

Luminate



Winning Hearts & Minds

How Change Agents, Funders, and Creative Agencies Can Harness the Power of Strategic Communications

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Executive Summary

Winning hearts and minds to catalyze social change is difficult in the absence of powerful narratives, which can only be generated by experts who understand the target audience and possess specialized communication skills. In this context, the synergies and the importance of partnerships between strategic communications and social change should be obvious. Yet, in Kenya, many strategic communication professionals and change agents work in silos, with little to no concerted and sustained efforts by either group to explore opportunities to collaborate. As a result, neither

digital advocacy and activism at scale and collect real-time data on the performance of said activities, which reduces the impetus to use strategic communication firms.

2. Change agents lack adequate in-house resources and tend to focus more on strategic communication tactics than strategy, which leads to suboptimal outcomes. Moreover, access to digital platforms has led change agents to presume that handling strategic communication internally through social

A key finding of the study is that there is a disconnect among many strategic communication firms, change agents, and funders in Kenya.

strategic communication firms/professionals nor change agents recognize the breadth of opportunities that lie at the intersection of their work. In addition, funders in the ecosystem have little impetus to fund strategic communication services when supporting change agents. This is because funders are not well-versed in the local nuances of how strategic communication can amplify change agents' work, while change agents lack the know-how or incentives to generate demand for this type of funding.

This study explores why this is the case in Kenya. Delving further into this fragmented ecosystem, a key finding of the study is that there is a disconnect among many strategic communication firms, change agents, and funders in Kenya.

Specifically:

1. Increased digitization has impacted the relationship between change agents and strategic communication firms. The rise and ease of accessibility of digital media have enabled change agents to conduct

media is a good alternative to having a holistic strategic communication strategy with dedicated personnel to execute it. In other cases, the lack of internal strategic communication skills makes it challenging for change agents to prospect, brief, and work effectively with strategic communication firms when they do explore this option.

3. Change agents and strategic communication firms hold certain impressions about each other, which dissuade them from working with one another. Change agents and strategic communication firms do not regularly or proactively seek each other out due to preconceptions about factors such as budgets (or lack thereof), gaps in knowledge in each other's domains, and working styles.
4. Lack of impetus towards marketing and communication activities by funders has dissuaded change agents from expanding their focus on strategic communication work.

To bridge some of these aforementioned gaps, our recommendations are as follows:

1. For change agents:

- a. As a baseline, change agents need to dedicate focused time to reflect on how they want to communicate their work and influence their target audience and the role of strategic communication in advancing their work. Depending on the organization's resources, an external facilitator could be helpful to guide this process.
- b. Once a baseline is established, they should explore options to close any skills or talent gaps, such as hiring and upskilling current staff in critical areas of work.
- c. Change agents need to take a more expansive view of how they communicate their work and influence their target audiences utilizing both traditional and modern modes of communication. We encourage change agents to partner as peers on joint campaigns or conduct learning sessions with peers. This can help build in-house strategic communication knowledge and other related synergies, such as purchasing shared services.
- d. Change agents should review their internal procurement and request for proposal (RFP) processes to identify ways that are time-efficient to attract a wider breadth of strategic communication firms to pitch for work and give them an equitable chance.
- e. Finally, change agents should review their reporting structures to reflect the significance of strategic communication to their work. They can do this by ensuring that strategic communication departments are involved in key decisions of the organization, implementing its strategy, and key operating procedures, such as hiring external professionals.

2. For strategic communication firms:

- a. Strategic communication firms should invest in building the requisite knowledge to be considered a viable candidate for a pitch opportunity from change agents through the following ways:
 - i. Set strategic intent within the firm to ensure the leaders of the organization are aligned on building a social impact practice over time.
 - ii. Prioritize which social impact issues to focus on and consider aligning the strategic communication firm to specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - iii. Bring in external experts on a need basis and identify opportunities to join external training to keep costs contained and build knowledge sustainably over time.
- b. Given that most change agents seek referrals from peers when looking for a strategic communication firm to work with (rather than issuing RFPs), it is crucial that strategic communication firms invest time in proactively developing relationships with change agents to elevate their visibility.
 - i. Create in-person and online convening experiences targeting potential social impact clients for knowledge sharing and networking purposes since existing gatherings are siloed.
 - ii. Identify and participate in social impact industry convenings to meet change agents where they are.

c. Strategic communication firms should test adjustments to the client-agency commercial model and pitch process. Some alternative approaches include:

- i. The Cannes Lions SDGs effort, where some agencies are committing to doing pro-bono work for a particular issue.
- ii. Explore a tiered pricing model to cater to change agents depending on their budgets.
- iii. Strategic communication firms on retainer should strive to have consistency in the personnel assigned to change agent accounts to help build institutional memory and continuity.

3. For funders:

- a. Funders should motivate strategic communication firms to expand their work in the social impact sector by acknowledging and celebrating the work of firms operating in these spaces and providing other incentives, such as access to exclusive networks/ convenings.
- b. Funders should revise their RFP and grant processes to encourage change agents to rethink, prioritize, and create budgets for strategic communication work.
- c. Funders should provide capacity-building, access to strategic communication support, and financing to their grantees to enable them to create and implement strategic communication strategies.



Cannes Lions Report, July 26, 2022, in Stuttgart, Germany. [Credit: Bild: Stan-Paul Schipper via Flickr]

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List of Acronyms

CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EOI	Expression of Interest
FBOs	Faith-Based Organizations
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPOs	Non-Profit Organizations
PR	Public Relations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

The world seems to be in perpetual crisis mode, with mounting challenges facing people globally. In such circumstances, it is easy to succumb to cynicism and fatigue, even — perhaps, especially — among those individuals and organizations who continually strive to make the world a better place. In the face of seemingly constant challenges, long-held tactics and strategies to initiate change may start to lose relevance. How do we respond to this?

A good starting point is to interrogate what needs to change and how within a specific local context. Let's take Kenya, for example, a country that is home to a breadth of changemakers fighting for an array of causes, from conservation to politics.

Within this mosaic of activities, it is difficult to imagine a traditional fishing community in one of Kenya's most impoverished counties successfully winning a lawsuit against a multibillion-dollar project. It seems even more impossible when you consider that the project was part of a nearly \$30 billion initiative supported by the governments of not one but three different countries. After years of protests and advocacy, however, the community-based organization, Save Lamu, and its partners were able to achieve just that—a judicial revocation amidst widespread media coverage. The case received so much support that it was dubbed a modern-day enactment of “David vs. Goliath.”

Since 2013, the Kenyan government had pursued the development of coal projects in Lamu County, often at the expense of the local community's environmental, health, and social rights, sparking protests from the public. The agitation surrounding the Lamu project began with community efforts, but eventually snowballed into a much broader campaign. In 2016, 40 civil society organizations and activists in Lamu joined forces to become Save Lamu, a community-based organization that was part of the “deCOALonize” campaign, which drew support from local and international change agents alike. Even so, three years later, when Save Lamu and its deCOALonize partners achieved a judicial revocation of Amu Power Company's coal power plant permit, the United Nations Environmental Programme described

the victory as “a novel and remarkable win” by a “powerless community.”

So, how did this apparently “powerless community” achieve the seemingly impossible?

DeCOALonize was more than just a legal fight. The movement began with grassroots efforts but quickly expanded to include a robust and multi-pronged communication and advocacy campaign aimed at local, national, and international stakeholders. The campaign coalition achieved this by informing locals about case updates, mobilizing support by raising awareness amongst Kenyan and international activists, and putting persistent pressure on local policymakers. This aided the campaign in gaining support from both change agents and campaign partners, including local organizations, such as Katiba Institute, and international partners, such as Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. This widespread support was one of the key enablers of its success.

What, then, was one of the most critical tools in “David's” arsenal? Effective communication.

The deCOALonize campaign was underpinned by a comprehensive communications strategy that engaged various stakeholders at the grassroots, local, and international levels, including policymakers, change agents, and funders. It relied on a diverse communication toolbox that included both traditional forms of communication, primarily radio and public speaking, unique tactics such as using the sails of dhows (traditional sailboats) as floating billboards for visual messaging, and modern channels, including social media. When fighting disinformation campaigns in the media that branded prominent members of the movement as terrorists and anti-development agents, the coalition was able to maintain a cohesive public front via multiple touchpoints: interviews for prominent community leaders on Kenyan and international radio and television to communicate with its grassroots audience; social media posts with interesting facts and updates about the project proceedings and its impact on the environment and the Lamu community; and a website populated with news, court proceedings, letters to



Environmental activists in Kenya are determined to show that coal has no place in the country's energy future. (Credit: decoalonize.org via Flickr)

parliament, reports, statements of support, and other similar resources to ensure accountability. Furthermore, a partnership with Purpose, a social impact-focused strategic communication organization, ensured that Save Lamu received end-to-end campaign and communication support.

These factors demonstrate that communication was a critical aspect of the deCOALonize campaign's success in bringing about change. It helped Save Lamu secure requisite human, financial, and legal resources, enabling them to win hearts and minds across the board. In addition to winning the case against the project developer, deCOALonize led to four banks pulling out of the coal project. Today, the Kenyan government has shifted efforts away from attracting developers for coal power plants to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to 32% by 2030, demonstrating the long-term impact of the campaign's advocacy efforts.

The deCOALonize campaign example is evidence of the very real impact that a successful collaboration between change agents and strategic communication firms can have in Kenya. After all, stories have been used to nudge people into performing various actions for decades. Advertising is a great case in point—using the power of effective storytelling to persuade people to make decisions about essentially every aspect of their lives, from what they wear to how they vote. As the deCOALonize campaign demonstrates,

a powerful narrative can help realize genuine social change.

Save Lamu demonstrates the positive and far-reaching impact of social change and strategic communications coming together successfully. In light of this, Winning Hearts and Minds sought to understand the degree to which change agents in Kenya harness the potential of strategic communication to advance their various causes.

Our findings reveal that social impact and strategic communication spheres in Kenya largely operate in silos, and bridging this gap in a systematic and sustained manner would unlock a breadth of value-creation opportunities that lie at the intersection of their work. In addition, we found that funders in the ecosystem have little impetus to fund strategic communication services when supporting change agents. This is partly because funders are not well-versed with the local strategic communication services available and the nuances of how integrated strategic communication can amplify change agents' work. Furthermore, change agents lack the know-how or incentives to generate demand for this type of funding.

Within this context, this report delves into the challenges—some collective, some unique—that prevent change agents from incorporating strategic communication as an integral part of their work to win hearts and minds and achieve societal change.

Methodology

This study is a joint effort by Botho Emerging Markets Group and Asphalt & Ink, commissioned by Luminate, and carried out between January and June 2022. Our approach included secondary and primary research that drew insights from a range of change agents, strategic communication firms, and funders operating at different scales with varied experience in commissioning, supplying, and resourcing various forms of social impact storytelling. We would like to thank the generous individuals from participating institutions Baraza Media Lab, Busara Center for Behavioral Economics, Standard Media Group PLC, The Institute for Social Accountability (TISA), Mathare Social Justice Centre, Article 19, World Vision, Women Political Leaders, Young Women's Leadership Institute (YWLI), Segal Family Foundation, Alfluence, Thellesi Trust, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, Mozilla Foundation, Hivos, Digital Beehive Africa, Dentsu Kenya, Scanad Africa, Odipo Dev, IDEO, CGTN Africa, and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for their time and thoughtful input through this process.

Secondary Research

There is limited publicly available information on Kenya's strategic communication sector in general and its role vis-à-vis change agents

specifically. For the former, exceptions are limited to specific industry verticals, notably public relations, advertising, and digital and social media advocacy.

Secondary research entailed benchmarking against other countries to see what the interplay of strategic communication and social impact looks like in other parts of the world to glean lessons learned and best practices. To understand the use of strategic communication, three customer segments were analyzed, namely: private actors, public actors, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The findings from this desktop research informed part of the primary research.

Primary Research

Twenty-five in-depth Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted across three stakeholder groups: Change Agents, Strategic Communication Firms, and Funders.

Stakeholders

25 Stakeholders Interviewed

12 Change agents

Change agents whose work represents a wide array of interests and focal areas, including the development sector (3), human/political rights (2), media and storytelling (3), civic engagement (1), and consulting (1), targeting gender-based groups (mostly women), marginalized minority communities, and informal settlement/slum areas.

7 Strategic communication experts

Four of the strategic communication firms interviewed were international, two were local, and one was regional. Services offered by a majority of the firms include strategy, digital, research, content production, media buying, and creative services. Two strategic communication firms offered public relations services, one specialized in artificial intelligence (AI)-powered influencer marketing, and one other offered a suite of services, including events, data visualization, and campaigning.

7 Funders

The seven funders who were interviewed had diverse backgrounds: five were Program Coordinators, one was a Governance and Public Policy Practitioner, and the other one was a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) adviser for a donor government.

Marcom Firm Services

Best Description of Services Provided	Number of Firms
Media Buying	3
Creative	3
PR	2
Campaigning	1
Content Production	3
Digital Agency	5
Research	3
Events	1
Other	1

The Power of Communications for Change

The Best of Both Worlds: Strategic communication can demonstrate impact and create it

On the surface, strategic communication and social impact appear to be two distinct, perhaps even divergent, fields. Yet, they share a common underlying purpose: to win hearts and minds. It is at this intersection that one can unlock the full potential of a genuine collaboration between these two domains. Our research identified four areas where change agents and funders should prioritize collaboration on strategic communication:

1. To influence policy
2. To amplify the work of change agents
3. To convey impact
4. To change behavior

Effective advocacy and communication with policymakers are critical to achieving policy reforms.

When Kenyan policymakers banned shisha smoking in 2017, the change was indirectly attributed to the efforts of change agents, such as the Den of Hope Youth Group, a Kenyan anti-tobacco advocacy group. Adopting a combination of bottom-up and top-down measures, the Den of Hope Youth Group advocated against tobacco use among Kenyan youth and policymakers simultaneously. They accomplished this through a variety of means, from distributing engaging YouTube content about the dangers of tobacco targeting young people to participating in public forums and talks and signing open letters to policymakers.

Strategic communication plays an important role in communicating a change agent's work to both project stakeholders and the general public.

By disseminating the results of their work via dynamic channels, such as social media, change agents can collect valuable data and real-time feedback on how external stakeholders respond to and/or engage with their programs and campaigns.

“One of the biggest challenges that change agents have is reaching the right target audience. The second is being able to measure their impact right in the sector...we often see that organizations struggle to figure out how to do things in a new way and also be able to show that it worked...we are able to collect that data through social media within a matter of days and actually use that in real-time to design our strategies in a more effective way. And so that kind of feedback is constant, and it really feeds better into a campaign strategy.”

(Executive of a Kenya-based AI-driven strategic communication firm)

Strategic communication can help change agents effectively demonstrate impact to funders, who often have to track and measure the outcomes of their funding to varying degrees.

Truly effective strategic communication can create behavioral change and inspire action. As one respondent pointed out:

“Strategic communication firms adopt behavioral science tools and research techniques to understand what messaging influences different personality types. This enables (the strategic communication agencies) to have a deep understanding of what works and influences stakeholders, allowing them to influence different political and business decisions, for example.”

(Executive of the Kenya office of a global strategic communication firm)

To achieve behavioral change or evoke a specific action, communication should not just be catchy; it must also be underpinned by the knowledge of what motivates the target

Communication should not just be catchy; it must also be underpinned by the knowledge of what motivates the target market.

While data and hard evidence are an integral component of impact reporting, they may not be able to paint a complete or persuasive picture if they are not communicated effectively as part of a compelling, overarching narrative.

“I think in the last few years, this is a very important way of telling stories of change and is now a required section in the reporting from our grantees. And we want to be able to see demonstrable evidence beyond the numbers and beyond the empirical feedback that there is actual change happening in the communities where our grantees are working. So stories of change are actually...an important and integral part of the reporting of the grantee.”

(Program Manager of an international bilateral funder)

market and which levers to pull to influence decision-making. For example, an expert cited a campaign run by a Kenyan conservancy that created a Tinder profile for a “single” male member of an endangered species to raise awareness and sympathy for these animals and encourage individuals to donate to their protection. This expert believed that, while the campaign captured the attention of global media and the public, individuals might not have felt compelled to donate to the cause, suggesting a lack of “evidence-based communication.” As a case in point, the \$100,000 raised fell significantly short of the \$9 million target.

The power of strategic communication in creating behavioral change and inspiring action

CASE STUDY : Sita Kimya (translation: I will not be quiet)

Summary	Sita Kimya is a feature film launched in 2010 as part of a campaign to increase awareness of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), increase rates of reporting, and provide referral pathways for legal, medical, and psychological support services.
Team Involved	Change agent's team
Strategic Communication Approach	<p>Published text and branding on T-shirts, buses, and other merchandise to help the message stick and travel.</p> <p>Created Sita Kimya murals on buildings to identify those locations as safe spaces where people could talk about SGBV.</p> <p>Recorded videos of testimonials from actual stakeholders, such as a judge and policewoman, to help the message resonate deeply with the target audience.</p> <p>Launched a film, 16 Days of Activism Against GBV, during the international campaign to challenge violence against women and girls to sensitize the community on forms of violence and how they can help prevent SGBV.</p>
Impact	<p>Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) opened a rape crisis center in Kibera to coincide with the “Sita Kimya” campaign and reported an increase in the number of people seeking post-rape care services.</p> <p>The campaign helped build the capacity of community members who continue to serve as SGBV change agents.</p> <p>There was increased police support and people seeking legal action during the campaign period.</p>
Takeaways	<p>Community involvement was an important aspect throughout the program implementation.</p> <p>Using multiple communications channels, e.g., murals, T-shirts, radio campaigns, film, and video workshops, was successful in raising awareness about SGBV and providing practical information on what to do and what services are available.</p>

Furthermore, effective campaigns may require combining multiple strategic communication channels—offline/online, conventional/innovative—and necessitate a nuanced understanding of how and when to tap into these channels for different audiences and purposes. In the earlier case of deCOALonize, for example, the campaign strategy used a diverse communication toolbox to engage various audiences. It adopted traditional forms of communication, such as engaging community leaders, and more modern tools, including multiple social media platforms,

each with its distinct audience and messaging strategy.

There are many ways in which strategic communication can assist, amplify, and supplement the work of change agents. Meanwhile, the rise of digital media has opened up additional opportunities for potential collaboration between these two sets of actors.

Strategic communication as a tool to inspire action and engage the general public

CASE STUDY : ShuleYangu (My School) Alliance Campaign

Summary	The ShuleYangu (My School) Alliance campaign was initiated in 2015 as a response to the growing land encroachment of public schools. The project started after protesters pulled down a wall at Langata Road Primary School in Nairobi, whose land had been grabbed.
Team Involved	Change agent's team
Strategic Communication Approach	<p>Use of social media platforms, such as Facebook, was effective in communicating directly to the public, creating a feedback loop with the community on campaign activities, and driving citizen enrolment and support of the protection and ownership of public schools.</p> <p>#OccupyPlayground on Twitter provided up-to-date information on the titling process and highlighted schools at the highest risk of land grabbing.</p> <p>Developed a bi-monthly Shule Yangu Newsletter to inform the public of their activities.</p> <p>Commissioned two documentaries, Not My School and My School, My Responsibility, to ensure continued public engagement. The documentaries were screened on local media outlets across the country.</p>
Impact	<p>A multi-agency working group or task force with stakeholders from the government, public, and private sectors spearheaded by Pawa254 and Transparency International Kenya was launched to support the issuing of title deeds to public schools.</p> <p>By 2020, the initiative had successfully issued title deeds to 10,000 schools—a massive increase from only 1,313 titled schools in 2015.</p>
Takeaways	<p>Though initially successful, the Alliance has scaled back the campaign due to a lack of resources as their last round of funding was in the 2019/20 financial year. Unable to sustain pressure on the government to ensure the fast-tracking of school titling, the pace has now slowed considerably, with 20,000 schools still waiting for titles.</p> <p>The resource challenge is common to many of the change agents interviewed.</p>



Second grade students at the Nyamachaki Primary School, Nyeri County, Kenya, April 2017 (Credit: GPE/Kelley Lynch via Flickr)

The Balancing Game: Digital media and traditional communication channels

In the post-pandemic world, digitalization has engulfed societies at an unprecedented level globally. As of January 2022, Kenya had 23.35 million internet users—an increase of about 7.4% (about 1.6 million more users) from the previous year. This rise in Kenyans' internet access has also resulted in an increase in digital ad spending over the years. The overall advertising spending in Kenya reached \$530 million by the first half of 2021, with digital ad spending projected to reach US \$72.55 million in 2022. The massive boom of the digital space has had several implications for how people communicate with one another, which affects how change agents influence and bring about change.

platforms.... Our communication utilizes different tools that exist both physically and digitally, e.g., social media, to share information, create awareness, push for implementation, and influence the spaces and perspectives of people. So, we use the website, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. These are the spaces that we utilize to attract public support. We've really moved from using physical posters and utilizing even the traditional media, which is radio, television, and print."

(Change agent whose work focuses on female empowerment)

This shift towards digital media has also been driven by digital media's critical ability to scale outreach, particularly when targeting relatively young audiences. According to research by the Media Council of Kenya, platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are more commonly used by young people in the 18-35 age bracket compared to older ones. With over

“Our communication utilizes different tools that exist both physically and digitally”

– Change agent whose work focuses on female empowerment

Social media has led to the evolution of content and how it is communicated

Strategic communication firms cited the rise of social media as the most significant trend in the industry. Except for one (who works as an independent consultant), all of the change agents interviewed have a presence on social media platforms, most notably Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The COVID-19 pandemic further bolstered the use of social media as a primary communication platform, with some change agents revealing that the pandemic caused them to focus more on digital marketing than traditional forms of communication.

“Before COVID, we actually didn't have a designation for communication. However, we changed it to digital to include online

75% of Kenya's population falling into this age bracket, digital media is a critical tool for mass communication in the country.

Moreover, the growth of social media has led to the evolution of content itself. Channels such as TikTok and Instagram have created a space for audiences to consume short and immersive video content, propelling video advertising to become the largest segment of digital advertising in Kenya, with a market volume of US \$26.32 million in 2022. This demand for video content corresponds to the general shift in content from long-form storytelling to engaging but bite-sized pieces, as observed by one strategic communication expert:

“Social media has become a big part in terms of tactics. We no longer see what used to be... long-form storytelling. Storytelling for impact

is favored, which means that the value of your product has to be intrinsically almost the first thing that you say in advertising. So we [have] to wrap up around a lot of things in an ad to get a consumer to get pulled in these days. If you don't do that in the first, maybe 10, 15 seconds, you've completely lost them."

(Executive from a Kenya-based pan-African strategic communication firm)

With the rise of social media, organizations, civil society, and policymakers now have common platforms to engage with one another, providing opportunities to influence each other using appropriate digital channels. This has opened up the space for "digital advocacy."

Digital advocacy has helped change agents communicate with policymakers and other stakeholders in a faster and more visible way

In fact, digital advocacy has been a major by-product of the rise of social media. Digital advocacy is the application of digital technology to disseminate information in order to mobilize groups and rally people around a shared issue. Digital media has played a critical role in helping some non-profit organizations communicate, advocate, and

build relationships. Furthermore, change agents have also recognized the importance of digital advocacy in influencing policy decisions. They use social media to engage policy stakeholders by channeling their policy gap research through creative experts to engage in "social media activism."

"One way that we best use [for policy influencing] is through social media. You can call it social media activism because we do work a lot with creatives who are very active on these social media platforms. We employ a bit of advocacy where it's basically shadow diplomacy, have discussions, and find a better way of solving these problems. Case in point, the recent IP bill that was going through, and we had to do a bit of social media campaign as well as communication to policymakers to convene and change the perspective."

(Executive Director at a Kenya-based change agent)

Beyond influencing policy, digital advocacy has also enabled change agents to create impact and evoke behavioral changes, as illustrated in the following case study:



Social media platforms. (Credit: Adem AY, via Unsplash)

Digital advocacy as a tool to inspire action and funder support

CASE STUDY : Narrative on the Plight of Refugees in Dadaab

Summary	This study, investigating the impact of digital advocacy on funding by non-profit organizations in Dadaab, was conducted with the support of 120 respondents at two change agent organizations.
Team Involved	Change agent's team
Strategic Communication Approach	The respondents relied heavily on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter to tell captivating stories to various audiences interested in the plight of refugees in Dadaab. The content utilized images and videos of the challenges faced by refugees to narrate targeted stories, with Facebook and Twitter yielding the most success.
Impact	<p>Impact at the societal level: respondents strongly agreed that digital advocacy enhances an NGO's credibility and legitimacy (86%), helps protect the rights of refugees and allows their voices to be heard at high levels of power (84%), and creates an enabling environment for implementation of policy changes (84%).</p> <p>Strength of digital advocacy as a strategic communication tool: respondents strongly agreed it is an essential element for raising awareness (82%), adds value in communication for behavior change (74%), and creates allies and partners for the cause at multiple levels of society (74%).</p>
Takeaways	<p>Digital advocacy enhanced the NGO's credibility and legitimacy. It also helped protect the rights of refugees and allowed their voices to be heard at high levels of power, creating an enabling environment for the implementation of policy changes.</p> <p>The change agent's employees noted that digital advocacy was an essential element for raising awareness and behavior change. It also helped to create allies and partners, including funding.</p>

The emergence of social media and digital advocacy has created new opportunities for strategic communication services.

The emergence of social media and digital advocacy has also created a demand by change agents for specialized strategic communication services that allow them to engage with their external stakeholders. For instance, strategic communication experts note that some change agents would benefit from collaborating with strategic communication experts who engage young people online daily.

"Many of them [change agents] don't understand how young people want to consume advocacy or how they want to participate in advocacy. So we feel like there's this opportunity to help them figure that out."

(Founder of a media intelligence firm based in Kenya)

Moreover, different platforms, such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, often cater to different audiences. For example (as seen in the table below), the youth in Kenya in the 18-29 age bracket preferred Instagram over YouTube, while more respondents in the 40+ age group used YouTube over Instagram. The data from 2020 shared in the table below does not include the adoption of TikTok, which has grown rapidly in Kenya in the past two years. In addition to target audiences, each social media platform is also characterized by its own kind of content. This differentiation creates opportunities for strategic communication services to support change agents in developing and deploying distinct strategies and tactics to derive the most value from each of these individual platforms.

Social Media Platform Usage by Age

	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-55	56-59	60+	Total
WhatsApp	60%	56%	46%	39%	31%	29%	25%	32%	16%	42%
Facebook	59%	56%	45%	38%	31%	30%	22%	24%	14%	41%
Twitter	18%	18%	16%	11%	8%	7%	4%	4%	3%	12%
Instagram	26%	19%	9%	9%	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%	11%
YouTube	16%	10%	9%	9%	6%	4%	3%	8%	5%	9%
Snapchat	3%	1%	1%	1%	–	–	–	–	–	1%
Blogs	1%	0.5%	1%	0.4%	1%	0.5%	–	1%	0.5%	1%
LinkedIn	2%	–	0.4%	0.2%	1%	–	–	–	0.5%	0.4%
Podcasts	1%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.1%
I do not use social media	31%	35%	45%	53%	60%	65%	72%	66%	80%	50%

n=3188

Source: [Status Of The Media Survey \(2020-2021\)](#)

Additionally, the growing demand for digital services and the growth of social media has expanded the field of strategic communication practitioners, with a significant increase in individuals (typically those with a strong social media presence) providing strategic communication services in the capacity of “influencers.” Their relative affordability has bolstered demand for their services by cash-strapped change agents.

“Change agents do not have a lot of money, so they go directly into digital techniques, [such as] making things viral or using influencers, so that might be a little bit lower cost to get the word out.”

(Kenya-based executive of a global strategic communication firm)

While the decision to engage influencers is not always motivated by financial considerations, digital influencers and social media personalities are making an impact, in some cases, by effectively communicating with the masses. A campaign in Kenya to promote gender equality exemplifies this.

The rise of influencers and their impact in the strategic communication sector

CASE STUDY : Advancing Gender Equality in Kenya: The Role of Influencers¹

Summary	Equality Now, in partnership with Better4Kenya, a digital advocacy initiative by multinational social impact strategic communication consultancy Hive, and Capital FM, a Kenyan media house, held a series of roundtable discussions dubbed #YourVoiceMatters to discuss progress on gender equality and women's rights. These conversations coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2021 Generation Equality Forum (GEF). The aim was to create and sustain a visibility campaign around GEF and hold the government of Kenya accountable for its commitments to the advancement of women's and girls' rights.
Team Involved	Strategic communication experts (social impact consultancy, influencers, mainstream media house) in collaboration with the change agent's team.
Strategic Communication Approach	<p>The campaign aired 10 episodes on YouTube and featured media personalities, influencers, government officials, and NGOs brought together to discuss a range of topics, including sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and women's economic empowerment.</p> <p>Influencers with regional and global profiles published opinion pieces, created Twitter campaigns, and posted content on their channels.</p>
Impact	<p>These campaigns helped raise awareness, complemented grassroots efforts, and increased Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) and citizens' understanding of GEF.</p> <p>These conversations sparked an intergenerational dialogue on women's rights, reaching an audience that would not have been reached through traditional media. They also demonstrated to the Government of Kenya that many citizens beyond those in the CSO care about issues of GBV and want to see their government make more progress.</p> <p>Because of sustained pressure from the NGOs, private sector, and citizens whose joint advocacy demanded greater action by the government in addressing GBV, President Uhuru Kenyatta announced a dozen concrete, actionable steps to end all forms of gender-based violence by 2026. The commitments were backed by funding of up to \$23 million for prevention and response, research and data collection, and the establishment of a survivors' fund.</p>
Takeaways	The collaborative communication approach was integral to the team achieving its objective of raising awareness of gender equality. Working with high-profile media personalities and social media influencers was effective in empowering the youth as gender equality champions.

1. Case Study References: [The Star Co](#), [EqualityNow.Org](#), [Better4Kenya](#)

However, the use of digital media needs to be balanced with traditional media to cater to the right audiences

Despite the rapid ascent of digital media, traditional media will continue to resonate with a variety of audiences. It is still considered the most trusted form of media across age groups in Kenya. For example, television is the most trusted media source for the 25-34 age group, while audiences in the 50-55 age bracket prefer radio. The 18-24 age group

trusts internet sources more than the 45-49 age group. Furthermore, these trends are likely to impact how different audiences consume and are influenced by digital advocacy. These preferences vary not just across age groups but also gender, economic class, and location, thus informing change agents' choice of media or marketing tools.

Trust in Media Platform by Age

A Lot of Trust / Trust										
	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-55	56-59	60+	Total
Radio	65%	67%	65%	68%	68%	64%	67%	63%	63%	67%
Television	65%	72%	72%	71%	68%	66%	63%	63%	65%	70%
Newspapers / Publications	38%	43%	41%	41%	39%	39%	38%	36%	41%	41%
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc)	38%	38%	36%	30%	26%	22%	26%	25%	24%	33%
Internet	45%	41%	39%	34%	31%	23%	26%	30%	32%	36%
n=3187										

Source: [Status of Media Report \(2020-2021\)](#)

For example, traditional media outlets will remain critical in reaching viewers in remote areas where digital penetration is low. As a funder respondent notes:

“We’re always trying to effect [sic] beyond just tech and the digital [...] (as) it (traditional forms of communication) is still important because a lot of folks don’t understand or know, there’s not like a lot of digital literacy about a lot of things that are very important and are very crucial in our everyday. And so a lot of organizations are invested in kind of narrating that and being the bridge that kind of helps folks understand and not silo tech and the digital realm.”

(Kenya-based program officer of an international funding organization)

This indicates the need for multi-pronged strategic communication approaches to cater to the different needs and preferences of specific audiences. This can be the case even when curating campaigns for audiences belonging to a specific age segment, as illustrated by the case study below.

Social media, complemented by a multi-pronged approach, is effective when curating campaigns for young audiences

CASE STUDY : Jiactivate Campaign

Summary	In 2017, a coalition was formed to amplify and unite the voices of 10 million youth throughout Kenya and to improve public participation in the August elections. The campaigns addressed several topics, such as healthcare, police brutality, and how young people can be more engaged in policy formulation and governance.
Team Involved	External strategic communication firm/funder
Strategic Communication Approach	<p>The campaigners worked with local influencers, including hip-hop artist Jua Cali, to build hype around the events and promote the campaign message. The video was viewed over 176,000 times and a Facebook page launched during the campaign had over 5,800 followers, which reflects high social media engagement for that period.</p> <p>The campaign used SMS-based polling to receive the input of young people.</p>
Impact	<p>56 events were held with 70 youth groups, collecting views that were crafted into a declaration that acted as the consolidated voice of Kenyan youth.</p> <p>All major political parties in Kenya endorsed Jiactivate ahead of the August elections and invited the coalition to join the National Youth Committee.</p>
Takeaways	<p>The campaign used a multidimensional communication approach, i.e., social media, SMS, art festivals, and influencers, to reach rural and urban youth.</p> <p>One output of the campaign was the “Jua County Yako” poster that explained the structures of county governments from the Governor level to the village ward.</p>

The Jiactivate campaign’s approach of identifying the right tools and messaging to evoke behavioral change and action requires a targeted strategy underpinned by relevant research that strategic communication firms and professionals are equipped to provide.

Similarly, in the case of Nyathi En Mwandu, a strategic communication firm helped a change agent understand exactly what tools would help its campaign succeed by conducting in-depth research beforehand.

In-depth research by strategic communication firms can ensure the effectiveness of campaigns

CASE STUDY : Nyathi En Mwandu (“A Child Is Wealth” in Swahili) Campaign in Siaya²

Summary	The County Government of Siaya in Kenya collaborated with IDEO ³ to develop a campaign to increase caregivers’ understanding of responsive care during the early stages of childhood. During the research phase for communication design, the team discovered that many caregivers, particularly male caregivers, did not see the need to develop learning foundations with very young children.
Team Involved	External strategic communication firm
Strategic Communication Approach	To engage male caregivers, Nyathi En Mwandu’s campaign designers devised a multi-pronged approach that included grassroots communication strategies for engaging communities, community-based organizations, and community leaders. They set up posters, distributed magazines and booklets, onboarded the First Lady of Siaya County to participate in radio shows, and maintained an engaging Facebook page.
Impact	<p>Engaging community leaders, for example, enabled IDEO to drive interpersonal communication with male caregivers about the importance of early involvement in a baby’s development. As a result, fathers immediately became more receptive to and proactive about spending time interacting with their children.</p> <p>The language and visuals were tested over several months to determine what would resonate the most, culminating in the emergence of the Nyathi En Mwandu (“A Child Is Wealth”) campaign.</p>
Takeaways	<p>Community engagement from the outset, testing messaging, and working with the client from inception to implementation were critical to the success of this campaign.</p> <p>Nyathi En Mwandu has spread to all Siaya sub-counties, with follow-up interviews revealing that many male caregivers are becoming more involved in their role in caregiving. In the words of one impact beneficiary, “I lost a lot. If I could go back in time, I would carry my child, talk with them, and I would have shown my child a lot.”</p>

2. The Nyathi En Mwandu campaign’s tagline is “Miye mise motegno chon,” which means “Give them a strong foundation early.” The campaign addresses the gap in active involvement of male caregivers in their children’s day-to-day upbringing.

3. Source: <https://www.ideo.org/project/nyathi-en-mwandu>

While the Nyathi En Mwandu case study demonstrates the value of balancing and adopting multi-pronged approaches that tap into diverse forms of communication, there are also limitations to the use of digital media as a stand-alone communication tool. For instance, although 98% of Kenya’s population uses mobile phones, only 43% of adults have access to the internet. Furthermore, only 17% of the population uses social media, suggesting limited access. Moreover, as data in previous tables suggest, traditional forms of communication, such as radio and television, continue to be trusted more than the internet and social media across age groups in Kenya. In this context, the affordability and accessibility of digital tools act as a double-edged sword. While digital platforms allow for mass outreach

and content production at minimal costs, these tools can also create the false impression that sharing posts on Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook is equivalent to developing and implementing a strong communications strategy. Consequently, some change agents turn to such digital tools in lieu of trying to bring in the expertise that strategic communication professionals and agencies can offer. This trend has deterred engagement between change agents and strategic communication firms. Unfortunately, this is not the only barrier to engagement between the two groups—in Kenya, the demand and supply for strategic communication services vis-à-vis change agents do not always align neatly in practice.

A Fragmented Ecosystem

The misalignment between change agents, strategic communication firms, and funders

Information asymmetries and a lack of exposure to each other's work have resulted in a highly fragmented ecosystem in which change agents, strategic communication firms, and funders do not fully see or appreciate the complementarities and synergies between their work. This is further compounded by misperceptions that both change agents and strategic communication firms have about each other. Specifically, three main factors serve as both the causes and symptoms of the misalignment between these three stakeholders:

- Change agents underutilize strategic communication tools due to financial and capacity limitations.
- Strategic communication firms' limited knowledge of and exposure to change agents has created inertia between these two stakeholders.
- Lack of impetus by funders has dissuaded change agents from expanding their focus on strategic communication work.

Change agents underutilize strategic communication tools

Change agents currently have a limited understanding of how they can collaborate with strategic communication firms to enhance their work and prefer to handle communications internally, even if they lack the capabilities. This lack of collaboration is compounded by the fact that change agents face resourcing and funding challenges that limit their ability to develop these skills in-house. Further, as noted earlier, easy access to digital platforms, including design platforms and social media, has led change agents to presume that they can manage their strategic communication internally instead of procuring professional services.

In-house strategic communication work by change agents tends to lack strategy and specialization

A 2021 study of nearly 40 non-profit organizations (NPOs) in Kenya conducted by an NPO that focuses on social media marketing to create behavioral change found that most local NPOs (which is interchangeable with our “change agents” terminology) spend less than 20% of their budget on strategic communication. Meanwhile, one of the strategic communication agencies that participated in the study—a leading global firm with annual revenues exceeding US \$10 million in their Kenyan branch alone—indicated that a negligible proportion (less than 5%) of their work came from non-profit sector clients. These responses indicate that, generally, the level of engagement between change agents and strategic communication firms is relatively low.

Given the internal knowledge, skills, and funding constraints that change agents face, their approach to communications tends to be unspecialized and, in some cases, misinformed. Interviewees from strategic communication firms noted that change agents’ communication activities are heavily focused on making announcements and generating attention around specific issues.

“Their [change agents’] communications skills are not up to the industry standards. The more famous ones do things like writing a book or they’ll use shock events, like putting blood on pigs or something, and show up in town. They’ll do things that can grab PR attention [...] But not your normal marketing media and creative strategy. So most of them know how to grab attention, but their overall communication is really poor.”

(Head of a global strategic communication firm with operations in Kenya)

One change agent with prior experience in the strategic communication sector noted that change agents implement campaigns for fixed periods without a plan or strategy for ensuring the longevity of the impact of the stories and messages shared during these campaigns. The interviewee also revealed that change agents rarely look at future iterations of existing campaigns or even measure post-campaign impact to inform future strategic communication activities.

In the absence of adequate strategic communication expertise, change agents can fail to reach and impact the full breadth of their target stakeholders

Due to the less strategic nature of change agents’ strategic communication work, they are often unable to reach and influence all relevant audiences. One funder indicated that some change agents direct their messaging to one segment of the population and miss out on opportunities to engage wider audiences effectively:

“Organizations are working in silos, and those doing influencing work are only working upstream while there’s downstream work to be done. We need to capture the downstream audience, so we don’t lose the pipeline of change and we are not building so much downstream.”

(Funder supporting organizations working on civic empowerment and social justice work)

Even in instances in which change agents reach diverse audiences, they either do not have the tools or do not take an interest in determining how these audiences respond to their messaging.

“[...] Clients [change agents] are not interested in “ground-breaking work” [...] they will ask for billboards with nice graphics but will not analyze the messaging and what it takes to convert clients, [...] Instead, it’s more of a checklist of what’s been done [to meet targets], rather than looking at the actual performance.”

(Interviewee working at the intersection of strategic communication and social impact)

Digital media is a double-edged sword, serving as an inadequate substitute for true strategic communication expertise

While the affordability and accessibility of digital tools like Facebook and Canva allow mass outreach and content production at minimal costs (compared to the costs for strategic communication firms), these digital tools can create the false impression that sharing posts on Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook is the equivalent of developing and implementing a strategic communication plan focused on long-term results. Consequently, some change agents turn to such digital tools in lieu of trying to implement a broader strategic communication strategy that may require them to source the expertise of



UN Women partnered with Kenya’s State Department of Gender, the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW) and the Collaborative Centre for Gender Development (CCGD). 10 community radio stations rolled out interactive talkshows and radio spot messages to foster discussion at the grassroots level. (Credit: Association of Kenya Community Media Operators (AKCMO))

Nonetheless, despite the technical nature of evidence-based strategic communication, change agents revealed a strong preference for handling such work internally rather than outsourcing it to specialized firms. One of the factors that has contributed to this preference is ready access to easily operated design and social media platforms, which the staff of change agents can use to develop and publish campaigns.

strategic communication experts and agencies. This trend has deterred engagement between change agents and strategic communication firms.

There are mixed perspectives on the growing use of social media among change agents to amplify their work. While all interviewees agree that social media is effective for reaching diverse audiences, change agents and strategic

communication firms differ on how to use these platforms to reach relevant audiences successfully. Change agents see social media as a cost-effective option to reach multiple audiences, as their staff can curate and post different items without external support. As a result, many change agents have disregarded the need to engage strategic communication firms in their campaigns and advocacy work. One exception was a change agent working on political justice issues whose organization has realized it needs specialized support to effectively navigate and leverage different social media channels. The interviewee observed that not all platforms are equal, and they are dissatisfied with their engagement on Facebook and Instagram since they lack the requisite know-how to appeal to their target audience on these platforms. This tallies with

inability to measure the impact of PR. This is despite the fact that in-house PR practitioners in NGOs serve multiple functions, including media relations work, stakeholder relations and internal communications, and event management.

“We are a small team who need to run from the onset. Resources and time are what has delayed that. So if we did have resources, we would because some of these strategies are built by outside-facing individuals who are not within the organizations and therefore they cannot give you a clean perspective. And we don’t have that funding for now to do that.”

(Change agent working in the media and creative space)

Many change agents’ communications teams are understaffed, with teams of two or fewer staff dedicated to communications work.

the view of strategic communication firms that argue for the need for specialized support to curate and disseminate messages on these deceptively simple digital platforms.

Existing gaps in change agents’ strategic communication work could be addressed by building internal resources and skills

The aforementioned gaps regarding change agents’ approaches to strategic communication boil down to one foundational issue—the lack of requisite internal resources and skills. The majority of respondents attributed this to budgetary and internal talent constraints that limit their ability to dedicate more resources to strategic communication. Moreover, a 2019-2020 [study](#) by the Public Relations Society of Kenya found that change agents with in-house PR teams struggle with budget constraints, human capital issues, and a lack of understanding of the value of PR, which is further compounded by the

“[W]e really struggle with the capacity in terms of personnel. And I feel at times there is more information that can go out. If we had someone else who supports digital advocacy in this kind of work, we could then be having more impact and more numbers and more impressions.”

(Change agent working on female empowerment)

Multiple factors contribute to the constraints that change agents face in their strategic communication work. The first is how change agents prioritize and approach staffing needs for strategic communications. One change agent with prior experience in the strategic communication sector highlighted the bias that change agents have when hiring strategic communication staff. The interviewee noted a propensity to hire ex-journalists or people who are affiliated with TV or media houses, assuming that anyone with this experience is also good at marketing.

In addition to these biases, many change agents' communications teams are understaffed, with teams of two or fewer staff dedicated to communications work. One interviewee noted that in some cases, these understaffed teams might also be asked to handle other responsibilities, further reducing the time and resources they can dedicate to strategic communication work:

"Scope creep is an issue—and the one or two in-house marketing staff are overworked as they are asked to combine strategic communication with research or fundraising or public relations. [Because of this] the quality of work goes down which feeds back into [mis] perception that strategic communication is not worthwhile."

(Executive Director of a social good-focused strategic communication firm)

Another interviewee highlighted that the reverse also happens—communications work is pushed on to programs and administrative staff to support an already over-stretched communications team:

"During campaigns, we might have 10 pages of content that go out at a certain time, maybe in two hours. So this could be very heavy for the communications person to do by themselves. So the program officer has to step in and at times help with the campaign and also just look at how weighty a campaign is, so we all need to come in and support."

(Change agent who works on empowering young women)

The lack of well-staffed communication departments and internal resourcing affects change agents' strategic communication work at multiple levels:

- Inhibits ability to incorporate strategic communication into their work effectively
- Limits capacity to work with and communicate their needs to strategic communication firms
- Hinders prospects for increased funding



Residents watch the activities during the USAID/Kenya Tuna Uwezo-sponsored Community Achievements celebration held in the informal settlement of Dandora on March 17, 2016. (Credit: Stephine Ogutu, Global Communities)

Strategic communication firms' limited exposure to change agents leads to inertia

There is a clear case for change agents to work more closely with strategic communication firms but the reverse is less obvious. The social impact sector is attractive as it provides a unique opportunity for strategic communication firms to work on pressing societal issues and leverage their deep expertise to effect change in Kenya at scale. However, they find it harder to navigate the social impact sector than the for-profit commercial sector where they better understand the rules of engagement. Moreover, there is currently a lack of convergence between the way service offerings are structured by strategic communication firms and the needs of change agents. Interviews with strategic communication firms reveal three factors that contribute to the low engagement between these two stakeholders. Firstly, change agents and strategic communication firms have reservations about each other that have dissuaded them from exploring opportunities to work with one another. Secondly, even where there is interest from change agents to work with strategic communication firms, there are challenges around securing the latter's services. Finally, internal human resources constraints within both organizations have led to sub-optimal working experiences between change agents and strategic communication firms.

While some change agents do see the value of strategic communication, it will likely require institutional, capacity-related, and cultural shifts to unlock meaningful and sustained synergies

Despite the belief among change agents that digital tools can serve as a substitute for strategic communication personnel in some capacity, change agents interviewed acknowledged that they recognize the need to engage external experts to help them with their strategic communications. At the same time, however, they generally have little confidence that strategic communication firms will understand and authentically communicate their messages. In describing an interaction

with a strategic communication firm, one change agent indicated that these firms tend to sensationalize messages.

"I thought most of them were fairly versed with who we are and what we do. But there's a lot of work in educating an agency...and in really helping them understand your brand, who you are, what you do. [For example, an agency will think] It's about children here. Let's bring the skinny child. Let's put some flies around her... but they don't understand our ethos, which is mutual empowerment."

(Change agent whose work focuses on children's rights issues)

Experiencing a similar inclination among strategic communication professionals, one M&E specialist posed the (rhetorical) question, "Is the world ready to think about poor people as agents of change in the way we communicate about them?" This same specialist, who is working with public sector statisticians to help them communicate their data and research in a manner that is digestible and appealing to mass audiences, describes what, in some ways, may be a lose-lose situation. On the one hand, she believes, "Nobody trusts evidence and information anymore" because people get their information from "influencers" and in sound bites rather than from authoritative sources that may be more difficult to read and digest quickly. On the other hand, these same authoritative sources can be resistant to change. As technical experts, they mistrust communications because they think strategic communication professionals misrepresent information. Therefore, it is not easy to get them to communicate their work in a way that will resonate with non-technical audiences, requiring time, training, and sensitization to create a mindset shift in addition to building requisite communications skills, such as how to translate data into compelling visualizations. In her case, the barriers to this change are three-fold: cultural, institutional, and capacity-related.

Change agents and strategic communication firms currently lack enough touchpoints and sensitization to fully appreciate the value of collaborating with one another

Strategic communication firms have their own reservations about working with change agents. To begin, they believe that change agents do not have sufficient funding for their services, or that they are “too stingy to spend it.” As one change agent who previously worked in the strategic communication sector explained, “The perception of NPOs⁴ is that communications professionals and agencies are expensive...I can use Canva myself, why do I need a designer?...which is not untrue, but agencies also don’t adapt their pricing models to work with NPOs.”

In the event that the money is available, the belief is that change agents—especially larger, more bureaucratic ones—provide few opportunities for strategic communication firms to be creative and assume an “advisory” role, rather than simply following top-down instructions.

“... the stereotype about NGOs⁵ is that all they do is produce reports; there’s a low chance of creating award-winning creative work... not entirely wrong, because NGOs don’t fully appreciate/understand the scope of communications work...[many change agents are] set in their ways so the door is not open for innovation.”

(Respondent working at the intersection of communications and social impact)

These misconceptions on both sides are fueled by a lack of exposure to each other’s work, as well as a disconnect in professional cultures and values. These points of divergence lead both change agents and strategic communication professionals to believe the little (and sometimes inaccurate) information they hear about each other’s respective industries. These misconceptions, in turn, propel change agents’ preference for handling their strategic communication work internally while providing little incentive for strategic communication firms to gear their business development efforts toward change agents.

Change agents interviewed reported that they receive little-to-no interest from strategic communication firms, especially when they

put out advertisements seeking their services. One change agent working on increasing the number of women in leadership positions mentioned, “I’m in a hiring cycle right now. And it’s been quite a disappointment to me in Kenya.... When I put out the call for a role, they just didn’t apply.... From a digital marketing perspective, there are jobs, but there are no applicants.” Another change agent working on similar issues shared, “It used to be that agencies would email me and ask for a meeting. I haven’t had that a lot recently with agencies just emailing me.... There’s only one person who reached out to me.... We do put out RFPs, but even putting out RFPs is tricky because how do you make sure the right people see it?”

The low response from strategic communication firms is unsurprising, given that they are not actively targeting change agents as clients. Still, it is worth noting that some change agents have successfully secured the services of strategic communication firms through their networks and referrals from other change agents.

“[...] referrals because the comms support for our sector is not as mainstream...so what to do is you go to someone, or maybe you even visit a site that has been built by one of our partners and you ask them who did this for them and so you engage them...before we got the current consultant, I recall we had to reach out to a couple of others and we got a huge number of expressions of interest (EOIs). We could not engage because they were way above our budgets. But I think the experience has largely been to get referrals and then you send out terms of reference to a restricted number of potential consultants. And, then you pick one from there.”

(Change agent focused on promoting accountability in political governance)

Although business can be generated through referrals and networks, the two industries have very few shared platforms and networks through which they can interact. The gaps in overlapping networks mean that if referrals are the main way change agents or strategic

4. Non-profit organizations - used by this interviewee when referring to change agents

5. Non-governmental organizations - used by this interviewee when referring to change agents



(Credit: Desola Lanre-Ologun, via Unsplash)

communication firms can find one another, many promising potential relationships are likely to fall through the cracks.

Human resources are a challenge on both sides

Strategic communication firms and change agents both revealed human resourcing challenges have negatively impacted their work with each other. Two change agents shared that strategic communication firms tend to experience high turnover, which makes it harder to work with them since it takes a while for new employees to become fully versed with their brand.

"...It's hard working with agencies and especially at a certain proficiency level, simply because it takes so long to make them truly understand your brand.... It's really about finding an agency that you can build a relationship on that can retain staff, so all this work that I'm putting into teaching you about our brand lasts."

(Change agent whose work focuses on children's rights issues)

Four out of seven strategic communication interviewees noted that change agents lacked the skills to provide clear briefs that specify the help and services they need. "...Better briefings come from experienced people. And I find a lot of the comms people [working in change agents' organizations] are very junior. That obviously needs to change." One strategic communication executive revealed that "... they [change agents] need to brief properly. I don't know where to learn how to brief, but maybe, it's a training that needs to be done, where you bring various stakeholders together to have a brainstorm on what a proper briefing template [is] for a change."

The currently siloed relationship between change agents and strategic communication firms suggests that increased exposure to each other's work could help expand collaboration between the two actors. Holistic communication approaches will also allow change agents to tell better stories about their interventions and target populations and to connect their varied strategic communication activities to create a consistent message that can be understood by diverse audiences. Moreover, if change agents were to have a better grasp of the full potential of strategic communication, then they would be better able to communicate their resourcing needs for this type of work to their funders.

Lack of impetus from funders has dissuaded change agents from focusing on strategic communications

Change agents' capacity to enhance their strategic communication work depends heavily on funders' willingness and ability to provide financing for this work. At present, there is little evidence of funding earmarked for strategic communication work; the only exception is

dialogue on national TV and bring an audience to flesh out the issues that come up. The aim is to influence critical thinking while voting."

The second avenue is by funding communication work as an approach or element under a larger program. One change agent, who has never asked their funders for direct funding for communications work, explained, "In our sector, we sometimes view comms as an approach, and so the conversation is around program development. So then communications work is taken as part of monitoring and evaluation." Only one of the

Funders play a critical role in determining how change agents approach strategic communication work.

instances where strategic communication makes up a significant percentage of change agents' work. One of the factors influencing this is the inaction by both change agents and funders to create budgets and allocate funding towards strategic communication.

Funders play a critical role in determining how change agents approach strategic communication work

Currently, funding for strategic communication work follows two distinct avenues. The first avenue is through direct funding for campaigns and advocacy initiatives, where strategic communication activities make up a significant majority of the activities under the overall project. One example of this was provided by a funder whose organization is dedicated to civic engagement:

"We are looking at the Kenyan elections and it's a large project. The component we're funding is how people understand info being shared and supporting fact-checking. We also support

funders interviewed indicated that they directly fund communications, campaigns, advocacy, or influencing work, not just as a component of a larger project, but as the focus of the funding.

Generally, there is inaction by change agents and funders with regard to strategic communication work

Interviews with stakeholders showed no strong evidence of change agents requesting direct funding for strategic communication, and donors seem unlikely to bring this up in discussions with change agents. Only two of the ten change agents interviewed have requested funding for strategic communication activities from their current funders. The change agents who have initiated these conversations indicated no immediate resistance from funders, but rather a need to examine the practicality of and approaches to financing strategic communication work.

"We talk about comms and advocacy and how to support us consistently... I would love to see them do more. And by that I mean there's a

realistic conversation that has to be had around advocacy and what the outcomes are and what the outcomes can be. Because it's [outcomes around communications work are] very behavioral and it can take a while, which means that outcomes need to be redefined.... Funding also needs to extend beyond the glamor of a campaign when everyone is engaging. We need to have more funding directed towards building the skills needed to do advocacy at this time of everything being crazy in the world, you know, and with the changing dynamics and geography, how then do we upscale?"

(Change agent working to increase the number of women in leadership positions)

Change agents will more often than not follow the lead of their funders, because of the power dynamics between the two. Consequently, even when change agents have access to unrestricted funding, they will most likely direct it to programmatic work where they can meet funders' predefined impact goals. The prioritization of programmatic work has created false competition with communications work when it comes to budget allocation. Speaking about how change agents approach these two streams of work, one change agent with prior experience in the strategic communication sector noted, "Most local and national NPOs spend less than 20% of their budget on strategic communication.... If communications is [sic] seen to compete with programs rather than complement them, it gets docked financially." Another change agent shared the same view, indicating that strategic communication is an integral part of the work they do:

"There's a vision we have in terms of what comms should do. And, particularly now with the evolving nature of the governance sector... this could be preemptive, but sometimes the impression we get from funders and partners is that communications is put on the periphery. And so it continues to be a living challenge that doesn't seem quite to be addressed. And yet it's so important and sits right at the heart of what we do."

(Change agent working on citizen empowerment)

Multiple factors cause and exacerbate the inaction between change agents and donors. Change agents, especially in their nascent stages, will prioritize projects and programs that align with their funders' impact goals as that is the safest route to follow on funding. As a result, if funders have no impact metrics around communications, then change agents are less inclined to present proposals for the same. Donors, on the other hand, look to change agents to generate demand for different types of activities and programs and have revealed that they are willing to consider funding stand-alone strategic communication projects.

When change agents overcome the lack of structure and impact metrics around communications work, their limited experience with strategic communication firms or professionals means they lack the know-how to justify dedicated budgets for this work and the expected impact to their funders. One interviewee with previous experience in the strategic communication sector explained, "At the proposal stage, NPOs struggle to make a case for unconventional communications (conventional communications such as hard copy brochures are still valued) because its value may not be quantified and it's very abstract; plus, at reporting stage, it is difficult to justify and report impact."

Change agents maintain a lower bargaining power in the relationship with funders, and donors must take the lead in creating structures and incentives for their grantees to take up and expand their strategic communication work.

Recommendations

Change Agents

As a starting point, it is important for change agents overall, whether they are just getting started or have years of experience, to consider how they want to communicate their work and influence their target audience and reflect on the role of strategic communication in advancing their work. Depending on the organization's resources, an external facilitator could help guide this process to enable change agents to:

- Better understand their gaps, e.g., internal skills, resources, professional expertise, etc.
- Establish priority areas that they want to work on in terms of strategic communication gaps and opportunities
- Frame their asks to funders and other stakeholders who can support their strategic communication plans

Once change agents establish a baseline, the next step should be working on closing the gaps:

- On the skills front, there are several possible approaches:

- Build the case internally for why strategic communication is important to advancing the mission and impact of their work—this will serve as the foundation for everything else.
- Explore options to close any skills or talent gaps, including:
 - Hire the requisite talent should there be enough resources to do so
 - Explore paid internships where they can benefit from talent that is looking for work experience
 - Take advantage of free/low-cost online resources but also invest in paid tailored training if needed to upskill, e.g., on how to measure the impact of their storytelling work or how to develop data-driven approaches within the organization
- Undertake a collaborative approach with peers where, for instance, funding could be pooled for shared media buying or shared digital advisory

- Refine how they engage with experts/ professional strategic communication firms
- Upskill current staff in critical strategic communication
- Change agents who are ready to engage strategic communication firms should review their internal procurement processes, including RFP requirements and processing timelines, to identify ways to attract a wider pool of qualified strategic communication firms. Firstly, change agents must improve transparency within their RFP processes to debunk perceptions among strategic communication firms that the RFP process is only conducted as a formality since change agents have pre-selected firms with whom they always work. Secondly, change agents should be more flexible in terms of the documents required as part of their RFP processes. Some change agents ask for lengthy, long-form documents, which can deter strategic communication firms that prefer to convey ideas through shorter text and visual presentations.

On the opportunities front, there are several layers to be addressed:

- First, having a more expansive view of the how:
 - In the current setting, as far as tactics go, there is a natural inclination to default to what change agents think is best practice or to the current trends. The use of social media as the medium of preference is one example where engaging on Twitter, Instagram, or TikTok is handled as a must-do without asking how or why. A non-expansive approach also ignores the fact that traditional methods of communication, like radio, remain just as powerful, or that alternative means of communication, such as art or graffiti, are as effective depending on the intended outcomes. By examining how they would like to communicate their work and influence their target audiences, change agents can improve the effectiveness of their strategic communication work and make sure that the resources are going where they are useful.
 - Given that there is currently limited peer learning among change agents on what has or hasn't worked from a campaign and storytelling perspective, we encourage change agents to partner on joint campaigns with peers who have more advanced strategic communication capabilities or to conduct learning sessions with peers. This can help build in-house strategic communication knowledge and other related synergies, such as purchasing shared services and joint media buying.
- Finally, change agents should review their reporting structures to reflect the significance of strategic communication to their work. Currently, most of the responsibility for strategic communication in many organizations sits with the Executive Director (ED), even when there is a strategic communication person or team. This can create a lack of clarity on resource allocation; in other cases, EDs who lack experience in strategic communication may make it difficult for their communication teams to be innovative. Moreover, change agents should ensure that strategic communication departments are involved in key decisions of the organization, implementing its strategy, and key operating procedures, such as hiring external professionals.

Strategic Communication Firms

As a first step, strategic communication firms should take a long-term view and invest in building the requisite knowledge to be considered viable candidates for a pitch opportunity from change agents through the following ways:

- For generalist firms, set strategic intent internally to ensure the leaders of the organization are aligned on building a social impact practice over time.

tools to measure the impact of strategic communication campaigns and behavioral change, as this is currently a barrier for change agents to justify an increase in strategic communication budgets from funders.

Given that most change agents seek referrals from peers when looking for a strategic communication firm to work with (rather than issuing RFPs), it is crucial that strategic communication firms invest time in proactively developing relationships with change agents to elevate their visibility. Ways to do this include:

It is crucial that strategic communication firms invest time in proactively developing relationships with change agents to elevate their visibility.

- Prioritize the social impact issues on which to focus. Firms with very limited exposure to the social impact sector can get started by aligning the firm to specific SDGs during the prioritization process for two reasons. First, this approach helps to focus the prioritization process and can enhance opportunities to pitch for CSR campaigns for existing and new commercial clients. Second, the [SDG Lions Awards](#) program is gaining global momentum and is a useful way to understand current trends at the intersection of social impact and strategic communication. The Awards are a partnership between the UN and [Cannes Lions](#), the leading strategic communication industry awards and largest annual gathering.
- Bring in external experts on a need basis and/or identify opportunities to join external training to keep costs contained and build knowledge sustainably over time. One prime example of such a training could be for understanding how M&E works and how to effectively incorporate
- Create convening in-person and online experiences targeting potential social impact clients for knowledge sharing and networking purposes, since existing gatherings are siloed.
- Identify and participate in social impact industry convenings to meet change agents where they are. For example, one of the strategic communication firms interviewed for this study indicated high success in expanding networks, deepening knowledge, picking up industry lingo, and securing client leads by attending social impact industry convenings. They also noted they typically do not see counterpart firms at these events. Desktop research is a good place to start to see what spaces such as Baraza Media Lab or the newly established [Panga Sanaa](#) initiative are hosting.

Strategic communication firms should test adjustments to the client-agency commercial model and pitch process. The client-agency commercial model typically involves a blend

of long-term (one year or longer) retainers and shorter-term campaign-based work. Some alternative approaches include:

- The Cannes Lions SDGs effort, where some agencies are committing to doing pro-bono work for a particular issue. However, arguably, this is not scalable.
- Explore a tiered pricing model to cater to change agents depending on their budgets. This requires transparent conversations on available budget levels from the change agent and transparency from the strategic communication firms on what can and cannot be included at smaller budgets (so that it is still profitable for strategic communication firms) to alleviate existing distrust on both sides. The tiered approach could lead to new offerings in response to demand, such as an introductory assessment of a change agent's strategic

communication plan or past campaigns as a starting point. As another example, one strategic communication firm noted that they are planning to offer digital marketing skills training as a paid service to change agents.

- Strategic communication firms on retainer should strive to have consistency in the team staffing the change agent accounts. Change agents have raised staff turnover as a concern as it impacts the continuity of work when new employees need to be re-educated on the brand. Motivating talent is a multifaceted issue for all employers, but identifying staff with a strong passion (in addition to the necessary skill set) for the change agent's work is a good starting point as it provides an opportunity for deeper professional fulfillment.



Fanis Lisiagali, Executive Director of Healthcare Assistance Kenya, leads the White Ribbon Campaign march to promote the IFES's Kenya Electoral Assistance Program's hotline which responds to violence against women in elections in Nairobi, Kenya. October 24, 2017. (Credit: Carla Chianese, IFES via Flickr)

Funders

Funders can motivate strategic communication firms to work with change agents in the following ways:

- Celebrate strategic communication firms' social impact work through awards. Strategic communication agencies are highly motivated by industry recognition for their work at the local, regional, and global levels. Currently, there is no clear pathway to gain this recognition beyond local industry awards (e.g., [Digital Media Awards Kenya](#)), many of which are not held as consistently as some of the leading regional ([Loeries](#)) and global ones ([Cannes Lions](#), [Effie](#), [Clio](#)). Donors can get involved by nominating a campaign for a specific award, sponsoring an award category, and funding the team's travel costs to attend high-value award ceremonies. In addition to peer recognition, awards enable strategic communication firms to attract new business and better talent.
- Funders can also incentivize strategic communication firms by including them in funder circles that would otherwise not be accessible. For example, by receiving an invitation to attend or showcase their work (when relevant) at global conferences, strategic communication firms will get an opportunity to network and gain access to potential new projects.

Funders who currently work with global strategic communication firms to support work in Kenya should evaluate the firms' in-market experience and consider local firms if they are not achieving the desired impact.

Funders should support prospective grantees (change agents) to prioritize strategic communication by revisiting their RFP or grant application process in a manner that encourages change agents to prioritize this work. Some ways to do this include:

- Calls for proposals can incorporate prompts asking change agents whether or not they have a strategic communication plan or department in place.

- Funders can also ask prospective grantees what role strategic communication currently plays or could potentially play in furthering their cause.
- Funders can include strategic communication as a line item in the budget templates that accompany grant applications. Incorporating strategic communication in the grant application and budget would prompt change agents to consider and include this work in their funding proposal if they did not already intend to do so.

Funders in partnership with change agents should rethink the process and operational elements of creating, funding, and implementing projects to include stakeholders from the three fields of strategic communication, behavioral sciences, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) from the onset. Change agents interviewed revealed that communications work is often discussed once the project has already started and treated as an add-on rather than as an integral component of the project itself. This practice not only restricts the funding available for strategic communication-specific activities, but also the amount of leeway strategic communication professionals have in defining and driving their contributions.

Funders can create resources and guides for change agents on how to work with strategic communication firms that include the ins and outs of processes such as sourcing, effective briefing, firm selection, and managing the relationship.

Funders can support the change agents in their portfolio by financing capacity-building measures to equip them with general or, when necessary, specialized strategic communication-related knowledge, resources, and skills. The support and resources provided by funders should be adapted to match the nature of change agents' work and their strategic communication strategy, as shown below:

Change Agents' Strategic Communication Strategy

%* of strategic communication in change agent's work	Ideation / Formation	Pre-implementation	Comprehensive strategy + implementation roadmap
Low (<20%)	<p>Contract experts to support the change agent in creating their strategic communication strategy</p> <p>Expose the change agent to learning and knowledge-sharing opportunities to equip them with the skills to create their own strategic communication strategy</p>	<p>Provide capacity-building to the executive team on hiring a strategic communication team, developing a roadmap for implementation of the strategy, and how to work with strategic communication firms.</p>	<p>Fund strategic communication work, which can be disbursed as part of programmatic funding</p> <p>Include strategic communication in report templates and impact/success metrics</p>
Moderate (20–30%)	<p>Deploy experts to support the change agent in creating their strategic communication strategy</p> <p>Offer training to change agent's executive team on creating a strategic communication strategy</p>	<p>Provide capacity-building support to the executive team on hiring and integrating a strategic communication department, developing an implementation strategy, and hiring external strategic communication experts</p> <p>Provide access to subscription platforms where change agents can source experts and boost internal capacity</p>	<p>Fund strategic communication work—the funding can range from programmatic funding to separate strategic communication funding where necessary</p> <p>Include strategic communication in program reporting templates but also provide separate templates to track strategic communication work</p> <p>Review strategic communication work and impact routinely to determine whether opportunities to scale this work exist</p>
High (>30%)	<p>Deploy funder's strategic communication team and external experts to sit in-house and support change agent in the creation of their strategic communication strategy</p> <p>Offer training to change agent's team on the importance of a strategic communication strategy and how to implement these principles into existing and future programs</p>	<p>Provide company-wide training on building the strategic communication team and how to work with the team once it is set up</p> <p>Offer support in vetting and hiring senior members of the strategic communication department. Funders can also provide funding for a recruitment firm to support this process.</p> <p>Funder's team (along with external experts) can work with change agent's strategic communication and executive teams to develop an implementation strategy</p>	<p>Fund strategic communication work—the funding should be separate from any programmatic funding</p> <p>Provide templates where change agents can report on their performance in strategic communication</p> <p>Host review and co-creation sessions with change agents, strategic communication experts, and other stakeholders to identify ways in which the change agent can increase their impact</p>

*Refers to the amount of strategic communication required in the work, not the budget

Annex

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

The KIIs were conducted virtually as structured interviews designed to capture qualitative insights and quantitative information. We incorporated open-ended, multiple-choice, Likert-style, and dichotomous questions to achieve this balance. While each stakeholder group had a specific set of questions, they were grouped into four sections to capture: 1) the stakeholder's professional experience and organization's background; 2) their experience with strategic communication or with social impact work and their attempts to provide or raise funding for strategic communication work; 3) their organizational support in terms of their involvement in communications, campaigns, and advocacy activities; and 4) the organizational growth prospects and the relationship among the stakeholders.

We interviewed 26 stakeholders using this approach: 11 change agents (including two from the same organization with complementary functions), seven strategic communication service businesses, seven funders, and one additional stakeholder. The latter was a non-profit organization that had conducted complementary research, which is not yet in the public domain. For this and three other stakeholders, the interviews focused more on open-ended questions, given that these respondents did not fall clearly into one of the three target stakeholder groups. One of the interviews focused on strategic communication in NPOs, while the other focused on the role of social and behavioral change communications in narrating the work of change agents. Both interviews highlighted the need for a multidisciplinary approach bringing together creatives, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and behavioral change scientists to go beyond the conventional marketing practice and make communication more impactful.

Change Agents

Change agents were interviewed to assess the current use of strategic communication services in their advocacy and social impact work.

Of the 11 change agents, eight work as executives, two work as program coordinators, and one as a consultant. The change agents have a wide range of professional experience of up to 20 years.

Moreover, the organizations in which the change agents work represent a wide array of interests and focal areas, including the development sector (3), human/political rights (2), media and storytelling (1), civic engagement (1), and consulting (1), targeting gender-based groups (mostly women), marginalized minority communities, and informal settlement/slum areas.

Strategic Communication Firms

Strategic communication professionals were interviewed to understand their experiences, or lack thereof, working in the social impact sector. Of the seven professionals representing both local and international strategic communication firms that were interviewed, most held over 10 years of experience and operated at the executive and C-suite levels. Four of the strategic communication firms interviewed were international, two were local, and one was regional.

Digital marketing, research, content production, media buying, and creative services are the types of services offered by a majority of the strategic communication firms reviewed. Two of the strategic communication firms offered public relations services, one specialized in artificial intelligence (AI)-powered influencer marketing services, and one other offered a suite of services, including events, data visualization, and campaigning.

The strategic communication firms' clientele primarily consisted of local and international for-profit companies, followed by NPOs, with a few having government and individuals as clients. In line with this, most of these firms earn all their income through profit-driven activities.

Funders

The seven funders who were interviewed had diverse backgrounds: five were program

coordinators, one was a governance and public policy practitioner, and the other one was an M&E adviser for a donor government. All the funders interviewed are from global organizations that fund local work in Kenya. While the global annual grant sizes of the funders range from \$15 million to \$19 billion, their local yearly grant sizes range from \$3.4 million to \$50.9 million.

The funding stakeholders support work in Kenya across a number of sectors, including health, gender equality, technology, development, and education. Social impact work around health, development, and education tends to receive more funding than human rights and social justice. A unique sector that was of interest to one of the funders was health and trustworthy technologies.

Furthermore, more funders finance work targeting the youth and gender-related issues. Other areas that receive significant funding include marginalized minority communities, refugee camps and settlements, informal settlements/slum areas, and institutions for people with disabilities or other specific needs. A few funders focus on border communities. Though three of the funders interviewed set aside funds for communications and advocacy work directly, three others do not. Of the latter, one provides unrestricted budgets, which allows the grantee to fully decide on the use of funds.



A staff member from SECURE, which is an acronym for the project Securing Rights to Land and Natural Resources for Biodiversity and Livelihood in Kiunga-Boni-Dodori Reserves and Surrounding Areas in North Coastal Kenya, reviews a sketch map of natural resources and forest. (Credit: Samia Omar Bwana, Kenya SECURE Project via Flickr)

Local Contexts of Strategic Communication Firms, Change Agents, and Funders in Kenya

Strategic Communication Firms

Strategic communication has evolved from a traditional model in which the firm communicated in a one-directional manner to the market to an integrated approach that focuses on building long-term relationships. Integrated strategic communication is built on two central ideas: relationship building and synergy. Through the lens of these two concepts, the strategic communication value chain focuses on raising awareness about the product, service, or idea that an organization is committed to selling to its audience; generating interest for its offering; nurturing the audience's consideration to convert it into a purchase or buy-in of the product, service, or idea; retaining consumers by ensuring they are committed to the organization's offering; and advocating for the idea, product, or service to capitalize on the retention and expand the target audience.

Strategic communication firms in Kenya offer a range of services, including media buying, creative, content production, public relations, campaigning services, digital media, market research, event organization, etc. Strategic communication firms have adopted two key structures to deliver these services: many independent firms only focus on niche offerings, while larger firms create independent (sector or service-focused) arms that operate under a larger holding company.

Change Agents

The stakeholders interviewed for this report describe change as “serving the underserved, being always approachable and willing to serve the society” and “increased or (prevalence) of progressive mechanisms of accountability within government.” Change agents are actors, individuals, or organizations who work to change social, political, or organizational systems externally through various pressure, influencing, or advocacy efforts. In the context of this report, change agents refer to members of civil society with the power and skill to facilitate, stimulate, and coordinate change efforts in a social setting and affect behavioral and policy changes. Examples of change



Fig 1 Chain outlining the different goals of strategic communications depending on each step of the user journey.

Kenya is home to a diverse set of strategic communication firms ranging from international firms, such as Omnicom and Dentsu; pan-African strategic communication firms, such as WPP-Scangroup; and niche agencies that only have a local presence in Kenya, such as Rococo PR & Media. However, these lines can be blurred, as the industry is dynamic, with firms of different sizes and types creating alliances and franchises to meet client needs.

agents include activists, advocacy groups, community-based civil organizations, or NGOs.

In Kenya, non-governmental change agents offer a broad spectrum of services across multiple fields, ranging from financial and livelihood interventions and health and education services to more specific areas, such as emergency response, democracy building, conflict resolution, human rights, environmental management, and policy analysis. The support provided by change agents ranges from

offering micro-financing support to facilitating change through actionable interventions, such as capacity building and other programmatic efforts.

In terms of industry sizing, Kenya had 9,255 organizations registered with the Kenya NGO Board and operating actively as NGOs as of 2020. As per the latest annual NGO report by Kenya's NGO board, NGOs received KES 158.7 billion (US \$1.37 billion) and spent KES 164.3 billion (US \$1.37 billion) between 2019 and 2020. Data collected further indicated that 60% (KES 97.8 billion or US \$0.85 billion) of the total expenditure was spent on projects, 10% was spent on administration, and 2% on other running costs. Additionally, in regard to project spending, KES 84.4 billion (US \$0.73 billion) went to direct project implementation, with KES 63.6 billion (US \$0.55 billion) being spent in Kenya.

As per the latest annual NGO report by Kenya's NGO board for the period 2019-2020, the main sources of funds for NGOs in Kenya were foreign government agencies at 29%, followed by affiliates of NGOs at 28%, and other NGOs, community-based organizations (CBO), foundations, and trusts at 20%. Furthermore, funds donated by United Nations agencies accounted for 8% of the total funding to NGOs, while self-generated income represented only 4%, and individual donors contributed 3%. Affiliate Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) contributed 2%, while corporates and businesses, as well as research and academic institutions, contributed 1% each.⁶

Donors or Funders

Funder or donor agencies are organizations that provide grants, scholarships, capacity building, or other forms of support to change-making organizations, projects, and individuals in a specific area. Funding agencies may be corporate social responsibility (CSR) arms of corporate organizations (such as the Safaricom Foundation and IKEA Foundation), philanthropic arms of high-net-worth individuals (such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), or donor agencies of international development organizations (such as USAID).

6. Annual NGOs Sector Report 2019-2020 by NGO Bureau of Kenya