CommGAP

Towards A New Agora

Innovative Solutions
for Governance

The Communication for Governance & Accountability Program

(CommGAP)

THE WORLD BANK

COMMUNICATION

Communication links citizens, civil society, the media system and government, forming a framework for national dialogue through which informed public opinion is shaped. Understanding the structural and process aspects of communication is critical to effective governance reform.

CommGAP

- Assists government officials in implementing governance reform programs.
- Supports project and program managers with innovative approaches and techniques.
- Provides evidence-based advice for policymakers.
- Convenes global dialogues bringing together practitioners, researchers and government decisionmakers and policymakers to advance the policy debate.
- Captures, distills and disseminates best practices globally.
- Promotes collaborative research with academic institutions.
- Helps donors design and coordinate comprehensive communication interventions.
- Leverages funds for comprehensive communication programs for developing-country governments.

The Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP) is a global program at the World Bank that seeks to:

- distill and disseminate lessons learned from around the world;
- develop innovative, communication-based analytical and diagnostic approaches, conceptual frameworks and tools to support governance reform;
- influence policy with respect to how governance reform programs are designed and implemented;
- strengthen the discipline of communication as it applies to governance reform; and
- build a community of practice around a more holistic approach to governance reform.

CommGAP is currently funded through a Multi-Donor Trust Fund, with initial funding of £ 5 million from the U.K.'s Department for International Development.

CommGAP was established to address three gaps that undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of governance reform efforts: a structural gap, a process gap, and a capacity gap.

1 **The Structural Gap –** There is insufficient appreciation of the public sphere as an essential part of how to secure good governance and accountability. While some of the constitutive elements of the democratic public sphere are now part of the governance agenda, a framework that ties everything together and also explores and takes advantage of the mutually reinforcing nature of the different elements of a democratic public sphere is entirely missing. CommGAP seeks to heighten understanding of the importance of the public sphere in supporting good governance both by influencing the policy debate and by improving practice in the field. CommGAP's evolving public sphere framework is intended to be a practical guide to governments, multilateral institutions, donors, NGOs, and others working to improve governance in developing countries.

2 **The Process Gap –** In addition to strengthening the public sphere, reform efforts require effective processes to handle stakeholder-related challenges including: addressing vested interests, building coalitions, strengthening political and public will, and handling hostile or indifferent public opinion. However, these challenges tend to be relegated by development practitioners to a black box labeled "political economy issues" deemed too difficult or complex to address. This practice is significantly undermining the success and sustainability of governance reform efforts. CommGAP seeks to illuminate this black box by bringing to bear the insights of the most recent theory and practice of communication and the allied social sciences.

3 **The Capacity Gap –** The end goal of CommGAP's activities is to increase the capacity of researchers and communication practitioners (be they government agencies, NGOs or private firms) in ways that will help them develop better synergies among them and raise the level of their contribution to improving governance in developing countries. One of CommGAP's key goals is to foster the emerging practice of communication for governance as a professional specialization and academic sub-discipline. The results of academic research are needed by practitioners to improve their work, while the experience of practitioners, in turn, fuels further research.

CommGAP's method begins at the level of practice. CommGAP starts by conducting a needs assessment to find out directly from governance reformers what challenges they face in implementing governance reforms.

The next steps are to assess how communication and the allied social sciences can help overcome these challenges and then to convene a multi-disciplinary group of experts from around the world—including leading scholars, researchers and practitioners—to share the theories, approaches and techniques they have applied with success; pitfalls they have encountered; and lessons they have learned.

CommGAP then synthesizes, distills, and codifies this knowledge and commissions further research and case studies to fill any knowledge gaps. CommGAP works with key actors or communities of practice with particular areas of expertise to fill these knowledge gaps.

This collaborative approach is critical to ensuring that the research agenda is demand-driven. It also helps to build consensus around the approaches CommGAP advocates. This research and knowledge will then be packaged and disseminated globally to different audiences in appropriate formats.

CommGAP divides its work into three interrelated and mutually reinforcing program areas, each with specific objectives:

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

CommGAP's current research agenda focuses on five main areas:

1] The Public Sphere, Media Systems and the Quality of Governance
2] Communication for Governance Reform
3] Post-Conflict and Fragile States
4] Generating Genuine Demand with Social Accountability Mechanisms
5] Communication to Support National Development and Anti-Poverty Strategies.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

CommGAP is developing and implementing a Global Learning Program on Communication and Governance to help reform managers in both development organizations and developing countries tackle difficult challenges in governance reform. The flagship course, *People, Politics and Change: Communication Approaches for Governance Reform,* is offered to government officials working on reform programs. CommGAP also offers its Global Learning Program materials to other agencies and organizations around the world to amplify the Program's impact.

SUPPORT TO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

CommGAP is testing and applying innovative approaches and techniques developed through its research and advocacy work program area. The contribution communication makes to the achievement of project objectives is then systematically and rigorously evaluated in order to learn practical lessons, refine approaches, and share them broadly with the development community.

CommGAP's project-related activities are focused on Africa and Asia, and exclusively on the areas of governance and accountability, such as accountability mechanisms, participatory local governance, post-conflict environments and fragile states, and anti-corruption. CommGAP has developed an Evaluation Framework that must be used in all the operations it supports. This Framework was developed by CommGAP in partnership with evaluation experts at the Johns Hopkins University.

CommGAP is well placed to bring together policy leaders from around the world for learning events on the importance and practical value of filling the gaps in governance reform and addressing the critical role of communication. Its global network of policymakers, practitioners and scholars serves to highlight lessons learned, stimulate debate, and seed a global community of practice in these areas. Moreover, at the level of advocacy, because CommGAP is a program within the World Bank, it can leverage the Bank's convening power to influence the policy debate on promoting good governance.

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. It is where they gather 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.

CommGAP's PUBLICATIONS

Governance Reform Under Real World Conditions: Citizens, Stakeholders, and Voice
(2008, Sina Odugbemi and Thomas Jacobson, editors)

The Missing Link - Fostering Positive Citizen-State Relations in Post-Conflict Environments
(2008, by Henriette von Kaltenborn-Stachau)

Towards a New Model: Media and Communication in Post-Conflict and Fragile States
(2008, by Shanthi Kalathil, with John Langlois and Adam Kaplan)

Forthcoming working titles (2009)

Generating Genuine Demand for Accountability: Public Opinion and State Responsiveness
(Sina Odugbemi and Taeku Lee, editors)

Activating Public Opinion to Secure Accountability: A Practitioner's Handbook
(Diana Chung and Karen Sirker, editors)

The Role of the Media in the Governance Agenda,
(Pippa Norris and Sina Odugbemi, editors)

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BLOG - People, Spaces, Deliberation

CommGAP has launched a blog entitled People, Spaces, Deliberation to share ideas about the role of the democratic public sphere in governance among a growing global community of practice with members who are united in their commitment to improve governance and accountability in developing countries. The blog is addressing issues such as accountability, governance, media development, anti-corruption, post-conflict environments, and public opinion. Join the conversation at http://publicsphere.worldbank.org.

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