

September 28, 1998

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Communications & Social Change Conference Participants

From: Denise and Marcia

Re: Conference Participation

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Enclosed is the current agenda for the meeting (there are slight revisions from the one we sent earlier), along with other materials you need for the meeting.

This memo includes information about the conference discussions. Please plan to spend an hour or two before arriving in Cape Town responding to the issues and questions posed.

**The Cape Town Meeting in Context**

Our group is 32 people. It includes film and video makers, storytellers, and journalists, both print and broadcast...people with backgrounds in political advocacy, labor organizing, new media and public health...program administrators, entrepreneurs, academics, foundation officers, and managers of NGOs...people who were at the first meeting in Bellagio and more who were not. Overall, we represent about 12 countries; six of us are from South Africa itself.

It's important to note that our meeting is not an isolated event, but instead part of a larger, long term inquiry of the Rockefeller Foundation. This initiative seeks to spark new thinking about the role and importance of communications to international development and social change. It's an ambitious initiative: it seeks to add to a body of new knowledge and practice that may truly revolutionize how communications can help change the quality of life for many people on a large scale.

The inquiry began in Bellagio, Italy in April of 1997, when the Foundation brought together a group of communications "pioneers" quite similar to those who are coming to Cape Town. At that meeting, we asked ourselves a complex series of questions: Whether there is in fact a shift in thinking about the most effective approaches to communications and social change? What forces – at both community or village level, and at the international level – are driving that shift? What is the role and impact of the new communications technologies? How big a factor is the decline of nation states...or the rise of community self-determination?

We worked at Bellagio as both a “brain trust” – struggling to define the new communications – and as an informal action team that left the Bellagio conference determined to define the next steps.

The inquiry continues in Cape Town. This time, another small group (with about ten carryovers from Bellagio) will come together to focus on one of the big next steps: defining – and testing with each other – some very specific ideas and strategies for action

### **What is Our Work in Cape Town?**

This is not a conference where there will be many “participants,” whose role is to listen... and a few “speakers,” whose role is to speak to and “instruct” everybody else. In this meeting, we are all the speakers and resources. We are all the learners. And we are all the dreamers and the designers of what might be.

We seek to do three things in this meeting:

1. **Get Clear on the Definition.** We want to pool all the experience represented – from the participants themselves, from the case studies, from the site visits – to create a clear and understandable definition of what we mean by “the new communications,” or communications for social change. This needs to cover both what it is (and isn’t), and what purposes it serves (or, what we mean by the term “social change”.) The definition should clearly explain to outsiders how new communications is critical to development – and the purpose and value it adds to accelerating global development.
2. **Define Strategies that Can make a Difference.** After the definition, we want to go the next step, and say to ourselves “If we and others took seriously the power and importance of communications for social change...” what specific strategies and action steps do we recommend:
  - to connect and support the people who do this work,
  - to create tools for them and to build the skills,
  - to help them measure the outcomes of what they are doing, and
  - to help them acquire additional means of financial support.
3. **Develop Collaborations that Advance All Our Work.** Then we want to move from thinking to action. Specifically, we want to spark a series of new collaborations, involving members of our group. For example, some of us are service providers who can train communities in new communications skills. Others may be good test sites. Still others can figure out ways to attract donor

interests – or to design new projects. How can we create alliances that advance our own and each others’ work --and that can serve as model collaborations?

### **What Preparation Do We Need to Do Before the Meeting?**

We’ve divided the group of 32 into five different small groups, or design teams, that will be working at the meeting. The team topics are:

1. **Definitions:** What do we mean by communications for social change? Communications Accelerating Development?
2. **Skills and Content:** What do you need to know, and be able to do, to be a new communicator?
3. **Delivery Systems:** How can we reach people in the field with the tools and resources they need?
4. **Measures:** How can we evaluate and benchmark this work? Prove that is essential?
5. **Support:** How can we build support for this work – not only among donors, but among NGOs, governments, civic leaders, etc?

Each team has a leader, and each team will have a series of questions and issues to deal with.

We want to make sure, that everyone has a chance to contribute to the questions and issues that the teams work on. So we ask you, as you prepare for the meeting, to write down 3 - 5 key questions or issues that you think must be discussed for each topic.

On the attached “Team Topic” worksheet, write down the things you want to be sure that each team deals with. We’ve posed some questions to trigger your thoughts. Bring this worksheet with you to Cape Town and we’ll collect the worksheets on Wednesday morning.

## **CAPE TOWN WORKSHEET ON DESIGN TEAM TOPICS**

**Ask yourself these questions...**

- What is too soft, or too easy, or not realistic, about the loose definition of communications for social change, or “new communications” provides?
- What skills and experience do you need to do such communications work?
- What skills or experiences seem missing when you look at colleagues who are not well suited to the new communications?
- What needs, challenges, problems do you encounter in your everyday work that could be helped by access to people, or learning resources, or equipment?
- What kind of training would be helpful – to you or to the people who work with you?
- What kinds of collaborations would benefit you?
- How could what you know be helpful to others?
- What problems do you have when you try to explain to others why your work is important – or what impact it has had?

With this in mind, please add your own questions:

**Definitions – (James Deane, facilitator)**

**Content and Skills – (Adelaida Trujillo, facilitator)**

**Delivery Systems – (Sushmita Ghosh, facilitator)**

**Measures – (Warren Feek, facilitator)**

**Broadening Support/Engaging Others – (Evelyn Lieberman, facilitator)**