

Communication for Governance
& Accountability Program



CommGAP

Towards A New Agora

Innovative Solutions for Governance

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THE WORLD BANK



The **Communication for Governance and Accountability Program** (CommGAP) is a global program at the World Bank with two complementary goals. The first is to promote the use of communication to help governance reform programs work under real world conditions. The second is to promote the building of democratic public spheres—characterized by plural and independent media systems, free flow of information, and free debate and discussion—because these are permanent institutional mechanisms for securing good governance and accountability.

CommGAP defines communication broadly as the communication principles, processes and structures that help to define a society's socio-political context. These include institutions that influence and shape public opinion, such as the media, and the legal and regulatory frameworks that affect the free flow of information between governments and citizens.

CommGAP's Program Areas

Three areas form the core of CommGAP's work: Research and Advocacy, Training and Capacity Building, and Support to Development Programs and Projects.

Research and Advocacy

CommGAP is fundamentally an advocacy program that seeks to distill and disseminate lessons learned from around the world; to develop innovative analytical, diagnostic and conceptual frameworks and tools to support governance reform programs, and to help coalesce a nascent and disparate policy community around governance issues, bringing them to the forefront of development policy and practice.

Towards this end, the Program has launched a research and advocacy agenda to produce a body of evidence that demonstrates the contribution



THE AGORA was the heart of the ancient Greek city—its main political, civic, religious and commercial center. Today, the Agora is the space where free and equal citizens discuss, debate, and share information about public affairs. It is where they gather to influence the policies that affect the quality of their lives. The democratic public sphere that the ancient Agora represents is an essential element of good governance and accountability.

COMM GAP...

- Assists **government officials** in implementing governance reform programs.
- Supports **project and program managers** with innovative approaches and techniques.
- Provides evidence-based advice for **policymakers**.
- Convenes global dialogues bringing together **practitioners, researchers, and government decisionmakers and policymakers** to advance the policy debate.
- Captures, distills, and disseminates best practices globally.
- Promotes collaborative research with **academic institutions**.
- Helps **donors** design and coordinate comprehensive communication interventions.
- Leverages funds for comprehensive communication programs for developing-country governments.





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CommGAP sponsors global dialogues that bring together technical experts, researchers, academics, and practitioners to build consensus, establish collaborative research partnerships, and ensure the technical rigor of analysis.

communication makes to development outcomes. This agenda includes publications and global dialogues that bring together disparate actors within and outside the World Bank—including technocrats, researchers, academics, and practitioners from different disciplines—to build consensus within the policy community, establish collaborative research partnerships across organizations and institutions, and ensure the technical rigor of the analysis.

The evolving research agenda will produce technical publications, advocacy pieces, training materials, a set of tools and handbooks for practitioners, and policy recommendations. The current agenda is divided into five main areas:

The Public Sphere, Media Systems and the Quality of Governance

A national governance system comprises an array of institutions and actors, and has a direct impact on the general welfare. However, two aspects of national governance systems are not sufficiently understood: 1) how different media structures affect the quality of governance; and 2) how the nature of the public sphere—whether and how citizens are able to jointly debate public issues and take decisions—affects public policy and accountability. The public arena is fundamentally a communication space, which fosters what Amartya Sen calls “government by discussion,” where public opinion is formed and decisions are made about social priorities.

Communication for Governance Reform

CommGAP is exploring how information and communication systems can strengthen public sector reforms under what are typically adverse conditions. Its research is distilling approaches and techniques that have been proven effective, particularly with respect to the most challenging aspects of reform, including securing the political will needed to support change; gaining the support of government middle managers who are often the strongest opponents of change; gaining support of—or neutralizing—vested interests; and helping reformers transform indifferent, or even hostile, public opinion into support for reform objectives and demand for good governance.

Communication to Support National Development and Anti-Poverty Strategies

This research is exploring the contribution of communication to the process of planning policy, and setting priorities, allocating resources, and monitoring the implementation of national development strategies and plans. Institutionalized communication mechanisms and processes ensure the flow of information on three main levels: 1] within the government machinery; 2] within the non-government entities such as the media, private sector, and civil society; and 3] between government and the citizenry.

Generating Genuine Demand through Social Accountability Mechanisms

Several social accountability (SA) tools have gained widespread acceptance and application in development today, particularly as mechanisms for improving poor basic service delivery. These tools include the Citizen's Report Card, the Community Scorecard, Participatory Monitoring, and the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey. Research in this area is exploring how SA tools can be used more effectively and selectively to ensure greater impact and generate genuine

demand, what the fields of communication and the allied social sciences can teach us in this regard, and what is needed at both the policy and practice levels to make these tools more effective.

Communication in Post-Conflict and Fragile States

This research is exploring the relevance of broad, donor-led communication interventions in addressing governance challenges in post-conflict and other complex emergency situations. It proposes that a holistic approach to strategic communication, civic education, and building independent media is a critical requirement for countries seeking to establish a solid foundation for long-term peace-building, reconstruction, and development of good governance. This research tests the hypothesis that a rich communication sphere, as the basis for informed institutional and individual decision-making, is instrumental in managing expectations, building both trust in and oversight of state institutions, aiding the formation of an inclusive national identity, and fostering a participatory and engaged citizenry.

"In deeply divided societies, representative and informed dialogue among ordinary citizens may offer greater opportunities for policy change than would a parallel dialogue among more entrenched policy elites."

James S. Fishkin, chair of Stanford University Center for Deliberative Democracy, and participant at a CommGAP workshop on Governance Reform.



"Citizens are far more engaged than they are given credit for. In all continents, and in most countries, you can find a critical group of citizens who understand the connection between corruption that is deeply engrained, and its adverse effects on their pocketbooks and the quality of their lives and those of their neighbors."

David Cohen, president of Global Integrity and co-founder of the Advocacy Institute, and participant at a CommGAP workshop on Governance Reform.



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Training and Capacity Building

CommGAP is also developing an innovative training and capacity-building program for reform managers in development organizations and developing countries, based on the knowledge and insights gained through research and the multi-stakeholder dialogues it convenes. This training program is designed to help reformers and change agents tackle difficult challenges in governance reform through a set of core communication training modules focusing on governance and accountability issues. These modules are intended for staff at the World Bank, other bilateral and multilateral development agencies, and reform managers in developing countries.

Training programs currently under development include:

- Communication and Governance Course for Project Managers
- Communication and Governance Course for Government Officials and Reform Managers
- Management Learning Program in Communication for Bilateral/Multilateral/UN System Officials

Support to Development Projects and Programs

CommGAP provides long-term comprehensive communication support to selected governance-related projects and programs that strengthen the public sphere by amplifying citizen voice; promoting free, independent, and plural media systems; and helping governments communicate better with citizens. The Program's operational portfolio ranges from providing technical assistance to the World Bank's first stand-alone governance project, Cambodia's Demand for Good Governance Project, to giving comprehensive communication support to the post-conflict states of Sierra Leone and Liberia, to helping strengthen Bangladesh's institutions of accountability and demand-side governance.

These projects are evaluated through a rigorous framework developed in collaboration with experts at the Johns Hopkins University. Outcome indicators are identified and monitored to help evaluate the contribution of communication interventions so that results and lessons can be distilled in case studies, which in turn feed into the advocacy materials and the training and capacity-building program.

The quality of basic public service delivery in areas such as health and education can be directly influenced by public demand. CommGAP supports research on how social accountability tools—such as Citizen's Report Cards and Community Scorecards—can be used more effectively to generate genuine demand for accountability.



CommGAP is exploring how a rich communication sphere can be instrumental in managing expectations, building both trust in and oversight of state institutions, aiding the formation of an inclusive national identity, and fostering a participatory and engaged citizenry.

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