



# THE DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Guidelines for the future of communicating  
about the end of global poverty

All change  
**begins with language.**

*Cheryl Heller*



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about the end of global poverty

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Communications* class of Georgetown University's  
Public Relations & Corporate Communications  
Master's Program



**GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY**  
School of Continuing Studies  
*Public Relations and Corporate Communications*

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# INTRODUCTION

The days of international development communications that look like this are over:

*A child's head is hanging low in dejection, dirty clothes and feet, and empty rusty tin bowl... Queue the solemn music. "A child like Emmanuel will die today from..." Queue the shots of a remote, rural African village. Queue the white celebrity. "But the solution is simple. For less than a dollar a day..."*

This approach may bring in the bucks for aid organizations, but many also realize that these types of communications are antithetical to their missions.

If it is so inexpensive to save this child's life, is this child's life worth very much?

There is growing recognition that traditional ways of depicting "those in need" as incapable and passively awaiting rescue are not effective in the long-term, with viewers and readers becoming desensitized to the barrage of negative depictions and over-promising taglines.

Several organizations are taking on alternative approaches using upbeat and uplifting messages about the strength, motivation, and capability of people who could thrive, if only their external circumstances changed. But is this a romanticized picture of the bewildering and deeply-rooted issues surrounding global poverty as well?

It's no wonder that communicators are often confused about the best way to portray the people and the problems in poor countries. How do we tell compelling, yet not overly-simplified stories? How do we inspire action without eliciting pity? Can readers or viewers be angry without judgment, and obliged without guilt? How do we enable people to tell more of *their own* stories?

How can communicators break through the message clutter on topics to which many people in rich countries cannot easily relate? How do we make what are often long-term institutional processes less boring? How can a

new generation of communicators embrace nuance of social change without turning the public off?

Yet more than ever before, globally-engaged citizens in rich nations

are looking for effective ways to affect change in the developing world. These guidelines were developed to help communicators be an effective bridge between those who understand what it takes to make development programs effective and those interested in a "quick click" on social media.

In this new era, communications are no longer only about increasing visibility and building a brand. Today, communications are a strategic part of ensuring an organization achieves its mission.

Today,  
**communications  
are a strategic part**  
of ensuring an organization  
can achieve its mission.

Painting a **fuller picture** of people's lives in this rapidly-changing world is becoming everyone's job.



# QUICK REFERENCE #INTLDEVCOMMS

## DO

- **LAYER INFORMATION.** Build opportunities for people to “dig deeper” through multiple layers of information on development issues.
- **ANALYZE VOICE.** No one is “voiceless.” People no longer want to hear *about* people in need in poor countries, but *from* them.
- **SEEK OUT STORY.** Use storytelling to provide context and connection. Enable people to tell their own stories whenever possible.
- **SHOW PEOPLE’S SENSE OF AGENCY.** There’s no need to underestimate or fail to represent people’s abilities, skills, or commitment. Root out stereotypes, generalizations, victimization, and exploitation.
- **TAKE TWO ON TECHNOLOGY.** Avoid the hype of “solutions” and demonstrate the demand side for technology.
- **BRIDGE THE “US” VS. “THEM” DIVIDE.** Create opportunities for people to connect with the universality of the human experience without relying on pity, guilt or shame.
- **RESULTS & FAILURE: MAKE THE CONNECTION.** Don’t underestimate how much donors want to see how you learned from failure and that making adjustments to your strategy, approach, or programs.
- **SHOW WHO’S DRIVING.** Accountability is no longer just about reporting to donors, but more importantly demonstrating how people’s own initiatives, feedback, and decision-making are incorporated in your work.

## DON’T

- **USE JARGON** if you can help it. (HINT: You can always help it.)
- **SUGARCOAT POVERTY.** Don’t build on ignorance or romanticism of poor countries or what it is to be poor. Poverty sucks, but it doesn’t mean people are victims.
- **SKIP THE BORING STUFF.** Acknowledge and show complexity. Portray multiple factors and long-term perspectives.
- Highlight problems without offering a “way forward”.
- Be afraid to take more risks.
- Ignore criticisms and different perspectives about your work. Be aware of the potential for self-congratulatory and self-righteous tendencies that are often part of international development work.

# WHY ARE THESE GUIDELINES NEEDED?

## BACKGROUND

When *how-matters.org* creator Jennifer Lentfer set out to teach “International Development Communications” at Georgetown University’s Master’s Program in Public Relations and Corporate Communications at the end of 2013, she found no texts to guide her. By the end of the class five months later, her students had researched, reflected upon, and compiled what was missing from the international development sector in terms of specific, forward-thinking communications guidelines.

**This is what they created.**

### Viewers/readers/potential supporters in rich or “developed” countries know:

- We are tired of bleak, “doom and gloom” messages.
- “Throwing money at suffering” is rarely effective or sustainable and “doing good” can sometimes be detrimental.
- We are lucky to live in a place where we can experience the potential to be financially secure.
- We are viewing the world through our own lenses, and the world may look very different through the eyes of others.

### Viewers/readers/potential supporters in poor or “developing” countries know:

- There are many different approaches to addressing poverty, some more effective than others. Lofty solutions, devised in another country, are not what we need. We are not waiting just for anything, nor are we waiting to be rescued by some unknown “heroes.”
- Aid organizations have been making promises for years.

- Aid is only one source of revenue for countries to use in bringing about development.
- Western understandings of what it means to be under-developed, poor, or from continents other than Europe or the US are often misguided, condescending, and oblivious to historical, racial and socio-economic realities.

**‘Poverty Porn’:** the practice of depicting the “graphic qualities of a [vulnerable] human being...for the sole purpose of eliciting an emotional experience and ultimately, money.”

*Definition by Emily Roeniak of World Relief*

### Aid organizations, agencies, foundations, social enterprises, etc. know:

- Oversimplification of problems and solutions is misleading. For example,

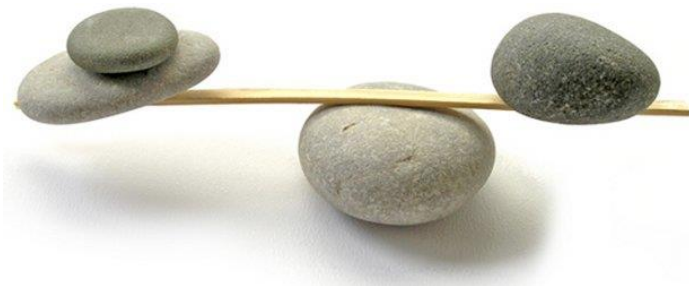
famine doesn't exist because there isn't enough food to go around, but because of deep power imbalances and lack of access to resources like fertile land and clean water. Long-term supporters require *reflective engagement with the complexities of development*.

- There is a financial incentive to tell the success stories of development work, based on the perception that this is what donors and potential donors want to hear.

- Any lack of sensitivity, exploitation, or stereotyping detracts from key messages and is not justified by the ends of obtaining people's attention and donations.
- New means of communication and new modalities of delivering assistance are enabling people in developed or wealthy countries to have a direct connection to leaders and people living in poverty around the world, without intermediary aid organizations.

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# STRIKING THE BALANCE



One well-crafted message can raise awareness of a problem and increase donations for a cause at the blink of an eye. At the same time, it can tear at people's dignity and self-determination, and discourage real investment in a country's people or economy.

For example, Invisible Children's Kony 2012 campaign demonstrated that general audiences still respond in overwhelming numbers to

messaging that offers a clear problem and solution upon which they can act quickly. However, Ugandans whose lives were affected by the LRA were puzzled, offended, and outraged at the campaign's depiction of the conflict.

In an over-informed world where organizations are competing with cat videos for people's attention, standing out and delivering striking, yet relevant messages about global development is ultimately a balancing act. Freelance writer and social media strategist Oscar Abello describes international development communicators as balancing between:

Raising money for people in need

Telling compelling stories

Highlighting a problem that needs to be addressed



Exploiting people in need to raise money

Oversimplifying or trivializing people's realities

Dictating or prescribing a solution

Indeed, it is a significant challenge to describe global development in novel ways with words and images that we use all the time. Communicators also navigate between:



The following sections highlight considerations and approaches that communicators can use to help strike this balance. A quick chart summarizing the dos and don'ts of international communications is found on page 2.

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# LAYER INFORMATION

Not every globally-engaged person has the same amount of knowledge or experience to apply to the communications products they encounter. Global development issues may be hard to tackle, but people want a chance to engage and contribute. Giving the minimum

amount of information to people so as not to overwhelm them, and then offering them opportunities to add more context, detail, and depth on the issues is an important mechanism for meeting varied audiences “where they are.”



“...if we try to tell people everything, they will remember nothing.”

*Joe McDonagh, Creative Director,  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

“Layering” information so that people have a “gateway” to click through and find additional background is a way to avoid information overload. At the same time, this does not alienate those who have limited time or interest, but rather invites them on a journey of discovery to learn more.

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# BANISH JARGON

*“Organization X has been working towards a more comprehensive development cooperation program to attract contributions of technical and financial support that can respond more nimbly and effectively to the expressed needs of...”*

Say what?

Clear and accessible writing is a vital, yet so often ignored element of development communications. Jargon is often a main culprit (along with passive voice and long sentences with multiple clauses). Even if “technical experts” are speaking to an “insider” group, text should never be constructed in a way that would bewilder lay readers. Whenever possible, communicators must weed out jargon and other confusing or “suitcase” words, which must be further explained to readers.

For example, why say food insecurity? Are people locking up their food? Who are food-insecure people? People who are self-conscious about their food? To most people, the term sound unnecessarily complicated and it lacks clarity. “Starving” may conjure stigma, so what about just saying “hungry” to a lay audience?

**‘Buzzwords’:** concepts that can float free of concrete references that try to conciliate interests of several governmental and multilateral agencies

*Andrea Cornwall and Deborah Eade, authors of  
“Deconstructing Development Discourse:  
Buzzwords and Fuzzwords”*

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# ANALYZE ‘VOICE’

What happens when people have been left out of their own stories? What damage is done if communicators are deemed to *give* voice to another human being?

questions of “voice” in their communications products, so that *all* individuals can see themselves as part of the solution and part of the future that they can help build.

“When people portray us as victims, they don’t want to ask us about solutions. **Because people don’t ask victims for solutions.**”

*Theo Sowa, African Women’s Development Fund CEO,  
Aspen New Voices Fellow*

Assumptions and generalizations about who poor people are, what they need, and how those in wealthy countries can help them, have been a part of international development communications for decades. But according to Solome Lemma, co-founder of Africans in the Diaspora, five key questions can help communicators examine and understand the role of “voice” more effectively in their work:

## ANALYZE ‘VOICE’

- Who is speaking?
- For whom?
- About what?
- For what purpose?
- What’s missing?

To reflect a changing development and global landscape, communicators have a responsibility to thoughtfully use these

An explosion of online and issue-driven media over the past decade has created a wide range of outlets, many of which are bringing new voices to light, representing the raw, real, local perspectives. Even when it’s not possible for people to produce their own content, international development communicators can use quotes

whenever possible, flesh out more of a person’s back story and support system, and focus on people’s own ideas about what’s needed for them to change their circumstances.

“The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption.”

*Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Everyone—community members, donors, national leaders, technical experts, clicktivists, policymakers—need an accurate vision of what the problems are, how they affect people’s lives, and how best to respond. They should no longer hear only *about* people in need, but *from* them.

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# SEEK OUT STORY



If we really believe that change can come from any level in society, we need to **seek out and represent those stories from all levels.**"

*Cara Mertes, Ford Foundation's JustFilms Initiative*

In a narrative format, we are able to follow a character's life experiences and the way he/she feels, thinks, and perceives the world and events. Movies have proven that this is true. We cry for a character we have only known for two hours.

As international development communicators, we adhere to 'story' as a powerfully emotive and connective tool, believing in its ability to persuade, influence, motivate and educate. Personalized stories allow the reader to connect on a more intimate level, rather than to a disassociated concept like "women in Africa" or "vulnerable communities." Developing empathy and admiration for a "character" makes a reader or viewer more likely to want them to succeed.

And while the power of storytelling is found in enabling people to try on another's person's shoes, hearing just one story about a people or a nation and allowing it to dictate our thinking can lead to deepened ignorance. Thus storytelling in international development must be done with care and consideration of voice (see above), agency, and complexity (see below).



Stories can be used to break the dignity of people, but **they can also repair that broken identity.**"

*Author Chimanda Ngozi Adichie*

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# SHOW PEOPLE'S SENSE OF AGENCY



There should be nothing communicated about us, without us."

*Participant in "Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid"*

Nobody likes to feel helpless, incapable, or desperate. It is never in a development organization's interests to underestimate people's abilities, skills or commitment, because if ultimately people's desire to make change happen is negatively affected, these approaches can delay development. Yet portrayals of "helping" often conjure up victimhood in order to validate the assistance being given.

What if “helping” were portrayed as directly asking and listening to, and responding to what citizens want? What if “helping” were about unleashing people’s desire and ability to take control of their lives and gain more and more self-sufficiency?

People drive their own development.

International development communicators should regularly consider how they reflect *agency* through the way they tell or communicate a story or an idea—helping to portray people’s capacity to make free choices and act independently no matter where in the world they live.

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# DON'T SUGARCOAT POVERTY

The real nature of poverty, disease, conflict and injustice is often tragic and heart-breaking. It is the challenge of communicators to search for resilience and hope in the most dire of circumstances. Resilience, by definition, comes from adversity. People become strong because they have to survive.

However, challenging people in wealthy countries to reflect on their relative good fortune and combat existing stereotypes, i.e. offering “gringo enlightenment,” doesn’t have to mean always painting a rosy picture of life in

developing countries, however. There’s no need to show a mother’s smiling face when publishing a story on a crisis that led to the death and displacement of thousands of people. Such oversimplification can further alienate.



Disasters are disasters. **Don't hide from the chaos.** Use it in your communications."

*Tracy Reines, American Red Cross International Services*

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# DON'T SKIP THE BORING STUFF

Just a hint, an acknowledgment, of complexity in international development communications can spur people to think a little deeper and learn a little more when information is layered (see above). Communicating these inter-related factors from as many angles as possible can bring a closer representation of the daily challenges faced by people around the world.

To fundamentally change a life means addressing all of the obstacles a person faces. Therefore, communicating solely about the environment or education or economics is often difficult without delving into other aspects of people’s day-to-day lives. Overemphasis on one route or one solution can give it too much power, distracting from the host of factors at play in international

development. Much is at play in determining whether or not aid works or development occurs. One initiative can seem to be successful, until people realize that a key factor wasn't considered in the planning or that another unanticipated problem has risen.

For example, a local nonprofit starts out raising money to ensure kids could go to school. But when the children are having trouble concentrating without sufficient food, they staff realize they didn't budget for school meals.

**'Development'** should now be seen (and spoken of) in terms of transforming economic and political processes. Poverty should not be seen as merely a technical problem that requires financial inputs, but as a 'thick problem.'

*From Dóchas Network Code of Conduct on Images and Messages*

Nonetheless, other disadvantaged parents find the local nonprofit and the demand for the organization's services increases. Instead of expanding their program, the non-profit forms parent support groups who then put pressure on the school administrators to demand that the existing government scholarship program be implemented.

Social movements are built over time on shared emotions and ideas that drives people to action. Sometimes the work needed to bring about people's well-being is just not new, innovative or sexy. Sometimes it's about citizens demanding fundamental services, governments managing their budgets, and the day-to-day grind of making institutions function. The problem of politics enlarges other problems in every country, and people must push and counter against what they are given to create social change. Just as it takes time for crops to grow, it takes time to see results.

Development organizations know that changing the world is no easy undertaking. In their communications, they can prepare and invite their supporter base for the journey too.

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# TAKE TWO ON TECHNOLOGY

The digital age brings with it an inherent sense of possibility for people in the developing world, but the latest creations are most often what warrant the most attention—a celebration of technology for technology's sake. What is rarely represented in international development communications about technology is the demand side by people for which it is intended. As such, practicality takes a backseat when "solutions" are applied

without fully understanding people's expressed needs, the existing digital divide, and gender inequality issues inherent to technology use.

When the context in which the technology will be used is portrayed in a personalized way, ideas and stories immediately become more nuanced, making it easier for communicators to avoid the hype and demonstrate tangible uses of technology.

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# BRIDGE THE ‘US’ VS. ‘THEM’ DIVIDE



...you and I and all of us will realize that we are family—that **we are made for togetherness**, for goodness, and for compassion.”

*Bishop Desmond Tutu*

Making people feel related is a powerful tool for international development that can drive awareness, urge people to care about others who have different life circumstances, and encourage them to take action on behalf of one another. The more communicators can convey that people are people and that we all want to better our lives, the easier it is for viewers and readers to feel connected and included, rather than sadness, guilt, pity, or shame.

To be able to portray people’s realities truthfully, reinforcement of “us” vs. “them” or “at least I am doing something” or “savior” mentalities can override key messages and lower expectations for impact. People are relatable not because they look/act like readers, but when storytelling is deftly used. Empathetic and compassionate responses, (e.g. “he could be my little boy,”) create opportunity for people to discover the universality of the human experience and then, to act in solidarity.

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## RESULTS & FAILURE: MAKE THE CONNECTION

International development programs have their share of successes and failures, yet balance and transparency about what doesn’t always go so well is still a rarity in the aid, philanthropy, and social enterprise sectors. Discussions of international development in traditional media have created a polarized view of the topic—aid is all bad, or all good.

Our society is driven by “results”—good grades, job performance, etc. So it’s understandable that donors want to see the outcomes of the funds they contribute to an effort, and that organizations feel the pressure to paint a positive picture. Impact is usually reported as, “we did this,” but “so what?” questions are often left unanswered. Most

people will never have the opportunity to follow their contributions all the way to meet those on the receiving end of aid, so they rely on organizations to share their view of progress.

We all know that

**failure happens.** It is those who are able to recognize it, learn from it, and adapt to the learning that prove successful.

*From Engineering Without Borders Canada's  
'Failure Reports: A How-To Guide'*

Of course all organizations have their shortcomings—where they have missed the mark, not met objectives, not considered priority stakeholder opinions, not measured

the right indicator, nor ensured an activity's sustainability. Increasingly, however, organizations engaged in international development are demonstrating that they are conducting serious evaluation/ research/ reflection to signify to their supporters that they care about doing quality work.

The power of communicators making the link between results and the failures that lead to them is that it can inspire another kind of confidence in an organization. The demonstration of learning and adaptation in development programs can lend credibility to the effectiveness of an organization's work. The staff and leadership may not have all the answers, but they can build their reputation by asking the right questions, being transparent, and continuing to learn. In doing so, telling the story of failure successfully can be a catalyst for innovation and sustained interest in an organization's work.

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# SHOW WHO'S DRIVING

A crucial part of establishing an organization's credibility is accountability to those whom they ultimately serve—people in living in poverty. Increasingly, people want to support development organizations that can demonstrate people's involvement and decision-making as a key aspect of successful programming. Not only do they want to see how money was spent, but also how feedback loops informed the projects.

Unfortunately, "customer satisfaction" or "reviews" are a relatively unexplored and

rarely-prioritized aspect of development work. But communicators can help widen accountability by creating space for testimonies and feedback for people participating in an organization's work. What are people saying about an organization? How dedicated is the staff to the people? Only those "on the ground" can offer this perspective.

And for the public, what can be more convincing and accurate—and at the same time, engaging and emotional—than the feedback of people with whom you work?

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# EXPAND COMMUNICATORS' ROLES

The days of international development communications where the key responsibilities were writing press releases and annual reports for donors are **over**.

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Millennials like us—future decision-makers—are publicly demanding transparency in international development more than we've ever seen. We are bold enough to ask questions about justice and good governance. We want truth, vulnerability, and we subscribe to the 'duty of publicity.'

"We want to challenge the norms about to whom development organizations should be accountable. We feel inspired when an organization decides to not sugar-coat or bury mistakes, but instead lay them on the line; it makes us respect them and want to invest more."

*Georgetown University Masters Student  
International Development  
Communications class in Public Relations  
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Program | Spring 2014*

As this revolution occurs throughout the world and within international development circles, the roles and responsibilities for communications are expanding rapidly.

Already, communicators are steering the future of the aid, philanthropy, and social enterprise sectors by helping focus and place emphasis on what matters most. As storytellers and as truth tellers, communicators can shape and frame the international development narrative, not to just make sure organizations are doing their best, but respecting, humanizing, and upholding the dignity of everyone involved. Perhaps more importantly, communicators are inviting more people to have a seat at the table.

Right now, the full picture of the realities of people's lives in poor countries is not a part of the development discourse, nor the public's awareness.

The **next generation** of international development communications **will change that.**

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# CONTRIBUTORS

## Jennifer Lentfer, Lecturer, @intldogooder

Jennifer is a Nebraska farm girl turned international aid worker. She was named one of Foreign Policy Magazine's "[100 women to follow on Twitter](#)" in 2012. Her blog, [how-matters.org](#), focuses on how the aid, philanthropy, and social enterprise sectors can be more responsive to local needs and initiatives.

Lentfer has served with multiple international organizations and foundations in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Namibia, and the U.S. over the past decade and has worked with over 300 grassroots organizations in east and southern Africa, focusing on organizational learning. Lentfer is currently Senior Writer on Oxfam America's Aid Effectiveness team and editor of the organization's [Politics of Poverty blog](#). Lentfer is also a lecturer at [Georgetown University's Center for Social Impact Communication](#).

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Sophie is a communication strategist and visual designer with five years of experience in the field of global health and development. As a social-change enthusiast, Sophie thrives on helping mission-driven organizations recognize their strengths and communicate their unique role in fixing up the world.

Sophie currently works at the Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University, where she supports all research initiatives with communications strategic visioning, product conceptualization and visual identity packaging. She is responsible for producing and disseminating high quality digital, print and creative products, managing branding compliance, and carrying out website and social media engagement. Additionally, Sophie coordinates communication skill-building across staff and manages conference and event planning for the Institute.

Sophie is enrolled in Georgetown University's Public Relations and Corporate Communications Program focusing on *Social Impact Communication*, and holds a bachelor's degree in Communications and International Development from Houghton College.

## Alisha Stewart @alishanicolePR

Alisha is an Atlanta native that works as a PR/Marketing Coordinator for the Boy Scouts of America, National Capital Area Council (NCAC) where she is responsible for managing partnerships and developing their digital media presence.

Prior to joining the Boy Scouts, she worked for The Harbour Group supporting AT&T's public relations campaigns and previously interned for the Girl Scout of the Nation's Capital, creating program materials and building a volunteer base for its interfaith program initiatives.

Stewart is currently a graduate student at Georgetown University where she is earning the Masters of Professional Studies in Public Relations and Corporate Communications. She is a graduate of Howard University where she received a B.A. in Journalism and was awarded the 2011 Exemplar PR Award for her outstanding work in the program.

## Amanda Pagay @apagay

Amanda is an Associate on the Workforce Surveys & Analytics team at Corporate Executive Board (CEB). The Workforce Surveys & Analytics team resides in the Solutions practice, which is the professional services arm of CEB. Workforce Surveys & Analytics provides measurement, reporting and improvement of employee opinions and organizational capabilities. Before joining CEB, she worked as a marketing consultant for Axela Government Relations, helping the firm with their non-profit clients. Amanda earned her Bachelor's degree from American University in Washington, DC, and a Master's degree from Hult International Business School in London. Currently, she is completing a second master's degree in Public Relations from Georgetown University and has an interest in pursuing development work through public-private partnerships.

## Ana Castanon

Ana is the Program Coordinator and Creative Director at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. She collaborates closely with the Center's Communication Director in implementing new communications and organizational strategies for the development of the center. She assists with internal and external communications and planning efforts, including coordinating meetings and calls for the center's directors, answering to research requests, and developing and updating content for the Center's website and social media. Additionally, she serves as the in-house designer and the first point of contact between the Center and contractors, such as Designers, Editors, and Researchers.

Prior to joining the Center, Ana served as the Public Relation Specialist at the Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts in El Paso, Texas. She has also worked as a Program Fellow at the Bureau of African Affairs at the American Embassy in Malabo (EG) and took on the role as a project research assistant for the development project of non-profit organizations. In addition, Ana has interned at the Chemnitz University, Germany where she researched and analyzed international border behavior and relations.

Ana is pursuing her Master's degree in Public Relations and Corporate Communications at Georgetown University. She plans to gather the necessary tools to one day begin a grass root organization for the better development of her hometown Cd. Juarez, Mexico.

## Ashley Simms

Ashley currently works for FleishmanHillard delivering social marketing consultation to public sector clients. She is responsible for managing account deliverables for several large government agencies, event management for brand and campaign activations, media relations and new business development.

Before working for FleishmanHillard, Ashley worked at Susan Davis International providing media relations support and creative services to an agency of the Department of Defense.

With a passion for advocacy, Ashley earned her bachelor's degree in journalism and public relations from Michigan State University. She will graduate this fall from Georgetown University with a master's in public relations and corporate communications.

## Claudia Teixeira @claudia\_ont

Claudia is a communications consultant at the [Educational Portal of the Americas](#) of the [Organization of American States](#) (OAS). She manages the communications of the Educational Portal using content marketing strategies to increase the visibility of the program in the Americas. The Educational Portal is an online education platform of the OAS that offers free and subsidized courses on key development areas for the Americas such as education, public management, gender, youth and disability policies, and entrepreneurship. She finds inspiration to do her job in the stories of the course participants who testify about the power of education in opening new windows of possibilities, and encouraging them to bring positive changes to their lives. Claudia holds a Master in International Management from the University of Maryland University College and is master's candidate in the Public Relations and Corporate Communications program at Georgetown University.

## Ecem Acar

Ecem is currently a full-time graduate student in Publics Relations and Corporate Communications at Georgetown University's School of Continuing Studies. She has previously worked for TUSIAD (Turkish Industry and Business Association) as their Project Event Coordinator for the 15th year anniversary celebrations of the Washington Office. TUSIAD's Washington Office thrives to develop and deepen Turkey-US relations in every field as well as strengthen mutual interaction. As TUSIAD's Project Coordinator, Ecem was responsible from all venue arrangements and hotel accommodations for the 50 most prominent businessmen of Turkey who attended the events. Before joining TUSIAD, she worked for the Special Olympics International as a Guest Coordinator for the World Winter Games in PyeongChang, South Korea. She managed the schedules of VIP guests who've attended the events, ensuring that their experience will make them permanent fans of the Special Olympics movement. Ecem earned her Bachelor's degree in Business Management in Leadership and Change from Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business.

## **Gboyinde Onijala Missihou**

Gboyinde Onijala has a bachelor's degree in mass communication and communication studies and is a candidate for a master's degree in public relations and corporate communications at Georgetown University.

Gboyinde is a cause-driven communicator who has a passion for working with youth and young adults. She currently works as the Senior Communications Specialist for Montgomery County Public Schools, the largest school system in Maryland. She assists the Director of Public Information and Web Services in managing the daily activities of the Department, including serving as a spokesperson for the school system, and developing and implementing strategies to improve internal and external communications.

In addition to her communications work, Gboyinde is also passionate about planning events that help bring diverse groups of people together for a common purpose. From cultural showcases, to weddings and corporate events, her work as an Assistant Coordinator with RAE Affairs has helped sharpen her skills in project management, strategic planning, and fundraising.

## **Isaura Lazo @GroceryCoach1**

Isa is currently a consultant at Deloitte Consulting. She has six years of experience assisting clients solve some of their bigger operational challenges, such as inefficiencies in organizational processes and technologies. Her efforts include working alongside clients to develop business strategies, roadmaps and plans of actions to address challenges. Prior to Deloitte, Isa served in the Army National Guard for six years. Throughout her service she responded to disaster relief operations throughout Virginia, such as hurricane Isabel, and supported Operation Iraqi Freedom as a convoy security specialist. As an entrepreneurial minded individual, Isa thrives on helping inventors, small businesses, and up and coming business owners develop their brand, and expand and act on their ideas.

Isa is passionate about creating a safe place for all children and helping children overcome difficult situations. She devotes her free time to mentoring with the focus on empowering them to be the best.

Isa is enrolled in Georgetown University's Public Relations and Corporate Communications Program focusing on public relations and leadership. She plans to leverage what she learns at Georgetown to continue empowering children as well as helping small businesses and idea generators to achieve their goals.

## **Joe Shaffner @jas3311**

Joe has over 12 years of experience in communications, marketing, partnership development, management, community engagement, and capacity building. Half of that has been in the international development arena—where he volunteered with the Peace Corps, managed the Marketing Department of an architectural and engineering international development consulting firm, and collaborated with UNICEF and the Pan American Health Organization. Through these experiences, he has worked with people at many levels—from local communities, to non-profit and for-profit organizations, to local government officials, to foundations. Through creative ideation, he continues to look for ways to give back to the global community as well as his local community.

Joe has a B.A. in psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and just last week received a master's degree in Public Relations & Corporate Communications (social impact emphasis) from Georgetown University's School of Continuing Studies.

## **Karin Bloomquist @kbloomq1**

Karin is currently a communications specialist at ICF International's Strategic Communications and Marketing Division, where she works on integrated marketing communications programs and energy efficiency initiatives for utility companies. She has strong interests in global communications, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable development.

Her previous experience includes work in marketing, public relations, and strategic communications, handling internal and external communications at both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. She has also served on the board of directors for Washington Women in Public Relations (WWPR), a DC-based professional organization, managing a committee of members to lead all of the association's marketing, communications, and public relations efforts.

Ms. Bloomquist is currently a graduate student at Georgetown University, working towards obtaining a master's degree in Public Relations and Corporate Communications. She currently holds a bachelor's degree in Communication with additional studies in Conflict Analysis and Resolution and Global Affairs from George Mason University.

### **Karla McKenzie**

Karla McKenzie is a research assistant at of American Institutes for Research, one of the largest behavioral and social science research organizations in the US. Karla consults regularly with the client and project staff and participates on a multitude of dissemination efforts, as well as conducting research for a program that strives to implement arts in math in primary education. She brings her background of communication, media, and design to the table as she continues on a lifelong journey of being a public relations mogul and entrepreneur.

### **Maggie Skinner @yaymaggiemay**

Maggie is a strategic planner committed to brand management and open communication. She is a community builder with a discerning eye and the confidence to generate innovative solutions to complex challenges.

Maggie begins as a Marketing Strategist at 360 Live Media in mid-May, shortly after her graduation from Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies Master's Program in Corporate Communications. In this role, she will be responsible for the development and coordination of live events for several clients, with careful attention paid to branding and return on investment.

Maggie has five years of professional experience as a project manager. She worked at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business in the Office of Executive Education building and coordinating custom programs for an executive audience. Maggie managed 38 programs in a five-year period, and was responsible for client contracts that averaged \$2 million per year. In this role, she collaborated with corporate clients to determine program objectives and design integrated communications plans.

Maggie has traveled extensively through Europe and China. She studied Arabic and Latin, and is hoping to turn her attention to French in the near future. Maggie lives in Washington, DC.

### **Marjorie Chenjin @MarjorieChejin**

Marjorie Chejin is a believer of the power of communications to make positive change happen. She is passionate about social media, public relations, development, causes, and human behavior. Currently she is a full time graduate student at Georgetown University for the Master in PR and Corporate Communications. She also does pro bono consulting for the Accelerating Market-Driven Partnerships program from The Aspen Institute.

Marjorie is originally from Caracas, Venezuela, where she developed and directed a successful campaign against violence called "No te engoriles," which intended to ridicule violent behaviors and obtained significant attention from celebrities, newspapers, social media, TV and radio in Venezuela. She spent four years as Communications Director in the Caracas Metropolitan Chapter. She has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a specialized degree in Integrated Marketing Communications.

### **Molly Anderson**

Molly currently works as a media analyst for the financial services team at PRIME Research in Ann Arbor, MI. Quantitatively measuring and reviewing the media presence of large financial institutions in the US, she has started to take an interest in Wall Street and how financial markets operate around the world.

Even though she works more in the quantitative, data driven side of communications now, Molly also has a strong background in writing and editing as well. This includes working for various publishing houses in London and the US as well as researching meta-cognitive skills in discipline specific writing and experience teaching writing to various age groups and students through a number of nonprofits and writing organizations. She is interested in representation and voice, and how those are portrayed and effectively used in storytelling throughout the media.

She is currently studying Public Relations and Corporate Communications, working towards her Master's at Georgetown University after receiving her B.A. in English and History from the University of Michigan.

## **Pam Boehland @PBoehland**

Pam Boehland is a current Georgetown University graduate student studying digital and corporate communications. She is a former military journalist and photojournalist and has traveled to numerous disaster areas to cover military operations. Her work includes documenting the 2010 Haiti earthquake and the Deepwater Horizon Gulf Coast oil spill. She currently lives in Maryland with her husband and dog.

## **Sara Schuttloffel @srschuttloffel**

Sara Schuttloffel is pursuing her graduate degree at Georgetown University. Her latest accomplishment is the Volkswagen Millennial Campaign through the Public Relations and Corporate Communications (PRCC) program at Georgetown, which won the PRCC Client Collaborative Competition. Sara has also successfully completed a branding project for a nonprofit in Zambia, the Lupwa Lwabumi Trust.

Sara has agency experience working at Qorvis Communications, where she served as a consultant to a team working with defense and sovereign clients. Contracted to federal government agencies, Sara planned and executed many major government events. She started her career on Capitol Hill. Before moving to Washington D.C., Sara worked as a Project Manager for Brooking Area Habitat for Humanity where she developed and implemented a new home renovation program.

## **Sheridan McCrae @sheridanjmc**

Sheridan is a communications strategist focused on social impact issues. Originally from Australia, Sheridan has spent 15 years living in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa and is currently based in the Baltimore/Washington DC area of the US. She has worked with communities and NGOs in Ethiopia, India, Malawi, Tanzania, the US, and Zambia – focused on and fascinated by the interactions between human health, livelihoods, and the environment.

These days she shares stories about inspiring individuals and innovative community development projects through the strategic use of photography, video, writing and digital platforms that portray context, culture, and universal human experience. Sheridan is currently a fellow at [Georgetown University's Center for Social Impact Communications, working on storytelling research](#) that involves developing training resources tailored for smaller non-profit organizations.

Sheridan holds a Master of International and Community Development degree from Deakin University and will complete a master's degree in public relations and corporate communications from Georgetown University this summer.

## **Silvia Vallejo Nazario**

Silvia is a full-time graduate student, pursuing her master's degree in Public Relations and Corporate Communications at Georgetown University.

She previously worked in higher education, engaging students and local communities through content marketing, social media, and video storytelling. She has also worked with the Amazon Conservation Association, where she developed a passion for storytelling, social responsibility, and the environment.

Silvia graduated magna cum laude from *Universidad del Sagrado Corazón* in San Juan, Puerto Rico, with a B.A. in Communications and Public Relations.

# QUICK REFERENCE #INTLDEVCOMMS

LAYER INFORMATION

BANISH JARGON

ANALYZE 'VOICE'

SEEK OUT STORY

SHOW PEOPLE'S SENSE OF AGENCY

DON'T SUGARCOAT POVERTY

DON'T SKIP THE BORING STUFF

TAKE TWO ON TECHNOLOGY

BRIDGE THE 'US' VS. 'THEM' DIVIDE

RESULTS & FAILURE: MAKE THE CONNECTION

SHOW WHO'S DRIVING



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