OPINION

THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE BUILDING INFORMED AND ENGAGED SOCIETIES

Editor's note: One of the major events of the SBCC Summit was the launch of The Global Alliance for Social and Behaviour Change, a mechanism for mobilising SBCC for achieving development goals. More than a thousand persons and organisations contributed to the expression of the Alliance's vision, mission, and more immediate goals. These are reflected in the Alliance launch document, which appears below.

The International Social and Behaviour Change Communication Summit, held in Nusa Dua, Indonesia in April 2018 provided an opportunity to convene the first in-person meeting of the newly established Global Alliance for Social and Behaviour Change - Building Informed and Engaged Societies. Many of the participating organisations in the Alliance were part of the Steering Committee or Secretariat for the SBCC Summit, ensuring good coordination across and between the Summit and Alliance priorities and agendas. This article describes the mission, vision and goals of the Alliance as put forth at the Summit, the context which informed the inception of the Alliance, and its structure and way forward.

Accelerated progress towards national development goals and the SDGs increasingly requires a focus on engaging people, understanding their capacities and interests, and supporting them in organising for action on those goals in their contexts. This needs to be matched with a focus on rights, social norms, the development agenda setting process, strengthening the voice of those most affected by development issues, equity, the family, and individual and collective actions that can and need to be taken – issues that are at the heart of a large number of SDGs. A better understanding of how to programme around these themes, and more effective implementation of these approaches at greater scale, will provide a major boost to development action.

Throughout the past several decades, development sectors, as well as organisations interested in advancing specific development issues, have realised that bringing together key stakeholders and agreeing on common goals is a powerful and effective way to ensure that their specific priorities are given voice and find a proper space in global development agendas and priorities. Notable examples include the

WASH sector; global initiatives such as Scaling up Nutrition, the Every woman, Every Child Strategy, and the Global Partnership on Education, amongst others.

The (C4D) field has a long history dating back to the 1960s and remains central to international development and broader social change initiatives. However, it is also clear that it remains significantly absent from global policy and international development discussions (i.e. the MDGs and SDGs processes). There are many organisations, networks and membership focused organisations engaged in social change, behaviour change, information and knowledge and social engagement strategies and action.

But, in the main, they are organised in relation to specific parts of this field, for example, communication for development, media for development, health promotion, health communication, digital media and development, civil society organisations and others. Of course, there is significant overlap across and between these different "parts". This ragged tapestry dilutes the overall understanding, impact, scale and policy contribution from this combined field of work. Creating a combined process – an Alliance – that joins up these different components could have a significant impact.

Over the past year, UNICEF, with support from the Communication Initiative and other key stakeholders, facilitated a wide range of on-site and virtual consultations to explore options to more effectively advance the positioning of the C4D/SBCC field and engage more substantively in global development dialogue and policymaking. Over 1,000 people and organisations were consulted about that focus and shape for such an Alliance. There were consultation meetings in 10 cities followed by a major gathering of interested organisations hosted by UNICEF in New York. This was complemented by extensive online debate and dialogue. An interim group comprised of 12 organisations and facilitated by UNICEF was tasked with taking this initiative forward. The following summarises key agreements, action points and the way forward for the Alliance.

It was agreed to establish the Global Alliance for Social and Behaviour Change - Building Informed and Engaged Societies. The Alliance's vision is for **fully informed and engaged societies working to achieve equity and realise their rights**, while its mission is to **advance the scale, quality, impact and sustainability of communication for development, media for development, social change and behavioural change strategies**.

In order to ensure that the Alliance welcomes the broad range of C4D/SBCC fields of work, it also was agreed that the fields addressed by the Alliance should include the following: supporting amplification of the voices of those most affected by development issues; communication for development; social change; behaviour change; media for development; media development; community engagement; participation; programme communication; freedom of information; development communication; social media initiatives as they relate to development priorities; facilitating dialogue, debate and conversation. Similarly, development priorities to be covered by the Alliance include the Sustainable Development Goals and/or

formal National Development priorities for the country within which the work is taking place.

While consultations recommended multiple areas of work for the Alliance, it was agreed that the main goals, at least for immediate future, are the following:

1. Expand policy influence from our collective perspective and experience.
2. Capture and communicate the most compelling evidence of the impact of our work.
3. Increase the scale of this work.
4. Improve the quality of this work.
5. Ensure higher levels of funding support for this work.

One of the recurrent questions raised throughout the consultations was, what is the added- value of the Alliance. The following captures the main value-added of the Alliance:

• Coalescing this overall field of work to fully reflect its size and strength;
• Organising this field of work to ensure that its voice, experience, analysis, ideas and recommendations, is increasingly prominent in development policy and resource deliberations;
• Building on these inputs to engage in global development and policy discussions and decisions.

A core principle in the initial work of the Alliance is that it will not replace or compete with any existing partnership, network or membership group related to any part of this field of work. It will seek to add value to those processes and build on what other organisations are already doing with respect to the core focus areas of the Alliance. The Alliance will also seek to facilitate learning between this field of work and other development disciplines.

An important recommendation from the various consultations was the need to prioritise key focus areas for the initial work of the alliance. In response to that request it was agreed that the Alliance's initial priorities include the following:

• Evidence – agree on and communicate with key stakeholders and partners the most compelling impact and evidence data.
• Policy – engage in key global and regional development discussions to ensure that the C4D/SBCC priorities are considered. Examples include engagement in the UN High-Level Political Forum.
• Build the infrastructure of the Global Alliance to ensure that this effort is sustainable over time.

As with any such endeavour the question about participation – who gets to be a member of these kinds of initiatives- is extremely important. This is particularly true for this Alliance as it focuses both on current trends and on the conceptual coherence and value-add of this field. In order to make this process workable in its initial phase, it was agreed that the Alliance will be constituted by a maximum of 30 organisations. Fifty percent of the individual organisations will be genuinely Southern developed and managed. The 30 organisations will include a significant number of the networks and partnerships that exist for some of the sub-sectors in

this field; with overall balance across the different sub-sectors in this field, global regions, and development priorities. An Alliance instrument, mainly an "Agreement to Cooperate" document, has been developed by the organisations engaged and will be signed by all of them.

The first group of organisations that have committed to expressed interest in joining the Alliance process include the following: Soul City Institute for Social Justice (South Africa); Breakthrough (India); ANDI (New Agency for Children's rights - Brasil); BRAC (Bangladesh); Femina Hip (Tanzania); Minga (Peru); Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD); International Social Marketing Association (ISMA); FEMNET (African Women's Development and Communication Network); Civicus; The CORE Group; International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE); UNICEF; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Open Society Foundation; Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs; BBC Media Action; Save the Children; International Association for Media and Communication Research; International Communication Association; American University of Beirut; and USAID.

These initial steps to form and grow the Alliance have been generously supported and guided by UNICEF. An initial communication platform is being established through The Communication Initiative (The CI). This will support participants in the Alliance in their cooperation activities and ensure good lines of communication and dialogue with the full field of work through the 100,000 people in The CI network. The initial meeting of the Alliance took place in the context of the SBCC What Works? Summit held in Nusa Dua that is the focus of this issue of the Journal.

This is just the beginning! Exciting and challenging days ahead!

Rafael Obregon – UNICEF robregon@unicef.org
Warren Feek – The Communication Initiative wfeek@comminit.com