

## Annual Meeting of the Informal Network of DAC Heads of Information and Communication

Jointly organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida –  
The Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency  
Stockholm, 14-15 June 2004

### Summary

The 2004 annual meeting of the *Informal Network of DAC Heads of Information and Communication* was jointly organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida. It took place at SIDA headquarters in Stockholm, June 14-15 2004. There were almost 60 participants, with representation from 18 OECD Members, five non-OECD EU Member States, a number of international organisations such as the UN Millennium Campaign, UNDP, UNDP/PI, the EC and the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe and the NGO NCDO from the Netherlands (see participants list attached). Richard Manning, DAC Chair, participated in the second day of the meeting - the first time that the DAC Chair has participated in this annual meeting.

The agenda items of this year's meeting were:

- Polling public opinion
- Support to the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs
- Communication Strategies in DAC Member countries and in the DAC
- MDGs, the necessity for policy coherence and implications for work of Heads of Information (HOI)
- Information sharing between DAC/Development Centre and HOI

A number of presentations were organised under each agenda item to facilitate the discussion and provide examples of innovative projects and best practices. The presentations covered a variety of perspectives and best practices from academics, the private sector, the Millennium Campaign, OECD, and Heads of Information and Communication from the Network. Links to the presentations can be found at <http://www.sida.se/Sida/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=2326&a=26994>.

- Josie Pagani gave a presentation on how **NZAID** applied recent poll results to its communication strategy. Examples of how this was done include the following : (1) it was clear from the poll that opinion in New Zealand about development and poverty was driven by values –a direct impact on the communication strategy was to make the key message of NZAID a value statement, e.g. '*NZAID towards a safe and just world*'; (2) the survey found that the primary source of information for New Zealanders on development is the TV news and that magazines, annual development reports, etc. are not significant as sources of information, as a result, it was decided to stop the NZAID magazine and the annual report. This then freed up resources for other adaptable and more flexible communications tools which would be used as needed. CIDA is also doing similar value-messaging to NZAID with the value statement '*Canadians' role in the world*'.
- Campaign Director at the **UN Millennium Campaign**, Salil Shetty, provided information about the Campaign. The Campaign aims to support people who are campaigning (campaign the campaigners). It was explicitly set up to push the political

will factor for the achievement of the MDGs and is trying to bring people who are campaigning on different issues together.

- The **DAC Chair**, Richard Manning launched the discussion on communication strategies. He stressed the importance of communication and accountability to taxpayers as well as the current imperative to build up momentum and public debate for the MDGs in donor countries. He also stressed the need to demonstrate aid effectiveness in a way that people can relate to. The DAC Chair's discussion with Heads of Information and Communication focused on three specific questions:
  1. What can the DAC do to help demonstrate aid effectiveness?
  2. How DAC could help improve public understanding of the results of programmatic approaches?
  3. Where is the added value of working together on communications?

The questions stimulated a very useful exchange of ideas, including ideas about communications around the Paris High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness next year. A number of points were made by the participants: involve communication experts in the DAC's work on programme approaches, aid effectiveness and management for better results; coordinate a message from the annual HOI meeting to the DAC High Level Meeting; greater focus in the DAC Peer Review process on information and development education so that it is more of an evaluation of their work than it currently is the case.<sup>1</sup>

***A number of members of the Network and invitees presented new and innovative examples of*** communicating for development.

➤ Sina Odugbemi from DfID presented a new programme within the DfID Communications Department (***Information and Communications for Development***) on mainstreaming communications internally in DfID vis-à-vis developing countries and domestically so that all employees are conscious of communications in their job even to the extent of factoring for communications in the log frame. Sina's conclusion is that development professionals will have to become effective communicators.

➤ The development education unit at DfID in partnership with the publishing house The Rough Guide have developed an innovative project to produce ***A Rough Guide to a Better/Fairer World***. Two million free copies of the Guide will be made available to the British public in late 2004. It will be free and most likely distributed in supermarkets. The idea behind this partnership is to exploit the credibility of The Rough Guide and its style of writing to communicate about development in an easily accessible way.

➤ Kare Stormark from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared Norway's experience of a successful initiative, namely ***International Week***, which takes place in a different Norwegian city on an annual basis. It is organised by the MFA in co-operation with the local authorities and the national UN Association. The first occurrence of this International Week in a city has generally been so successful that the local authorities went on to organise a consecutive International Week the following year without assistance from the MFA. It is effective too: evaluations have shown increased awareness of the issues as well as Norway's contribution to global development.

➤ A lively and provocative presentation was given by ***Prof. Hans Rosling***, Head of International Health division, Dept. of Public Health Sciences, ***Karolinska Institute in Sweden***. Using graphic bubble charts, he demonstrated the historical evolution of

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Manning reported on this meeting to the DAC on June 18, he summarised the meeting as a great success.

poverty, as measured by child mortality, life expectancy disparities and the impact of HIV/AIDS on the world. His information and presentations are available on a website called 'Gapminder', at no cost.

## **Main Conclusions**

**The meeting** marked a large step forward for the Network of DAC HOIs in terms of the level of participation, commitment to working together, placing communications within the DAC Agenda and identifying where communications can better serve DAC work. Attendance was a record-high with the first-time participation of a few of the newly acceded EU member states and the DAC Chair.

1. **The MDGs** are the common platform for communications about development. Effective communication will help secure the political will to attain agreed development goals. The HOI Network aims to a more strategic approach to communications about the MDGs over coming years. A major step forward was achieved at the EU level when DG DEV Director, Mrs. Barreiros, announced that the EC would incorporate the Public Opinion Polling Group's set of questions on the MDGs into their 2-yearly Eurobarometer polling exercise on development co-operation. This means that, starting from a questionnaire developed by 3 countries in 2002 it will be implemented across the 25 EU member states. Australia and New Zealand are expected to implement the POP questions as well.
2. **Working with the DAC** - the Informal Network should work more concretely with the DAC and its subsidiary bodies specifically in relation to the work that is being carried out on aid effectiveness and management for better results. Communication can help demonstrate aid effectiveness to tax-payers and the electorate.
3. **Coordination** - based on a project proposal made by the Development Centre, a collective decision was made to create the role of Coordinator of the Informal Network's activities to sustain the benefits that can be gained through this informal network between annual meetings and to bring the group closer to the work of the DAC, as requested by members. A small steering group of heads of information may be established to mandate the Development Centre's Co-ordinator with a work programme which will be articulated around best practices in communication, international public awareness and case studies.
4. **Next Annual meeting** might take place in Paris, possibly in March/April around the time of the DAC High Level Meeting. Australia and France were keen to have an active role in its organization.

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