



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Summary Report of DevCom Workshop

**“Achieving the MDGs in Times of Crises and Changes:
How Can Development Communicators Adapt?”**

Warsaw, 4–5 June 2009



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Contents

- Overview
- Background
- Objectives
- DAY 1
 - Welcome addresses
 - Presentation: *End Poverty 2015 – The UN Millennium Campaign: An Overview on Activities, Plans and Challenges of a Worldwide Campaign*
 - Panel I: Public Opinion on Fighting Poverty
 - Keynote address: Today's Challenges for Development Cooperation
 - Panel II: Communicating about Fighting Poverty
 - Wrap up of Day 1
- DAY 2
 - Workshop: How Can We Tailor Communication Strategies For the Ambitious MDGs in Time of Crisis?
 - Conclusions
 - Ideas for the DevCom Annual Meeting 2009 in Dublin
- Evaluation
 - Results of the survey
 - Participants' comments



OVERVIEW

The DevCom Workshop *“Achieving the MDGs in Times of Crises and Changes: How Can Development Communicators Adapt?”* took place from 4 to 5 June 2009 in Warsaw. For the first time a DevCom event was hosted by a government in Central-Eastern Europe: The event was hosted and financed by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, co-planned and co-organized by the DevCom Secretariat together with the United Nations Millennium Campaign, which supports and inspires people from around the world to take action in support of the MDGs. The workshop brought together communicators and experts from DAC and non-DAC countries, as well as representatives of multilateral institutions such as the European Commission and African Development Bank. For further details see the list of participants.

This summary report includes the variety of perspectives and experiences shared by members and external experts over the two days.

BACKGROUND

To end poverty by 2015 – 189 world leaders made this historic promise when, at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, they agreed to meet the [Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs\)](#). Since then, the MDGs and the global fight against poverty have become the framework for development policy and communication. The MDGs are considered the most appropriate yardstick for measuring and communicating results. The messages of the eight goals are clear, and can be understood by everyone: reducing poverty and hunger; achieving universal education; improving child and maternal health; fighting HIV/AIDS; providing access to water and sanitation and protecting the environment. Thus, the MDGs are an excellent basis for raising public awareness and political support. Nonetheless, achieving the MDGs is an ambitious task. Significant progress has been made, but much more needs to be done.

Yet today, rich countries are confronted with domestic social and economic challenges that require political support and financial allocations. In this already complex scenario, and with only six years to go until 2015, the world has been hit by a severe economic crisis which reduces every country’s growth prospects and threatens its ability to contribute to or to make progress towards the MDGs. At the same time, world trade is experiencing its largest decline since 1929. This



context is putting pressure on national budgets and challenging governments' commitments vis-a-vis the world's poorest.

While ODA figures were at their highest level ever in 2008, the promised scaling up of aid by donors is coming under question by some governments as they begin to cut aid budgets. Will the MDGs become one of the collateral damages of this crisis? Will the economic turndown hamper progress already made towards meeting the MDGs? If development policy and development cooperation fail to achieve their goals, will the aid lose its credibility? Does this mean that communicators should scale down expectations now? Or is this, to the contrary, the right moment to invest more in campaigning for the fight against poverty as a strategic political investment to mobilise new resources? It seems that only a special, crisis-related effort can ensure that the international development goals are met.

In this scenario, the role of development communication is crucial; now is the time to reshape our message and adapt it to the current context of crisis.

OBJECTIVES

The workshop aimed at providing DevCom members with effective communication messages and a set of tools to tackle the challenges of delivering development promises in times of crisis. The meeting was intended to lead to increased awareness of the complexity of the scenario ahead and to deliver practical outcomes and new ideas for communicators to cope with their task in this changed context.

Objective 1: Discuss and agree on a series of pro-development messages that reflect the new context of crises and changes

- messages for decision makers
- messages for the public

Objective 2: Identify and share tools for advocacy and campaigning and discuss their adaptation and use at the national level



DAY 1

WELCOME ADDRESSES

The first day of the workshop was facilitated by Maciej Kuźmicz, editor-in-chief of the Think Tank Magazine (<http://www.thinktankmagazine.com/>) and researcher at Warsaw School of Economics. The meeting was opened by Mr Marek Ziolkowski, the director of the Development Co-operation Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, who emphasized the challenge of communicating to truly transform societies and the importance of freedom of media in this task. Régis Avanthay, Head of the Partnerships Unit at the OECD Development Centre gave an introduction into the significance of the MDGs (see presentation).

PRESENTATION: End Poverty 2015 – The UN Millennium Campaign: An Overview on Activities, Plans and Challenges of a Worldwide Campaign

Marina Ponti the European Director of the UN Millennium Campaign, shared eight key lessons learned:

1. Messages must be **adapted** to the national and local context.
2. They must be **credible** and delivered by **voices that resonate** with each particular audience.
3. They must be **simple** and easily understood (beyond the converted).
4. They must be **real** (not just PR) and communicate clear objectives.
5. They must be **relevant** to the wider debate.
6. Supporters must be given regular **feedback**, not only asked for support.
7. It is fundamental to assess **political will**; if it is missing, the job is much more difficult, so strategies must be **ambitious yet realistic**.
8. Campaigns must be built on a **narrative**, rather than being ad hoc.

See the presentation for further details.

Discussion points:

- Systemic crisis can be used to go beyond “the converted”: it proved that the world in which we are living in is interdependent and such are global problems (climate change,



migration, diseases, etc.); global dilemmas need global solutions and the public will understand the need for cooperation and should take this opportunity to address global poverty – as the crisis – together.

- Evaluation of advocacy effort: it is important to make sure people will understand the reasons behind the campaign, to know how to carry it out and to have an exit strategy – to explain to people why campaigners are moving to a different topic;
- Campaigners should not only talk TO the people, but also talk WITH the people;
- The challenge lies also in tailoring specific messages to specific public: it is a much more difficult task to address people in partner countries, than in donor countries.
- Q: Do people really know what they stand up for in the UN Millennium Campaign activities?
A: Yes, e.g. in Germany parliamentarians were approached by their constituencies with concrete demands.

PANEL I: Public Opinion on Fighting Poverty

-> *Key Question: What do tax-payers in donor countries think about spending public money in developing countries when they themselves are facing a severe economic crisis?*

Participants of this panel were: Laura Losada, Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development, Jan Szczycinski, UNDP Regional Centre Bratislava and Tim Stern, Communications Division, DIFD, UK. See the presentations for further information.

This panel highlighted examples for good practice to get arguments to the public:

- Do not avoid dealing with issues the public is concerned about, e.g. corruption. Show that the public money is effectively spent, that aid is not a waste, but makes a difference to poor people.
- Make the public understand that the current economic crisis hits people in developing countries even more and leaves in much worse conditions.
- In Central and Eastern European countries people are very well aware of the financial support they had received by foreign donors during the last two decades. You can build on this sense of solidarity by “moral obligation”.



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



- Several agencies are rebranding towards more national names. Does this send the right message on the nature of today's development cooperation in the light of the Paris Declaration principles?
- The question of wording and of positioning agencies as "development agencies" rather than "aid agencies", since there is a sceptical attitude towards aid; associations with the word "aid" are negative recently, while "foreign assistance" is less negative.
- Changing political leadership is a risk to a committed development policy in the long term. A sustainable support by the broad public, regardless of the political option behind the wheel, is therefore crucial.
- Use "self-interest" arguments: making the world a safe place for everyone is making it a safe place for ourselves – fight against poverty is in our own interest;
- The fact that people are sceptical about the effectiveness of aid and are at the same time supportive needs more research.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: *Today's Challenges for Development Cooperation*

Eveline Herfkens, Founder of UN Millennium Campaign, presented a keynote address (see her full presentation). Her main points included:

- We should not abandon the MDGs. "They're the best thing we've got". With the exception of the MDGs, the development community has been speaking in isolation (their own language, acronyms, international meetings). The MDGs have put a human face on development issues and mobilized people.
- Nonetheless, we need to use the framework of the MDGs correctly. The focus should be on Goal 8, which is the responsibility of the donor countries and relates to trade and aid effectiveness.
- However, it's the developing countries that should decide about their own priorities in MDGs. Governments of developing countries must be accountable to their own citizens and not to donors.
- Fair trade rules don't imply that industrialized countries have to suffer: we don't need to give up on something in order to help to improve someone else's life.



- The public in donor countries has heard too many pledges with no further implementation, which explains why they are sceptical now; they need to be assured “more bang for their buck”.
- Increasing aid effectiveness increases resources available; aid effectiveness should be evaluated on the basis of the number of people it supports, not the number it employs.
- We must underline how much the crisis impacts the MDGs and the poor – especially in Africa; this is the worst time to decrease aid – we need it now more than ever: the moral case for aid is stronger now.

Communications:

- It is good to promote healthy self-interest: the inter-connectedness of issues such as climate change, conflict and fragility (i.e. 1 cent invested now in development, saves 1 dollar invested later in peacekeeping) makes the investment in a common, sustainable future benefit all and is therefore in our own interest; Africa and Europe need each other in dealing with these challenges.
- However, implementing the Paris Declaration is not about flag-raising; you need to show modesty as you are not the one and only donor. Show that you are working with others.
- Sending press releases on spending money is “old communication”: a message illustrating how well you spend it is much more convincing.
- Don’t be afraid of dealing with popular TV shows (e.g. Big Brother). It is an opportunity to bring the issue to a broader public.
- The UN Millennium Campaign has made good experiences with cooperating with cities/mayors.

Eveline Herfkens concluded her speech by addressing the “Dead Aid” controversy raised by Dambisa Moyo, stating that we should welcome Moyo and thank her for raising the visibility of these issues. Since Moyo wrote her book, the situation has changed, making a new assessment necessary; even so, she has brought many things to the forefront of public attention:

- It is time for Africans to stand up and join the aid debate.
- International aid community doesn’t have a monopoly on fixing poverty. The underlying myth of Western superiority must be done away with (we teach, you learn etc.).
- People need to demand action from their own governments.



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



- Increasing trade and improving the access to markets is fundamental to growth: it is everybody's.
- Regarding the development targets for 2010 and 2015, implementation (vs. promises) is fundamental now.

Discussion points:

- More emphasis should be put on positive messages illustrating African efforts to develop and to make good use of foreign aid; African best practice and success stories should be widely diffused.
- The terminology is important: term "poor" negatively affects mindsets of people in Africa.

PANEL II: Communicating about Fighting Poverty

-> *Key Questions: How can we meet public expectations in times of crisis through development communication? How do we communicate the shift of development from charity, justice and morality to a strategic investment for a better future for all? How do we adapt communication to the move from bilateral programmes and projects to budget support and multilateral cooperation? How do we encourage public perception in the light of negative news ("Dead Aid")?*

Karin Christensen, Director of Publish What You Fund:

- Do not try to hide because of fear of failure (as some tried to do with the HLF-3).
- Go for a defensive communication strategy with positive messages.
- The risk factor is intrinsic to development.
- One bad story needs to be counteracted by 15 good stories.
- Messages must be layered rather than isolated.
- Goals must be realistic and specific; e.g. 'Make Poverty History' is too vague.
- Not only more info, but most of all – better info must be disseminated.

Lawrence MacDonald, Director of Communications and Policy at the Center for Global Development, US:

- Two-way communication (vs. PR) is fundamental; this means that communicators must be in the management team (feedback, positioning).
- Communicators must push the agenda: we need to do a better job at development.
- Don't use the "guilt" argument – it's proved not to work.



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



WRAP UP OF DAY 1

Christine Graves, DAC Communication Manager did the wrap-up of the day of discussion, summing up and setting the stage for the next day's objective: to generate a realistic strategic approach for communication in times of crisis and to develop new ideas for messages and tools (see the presentation).

DAY 2

WORKSHOP: How Can We Tailor Communication Strategies For the Ambitious MDGs in Time of Crisis?

This workshop was facilitated by Holger Baum, managing director of MediaCompany, Berlin/Bonn. The agency, established in 1991, is a communication agency specialised on "issues in need of explanation". Main clients are federal ministries as well as scientific institutions, national and international organisations and NGOs working on development, environment, consumer protection and social issues.

The aims of the workshop were to generate a realistic strategic approach for communication work in time of crisis and to develop new ideas for adapted messages and tool. In detail:

- Taking objections seriously and finding reliable answers.
- What do we say in 2015? Downscaling expectations or intensifying pro-development campaigns? => different strategic approaches
- Identifying target groups, adapted messages, methods and tools for advocacy and campaigning.

The discussions were framed around ten key elements of a possible strategy for communicating the MDGs (see also full presentation by Holger Baum):

1. Clearly defined objectives.
2. Clearly defined target groups/what you want each to do.
3. Realistic assessment of the context: strengths and weakness/challenges and obstacles.



4. Identifying friends and allies; opponents and critics; those who are neutral/uncommitted, and having clarity on how you will deal with each.
5. Timing efforts carefully (context) for each target group.
6. Shaping messages that are understandable and will provoke the response/action you are looking for.
7. Shaping the tone of messages (rational/aggressive) for each target group.
8. Distinguishing between rational arguments and the emotional approach; deciding when to use each.
9. Setting milestones and evaluation points.
10. Stipulating clear and realistic budget, schedule and responsibilities.

Plenary discussions and working groups addressed the challenges vis-à-vis their own contexts.

What are the main arguments against aid in your country?

- First of all we must ensure our own well-being. Use the money at home. We cannot afford helping others anymore.
- Aid doesn't work because of corruption and inefficiency. The money is wasted and does not reach the poor who need it.
- 50 years of development aid – where are the results?
- Aid is too much linked to political and economic objectives like trade liberalisation.
- Let developing countries take care of their progress themselves. We don't want them to depend on our aid. They must stand on their own feet.
- Aid is neo-colonialism.
- It doesn't work because there is no policy coherence.

Discussion points:

- Conclusion: Many arguments against development cooperation are not against aid, but they call for its effectiveness.
- We need a progress report, measuring the targets.
- You should motivate your target group: do not lie and avoid excuses. Not telling the truth is weakening your arguments.
- Address fears and do not create new fears.



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



- Don't be too modest: some progress is already a progress! 50 per cent achieved is also a success! Tell the success story of the glass which is half full (and not half empty).
- There is a lot of statistics, but a lack of success stories with an emotional approach.
- Moral arguments can be better. Otherwise you might get lost in figures.
- Moral obligations worked more or less for 50 years. But in times of crises you need arguments on self-interest.
- Potential target groups for awareness-raising: journalists, parliamentarians, teachers, students, CSO, migrant associations, trade unions, other professional groups such as farmer unions, other ministries (Foreign Affairs, Economics, Defence), private sector.

What are good messages to home audience on (healthy) self-interest?

- Failed states make the world less safe for everybody.
- Give examples: Britain is at risk from piracy in Somalia because Somali government is falling apart. We need to help rebuild it.
- The poor in developing countries don't have safety nets.
- Solidarity doesn't end within your own country. Showing solidarity in hard times with those who are in worse conditions can also be key to our own improvement.
- Challenging world food crisis will help us solve our own financial crisis.
- Since we are members of UN, EU etc. it is our international obligation to help others.
- We live in a global reality: So if the world is okay, you are okay. What is good for them is good for you.
- Security "there" will lead to security "here".
- Global problems affect citizens in every country – only global citizenship can prevent global crisis in future.
- Climate change, diseases, money-laundering and drugs are global problems which need global solutions. National responses are not effective. We can't do it alone. Now more than ever: we have to work together with others.
- The world is not sustainable if it is not sustainable for all: we need to address problems at home and abroad. Global responsibility benefits us all.
- Regional problems in a globalized world become global problems. It will affect also our country, sooner or later. We should avoid it.
- A fairer world for developing countries is a better world for all.



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



- Aid means more purchasing power, more markets for our products, more jobs for us. Aid and trade is beneficial to all.
- Donor countries which depend on export are missing opportunities when people are too poor to buy our products.
- Aid is only a tiny proportion of our budget – compared with the expenses on domestic education, health, infrastructure and military.
- Peace-keeping is much more expensive than rural development.
- Our investment into the social development of developing countries creates better perspectives and is decreasing the pressure to migrate to the North.
- Investing in development is investing in our own future.
- Borders will break. Be prepared for sound solutions. We are all in the same boat.
- The world is a global village: when your neighbour's house is burning, yours is in danger too. Let us keep our neighbour's house safe and prosper.

What are good arguments to intensify communication on the need to achieve the MDGs?

- We still can do it!
- We have already changed so much. Let's not stop here.
- MDGs: A lot done, more to do.
- Let's not give up: Every effort and cent counts.
- We have 5 years to go and need to accelerate the progress achieved.
- Progress might be slow but it is happening.
- We have made progress but still there is an urgency to work together in keeping this progress alive from now on.
- Yes, there are obstacles and set-backs. But there has been progress and every life saved, every child who goes to school, every woman who goes to bed not worrying about her children's well-being is an indication that we as citizens of the world – developed and developing – took our responsibility seriously. We are all players here and no one can be a spectator in achieving these development goals.
- Thanks to a common effort we have achieved better education and health for thousands of children.



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



- Poor countries are making much faster progress at improving human well-being than today's rich countries made in the past. Education, health, life-span are all of much higher levels than income levels would lead us to expect. Progress is accelerating!
- The only truly global crisis is poverty.

Strategy

- Be transparent about the progress and communicate about the next steps.
- Communicate why it works and why the idea is still a good one.

Conclusions

- Circumstances are very different for each country and therefore the approaches must vary.
- We need clear messages based on solid information, focussing on results.
- It is important to communicate success as well as failures, but sometimes agencies are reticent to do this; failures can be communicated as lessons learned.
- Building internal partners can stimulate feedback of stories (informal networks). Contact points for results should cooperate directly with communicators.
- It is important to build on opposition – ride the wave and show openness instead of defensiveness.
- Stories are fundamental, but they must have the right mix of quantitative and qualitative information. Make use of journalists. Equip staff with high-definition cameras for authentic images and reports.
- Recommend to your minister to go to a developing country. Contact decision-makers. Ensure media coverage in both the recipient and the donor country.

Ideas for the DevCom Annual Meeting 2009 in Dublin

- Display and share recent publications and other documents on MDGs, results and aid effectiveness, bring also “bad” examples to learn from.
- Work together on a template to gather results stories.
- A session on how to communicate “the development cooperation of tomorrow”: dialogue and capacity-building instead of funding.
- A session on how do we measure the success of our work apart from opinion polls.



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Comments by participants:

- *“Exchange between countries and info staff is needed and useful. Every part has something to learn from the others.”*
- *“ First day should have been in less formal. Second-workshop included too many unsorted issues. Otherwise excellent!”*
- *“ Too much discussions between participants with different agendas, very little similar problems maybe better to split group in similar participants (bilateral donors, banks, multi organisations, com agencies...) and let them interact afterwards.”*
- *“Nice organizing, classy hotel chosen, we could also be well of by more relaxed standard of hotel . Informal exchange between participants important. Eye-openers on info matters always useful when compared.”*
- *“... of course for me was really interesting to participate in the DEVCOM workshop and find out how other colleagues deal with communication issues, as we do everyday at the AECID communication area. It would be grateful to be part of your DevCom member’s list to improve our skills in communication and development with the information provided by other colleagues.”*
- *“... I would just like to thank you so much for a nicely organized and well set up conference and workshop”*