

# Final Report

## UNDG “Communication for Change” Retreat

Pretoria, South Africa

3-5 May

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### I. Background: Retreat Objectives and Expected Outcomes

#### *Objectives:*

- To develop a shared understanding of the communication challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the “One UN” pilots at country level (best practice sharing component);
- To assist pilot countries in identifying key strategic audiences, messages and channels for effective external and internal communication on the “One UN” pilots<sup>1</sup> (strategic planning component);
- To further strengthen participants’ knowledge of how to use communication as an effective tool for implementing UN reform (learning and hands-on training components).

#### *Outcomes:*

- Draft elements for internal and external “One UN” communication plans identified for all eight pilot countries;
- Inventory of support needs established for “One UN” pilot countries to effectively implement their internal and external communication strategies;
- Informal support network of “One UN” Communication Officers and Focal Points established.

#### *Participation:*

- **2 participants from each “One UN” pilot country (16 participants)**, nominated by Resident Coordinator in consultation with the UNCT.
- **6 agency resource persons**, nominated by the expanded UNDG Joint Office Working Group and representing both Specialized Agencies (ILO and FAO) and UN Funds and Programmes (UNICEF, UNDP and WFP) as well as the UN Department for Public Information (DPI).
- **2 organizers:** DGO “One UN” Communication Team

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<sup>1</sup> (taking into consideration that some countries already have developed communication strategies)

## II. Retreat Content

### *Day 1*

- Opening Session: The retreat opened with an icebreaker and introductions by participants followed by a brief discussion of the workshop's objectives (see [above](#)) and participants' expectations.
- Session I ("Using Communication strategically"): Presentation by the facilitator from the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) on how to use communication as a strategic tool for change management. Please click [here](#) for more information on content.
- Session II ("Sharing Experiences – Understanding opportunities and threats across pilot countries"). During plenary and working group sessions, participants discussed the challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed to ensure that communication strategies become a meaningful element of change management. Please see [below](#) (section III) for summary of discussion.
- Session II, cont'd ("Sharing Experiences – Communicating as One"). Colleagues from the Viet Nam Communications team presented their model of a joint communication unit, which was followed by a discussion of experiences from other countries. Please click [here](#) for more information on the Viet Nam model.

### *Day 2*

- Presentation: Presentations by DGO and BCG on views of internal and external audiences on "One UN" pilots. Please click [here](#) for summary of presentations.
- Working group sessions: Participants split into working groups to develop elements for communication strategies, including for both external audiences (media, public, governments and donors) and internal audiences. Please see [below](#) (section IV) for summary of discussion.
- Wrap-up Session: Brainstorming session on pilot country support needs and key priorities for action. Please see [below](#) (section V) for summary of discussion.
- Two-hour informal networking session of "One UN" focal points.

### *Day 3*

- Half-day hands-on training session on working with the media, facilitated by Nicholas Kotch, independent media consultant. Please see [annex](#) 4 for more details.

### III. DAY I – Setting the Stage: Identifying communication challenges, opportunities and best practices

During plenary and working group sessions on the first day, participants shared best practices and discussed the challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed to ensure that communication strategies become a meaningful element of change management. Participants identified the following issues:

- Lack of clear global messages on agency commitment to the pilot exercise and the roles expected from agency representatives at regional and country level; need for open and unambiguous top-down support for “One UN” reform agenda; danger that implementation will be slowed down by uncertainties about how different agencies view reform;
- Inconsistent messaging on “One UN” – country offices receive conflicting messages on priorities from different players; need for consistency and coordination of messages to pilot countries (Agency HQs, UNDG, regional support structures, etc.);
- Little common understanding among agencies of the benefits gained from the “One UN” exercise (“what is in it for us”); need to clarify and create “incentive structures” for closer agency collaboration;
- Need for a better understanding of the “communication needs” of agencies at country level; agency visibility (and ability to brand activities) need to be retained as important elements of fundraising strategies, but multitude of UN voices and messages needs to be better coordinated – how do we achieve “many voices with one consistent message”;
- Carefully address corporate identity issues (e.g. logos, etc); experiences from other countries may be helpful: for example, retain agency branding but use UN logo when agencies act jointly (UN logo used as an entry point into other agencies’ work);
- How do we achieve consensus without compromising “added value” of individual agencies; joint communication products cannot end in lowest common denominator; UN system cannot lose “edge as watchdog” on specific issues (e.g. human rights);
- Communication around pilots seems “process-heavy” – how do we add substance to our messages (substance lies in “benefits” of reform, but do we already know what these are); when should messages focus on *results* of pilots and when on *process of change*;
- Lack of clarity on different roles of communication outreach at global, regional and country level (“who communicates on what”);
- Need for a better understanding of functioning of inter-agency communication mechanisms; how do we make UN Communication Groups (UNCGs) at country level

more results-focused and effective; need for capturing lessons from countries where groups have worked well (see Tanzania) while taking into account country specificities;

- Greater clarity needed on amount of “leeway” available to pilot countries; when are pilots driving their own messages and when are they following globally agreed messages;
- Pilots are an opportunity for the UN system to “think outside the box” and experiment with new ways of organizing “communication” (see Viet Nam example);
- How do we ensure that communication efforts around pilots are seen as “owned” by the entire UN system; some agencies perceive communication efforts as biased towards UNDP activities; details matter (“little things can affect perception in big ways”), e.g. change in email domains of RC Offices from UNDP to UN addresses;
- More guidance needed on how to balance “inclusiveness” with effective decision-making and strategic focus (“Consensus slows us down, but without it we get flak”); frustrations at perceived (and sometimes real) exclusion can magnify otherwise small issues;
- More guidance needed on “end result” of pilot exercise (“what are we trying to achieve” and “what are criteria for pilots working well”); urgent need for greater clarity on performance criteria, benchmarks and timeline for pilot evaluation;
- How do we best use the limited resources (human and financial) available for communication – important to prioritize communication initiatives;
- Core capacity for internal communication is essential; experience in outsourcing has been checkered (particularly longer term engagements of PR firms) – however, outsourcing of specific technical tasks can prove useful if well supervised (e.g. design of websites, capacity building support, etc.);
- Pilots provide an opportunity to address negative perceptions of UN’s development work at country level (“inefficient”, “extension of government”); how do we best use communication to highlight UN system’s added value and unique role as a development actor;

#### **IV. Day 2 – Developing Key Elements for Communication Strategies**

On the second day, participants split into working groups to develop key elements for communication strategies, including both external audiences (media, public, governments and donors) and internal audiences.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC (see Annex)

- Understand how the media operate– invest time in understanding your audience (!); local media in most pilot countries are different from international media – messages of interest to international media will differ from those of interest to local media (see annex);
- Understand how the general public views the UN’s work – understand both negative and positive perceptions; “One UN” pilots can be an opportunity to address negative perceptions;
- Be careful of a “hostile” media environment;
- Use phrases and messages that convey a direct benefit for the people and highlight the UN’s support for national priorities – some participants raised concern that the UN needs to be careful to not appear as a “government puppet”; whenever possible, give concrete examples of where the UN system has successfully worked together (e.g. through joint programmes);
- The media are a channel not an audience!
- Present a joint “UN image” at news conferences (RC with lead agency); joint press releases can be time consuming but are important in building a culture of trust among agencies and can help change perceptions;
- Convey to the media that “Communicating as One” can help make access to UN stories easier (“*one-stop-shop*”) and more comprehensive by providing journalists with multiple angles to stories; RC Offices could play an important liaison role by directing general media inquiries to appropriate lead agencies; journalists with existing agency contacts should be able to continue using these – be careful not to create any additional layers;
- Provide journalists with strategic background/context information and facts (but remember that journalists are not “number” people);
- Provide journalists with “People” stories.

#### GOVERNMENT AUDIENCES

- The “One UN” pilot initiative comes as a direct response to programme countries’ demands for the UN system to become a more efficient and effective development partner;
- The “One UN” pilot initiative will help governments develop better and more effective strategies to address specific national priorities – stress immediate and concrete development benefits;

- The “One UN” pilot initiative will ensure that governments benefit from more (rather than less) ODA as:
  - ⇒ UN agencies will be able to re-direct time and energy from competing over resources to working more strategically together in support of national priorities.
  - ⇒ Governments will save time and transactions costs; funds saved by becoming more efficient will be reinvested into development.
- Becoming a strong advocate for the “One UN” pilot initiative will increase Governments’ international visibility and voice (esp. for small countries).
- The “One UN” pilot initiative is not about reducing the number of UN agencies at country level (“no agencies will be closed down”); it is not about changing the mandates of agencies – rather the “One UN” initiative will provide governments with better and easier access to the large wealth of UN knowledge and expertise (branding “diversity” as positive).
- The “One UN” pilot initiative is not about downsizing or “cutting national jobs”; while in some countries it may have an impact on the number of national staff, the UN needs to act now to secure the relevance of its operations in the future; be honest and frank – stress that the UN will do everything possible to minimize the possible negative impact on national staff;
- Messages need to be targeted not only at central government ministries, but also at line ministries and federal and provincial administrations, which will have different concerns and communication needs.

#### DONOR AUDIENCES

- The “One UN” pilot initiative directly responds to calls from donors for a more efficient and effective UN development system at country level (see Paris declaration);
- The “One UN” pilot initiative is about giving donor countries higher returns on their investments; reform will lead to increased efficiency and reduction in transaction costs resulting in more money being spent on development (rather than administrative overheads);
- The “One UN” pilot initiative will help donor governments demonstrate more easily that “tax dollars and euros” are spent wisely and result in concrete development outcomes;
- Stress that donors also have a *responsibility* and stake in making the pilots a success; donors should try to provide the UN system with more flexible and un-earmarked

funding to enable the “One UN” to better respond to national priorities and plan more strategically;

- Use communication to manage expectations!

## INTERNAL AUDIENCES

- Internal communication involves multiple target audiences with different communication needs and concerns – important to define and understand your internal audiences (e.g. conduct formal research, informal opinion polls);
- Spend time on understanding staff perceptions (“rumors and misperceptions can be very detrimental”); attitudinal surveys can prove helpful in capturing staff buy-in and commitment (and changes in attitudes throughout the change process);
- Convey positive messages – what are the expected benefits for agencies and staff as a result of the pilot (“what are the opportunities”):
  - ⇒ “We have been chosen as a pilot: everyone is looking at us”; “let’s prove how good we are”;
  - ⇒ More job satisfaction through more interesting and diverse portfolios; a larger pool of colleagues to work with; new and more diverse experiences, better career opportunities, etc.
- Messages need to include information on “what is expected of staff” and “how staff is expected to change”; communication tools should involve “conversation” elements to give staff an opportunity to get involved and understand their role in the change process;
- Ensure “senior” ownership early on in the communication effort; important for “One leader” and senior agency representatives to be present during key periods;
- Important to communicate early and consistently with staff; even when specifics have not been worked out yet – it is better to say “we don’t know at the moment” than say nothing at all; important to maximize face-to-face communication (e.g. through townhall meetings, informal conversations);
- Need for constant and early communication with all agencies involved in the pilot, including non-resident agencies;
- Communication officers need to closely liaise with human resource people and staff associations (messages should be coordinated and not parallel); staff need to know as early as possible the potential impact of pilot on their jobs (“how high are the stakes”);

- When developing communication products, take into consideration that not all staff have the same access to information – some national staff may require information in national languages or access to computers (to receive newsletters, access websites, intranet, etc.);
- Mobilize spokespeople to address internal audiences; spokespersons could include Resident Coordinators (or RC a.i. when appropriate), heads of agencies, staff associations and other champions and key opinion leaders;

## **V. Communication Tools and Support Needs**

### *Support needs*

- Request for DGO to develop a roster of communication experts (building on the existing UNICEF database and available country rosters);
- Support needed with development of Q&As for different stakeholder groups – room for corporate support; request for DGO to share analysis of donor views and perceptions;
- Support requested for design and management of attitudinal surveys to capture internal buy-in and commitment to change process (as well as changes throughout change process);
- Need for consistent global communication and mechanism to coordinate global communication efforts and create better liaison with country level;
- Need for capacity building support to improve effectiveness of UN Communication Groups (UNCG) at country level as well as more systematic exchange of best practices between countries;
- Request to remove the restrictions on [www.undg.org](http://www.undg.org) for “One UN” country pages to improve transparency and counter perceptions that “we have something to hide”; move restricted pages (“Change Management” and “Get Support”) to a closed workspace not viewable by the public.
- Create a small email-based informal network for “One UN” focal points; 8-for-1 network will continue to exist but be used for information sharing with a inter-agency larger audience;
- Request for DGO to organize a dedicated meeting of “One UN” focal points to discuss technical issues related to “One UN” implementation; timing could be prior to RC meeting scheduled for 18-22 June in New York.

## ANNEX 1 – RETREAT AGENDA

### Day of Arrival – 2 May 2007

#### **Welcome Cocktail**

*Details to be announced for those arriving in time*

### Day 1 – 3 May 2007

8:45 – 9:00

#### **Security Briefing**

9:00 – 10:00

#### **Introduction and workshop objectives**

*Introductions, ice breaker, clarification of workshop expectations (facilitator)*

*Brainstorm & discussion:* High-level view of key communication opportunities & challenges relating to ‘One UN’. Thoughts on vision for end result of change process, as relates to communication.

10:00– 11:30

#### **Session I: Using communication strategically**

*Approaching change from a communication perspective (Facilitators)  
Includes Q&A*

11:30 – 11:45

Coffee and Tea Break

11:45 – 1:15

#### **Session I (continued): Using communication strategically**

*Introduction to Strategic Communication – Defining audiences, message channels and results (Facilitators)  
Includes Q&A*

1:15 – 2:15

Lunch

2:15 – 4:15

#### **Session II: Sharing experiences -- Understanding opportunities and threats across the eight pilots**

*(Facilitators and Agency resource people to run small group discussions)*

**Presentation:** “Key themes which all pilots are considering – a synthesis of issues identified in existing communications plans”

*Discussion:* Applicability of themes, identification of key opportunities and threats in each pilot context. Understanding of local, pan-pilot and global issues. Creation of ‘parking lot’ for support needs (to be updated throughout the retreat). Understanding “what it would take” to achieve end-state vision.

- 4:15 - 4:30 Coffee and Tea Break
- 4:30 – 6:00 **Session II (continued): Sharing experiences – Communicating as “One”**  
*(Facilitators and Agency resource people to run small group discussions)*
- Discussion:* Best practices for coordinating communications across agencies at country level
- 7:30 – 9:00 **Buffet Dinner**

**Day 2 – 4 May 2007**

- 8:30 – 8:40 **Introduction and recap of objectives for Day 2**
- 8:40 – 10:15 **Views from internal and external stakeholder groups**
- Brief presentations (including input from agency resource people):*
- Views on “One UN” from an internal audience: Addressing staff concerns and fears
  - Views on “One UN” from external stakeholder perspectives
- Discussion:* Q & A, identification of key internal and external communications challenges, including differences and similarities
- 10:15 – 11:45 **Parallel working group sessions:**  
*Division into 4 working groups, ensuring division of the 2 representatives from each country between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ groups (Facilitators and agency resource people to run working groups)*
- 2 Working groups:* Developing elements for an external communication plan, addressing key themes from Day 1 and considering viewpoints and issues discussed in previous session. (Segment messages, channels, products by target audience)
- 2 Working groups:* Developing elements for an internal communication plan, addressing key themes from Day 1 and considering viewpoints and issues discussed in previous session (Segment messages, channels, products by target audience)
- 11:45 – 12:00 Coffee and Tea Break
- 12:00 – 1:15 **Parallel working group sessions (cont’d):**  
*2 pairings of one ‘internal’ and one ‘external’ working group*
- 2 Role-playing groups:* Refining the communications plans from the audience

perspective (Presentation of one working group's communication plan to the other, role-playing key stakeholder groups to suggest edits)

1:15 – 2:15

Lunch

2:15 – 3:45

**Report-back session from working groups**

*Reports back from parallel working groups, and synthesis of the two different plans for each of internal and external communications*

3:45 – 5:00

**Wrap-up and discussion of support needs for implementing a “One UN” communication strategy**

*Presentation: Support provided by DGO “One UN” Communication Team*

*Group discussion: Consideration of the ‘parking lot’ of support needs surfaced during the retreat, as well as how to implement end-state vision for communication. Identification of key priorities for action.*

5:00 – 7:00

**Informal Networking and information exchange session (for “One UN” Focal Points only)**

*An opportunity for “One UN” focal points to discuss broader issues associated with “One UN” implementation*

7:30- 10:00

**Farewell Group Dinner (venue: tbd)**

### **Day 3 – 5 May 2007**

9:00 – 12:00

**Communication hands-on training**

*Media training session facilitated by Nick Kotch, Reuters Foundation*

**ANNEX 2 – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****LIST OF PARTICIPANTS  
“Communication for Change” Retreat  
3-5 May**

<b>Participants from eight pilot countries</b>			
<b>Tanzania</b>			
1	Ms. Eshila Maravanyika	Chair, UN Communications Group	<a href="mailto:maravanyika@un.org">maravanyika@un.org</a>
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**INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS: Examples of Major Internal UN Concerns**

Fears for employment and agency identity

- *“Will I be viewed as a traitor by my agency if I participate?”*
- *“Will my agency still be able to perform its mandated functions?”*
- *“Does ‘One Office’ mean I will lose my job?”*
- *“Are we cutting down on agencies?”*

Uncertainty regarding support from the UN system

- *“What does my agency really think about this reform?”*
- *“How do we solve key technical issues at country level?”*

Anxiety over the effort involved in the reform

- *“How much is expected of me in this process?”*
- *“How do we ensure that we don’t neglect our programmes during this process?”*

Uncertainty regarding the rationale and process for ‘One UN’ reform

- *“Is this really going to work?”*
- *“Can we still fundraise? Can we still do our own activities?”*
- *“Why are we starting at country level, not HQ? We need guidance!”*

**EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS (please see next page):**

## “One UN” Communication Plan (external): Analysis of target audience/concerns

Target audience	Concerns	Proposed objectives	Proposed products	Comments
Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Progress too slow with few real results to show;</li> <li>- What are the efficiency savings?</li> <li>- Reform needs to involve entire UN system (can't go at two-speeds);</li> <li>- Reform cannot happen at country level alone – what's happening at HQ?</li> <li>- Are “weak” mandates (e.g. gender, human rights) not being lost in “One UN” implementation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appreciate progress made on “One UN” implementation and understand steps taken to overcome barriers;</li> <li>- Clarify wider reform context (parallel tracks: HQ and CL)</li> <li>- Clarify role of donors in pilot exercise;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce regular progress reports</li> <li>Organize briefings</li> <li>Organize country visits</li> <li>Regular interaction with local donor reps</li> <li>Communications from UNDG Chair</li> <li>One UN Newsletter (external)</li> </ul>	Lead: “One UN” Communication group, drawing on respective agency expertise (External Relations)
G77	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Another UN reform effort focused on process rather than results;</li> <li>- Reform's ultimate objective is to “trim” UN operations;</li> <li>- Non-pilot countries disadvantaged – why them and not us?;</li> <li>- UNCTs wasting resources (ODA) on internal reforms (pilots have more costs than benefits) – what are benefits for governments and development results?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand benefits of “One UN” (i.e. lower government transaction costs and lower UN operational costs relative to programming budgets)</li> <li>- Clarify “When can other countries participate?”</li> <li>- Allay fears of G77 that “One UN” pilots will lead to reduction of UN assistance;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce regular progress reports</li> <li>Organize briefings (use Perm Reps from pilot countries as advocates)</li> <li>Communications from UNDG Chair</li> <li>One UN Newsletter (external)</li> </ul>	Lead: “One UN” Communication group, drawing on respective agency expertise (External Relations)
Governing Boards*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Governance of “One UN” pilots – UN going it alone?;</li> <li>- Future of pilot exercise – will pilot experience be mainstreamed?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clarify role of Boards in pilot implementation;</li> <li>- Raise support for endorsement of second-phase pilots;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statements by Principals to governing and executive boards (consistent messages)</li> <li>Special side-events</li> </ul>	Lead: “One UN” Communication group, drawing on respective agency expertise (External Relations)
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Misreporting on “One UN” pilots (“trimming of UN operations”);</li> <li>- UN reform fatigue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that journalists are better informed and more knowledgeable on pilot exercise</li> <li>- Reduce negative reporting on UN reform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted media activities both at HQ and country level</li> <li>Engage key journalists as advocates</li> </ul>	Lead: “One UN” Communication group

\* **Note:** This includes inter-governmental bodies, such as the Executive Boards of Funds and Programmes, Governing Bodies of Specialized Agencies as well as ECOSOC – special attention will need to be given to messaging around the TCPR process.

## “One UN” Communications Plan (external): Analysis of concerns/target audience

Target audience	Concerns	Proposed objectives	Proposed products	Comments
Civil Society (including NGOs, think-tanks, dev. experts, foundations and public)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yet another process-focused reform initiative with little results on the ground?</li> <li>- Costs higher than benefits with ODA being diverted into internal reform financing;</li> <li>- Will it lead to cutting of UN funding?</li> <li>- Will we still be able to donate money to our “pet projects” and not lose visibility for our contributions in a monolithic “One UN”?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote “correct” understanding of pilots</li> <li>- Mobilize external support for pilot implementation (in view of second phase)</li> </ul>	Special briefings “One UN” Newsletter (external)	Lead: “One UN” Communication group, drawing on respective agency expertise (External Relations)

### Immediate Priorities (external)

Prepare terms of reference for “One UN” Communication Group

Convene first meeting of “One UN” Communication Group

Communication Group to develop key outreach messages, products, channels, opportunities

Costs incurred should be cost-shared by “One UN” Communication Group members (proposed)

DGO to provide Secretariat services for Communication Group

## ANNEX 4 – SUMMARY OF MEDIA SESSION

### **Knowing the Media: Some General Thoughts on Local Journalists**

- Often young and inexperienced; little professional training
- Poorly paid and sometimes susceptible to corruption (monetary and in-kind)
- Sometimes “lazy” and “irresponsible”
- Gender biased reporting
- Market driven in reporting; looking for “sensational” stories
- Interest in stories and focus of coverage varies: in some countries, excessive development coverage; in others excessive reporting on politics with little interest in social themes
- Little real investigative journalism
- Can be probing and sharp
- Can be highly motivated
- Can be interested and engaged but restricted
- Brave and inquisitive
- Exercising self-censorship
- Often looking for negative stories
- Sometimes you need to pay for access

### **Knowing the Media: Some General Thoughts on International Journalists**

More professional  
Need a hook for reporting  
Better trained and “doing their homework”  
Come with agenda  
Better quality of reporting  
Expectations higher (access and response times)  
Skeptical  
Results driven  
Face competition for space to place stories

## **How to Work with Journalists: Some Thoughts**

- Give them a story and a hook
- Provide them with access (people, places, VIPs, stories)
- Provide them with facts (but remember that journalists not #s people)
- Provide them with background/context (often not present in country)
- Provide them with “People” stories
- Answer your telephone!
- Understand their deadlines
- If misreporting, do a damage assessment to come up with appropriate response (do not immediate send an “angry” letter to the editor)
- Always ask for corrections (as everything gets archived)
- Know your journalists (gray list for those needing extra attention)
- Be mindful of data shared
- Avoid embargoes when possible