance, but each is careful to identify the importance of an enabling environment for both good communication and good governance.

⁷ Other websites and resources provide a useful repository of materials on the role of communication in development in general, with some featuring specific sites on the role of communication in governance, citizen empowerment and engagement. Examples include: Communications for Social Change; the World Bank Development Communication site; Danicom, the Danish network of media and communication consultants working within the field of international development; the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre; Development Gateway; and BBC World Service Trust, amongst others.

Daniel Kaufmann's analysis, for example, supports a strong (0.97) correlation between communication and governance utilising the World Bank Voice and Accountability Indicator and regressing it to the Press Freedom Index. This analysis is based on the development of country-level and international comparable indicators of both media freedom and governance. Such data includes analysis of media ownership, the political environment including freedom of expression, and the legal and regulatory environment for media. Kaufmann's analysis supports the idea that the media acts as a monitor, a discussion forum, a tracking device and a tool of advocacy but tempers his argument by confirming that for communication to have a positive impact on governance it needs a good enabling environment.

Pippa Norris conducts a regression analysis of media and good governance and finds that:

'the free press is significantly associated with levels of democracy... Indeed the impact of media liberalization was the most consistent predictor of democracy out of any of the factors under comparison, even stronger than wealth.'

Norris, 2007

In this paper, the Freedom House Index of Press Freedom is used as a standard cross-national indicator of media freedom, whilst governance is measured by the Polity IV's measure of constitutional democracy, Vananen's indicator of participatory democracy and the Przeworski et al classification based on contested democracy. Such indicators provide cross-national scope over time, with data based on annual observations classifying regimes worldwide. The study also draws on Kaufmann et al's measures of good governance developed in Governance Matters. Norris' analysis controls for several factors, including the country's colonial origin, ethnic fractionalisation, population size and GDP per capita. The results confirm a correlation between press freedom and democracy and are robust across the three measures of democracy and all five of the World Bank's indicators of good governance.

Whilst the evidence is persuasive, Norris qualifies her findings by highlighting how her research cannot be used: to identify the direct causal mechanism for a connection between the media and good governance, for example, whether the media is acting as watchdog, civic forum or agenda setter; or to disentangle the reciprocal relationship between media and good governance. Qualitative and/or case study analysis is required.

Roumeen Islam also finds a strong correlation between the flow of information and political freedom/good governance, claiming that:

'information gives power to monitor and make good choices [thus] a significant positive correlation between transparency and improved governance gives us pause to think: just giving better data to people can help countries to govern better.'

Islam, 2003

Islam's analysis specifically questions whether restrictions on the use of information (namely, the presence of a Freedom of Information Act) affect flows of information and the quality of governance. To measure information flows, Islam uses the transparency index which measures the frequency with which

economic data are published and the access to information index which is based on the existence of Freedom of Information Acts. Governance is measured using indicators of governance effectiveness, regulatory burden, corruption, risk, voice and accountability and the rule of law amongst others. Controlling for factors such as newspaper circulation, Islam's analysis supports the World Bank's virtuous circle of transparency with information giving power to citizens to monitor governments and to make more informed decisions, for example at elections, thereby promoting government accountability. As with Norris, Islam is careful to point out that

- her analysis does not control for reciprocity whereby better governments are more likely to promote transparency
- a conducive enabling environment for communication is required (when policy-makers want good data, and people require the ability to hold those in power to account)

Besley and Burgess look at the impact that information flows, from democratic institutions and the mass media, have on government responsiveness. They find that governments are more responsive in areas where local language newspaper circulation is higher, resulting in increased political pressure, competition and a higher voter turnout. Once again, the enabling environment for good governance and communication is important, as the citizens in the study have formalised systems for holding their agents to account. The authors do however reinforce the importance of media and communication in political accountability, concluding that:

'the formal institutions of political competition (such as open elections) are not sufficient to deliver responsive government unless voters have real authority to discipline poorly functioning incumbents. This requires effective institutions for information transmission to voters.'

Besley and Burgess, 2002

For example, Besley and Burgess find a strong, significant and positive correlation between newspaper circulation levels and government responsiveness, with a one percent increase in newspaper circulation resulting in a 2.4 per cent increase in public food distribution and a 5.5 per cent increase in calamity relief expenditures. It appears that states with higher levels of media development are more active in protecting vulnerable citizens. Communication is therefore an important facet of good governance, but equally, some good governance/democratic conditions are required for communication to have a real impact on governance.

3.2.2 Qualitative Evidence

Qualitative analysis of communication and good governance, as outlined above, tends to focus primarily on e-governance, access to information and the role of civil society in governance rather than on the broad based application of development communication as a distinct discipline. This section provides an overview of some of the more prominent analyses on the subject.

E-governance as a means of promoting capability, accountability and responsiveness has received considerable attention⁸. Simon Clift provides a useful overview of both the theory and application of e-governance worldwide. His paper *“takes a comprehensive look at the democratic outcomes that can be sought by government, civil society and others in order to deepen and enhance participatory democracy online”* (Clift, 2004). Based on thirteen case studies and links to best practice on e-governance, Clift’s paper demonstrates how e-governance provides a useful means of communication and interaction between elected bodies and representative bodies, the media, political parties and the citizenry.

Despite evidence of the positive impact of e-governance on governance, Clift, like the commentators above, highlights the importance of an enabling environment for good governance. He states, for example, that:

‘political and social expectations and behaviour change too slowly to expect information and communication technologies to give us a direct, uncomplicated path to greater participatory democracy.’

ibid

He contends that any expectations relating to the impact of e-government on good governance should be set within the existing governance context. For example, e-governance, or setting in place the mechanisms for communication and participation, is not sufficient on its own to encourage participatory democracy, there must also be a demand amongst citizens for democratic governance, and systems in place to hold government to account. Moreover, E-governance, according to Clift, must be introduced with effective outreach campaigns to attract people to participatory features and events – as with standard forms of governance, participation cannot be assumed. E-governance in this context is a useful enabler of participation and good governance⁹.

Most development communication initiatives in the field of governance seek to promote civil society participation and engagement with government agencies. There is a significant pool of literature and case study material on civil society inclusion but much of it doesn’t explicitly acknowledge the role of development communication, instead discussing participation more broadly. Lawrence Frey and Kevin Carragee’s *“Communication Activism: Communication for Social Change”* 2007 specifically addresses the role of development communication in social change. Their work demonstrates how scholars have engaged in social communication activism to assist individuals, groups and organisations to secure social reform, and provides a good overview of both best practice and practitioner views.

Much of the literature on civil society participation focuses on the issue of citizen engagement in the use of public monies. For example, Malunga’s presentation on *Civil Society Efforts in Improving Accountability in Africa* (2006) shows that

⁸ For examples of e-governance initiatives see: Dot-Comments (2003); Rodriguez and Min (2003); Cecchini and Scott (2003); and the South African Department for Communication website.

⁹ Other sources of evidence on e-governance include: OECD (2003); Warkentin et al (2002); Blumler and Coleman (2001); and the Communications Initiative website

civil society in South Africa¹⁰ can play a role in public financial management through a synthesis of civil society initiated social accountability programmes¹¹.

4 Analysis Based on Governance Subtopics

This paper addresses the role of specific communications initiatives on the core components of good governance – capability, accountability, transparency and responsiveness. Capability, accountability and transparency are considered by analysing the effect of communication strategies, including the use of media, civic activism and e-governance, on corruption. Accountability is considered by analysing whether citizen score cards and formal citizen feedback mechanisms lead to improved service delivery. Responsiveness is addressed through analysis of the role of civil society in participatory budgeting and public financial management. This subsector analysis enables us to test the hypothesis that communication matters for governance, and to highlight any factors which promote or impede this causal link thereby forming a solid basis for policy development.

4.1 Improving Government Capability

State capability, defined by DFID as the extent to which leaders and governments are able to get things done (DFID, 2006) or the capacity of government departments to meet the needs and demands of the citizenry is a vital function of good governance. This capacity is deeply intertwined with the concepts of accountability and responsiveness with the importance of accountability and transparency to state capacity supported by empirical analysis. Roumeen Islam, for example, shows that countries with better information flows as measured by indicators for transparency and access to information score higher on a number of good-governance indicators, including government effectiveness, bureaucratic efficiency, control of corruption, voice and accountability and the rule of law. Through empirical analysis comparing a number of countries she demonstrates a clear correlation between information flows and quality of governance:

'better availability of economic data and the ability of people to demand and receive the information they need are highly correlated with governance.'

Islam, 2003

¹⁰ Analysis reviews case studies of Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

¹¹ Other noteworthy sources include: Mozammel and Odugbemi (2005) ; and Robinson (2006).

4.2 E-Procurement to Curb Corruption and Increase Efficiency

There are growing indications that e-government can enhance openness and transparency, particularly in relation to corruption, and that this also can have a strong positive impact upon state capacity (eg Clift, 2004). A n OECD policy brief states:

‘E-Government can help build trust between government and citizen. Building trust between governments and citizens is fundamental to good governance. ICT can help build trust by enabling citizen engagement in the policy process, promoting open and accountable government and helping to prevent corruption.’
OECD, 2003.

Both the OECD brief and Clift highlight the benefits of e-government to public services.

In Andhra Pradesh, India, in 2000, the Government set up an E-Procurement Marketplace for public procurement (World Bank, 2006c). Before this, procurement was carried out through a manual tendering process, which suffered from multiple deficiencies, causing both discriminatory treatment and severe delays in the evaluation process. Many of the problems were caused by the need for human intervention at every stage of the process, which could lead to favouritism and corruption, as well as time consuming administration. In addition there was a prevalence of cartel formation to suppress competition, and physical threats to bidders. The severe shortcomings of the system had a crippling effect on the completion of projects and delivery of services to citizens.

The introduction of an automated procurement system was intended to reduce human intervention and so ensure objectivity, bringing in transparency and standardisation to the tendering process. Removing supplier and buyer interaction during pre-bidding and post-bidding stages ensured anonymity and objectivity in receipt and evaluation, and significantly curbed opportunities for corruption. To bring in transparency, tender documents containing all details were hosted on the web site and can now be downloaded by the interested suppliers free of cost, from the day of publication of a tender. Following from this, a supplier participating in a tender knows the list of other participating suppliers, the documents furnished by his competitors, price quotations and the evaluation result, as soon as a stage is completed by the departments in the system. At any time in the procurement cycle, any person associated with the transaction can check and know the status of the transaction.

Implementation of the new automated system has vastly improved the procurement process. Overall tender cycle time is reduced, and the enhanced transparency and objectivity increase public trust. Supplier participation has increased, the cartels are eliminated and even small and medium suppliers are now able to bid, as the platform facilitates any-where any-time bidding.

Using ICT to formalise the procurement process has significantly improved the government’s accountability to citizens. Standardising the procedures and making all information accessible leaves the process open to public scrutiny. Crucially, it has also improved the government’s capability to manage their procurement, and therefore improved their capacity to deliver public services.

4.3 The Use of Media to Create Public Pressure against Corruption and Promote Reform

Pippa Norris (2007) emphasises the role of the media as a watchdog over abuses of power and in raising public awareness, thereby promoting accountability and transparency, and creating pressure to improve government. The case study below illustrates how an international civilian agency used the media to generate public awareness and bring about legal reform.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina a number of different communication tools were employed in 2003 by the Office of the High Representative (OHR) when widespread corruption was uncovered among top managers of state owned companies, and political leaders failed to act on their promises to crack down on the management culture (World Bank, 2007a). After repeated promises from ministers to introduce legal reforms yielded no results, OHR (the international civilian agency implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement) initiated a three-part communication strategy to name and shame the politicians into taking action. The initiative aimed to create public support and through this strengthen political will to implement reforms, and reinforce current advocacy efforts.

As a first step OHR created the comic strip “Denis” and bought advertising space in BiH’s five major newspapers to publish one strip a day for 30 days, presenting it as a regular newspaper strip. As an employee in a publicly owned company Denis fights against management corruption, and was intended to raise public awareness of the problem. The next step was a series of opinion pieces on corruption by respected community leaders published in the media. This introduced a deeper analysis of the root causes and its solutions. Finally, OHR published a brochure which was distributed in the same five newspapers that had published Denis. The brochure described each promised, but yet un-enacted, law and the benefits it would have for BiH. At the top of each page the picture and name of the minister responsible was displayed within a “Most Wanted” poster. This message was picked up and spread by the rest of the media, in spite of fierce protests from the named ministries.

The campaign created significant public pressure to clean up the corrupt practices of the state-owned companies, and resulted in a new package of reform laws. In July 2004 the framework law on business registration was passed, the following September the BiH law on public procurement, and in June 2005 the framework law on accounting and auditing.

The case studies illustrate how different forms of communication can contribute to increased accountability, reduced corruption, increased citizen influence, and enhanced processes and regulations for better service delivery. E-governance, for example, enables a formalised and standardised system for transactions between the government and its citizens, significantly reducing opportunities for corrupt practises, whilst open sharing of information allows citizens to scrutinize government decisions.

Critical success factors in the implementation of e-government include

- a participative design process
- keeping a focus on the individuals targeted
- providing education to clients/users

- the support of political leadership
- and considerable investment in change management

(World Bank, 2006c and 2006d)

Mass media messages appealing to a number of different audiences are also effective vehicles through which to raise public awareness. Public pressure can in turn force through change in governance. However, a free and independent media, and a government concerned about public opinion, are preconditions for this communication strategy to have any impact.

Based on the above it is apparent that communication, when properly used with the right preconditions, is an effective tool for addressing issues of corruption and increasing government capability, accountability and transparency.

4.4 Improving State Accountability: The Use of Citizen Score Cards as a Formalised Means of Communication

Accountability, defined by DFID as the ability of citizens, civil society and the private sector to scrutinise public institutions and governments and hold them to account (DFID, 2006) is a vital function of good governance. In “Are you Being Served: Political Accountability and the Quality of Government” Adsera et al conclude that:

‘how well any government functions hinges on how good citizens are at making their politicians accountable for their actions... That it is only when citizens effectively discipline policy makers to service them that public goods are delivered in an efficient manner.’

Adsera et al, 2003

Their analysis finds that a well informed electorate and a democratic setting accounts for between one and two thirds of the variance in the levels of government performance and corruption. Goetz and Gaventa also assert that for citizen engagement with service providers to move beyond consultation to real influence, citizens must enjoy rights to a more meaningful form of participation. This would include formal recognition for citizens groups, their right to information about government decision-making and spending patterns, and rights to seek redress for poor quality service delivery (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001). Communication, the flow of information and dialogue between citizens and the government, is therefore central to accountable government.

4.5 The Case of Bangalore

This case study (Balakrishnan and Sehkar, 2004) reviews the application of citizen score cards in Bangalore. The study, covering ten years, is remarkable as an example of the virtuous circle outlined by the World Bank (figure 1), with improved communication resulting in a three-fold impact on governance in Bangalore. The use of score cards, in itself a result of civic activism, resulted in

1. The evolution of an innovative methodology for civil society engagement with service providers
2. Improvements in service delivery
3. Institutionalisation of citizen feedback

It has also helped involve the media more in civil society and governance, as outlined below.

Prior to the introduction of citizen score cards in 1993, service delivery in Bangalore was inadequate and of low quality, whilst the citizens were apathetic with no evidence of public activism or public protest about the level of service provision. For example:

- each delivery agency formulated policies and plans for service delivery on their own priorities and resources, not those of the citizenry
- for a five-year period from the late 1980's the City Council was suspended due to the postponement of elections
- by the early 1990's, the city was completely managed by non-elected officials. Administrative systems therefore provided little room for communication or consultation between the government and the citizenry

Accountability was completely lacking. It can be argued, in line with the assessment of Adsera et al (2006), that the lack of corrective action on the part of service providers could be attributed to the apathy of the recipients¹².

4.5.1 The First Score Card Scheme

The first score card scheme was initiated by a small group of citizens who believed citizen feedback could stimulate action by service providers and start engaging the citizens. Together they designed a questionnaire and, with the help of trained investigators, collected responses from general and slum dwellings throughout Bangalore. Systematic feedback was then gathered and assimilated from a cross-section of citizens using a stratified random sample survey. Responses were sought from persons who had complained to service deliverers, and all respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with service delivery on a seven point scale. The results revealed satisfaction at less than 10 per cent for all public services.

This first scheme was an important step in the provision of information on government performance to the citizenry, and provided an effective means for the citizenry to communicate their dissatisfaction to service deliverers. Upon completion of the survey, the results were published widely in all major newspapers resulting in a growing interest in civic issues:

'The power or the press to leverage the voice of the people, and the potential for even powerless civil society groups to harness their support was established.'

ibid

The first survey was a wake-up call to the citizens, highlighting the widespread discontent with the level of service delivery and demonstrating the power of collective action. Similarly, it made the deliverers of services aware of the

¹² Belakrishnan and Sekhar maintain that "one could largely attribute the lack of corrective action by service providers to this deficit in collective action by city residents".

extent of discontent and demonstrated that the citizens could and would hold service providers to account.

4.5.2 The Second Score Card Scheme

By the second score card scheme in 1999, civil society in Bangalore had changed considerably with the establishment of formalised partnerships between state and government. The government, for example, created a Public Affairs Centre for dealing with citizen groups, whilst the citizens formed residents' associations for dealing with service providers. This more formalised system represented a move from information gathering and dissemination to a process of active partnership/communication between the citizens and service providers.

This communication, and growing civic protest, led to improved service delivery as evidenced by the second survey, which revealed an improved level of public service provision. The level of satisfaction among recipients rose from 6 to 47 percent in the case of electricity provision; 1 to 16 percent in the case of urban development; and 9 to 67 percent in the case of telephone services. Civic protests by citizens groups also led to better roads and plans to create traditional public spaces. As before, the results were reported widely in the newspapers, and at public meetings where service providers and recipients discussed ways to improve performance.

4.5.3 The Third Score Card Scheme

By the third survey in 2003, a Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) was established to respond to the demand from citizens and public interest groups to hold service providers to account. The findings of the third survey revealed even higher user satisfaction, exceeding 60 percent for all service areas, and a renewed drive for reform among service providers, with many agencies launching pilot programmes to improve service delivery. The third survey also indicated:

- a reduction in corruption through the transformation of the Ombudsman office into a proactive body for tackling corruption
- a continuing increase in civic activism and media attention, challenging indifference and abuse on a variety of issues, from potholes to the spending of the City Government

The citizen score cards resulted in:

- the growth of civil society and direct communication between government and the citizenry
- an increase in responsiveness and reform by public service providers
- a developing commitment by the media, citizens and private companies to monitor public service delivery

In an independent assessment, Dr A Ravindra described the evolving role of citizen report cards in Bangalore as:

'a move from limited impact (with dissemination of feedback) to more impact (with dialogue and public pressure for change) to greater impact (with advice on reform).'

ibid

The increasing role of the media in civic activism was crucial to the success of this programme:

'the media played an important role in converting the idea behind citizen report cards into a widespread mechanism for collective feedback... the media now provides space for citizen perspectives on a range of issues... and even organises neighbourhood meetings for service agency officials to dialogue with citizens.'

ibid

This programme demonstrates how communication and civic activism can establish a space and legitimacy for civil society to speak, provide a means of articulating the voice of civil society in a manner that encourages positive reform, and provide a means of leveraging policy change in government. However, there were a number of enabling factors which cannot simply be assumed. For example, the success of the programme was dependent on both the willingness of the community to raise concerns, once prompted to do so, and the preparedness of the local government to discuss issues. In addition, the initiatives were implemented in a manner which provided equal access to all users and avoided elite capture.

4.6 Improving Government Responsiveness

Good governance requires that public policies and institutions respond to the needs of their citizens and take their voices into account. A crucial part of this is a vibrant civil society, empowered to make demands on its government, and allowed to participate and influence decision-making.

One area where citizen participation has been particularly noteworthy is public financial management and budget expenditure. The allocation and disbursement of public money concerns people in a number of ways. Allocation of funds to budget areas is highly political, and whether money actually gets to where it is allocated directly affects public services.

The case studies below look at how communication can facilitate citizen involvement at different stages of this process:

- in deciding where money should be allocated through involvement in the consultations around the development of the national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)
- in checking that the money reaches its intended target through expenditure tracking
- in using this to hold government accountable and demand change through lobbying and the media

4.7 Strategic Communication in Poverty Reduction Strategies

Mozammel and Odugbemi relay the experiences of DFID and the World Bank in using consultative processes in the development of the PRSP, and stress the importance of broad participation:

'poverty reduction strategies are far more likely to be effective and sustainable when they are evolved and implemented with the full participation of the broadest possible segments of the country.'

Mozammel and Odugbemi, 2005

Strategic communication is about actively seeking the contributions of citizens to shape policy.

Mozammel and Odugbemi's report outlines the major issues impeding genuine participation in the development of PRSPs as:

- lack of information from the relevant ministries
- lack of trust and confidence about the process
- a top-down and ad-hoc approach to public involvement in the process
- a tendency to stop participation efforts as soon as the PRSP is finalised

The PRS development process in Tanzania displayed many of the problems listed above (ibid). Communication efforts were mostly ad-hoc and driven by donors; civil society was not part of a wider communication strategy; and there were few mechanisms in place to absorb feedback or enquiries, not only from the public, but also from formal consultations. Following a PRS review initiated in late 2003, efforts to ensure appropriate participation and communication became much more focused. Four technical working groups were set up, two of them containing significant numbers of civil society organisations (CSOs). These play an important role in disseminating information to the wider population, monitoring policy impact and gathering feedback from citizens, and are also increasingly getting involved in higher level public expenditure reviews and PRSP consultations as their capacity grows.

Three major communications initiatives were considered particularly successful.

First, the "*Tanzania without Poverty*" booklets were widely distributed through CSO networks and advertised by workshops and posters. The booklets explained in plain language the basic themes of the PRSP, as well as posing thought-provoking questions, and became very popular reading for the general population.

Secondly, the Poverty Policy Week event was very effective in bringing together key stakeholders (including government, CSOs and donors) and has become a regular annual event. This is a four-day workshop on the PRSP review, and on the first occasion over 600 people were invited, with 300 participating each day. Initially donor-driven, the government has increasingly taken interest in what is now a completely government-owned event.

Thirdly, a survey established baseline indicators to measure the level of public satisfaction with the PRSP.

In spite of many achievements in Tanzania, there are still challenges ahead in strengthening communication flows, and balancing the need for a broad mix of members in the working groups with the need for consistent and continuous dialogue. Communicating too much may create an information overload, and means of communication need to be suitable for different target groups, especially the illiterate.

4.8 Civil Society Budget Monitoring

Ablo and Reinikka (1998) undertook a public expenditure tracking survey in Uganda, and provided citizens and users of public services with the means to monitor their access to services and the allocation of government money.

The tracking survey was prompted by initial findings that primary school enrolment did not improve in Uganda, in spite of significant increases in budget allocations. The survey discovered three major issues:

First, instead of enrolment being stagnant, there had actually been a 60 per cent increase in the period in question, casting serious doubt over the reliability of the officially collected and reported data.

Second, district authorities kept most of the non-wage funds meant for primary schools in 1991-1995, leaving a large proportion of tuition fees to be paid by parents.

Finally, the quality of public services varied considerably between sectors, depending on the institutional context and incentives for providers. For instance, parent-teacher associations successfully exerted a lot of pressure on schools for accountability and better services in return for their contributions, while users of health clinics were not organized in the same way, and would often rather opt for private services if they could afford it.

Following the survey, the Ugandan government took a number of steps to increase the information flow within the system. These included hands-on measures such as schools being required to post regular information on funds they receive on their notice boards, and monthly transfers of public funds for wage and non-wage expenditure being published in the main newspapers and broadcast by radio.

The World Bank mounted a public expenditure tracking survey (PETS) which was repeated in 2001. This found that over the period, the percentage of money reaching individual schools increased from 20 to 80% of the grant. The researchers concluded:

‘A strong relationship exists between proximity to a newspaper outlet and reduction in capture since the newspaper campaign started, which represents a significant change in pattern from the five-year period preceding the campaign....we find that public access to information is a powerful deterrent to capture of funds at the local level.’

Reinikka and Svensson, 2003

However, the survey did find that parents do not have much control over public budget prioritisations when the budget is dominated by central and local

government. The next case study will look at civil society influencing public spending at central government level.

4.9 Budget Analysis and Civil Society Advocacy

Mark Robinson's account of Fundar in Mexico (2006) is about a CSO taking its information one step further; it doesn't merely monitor public expenditure and use the information to put pressure on local institutions, but also initiates more substantial changes in government budget priorities. Fundar formed a network with feminist organisations and reproductive health groups in Mexico to increase budgetary allocation for a national programme to combat maternal mortality. Fundar's early work created pressure to reform legislation on public access to information. The group then used budget analysis tools to show that the government was not allocating sufficient funds to tackle maternal mortality. Through advocacy, including active use of the media and building alliances with more progressive public officials, Fundar managed to achieve a ten fold increase in the 2003 budgetary allocation for a national health care programme to combat the problem¹³.

Fundar used different communication strategies to address several different levels. At government level, it provided sessions for legislators on various aspects of the federal budget and provided members of the congressional budget committee with a steady supply of information and analysis. At the level of civil society, Fundar worked with local organisations to strengthen skills in budget analysis and policy advocacy. On a regional level, Fundar played a leading role in the compilation of a Latin American Transparency Index in association with budget groups in other countries. A quarterly bulletin (*Pesos y Contrapesos*) is produced for a wide range of stakeholders concerned with budget issues, including CSOs and government representatives. Additionally, the organisation has taken on an important role in disclosing budget information, publishing it on its website as well as producing reports and briefings that are then picked up by mainstream media¹⁴. As such, the media has provided a valuable outlet for budget information, and Fundar has actively cultivated them as an ally for advocacy purposes.

The example clearly shows how civil society, when it can access information, can use this to make demands on government and hold it accountable. It also demonstrates that applying pressure through the media can be effective.

The examples illustrate how the provision of better information from government can enable citizens and civil society to engage at different levels of governance in policy analysis, debate and advocacy: at the macro level in the PRSP process in Tanzania; at the sector level on maternal mortality in Mexico; and at the community level on schooling in Uganda. In all cases, there was a supportive government. Robinson observed that:

¹³ Because of difficulties accessing budget data, it has so far been hard to establish whether the money eventually reached its target.

¹⁴ It is worth noting that this has been welcomed by the finance ministry as it complements their interest in improving accountability (ibid, p 28).

‘Civil society budget groups with a strong grounding in a wider political constituency can amplify the voice of poor and socially-excluded people indirectly by ensuring that their demands are reflected in budget policies and that budget advocacy is supported by sustained collective action. Promoting voice in this manner may be as important as exerting influence over budget policies for the purpose of strengthening democracy.’

Robinson, 2006

5 Conclusion

5.1 Establishing an Evidence Base

If we accept the view that governance requires an inclusive public space based on informed dialogue and debate – an environment in which voice and accountability are central – then it is clear, in theory at least, that communication must have a positive impact on good governance. This view is gaining credence amongst international donors, notably DFID and the World Bank, and as outlined above there is a growing evidence base underscoring the importance of communication in good governance.

There are however a number of challenges inherent in establishing an evidence base on the role of development communication in good governance. In particular, much of the literature on development communication and governance focuses on the role of the media as a watchdog, civic forum and agenda-setter, whilst analysis of broader conceptions of communication are subsumed within traditional governance analysis under titles of participation, civil society engagement and inclusion. The case studies above are a good case in point – each study focuses explicitly on civic engagement and whilst there is a clear communication theme in each study, the term “development communication” is rarely used.

Other challenges include the difficulties of establishing a quantifiable basis for the impact of communication on good governance and the tendency among communications practitioners to demonstrate impact rather than question outcomes.

This paper contends that establishing a sound evidence base for policy on development communication and governance requires the use of a combination of source materials. For example, empirical evidence is required to establish objectively variable trends and correlations whilst qualitative evidence is required to identify causal links and enabling factors. As communication for governance establishes itself more firmly on the development agenda, specific evaluation methods for communication, publication of evaluation reports and recognised case studies will form an important evidence base (e.g. DFID, 2005).

5.2 Comments on Causality and Reciprocity

As the empirical evidence presented in Section Three shows, the positive benefit of communication is most evident when the basic preconditions for democracy and/or good governance exist, for example, when there are established mechanisms for holding government to account, as in elections, and when the government is prepared to listen, as in the case of Bangalore. Hence it has been suggested that communication and governance operate hand-in-hand rather than as discrete processes – communication can serve to awaken both the citizenry and the government to their respective commitments but equally, improved governance can provide the freedom and space necessary for improved communication. As Shahi Tharoor states:

'the two concepts – good governance and press freedom – can and must develop together as part of an integrated approach to nation building.'

Tharoor, 2007

In this sense, the connection between communication and good governance cannot simply be assumed – it is not enough to create the means of communication, it is also necessary to ensure that enabling factors are in place so that voices can be heard and citizens be provided with the means to hold government to account.

5.3 Lessons on Effective Communication for Governance

Silvio Waisbord (2003) provides useful guidance on maximising the impact of communication programmes on governance, by advocating a differentiated approach as follows

- conventional mass media to reach large populations
- social marketing to target specific groups
- social mobilisation to bolster participation
- media advocacy to gain support from governments and donors
- popular folk media to generate dialogue and activate information networks

Applying a differentiated approach, dependent on both the existing level of communication in society and the form of governance, is considered vital to success. For example, in repressive environments with limited freedom to speak use of the Internet may prove to be the most effective way of generating a momentum for change, whilst in more open environments formalised partnerships and citizen feedback systems, as in Bangalore, form a good basis for policy. Waisbord also emphasises the need to integrate top down and bottom up approaches, by using communication at multiple levels including civil society, government and donors, and the importance of combining media and interpersonal communication – the media to raise awareness and knowledge, and interpersonal communication to induce behavioural change.

6 Difficulties of Identifying and Using Evidence

There is clear value for donors in basing policy on objectively verifiable and statistically sound empirical data. However, there are a number of problems associated with the production of good quality, reliable hard evidence relating to the role of communications in governance as outlined below:

- communication inputs and governance outputs are difficult to quantify as both, to a large extent, require subjective analysis, particularly in highly political environments¹⁵
- there are real problems with attribution whereby it is not always clear that a communication programme, rather than political, social or economic factors, have been responsible for change. This is particularly evident in communication as communications initiatives rarely operate singly making it difficult to attribute impact to a single message or initiative
- it is difficult to define a specific target audience for initiatives that have an effect over a wide area; moreover as change happens slowly it is difficult to measure impact over a short period. Indicators therefore have to be designed to capture long term impacts, delayed effects, indirect effects, unexpected effects and changes in social norms (Waisbord, 2003)
- communication programmes are very often subsumed within other governance activities, making it difficult to identify them and measure their impact
- there is a reciprocal relationship between communication and good governance whereby communications can positively impact upon governance, but equally, improvements in governance can encourage development communications

Importantly, it is argued by Danida that the many important indicators of communication are not quantifiable. For example, Danida argues that the number of people participating in a social network or in a specific form of communication is relatively unimportant compared to the quality of the relationships and dialogue within the networks. In such instances, qualitative indicators provide more meaningful measures (Danida, 2005). These difficulties demonstrate that while it is possible to obtain quantitative evidence, establishing a direct causal link between communication and good governance should not rely solely upon such evidence but must also include case studies; opinion including academic think pieces and analysis; quantitative surveys, data,

¹⁵ DFID's Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluating Information Communication for Development Programmes identify the problems of monitoring both behavioural change and social change as follows: behavioural change initiatives use targeted messages to change behaviour but behaviour isn't always a logical response to a held belief so indicators used might be fundamentally flawed; whilst social change initiatives try to inspire change by giving people information to use however they like – perhaps to inspire community dialogue or collective action – but the main problem with evaluating social change is that it is often too fluid, long-term and intangible to measure.

analysis; synthesis of existing material; and best practice policy papers. Including such analysis allows for a differentiated analysis of the connection between communication and good governance by highlighting any factors that may promote or impede this relationship.

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