

Forgetting the 'C' in ICT4D:
A Critical Examination of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development

by
Laura Tribe

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Abstract

This work explores the ways that communication is being framed within mainstream development discourse, and how it is being impacted by the integration of ICTs. Through an examination of the United Nations' Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID) initiative, I examine how communication is being influenced by how ICTs are being viewed as the primary means to achieve development. Using James W. Carey's theory of communication as ritual, this thesis argues that communication is an integral element of the development process. Understanding development through Amartya Sen's model of development as freedom, I posture that a broader framing of communication is necessary for the recognition of broader communication rights, and the expansion of human freedoms and development.

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Introduction

January 25, 2011 is the day that the revolution began in Egypt, and the communicative abilities of technologies found their support in a political context. Although there have been previous occasions where ICTs have facilitated the organization and execution of large-scale protests or revolts, such as the 2001 SMS revolution in the Philippines, the uprising that has taken place in the Middle East and North Africa since the end of 2010 has garnered widespread media coverage for the role that technology has played.

Frequently referred to as the “Facebook revolution” or the “Twitter revolution,” incredible credit is being attributed to the communicative powers of technologies to facilitate communication between citizens, despite oppressive government regimes that stifle dissenting or oppositional voices. Since this uprising, a number of other countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa, particularly developing, or newly industrialized countries, have risen in protest against their corrupt, autocratic political systems. Although there has already been a great deal of talk about how these political uprisings will change modern history, what has been particularly interesting to watch throughout these protests is the way that technology has both been used and perceived.

In Tunisia, Twitter has been credited with facilitating the uprising. In Egypt, the beginning of the protests has been attributed to a Facebook group, *We are all Khaled Said*, which was started by Wael Ghonim (who was posting anonymously at the time). The group provided a forum to help Egyptian citizens to realize that they were not alone in their frustrations with the nation’s corrupt political regime. The day the protests began, Egyptians took to the streets of Cairo, met in Tahrir Square and stood their ground. The

online expression of discontent with the political status quo had taken a physical manifestation. This is not to say that these protests could not, or would not, have happened without the use of ICTs. Rather, the power of these ICTs was most felt by the threatened government, which reacted with an iron fist, as it disconnected the entire country from the Internet. Such an event had never been witnessed before. One of the most ‘developed’ countries of Africa suddenly fell into communicative darkness. Protesters still found ways to communicate – ICTs were not their only means of doing so – but the government’s fear that these technologies would be a tool for the democratization of an autocratic regime was too much. In Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain, there have been reports of Facebook, Twitter, blog and email accounts being hacked so that locations and identities of protesters can be discovered. This intimidation by governments, in addition to the powerful resilience and resistance by the protestors, shows the true power that technology can afford those who use it.

With increasing attention being given to ICTs in the realm of development, the specific ways that these technologies are permitted, restricted, or implemented, plays a large role in the ways that they are used. It is important to recognize that ICTs can be incredibly powerful tools in the hands of their users, and this power must be recognized in their implementation – protecting the rights of individuals, communities, and nations, to effectively protect their rights to communicate through these technologies. However, while it is easy to credit the recent revolutions to the use of mobile phones and social networking sites, we must not lose sight of the people that were behind these technologies. Political conversations were being had with and without these technologies, a revolution would have happened either way. What is important to remember is that

these recent developments did not come as a result of Western nations providing tools and technologies, but from a bottom-up collective of citizens actualizing their political discourse. The role of communication should not be overlooked in its abilities to facilitate democracy and the process of development, and should be recognized as a critical aspect of human culture and development.

Chapter One: Forgetting the C in ICT4D

Often seen as a solution to the ‘digital divide’, initiatives utilizing information communication technologies for development (ICT4D) are frequently positioned by governments, NGOs, and development practitioners as a catalyst to leapfrog developing countries into development. There are increasing amounts of attention being focused on the ways that information and technology can aid in development, but the role that communication can and should play is frequently overlooked. Although debate and controversy have surrounded notions of a universal right to communicate, the underlying ideology of this right recognizes that communication is an interactive process and a fundamental human need – principles that I argue need to inform the effective utilization of ICTs in the development agenda.

Numerous countries and organizations have played a significant role in the ICT4D field; however, the United Nations (UN) is unmatched in both size and influence. The UN has been involved with the implementation of ICT4D initiatives from its inception. Since the Millennium Declaration in 2000, the UN has placed particular emphasis on developing partnerships and implementing ICTs as a part of its strategy for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which seek to address extreme poverty in its many dimensions, such as hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion – while at the same time promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability (MDG Monitor, n.d.; UNDP, n.d.). While the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) manage the majority of the UN’s ICT4D initiatives, the UN’s actual ‘resident

expert' of ICTs and development is its Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID) initiative.

Established in 2006, as a direct outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), GAID describes itself as a 'think-tank' on ICT4D and is responsible for setting and framing the ICT4D agenda throughout the UN (GAID.org, 2010). The Alliance operates under the authority of the UN Secretary-General, and reports to the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), while the United Nations' Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) manages its finances through its trust fund (GAID, 2007b, p.9; GAID, n.d.). As such, GAID plays an important role in contributing to larger global development and ICT4D discourses, both within and beyond the UN. Despite its influential position on the world stage, there has yet to be any in-depth critical examinations of GAID's role, perspective, agenda, or performance, which is rather surprising given the relatively extensive communication scholarship about the wider WSIS process.

I argue that the UN has the potential to use GAID to directly address challenges that have been identified within ICT4D discourse, but that this requires the UN (and therefore GAID) to expand its current framing of both development and communication. I also find GAID's extreme focus on information, to the exclusion of communication, to be problematic. Adopting this focus reduces the problem of the digital divide and access to technology and information as the barrier to development, not a symptom of larger development issues. Policies that incorporate a right to communicate and recognize existing communication rights would help to ensure that ICTs are implemented with communication as not only a potential byproduct of development, but also as a goal in

and of itself, integrating human self-fulfillment, community development, and democracy into the development process.

GAID developed as the result of decades of debate surrounding issues of information, communication, and technologies. The UN has an historically tumultuous relationship with issues surrounding media and communication, dating back to the disputes around the campaign for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The debates regarding NWICO eventually led to the withdrawal of the United States and the United Kingdom from UNESCO in 1984, and highlighted the UN's need to appease its more powerful member nations (McPhail, 2009, p.10; Mueller, Kuerbis & Pagé, 2007, p.273). The UN's political limitations and overall structure have also hindered its ability to actively address complex, and often politically contentious, communication issues. These matters can all be seen as factors that have motivated the lack of attention given to this rights-based communication discourse. The purpose of this thesis is to specifically make a case for the inclusion of democratic participatory communication within the use of ICTs in development, and to examine if and how GAID is incorporating this into its mandate, structure, and public discourse.

This chapter will examine the main bodies of literature that pertain to the examination of GAID's understanding of communication within ICT4D, including development theory, the role of technology, and rights-based communication discourse. The chapter will then outline the conceptual framework that will be used to underpin this thesis. Subsequently, I will outline the methodology employed for this study, and the research questions that this thesis seeks to answer.

Literature Review

I draw upon three main bodies of literature to situate my analysis: development communication, ICT4D, and rights-based communication discourse.

Development Communication

Communication's role within development theory has moved through a number of different stages over the years. Beginning with modernization theory in the 1960s, through to dependency theory, and finally participatory communication, this section will explore the different ways that development communication theories have viewed the role of communication within development.

Modernization Theory

The role of communication in development increased dramatically post-World War II, and became a central component of the discourse surrounding the cold war (Thussu, 2006, p.42). To help curb the spread of communism through less developed states, developed nations felt the need to provide the hope of development as a preventative measure against communist messages finding a receptive audience (Mody, 2003, p.8). At that time, the solutions to underdevelopment were found in modernization theory, which creates a strict delineation between modern and traditional societies and operates on the assumption that Western models of development are transferable to other regions and cultures (McPhail, 2009, p.7). Scholars working within the modernization framework believe that underdevelopment can be mainly attributed "to problems within developing nations rather than in their external relationships with other countries" (Melkote & Steeves, 2001, p.72). This ultimately ascribes the faults of underdevelopment to

traditional societies that have yet to adopt a modern way of life. As such, key themes within ‘development,’ such as economic growth and scientific values were, and arguably continue to be, heralded as the cure to ‘underdevelopment’ (Melkote & Steeves, 2001, p.72). The modernization paradigm holds that individuals in the developing world lack the characteristics and social norms that individuals in the West possess, thereby preventing them from helping their society to advance or progress. It is with this understanding that modernization scholars posit that individuals of the developing world require a change of character, “to more closely resemble the attitudinal and value characteristics of people in Western Europe and North America” (Melkote, 2001, p.131).

Within this modernization framework, media and communications are viewed as key means to help disseminate the ideological tools of modernity and a Western way of life. Indeed, in the early stages of the modernization approach, the primary role of mass media and communication technologies in development was to provide the Third World with exposure to the modern ideologies and culture of the West, thereby “strengthening the influence of Western media on global markets, and strengthening the West in its ideological battle with the Soviet Union” (Thussu, 2006, p.42). Proponents of this approach actively promoted the alleged democratic benefits of facilitating a free flow of information worldwide. As Thussu describes, the free flow concept was created to work as “a part of the liberal, free-market discourse that championed the rights of media proprietors to sell wherever and whatever they wished” (*ibid.*), drawing its argument “on premises of democracy, freedom of expression, the media’s role as ‘public watchdog’ and their assumed global relevance” (*ibid.*).

Daniel Lerner, one of the key proponents of this initial version of modernization theory, believed that the media were to be used to create “empathetic personality types” (Mody, 2001, p.126), allowing individuals in the Third World to identify with individuals and cultural elements of a modern society. This was intended to help provide individuals in the Third World with insight into other cultures, and build their empathy towards foreign (modern) cultures. Put simply, “[m]ass media were the vehicles for transferring new ideas and models from the West to the Third World and from urban areas to rural countryside” (Melkote, 2001, p.134).

Although economic development was one of the overarching priorities of modernization, mass media became the primary means for its achievement. “The media stimulate, in direct and indirect ways, mobility and economic development; they are the motivators and movers for change and modernization” (Servaes, 1999, p.25). Wilbur Schramm further developed Lerner’s ideas by proposing that communication and media technologies also helped to aid in the mobility of ideologies, working in conjunction with individual and traditional communication models (*ibid.*). Mass media outlets were thus seen as a gateway to disseminating the ideologies of the West to traditional cultures which, when combined with traditional communication models, could serve to speed up the process of mobilizing modern ideologies (McPhail, 2009).

For almost two decades, modernization theory was the dominant paradigm in development communication; however, strong critiques of the assumptions and ideologies that accompanied it soon emerged, which led to new viewpoints and theoretical frameworks. One of the main critiques of the modernization agenda is that it serves “to transmit specific cultural, economic, and political practices across borders, but

in the guise of a universal model of development” (McDowell, 2003, p.8). The assumption that development is a linear process was also found to be particularly problematic within modernization theory. By understanding underdevelopment to be the result of a nation failing to progress in the same manner that developed Western societies have, modernization places blame strictly within the borders of Third World nations, and does so within an ahistorical vacuum that seems to forget about the socio-political and economic ramifications of colonialism (McDowell, 2003, p.9).

Dependency Theory

Searching to find an explanation for modernization’s failure to produce any real progress, South American scholars in the late 1960s and 1970s introduced dependency theory as an alternative understanding of the causes of underdevelopment (Thussu, 2006, p.47). This theory challenges the founding principles of the modernization approach, attributing the lack of economic growth and development in certain areas to the larger international power relations at work, arguing that rates of development in different regions are not independent from one another, but are actually directly related (McDowell, 2003, p.9). Dependency theorists have argued that there never was a time when developed regions were “underdeveloped,” they were just “undeveloped” (Frank, 1966, p.112). Dependency theory proposes that the current underdevelopment of specific regions is in fact an historical product of the exploitative relationships between developed and underdeveloped regions, frequently referred to as the core and periphery or satellite regions (Frank, 1966, p.113). This understanding was later nuanced to include semi-periphery regions as well (Wallerstein, 1974). Any involvement that the core had in development that took place in the periphery or satellite regions was done with the aim of

maintaining the core regions' power and dominance over its extremities (Thussu, 2006, p.47). Examining the role of communication in modernization specifically, dependency theory challenged the free flow of information model heralded within modernization, viewing it as another tool to disseminate the problematic dominant development paradigm, and reinforce the control of core developed regions over their satellites (Carlsson, 2003, p.33). It is this issue of information flows that was at the heart of the development of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and its support for the campaign for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). Consisting of underdeveloped nations such as Cuba, China, and Chile, the NAM alliance developed in an attempt to gain independence from the Western power, and challenge the exploitative relationships between nations (Servaes, 1999, p.31). Existing with the support of both NAM and dependency theorists, the NWICO campaign¹ specifically addressed the media and communications issues at the root of the "free flow" of information model touted by the West, as underdeveloped regions instead found themselves to be strictly receivers of a one-way flow of information, unable to communicate in return (McPhail, 2009, p.10). Instead, NWICO proposed democratization, decolonization, demonopolization, and development, as the four cornerstones for its development (Carlsson, 2003, p.40). NAM, and its support for NWICO, caused a great deal of conflict within UNESCO as it presented a threat to the media power of developed nations. This debate eventually

¹ The NWICO debates were an ongoing campaign led by the developing nations of NAM in an attempt to challenge the imbalanced controls over mass media outlets, and information and communication flows. The debates began in the 1960s, and lasted through into the 1980s, eventually resulting in their being dropped from the UNESCO agenda in 1987.

resulted in both the United States (in 1984) and the United Kingdom (in 1985) withdrawing their membership in UNESCO out of protest (although they have both since returned) (McPhail, 2009, p.10; Mueller *et al*, 2007, p.273).

Subsequent critiques of dependency theory have highlighted that it glosses over disparities *within* core, periphery, and semi-periphery countries and the role played by local elites in also encouraging underdevelopment (Smith, 1979, p.251). As a corollary, critics argue that blame for failed modernization projects cannot solely be placed on Western elites, but can also be attributed to power dynamics within and between developing and newly industrializing countries, and regional class relations (Friedmann & Wayne, 1977, pp.407-408). As well, although obvious and substantial disparities exist between the West and the rest in terms of economic and technological resources, and the modernization project has helped facilitate even greater economic and technological dependency on the West, critics would argue that the same cannot be said about cultural dependency. This type of pluralist critique of dependency theory contends that citizens around the world will produce and consume cultural content to fit their own needs, wants and desires, and that it cannot be assumed that Western cultural products will automatically trump local cultural products. Citizens around the world must be seen to have agency, therefore making the situation far more complex than the dependency theory would suggest.

Participatory Communication

Addressing the complexity that dependency theory has been accused of overlooking is the multiplicity paradigm, which is the foundation for participatory communication. This

paradigm focuses on the role that citizens themselves can, should, and are playing in making decisions about their own development, and is based on the idea that “there is no universal development model that leads to sustainability at all levels of society and the world, that development is an integral, multidimensional and dialectic process that can differ from society to society, community to community, context to context” (Servaes, 2007, p.485). Operating as an extension of this multiplicity approach is the model of participatory communication.

While there exist myriad approaches supported in development literature, participatory strategies have become particularly prevalent, addressing the critiques found within previous theories (Servaes, Jacobson, & White, 1996). While the concept of participatory communication is not new in itself, its more recent application to development has led to a shift in the ideologies surrounding the implementation and execution of development projects (Servaes, 1999, p.143). Participatory theorists generally agree that community participation is required for individuals to improve their quality of life and successfully achieve development (McPhail, 2009, p.27; Servaes, 1999, p.159). Specifically in terms of communication, participatory approaches stress “the basic right of all people to be heard, to speak for themselves and not be represented or reworded by another party” (McPhail, 2009, p.27). The ultimate goal is for participants to experience empowering outcomes and to challenge dominant power structures that typically regulate information and communication in development (Huesca, 2003, p.215).

Participatory communication differentiates itself from other forms of development communication in striving to work *with* people, as opposed to working *for* or *on behalf of* people (Servaes, 1999, p.143). Challenging the power relations enforced by the

modernization paradigm, and problematized by dependency theory, participatory approaches to communication in development work to create a more equal balance between all actors engaged in the development process, to ensure that all agendas and needs are being addressed (Huesca, 2003, p.214). Development practitioners promoting the potential of participatory approaches recognize that they still have their limits, and that power dynamics remain inherent within all groups, regardless of the claims to obtain equality (Huesca, 2003, p. 220; Servaes, 1999, p.86). Nevertheless, multi-stakeholder participatory development projects are still, from a critical perspective, the most effective in terms of creating an equal playing field for all actors. While there remains room for improvement, this type of initiative presents an opportunity to help create self-actualization in developing regions, and overcome the dependency and disparities that were strongly highlighted in previous development paradigms. What remains to be seen is how this approach can be utilized not only for the specific integration of ICT projects, but as an ideology to underpin the approaches to communication and development as a whole.

As discussed below, mainstream ICT4D initiatives overwhelmingly tend to be top-down projects, developed, funded and implemented by Western governments, NGOs, and corporations. The participatory approach is often incorporated into a project's development, but primarily extends only to the level of local elites, not engaging the citizens who are the targeted beneficiaries of these technologies. Consequently, the failure to engage citizens in the initial development of a project reinforces elite agendas, which often fail to ensure a sustainable, participatory environment for the actual use of

these technologies after they are implemented; assumptions are made that once the technology is in place, development will ensue.

The Digital Divide and Information Communication Technologies for Development

The second body of literature of importance to this project addresses issues of the digital divide and the implementation of ICTs for development. With different countries and regions adopting ICTs at varying rates, the gap between those with the latest ICTs and those without is growing at an incredible pace. This disparity between the technological “haves” and “have-nots” is the most common understanding and definition of the “digital divide” (Mossberger, Tolbert & Stansbury, 2003, p.3). Although there is no definitive origin of the term digital divide, it is commonly agreed to have been first used publicly in May 1996 in a speech given by then Vice-President of the United States, Al Gore, to discuss his government’s response to technology access challenges within the nation’s primary and secondary education systems (Gunkel, 2003, p.502). The baseline understanding has since been accepted as “the perceived gap between those who have access to the latest information technologies and those who do not” (Compaine, 2001, p.xi), although the term’s use has quickly expanded to describe the divergence of Internet access between developed and developing regions (Norris, 2001, p.4).

Over the past decade, the role of ICTs in development has gained significant attention from policy-makers, development practitioners and scholars alike. However, this approach is still relatively new and has yet to find a permanent place in development discourse. ICT4D has even been accused of being just another fad, soon to be replaced by an even newer approach to solving development issues (Wade, 2003, p.443). Overall, the

implementation of ICT4D has been met with a great deal of optimism, and yet it has failed to provide the potential contribution to democracy that has been envisioned by its proponents (Mossberger, Tolbert & McNeal, 2008, p.69). Specifically, critical scholars object to the way that technologies – especially Western-oriented ones – are heralded as *the* solution to issues of underdevelopment. In so doing, the digital divide is positioned as the problem, and the latest, fastest, and most efficient ICTs are heralded as the solution – a framing which fails to address, and arguably perpetuates, the power imbalances highlighted in dependency theory (Fuchs & Horak, 2008, p.107). Stated differently, discourses about the digital divide frame the issue as a disparity in technological access that can be solved with the provision of more technology which, in turn, will lead to greater development. It is this emphasis on the transformative abilities of ICTs that can be considered a form of technological determinism, which believes “that technology is understood to have effects and that those effects are the principle determinant of cultural change” (Slack & Wise, 1998, p.43). This perspective fails to recognize that technological disparities are not the problem, but are a symptom of larger systematic and systemic political and economic disparities – the root causes of underdevelopment.

This technologically determinist faith in the ability of ICTs to actualize development is particularly problematic for scholars and practitioners who believe that technologies have politics embedded within them and thus also serve to disseminate Western ideologies into developing regions (Winner, 1980; Mansell, 2006). Context and culture have significant influence on the successful implementation and use of technologies, and these specific contextual factors must be considered with the deployment of ICT4D initiatives (Alzouma, 2005, p.347). In an effort to address these critiques, a number of ICT4D

initiatives have adopted a more participatory approach to their creation and deployment, involving recipient regions in a project's creation and implementation (McPhail, 2009, p.100). This is in part to avoid the claims of cultural imperialism and neo-modernization of which ICT projects have been accused (Leye, 2007). In addition, this helps to ensure that the projects are effectively designed to meet the specific needs of the recipients and users, not just the needs anticipated by external stakeholders.

ICT4D initiatives have also been criticized for privileging technologies as the measurement of development, ignoring the systemic and structural factors that create and sustain underdevelopment, which are particularly highlighted by dependency theorists. When ICTs are instituted for the purpose of technological progress instead of as a tool to help overcome a specific obstacle to development, the technologies are frequently conflated with development itself, allowing the institutional obstacles and resource deficiencies that have stood as barriers to these technologies being implemented from the start to be overlooked (Wade, 2003). This cyclical approach, which equates technologies with progress, has been observed before. New technologies have consistently been heralded as the means for overcoming the problems faced by developing countries, while continuously ignoring the social and political factors that underpin these problems (Alzouma, 2005, p.340).

Despite its shortcomings however, ICT4D is a field that continues to grow, and works to address its critics as it develops. ICTs have come into the spotlight over the past decade in particular, after being included within the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As a part of the Millennium Declaration in 2000, the UN created the MDGs to be used as global goals to eradicate poverty by the year 2015. There are eight

MDGs, with twenty-one specific targets, each with their own measurable indicators. Development communication falls within the realm of the eighth goal, to “develop a global partnership for development” (MDGs, 2001). This goal focuses specifically on the need for the international community to come together as one and work together to help solve problems of development. The MDGs have therefore allowed GAID to at least partially situate itself within the UN within the frame of multiplicity, or participatory communication, by recognizing that all actors involved in the development program have a valuable contribution to make. More specifically, the MDGs’ 21st target located within this goal has brought a great deal of attention to the field of ICT4D, as it states: “In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications” (MDGs, 2001).

Although there continue to be concerns surrounding the specific ways that ICTs are being integrated into developing regions, there is agreement among development communication scholars that these technologies are here to stay. Despite concerns and criticisms of the specific role of ICTs in development, there is a general acceptance that these technologies have become too prevalent in networking the global community for developing regions to be able to ignore them or to develop without them. They have not only become a standard measurement of development, but have become one of the defining factors of the developed world. As a result, ICTs are seen to be imperative for developing regions to employ in order to be able to communicate and engage with each other, as well as with the developed world. However, the use of ICTs within a development context does not automatically equate to achieving development, nor should it be conflated with development itself.

Right to Communicate and Communication Rights

The third body of literature underpinning this thesis addresses the need for communication to be acknowledged as a universal human right. The importance of communication, and its relationship to global human rights, has been visible on the international stage beginning with the inclusion of Article 19 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1949. According to Article 19, “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (United Nations General Assembly, 1949). Even today, Article 19 provides a central focus for recognizing elements of communication within the framework of human rights. Despite this specific inclusion within the UDHR, a larger debate within communication and human rights has since developed over the importance of recognizing a right broader than just expression – a right to communicate.

Generally considered to be the first person to acknowledge the need for a right to communicate, Jean d’Arcy stated in 1969 that access to information and freedom of expression were not enough to guarantee communication and prevent weaker voices from being drowned out (Raboy & Shtern, 2010; Mueller *et al*, 2007; Fisher & Harms, 1983). D’Arcy, who served as the Director of Radio and Visual Services in the United Nations Office of Public Information at the time, recognized the need for a right to communicate, saying,

The time will come when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will have to encompass a more extensive right than man’s right to information, first laid down 21 years ago in Article 19. This is the right of man to communicate. It is the angle from which the future development of communications will have to be considered if it is to be fully understood (D’Arcy, 1969).

D'Arcy's notion of the right to communicate was introduced with the intention of affording everyone the right to an environment that is conducive to two-way communication, arguing that Article 19 was created with a mass media mentality that did not fully embrace the future technologies that would enable individual communication (Mueller *et al*, 2007, p.271). Proponents for a broader understanding of communication have also noted that "[w]ithout communication rights, freedom of expression can privilege the powerful. With them, it can achieve its full potential" (CRIS, 2005, p.25). These statements ultimately call for a more extensive understanding of what is integral for creating an environment for democratic communication.

This concept of a universal right to communicate was quickly embraced by underdeveloped countries involved in the NWICO fight against the one-way flow of mass media from developed Western nations. The right to communicate movement became heavily intertwined with the NWICO campaign, focusing on affording a voice to citizens not being heard, and preventing the unidirectional flow of information from the West to the rest. Unfortunately, the concept was greatly opposed by Western governments because it challenged the prevalence and dominance of their mass media outlets, which as noted above, caused a great deal of controversy within UNESCO.

To help resolve some of the conflicts with NWICO, in 1977 the UN formed the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems. Chaired by Sean MacBride, a founding member of Amnesty International who eventually went on to be the Chair of UNESCO, the Commission was unofficially known as the MacBride commission (Mueller *et al*, 2007). Upon its conclusion, the commission's final report

Many Voices, One World (commonly referred to as *The MacBride Report*, published in 1980) officially endorsed the right to communicate (Raboy & Shtern, 2010).

Although there is some debate as to what an actual legal right to communicate would comprise, there is general agreement that it would be based on the ideals of participatory democracy as described above, and built upon the existing human rights related to communication (Mueller *et al*, 2007). Despite the recommendations of the MacBride Report, there was no adoption or real action taken to implement a right to communicate – a direct result of the pressure from the US and UK, which will be expanded upon in Chapter Two. In the end, the issue fell from UNESCO’s agenda, which signaled the imbalance of power between member nations within the United Nations itself (Mueller *et al*, 2007, p.273).

Discussion surrounding the right to communicate subsided somewhat throughout the 1990s, until the UN announced that it would host a World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) as a means to address issues of information communication technologies as a part of the global information society. WSIS was scheduled to take place in two parts – in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005 – with multiple preparatory meetings on specific issues preceding each summit. Focusing on the information society, WSIS was seen as the perfect forum for raising communication issues. NGOs and other civil society organizations began to revisit these communication-related rights, and joined together to organize ways to address the issue of a right to communicate at the Summit. In 2001, just as WSIS preparations were in full swing, the campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) was created (Raboy & Shtern, 2010).

The CRIS campaign is one of the most recent global initiatives to directly link communication to human rights and freedoms. However, due to a history of controversy surrounding the role of communication-related rights in a development context, the CRIS campaign avoided directly addressing issues of development as a way to separate itself from the NWICO issues of the 1970s. Even in recent years there has been a great deal of resistance to the right to communicate, which is largely due to its heavy historical ties with NWICO. This is also perpetuated by a number of unresolved issues, such as whether the rights would be afforded to a collective or an individual, and if these rights might also be used to rationalize censorship (Mueller *et al*, 2007, p.275).

For these reasons, CRIS has focused its energies on promoting communication rights because, as outlined in the CRIS Handbook for assessing communication rights,

Communication rights cannot be construed as simply about communication between equal individuals. They already imply social structures that differentially constrain and enable the capacity of different groups to communicate. They thus point to changes to, and the governance of, inequitable social structures and dynamics (CRIS, 2005, p.2).

Despite the efforts of CRIS, there was no explicit recognition of communication rights in any of the official documentation of the Summit; moreover, it is commonly agreed that the concept is unlikely to ever be officially implemented as was clearly demonstrated through the strong conflicting viewpoints expressed during the WSIS process (Mueller *et al*, 2007). Specifically, recognition of global communication rights would be problematic to nations and nation-states that are, broadly speaking, authoritarian and semi-authoritarian, as these rights would provide citizens with greater internationally sanctioned agency to challenge and oppose the political and economic status quo. Concomitantly, various international agencies and corporations are also hesitant to

support freedoms that would encourage challenges to power relations from which they directly benefit. Nevertheless, WSIS and the CRIS campaign have played an important role in highlighting the need for communication to be integrated into human rights discourse. As a result, the relevancy of communication rights to development should be abundantly clear especially as ICTs have become increasingly central to development initiatives. Through understanding communication as playing a critical role in development, it is imperative that its role is not only recognized, but also protected.

As the above literature review of these three areas – development communication, the digital divide and ICT4D, and rights-based communication – demonstrates, critical scholarship has increasingly highlighted and problematized the trend toward removing the ‘c’ from ICT4D. Of concern, communication must be at the heart of any ICT4D project.

Conceptual Framework

Although there are multiple definitions, understandings, and measurements of development, a number of which are based in economic growth and poverty reduction, this project will draw upon development economist Amartya Sen’s understanding of development as freedom. Sen views development as both the process, and the result, of expanding human freedoms (Sen, 1999, p.36). In other words, he understands freedom to be the means, not just the end, to development (Sen, 1999, p.37). As outlined by Sen, development is not centered on communicative freedoms explicitly, but rather on the larger understanding that specific freedoms do not exist independently of each other: “different kinds of freedom interrelate with one another, and freedom of one type may

greatly help in advancing freedom of other types” (*ibid.*). It would appear then that Sen’s notion of development works well with the communication rights perspective inasmuch as they both look beyond the strict recognition of individual rights, highlighting the need for understanding freedoms as a collective process.

Sen focuses specifically on two types of freedoms, instrumental and constitutive, which serve the means to, and end of, development respectively. Constitutive freedoms are seen as the primary ends of development, including such freedoms as the ability to avoid starvation, to participate in political processes, freedom of speech, and so forth (1999, p.38). This understanding of the primary ends to development challenges how development is frequently measured solely in terms of economic growth.

Instrumental freedoms operate as the *means* to establish constitutive freedoms, and focus on the principle areas of human freedoms that need to be expanded. Sen describes five types of instrumental freedoms: political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security (1999, p.38). Political freedoms emphasize the need for civil rights, freedom of political expression, the right to determine political governance, and freedom to engage in political dialogue, dissent and critique (1999, p.38). Importantly for this discussion, it is within this category of political freedoms that communicative freedoms are situated. Economic facilities include the “opportunities that individuals respectively enjoy to utilize economic resources for the purpose of consumption, or production, or exchange” (1999, pp.38-39). In addition to a nation’s overall wealth, Sen notes that the distribution of wealth within a country plays an important role in the economic facilities available to its citizens. The third instrumental freedom, social opportunities, refers to a society’s arrangements for improving

individuals' quality of life, such as health care and education opportunities. These factors play a role in not only the immediate quality of an individual's life, but also impact his or her ability to engage in other freedoms that require skills such as literacy (1999, p.38). Transparency guarantees, the fourth type of freedom, are founded in establishing openness, and highlight the need for honest engagement and access to truthful information, without fear of deceit or corruption (1999, p.39). Protective security, the fifth and final type of instrumental freedom, refers to the need for "social safety nets," specifically the inclusion of fixed institutional arrangements to ensure the protection of quality of life for individuals (1999, p.39). Sen's framework for understanding development – as an ongoing process that includes both instrumental and constitutive freedoms – is particularly useful for critically analyzing ICT4D policies and initiatives. Instead of focusing solely on the provision of technologies as the end of development, we must also consider the freedoms individuals possess to be able to use such technologies, as well as and what they actually *do* with them and how such usage impacts their overall human freedoms.

Examining communication specifically, this project utilizes James W. Carey's theory of communication as ritual. Carey argues that over recent decades, communication has been largely reduced to a transmission model. "[D]efined by terms such as 'imparting,' 'sending,' 'transmitting,' or 'giving information to others'" (Carey, 1989, p.12), the transmission model focuses on the need to transport information or knowledge from one place (or person) to another, and ignores the cultural aspects of the communication process. "The center of this idea of communication is the transmission of signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control" (Carey, 1989, p.12). Problematizing

this model's limited scope, and failure to recognize the cultural or communal aspects of communication, Carey highlights an alternative model – communication as ritual. Carey notes, “[i]f the archetypal case of communication under a transmission view is the extension of messages across geography for the purpose of control, the archetypal case under a ritual view is the sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality” (Carey, 1989, p.15). In contrast to the transmission model, the ritual view posits that communication is an integral aspect of human existence and a fundamental element of culture. Through this ritual view, “communication is linked to terms such as ‘sharing,’ ‘participation,’ ‘association,’ ‘fellowship,’ and ‘the possession of a common faith’” (*ibid.*). Through this model, communication is not something to have achieved, but experienced. Recognizing that “[a] ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs” (*ibid.*), Carey presents this model as a process that works to shape how people collectively view the world, and form a sense of community and culture.

Emphasizing communication as a productive process, this project therefore also aligns itself with right to communicate scholar Cees Hamelink's understanding of communication as being an interactive process – one of sharing, and creating a community (Hamelink, 2003, p.155). Hamelink contends that the essence of a right to communicate “would be based on the observation that communication is a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organization” (2003, p.121). Although freedom of expression and freedom of information are formally recognized as human rights within the UDHR, they are framed with the assumption that

communication solely constitutes the transfer of messages – a restrictive approach that prevents full recognition of a freedom and right to communicate. In order to fully recognize communication as an essential human need, and place it within the context of development, it must be understood within the context of human rights, which “currently provide the only universally available set of standards for the dignity and integrity of all human beings” (Hamelink, 2003, p.123).

Despite the push for an overarching right to communicate dating back to the NWICO era, it has not been officially recognized within the UDHR. As a result, it remains a political objective, and not an enforceable human right. Thus while recognizing the principles in support of a right to communicate, this project will focus specifically on those human rights currently in place and recognized by UDHR as a means to integrate Hamelink’s notion of interactive communication into development discourse. To situate these rights within a communication perspective, this examination will utilize a communication rights-based framework to understand how GAID is (or is not) viewing existing human rights through the lens of communication.

This project specifically utilizes CRIS’ four pillars for assessing communication rights. This framework understands communication to have social, political, civil and cultural elements, all of which are critical to recognizing existing human rights and which are imperative for achieving development and expanding human freedoms. The first pillar, Communicating in the Public Sphere, “relates to the existence of spaces and resources for the public, everyone, to engage in transparent, informed and sustained democratic debate” (CRIS, 2005, p.40). This focuses on issues such as freedom of expression, freedom of opinion, and the right to freely engage in political conversations. The second

pillar, Communication Knowledge for Creativity and Equity, is intended “to create a regime where creative ideas and knowledge are encouraged, that can be communicated as widely and freely as possible for education, enlightenment, practical application, entertainment and other uses” (*ibid.*). Included within this realm are issues such as access to information, knowledge production and education. The third pillar, Civil Rights in Communication, focuses on “ensuring that civil rights associated with communication of all kinds are secured, and the need to protect the dignity and security of people in relation to the communication process” (*ibid.*). The role of civil rights in communication encompasses existing rights such as privacy, and freedom from surveillance, and guarantees that civil liberties are extended to the realm of communication. The fourth and final pillar, Cultural Rights in Communication, focuses on “enabling the communication of diverse cultures, cultural forms and identities at the individual and social levels” (CRIS, 2005, p.41). This particular aspect of communication is centered on the diversification of communication processes and content to adequately represent all societies, languages, and religions.

The CRIS Handbook was primarily created as a tool for assessing the status of communication rights in a given region (CRIS, 2005, p.8). However, for the purposes of this thesis, I will use the four pillars outlined in the Handbook as the framework for understanding communication as a social value. As a collective, these pillars serve as a more concrete method for measuring and defining Hamelink’s conceptualization of communication as an interactive process. While these elements of communication are defined by CRIS in the terminology of rights, they are also congruent with Sen’s understandings of development as freedom – if existing communication rights are

implemented and respected, and individuals and citizens are able to exercise these rights, this further expands their freedoms and brings them closer to achieving development.

Methodology

This project seeks to examine GAID's understanding of communication within ICT4D. To this end, I will utilize a framing analysis to identify how key concepts are framed within the organization. In so doing, I hope to gain greater insight into the ways in which these types of primary frameworks collectively serve to construct the overall belief system of a group (Goffman, 1974, p.27). More specifically, by examining how GAID frames ICTs and development, I hope to critically assess how this rhetorically manifests the organization's overall understanding of communication and its importance vis-à-vis development.

According to Erving Goffman, frames are "schemata of interpretation" (1974, p. 21) through which individuals are able to "locate, perceive, identify, and label" the world around them (1974, p.21). Building upon Goffman's notion, Robert Entman explains that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (1993, p.52). Entman states that in addition to defining problems, frames are also able to diagnose causes, make moral judgments, or suggest remedies (1993, p.52), all of which are highly relevant to not only GAID's discourse, but also to its overall mandate. Importantly, Entman contends that framing is a deliberate process – frames are defined not only by what they include, but also by what they omit (1993, p.54). As such,

this project will examine GAID's framing not only through what it contains within its documentation, but also by what it fails or chooses not to include.

To examine how GAID frames the role of communication within ICT4D I will assess the organization's public discourse. To do this, I will first conduct a framing analysis of documents published by GAID since its inception in 2006. This will provide a clear understanding of how GAID does, or does not, discuss issues of communication, development, and ICTs. I will then compare the findings of this analysis to critical literature on the topic in order to understand the similarities and discrepancies between how the organization frames these issues and the frames used by scholars and development practitioners. By situating GAID within broader development, communication and ICT4D discourse, this examination will help to draw attention to specific areas that could better utilize communication as a means to, and end of development.

The reasons for selecting GAID as the organization to be examined are threefold. First, GAID was chosen because it is self-professed to be the think-tank on ICT4D issues for the UN and all of its affiliated organizations, making it a major player in ICT4D policy and discourse. Second, GAID adheres to a multi-stakeholder structure, incorporating voices from around the globe. As such, the organization *should* be a reasonable representation of global ICT4D discourse, integrating varying perspectives and politics. Although it is yet to be seen if this will actually be possible, this organization remains the closest to creating a worldwide forum for debating issues of ICTs within development, with the potential to challenge existing frameworks with new and innovative ideas. Third, a preliminary assessment of GAID's literature suggests that the organization has failed to

provide any real discussion of the role of communication within development. Instead, it focuses heavily on the role of information and technology, and overlooks the potential for interactive communication as a means to development. As there is yet to be any critical assessment of GAID's publications or its framing of communication, this project hopes to open the door to exploring both the shortcomings and potential of this organization within this area.

The specific documents being examined in this study include GAID's primary publications, its website, and its press releases. The timeframe extends from the organization's inauguration in 2006 through to April, 2011. All of GAID's own publications are available for free download from its website. These documents include best practices guides for implementing ICT4D initiatives, handbooks for integrating private sector partners into development projects, and overviews of GAID as an organization. Although the resources made available by the organization also contain a number of publications provided by some of its individual stakeholders or partner organizations, this project is restricting its examination to those that are explicitly produced and endorsed by GAID. Not only would the inclusion of these additional documents increase the size of this project beyond what is manageable, but this project aims to first assess how the organization itself views communication, rather than opening the discussion to examine the intricacies and disparities between its members' views. In examining the content from GAID's website², this project hopes to include more up-to-

² <http://www.un-gaid.org>

date information and communication from the organization than is available through its publications, which take longer to produce. The website also contains information about ongoing events and projects which are not discussed elsewhere.

Finally, it must be noted that while there is little news coverage about GAID, the majority of public attention it did garner occurred at the time the organization was established. As a result, the materials available are not an accurate measure of its current work, as they are primarily in reference to the organization before it was created and developed its own framework. Although an examination of press releases and news coverage is particularly critical to understanding how the organization is explicitly trying to position itself to the public, as well as how it is being received, this media is not an accurate reflection of the organization once it was formed.

Although it would be worth examination in the future, this project will not examine the organization's social media engagement, such as its Facebook and Twitter profiles, as typically only a single individual manages these within an organization, and this amount of content is also beyond the scope of this project.

The secondary analysis of this project will examine the findings of the critical discourse analysis, and will be utilized to situate GAID within the fields of critical development communication, ICT4D, and communication rights. This comparison will serve to highlight the similarities and disparities between GAID and scholarly literature on the topics, and illuminate discrepancies between the issues' theory and praxis.

Research Questions

In particular, this study specifically seeks to answer the following questions:

- How does GAID frame ICTs?
- How does GAID frame development?
- How does GAID frame communication, and how does this compare to rights-based communication discourse?
- How does the framing of each of these terms relate to or influence one another?
- How does GAID's framing of all three of these concepts (ICTs, development, communication) work together to frame its understanding of the role of ICTs within the context of development?

Through answering these questions, this project aims to better understand the role that GAID plays within ICT4D discourse, and help highlight the importance of communication within development.

GAID uses two major frames throughout its publications: technology, and development. Through breaking down these two frames within GAID's work, this examination hopes to uncover the ways that these frames are not only influencing the organization's views of technology, and development, but also how they are influencing the role of communication within GAID, and broader ICT4D discourse.

The following chapter will outline the historical progression of the UN's relationship with communication issues. This will help to contextualize GAID leading to the subsequent two chapters, which will analyze the organization's framings of technology, and development, respectively.

Chapter Two: An Historical and Structural Overview of GAID

The Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID) was developed as the result of a long-standing relationship between the United Nations (UN) and issues of international communication. This chapter traces the historical progression of the UN's ongoing connections to communication, human rights, and development, beginning with World War II through to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). It illustrates how GAID was created as a result of the WSIS process and explains the development and structure of the Alliance. This contextual understanding of GAID as an organization helps to identify how and why the organization's framework and positions on development are defined and created.

The United Nations and Communication

The United Nations' relationship with communication dates back to the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The most commonly recognized human right from the UDHR associated with communication is Article 19, particularly the right to freedom of expression³. However, attention has since been drawn to the rights to privacy (Article 12), religion (Article 18), information (Article 19), education (Article 26), culture (Article 27), and political participation (Article 21), as

³ Article 19 states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (United Nations General Assembly, 1949).

they also pertain to the overall conditions required for facilitating communication both between individuals and collectives (CRIS, 2005, pp.42-44).

As early as 1946, even before the UN had adopted the UDHR, the United States led the movement for a 'free flow of information' to open the international flows of media (Carlsson, 2005, pp.193-194). This idea was initially met with international enthusiasm, as it stood to challenge the propaganda and censorship that prevailed throughout the war era (Carlsson, 2003, pp.34-35). This period also heralded technological progress in the area of communications as the means to spread information, knowledge and understanding between nations (Carlsson, 2005, p.193). The modernization paradigm was gaining prominence throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as Western nations were increasingly gaining control over media and communication technologies. In particular, commercial trans-national media systems were using satellite technologies to reach new markets in developing regions, while primarily broadcasting Western content and values (Shade, 2004, p.81). This, in tandem with the mandate of a free flow of information, provided the West with both the tools and power to quickly develop control over the majority of content being broadcast worldwide.

The Non-Aligned Movement and the Call for a New World Information Communication Order

Throughout the 1960s, Western nations continued to expand their reach and control over international news media outlets and technologies. As a result, developing nations were growing increasingly frustrated with their own weakening political and economic control. In this post-colonial era, developing regions strongly believed that political, economic,

and cultural autonomy for all states must be obtained in order to truly achieve independence (Padovani, 2005, p.317). In 1972, these developing nations banded together to create the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), an alliance of countries that refused to take the side of either the United States or the USSR in the Cold War (Mueller *et al*, 2007, p.271). The first official assembly of this alliance, The Non-Aligned Movement Summit, took place in Algiers in 1973 and declared that ““the activities of imperialism are not confined solely to the political and economic fields, but also cover the cultural and social fields’ calling for ‘concerted action in the fields of mass communication’” (Padovani & Nordenstreng, 2005, p.264). Although there was great concern with the economic and political control that Western nations were gaining, NAM was particularly wary of the amount of power that Western nations had over the international flows of media and how this media control was influencing information and cultural practices around the globe.

Shortly after the UN adopted the New International Economic Order (NIEO)⁴ in 1974, the non-aligned countries expanded their demands to include a New International Information Order (NIIO). The call for a NIIO addressed the role of information and mass media in the development process and the international flows of media between industrialized and third world countries (Carlsson, 2003, p.38-39). Developing countries were particularly resentful of the way the renowned ‘free flow of information’ doctrine

⁴ The intention of the NIEO was to alter the economic relations between the global North and South, through the use of treaties and the redistribution of wealth. However, this was greatly protested by the Western nations who failed to see how this could aid their own economic growth (Weiss *et al*, 2010, pp.262).

was in its execution actually only a ‘one-way flow’, strictly perpetuating the dissemination of news and information from developed to developing nations (Carlsson, 2003, p.38). As a result, the nations of NAM “rejected the free flow doctrine, viewing it as a rationalization for dominance of international media systems by Western, mainly American, commercial interests” (Mueller *et al*, 2007, p.271). The call for a NIIO, which shortly thereafter became the New World Information Communication Order (NWICO), challenged the information flows controlled by the West and proposed greater protection of developing nations’ communication abilities (Mansell & Nordenstreng, 2006, p.23).

At the heart of the NWICO debates was the call from developing nations for the implementation of a universal right to communicate. This proposed new human right was first put forward in 1969 by Jean D’Arcy, who was at the time working in television in France and also serving as an official at the U.N. Office of Public Information (Mueller *et al*, 2007, p.270). D’Arcy recognized the ways that the developments of new technologies were making it possible for people to interactively participate in social processes (Mueller *et al*, 2007, p.270). Of particular interest to him was how satellite technologies provided the potential to challenge the independence of the communications services and processes of individual nations. Recognizing the power that these technologies could provide (the already dominant) Western media, D’Arcy posited that freedom of expression was not a sufficient right, and that the recognition of a right to communicate as a fundamental human right was the only way to ensure communication equality. As a result, he called for the recognition and protection of people’s rights to participate in communication and decision-making processes.

The NWICO proposal was officially introduced at the UNESCO General Assembly in the mid-1970s and remained in debate through to the mid-1980s (Pickard, 2007, p.122). With key issues including imbalanced media flows, satellite broadcasting regulations, and the protection of journalists, the call for a NWICO created a large divide between industrialized Western nations and members of NAM. This proposal was strongly rejected by Western nations and journalists, and the World Press Freedom Committee in particular, which feared that the need to present more balanced flows of information would serve to strengthen state control over media and threaten the independence of journalists and news media (Mueller *et al*, 2007, p.272). While NAM hoped that a NWICO would bring more balanced flows of information and regulations to prevent the overpowering of local media by international media outlets, it met a great deal of opposition from the West. In particular, the United States and the United Kingdom's objections to NWICO were based in the "myth that NWICO wanted to enforce journalist licenses and other heavy-handed state interventions against freedom of the press" (Pickard, 2007, p.131). Although this was never the intention of NWICO, as its mandate was not to constrict the power of existing media outlets, but rather to provide agency to the less powerful, the US' arguments have since been attributed to its larger contestation of the economic limitations that this would place upon its internationally dominant media outlets. Also problematic within the NWICO debates was the unresolved issue over whether this right would serve to protect individuals or collectives, an issue that was being debated even amongst NWICO advocates.

In 1972, members of NAM created the Declaration on Mass Media, in an attempt to provide the means to achieving a NWICO. The Declaration highlighted the important

changes required within the existing media structures to produce the power shift that NAM was seeking (Pickard, 2007, p.123). The final version of the Declaration was presented to UNESCO in 1978 and after some debate was adopted by the General Assembly (Mansell & Nordenstreng, 2007, p.22). Amongst a number of other articles, the final version of the adopted Declaration states, “[i]t is important that a free flow and wider and better balanced dissemination of information be encouraged” (UNESCO, 1978). Although this directly addressed the free flow doctrine, as well as a number of the other demands from non-aligned countries, this final version adopted by the General Assembly was much more watered-down than the original wording proposed by NAM and was too vague to be very effective (Pickard, 2007, p. 123).

MacBride Commission

To elaborate on continuing calls for a right to communicate, and settle the increasing arguments regarding control over mass media, information and communication, UNESCO created the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems in 1978 (Mueller *et al*, 2007, p.272). Sean MacBride, the commission’s chair, was an Irish politician, founding member of Amnesty International, and a Nobel laureate (Becker & Nordenstreng, 1992). The Commission (also known as the MacBride Commission) consisted of fifteen members in addition to MacBride, each from different countries, and all representing their own individual views, not those of their nations

(MacBride, 1980)⁵. The group set out to address the full spectrum of global communication problems, particularly within the context of a New International Economic Order, and the potential for a New World Information Order (Carlsson, 2003, p.42). Specifically, the MacBride Commission had four main priorities set out by the Director General of UNESCO:

(a) to study the current situation in the fields of communication and information and to identify problems which call for fresh action at the national level and a concerted, overall approach at the international level. The analysis of the state of communication in the world today, and particularly of information problems as a whole, should take account of the diversity of socio-economic conditions and levels and types of development;

(b) to pay particular attention to problems relating to the free and balanced flow of information in the world, as well as the specific needs of developing countries, in accordance with the decisions of the General Conference;

(c) to analyse communication problems, in their different aspects, within the perspective of the establishment of a new international economic order and of the measures to be taken to foster the institution of a 'new world information order';

(d) to define the role which communication might play in making public opinion aware of the major problems besetting the world, in sensitizing it to these problems and helping gradually to solve them by concerted action at the national and international levels (MacBride, 1980, p.42).

In 1980, the Commission's final report, *Many Voices, One World* (also known as *The MacBride Report*), was presented to the UNESCO General Assembly (Pickard, 2007, p.123). The report's recommendations are grouped into four key points: the independence

⁵ The committee members were: Eli Abel (USA); Hubert Beuve-Méry (France); Elebe Ma Ekonzo (Zaire); Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Colombia); Sergei Losev (USSR); Mochtar Lubis (Indonesia); Mustapha Masmoudi (Tunisia); Michio Nagai (Japan); Fred Isaac Akporuaro Omu (Nigeria); Bogdan Osolnik (Yugoslavia); Gamal El Oteifi (Egypt); Johannes Pieter Pronk (Netherlands); Juan Somavia (Chile); Boobli George Verghese (India); Betty Zimmerman (Canada).

and development of third-world countries; improved conditions and ethics for journalists; the democratization of communication; and the development of international cooperation (Carlsson, 2003, p.46). The most controversial of these recommendations was that of democratizing communication, which included the call to recognize a universal right to communicate. The report put forward that a right to communicate, if recognized as a universal human right, would require the inclusion of numerous other related communication rights to clarify the various elements involved in democratizing communication (MacBride, 1980, p.173). The specific elements of such a right included “the right to be informed, the right to inform, the right to privacy, the right to participate in public communication” (*ibid.*). In addition to providing a working frame for a right to communicate, the report highlighted the need to look beyond the strictly quantitative democratization of communication, to understand the underlying intention of such a right – to allow the equal exchange of information, without any dominance over, or discrimination against, weaker actors (*ibid.*). The report also problematized the strong corporate dominance of a select few corporations over international mass media that was creating a top-down flow of information (Carlsson, 2003, p.44).

Shortly after its publication, the MacBride Report was left off the official agenda of UNESCO’s General Assembly in 1980, but was still integrated into the debate by individual members (Carlsson, 2005, p.200). At its conclusion, the General Assembly produced ‘the MacBride Resolution,’ which outlined the makings of a New World Information Communication Order. However, this Resolution contained only a number of watered-down elements of the MacBride Report’s original recommendations (Carlsson, 2005, p.200). One of the biggest difficulties that the members faced was trying to reach

an agreement on defining what would constitute a right to communicate, which they ultimately failed to do. Instead, the report focused primarily on development and aid – to the disappointment of the non-aligned nations (Carlsson, 2005, p.200). Unfortunately, despite the work of the commission, the recommendations of the MacBride Report, and the NWICO that had been agreed upon at the General Assembly, these recommendations went largely unheeded due to the controversy they caused – particularly, in how they upset the organization’s more powerful Western members (Carlsson, 2003, p.48). In protest of the NWICO debates, the findings of the MacBride Commission, and the threats this discourse placed to their national interests, the United States resigned its position within UNESCO in 1984 and was soon followed by the United Kingdom and Singapore in 1985 (Pickard, 2007, p.124; Leye, 2007, p.988). Losing such a large portion of its funding from these resigned nations, UNESCO allowed NWICO to fade off of its agenda in 1987, instead returning its central focus to the free flow model in an attempt to avoid further controversy and prevent any additional damage to future funding and operations (O Siochrú, 2004, pp.208-209).

GAID Predecessors: The Evolution of ICT4D

Following the breakdown of the NWICO debates, the United Nations remained relatively silent on issues of international communication flows, rights, and media throughout the 1990s. With the debates having concluded, but the problems they addressed still very much alive, the MacBride Round Table was originally created in 1987 with the support of NAM, as an annual forum to continue to discuss the problems addressed in the NWICO debates (Roach, n.d.). Meeting from 1987-1999, the MacBride Round Table consisted primarily of journalists, academics and some members of civil society (O

Siochrú, 2004, p.210). However, in addition to these meetings, a number of other NGOs and civil society organizations began to meet on their own to discuss ways of resolving the information, communication, and media challenges they continued to face (*ibid.*).

During this decade, the Internet and digital technologies were rapidly infiltrating developed nations and changing the face of information and communication. However, with the relative silence of international bodies on issues of communication, the Internet's benefits were presented with a focus on the potential of the technologies and the information they provided access to, instead of the potential they provided people and the communications that they facilitated. It was not until the end of the millennium when the Internet had largely saturated the Western market that any significant attention was given to ways that these Internet technologies could be expanded to the developing world. ICTs' role in developing nations became tied to issues of information, networking and the need for these ICTs to achieve progress, and was distinctly removed from the rights-based discourse that was so prevalent throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

DOT Force

After first addressing the digital divide between individuals within their own countries (Gunkel, 2003, p.502), developed nations realized the existence of broader international technological disparities and the potential benefits of developing regions adopting these same technologies. At the 2000 G8 Summit in Okinawa, Japan, G8 nations directly addressed the role of technological disparities in economic development, creating the Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force) (Shade, 2003, p.107). This task force was created to understand how to best overcome the digital divide and utilize digital

technologies as a means to achieving development (Mansell, 2002, p.413). In particular, the group was focused on the “role of new media in enabling productivity and efficiency gains in the economies and regions that are disadvantaged” (*ibid.*). It is through this lens that the DOT Force operated, listing four priority areas for its focus: fostering policy, regulatory and network readiness; improving connectivity, increasing access and lowering costs; building human capacity; and encouraging participation in global e-commerce networks (Shade, 2003, pp.109-110).

The task force only operated for one year and presented its final report, *Digital Opportunities for All: Meeting the Challenge*, in July 2001 (Mansell, 2002, p.413). The report first summarizes the reasons DOT Force believed the implementation of ICTs in development to be important, such as overcoming time and space to connect remote regions to the global economy (DOT Force, 2001). As well, in addition to the explication of the digital divide, the task force also included a specific plan for bridging it: *The Genoa Plan of Action* (*ibid.*). The specifics for this plan focused on the ways that ICTs can be better integrated into developing nations and what uses of ICTs should be promoted – with a specific focus on their use for health care, entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth (*ibid.*).

Through this integration of health care and knowledge sharing, the report attempted to incorporate elements of development beyond simply economic growth. It also called for the implementation of effective policies to ensure the proper use of these ICTs, recognizing the potential limitations or downfalls of their deployment.

Although ICT are a potentially valuable tool in addressing these more fundamental divides, their contribution to development is not automatic. ICT, by

themselves, might either widen or narrow these divides. Mitigating potentially negative impacts (e.g. decreased competitiveness of particular sectors and processes), integrating ICT into national development priorities, securing the public policy environment are crucial in assuring positive outcomes. There is also an urgent need to identify specific initiatives that will have the greatest development impact and genuinely improve the livelihoods of poor people (DOT Force, 2001).

Unfortunately, although the Task Force did note the potential detrimental impacts of these technologies, it was limited to an economic frame, restricting its examples of potential difficulties to market competition. In so doing, the organization remained rooted in its economic perspective, as it overlooked the way that these technologies could also infringe upon other aspects of development, such as human rights and freedoms. As such, overall the Task Force was seen to be a perpetuation of the modernization paradigm in its rhetoric and positioning of technology (Shade, 2005, p.115). However, the DOT Force does mark the starting point for international adoption of ICTs as a means of achieving development and served to set the tone for the organizations and initiatives that followed its lead.

Millennium Development Goals

With the arrival of the new millennium, shortly after the announcement of the DOT Force, the UN convened to develop a strategy to eradicate poverty around the world, understanding that such an achievement would require a truly global effort. The resulting Millennium Declaration, adopted on September 8, 2000, announced the eight global Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which aim to eradicate poverty by the year

2015 (United Nations General Assembly, 2000)⁶. The MDGs have played a particularly strong role in framing development discourse over the past decade, as they have served as the central focus for all of the UN's initiatives. As a result, they have concentrated the attention of corresponding member nations and have influenced the way that funding is allocated.

The majority of the eight MDGs are focused on creating economic developments or progress in health care availability and practices. It is through the inclusion of the MDGs' 21st target⁷ that the introduction and dissemination of ICTs has also been declared to be one of the key means to achieving development, therefore helping to bring ICT initiatives further into the global development spotlight. The specific measurements for the 21st target are the number of telephone lines, cellular subscribers, and Internet users per capita (UNDP, n.d.). This particular understanding of technology as measured by penetration rates is in close alignment with the focus of DOT Force, as it privileges access to technologies over the full breadth of use that these technologies could provide.

Since their inception, the MDGs have faced a great deal of criticism. The Goals have been challenged for having unrealistically lofty aims, which are unrealistic given their

⁶ The eight Millennium Development Goals are: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Achieve universal primary education; Promote gender equality and empower women; Reduce child mortality; Improve maternal health; Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; Ensure environmental sustainability; Develop a global partnership for development.

⁷ The 21st target is "In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications" (UNDP, 2011), and is situated within the 8th development goal.

timeline. The financial contributions required of both donor and developing nations have also been considered to be unreasonably high and unrealistic (Clemens, Kenny & Moss, 2007, p. 736-737). In addition, the MDGs have also been critiqued for their approach to development itself, limiting the notion to the understanding of development as outlined by developed regions, and failing to integrate human rights into the definition of development.

The MDGs are a careful restatement of poverty-related development challenges, in language that avoids reference to rights; they are a donor country interpretation of the key issues, for a donor-country audience. Rights-based approaches, by contrast, seek to link the development enterprise to social movements' demands for human rights and inclusion, and to tie development to the rhetorical and legal power of internationally recognized human rights (Nelson, 2007, p.2041).

Through this distinction between poverty-related and rights-based development, the ways that the MDGs privilege economics as the means to achieving development can be more clearly seen. As ICTs were included as a means to facilitate their achievement, the MDGs' failure to recognize broader rights-based development not only limits the overall understanding of development, but also inhibits the ways that ICTs are to be used in a development context, constraining them to the foci privileged within the Goals.

Despite the above criticisms surrounding the MDGs, they did aid in revitalizing discourse around information flows, media technology, and communication rights. The MDGs have also been praised for how they “explicitly commit world leaders to a collective responsibility for all people irrespective of national borders” (Fukuda-Parr, 2004, p.397). Through this collective global effort, the MDGs have shared responsibilities of aid, trade, debt relief, technologies and knowledge transfer, amongst both developing and developed nations, as a part of achieving the eighth goal. However, it is important to note that in

contrast to the specific targets provided to developing regions in the first seven goals, the specific responsibilities, indicators and targets for developed regions to achieve this goal are unclear (Fukuda-Parr, 2004, p.398).

Despite the progress that has already been made in achieving a number of the different MDGs in developing regions, there remains great doubt that they will be fully realized by their target of 2015. Even the UN has noted the difficulties, recognizing that “[t]hough progress has been made, it is uneven. And without a major push forward, many of the MDG targets are likely to be missed in most regions. Old and new challenges threaten to further slow progress in some areas or even undo successes achieved so far” (United Nations, 2010, p.4). There are a number of different reasons why the MDGs have been seen to be problematic, ranging from beliefs that the goals were too high to start, or they were not the right goals to focus on (Nelson, 2007, p. 2047). What remains clear is that the UN’s, and ultimately the global development community’s, primary focus has been on the achievement of these globally recognized goals, once more undercutting broader social and cultural rights in favour of economic progress. The MDGs have remained at the center of development discourse over the past decade and will continue to remain a central goal until their mandate expires, in 2015.

ICT Task Force

In 2001, as an extension of the MDGs, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for the development of the Information Communication Technologies Task Force (ICT Task Force), the role of which was to help foster international ICT4D policies that would work to support the eradication of poverty (GAID, 2007b, p.v). The primary focus of the Task

Force was to aid in developing policies that would support the access and use of ICTs as means to support to access to information and education beneficial to creating economic development (ICT Task Force, 2006). Building on the global cooperation emphasized in the MDGs, the structure of the Task Force was the UN's starting point towards incorporating equality and participation in the decision making process, serving as "the first UN body where all members had equal decision making power" (GAID, 2007a, p.6).

The ICT Task Force was only intended to last for two years, with its mandate expiring in 2003. However, due to the overwhelming amount of work to be done in preparation for WSIS, and the large role that it was playing in the WSIS process, the ICT Task Force ended up extending its mandate an additional two years, until the end of 2005 (GAID, 2007b, p.v).

WSIS: The Call for a Global Vision on the Information Society

After remaining relatively low on the international agenda following the NWICO debates, media, information and communication issues rose to the international spotlight once more through the growth of the Internet and debates about its governance. In 1998, the UN's International Telecommunications Union (ITU) proposed that a World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) should be held to address these issues (Pickard, 2007, p.124). The summit was held in two parts: in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2003, and in Tunis, Tunisia in November 2005. The focus of this summit was "to 'define a common vision of the information society' and to find ways to overcome the digital divide within the UN Millennium Goals" (Padovani & Nordenstreng, 2005, p.265). As stated in the Declaration of Principles:

We, the representatives of the peoples of the world, assembled in Geneva from 10-12 December 2003 for the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, declare our common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (WSIS, 2003, p.1).

The summit sought to address Internet-related issues such as Internet governance, security, free and open software, communication rights, intellectual property, human rights, and finances (Pickard, 2007, p.124-125).

Of particular importance within the WSIS process was that, in a new approach to international governance, it was the first time that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were offered a formal and open invitation to a UN summit (Padovani & Nordenstreng, 2005, p.268). While critics note that there was frequently only a minimal exchange between civil society and governments (Hamelink, 2004, p.282), this was still a positive step towards creating a democratic forum for international communications discourse. Although it was not always included in the official Summit debates, civil society played a particularly strong role in reintroducing the concept of a right to communicate to international debate, particularly through the Communication Rights for the Information Society (CRIS) campaign (Hamelink, 2005, p.28).

WSIS presented the opportunity to directly tackle the challenges of information and communication in the context of technology, although the Summit has faced a great deal of criticism in both its planning and execution from communication rights advocates. One of the most common critiques of WSIS was its ahistorical approach to development,

which is clearly reminiscent of previous NWICO debates. While the specific actors and issues had changed, the underlying political, technological, and social roots of the debates remained closely linked (Padovani & Nordenstreng, 2005). Although this may have been an attempt to avoid the controversy of NWICO, it served as a disservice to the potential for true progress to be made in international communications policy and discourse (Hamelink, 2004).

The second key critique of WSIS was the strong emphasis it placed on technical standards of communication, as it failed to address the larger political and cultural factors that influence communication and information exchange (Hamelink, 2004; Padovani and Nordenstreng, 2004; Pickard, 2007). The historical narrowing in focus from political and cultural debates to technical regulations can also be seen through the UN's affiliations with the debates themselves. While NWICO was addressed and debated through UNESCO, which is responsible for social and cultural issues, WSIS was directly affiliated with the ITU, a strong indication that WSIS was restricted from the outset to focus solely on the technical elements of telecommunication (Pickard, 2007, p.130). WSIS' technical focus placed too much confidence in the transformative abilities of technologies. "A common assumption in much of the WSIS discourse is that ICTs have a power that can advance human development and that human potential can be achieved through ICTs and access to knowledge" (Hamelink, 2004, p.287). Highly technologically deterministic, this ideology underpins a great deal of the discourse that took place at WSIS, perpetuating the same ideologies that were at the root of modernization theory in the 1960s, and served as the basis for the NWICO debates. While it appeared as though the UN's intention was to avoid reopening the debates from the NWICO and MacBride

era, a number of external actors rose to action, challenging the neo-modernization discourse that was taking place within WSIS with complete disregard for its historical similarities to NWICO.

Although at first met with great criticism, particularly from the World Press Freedom Committee, the reintroduction of the notion of a human right to communicate did garner some strong support throughout the WSIS process (Hamelink, 2005, p.28). Particularly, the endorsement gained from the UN Secretary General on World Telecommunications Day (UN, 2003) and the large number of references to human rights within the Declaration of Principles (WSIS, 2003) both emphasized the increasing acceptance of communication as having a fundamental role in human development, and the need to accept it as such. Although there were a number of key governance issues addressed throughout the WSIS summit, there was great difficulty in achieving consensus on these topics. This is perhaps best summarized by Cees Hamelink, who noted, “The final Declaration of the WSIS commences with the aspiration of a common vision. The end result is however a blurred confusion” (2004, p.281). However, despite disagreements, and a lack of focus, one common principle that remains constant throughout is WSIS’ strong conclusion that the information society should be inclusive and accessible to all. This serves as the foundation for the projects and initiatives that succeeded it (Hamelink, 2004, pp.286-287).

GAID: A Global Alliance to Culminate Decades of Debate

At the conclusion of WSIS, there were two main issues that clearly still needed to be addressed: Internet governance and international technological disparities. To address

issues of Internet governance and control, the UN created the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in an attempt to provide transparency and more international democratic regulation over the Internet. This was intended to remove some of the power from the US-based private non-profit iCANN, which then had complete control over the assignment of IP addresses and domain names. As such, the IGF was “created to encourage an “evolutionary process” toward a more multilateral governance structure” (Pickard, 2007, p.128). With regards to the second issue – technological disparities, information flows, and communication rights – the UN had the opportunity to directly address these issues with a new initiative, incorporating all of the lessons learned throughout the WSIS process. As the UN’s ICT Task Force’s mandate was expiring at the end of 2005 alongside the culmination of WSIS (ICT Task Force, 2006), the stage was set for a new organization to spearhead the UN’s engagement with ICT4D. In 2006, these issues came to all be directly addressed through the creation of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID).

Inaugurated in 2006, GAID positions itself as a response “to the need and demand for an inclusive global forum and platform for cross-sectoral policy dialogue on the use of ICT for enhancing the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, notably reduction of poverty” (GAID, n.d.). GAID’s creation was intended to create the ideal international forum for issues of ICTs and development, operating in a participatory manner as an extension of the UN’s engagement with civil society that began through WSIS. Functioning as a “decentralized network of forums, institutions and think-tanks” (GAID, 2007b, p.11), GAID serves as a locus to bring global ideas and partners together, operating as a think-tank on issues related to ICT4D, and works to strengthen the

activities of both the UN and external organizations by fostering discourse and collaboration (GAID, 2007b, p.10). However, without any mandate to enter into ICT4D operations, GAID does not have any direct policy-making functions (GAID, 2007b, p.10). The Alliance instead aims to mainstream ICT into the broader UN development agenda, to effectively integrate ICT as a tool for development overall, as opposed to its previous positioning as operating within a silo, separately from other development discourse (GAID, n.d.).

As an organization, GAID utilizes a multi-stakeholder approach, inviting individuals, corporations, and NGOs from around the world to contribute to its dialogue, forums, and publications. Stressing that it provides an open and inclusive platform for discourse surrounding a plethora of ICT issues, GAID believes that it is effectively incorporating the notion that “a people-centered and knowledge-based information society is essential for achieving better life for all” (GAID, n.d.). Structurally, the Alliance is comprised of a Steering Committee, Strategy Council, a High-Level Panel of Advisors, and a Champions Network (GAID, 2007b, pp.21-25). While the first three are all comprised of UN, NGO, and corporate executives, the Champions Network consists of ICT practitioners, academics, and community leaders working at the grassroots level implementing ICT projects in a development setting. Members of the Champions Network are selected for a two-year renewable term, as invited by GAID’s Executive Coordinator, in consultation with the Alliance’s Chairman (GAID, n.d.). Members are explicitly selected based on their commitment to champion and support the mission and objectives of GAID, through both their personal work, and affiliations (GAID, n.d.). Through this Network, as well as

the open invitation to outside participation, GAID positions itself as a participation-based multi-stakeholder partnership.

In its relationship to the UN, GAID is situated under the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which performs annual reviews of GAID's operations and performance (GAID, n.d.). The organization is entirely donor-funded, accepting both financial and in-kind donations to support its operations (*ibid.*). GAID's NGO, NPO, and government donors include The United Kingdom and Ireland's Building and Social Housing Foundation (BSHF), Venezuela's Fundación Cisneros, Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Finland, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Its corporate donors include Cisco Systems, Ericsson, Intel Corporation, and the Inter-American Development Bank (*ibid.*). The Alliance's financial resources are held in a trust fund managed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and are located in the Office of the Under-Secretary General of DESA (*ibid.*).

GAID does not explicitly outline the target audience for its work and discourse, other than its direct role in working to support the UN's development work. However, it should be noted that all of the Alliance's publications, including its website, are only available in English. In addition, the authors of GAID's publications include corporate executives, leaders of NGOs, and UN officials, speaking about why they believe ICTs to be of critical importance to development. Yet there are very few voices present from the developing world. In particular there is no representation from those who have received, or are hoping to receive, ICT initiatives in their communities. As a result, it is highly unlikely that GAID is working to produce materials for potential recipients or participants

in ICT4D initiatives, but that it is instead targeting government agencies, development practitioners, or donors, particularly from English-speaking regions.

Conclusion

Understanding the context within which GAID developed is critical to understanding its potential value, its given limitations, and the political challenges it faces. The organization was not created on a whim or without knowledge of the history addressing issues of communication and technology within the context of developed and developing nations. When seen in perspective from its predecessors, GAID should be the culmination of a great deal of experience, knowledge, and collaboration, serving as the UN's best initiative to date for addressing technological disparities and impediments to communication rights. However, understanding the problems within the WSIS process, and the challenges that the UN faces in maintaining political stability, it is clear that GAID also faces a number of potential obstacles. Having yet to face any critical evaluation, it remains to be seen if GAID is actually aiding how power imbalances in communication are addressed, or if it is perpetuating the communication issues prevalent since the NWICO debates.

Through an analysis of GAID's work over the last five years, the following chapters will examine the discourse and framing that GAID is using to critically analyze its contributions to ICT4D and communications discourse. Chapter Three will begin by examining the organization's framing of technology and how this impacts the communicative capacities of these ICTs. Chapter Four will then explore how GAID is

framing the means to, and end of, development, and how this is structuring the role that communication and technologies play in the development process.

Chapter Three: Technology and ICTs – The Great Equalizers

GAID has the potential to play a large role in shaping ICT4D discourse through its global reach, extensive partnerships, and affiliation with the UN. As such, the ways that it defines and frames ICTs are incredibly important to understand. This chapter will open with an examination of how GAID positions ICTs within broader digital divide discourse, and will then explore how the organization defines ICTs to gain a better understanding of what role(s) these technologies are seen to play in development. The chapter will then turn to highlight the ways information is framed, and how this framing impacts the types of uses for which ICTs are intended. Finally, the chapter examines how communication is framed as a result of these previous definitions, and how this compares to rights-based communication discourse. By analyzing GAID's definitions and framing of these key concepts, we gain valuable insight into how they shape the organization's contribution to development discourse writ large.

It is important to note that GAID's documents are not written by a single author, but are the result of collaboration between a number of individual authors operating as subject matter experts, with each author expressing his or her own opinions and perspectives.

Though GAID makes note that the views of the authors do not necessarily reflect those of the organization, it operates as a multi-stakeholder collective, working to incorporate the voices of multiple actors in the ICT4D field. Given this, the following examination serves to highlight the overall themes represented across GAID's various authors and documents. While the individual authors occasionally present varying or conflicting viewpoints, together they represent the larger ICT4D discourse within the development

community. If, as per its stated goal, GAID *is* a collaboration of a global network of development practitioners and stakeholders, then its publications should address the strengths and critiques of mainstream development discourse to provide the most valuable role for ICTs in helping to improve the lives of others.

Digital Divides: The barrier to progress?

Within ICT4D discourse, the ‘digital divide’ serves as the primary frame for the implementation of new technologies, and GAID's publications are closely aligned with this perspective. In congruence with early academic and policy discourse in this area, GAID positions the divide as a separation between those *with* and *without* access to ICTs. The organization’s understanding of the digital divide remains very centered around access to technology as a binary issue, with a clear cut yes or no answer. Once ICTs are in place, users are shifted to the other side of the divide and thus effectively ‘bridged’. Importantly, the differences between the most advanced technological users and beginner users, or those with older/out-of-date technologies, are not addressed within GAID’s working understanding of the digital divide.

Referring to the digital divide as “the new poverty of our era” (GAID, 2007b, p.36), GAID positions “digital exclusion” (GAID, 2007c, p.117) as one of the key issues in development. It is seen to be a global issue – “[a] digital divide threatens us all” (GAID, 2007c, p.10) – that threatens the benefits of globalization. GAID’s documents overwhelmingly frame this digital divide as the result of the rapid technological progress in the West with which developing regions simply cannot keep up. While GAID primarily positions the gap between those with and those without access to ICTs as the

foremost problem of development, it also references other development divides that need to be addressed. These disparities include educational divides (GAID, 2009b), geographic divides between rural and urban areas (GAID, 2009a, p.16), and gender divides (GAID, 2007c, pp.74-76). Yet, GAID turns to technology to resolve these development disparities. By recognizing technology as a larger solution to other problems of development, GAID places the technological divide as a priority ahead of other social, cultural, and economic disparities – ICTs are framed as both the symbol of, and the catalyst for, development.

The need to expand the concept of the digital divide to recognize additional barriers to effectively utilizing technology, beyond simply access, is widely recognized within ICT4D scholarship. However, more critical academic and policy ICT4D discourse also posits there are more access disparities *within* the digital divide which contribute to ICT disparities. These include mental access, material access, skill access, and usage access (Fuchs & Horak, 2008, p.100), all of which are a result of other systemic issues within development. This type of ICT4D discourse recognizes the presence of multiple discrepancies beyond simply access to ICTs that can impact an individual's ability to use technology for personal and societal development goals. In contrast, GAID's perception of divides fails to, or chooses not to, acknowledge the larger systemic economic and political structures that create and sustain these divides, both within, and apart from the realm of technology.

As noted above, GAID's solution to technological disparities is largely presented through the metaphor of 'bridging the digital divide.' With its documents containing forty-two references to the digital divide and thirty-four references to bridging it, GAID indicates

that this 'gap' can be clearly overcome with the right tools. This bridge metaphor is rampant throughout both ICT4D literature and GAID's documents, and plays a significant role in shaping ICT4D projects. This can be clearly seen in the organization's statement that, "[t]he digital divide is a reality and we must work to bridge the gap" (GAID, 2007c, p.18), positioning technological disparities as the primary focus of GAID's operations. As a particularly salient example, GAID notes that "[t]he need to actively and collectively help bridge the ever-growing gap between the haves and have-nots of the world today must become an urgent priority if we are to establish the unity and solidarity that will ensure the prosperity of our own and future generations" (GAID, 2007c, p.113). This binary positioning of individuals on either side of the gap is equally problematic to the concept of a bridge, as the solution fails to address the disparities that will remain even if the digital divide is actually 'bridged.' For instance, access to ICTs will not necessarily increase the availability of water or food, or address socio-economic disparities between citizens. Additionally, even if this bridging of the gap does happen, disparities between the use, abilities, and the actual technologies being used will remain, as is currently exemplified in even the most developed nations, and technologies will continue to change.

Clearly, GAID views the concept of a digital divide within a bubble, failing to recognize the multivariate issues and context-specific conditions creating these disparities. By not addressing them apart from the larger systemic political, social, economic, and structural causes of the digital divide, this perspective positions technological disparities as an isolated problem. While the framing of development as a whole will be further explored in Chapter Four, GAID's narrow definition of the digital divide is important to note here

as it serves to outline and restrict the ways in which technology is viewed within the context of development. By oversimplifying this problem, GAID does not recognize the issues that will remain (or evolve) once its understanding of the access divide has been bridged.

ICTs: Technology as the Gateway to Development

With the digital divide framed as the ‘problem’ underpinning current issues of underdevelopment, GAID heralds ICTs as the ‘solution’. It describes ICTs as “a variety of media such as computers, satellite communication, radio, televisions, telecentres [sic], internet, mobile phones and emerging ways of using these technologies” (GAID, 2010b, p.1). Though GAID addresses each of these technologies in its definition, the majority of authors writing for GAID documents restrict their discussion to computers with Internet access, with a secondary focus placed on mobile phones. More ‘traditional’ one-way media, such as televisions and radios are generally referenced as afterthoughts or overlooked entirely, taking a backseat to newer, interactive digital technologies. Although there are benefits to adopting these interactive ICTs, this preference for newer technologies results in existing media often being undervalued and replaced with expensive alternatives.

Slightly overlapping with critical ICT4D discourse, GAID consistently refers to ICTs as a tool that can aid in empowering individuals to achieve development. The documents examined are filled with descriptions of ICTs as an “enabler” (GAID, 2009b, p.10), “tools to unleash the potential of the local citizens” (GAID, 2007b, p.viii), or a “strategic instrument” (GAID, 2007c, p.145), emphasizing the role of people in the use of these

technologies. With “the belief that a people-centered and knowledge-based information society is essential for achieving better life for all” (GAID, n.d.), GAID positions ICTs as an aid to help people facilitate economic and knowledge growth. Addressing the role that ICTs can play in education for example, GAID states, “by bridging the gap between the various groups, countries can make significant progress in eliminating the social and economic inequalities that are detrimental for sustainable development” (GAID, 2009b, p.4). Through this understanding of technology’s role as a tool in development, the procurement of ICTs is thereby seen to level “level playing field” in global development (GAID, 2009a, p.38; GAID, 2007c, p.xv).

This rhetoric is in close alignment with critical ICT4D scholarship, which is instrumentalist when examining the potential benefits of technologies, viewing the impact and influence of ICTs as dependent upon the ways that people choose to use them. However, while GAID’s language discusses technologies as tools for use in a development setting at great length on a surface level, in its deeper framing ICTs are positioned as though their implementation will automatically produce progress and development. The solutions exemplified by most of GAID’s authors imply a deterministic approach to technology; the majority of projects they discuss situate the implementation of ICTs as both the means and end to development, implying that with these technologies progress will automatically ensue.

Moreover, “compounded by the realistic fears that if not used properly, ICT can increase existing social and economic inequalities, particularly if access and use of ICTE is not

equally available to everyone” (GAID, 2009b, p.1)⁸. In a similar vein, recognizing both the enabling and “disabling” powers of technologies, then Malaysian Prime Minister Badawi, speaking for GAID, stated that, “as a ‘disabler’, ICT leaves entire communities that are unable to utilize and maximize on its benefits, very far behind and poorer by the second” (GAID, 2007b, p.76). Rather than provide a balanced examination of the benefits and drawbacks associated with implementing ICTs in a given context, these criticisms instead focus on the problems that they cause for those *who do not have the technologies*. In using this type of language, GAID does not provide legitimate critiques of the technologies, but instead further emphasizes the case for their deployment.

By failing to reference potential drawbacks of implementation and highlighting only the potential for ICTs to aid societies, these technologies are framed as possessing an intrinsically positive value. It is through this lack of distinction between the ways technologies *can* and *will* be used, and a failure to recognize the full spectrum of potential outcomes of ICT implementation programs and policies that GAID approaches technology in a deterministic manner. In other words, by assuming that there exists only one potential result of deploying ICTs – positive development – GAID removes the agency from the users and ignores the individual contexts into which these technologies are being implemented. This is par for the course of mainstream academic and policy literature addressing ICT4D.

⁸ In this context, ‘ICTE’ is referring to the use of ICTs for the purpose of education.

Despite statements that there is a need to place people at the heart of technology projects, and use ICTs to “help people help themselves” (GAID, 2007c, p.117), these remarks are often unsupported, or even contradicted, through the faith placed in the technologies themselves to affect change. To illustrate, one of GAID’s contributing authors, Director of the United Nations Millennium Project, Jeffrey Sachs, views technology as critical for achieving the MDGs and addressing some of the systemic basic issues that prevent development (GAID, 2007c, p.2-7). Sachs makes a telling statement in his own book, *The End of Poverty*, which concisely summarizes his personal viewpoints on technology: “I believe that the single most important reason why prosperity spread, and why it continues to spread, is the transmission of technologies and the ideas underlying them” (Sachs, 2005, p.41). It is this mindset – that the acquisition and use of technologies will naturally and automatically result in progress – that permeates the underlying ideologies of GAID’s literature, standing in stark contrast to the critical academic discourse surrounding technology, which problematizes the direct equation of technology with progress.

GAID’s documents present an extensive list of benefits that ICTs can provide to the developing world. With documents dedicated entirely to health, education, and youth development, each of these fields are privileged as areas which are either in need of, or can benefit from, the use of ICTs⁹. However, throughout all of its literature, GAID places

⁹ See: *Information & Communication Technologies for Development: Health* (GAID, 2010b), *Information & Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education for*

a particular emphasis on the ways in which technologies can aid in poverty reduction and help achieve the MDGs. Although there is no single document dedicated specifically to the economic benefits that ICTs can provide, the goal of economic growth and poverty reduction underpins the organization's fundamental premise and is one of the most consistent themes in its documents. For example, as GAID's foundational document describes, ICTs have the potential to "play a significant role in helping governments and communities to create wealth and spur economic growth" (GAID, 2007b, p.36).

Emphasizing the economic benefits for ICT users of "harvesting the fruits of the digital economy" (GAID, 2009b, p.1), GAID highlights the role these technologies play in integrating developing regions into the economic systems of the information society. Of particular relevance, ICTs are seen to create more workers, a broader information-based economy, and to liberate citizens from extreme economic poverty.

Despite its specific focus on technologies, GAID does recognize ICTs as more than just a 'one-size fits all' solution to issues of development. Its documents address a number of ways that these technologies can be deployed and/or customized to benefit various marginalized groups, such as youth (GAID, 2009a), women (GAID, 2009a, p.21), and persons with disabilities (GAID, 2009a, p.8). This is consistent with critical ICT4D literature, which has continuously heralded the importance of implementing ICTs with the specific context of each project being taken into consideration. However, it still positions technology as the pivotal solution for these underprivileged groups.

Development (GAID, 2009b), and *A Digital Shift: Youth and ICT for Development. Best Practices* (GAID, 2009a).

In contrast to the majority of authors included in GAID's documents, one of the only voices to speak cautiously of technology is Microsoft founder, Bill Gates. In his acceptance speech for the James C. Morgan Global Humanitarian Award, from the Tech Museum of Innovation, Gates states,

So even though PCs and technology can often be part of a solution, we need to be careful to always think about putting technology in the service of humanity. And so it's often not just taking what we do in the rich world and subsidizing its use in the developing world. Doing that kind of elevates technology as though it's the end goal, whereas we're just trying to meet human needs. So it's not starting in the right place (GAID, 2007a, p.2).

Gates' statement aligns well with critical ICT4D discourse, inasmuch as it demonstrates recognition that technology is a *tool* for achieving larger development goals and that people must remain at the center of technology, and development projects. Yet, Gates' perspective stands in sharp contrast with the majority of GAID's literature, which focuses on, and places faith in, the technologies themselves and not the people using them or the quality of life ICTs should be helping to provide.

GAID draws on numerous examples to highlight specific problems that can be solved with the help of ICTs. These include crop yields and food shortages, malaria, AIDS, TB, emergency services, and facilitating disaster relief (GAID, 2007c, pp.2-7). However, GAID frequently fails to provide specific reference to how, or what ICTs will actually do to help. Though GAID does not have a mandate to actually deploy these technologies, nor does it need to determine the specific role that they should play without understanding the context, in failing to provide any specific examples of *how* these technologies can facilitate agency in the individuals using them, its claims seem to fall flat. GAID provides an unrealistic understanding of how complex and complicated the

process is on the ground in myriad contexts around the world. With little substance to support the way ICTs are being privileged as the means to development, the documents seem to hold little more than faith, with no plans or strategy.

Concomitantly, GAID's repeated use of the 'bridging the digital divide' metaphor is problematic in terms of how it approaches technologies as though they (and the ways they are used) are relatively stagnant or predictable. In other words, it assumes that once technologies are implemented, these ICTs will continue to operate as the bridge into development, ignoring the ongoing changes in the contexts in which these technologies are used. This approach stands in stark contrast to the incredible speed at which ICTs are modified, and new technologies are developed. ICT4D programs and policies must take into account the rapid change in technologies, while also recognizing their relationship with existing and 'traditional' technologies, and the contexts of their use. Through this omission, GAID fails to acknowledge the ways that technological developments can (and do) actually perpetuate the digital divide. The continuously changing capabilities of new ICTs make it increasingly difficult for those with access to older technologies, or no technologies at all, to keep up. Of particular concern, GAID does not acknowledge that the implementation of ICTs can have a potentially negative impact on development, such as creating a technological dependency, or placing developing regions in a constant battle to keep up with the technological advancements of developed regions (Leye, 2009, p.32).

In viewing technologies as the solution to the digital divide, GAID portrays ICTs as developing in a linear fashion – both in their creation and use. The organization affords significant attention to mobile phones and Internet technologies, and the benefits that they can provide, noting that “[t]he trends towards convergence and new mobile

platforms for internet-connectivity need to be fully exploited through innovative policies and partnerships that can help lower cost and expand access” (GAID, 2009b, p.16).

However, despite having defined ICTs as inclusive of all forms of media, including more traditional technologies such as television and radio, these older technologies are not mentioned or referenced in any of the projects that GAID explores. It is through this preference for newer technologies that GAID adopts a linear understanding of technology, and continues to recommend a ‘leapfrogging’ approach to development. Importantly, this refers both to the leapfrogging of technology and the development ‘stages’: ICTs permit “poor countries to skip intermediate technologies (such as traditional telephone and computing systems) and jump directly into the more advanced systems (cellular phones, laptops, and internet), which provide major and quick improvements in labor productivity and growth” (GAID, 2007c, p.130). Recognized as a highly problematic element of development discourse (Alzouma, 2005, p.351), this leapfrogging approach fails to contextualize both the lack, and use, of technologies in developing regions, and is itself linear and teleological.

One final area of technology that GAID neglects to address is how the use of one technology can potentially create the need for more technology. Often, once ICTs are deployed, they need to be continuously upgraded and updated; the same also applies for the knowledge and understanding needed to effectively use these technologies. GAID addresses these concerns on a surface level, noting that “[c]ontinuous teacher training in updating and enhancing their methodologies is critical to effective education policy and practice to keep pace with the constant advancement of technology” (GAID, 2009b, p.3).

However, the organization provides no strategies for how best to address these issues of technological or educational sustainability.

Information

GAID's particular interpretation and framing of information is critical to understanding what the organization believes to be the role, potential, and power of ICTs. The organization provides an incredibly positive framing of how ICTs effectively facilitate citizens' access to a range of invaluable information. Information is described to be valuable in a number of settings, such as education or health care, where information can be beneficial to overcoming knowledge-based barriers to development. By providing enhanced access to information, ICTs are framed as the primary tool in efforts to provide education, create jobs, and connect developing regions to the developed world's wealth of knowledge. Information is thus positioned as the key to prosperity and to the overall progress of developing regions.

However, GAID presents a very specific understanding of what exactly constitutes information – or more accurately, what kinds of information *should* be exchanged through ICTs. Information is rhetorically constructed as being closely aligned with data, or facts, thereby privileging the scientific and economic over cultural, political, or social information. As such, information is framed as something that does not need to be interpreted or contested, but rather disseminated and learned, and is situated in the contexts of education, market prices, e-governance (accessing government data), and health sciences. Through this lens, GAID adopts Carey's transmission model of

communication, focusing on the importance of exchanging or disseminating information, and reinforcing top-down information flows from developed to developing worlds.

As well, the types of information referenced throughout the organization's literature are predominantly apolitical in nature. The role of political or otherwise contentious information sits in contrast to this prevailing presentation of information as neutral data. However, any circumstance where any type of politically oriented information could be used, from the relatively innocuous to the more controversial, is quite noticeably absent from GAID's documentation. Throughout its publications, there are no references to the ways in which citizens should be able to produce and consume information that may result in oppositional political, academic, social, or cultural perspectives and actions. There are also no references to how information could or should be used to challenge the status quo, raise awareness about local, national, and international politics, expose corruption, or share news and resources relevant to socio-political development that falls outside the mainstream linear path of progress. By completely ignoring the role that critical information can (and should) play in development writ large, GAID's framing of information remains apolitical, and remarkably narrow.

The organization also fails to address information that aids in the achievement of the more culturally sensitive elements of the MDGs. Of particular note is the issue of sexual health information, as maternal health and women's empowerment are two important areas addressed in the Goals. In its white paper discussing the potential of ICT4Ds for health, GAID does not once use the words 'contraception', 'rape', or 'condom', instead focusing the need to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child (GAID, 2010a, p.10). Although these can be culturally sensitive topics, they are also incredibly

important issues for improving the health and safety of women and children in developing regions. This is not intended to criticize those health issues that GAID does address, but to highlight the ways in which it confines its use of information to the less controversial. Without needing to take a side on these issues, GAID fails to address the importance of providing this type of information to women in developing regions, similar to its failure to address other areas that could be seen as socially, culturally, or politically contentious.

Communication

As noted in Chapter One, this thesis is working with the understanding that interactive communication is a fundamental process of human culture. Integrating the theories of James W. Carey and Cees Hamelink, I contend that the process of communication itself is a critical aspect of human development, and communication is not just a means to an end. Through examining how GAID understands communication, we can better understand how the organization does or does not acknowledge communication rights and right to communicate ideologies, and what limitations or benefits this places on its discourse surrounding the facilitation of ICTs in the context of development.

GAID's references to communication as a topic unto itself are very limited. In its print publications, the majority of the uses of the word 'communication' are linked to the words 'information' and 'technology.' In *Our Common Humanity for the Information Age: Principles and Values for Development*, a 215 page document outlining GAID's framework for development, the word 'communication' appears only twice in reference to any type of dialogue, or interactive exchange (GAID, 2007b, p.91; p.100). The vast

majority of GAID's uses of the actual word 'communication' are within the term 'ICT,' in reference to the technologies themselves (as a noun), as opposed to the process, or action of communicating (as a verb). Throughout the documents, communication is primarily understood to be the successful exchange of information, privileging language that explains communication as a process of transferring or accessing information. This is exemplary of Carey's "transmission view," which aims to increase the speed and effect of messages, disregarding the cultural or ritualistic elements of the process of communication (Carey, 1989, p.12). Through this transmission-based approach, GAID's understanding of what constitutes communication remains centered on transporting information, and not the process of communication itself. This is problematic because the transference of information is being privileged over the process of interacting and sharing the communication experience.

Although GAID uses a narrow framing of communication within its own documents, it does not go so far as to prevent, or explicitly denounce, the term being more broadly understood. This means, if viewed through a broader understanding of communication, there are a number of ways that GAID actually permits (but does not advocate for) the recognition of communication rights. Through its strong emphasis on the need to provide access to ICTs and develop the infrastructure for creating communication networks, GAID provides the *potential* for a number of broader communication rights to be recognized, whether intentionally or simply as a byproduct of technologies' implementation. The communication rights that GAID most clearly addresses are those found within CRIS' second pillar: Communication Knowledge for Creativity and Equity. GAID places particularly strong emphasis on the importance of access to information and

education, which are in congruence with existing communication rights (CRIS, 2005). In addition, through actively promoting ‘connectivity’ as one of its four key foci, GAID reinforces the role that tools and infrastructures can play in expanding communication networks, integrating individuals and communities into global conversations from which they would be otherwise excluded (GAID, n.d.). As such, the organization’s strong emphasis on the power and potential of technologies permits, but does not privilege or protect, interactive and participatory communication in its ICT4D discourse.

Unfortunately, while GAID actively emphasizes the importance of information and education within ICTs, these elements of communication are just one small piece of the communication rights framework. By drawing on a transmission view of communication, GAID does not recognize or legitimate many other communication rights. In particular, it excludes the role of politics, civil liberties, and socio-cultural practices, and the actual cultural practices of the act of communicating itself, as highlighted in CRIS’ pillars of communication. Even when GAID discusses dialogue, it is only understood as communication between agreeing parties, in the context of the organization’s own global development partnerships or collaboration – not dialogue between citizens within developing regions. Although this understanding of discussion as between GAID’s own partners does technically constitute an interactive process, this understanding restricts communication to being collaborative, and inherently positive. While this is one of the *possible* outcomes of interactive communication, it omits disagreement, debate, and the varying perspectives that are likely to occur when openly recognizing communication rights such as freedom of expression.

Additionally, GAID employs a very narrow understanding of participation within its framing of communication processes. References to participatory communication can only be found in discussions revolving around the partnerships formed between the UN and Silicon Valley, as they work to facilitate the effective development of ICT initiatives, as highlighted in *Building Common Ground: United Nations Connecting with Silicon Valley* (2007). Viewing communication in this context privileges discourse amongst elites – an already problematic trend in mainstream development processes – and reinforces existing power relations and the notion of technology as integral to the development process. When calls for participation are extended to include developing regions, they are largely confined to participation in the use of ICTs, not an explicit call to communicate. This limited understanding implies that communication in an interactive context is privileged amongst developed regions, perpetuating the ‘economics first’ approach to development discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Beyond GAID’s push for access to communication networks and a limited recognition of interactive communication, additional issues of communication rights highlighted in Chapter One are barely addressed within the organization’s literature. GAID focuses its attention on four primary areas: access, content, education, and connectivity (GAID, n.d.). However, while three of these goals are addressed at great length, the types of ‘content’ referred to in the Alliance’s documents are quite limited, generally confined to an understanding of ‘information’ as it is defined earlier – as data. This is problematic in that it fails to address the need for a variety of local, regional, and cultural content, as well as the need for content to be available across the full spectrum of languages, as well as for literacy disparities to be taken into account. By confining its discussion of content

to within a single document (which frames the values to be used in ICT4D), and not making these acknowledgements in its other documents (which address the practical applications of these technologies), GAID fails to provide any substantial calls for these content needs to be attained. Although a significant proportion of GAID’s publications explicate actual ICT4D initiatives that have taken place, this more practical discussion of ICTs does not provide the necessary grounding for GAID’s bigger picture claims about the need for content vis-à-vis new technologies. Consequently, GAID not only fails to acknowledge ways that projects could, or previously have, addressed issues of content, but neglects to address these issues within its own work – as noted above, the organization’s website is only available in English, and the same is true of almost all of its publications. The only exception to this is *A Digital Shift: Youth and ICT for Development*, a best practices guide containing a brief five-page section in French; this is likely due to the document’s publication partner, Organization Internationale de la Francophonie (GAID, 2009a).

Throughout all of GAID’s promotion of ICTs as a powerful tool for facilitating communication, the ways that ICTs can, and are used to actually communicate are often overlooked. In neglecting to address communicative freedoms, in particular that of expression, the organization does not fully recognize Article 19 of the UDHR¹⁰ – some of the most fundamental elements of communication rights. Through this omission, GAID fails to provide any protection for the abilities of individuals and communities to utilize

¹⁰ Article 19 states “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

these ICTs to fully participate in global communication. In addition, by omitting and avoiding any discussion of these issues, GAID also fails to acknowledge the potential negative impacts that ICTs can have on communication, even within its own transmission model. Although ICTs have the potential to empower individuals to communicate, these same technologies can also be used to further benefit the already powerful, who are keen to suppress or censor weaker voices. This serves as a perpetuation of the existing power imbalances that GAID claims to be addressing through ICT4D policies and initiatives. By not recognizing or supporting the protection of ICT users' equal communication rights, GAID overlooks a large aspect of the ways that ICTs can, and are, used, and fails to engage in sensitive, but necessary, debates about these issues that are at the heart of larger development discourse. This not only fails to "level the playing field" as GAID so often claims that ICTs will do, but actually serves to perpetuate the problems associated with imbalanced power in flows of information and communication addressed throughout the NWICO debates.

Failing to address and protect the different ways that participatory communication can be used to support weaker voices and promote agency situates GAID within a neo-modernization paradigm. The organization perpetuates a top-down dissemination of *information*, and fails to embrace any bottom-up or participatory approaches to communication. In framing the use of technologies in this way, it continues to position ICTs as a tool for sharing a Western-based, narrow understanding of development with the world. While on the surface GAID recognizes that technologies are simply a tool in the quest for development, the organization perpetuates the deterministic approach to technologies that underpinned modernization theory in the 1960s by its faith placed in the

abilities of these technologies to affect development. This is because GAID fails to embrace the role that communication and participation can and should play through the implementation and use of these technologies. Instead, ICTs are primarily viewed as a tool to facilitate the exchange and dissemination of information by providing greater access to marginalized citizens without taking into account a range of contextual development issues. In this way, GAID's understanding of information works in congruence with CRIS' second pillar of communication (communicating knowledge for creativity and equity), which advocates for access to information and education (CRIS, 2005, p.40). However, this limited understanding of a transmission model fails to recognize CRIS' three other pillars of communication, including the role of communication in political engagement, cultural expression, and civil rights, which are fundamental elements of development writ large.

While there are a number of references to the exchange of information and sharing of knowledge between ICT users, there is no explicit call for a multi-directional flow of information. Instead, the rhetoric is reminiscent of the discourse prevalent throughout the NWICO era. GAID makes a number of references to the ways in which information can flow into the developing world to aid in development, with very few references to how developing regions can share information between themselves, and absolutely no reference to the ways that information and knowledge can be shared back to the developed world. While it appears that GAID touches upon a number of issues of rights-based communication discourse, its narrow framing of communication and its failure to push for the actual changes that would be necessary to achieve this interactive

participatory communications environment emphasize that the problems highlighted in the NWICO debates are still relevant today.

Conclusion

Through understanding the narrow frames of information and communication used by GAID, the organization's overall understanding of the role that technologies can play in facilitating development is clearer. By specifically situating GAID's relationship with communication and technologies in a historical context, it is evident that the GAID is a continuation of the UN's continuously narrowing views of communication and the role of technology in facilitating open communication over the past few decades. As a global partnership and UN-affiliate, GAID must maintain a fine balance to manage all of its stakeholders. However, working with these narrowing definitions of information and communication results in the potential reach, scope, outcomes, and impacts of all of GAID's work that follows being inhibited by these constraints from the outset. By defining its primary focus as bridging the digital divide, and limiting the role of ICTs to only facilitating the exchange of neutral and non-political information, it becomes clear how and why technology is positioned in such a positive light. Simply put, by framing ICT4D in such a technologically determinist manner, technology is given an easier objective – to provide access to readily available information. This simplistic objective, with such an emphasis placed on the technologies themselves, results in the means of communicating being privileged over the process of communication itself. In so doing, GAID remains situated within Carey's transmission view, and fails to recognize the role of communication a cultural process, ritual, and need. If GAID is to truly embrace the rhetoric and communication buzzwords that it uses throughout its literature, I argue that

the organization would be better served by adopting a broader understanding of communication that explicitly recognizes communication rights and allows users to define their own uses for and implementations of technologies. It is only through doing this that GAID will practice what it preaches, and embrace technology as a *tool* of development, with the actual needs of the users at the heart of the projects.

Chapter Four: Development – The Problem is the Problem Itself

While there are a number of different ways that ICTs are used in development initiatives, the underlying link between all of these projects is the idea that there is an end goal of development to be achieved, and that it is achievable. ‘Development’ is defined in this discourse as being a critical factor in determining both how and why ICTs are used in the development process. As discussed in the previous chapter, the way that problems are framed plays a strong role in shaping their solutions (Schön & Rein, 1994). How development is defined not only determines what GAID is striving to achieve, but if and how ICTs are best utilized as the means to achieve these ends. The means that the organization suggests to ‘solve’ issues in development are a direct outcome of how it views problems in development as a whole. The ways in which development is defined not only determine what the organization is striving to achieve, but if and how ICTs are best utilized as a means to achieve these ends.

Using Schön and Rein’s understanding of frame construction, this chapter will begin by examining how GAID envisions the result of the development process. First examining how GAID and its authors define development through the mainstream paradigm, followed by the ways that they recognize broader goals of development, this section will evidence how GAID outlines its end goals, to understand what the final product is that these ICT4D projects are being structured to achieve. The chapter will then explore the different means that GAID outlines for achieving the aforementioned end goals of development, to see if and how the framing of the end goals, are enabling or inhibiting

the process of development. Specifically, this chapter seeks to assess if and how the notion of freedoms and communication rights fits into these development frames.

What are the End Goals? Development Defined

The Dominant Development Paradigm: Poverty Eradication and the MDGs

As noted earlier, GAID was established as a result of the WSIS process and its discussion surrounding the digital divide and the role of ICTs in development, and was specifically created to work towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as an extension of the ICT Task Force (GAID, 2007b, p.2). GAID's commitment to achieving the MDGs by 2015 has been clearly outlined since its inception, and these goals serve as the touchstone that guides the organization's development priorities, operating as the primary reference point for the majority of its discussions (GAID, 2007c, pp.ix-x).

Each of GAID's publications clearly address different goals of the MDGs, with documents dedicated to specific issues such as health (MDG 4,5,6), education (MDG 2), and global partnerships (MDG 8), and one document dedicated to directly addressing the MDGs as a whole. The Goals serve as the guiding principles for not only the types of specific problems that ICTs can be used to address, but for framing the overall ideal of development that GAID posits the global development community should be working towards. By replacing the different end goals of ICTs with the MDGs' specific individual goals of development, development is identified as the attainment of these individual goals. In this way, GAID's use of the MDGs as a guideline for development is in close alignment with development practitioners, who have also adopted these goals as the key

foci of their projects (Fukuda-Parr, 2004). Although GAID's individual authors vary slightly in their ideal visions of development, they continuously present their vision in reference or comparison to the MDGs. Thus while they may expand upon the dominant discourse, or focus only a specific area of it, these overarching global goals permeate GAID's publications. The organization's continued use of, and reliance upon, the MDGs as the goal of development was most recently illustrated through its Annual Forum held in December 2010, titled "Information and Communication Technologies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals – Moving from Advocacy to Action" (GAID, 2010c).

The MDGs have become the global gold standard for framing and selecting development projects, as they allow development practitioners to demonstrate tangible results, and have also influenced financial support for development priorities (Langford, 2010, p.84). As such, GAID's adoption of this measurable, performance-based framework serves to reinforce the MDGs' approach to development, and place it in congruence with a large segment of the development community. It is interesting to note here that almost all of GAID's collection of authors is composed of these development practitioners, or individuals who work directly for the United Nations – both groups that have their own vested interest in seeing the MDGs validated and achieved.

Using the MDGs as a basis for specific goals of human development, GAID works from the understanding that "poverty remains the most fundamental challenge to be addressed" (GAID, 2007b, p.36). Poverty reduction, or eradication, is frequently distinguished from the other MDGs, privileging it over the other development goals. Highlighting its role in "enhancing the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the

MDGs, notably reduction of poverty” (GAID, 2007b, p.7), GAID frequently draws explicit attention to the elimination of poverty as the specific focus of development. The organization recognizes that “[t]he Millennium Declaration provides us with the blueprint for action in eradicating poverty and freeing people from dehumanizing conditions of underdevelopment” (GAID, 2007c, p.22). In so doing, GAID not only emphasizes the need for economic development, but also positions the remaining MDGs as either symptomatic or contributing factors of financial poverty. For example, “[i]n order for global poverty to decrease, definitive steps must be taken to improve health, especially among marginalized populations” (GAID, 2010a, p.2). In addition to health, GAID also recognizes other areas addressed by the MDGs, noting that “[w]hile we commit to the eradication of global poverty, the lack of economic opportunity and lack of free education worldwide remain key contributory factors” (GAID, 2007c, p.13). It is this framing of poverty as the primary development deficit and the MDGs as contributing to the achievement of poverty eradication, which underpins both GAID’s understanding of what constitutes development, as well as the processes it believes will be beneficial to achieving this ideal.

While poverty is positioned as the underlying problem of development, GAID presents technological disparities (or more specifically the absence of technology) as the fundamental barrier standing in the way of economic development – as the problem within the problem. As such, procurement of technology is presented as the immediate development goal, which will lead to the long-term resolution of economic development. In the keynote address at GAID’s ceremonial launch, Malaysian Prime Minister Badawi stated, “ICT leaves entire communities that are unable to utilize and maximize on its

benefits, very far behind and poorer by the second” (GAID, 2007b, p.76). GAID positions an increase in technological disparities as synonymous with increasing economic disparities. In so doing, GAID structures its understanding of development as two-tiered, recognizing it to first be the procurement of technologies, which will remove the barriers impeding the achievement of its second goal, the eradication of poverty.

GAID frequently privileges ICTs as an immediate development goal, positing:

Effective integration of ICT into development strategies and programmes can help achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, within the agreed timeline by 2015. For this to happen, however, ICT must not remain a privilege for the rich, but must become a potent tool for empowering the poor. We must pursue approaches that anchor our policies on the problems and needs of the poor and help devise appropriate technological solutions (GAID, 2007b, p.44).

This type of language permeates the Alliance’s documents, holding technological inequalities as the short-term development obstacle standing in the way of the MDGs, thereby holding technological solutions as the answer. This is based on the recognition that “the use of ICTs is widely seen as having a positive effect on economic growth and development. ICTs are seen as boosts of productivity, creators of opportunities for business, facilitators of trade and co-operation between developed and developing countries” (GAID, 2007c, p.xi). This framing is present throughout the organization’s digital divide discourse, which references the ways that a lack of technology is preventing individuals or countries from participating in the global economy, infringing on their ability to become developed, while in contrast, the use of ICTs means that even “the poorest nations can rise and participate in the global economy” (GAID, 2007b, p.76). As discussed in the previous chapter, it is through this belief that ICTs have an inherently positive impact on development, understanding them to clearly result in economic growth

and opportunity, that these technologies are held as both a means to an end, as well as the end goal themselves. With technologies viewed as the way to reduce poverty, GAID positions the digital divide as one of the primary obstacles to development, understood in economic terms.

Although positioning a binary divide between those with or without technological access does provide a functional illustration of the disparities between various regions, it oversimplifies the problem and reduces the development process to resolving technological poverty. This ignores other broader elements of human development that also need to be addressed, such as quality of life, and rights and freedoms. In so doing, GAID fails to acknowledge the systemic problems that caused these divides to begin with, therefore failing to rectify any of the structural barriers to development that will otherwise continue to exist long after technologies are made universally available. With this narrow focus, GAID frequently views technology as both the means to, and measurement of, economic progress. As such, the strong correlation between technological and economic progress results in one often being conflated with the other.

GAID's adoption of the MDGs as its primary development focus makes the organization susceptible to the same criticisms that the MDGs face. Of particular note is the critique that this approach addresses the *symptoms* of underdevelopment, but not the underlying *causes* (Satterthwaite, 2003, p.9). By privileging economic growth over social, cultural, or intellectual developments, GAID's goals of development, as with the MDGs, overlap with a neo-modernization paradigm. This approach is problematic in that it fails to holistically address the issue of development, and overlooks important issues because they cannot be internationally agreed upon. This target-based approach addresses issues

that can be easily measured, such as income, life expectancy, and physical health, and privileges the more measurable, or demonstrable, aspects of development over the more intangible elements (Langford, 2010, p.83). Through using these indicators, nations such as Singapore are considered ‘developed’ and have met the requirements of the MDGs due to their rapid economic growth, despite being notoriously void of political and social freedoms.

One incredibly important aspect of understanding the ends of development is recognizing *who* exactly is to become developed. GAID makes numerous statements about achieving global equality and development (GAID, 2007c, pp.69-90), However, in using the MDGs as its means of measuring and defining development, GAID falls victim to the same criticisms as the Goals – working to provide development for the majority, instead of for all. To clarify, the MDGs use targets such as (1.A) “Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day” (MDGs, 2001), which focus on achieving progress for a significant amount of people, but not for all. The framing of this target does not ensure that everyone develops equally, but instead focuses on providing a “developed” life to *most* of the citizens, while failing to recognize any quality whatsoever for those who are in the worst condition. This approach is problematic because it fails to take regional disparities into consideration, setting a universal standard for regions beginning from very different starting points. These development targets measure progress against these specific performance indicators, which fail to call for the need for an overall improvement of conditions, and instead privilege improvement of a particular percentage of the populations (Easterly, 2008). As such, this approach does not require individuals enter development at an equal rate, nor does it ensure equality even once

these targets have been achieved. This can result in development projects focusing on those individuals already closest to already achieving development, as opposed to the more challenging projects working with the most extremely impoverished, in the need of the most help (International Alert, p.17). Through utilizing these internationally agreed upon goals, GAID positions the eradication of poverty and the achievement of the MDGs as the primary end of the development process.

Beyond the Dominant Paradigm: Aspiring to Rights and Freedoms

Although GAID's primary focus remains rooted in material terms, the organization does also venture outside of this framework to recognize additional 'soft' elements of development to aspire towards. Devoting an entire document to the exploration of the principles and values of development,¹¹ GAID examines the roles of freedom, equality, environmental sustainability, tolerance, solidarity, and partnerships (GAID, 2007c). It is through this document's exploration of the values in development that discussion of human rights discourse is addressed. GAID's use of rights-based discourse primarily calls for development to ensure the protection of basic needs for human survival, positioning the recognition of human rights as an ideal end goal of development.

As listed in this document,

Fundamental human rights should include: Individual dignity; socio-economic sustainable development; freedom from poverty and hunger; universal basic education and the opportunity for advancement; universal healthcare from the

¹¹ GAID. (2007c). *Series 2: Our Common Humanity in the Information Age: Principles and Values for Development*.

prenatal stage to death; freedom from opportunistic diseases; sustainable environment; freedom of expression (GAID, 2007c, p.82).

These freedoms are based in the principles of the UN's Millennium Declaration, and focus on the role of rights and freedoms as a means to protecting factors that work to sustain human life. Rights are closely linked to the role of freedoms, referred to as a potential means of enforcing or achieving freedom. Through protecting fundamental aspects of human life, rights-based development provides a stepping-stone for expanding these rights into freedoms.

Sarbuland Khan, GAID's then Executive Coordinator, provided his own definition of freedom, which serves to frame the organization's working definition throughout the documents:

Freedom, in a globalized world is the capacity to act within the international society according to one's own determination, within the limits of rules set for all. International organizations have defined common rules that apply to all and within which freedom should be guaranteed. The corollary of this is the freedom of mind, namely its independence from fear or prejudices, which finds a practical incarnation in the protection and promotion of human rights. In a world dominated by high inequalities, freedom from want is important, namely the right to food, water and access to basic services which leads to the Millennium Development Goals (GAID, 2007c, p.22).

The above freedoms, consistent with the UN's general approach to freedoms, are primarily understood to call for the removal of oppressive circumstances that would impede basic human survival. Through continuously using language referring to 'freedom *from*' circumstances, the empowering element of freedoms is removed, making freedoms a demand that people can call for, instead of a freedom they should be empowered to exercise themselves. Although Khan does recognize freedom of mind, these ideas are an extension of rights. It is through this lens that GAID views rights as a

means to achieving freedoms, and freedoms as a larger result of the recognition of rights. In using this perspective, GAID is strictly viewing freedoms as an important byproduct of development, but not necessarily a means to achieving development, or an integral part of the process itself. Through this, freedom is being treated as an achievable end state, as opposed to an ongoing process involving labour and upkeep. Additionally, along with the majority of other rights and freedoms used throughout the UN, this again emphasizes the role of individualism, focusing on the freedoms of individuals, and fails to integrate the freedoms of societies or collectives. This problematically privileges Western-based notions of individualism over communal or collective approaches held in high regard in other societies.

GAID's most clearly articulated call for the integration of freedom into development discourse comes from author Uzodinma Iweala, as he writes of the MDGs:

These are incredible goals that must be reached. The only problem is that they will never be reached until we reconsider existing power structures and how they promote and prohibit access to freedom.

In some senses, the way we combat poverty today is an exact expression of Camus "bread depending on the whim of the master." Powers of the developed world (and I include Western NGOs and movie stars in this category) decide when, where, and how they are going to alleviate the developing world's poverty. All too often, these decisions are made without consulting the most important stakeholders—the poor and very poor who are the intended beneficiaries of this charity. This arrangement seems to ignore the idea of freedom and more importantly its intimate relationship with development. Freedom and development go hand in hand because the first step is the freedom to speak, to articulate and demand that one's basic needs be met. If development means Western aid agencies focusing on what they want to improve instead of what the people have expressed need for, if freedom means NGOs operating in countries with completely expatriate staff, then it is a maintenance of the old structure that subjects freedom to the whim of the master.

Perhaps more importantly, the West should understand that alleviating poverty with one hand while continuously undermining freedoms – individual or communal – in the hopes of national or corporate interests with the other simply cannot serve anybody. Nobody wants handouts to alleviate the humiliations of suffering caused by exploitation. People want the ability to dictate the courses of their lives—free from poverty AND its causes or masters (GAID, 2007b, pp.32-33).

Through Iweala's call for the integration of freedom, he emphasizes it as a fundamental aspect of development; it is not simply a potential byproduct, but a pre-existing necessity and a goal unto itself. Calling for the freedom to articulate one's need to speak, Iweala begins to address the need for participatory communication as a goal of development. However, this is again positioned in the limited context of freedoms *from* oppressive forces, as opposed to more liberating freedoms *to* communicate or *to* participation, and does not fully recognize the need for communication as a cultural and social need.

Although Iweala provides one of the most explicit calls for freedom throughout all of GAID's documentation, there are other authors that also support the integration of freedom as an end goal of development. This is in close alignment with Amartya Sen's framework of development, as he argues for the need to recognize political and social freedoms as important unto themselves, separate from the benefits that they can also play in achieving economic freedoms and development.

[P]olitical liberty and civil freedoms are directly important on their own, and do not have to be justified indirectly in terms of their effects on the economy. Even when people without political liberty or civil rights do not lack adequate economic security (and happen to enjoy favorable economic circumstances), they are deprived of important freedoms in leading their lives and denied the opportunity to take part in crucial decisions regarding public affairs. These deprivations restrict social and political lives and must be seen as repressive even without their leading to other afflictions (such as economic disasters). Since political and civil freedoms are constitutive elements of human freedom, their denial is a handicap in itself. In examining the role of human rights in

development, we have to take note of the constitutive as well as the instrumental importance of civil rights and political freedoms. (Sen, 1999, pp.16-17).

It is this critical distinction, incorporating political and civil freedoms as elements of development itself, which problematizes GAID's recognition of the dominant development paradigm, as it prevents the organization from fully recognizing Sen's vision of development as freedom. Although GAID acknowledges the benefits of freedom as an ideal, it privileges the tangible aspects of economic development over a broader notion, placing a higher value on eradicating poverty than supporting freedoms. Through this, freedom no longer becomes the primary goal of development, but is reduced to merely a side project. The problem is that GAID fails to actualize these claims in outlining any of the means to achieving development. As such, it seem as though these terms are thrown in more to appease critics, than as actually agreed upon goals.

Civil and Social Liberties

Although they largely fail to recognize freedom as the ultimate goal of development, GAID's authors do still incorporate civil liberties into their development discourse. The aspect of civil rights and freedoms that garners the most attention is equality. Dedicating a chapter of its publication on values for development to addressing the need for equality and opportunity, the organization focuses heavily on gender equality as an essential goal of (and means to) development, recognizing that "none of the goals of development, human rights and peace and security can be achieved if equality between women and men is not secured" (GAID, 2007c, p.70). Under the framing of gender equality, the organization calls for women's empowerment, positioning equal access to rights and quality of living as an end goal of development. Although it plays much less of a role

throughout GAID's documents than technology, gender equality is similarly positioned, as a short-term end goal of development. Through achieving gender equality, both women and men will be able to contribute to the workforce, providing more jobs that will enable greater income.

For the female population in particular, their increased access to education has a huge impact on the society. Research by the United Kingdom Department for International Development has shown that a woman's income increases by 15% for each year that she receives additional education past the primary level (GAID, 2009b, p.1).

The specific goals of this equality are positioned through access to education and employment, again returning to the dominant paradigm numerous times to reinforce why these extensions of equality and opportunities are relevant and applicable to the dominant discourse. Demonstrating projects that stemmed from the recognition that a "severe lack of education had led to an unfair wage distribution among the men and women" (GAID, 2009a, p.23), arguments for the inclusion of women are not made on the basis of principle, or freedoms. Rather, they are presented through the idea that development as framed through poverty reduction and the MDGs can only be achieved if women are also educated and employed, building a stronger workforce and increasing the incomes of families. This grounding of women's empowerment in economic productivity allows it to be grounded in a widely accepted system – capitalism. However, it overlooks the broader cause of gender inequalities, neglects to address patriarchy as a systemic social issue, again preventing GAID's discourse from fully adopting civil and social freedoms as an end goal of development itself.

Beyond the scope of gender equality, GAID makes very few references made to any other types of equality. In particular, there is no explicit recognition of the need to achieve equality between socio-economic statuses, nations, castes or classes. Instead, equality becomes a catch-all phrase, with no specific details as to what types of equalities should be used as the end goal, aside from gender, which is already outlined within the MDGs.

Political Freedoms

Moving beyond civil freedoms to more divisive issues, GAID makes significantly fewer references to the need to recognize political freedoms. The freedoms that are the most controversial are also those that GAID most clearly avoids addressing directly. Political freedoms, which can be considered to be those that influence governance, regulations, participation, opinions, and expression, are often contentious within UN discourse, and can challenge the cultural and social norms in various regions. As a result, these political freedoms are not easily adopted on a global scale across such a vast political landscape, and remain on the outside of mainstream development discourse.

The political end goals of development earn only minimal recognition from GAID's authors. The documents shy away from any direct recognition of the political role of democracy itself. Instead, the calls for democratic practices are embedded within discussion of e-governance as the ideal for political development. E-governance is seen as "enhancing citizens' participation and promoting accountability, transparency and efficiency in governance processes" (GAID, 2007b, p.13), specifically through the use of digital technologies. GAID's continued calls for e-governance do not emphasize the way

that ICTs can aid in providing access to participation and enable more democratic practices such as referendums, online voting, and enabling communication between rural areas and urban governments, but instead simply hold the shift of bureaucracy to digital technologies as an ideal end of development. GAID emphasizes the ways that transferring government services and bureaucratic procedures online can speed up the processes and eliminate human errors, ignoring the potential that e-governance could provide for equal participation, engagement, or representation. This results in a conflation of bureaucratic efficiency with democracy. Although online governance strategies could be identified as a means to aiding in the achievement of broader political freedoms, this is not how they are presented in GAID's documents. Instead, here they are presented as an end unto themselves, limiting the role of online governance to streamlining productivity.

When GAID does actually refer to actual political processes, it frequently uses less politically driven terms such as 'empowerment', 'equality,' and 'participation', in lieu of directly referencing democracy. Acknowledging the disparities between different nations' cultural and political systems, GAID uses economic progress as the common goal of development that everyone can agree to.

Countries around the world may not agree on a single way in which governments should run their respective nations. They are all, however, trying to achieve similar social and economic development goals. Thus it is indispensable that they learn from one another when it comes to the implementation of ICTE, which can immediately stimulate their education sectors, and develops the young people that will be the basis for future economic growth (GAID, 2009b, p.15).

This example is representative of the overall positioning of political, social and economic development throughout GAID's documents, and is problematic in several ways. The most obvious is the permission that this framing gives economic and social development

to come at the expense of political freedoms. It also assumes that governance can be separated from social and economic issues, when they are actually quite closely linked. This failure to directly call for democracy again privileges economic development over establishing human freedoms, restricting the role that democracy and political freedoms can have in the end goals of development, and allowing them to be sacrificed at the expense of greater economic growth.

While GAID includes much more language including political freedoms as a part of development than previous eras of development discourse have, this hierarchy of development priorities is reminiscent of the Lee Thesis that was used as a means to achieving Singapore's development, which sacrificed political freedoms arguing that economic progress had to come first. Although this is a much less explicit division, this privileging is still problematic in that it remains based on the ideology that political, economic, and social development can take place separately from one another. Apart from democratic freedoms, GAID makes minimal references to government transparency, security, or privacy, all of which are incredibly important elements of political freedom, to both individuals and collectives.

Communication

As mentioned in Chapter One, communicative freedoms are an integral part of human development. As seen through Sen's understanding of social engagement as a fundamental element of human needs and desires, communication is a critical aspect of both the development process, as well as the end result. Sen has encouraged academic

development discourse over the past decade to broaden its understanding of the end goals of development to ‘human development.’

Working in tandem with Hamelink’s notion of participatory and interactive communication, the freedom to communicate is a critical element of the constitutive freedoms of Sen’s model of development. However, GAID does not integrate communicative freedoms into its framing of the ideal goals of development in any substantial way, failing to recognize communication’s full role as either a social, or political freedom. Even with the above recognitions of ways that freedoms should be integrated as a part of the end goal, GAID largely overlooks the role of communication within the framework of freedoms. The explicit recognition of any communication rights and freedoms as an end goal of development is limited to freedom of expression, as an extension of acknowledging human rights as a whole, and even this is only mentioned twice throughout all of the documents examined. Failing to use the terms ‘right to communicate,’ ‘communication rights,’ or ‘communication freedoms’ even once in any of its publications, GAID’s conceptual grounding for development clearly fails to recognize the importance of communication as a development goal. Recognized as neither a right nor freedom, the role of communication within GAID’s documents is restricted to aiding in the process of recognizing other goals of development, and is not recognized as a goal in and of itself in any way.

The references that GAID does make to the role of communication development remain confined to the definition of communication as the exchange of information, as highlighted in the previous chapter. These references also position communication as a means of networking for the purpose of aiding in other economic and social benefits.

Communication remains unacknowledged as a social and cultural need unto itself. This failure to integrate communication as an intended outcome clearly impacts the ways that technologies, and freedoms, are used to achieve other development goals.

The Means To Development: We Have the Problem, Now What's the Solution?

Through understanding the narrow goal of development that GAID is striving to achieve, the constraints that the organization places on proposed development solutions can more clearly be seen. With each of the means to development being clearly intended to achieve a specific objective, these strategies are clear reinforcements of the specific end goals. In addition, examining GAID's discussion of potential solutions not only focuses us on *how* ICTs are being positioned in development, but also *why* they are being confined to the specific uses identified in the previous chapter.

The Dominant Paradigm: A Linear Path to Development.

The main development strategies endorsed by GAID are aimed at directly achieving specific goals of the MDGs. By privileging those areas of development that can be measured to readily demonstrate 'progress,' the path to development becomes clearly defined and measured by achieving stepping stones along the way to these specific targets. GAID uses the MDGs to frame the immediate goals of development, and therefore these goals also become the means to achieving longer-term economic growth; in order to achieve development, one must first achieve the MDGs.

With such an emphasis on the measurable aspects of development, GAID continues to view the process as linear. As such, a rhetoric of progress is widespread throughout the documents, perpetuating the notion that development only proceeds in one direction,

overlooking the various issues that have historically caused nations to all develop in incredibly diverse ways. This linear process overlooks the layered complexity of development issues, ignoring any outside forces that could restrict, block, or alter the steps necessary to achieving development. GAID's linear understanding of development positions the path to progress as universal – there is only one way to get there. As such, highly measurable and easily defined changes such as telephone or Internet penetration rates, and health indicators are used as indicators of progress, while more intangible elements are largely overlooked, potentially due to their lack of checkpoints or markers on the roadmap to development.

Strategies for Economic Growth: The MDGs

As noted earlier, GAID believes that economic growth is the key to achieving broader development goals. In attempts to achieve this type of development, there are a number of approaches and solutions presented throughout GAID's literature. In particular, GAID emphasizes the need to empower individuals to become contributing members of the global economy. This is largely framed as achievable by recognizing the key areas addressed in the MDGs, with particular importance given to education, youth, health, and partnerships. With documents dedicated to each of these issues, GAID focuses on these specific areas as the path to development.

One of the most frequently referenced means to achieving development is through education. GAID notes, “[a] vibrant education sector is fundamental for developing human capital within countries. With an active and transformative education policy and a supportive infrastructure, the development of a knowledge-based population can apply

itself to sustained and equitable growth” (2009b, p.2). Education is thus seen to be a means to creating and facilitating development, transferring knowledge from developed to developing regions. Particularly exploring the ways that ICT4D projects can and should be implemented, GAID argues, “Education should be mandated as the core objective of all projects. If the locals cannot read or write, there is no point of having computers on the desk” (GAID, 2007c, p.83). This strongly emphasizes GAID’s belief that education is at the heart of development, as it places a need for education as a central focus for the implementation of ICTs. However, the organization also recognizes the benefits that ICTs can provide when integrated into the educational systems, and used as an integral part of the learning process.

ICT skills that come along with this shift in pedagogy are also useful for students hoping to transition into today’s job market, which in many countries is increasingly demanding these skills. Developing a critical mass of knowledge workers with proficient ICT skills will greatly improve long term economic opportunities. (GAID, 2009b, p.3)

It is this understanding of education as a means to creating a stronger work force, and ICTs as a means to achieving a more robust educational system, that makes these two areas GAID’s central means to achieving development progress. Through education, ICTs can create productive citizens, and thus lead to economic progress.

In addition to education, other important means to achieving GAID’s mainstream development goals are seen to be through the empowerment of youth and women. Through the empowerment of these frequently marginalized groups, it is believed that they will also contribute to the development of a stronger workforce, and increased economic opportunities for developing regions. However, the most prevalent means to

facilitate these particular means to development is again seen to be the procurement of technologies. "ICTs can greatly help us achieving women's empowerment and gender equality and thereby contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)" (GAID, 2007c, p.73). This perspective continuously presents ICTs as a facilitator to these other opportunities, and places them secondary to the technologies themselves.

In various circumstances economic and technological growth are each said to lead to the other, and the two are frequently conflated, as technology is used as an indication of economic growth, and vice versa. This is problematic in both the way that it is working within an incredibly narrow frame of reference, and also in how technology and economic growth are seen as so highly correlated. As such, technology is heralded as the natural progression to economic growth, and economic growth is seen to automatically result in technological growth. Through connecting these terms so closely with one another as markers of successful development, it again reinforces the narrow solutions proposed to address problems in development. If technological growth is the result of economic growth, then spurring the economy will lead to technology and result in development. In the reverse approach, framing economic growth as the result of technologies inherently frames the solution to be one of increasing the amount of technologies. In either of these two approaches however, the focus remains limited, still confining development to providing economic growth and technologies as both the means to, *and* end of development.

Both as a means to address the goal of economic progress, as well as bridging the digital divide, technological growth is the most commonly presented means to achieving

development seen in GAID's documents. "The links between ICT and achieving the Millennium Development Goals are not theoretical or remote, they are absolutely direct. They should be part of anybody's projects right now" (GAID, 2007c, pp.6-7). However, despite continuously heralding ICTs as the solution, the Alliance's authors largely fail to recognize specific ways these solutions can be implemented. Even in just addressing the limited development problem of the digital divide, let alone larger economic development, there are very few ways that the organization discusses *how* to actually implement these technologies. Instead, the documents rely heavily on the authors referring to their own projects either completed or in progress. With this approach, there are a number of examples provided as to ways that ICTs have been previously used in various circumstances, but there are no recommendations for how they should most effectively be implemented for future successes. The organization fails to provide any depth or guidelines of how they *should* be implemented, instead limiting its discussion to ways that they *have*, where the feedback on these projects is limited to heralding the projects' successes, with minimal (if any) critical examination of ways that these projects could or should be improved if to be attempted in a similar manner in the future. While this is unfortunately symptomatic of larger problems in development, which reward successful projects while failing projects typically fail to receive funding, it also prevents a collaborative environment aiding practitioners in the best ways to implement these projects, and fails to provide a set of guidelines or principles that need be applied in ICT4D initiatives in the future.

Global Partnerships

In alignment with dominant development discourse, and attempts to work towards achieving the MDGs, there has been a strong emphasis placed on the need for global partnerships to be used as a means to achieving development. In order to achieve a truly universal change, the MDGs call for a corresponding global effort. This mentality that is prevalent throughout GAID's discourse, as it even recognizes partnerships as one of its six values of development, dedicating an entire chapter to the subject (GAID, 2007c, p.125). As this multi-stakeholder approach is also dictated in GAID's mandate, it has become an integral element of the organization's plans to achieve development.

Partnerships are seen to play a particularly strong role in the implementation of ICTs.

“The nature and scale of development issues involving ICT require effective partnerships and solutions that involve different sectors of society” (GAID, 2007a, p.15). GAID recognizes different partners have different assets and strengths, which work to simplify the integration of technologies into development practices. “Strong, sustainable partnerships between the government, private sector and civil society must be built to offset costs and mitigate the complexities of the integration of ICT” (GAID, 2009b, p.8).

With both the costs of ICTs, and the education and integration requirements associated with them, the facilitation of partnerships helps to take the burden off of any one stakeholder, thereby making their implementation more possible

However, while GAID calls for collaboration and multi-stakeholder approaches to development, its understanding of who is involved in these partnerships is actually quite narrow. Instead of actualizing a collective global effort, GAID's own participatory process is instead limited to elites, with a particular amount of attention paid to

American-based technology companies. Dedicating two of its documents to the need to form partnerships with Silicon Valley¹², GAID places a significant amount of support behind private Multi-National Corporations (MNCs). Although these are certainly partnerships, they are not truly global networks as GAID advocates, but rather international, and work to connect multiple elite actors together in the development process. This would not be as problematic if these documents were counterbalanced with calls for partnerships with local, developing companies, organizations, or individuals. However, the participation and global cooperation that GAID calls for in these partnerships is removed from any type of communicative framework, and is instead positioned in the business-based context of partnerships, collaboration, and stakeholders.

The partnerships and global collaboration are seen to be a means to achieving global development by a pooling of intellectual resources. However the hierarchical power structures already inherent in international relations remain, or may even be exacerbated by the integration of these large private stakeholders, as they are privileged over local organizations in developing regions, local governments, or any other substantial involvement from within the developing world. In alignment with dependency theory, critical academic scholarship has challenged this idea of global development, and the concept of aid in particular, as it fails to recognize the power relations that continuously exist in these partnerships (Easterly, 2006; Moyo, 2009). Through GAID's approach,

¹² See GAID's *Building Common Ground: United Nations Connecting with Silicon Valley*, and *iGuide: ICTD Resources in Silicon Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area*.

certain partnerships and collaborative efforts are seemingly valued over others, and power dynamics continue to be an incredibly prevalent factor in the development process.

Rights and Freedoms in the Development Process: A Whole Lot of Talk and No Action

Unfortunately, despite including a great deal of discussion of freedoms as an ideal goal of development as discussed earlier, GAID fails to actualize any of these values into its discussion of the means to achieve development. Although freedom is discussed at great length, it remains as an ideal end goal of development, with little recognition of the role that freedom can and should play in the development process itself. Instead, GAID focuses on the recognition of existing internationally agreed upon human rights, and even still these are addressed as an end goal, not a part of the process. Its discussion of freedom as an ideal or goal of development remains confined to the notion of values, as its documents do not make any real attempt to explicitly integrate freedoms into the development process itself. While an entire chapter is dedicated to the topic of freedom within *Our Common Humanity: Principles and Values for Development*, references to the concept are restricted to within this document. Of the 129 times that “freedom” is used throughout all of the organization’s documents, only twice does this word occur outside of this text.¹³ Thus while freedom is explicitly heralded as one of GAID’s “values” of development, and discussed as an end goal, in the subsequent documents that address

¹³ Includes the 113 times that ‘freedom’ is used, and the 16 times that ‘freedoms’ is used, collectively referred to as “freedom.” Of this, all but two of these references are contained within *Series 2: Our Common Humanity, Principles and Values for Development*.

specific ways to achieve development, no substantial attention is given to the reasons how and why freedom is integral in this process. This stands in stark contrast to Sen's recognition of freedoms being equally instrumental to both the process and end result of development. However, despite avoiding any explicit calls for freedoms in its actual means to achieving development, there are still various ways that the dominant development paradigm is indirectly challenged and expanded upon throughout GAID's documents, particularly through the recognition of rights.

Equalities and Rights

In addressing civil and social aspects of development, GAID plays particular focus to the recognition of gender rights. In accordance with its explicit call for gender equality as a desired outcome of development, GAID provides specific solutions to address this problem, all focused on ways to empower women. Similarly to how it approaches economic growth, the Alliance again heralds ICTs as the tool that will serve as an equalizing force. Through education, economic opportunities, and enhanced health care, ICTs are presented as the catalyst needed to empower women – the only way to achieve this particular goal of development.

At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders declared that “progress for women is progress for all” – illustrating that none of the goals of development, human rights and peace and security can be achieved if equality between women and men is not secured. Unless sufficient attention is given to MDG3 on gender equality and empowerment of women, and to the gender perspectives in all other MDGs, none of the MDGs can be achieved (GAID, 2007c, p.70).

Framing the progress of women as necessary for humanity as a whole to make any further progress, GAID's authors emphasize a number of different ways that women can be integrated into development through their empowerment. However, the majority of

these projects are all directed at finding specific ways to target women as the users of ICT initiatives, and how this can help women to become more productive members of society, and the economy. GAID fails to provide any recommendations suggesting that the systemic problems that have placed women in this position should be addressed or remedied in any way, other than through 'empowerment'.

Examining GAID's understanding of the means to development through Sen's notion of instrumental freedoms, it can be seen that GAID touches on a number of these same issues by approaching them as fundamental human rights. Through pushing for elements of these instrumental freedoms, small portions of Sen's vision are integrated into the organization's documentation, however unintentionally. GAID advocates for equality, protection of civil rights, and so forth, which while presented in the context of equal poverty reduction, also provide civil, social, and cultural benefits in the process. This is intended to free individuals from the confines of economic poverty and protect their socio-cultural rights in the process.

Unfortunately, by calling for these specific changes outside of the parameter of freedoms, GAID fails to clarify the context in which these elements are to be provided to individuals. Through Sen's vision, freedoms permit individuals to choose to exercise their freedoms, freeing them from dependency, and allowing them to expand their human capacity. In contrast GAID's (and the MDGs') failure to protect peoples' freedoms to participate means that the context of the implementation of these factors is no longer up to the beneficiaries of development. One problem with the way that these calls for equality and rights are being addressed as a means to development is that they remove the agency from developing regions, instead leaving their well-being up to the greater good.

By not explicitly advocating for the freedoms of developing regions, GAID thereby becomes complicit in making dependency an acceptable means to poverty reduction. In this case, individuals may achieve economic development by GAID's standards, but the circumstances of doing so may create a dependency upon other structures for its maintenance. For example, individuals living in shelters, or dependent upon food programmes, qualify as developed by the standards of the MDGs, but are only in such a position by need, or lack of alternative – not by choice. Through the explicit recognition of individuals' agency, and the protection of the need for individuals freedom to choose, GAID would not only ensure a broader framing of the solutions of development, but would also ensure that the means to achieving development produce more sustainable results.

Politics and Democracy

Although it has already been noted that GAID does not privilege political freedoms in its definition of what constitutes development, these issues are even more overlooked when it comes to addressing *how* to achieve development. Similarly to the overall concept of freedom, 'democracy' is only referred to as a desired value to be sought as an outcome of development (GAID, 2007c). When it comes to actually addressing the means to achieving development, democracy is ignored. By failing to call for the direct implementation of democratic practices to either facilitate economic growth or democracy itself, GAID instead suggests that the achievement of its primary development goals, poverty reduction, the MDGs, and the implementation of technologies, will usher in democracy alongside the ends of development. But without actually implementing any democratic processes or values in the use of these ICTs, GAID not only places too much

faith in the transformative abilities of technologies, but reduces democracy to simply a buzzword, without providing any substance to support or recommend its use.

At no point does GAID explicitly appeal for the prevention of political freedoms in development, as it recognizes them not as a constant process, but strictly as an end point. However, by failing to address the issues head on and directly calling for the *protection* and *preservation* of these rights and freedoms, it allows these issues to fall off of the agenda entirely. Even where GAID does address ways to achieve any sort of political development goals, restricted to the above mentioned limitations of e-governance, the solutions are positioned as streamlining the bureaucratic processes in development to allow easier access to government services and processes, through the use of technologies. Despite placing such a strong focus on technology and the ways that it can empower users throughout all of its publications, GAID still makes no reference to the ways that ICTs can serve as politically democratizing tools, or conversely tools of intimidation and oppression, depending on the context of their implementation. Through understanding political freedoms in such a restricted way, and blatantly ignoring the ways that technology *could* (let alone *should*) help in the political processes, GAID again remains complicit in the exploitation of technologies (and development initiatives) that permit individuals to be oppressed, overpowered, threatened, and intimidated, either by (or despite) the use of technologies. This is where GAID most clearly diverges from Sen's notion of development as freedom. Despite the surface level rhetoric that the organization provides in reference to ways that development can be freeing, and should provide these freedoms, when it actually addresses the ways that these freedoms and goals can be achieved, it falls back to simply perpetuating the status quo.

While GAID includes terms such as freedom, solidarity, equality, and tolerance as values that should be respected within development practices (GAID, 2007c), this discussion is almost entirely absent when discussing the practical aspect of how to get there. The means to achieving political freedoms is not seen to be the implementation of political freedoms, but technologies and economic growth. There is clearly a disconnect here – but why? Is it only a result of the UN’s political difficulties, or is there more to this reasoning? Through presenting the means to development as so narrowly confined, GAID at best leaves freedoms as mere surface level rhetoric and a byproduct of other results, failing to provide any depth or impact to its claims for freedoms in development. This type of rhetoric is problematic in that not only does it fail to provide any call for the expansion of freedoms as a means to development, but it allows GAID to hide under the guise of its surface level calls for freedom in development, while maintaining a modernization-based approach to development, which privileges technology as a means to achieving economic growth and progress. Sen calls for these freedoms as integral in the development process itself, while GAID fails to recognize the role of “controversial” freedoms in the process – least of all those that could connect dissenting viewpoints, and potentially empower oppositional perspectives and voices.

Conclusion

Throughout GAID’s discussion, its overall framing of the end goals of development privileges economic and technological growth and progress. Equating technology with development, the organization has ignored previous criticisms of the modernization paradigm, and has renewed this perspective, resulting in a version of “modernization 2.0” (Shade, 2003, pp.114-115; Leye, 2007, p.979). By continuously privileging economic

and social development over the expansion of freedoms and broader cultural developments, GAID provides a relatively narrow viewpoint of what the end goal of the development process is. As a result, the means to achieving the goals of development are compromised by the restricted end goal of development that GAID has set forth. With its end goals failing to clearly articulate people's agency or protect their values, GAID has failed to recognize that the process of development is equally as important as the end results. However, the way that GAID has defined development is in close alignment with mainstream development discourse. The organization remains content with meeting the specific measurable goals of the MDGs, instead of respecting both the means to and end of development as being complimentary to one another, and valuing the freedom of the individual at the heart of all processes.

There are a number of ways that GAID contributes to benefiting the communicative rights of individuals through its framing of development. The benefits of education, access to technologies, information, and education are all seen to aid in the achievement of GAID's greater development goals of economic progress and ICT penetration. However, these are primarily secondary benefits from trying to achieve economic benefits, not development of communication in itself. Recognizing a role that ICTs and communication can play in the achievement of economic and technological development, these factors have worked their way into GAID's development discourse, as both a means and an end. Yet because these communicative rights (let alone freedoms) are not explicitly recognized as a part of the end goal, they only fit in when it is convenient, and are never recognized to their full potential. The restricted ways that GAID is framing

development is an immediate barrier to recognizing larger rights and freedoms; the organization is restricted to the frameworks that it is working within.

Conclusion

While this project serves to draw attention to communication practices, its intention is not to argue against the other foci that GAID has chosen to integrate into its framing of ICT4D usage, such as access, content or education. Rather, I contend that these additional objectives will also become more effectively achieved with communication understood to be a fundamental human right and need, and integrated into both ICT4D theory and practice.

As recent events in Egypt (and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa) have demonstrated, communication is an integral part of human engagement. Although these revolutions have oft been attributed to the technologies themselves, it is important to not lose sight of the role citizens themselves played in starting these revolutions.

Technologies may have facilitated the communication, but it was the people behind the tools that had a message they wanted to be heard, and were at the center of the process of change. Viewing the way that communication is so fundamental to human expression, it is critical that it not be lost in the development process. If these revolutions can show us anything, it is that communication is the means to change, not just the result of it.

Without the expression of otherwise oppressed voices, the status quo would have remained.

GAID's overall approach to the implementation of ICTs in the context of development is largely constrained by a bureaucratic logic, as it remains centered on facilitating productivity and efficiency. By remaining focused on these processes, the organization is unable to recognize the broader social and cultural rights and freedoms that play a large

role in the expansion of human development – as is exemplified by its continuous focus on economic growth and the measurable targets of the MDGs.

Although GAID positions itself as a think tank, serving to contribute to the UN (and global) ICT4D discourse, it primarily serves to simply reiterate the opinions and perspectives of its global network, thereby perpetuating the status quo. Therefore, instead of working to contribute to critical, analytical discussion, it serves as a clearinghouse of mainstream development projects and discussion – topics already prevalent amongst development practices. If the purpose of a think tank is to perpetuate the status quo, then GAID is doing its job. As GAID is working to address the role of ICTs in development, and integrate ICT into the broader UN agenda, then yes, it should be integrating mainstream ICT4D discourse. However the majority of this is already publicly available in some form. So what is the point? If the goal is to in fact to effectively position ICTs as a catalyst to development, then GAID needs to recognize both the strengths *and limitations* of these technologies. It is only through critically assessing all of ICTs' potential roles and uses that it can effectively recommend the best practices for their implementation.

Although GAID and its authors address a number of the issues that have been raised in international rights-based communications discourse over the past fifty years, they fail to provide any concrete path to resolving these issues. While the use of a number of key buzzwords – such as freedom, democracy, and equality – demonstrates that the organization understands what it is that specific groups and nations are looking for from it, these terms are not substantial enough to provide an actual solution, but instead just work to appease everyone and change the topic of conversation. Instead of embracing

these terms, which lend themselves towards an understanding of communication as cultural, and participatory, GAID continues the trend of privileging technologies as the solution, adopting a transmission view of communication. Through this understanding of communication as a process for the transportation of information, and its failure to recognize communication as an interactive process with significant cultural impact, GAID problematically privileges the actual technologies themselves over the ways that they are used.

Communication, rights and freedoms are all sticky issues. There is no easy answer for everyone to agree upon, and expecting a simplistic solution to come about is naïve.

However, not addressing these issues simply because they are difficult will not help to resolve these problems any faster, nor will it help improve the living conditions of those living in extreme poverty. Although technologies will continue to change at an incredibly rapid pace, ICTs appear to be here to stay, in some form or another, and will only further penetrate the daily lives and connectivity of the developed world. As such, it is up to the world to decide how to best use these technologies. Whether these technologies are used as the means, ends, or byproduct of development is irrelevant. What is critical is the way that recipients are integrated into the process, empowering individuals to each have their own voice. To believe that ICTs provide the ability to entirely negate power dynamics is unrealistic. However, depending on their uses, these ICTs have the ability to either perpetuate, or minimize these power dynamics. It is up to recipients to decide how they are going to be used.

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