

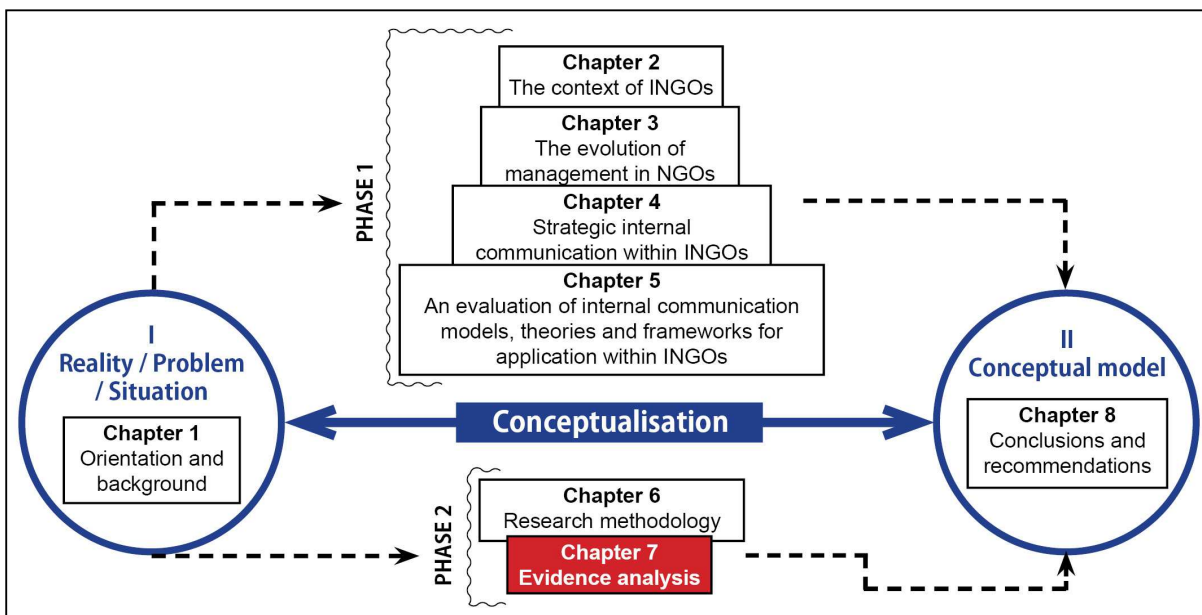
Chapter 7

Evidence Analysis

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on the evidence collected and analysed using the process described in Chapter 6. As such, it provides the results for the empirical phase of the study towards the completion of Objective 2: to identify the current strategic internal communication practices of INGOs empirically. In addition, this chapter starts the integration of the theory discussed in Chapters 2 to 5 towards the achievement of Objective 3. Figure 7.1 highlights this chapter's position in relation to the rest of this dissertation.

Figure 7.1: Chapter 7 in relation to the other chapters



This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section provides a brief review of each case study and internal communication within its particular context. The second section provides a cross-case comparison examining similarities and differences between cases, as well as starting to compare the key themes in the evidence with the theory developed in Chapter 2 to 5.

7.2 CASE STUDIES

This section provides a review of each case's internal communication based on the evidence collected. Table 7.1 shows what sources of evidence were available for each case.

Table 7.1: Evidence available per case study

	Interview	Website	Annual Report	Organogram	Organisation Strategy	Comm. Strategy	Internal comm. strategy
Case A	√	√	√	X	√	X	X
Case B	√	√	√	X	X	X	X
Case C	√	√	√	√	√	√	X
Case D	√	√	√	X	√	√	√
Case E	√	√	√	√	X	X	X

Based on the evidence, each case study reconstructs the characteristics of its internal communication following a similar outline to the normative criteria developed in Chapters 4 and 5. Thus it considers the purpose, position, role and content of the internal communication function, the knowledge of the most senior communicator and the process of internal communication within the case. However, since the evidence suggests that, in most of the case studies, the internal communication function does not undertake the communication of corporate strategy, this process is also discussed separately for each organisation. Following this, the challenges and barriers for internal communication as they manifest in each case are discussed. Finally, each case study concludes with brief overall comments on internal communication in the case as it relates to the theory discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.

7.2.1 Case study A

As noted in Chapter 6, Case A is a 'network' INGO with headquarters in South Africa but partner organisations all over the world. It operates both in the global arena and in national contexts via local partners and primarily fulfils a global policy and advocacy role.

7.2.1.1 Scope of Internal communication

Case A does not have any official internal communication function nor was this officially incorporated within the responsibilities of the most senior communicator. Therefore, much of the discussion revolved around broader communication or communication with partner organisations – who are integral to achieving the organisation’s strategic intent – which the interviewee, as well as the terminology in the organisation’s strategic plan, characterised as internal communication. Table 7.2 outlines the content, purpose, position and knowledge of internal communication in Case A as derived from the two evidence sources.

Table 7.2: Characteristics of internal communication in Case A

	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Interview	Information sharing	Not part of senior management	Tactical	Task related	Asymmetrical, cascading, online
Organisational documents	Information sharing	Tactician	N/A	N/A	Interactive

7.2.1.1.1 Purpose of internal communication

Case A does not have any formal objectives for internal communication. The primary purpose appeared to be the planning of and dissemination of information pertaining to specific campaigns and activities of the organisation. For example, a major component of their internal communication, as noted by the interviewee, is every week they have “calls with all of our [members] and we’ve kind of given them an update, you know: so this is the latest, we’ve signed so and so up and we’re ... well whatever we are doing.”

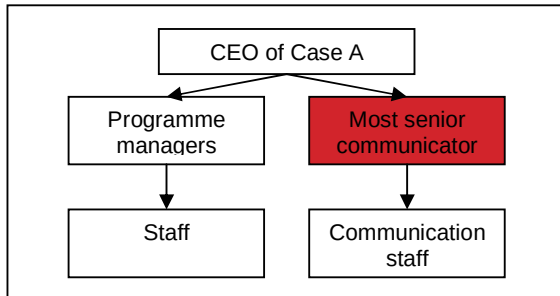
However, despite the lack of strategic focus, the interviewee did recognise the role of internal communication in aligning the organisation and “making sure everyone is on the same page.” She also noted the important role of internal communication in facilitating dialogue throughout the organisation both on strategic and non-strategic content.

7.2.1.1.2 Position and role of internal communication

In Case A, internal communication is not formally structured nor is the responsibility for it formally assigned to the most senior communicator. The most senior communicator does

report directly to the head of the organisation and therefore communication is positioned within the strategic management of the organisation. Figure 7.2 illustrates this position.

Figure 7.2: Position of internal communication in Case A



Case A does have a participative strategic development and implementation process; however, the role and position of communication in this regard is not clearly stated. The interviewee also noted that overall the strategic process is ad hoc and is “something that kind of happens on demand”. Therefore, internal communication is not regularly considered in the strategic management of the organisation.

7.2.1.1.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

The interviewee in Case A does not have any formal communication education but rather is educated in the subject matter with which the organisation is engaged. She does have previous work experience in communication. The communication function is clearly managed with a tactical understanding of the role and importance of communication to specific campaigns and activities. However, the underlying strategic role is not apparent both in terms of the strategy of the organisation as a whole as well as the overall communication strategy. This is even more evident in terms of internal communication, although as noted above, the interviewee did recognise the purpose of this function in aligning all stakeholders behind the organisation’s strategic intent.

7.2.1.1.4 Content focus of internal communication

The content of internal communication appeared to centre primarily on specific activities and relate to specific tasks. The organisation’s strategy provides specific tasks to improve the internal communication between the organisation and its members including improving its e-newsletter, developing an online contacts page of members and producing a

membership handbook. However, these tactics for internal communication were not clearly linked to achieving the strategic intent nor was there an indication that there was room for additional strategic planning around internal communication.

7.2.1.1.5 Internal communication process

Case A is quite a small INGO thus allowing it to rely on meetings and phone calls as its primary means of internal communication. A majority of the internal communication tools identified were typically one-way and/or asymmetrical. As the interviewee described “we will ... communicate to all of our national coalitions and will expect them [to] post or have a meeting or do other things” indicating a reliance on cascading communication. In addition, the interviewee noted a move towards the use of online tools to facilitate international collaboration. Finally, both the organisation’s strategy and the interviewee did identify internal stakeholder interaction and dialogue as an important component of internal communication.

7.2.1.2 Communication of corporate strategy

As noted, there is no formal internal communication function or strategy, or even an overall communication strategy in Case A. The communication of the organisation’s strategic intent to internal and external stakeholders is not coordinated through the communication function, although the function does communicate specific campaign or programme strategies. Instead, the interviewee noted the important role played by the board of directors and the organisation’s leader in communicating the strategic intent: “to actually feed strategy out and get people involved, it’s kind of the board’s responsibility.” Therefore, there is senior leadership of the communication of corporate strategy; however, this is primarily to external stakeholders including members and not to employees.

The organisation’s strategic intent is developed through consultation with its member organisations who ultimately adopt it at Case A’s World Assembly every three years. In this regard, the strategic development process is participatory from an external perspective, but it is unclear as to whether employees have the opportunity to contribute to this process. However, during the strategy implementation process, employees play a more active role in developing their work plans around the strategic intent, suggesting an

opportunity for the organisation to become aligned. As the interviewee notes: “our regular plans will come out of a team meeting where we’ll discuss what we need to focus on, how our work, works into each other ... and we are fairly flat in that structure.” The interviewee also emphasised the need for Case A’s strategy to remain flexible and adaptable given the speed of change in their sector: “it’s less of a let’s think three years ahead [about strategy because] ... our circumstances change [and] also to be able to react to whatever happens in the climate.” Thus the dialogue around work plans helps to build strategic alignment with a changing strategic intent.

7.2.1.3 Barriers and challenges

The interviewee identified several challenges that she faces in the implementation of strategic internal communication in Case A. First, there is a need to satisfy various stakeholders – the board of directors, members and donors – who influence the organisation’s direction and the work it undertakes. The second challenge is that many of their communication decisions are made because of resource constraints in terms of cost and the demands on the time of the most senior communicator who wears multiple hats within the organisation. This challenge is further exacerbated, since the organisation has recently grown very quickly placing even more demands on the senior communicator’s time.

Third, there is a focus on specific campaigns and projects, as opposed to the overall strategic intent of the organisation, which is quite broad to start with. Fourth, the interviewee noted a difficulty in remaining true to some of the values of the organisation around participative governance: “I think a lot of NGOs ... like to pride themselves in having this very flat structure but it doesn’t necessarily work and then people kind of resent [it].”

Finally, the interviewee’s responses indicated that there is an action culture within the organisation, where internal processes are not considered as important as external activities because the impact and results are not as evident. For example, she said:

“Ultimately we’ve got to be getting stuff out ... and stay fairly sane and so I think it is something that ultimately when you’re doing what’s urgent and

what's important, I feel [internal communication] does slip off the urgent and important box and it will be on your work plan and it might just not get done."

Overall, Case A faces several challenges in implementing strategic internal communication.

7.2.1.4 Overall comments on internal communication in Case A

Despite some recognition of its strategic function, internal communication in Case A did not meet the normative ideal for strategic internal communication identified in Chapter 4. In terms of Grimshaw and Mike's (2008:30) strategic communication maturity model (Figure 5.9), it would be classified as a level two with "a strategic orientation limited to formal communication products." A lack of a formal function may not be the most detrimental aspect to Case A's internal communication. The interviewee's comments suggest the need for a postmodern approach to strategic management that is flexible and adaptable to changing circumstance. This approach emphasises dialogue to build strategic consciousness within the organisation (Puth, 2002:182). Given the small size of Case A, it may not need to invest its limited resources into a formal internal communication function if its senior management reflected this commitment to dialogue in its words and actions. The important role that senior leadership can play in this regard is highlighted in the literature (Doorley & Garcia, 2007:152; Yeomans, 2006:345). However, this commitment to dialogue is not reflected in the interviewee's responses or the organisation's documents.

7.2.2 Case study B

As noted in Chapter 6, Case B is an INGO headquartered in Washington DC, with regional offices throughout Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, including the Southern Africa office in Johannesburg. It is a global organisation with a divisional structure and a global policy and advocacy role.

7.2.2.1 Scope of internal communication

Case B's communication function is centralised at the Headquarters in Washington DC. It contains a small internal communication function but the activities of this function were not known in the Southern Africa office. For the most senior communicator in South Africa,

communication is only a small part of her role. Therefore, because Case B possesses no communication strategy and the international communication staff were not available for interviews, it was difficult to get a complete understanding of the communication function within the organisation as a whole. However, the interviewee provided evidence on how communication is undertaken in the region and how she views the global communication structure, thereby allowing the researcher to gain some insight into communication and internal communication in the organisation. Table 7.3 outlines the purpose, position, knowledge, content and process of the internal communication function in Case B as derived from the interview. Case B could not provide any organisational documents except for a regional annual report.

Table 7.3: Characteristics of internal communication in Case B

	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Interview	Information sharing	Centralised, not part of senior management	Tactical	Resources	Asymmetrical, cascading, online
Organisational documents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

7.2.2.1.1 Purpose of internal communication

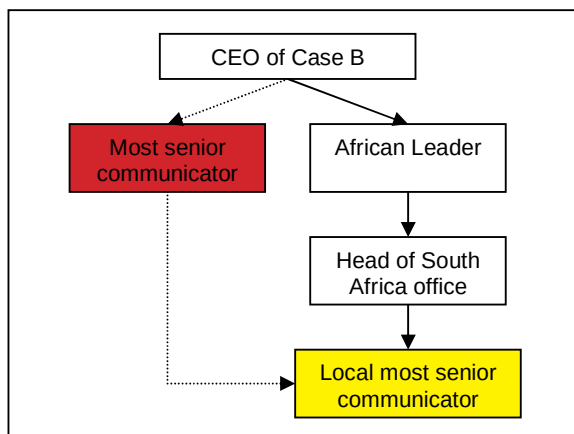
Case B did not have any formal internal communication objectives. The interviewee recognised the importance of strategic alignment, noting a role for internal communication in “creating a more efficient way of doing business in each of the local offices and that’s obviously tied in with the vision, the global vision.” However, this purpose is not reflected in the internal communication activities the interviewee described. Instead, the interviewee highlighted the role of internal communication for information sharing and knowledge management.

7.2.2.1.2 Position and role of internal communication

In Case B both internal and external communication is driven from headquarters. Unfortunately, the position of the most senior communicator globally could not be determined. Communication is only a small part of the interviewee’s role in the organisation. As she describes it, she “kind of takes [communication] on as an additional

kind of service to the organisation but generally speaking Global would provide any communication material, collateral, and we'd implement it within the South African context." As such internal communication in Case B is primarily one way. The global communication team asks her, as the local most senior communicator, to assist in disseminating communication materials regionally but she does not engage in dialogue with them on the communication strategy. The link between the Southern Africa Office and the senior management of Case B is via their 'African Leader' who is the representative for Africa (although based in Washington) on the Board of Directors. While serving as a communication channel between the regional and head offices, the interviewee indicated that the African Leader is not primarily a communicator, but a programme manager. Figure 7.3 further illustrates this position of the local most senior communicator.

Figure 7.3: Position of internal communication in Case B



From what could be determined from the interviewee's responses, the communication function does not play a specific role in either the strategy development or strategy implementation process.

7.2.2.1.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

The interviewee has a background in marketing and communication for NGOs. However, her role does not focus on communication enough to provide it with a strategic foundation. It was not possible to evaluate the knowledge of the global communication team. However, the interviewee states "our target driven by the head office is awareness of our fellows and awareness of the organisation as a whole." This does not indicate an overall strategic

functioning for communication in the organisation. Instead, the examples of internal communication within the organisation indicate a tactical approach.

7.2.2.1.4 Content focus of internal communication

Case B did not have a strategy document they could share with the researcher nor was their strategic intent clear from their website. In any case, the formal internal communication in Case B appears primarily to centre on the provision of resources by the communication team in Washington to staff in regional centres. For example, the interviewee describes how the international communication team “sends out regular newsletters, both staff focused newsletters ... and various other kinds of nice-to-know information. It’s called ‘News you can use’ and it literally is news you can use.” She did discuss various ways that strategy was communicated, but this was not coordinated through a communication function.

7.2.2.1.5 Internal communication process

As noted above, locally there is no separate internal communication process and internal communication activities occur on an ad hoc basis. Global internal communication appears to primarily centre on the provision of resources. The primary vehicle for internal communication from the internal communication team was a staff-focused newsletter. In addition, the interviewee noted the recent adoption of an online database that facilitates internal communication within Case B. Regular conference calls and annual face-to-face meetings were also identified as key forums for internal communication. Finally, cascading communication through the African leader were noted as an important medium for communication to and from the local office. Overall, while some local forums for dialogue were identified, the main internal communication tools between the local office and head office appeared asymmetrical.

7.2.2.2 Communication of corporate strategy

The communication of the organisation’s strategic intent to internal stakeholders does not appear to be coordinated by the communication function. However, the interviewee did describe a process both globally and locally for the communication of corporate strategy.

In terms of the development of strategy, in Case B, this occurs at the global level and there was no indication that local internal stakeholders were involved. From the local perspective, it appears to be a non-participative process directed by the organisation's Board. As the interviewee describes "we have a strategy that comes down from the board which is based in DC. So we have a strategy, we have targets, we have ... performance agreements that come down from the board."

The communication regarding strategy between the local office and the headquarters occurs through two avenues. At one level, the local employees interact directly with global employees through yearly meetings in Washington and regular conference calls. As the interviewee notes, this process involves discussions on all aspects of the organisation from fundraising to strategy. She also notes that they "do various reports – quarterly reports. The template is set and we plug in our achievements, challenges etc in those templates and that is sent to the US office." The second avenue of communication around strategy is with the African leader who represents the African region on Case B's Board of Directors. As the interviewee describes "this person represents us when feeding back our performance to the board and also is able to kind-of key in to any challenges or any opportunities that may come up when they do report to the board."

Locally, the organisation's strategy is communicated each year through a participative strategic planning session, where the global strategy is applied to the local context. This is followed up throughout the year by regular meetings where progress and challenges are identified. However, the interviewee identified a major deficiency in this process:

"we communicate the local strategy and that's obviously informed by the global strategy determined for us or with us, but ... we lack in being able to merge the two really well and communicate that to the staff so the staff tend to see this as 'this is our Southern African strategy' and we rarely tell them ... how this impacts on the global [Case B] world"

Overall, strategy is communicated throughout Case B, but it fails to create ownership of the overall strategy at the local level.

7.2.2.3 Barriers and challenges

Case B did not have a corporate strategy document nor was their strategic intent clear from their website. This lack of a clear strategic intent is a major barrier to effective internal communication. In addition, several challenges in the implementation of strategic internal communication in Case B were either identified by the interviewee or became apparent during the interview.

First, as noted in the previous section, in Case B there is a disconnect between the communication of the global and local corporate strategy. The interviewee's comments indicate that there may be a lack of effective communication between headquarters and local offices overall. For example, her description of their board member as knowing “what happens on the ground as far as an American or a non-African could” indicates that she views him as not completely representing the continent. Similarly, she says “everything happens in DC and sometimes what is communicated in DC doesn’t always filter through in as much detail as it should when it reaches the local offices so that sometimes, but not always, poses a problem.” These comments highlight the challenge of internal communication in an international organisation which is further exacerbated by time zone and language issues.

Secondly, the interviewee identified resource constraints as both a major challenge for implementing effective internal communication as well as a major reason why it needs to be done. She states: “We have such limited resources that internal communication done well and effectively maximises ... or mobilises the limited resources we have.” However, she also says:

“The challenges are that everyone is wearing so many different hats that ... we’d rather not delve too deep into what could be the reasons why something [internal communication] is a consistent challenge because that means we need to commit resources and manage human capital resources and time and financial resources.”

This statement also highlights the challenge of implementing effective internal communication when the most senior communicator is fulfilling multiple roles. As she notes: “It doesn’t make for efficient and effective kind of strategy implementation because

everyone is focused on so many different things.” The time availability of other staff members also poses a challenge as they are less likely to engage with internal communication tools and activities when operating under time constraints.

Finally, the interviewee identified staff turnover as “a huge huge issue” because it means that any investment in staff is quickly lost when they move on. The reason she saw staff turnover being such an issue was because Case B, as a NGO, did not have the resources to provide substantial financial remunerations or other forms of rewards. She felt that this had a major impact on staff morale and “obviously staff morale equals not effective communication, not effective carrying out of strategic roles.” Resource constraints, therefore, play a big role in Case B’s ability to carry out effective strategic internal communication.

7.2.2.4 Overall comments on internal communication in Case B

Despite some recognition of its strategic function, internal communication in Case B did not meet the normative ideal for strategic internal communication identified in Chapter 4. Considering Grimshaw and Mike’s (2008:30) strategic communication maturity model (Figure 5.9), it would be classified as a level two because any strategic orientation is limited to the development of formal communication products.

The overall structure of the communication function of Case B fits the global model for internal communication identified by (Appelbaum & Belmuth, 2007:245) as necessary for ensuring a coherent strategic intent across a global organisation. However, there is no ownership of the internal communication process locally as is called for in Mounter’s (2003:268) framework for global internal communication (Figure 5.5). Based on the theory, this lack of ownership can lead to lack of commitment and poor implementation of internal communication activities in local contexts. This combined with the poor staff morale identified by the interviewee can help explain the poor strategic functioning of internal communication at the regional level. However, without more evidence from the global level, it is not possible to draw conclusions as to the reasons behind the lack of strategic functioning across the organisation as a whole.

7.2.3 Case study C

As noted in Chapter 6, Case C is an INGO federation headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland with a regional Africa office in Johannesburg as well as offices in Asia and the Pacific, the Americas, Europe and North Africa and the Middle East. Case C adopts a functional structure in its headquarters with a matrix structure in its regional offices. Overall Case C plays both an operational service-oriented role and a global policy and advocacy role.

7.2.3.1 Scope of internal communication

In Case C, internal communication is a separate unit within the communication function in the headquarters in Geneva. At the regional level, internal communication is a formal part of the regional most senior communicator's job description. The local most senior communicator, the communication manager for Southern Africa, noted that there were two levels to their internal communication, communication within the secretariat (headquarters and regional offices) and communication between the secretariat and national affiliates. Table 7.4 outlines the purpose, position, knowledge, content and process of internal communication in Case C as constructed from the two evidence sources.

Table 7.4: Characteristics of internal communication in Case C

	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Interview	Communication culture	Part of senior management	Strategic	Strategic	Asymmetrical, online
Organisational documents	Strategic alignment	Not part of senior management	N/A	Strategic	Online

7.2.3.1.1 Purpose of internal communication

The interviewee was not able to provide the researcher with the specific objectives of Case C's internal communication. His answers did suggest that the internal communication function advised on change management, assisted with knowledge management and information sharing, and built communication capacity internally. He did not specifically note strategic alignment as an aim for the function, but Case C's strategic document notes that the organisation uses "strong information-sharing platforms to share knowledge,

promote innovation and create organisational cohesion – a common sense of belonging and engagement that extends from the global level to both national and branch levels.” On a similar note, the interviewee did say that

“Internal comms isn’t just distributing information; it’s really trying to create a culture of talking you know. ... The approach you know has to be kind of an internal communication culture ... it has to be more part of everyone’s responsibility with communication perhaps just facilitating that.”

Based on this statement and the organisation’s corporate strategy, the purpose of internal communication in Case C can be devised as one of facilitating the flow of information and dialogue for the purpose of creating a more cohesive and engaged workforce and thus is linked to achieving strategic alignment.

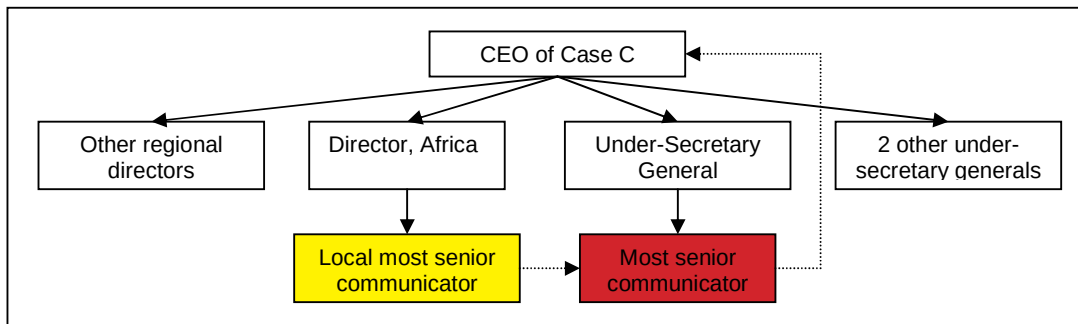
7.2.3.1.2 Position and role of internal communication

In the organogram for Case C, the head of the Communication Unit reports to an under-Secretary General who then reports to the Secretary General. A similar structure is also in place at the regional level. Therefore, the senior communicator does not automatically have a position at the most-senior management level. As the interviewee describes:

“We’re not curing people of cholera, we’re not shipping relief into disasters zones and our value is not as immediately apparent and it’s very easy for us to be marginalised so we have to really earn our seat at the table.”

He goes on to say that the current most senior communicator in Geneva has earned the respect of the Secretary General for both himself and his team, meaning that he is in the position to play a real role at the senior strategic level. Figure 7.4 illustrates this position.

Figure 7.4: Position of internal communication in Case C



The interviewee cautions that this position is “based on personalities”. If the current Secretary General, Under-Secretary General, or head of communication were to change, the position of communication at the “cabinet table” would be in jeopardy. Similarly, the communication function globally is fairly decentralised, although there is an attempt to put in place a global communication strategy, meaning that the local most senior communicator’s access to senior management varies based on the personalities in each region.

Even with the senior communicator having direct access to top management at the head office, communication, particularly internal communication, is not always involved in the projects it should be. For example “because [internal communication] sits under the head of communication ... maybe it’s pushed a little bit to the side, he’s not involved with the very senior management who are overseeing [our restructuring] process, [therefore] it [consultations] doesn’t incur.” While communication is currently fairly well positioned to make strategic contributions, this is not the ideal position overall.

This less than ideal position is reflected in the internal communication function’s strategic role. While it does play a role in soliciting feedback during strategy development, not all the communication processes are led by the communication function. As the interviewee describes from a recent strategy development process:

“Efforts were made to use ... Facebook, which was reasonably successful, [but] I think the organisation learnt lessons ... I mean one of the issues for that is that it wasn’t coordinated through the communication department so some mistakes were made.”

For strategy implementation, the internal communication function undertakes a campaign that involves internal branding around the strategy to create a suite of materials to help affiliates and different functions adapt the strategy in their own region. However, while assigned this role, it is not involved in the overall strategic planning for the communication of strategy.

7.2.3.1.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

The interviewee has an undergraduate degree in communication and psychology as well as over seven years experience in communication or related fields. Throughout the interview, he indicates that he and Case C's overall communication function understand the strategic value of communication. As he notes, the communication function plays a capacity building role with the communication in their national affiliates and always advocates that "communication to report directly to the Secretary General because it builds the profile, and also because ... it has strategic value even internally." Overall, communication in Case C appears to function with a sound understanding of its strategic role.

7.2.3.1.4 Content focus of internal communication

The internal communication unit in Case C does play a role in the communication of the organisation's strategic intent during both strategy development and strategy implementation. In addition, it assists with the flow of information between different departments and programmes as well as providing communication resources. While not all the content of Case C's internal communication is explicitly linked to its strategic intent, the overall impression is that it is all undertaken with the goal of furthering it. As noted in their organisational strategy, "the core characteristics for ... effectiveness, includ[e] ... effective internal communication arrangements."

7.2.3.1.5 Internal communication process

Case C uses a variety of different tools for internal communication. The interviewee noted that the emphasis is often on email as it is the most reliable form of communication for them to reach all the national affiliates, no matter the quality of their internet connection. Case C does rely on line management for communicating some internal messages;

however, the interviewee noted that the success of this process really depended on the manager. In addition, the organisation uses an intranet, which is currently being updated, as well as conference calls, e-newsletters and face-to-face meetings.

Currently, internal communication in Case C is asymmetrical and “there’s no sort of structured institutional approach just yet” to encourage dialogue. The revised intranet is being developed to “set up these networks, informal ad hoc networks that don’t crumble under the weight of bureaucracy or anything like that.” The aim is to facilitate dialogue across the organisation, between regions, national affiliates and the head office. However, this process is not yet in place.

7.2.3.2 Communication of corporate strategy

Case C develops its global strategy every ten years and it is implemented in the headquarters, regional offices and national affiliates. However, it is designed to be a flexible document and describes itself as “a dynamic framework that is responsive to differing contexts and changing circumstances.” Strategy development is led by a senior person appointed by the Secretary General but is designed to be a participative process. The interviewee describes multiple rounds of feedback with tools designed “to be able to make sure that the feedback wasn’t just from [senior people in national affiliates] or from their governing boards but really trying to get it as far into the field structure” as possible. However, as noted above, not all the communication processes were led by the communication function. Overall, however, the strategy development process was participative.

Strategy implementation is clearly “a priority for all of us” in the organisation, according to the interviewee. For the internal communication function, it involves an “internal communication campaign if you will.” As discussed above, this campaign would involve internal branding around the strategy to create a suite of materials to help affiliates and different functions adapt the strategy in their own region. In addition, Case C is training about 70 strategy facilitators “in how to engage national [affiliates] to see how they can take this strategy and adopt it to their national context, how they can use it in terms of feeding into their own strategic plans and stuff like that”. However, this latter process is not led by the communication unit.

7.2.3.3 Barriers and challenges

The interviewee identified several barriers for internal communication in his organisation. First, he argued that the ‘segmentation’ of internal communication as a separate unit within the organisation was detrimental because it meant that employees do not take responsibility for their own role in the sharing of information. Rather, he argued that there needs to be an “internal communication culture” in the organisation that engages all employees in the process of internal communication. He noted that this requires counter-acting many of the expectations of employees, who expected to receive from internal communication rather than contribute to it. The lack of understanding about the proper role of the internal communication function as well as its less than ideal position as described above, are challenges for effective internal communication.

Second, the organisation’s culture is a challenge for internal communication in the organisation. The interviewee noted that limited human resources are a barrier to effective internal communication: “the struggle ... is capacity; I mean it’s always a struggle for internal communication.” Part of the challenge is that, as he described it, internal communication is not as “exciting” and does not deliver tangible results. This suggests an action culture within the organisation. The interviewee described another challenge posed by the organisation’s culture when he says “we’re incredibly sensitive to criticism.” This has posed a barrier to the adoption of social media both internally and externally. In addition, it suggests a conflict between the organisation’s values of transparency and its desire to control the information that is part of the public domain.

Third, the organisation’s context is a challenge for Case C’s internal communication. The interviewee described the chaos in their external environment:

“sometimes it looks like our core business has changed, we’re constantly reinventing ourselves and restructuring because priorities shift very quickly, funding shifts very quickly, the expectations of our donors shift very quickly.”

The result is a need to be flexible and able to meet the needs of different stakeholders as change occurs. He also noted that this was further complicated by the digital divide between different parts of the world which limited the available internal communication tools and made it difficult to be effective across all parts of the organisation.

Finally, the interviewee described the difficulty of a “massive” mission and the need to prioritise. He noted that this is difficult to do for the benefit of the entire organisation when “ultimately you get your money to play your games from programmes and they want their programmes communicated”. Therefore negotiating these tensions is a challenge for internal communication in INGOs.

7.2.3.4 Overall comments on internal communication in Case C

Internal communication in Case C meets all the normative criteria for strategic internal communication identified in Chapter 4 to some degree. While its position is not ideal, its purpose not fully committed to strategic alignment and its content focus somewhat on general information sharing, overall internal communication in case C does function fairly strategically. Considering Grimshaw and Mike’s (2008:30) strategic communication maturity model (Figure 5.9), it would be classified as a level four because it does promoted strategic alignment. However, it is not a level five because the most senior communicator is seen more as a trusted advisor and senior strategist then a fully integrated member of the senior leadership team. Poor understanding of the role of internal communication within the organisation, lack of resources and an action culture may be the reason behind internal communication not completely fulfilling its strategic function in this case.

In terms of its functioning, Case C’s internal communication bears resemblance to both Mounter’s (2003:268) framework for global internal communication (Figure 5.5) and Mellor and Dewhurst’s (20008) framework for an effective internal communication function (Figure 5.10). While centralised in headquarters, the internal communication function does operate globally via a network of internal communicators who take ownership of the function in their local offices. This reflects Figure 5.5, where globally a few key messages and non-negotiables are identified but local managers have the flexibility to deliver these in the most appropriate manner for their region. Case C reflects figure 5.10 because it identifies the role of strategy and culture in the internal communication process. As noted above, the interviewee identified building a communication culture as a major part of the purpose of internal communication.

This emphasis on culture supports over evidence in Case C of a shift toward a postmodern approach to strategic management and communication. For example, there was emphasis

of the need for the strategy to be flexible in order to adapt to changing external contexts. However, internal communication in Case C is primarily asymmetrical and does not include significant dialogue as a postmodern approach requires. Therefore, while there is support for the implementation of a postmodern approach to strategic internal communication, it is not yet reflected in practice.

7.2.4 Case study D

As noted in Chapter 6, Case D is an INGO federation with headquarters in South Africa but offices and affiliate organisations all over the world. Case D is structured along the lines of a matrix and plays both an operational service-oriented role and a global policy and advocacy role.

7.2.4.1 Scope of internal communication

Case D does have a formal internal communication unit; however, it is housed separately within the organisational effectiveness function (alongside human resources, information technology and impact assessment and shared learning) and not as part of the communication function. In addition, the communication function is currently undergoing major restructuring with many positions moving from Johannesburg to London. Therefore, it was not possible to interview the most senior communicator; instead the interview was conducted with the internal communication manager who had also previously held a senior role in the communication function. The internal communication unit was only established one and a half years ago and therefore has not fully established its role within the organisation. However, the internal communication manager did provide detailed comment on the role the unit has played so far and the vision for the future. Table 7.5 outlines the purpose, position, content, knowledge and process of the internal communication function in Case D as constructed from the two evidence sources.

Table 7.5: Characteristics of internal communication in Case D

	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Interview	Collaboration, internal branding, information sharing	Not part of senior management, advisor	Strategic	Task-related	Asymmetrical (vertical), online
Organisational documents	Strategic alignment	Part of senior management	Strategic	Task-related	Online

7.2.4.1.1 Purpose of internal communication

The internal communication unit has several formal objectives:

- “To develop, implement and monitor the internal communication policy which will come out of the strategy to ensure standards compliance”;
- “to ensure higher quality and more effective and efficient collaboration and information sharing”;
- “to build staff capacity around internal communication and to raise awareness of and ensure internal brand compliance and organisational commitment”;
- “to provide internal comms expertise to the international secretariat management team”; and,
- to “ensure effective change management, [and] communication of strategic operational.”

The interviewee also noted that the key is developing community spaces where communication can occur, opposed to centralising all communication within the unit.

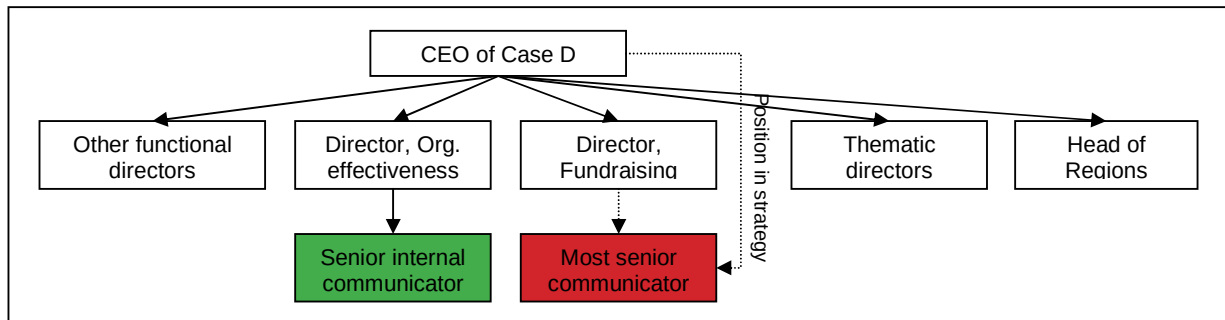
These objectives do not spell out strategic alignment as the purpose of the internal communication unit, but they do suggest recognition of internal communication’s role in establishing the internal brand and the communication of corporate strategy. In addition, the overarching goal of the organisational effectiveness function, of which internal communication is a part, does link its role to strategic alignment: “to shape the organisation’s mindset, structure, systems, staffing and culture to ensure best fit for the purposes expressed in [the organisation’s strategy].”

7.2.4.1.2 Position and role of internal communication

The communication function in Case D is established in its five year strategy as a key organisational function with direct access to the CEO. However, the interviewee established that recently, due in part to the departure of the most senior communicator, the communication function was placed under the fundraising department. Therefore, there is currently no senior communicator with a seat among the most senior managers of the organisation. In any case, as is specified in the organisation’s communication strategy, internal communication is not considered part of communication function. Instead, internal communication is positioned within the organisational effectiveness function alongside human resources, IT and impact assessment and shared learning. The international

director for organisational effectiveness does sit at the senior management table, however, there he is not a specialist in either internal communication or communication generally. Figure 7.5 illustrates this position.

Figure 7.5: Position of internal communication in Case D



The interviewee indicated that she did play a role in the strategic management of the organisation, but this was primarily to do with establishing a strategy for her unit that was linked to the organisation's strategy. She did not identify a role for her function in overall corporate strategy development; however, she did note that for strategy implementation she would be involved in an internal branding campaign. Overall, her role among senior managers was that of an advisor, and not a full member, "to provide internal communication expertise to the international secretariat management team, ensure effective change management, [and] communication of strategic operational objectives."

7.2.4.1.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

As noted above, the most senior communicator had recently departed the organisation and it was not possible to determine her background or the background of other members of the communication function. The interviewee does not have a formal education in communication. However, she had many years experience managing general communication functions before moving into internal communication. Her responses to several questions indicate an awareness and understanding of the strategic role of internal communication:

"Effective internal communication is absolutely vital ... to provide information for effective decision making, to develop buy-in for new processes and projects ...for change communication. ... [to] ensure that everyone's on

*board, that teams know about key decisions and can implement those in time
... So without communication you might as well just go home.”*

Similarly, the goals of the overall organisational effectiveness function illustrates that the organisation understands and recognises the need for strategic alignment through communication, structure, culture and activities.

7.2.4.1.4 Content focus of internal communication

The internal communication unit was not established when Case D's previous strategy was developed. However the organisation is in the process of developing a new strategy, and while the internal communication unit does not appear to be playing a role in the strategy development, the interviewee did recognise that once the strategy was complete “it would mean working closely with me on a whole internal communication campaign.” Therefore strategy is a part of the content focus of internal communication in Case D, but the interviewee did note that she did not focus enough on strategy. Instead, much of Case D's internal communication was focused on general information sharing and online collaboration among teams for task-related activities. This focus is, however, in line with the organisation's strategy which calls for “effective management of distant and virtual team working” and “more effective internal communication and more knowledge input.”

7.2.4.1.5 Internal communication process

The main focus of the internal communication unit since its creation a year and a half ago has been Case D's intranet. The intranet has been designed to both facilitate information sharing and online collaboration. The process of promoting and maintaining the intranet is decentralised, with intranet facilitators in each national affiliate serving as the focus point. The interviewee uses this intranet facilitators' network to serve as a broader internal communication network to both disseminate messages and obtain feedback and input.

A second process undertaken by the internal communication unit is development and communication of accessible documents outlining senior decisions that are distributed to internal stakeholders so that they have the information needed to implement these decisions in their work. Finally, a third focus of the internal communication unit is to work

with departments and units in Case D to develop internal communication strategies for new policies, new projects and other activities.

Other internal communication tools in Case D include email, video and teleconferencing, e-newsletters and fact-to-face workshops. Overall, while the intranet facilitates significant horizontal dialogue, vertical communication appears to be primarily asymmetrical.

7.2.4.2 Communication of corporate strategy

As noted previously, the internal communication unit was not established during the development and initial implementation of Case D's previous strategy. However, the organisation is starting the process of strategy development again. There is no indication from the interviewee that internal communication is playing a role in this process. Overall, it appears that the process is hierarchical and non-participative. As described by the interviewee "it's quite a detailed process of working through the international directors, the theme and function heads" and also involves consideration of external factors such as fundraising potential.

During strategy implementation, the internal communication unit plays a role by developing accessible documents and "a whole internal communication campaign to ensure this full understanding of the objectives and buy-in as well." However overall, the strategy implementation process appears to occur equally along vertical lines with unit heads developing their strategies that link to their function strategies that link to the overall strategy. The interviewee does note that in this process, she "would imagine that each of the team leader, because that is the way work we work, would consult with their teams." Case D's strategy similarly calls for "staff to be involved in shaping the organisation." However, the internal communication tools developed for dialogue appear to be primarily aimed at breaking down horizontal barriers to communication, rather than vertical ones.

7.2.4.3 Barriers and challenges

The interviewee noted several barriers and challenges for internal communication. For example, she identified resource constraints, both financial and human, as hindering her ability to implement a full effective strategic internal communication programme. The importance placed on internal communication when determining money and time

allocations was minimal, creating difficulties implementing a fully developed internal communication strategy across the organisation. This problem is further compounded by a poor understanding of the role of the internal communication unit, resulting in certain inappropriate tasks being given to the unit and it not being involved in other projects that it should be.

Similarly, she identified several challenges of working internationally, such as language and difficulty communicating across regions, as barriers that need to be overcome by internal communication. These barriers pose further challenges by “teams scattered around the world who hoard their information”. Facilitating the communication internationally is a challenge in a global organisation.

The interviewee also identified power and gender issues within Case D as barriers to effective internal communication. These issues directly contradict some of the values of the organisation, such as ‘mutual respect’ and ‘equity and justice’, and their presence within the organisation can directly threaten its legitimacy: a large focus of Case D is women’s rights and promoting the rights of the ‘powerless’. As the interviewee describes it:

“You’ll still find men will keep women in certain positions and not support their promotion or leadership development and all that sort of thing ... even though that is an area that we very much try to push, at the end of the day, what we do as an organisation and what individuals do will not always align as closely as you would like them to.”

Addressing these issues where actions do not support values is a difficult but important challenge for strategic internal communication. These challenges can threaten the external brand, reputation and legitimacy of the organisation, as well as the commitment of employees.

7.2.4.4 Overall comments on internal communication in Case D

Internal communication in Case D meets some of the normative criteria for strategic internal communication identified in Chapter 4. For example, its purpose is linked to strategic alignment and the most senior communicator does have some knowledge of its strategic role. However, it is not part of senior management, a major impediment to

functioning strategically that was identified by Steyn and Puth (2000). Considering Grimshaw and Mike's (2008:30) strategic communication maturity model (Figure 5.9), Case D's internal communication would be classified as a level three. The most senior communicator for internal communication operates as a trusted advisor but is not a part of the senior strategic leadership team.

Case D reflects elements of both Mounter's framework for global internal communication (Figure 5.5). The interviewee has organised a network of internal communication representatives across the different offices of Case D and uses it to undertake internal communication activities. This reflects step 4 of Figure 5.5 which identifies developing a communication network to provide support for local strategic internal communication. In addition, the interviewee has empowered this network to take ownership of internal communication tools like the intranet, reflecting step 6 of Figure 5.5. As Mounter (2003:268) points out, this is important because it promotes commitment and better positions the tools to address local needs and adapt to cultural nuances.

Overall, the functioning of internal communication in Case D reflects Welch and Jackson's internal corporate communication model (Figure 5.8). Case D identified communication of senior decisions as an important process for internal communication to manage. As discussed in Chapter 5, Figure 5.8 illustrates that the goals of internal communication are achieved through communication from the organisation's strategic managers to all employees, reflecting the outward communication described by the interviewee. In addition, Welch and Jackson (2007:187) argue that this process is by necessity primarily asymmetrical. Case D's vertical communication reflects this, with communication about strategy flowing primarily from top to bottom with only minor room for feedback. As such, similar to Figure 5.8 and many of the other models in Chapter 5, Case D illustrates a traditional linear approach to strategic management and communication.

7.2.5 Case study E

As noted in Chapter 6, Case E is an INGO headquartered in Washington DC, with regional offices around the world, including the Southern Africa office in Johannesburg. Case E has a divisional structure and fulfils a global policy and advocacy role, as well as a small operational service-orientated role.

7.2.5.1 Scope of internal communication

Case E does not have a specific communication function. Many communication activities, including managing the website, media relations and the annual report, are coordinated through an advocacy function under the auspices of the Director of Advocacy at the head office in Washington DC. Other activities concerning writing and editing appear to be the responsibility of the publications team in the New York office. Internal communication is not formally assigned to either of these functions, nor was there evidence that it was considered the responsibility of human resources. Both the Director of Advocacy and the Human Resources manager were new to the organisation at the time of this research and therefore were not able to provide evidence for this case study.

For this study, a senior programme officer in the Johannesburg office was interviewed. She coordinates several of the internal and external communication activities regionally and thus serves as the local most senior communicator. While there is no formal internal communication function, she was able to highlight many of the current internal communication activities undertaken regionally and between the regions and the head office. Also, a recent visit to the head office allowed her to comment on several of the internal communication activities undertaken at that level. Table 7.6 outlines the content, purpose, position, knowledge and process of the internal communication activities in Case E as constructed from the interview. Case E did not have an organisational strategy or a communication strategy, although the interviewee did support her comments by showing the researcher examples of different internal communication tools.

Table 7.6: Characteristics of internal communication in Case E

	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Interview	Information sharing	Not part of senior management	Tactical	Project information	Asymmetrical, cascading
Organisational documents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

7.2.5.1.1 Purpose of internal communication

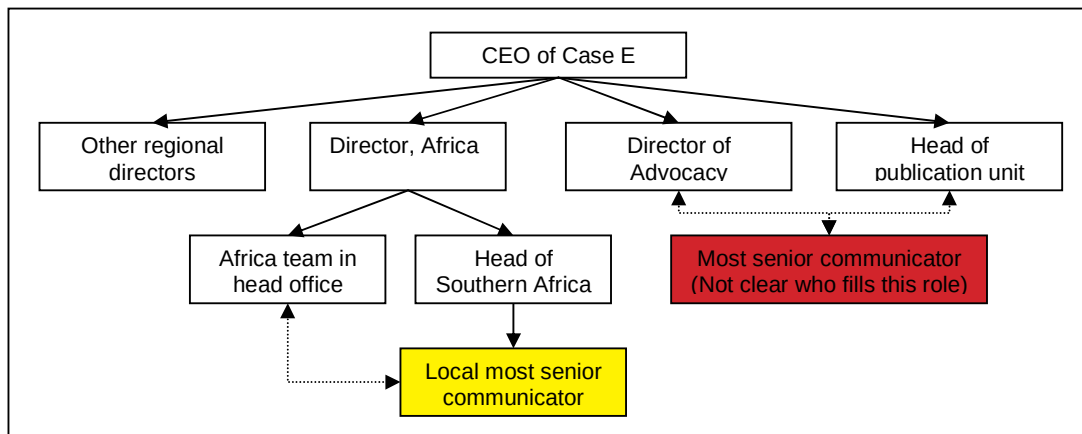
The interviewee described the purpose of the internal communication activities in the Case E as “to basically make sure that the branch offices know what’s going on in the head

office and that we can get proper approval for the things that we are doing ... [for which] we really need to make sure they (head office) know what is going on.” She did note that the overall purpose should be to ensure awareness throughout the organisation of its corporate strategy but that as it currently stands even “we are not so aware of it ourselves.”

7.2.5.1.2 Position and role of internal communication

Case E does not have a specific communication function and therefore does not have a senior communicator as part of the senior management team. The Director of Advocacy is a senior management position in the organisation, meaning that some of the communication activities are represented at the strategic level. However, internal communication is not part of the Director of Advocacy’s responsibility and is therefore not represented among senior management. Regionally, communication again is not formally assigned to any specific person and is centralised through the Head office. Figure 7.6 illustrates this position.

Figure 7.6: Position of internal communication in Case E



The interviewee has little direct access to the Director of Advocacy and others who undertake communication activities and she notes that the access she does have is the result of the personal relationships that she developed when she visited the head office rather than any formal organisational structure: “I find that I’m a lot freer to be able to speak to them (head office) because there is a personal relationship.” Overall, communication is not part of the senior management of the organisation, either globally or

regionally. Since there is no specific communication function, it also cannot play a role in corporate strategy development or implementation.

7.2.5.1.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

The interviewee trained in journalism and has experience working in communication, giving her some understanding of the function. However, both her description of communication activities and the position of communication within the organisation illustrate an understanding of the tactics of communication, but not its strategic role. For example, she describes one of their main internal communication activities as follows: “they basically have what they call an update sheet which they put all their updates on and circulate.”

7.2.5.1.4 Content focus of internal communication

The interviewee identified a variety of different internal communication tools in Case E, most of which were used to share information and coordinate projects between the head office and the regional office as well as within the regional office. She described the contents of a regular report from head office as follows: “it’s just what they’ve been doing, to some degree reports on the strategies they’ve been developing and what their thinking is around the strategy as well as different grants that they’ve been applying for.” While this does indicate some strategic content for internal communication, she emphasised that these strategies were project-related and not clearly linked to an overall strategy for the organisation.

7.2.5.1.5 Internal communication process

Internal communication in Case E centres on the communication between head office and the regional offices. As the interviewee describes, “we depend a lot on email,” and regular conference calls as well. The process of communicating organisational-wide information is via a cascade system: the information is communicated to the Africa team in the head office who then have the responsibility of communicating it to the regional African offices. As the interviewee describes “it really depends on single people at our head office to communicate it to us.” In addition the African team in the head office provides a bi-weekly newsletter to the regional offices and the regional offices send a weekly report to the

African team at the head office. Both these report primarily focus on project information. The head office also has monthly staff meetings and a monthly newsletter which is not sent regularly to the regional offices: “usually it’s just to the head office staff, but for the first time in 8 months I received it in our office just last month ... the first time I’d seen it was when I was there [in Washington DC].”

There is some room for dialogue and face-to-face communication in the regional office through regular staff meetings as well as video conferences with the African team in the head office. As the interviewee describes:

“in our office we try to have meetings and its an opportunity for everyone to engage at that level and even, we have meetings with the head office as well via video conference and everyone participates even the programme assistants and the finance people, so that’s great but the highest level there would be the Africa manager.”

As she notes, there is very little engagement between the regional offices and the organisation’s senior management. Overall communication in Case E is asymmetrical with information flowing from head office to the regions with very little opportunity for dialogue.

7.2.5.2 Communication of corporate strategy

As was noted previously, Case E does not have a corporate strategy and the interviewee could not describe how the organisation’s strategic intent is communicated to the regional office. She did note that the Africa team in the head office did develop strategies around the African programme which were communicated to the regional office through their bi-weekly report, conference calls and face-to-face meetings. While the head office team does appear to lead the programme strategy development process, there are opportunities for at least some members of the regional office to contribute by participating in meetings and engaging with the African programme officer and African manager.

Regionally, the Southern Africa office has developed its own strategy for the projects it is implementing. In terms of the link between the regional strategy and the global strategy of the organisation, the interviewee says the following:

“My experience has been that it’s not linked ... we’re not asked to contribute to their strategy and they contribute to our strategy in some ways. We have an Africa manager who manages all the Africa offices and manages the Africa team at the Head office and he feeds into our strategy.”

The regional strategy is developed through participative meetings of the programme team in South Africa and the African manager. The process is an ongoing strategy development process and is very flexible because the Southern Africa office works primarily in Zimbabwe and must try “to orient ourselves around the situation in the country as it changes.” The strategy process is also heavily influenced by the donors who are funding the Southern Africa projects. The interviewee describes the relationship with one influential donor: “they have the ability to kind of say ‘what about this’, ‘why don’t we do this’, and we can say ‘No’ but it’s not in our interest to do so.” Overall, the regional strategy development process is fairly participative but it lacks engagement with the organisation’s overall strategy development and implementation processes.

7.2.5.3 Barriers and challenges

The interviewee identified several barriers and challenges for effective internal communication in Case E. For example, she noted that they are extremely busy in the regional office and do not necessarily have the time to engage with the head office on the corporate strategy issues. Another basic challenge is the digital divide most evident between the regional office and several staff members who regularly work in Zimbabwe.

A further challenge in Case E is the lack of a clear strategic intent and the focus on specific projects based on the funding from donors. As the interviewee describes, they are “a little bit isolated from our head office in some ways because we do our own strategy within Freedom House Southern Africa and sometimes that’s based around the grants that we get.” The lack of a clear organisation-wide strategic intent and a focus on specific projects as dictated by donors is a barrier for internal communication and its role in creating a cohesive workforce.

A less tangible barrier is a poor flow of communication between the head office and the regional offices which is exacerbated when internal stakeholders do not fully engage in the

internal communication processes. The interviewee describes a situation where this is a real challenge:

"[the deputy directors] won't be fully informed of what's happening on the ground, our daily work, and so sometimes things will get delayed at that level because things need to get communicated to them ... [you] just hope that your executives are reading your weekly reports, that they know what's going on and they feel like they can communicate directly."

Related to this challenge, regular turnover of staff at the regional office can result in the processes and relationships that do develop being regularly lost. Developing tools and processes to overcome these issues is a challenge for internal communication.

7.2.5.4 Overall comments on internal communication in Case E

Internal communication in Case E did not meet the normative ideal for strategic internal communication identified in Chapter 4. Since there is no formal internal communication function in Case E, it does not even register on Grimshaw and Mike's (2008:30) strategic communication maturity model (Figure 5.9). For similar reasons, Case E does not reflect any of the models and frameworks related to internal communication discussed in Chapter 5. However, in its regional office, Case E does show evidence of postmodern strategic management. Post-modern strategic management requires the organisation to be open to its external environment and constantly adapt to it through self-organising dialogue on its strategic intent (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:37). Through ongoing discussions on its strategy in the ever-changing Zimbabwe environment, Case E illustrates a postmodern strategic management approach. As argued by Puth (2002:203), if that strategic discourse could be extended across the entire organisation at all levels, individual and collective strategic consciousness would be raised and strategic alignment achieved.

7.3 CROSS-CASE COMPARISON

This section compares the case studies along the same dimensions: scope of internal communication, communication of corporate strategy, and barriers and challenges. The cases are considered in their context to identify how contextual characteristics such as their size, and structure impact on each of these dimensions. In addition, key themes across cases are also identified. The theory developed in Chapter 2 to 5 is integrated into

the discussion to identify how current practices differ from the theoretical normative ideal for strategic internal communication in INGOs.

7.3.1 Case study contexts

As outlined in Chapter 6, the five case studies covered all three structures for INGOs identified by Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:65-67) in Table 2.5: federations, global organisations and networks. Their internal structures were combinations of functional, divisional and matrix structure, with no one format appearing predominant. Of the three roles for INGOs identified by Lewis (2007:40), an operational service-oriented role, a global policy and advocacy role and a counter-hegemonic activist role, only the first two were represented in the case studies. All cases fulfilled some sort of global policy and advocacy role.

7.3.2 Scope of internal communication

Only Cases C and D had formal internal communication functions. Case B had internal communication responsibilities assigned to the broader communication function. Case A had a communication function but internal communication was not officially part of its responsibilities, while Case E had no communication function at all. Despite the wide range in the formalisation of internal communication in each organisation, it was possible to construct the purpose, position, content of the function, the knowledge of the internal communicator and the process of internal communication in each case. Table 7.7 summarises each of the cases' positions along these dimensions as well as the normative ideal from the theory developed in Chapter 4.

Table 7.7: Comparison of the characteristics of internal communication in all cases

Type of organisation	Purpose	Position	Knowledge	Content	Process
Theory (Chapter 4)	Strategic alignment	Part of senior management	Strategic	Strategic intent	Symmetrical, holistic
Networks					
Case A	Information sharing	Not part of senior management, Manager	Tactical	Task related	Asymmetrical, cascading, online
Global organisations					
Case B	Information sharing	Not part of senior management, Tactician	Tactical	Resources	Asymmetrical, cascading, online
Case E	Information sharing	Not part of senior management, tactician	Tactical	Project information	Asymmetrical
Federations					
Case C	Communication culture	Part of senior management, strategist	Strategic	Strategic	Asymmetrical, online
Case D	Collaboration, internal branding, information sharing	Not part of senior management, advisor	Strategic	Task-related	Asymmetrical (vertical), online

7.3.2.1 Purpose of internal communication

Overall, a primary purpose for internal communication across the case studies was knowledge management and information sharing. Both federations strongly emphasised, and were echoed by Case A, a network, that it was not internal communication's purpose to gather information and distribute it, but rather to facilitate the process and build a culture of open communication and collaboration in the organisation. This view is similar to the post-modern vision of organisational strategy and internal communication discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, where the goal is to build a flexible and adaptable organisation based on dialogue and communication. As noted by Foreman (1997:18), strategic internal communication is concerned with developing a culture or atmosphere of ongoing communication.

Knowledge management and information sharing are necessary in an organisation, but as discussed in Chapter 4, to be strategic, internal communication should be driven by an overall goal of strategic alignment (Doorley and Garcia, 2007:129). In all the case studies, the senior communicator and/or the organisational documents did provide some recognition of the role of internal communication in achieving strategic alignment. However, despite this recognition, only the federations undertook internal communication activities that were directly designed to achieve strategic alignment but even for them this

was not a focus for their internal communication. Thus internal communication in the case studies was not centred on a core strategic goal.

Finally, the activities the cases identified as being directly related to strategic alignment did not centre on the dialogue needed to build strategic consciousness. As discussed in Chapter 3, Puth (2002:185) describes the development of strategic consciousness through dialogue around strategic intent and related issues necessary for real strategic alignment to occur. Internal stakeholders must not only be aware of the strategic intent but imbue their daily activities with it. Similarly, Ridder (2004:20) argues that the role of strategic internal communication is to foster a “community spirit within [the] organisation [that] falls in line with its strategic direction”. This objective was not evident among the case studies.

7.3.2.2 Position and role of internal communication

The exact position of the communication and internal communication functions varied in each case study. In the global organisations, communication was generally centralised in the head office: a characteristic in line with general description of the organisational form. In the federations, there is a much more decentralised communication function, aligned with the multi-domestic strategy of these organisations, although there is still a fairly strong central communication structure. Finally, Case A, the network, only had the one communication function in the secretariat but relied on their members and partners for a significant amount of its activities and communication.

In most of the case studies, the senior communicator was not formally part of the senior management of the organisation. In the network, the senior communicator operated as a manager and consulted with senior management as and when asked. Unfortunately, in the global organisations it was not possible to accurately identify the role of the senior communicator in the head office, but at the regional level they operated primarily as technicians. In one federation, Case D, the internal communication manager was an advisor to senior management while in the other, Case C, the senior communicator was identified as having a seat at the ‘cabinet table’. However, a theme across all the organisations was that the position of the communication function generally, and internal communication in particular, was unstable and subject to devaluation. In other words, even

where communication had a good relationship or was part of senior management, this was not formally structured into the organisation and required constant vigilance on the part of the senior communicator to maintain.

Unfortunately, Steyn (2007:139) notes that when the senior communicator is not part of senior management it is not able to fulfil its strategic role. The case studies support this as in most cases the communication function was not closely involved in either the strategy development or strategy implementation process. As discussed in Chapter 4, in order to be strategic, internal communication must play a role in strategy development by incorporating the concerns and issues of internal stakeholders into the process and in strategy implementation by communicating the strategic intent. Thus, internal communication serves a role in both aligning the strategy with internal stakeholders and aligning internal stakeholders with the strategy. From the postmodern perspective, both these process occur simultaneously through ongoing negotiation and dialogue (Franklin, 1998:444).

Of all the cases, Case C is the case that most closely reflects the normative ideal position and role for strategic internal communication. The most senior communicator is part of senior management and the communication function does play a role in both strategy development and implementation. However, its role appears to be relatively minor and does not play the primary role identified for it in either strategy development or implementation. Overall, none of the cases do and this is even more apparent in comparison with the postmodern process identified as appropriate in INGOs.

7.3.2.3 Knowledge of the most senior communicator

In terms of internal communication, the functions in the network and global organisations appeared to solely focus on tactics with little knowledge of the strategic function of internal communication. This reflects Grimshaw and Mike (2008:28) who argue that one of the main reason for the poor strategic function of internal communication is because of the lack of knowledge of its strategic role. Lack of both human and financial resources in the networks and global organisations is a potential explanation for the tactical focus of the network and global organisations' internal communication. In these cases, the communication staff must be generalists, in order to fulfil all the roles they are assigned.

Only in the larger federations did there appear to be a sound knowledge of the strategic role the function should play, and these two cases are also the only two cases with dedicated internal communication staff.

7.3.2.4 Content focus of internal communication

Components of all the case studies' internal communication were centred on non-strategic content such as task-related communication and information resources. As was discussed in Chapter 4, in order for internal communication to be strategic, its content and messages need to centre on the organisation's strategic intent. Both global organisations, Cases B and E, as well as the network organisation, Case A, described issues with their strategic intents making it difficult for the content of their internal communication to be strategically focused.

Only the two large federations, Cases C and D, had very clearly developed strategic intents. These two organisations are also the only two organisations with formal internal communication functions. While both these functions were involved in the communication of corporate strategy, strategic intent was only the centre content element in Case C, Case D still focused primarily on task-related communication. However, in both cases, strategic intent was still viewed as a coherent piece of content to be communicated. The postmodern approach to strategic intent discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, where it is constantly being developed through dialogue and communication, was not evident.

As discussed in Chapter 2, federations generally adopt multi-domestic positions where national affiliates have significant autonomy over their own affairs (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006:66-67). In this context, a strong strategic intent is mandatory to maintain the coherence of the organisation. This can explain the formal internal communication functions in these organisations and their focus on strategic intent. However, a clear strategic intent is equally important in both networks and global organisations in order for the entire organisation to work towards a common goal. It is possible that the smaller size and fewer resources of these cases have resulted in less well-developed strategies and internal communication functions. As discussed in Chapter 4, strategic internal communication has a role to play in the development of strategic intent by aligning it with

the values and views within the organisation (Verwey, 2003:2), but this content is not part of any of the case studies' internal communication activities.

7.3.2.5 Internal communication process

Unlike the theoretical ideal discussed in Chapter 4, the process of internal communication in the case studies had a very weak strategic orientation. Only one case, Case D, had a specific internal communication strategy and this is not linked to the organisation's communication strategy, as the function is housed in a separate department. In addition, only Case D had clearly identified objectives for the function. None of the case studies identified high-level involvement of senior leadership in internal communication. Argenti and Forman (2002:154) identify senior leadership as the most valuable asset for internal communication, but this was not apparent within the case studies. However, all the cases did use line management in some form as an internal communication tool.

The internal communication infrastructure in each of the case studies involved a wide variety of channels and media. The most commonly identified tools across the case studies were face-to-face meetings, tele- and video-conferencing, and cascading communication from senior management to line management to employees. A large emphasis was placed on email with three of the five case studies highlighting its major role in internal communication in their organisation. In addition, four case studies were either using or planning to use various forms of online tools to improve the information sharing, and in some cases dialogue and collaboration throughout the entire organisation. In this regard, there was some recognition of the importance of facilitating informal communication as well, suggesting a holistic view of the internal communication infrastructure as discussed in Chapter 4.

In the federations, they used decentralised networks of communicators to undertake internal communication throughout the organisation, similar to Mounter's model (Figure 5.5) discussed in Chapter 5. It was also in these large organisations with a dedicated internal communication function that internal communication campaigns and strategies were incorporated into the overall process of internal communication. In addition, these organisations were the only case studies that provided evidence that the organisations' were selecting their channels and media with consideration for their internal

communication goals and audience. In the smaller networks and global organisations, internal communication appeared to operate on an ad hoc basis with tactics being implemented as needs were identified.

Overall, internal communication appeared to be asymmetrical, with communication flowing primarily from top to bottom. It was only in the smaller network and at the regional level of global organisations that evidence of symmetrical communication and dialogue was apparent. However, the move to new online communication platforms was indicated by both federations as means of improving the dialogue across horizontal and vertical divisions in the organisation.

7.3.3 Communication of corporate strategy

In all the case studies, the communication function was not identified as playing a major role in the strategy development process. Similarly, a common theme was the major role played by external stakeholders, such as the board of directors, the organisation's members and donors, in developing the strategy. Particularly in the network and global organisations, the role of the Board in developing and adopting the organisation's strategy was emphasised. Overall, in the global organisations and the federations, the strategy development process was not very participative, although in some cases, there was room for feedback and input from different levels of the organisations. The smaller network did appear to have more room for dialogue around the development of the organisation's strategic intent.

In all the case studies, there was more participation in strategy implementation than in strategy development. The primary form this took was in the alignment of the organisation's strategy with specific regional or programme strategies. Both global organisations noted that this was not easy to do because of poor understanding of the organisation's strategic intent. In the federations, the formal internal communication functions were identified as undertaking internal communication campaigns to assist in this alignment process. Again, there was more evidence of dialogue and a participative process in the smaller networks than in the larger cases. As identified in Chapter 4, this dialogue is a necessary component of developing strategic consciousness which leads to strategic intent.

There was some evidence in the case studies to support a post-modern strategic management process as discussed in Chapter 3. The network, Case A, a global organisation, Case E and a federation, Case C, all noted the need for flexible and adaptable strategies that can adjust to meet local and changing contexts. An ongoing process of strategy development and dialogue was identified as assisting in achieving this flexibility. However, there was little evidence of this process being implemented in the cases, except in Case A and Case E which conduct regular strategy reviews in light of changing external contexts.

Overall, the case studies showed indications of attempts at participatory strategy development and implementation process but they were primarily top-down driven.

7.3.4 Barriers and challenges

The case studies highlight a number of challenges and barriers for strategic internal communication. These barriers and challenges can be grouped together under the characteristics of an INGO as was done with the theoretically identified barriers and challenges in Chapter 4.

7.3.4.1 Context-related barriers and challenges

Context-related barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8: Context-related challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapters 2-4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Context – related	Many stakeholders with conflicting expectations Multiple complex environments which they have very little control Changing global contexts	Many stakeholders with different expectations Limited space for internal participation in strategic planning Digital divide

The contexts in which the cases operate contain a wide array of stakeholders with different demands and expectations of the organisation. This mirrors the challenge identified in the literature regarding conflicting expectations from different stakeholders (see Chesters, 2004:326). The main impact of this identified in the case studies is that these stakeholders

have significant influence on the development of strategy, limiting the space for internal participation. This impact reflects the theory that INGOs have little control over the influence of the external environment (Anheier, 2005:251). Thus, both the challenge identified both in theory and practice supports the argument for a postmodern strategic management approach in INGOs which allows them to engage in ongoing dialogue and negotiation with their stakeholders to maintain a flexible yet cohesive strategic intent.

An additional contextual barrier identified for the cases was the digital divide. As international organisations, several of the cases, particularly Cases C, D and E, noted that overcoming the differences in access to internal communication tools posed by different levels of access to the internet and other technologies was a major challenge for the function. This challenge for internal communication was not highlighted in the literature, potentially because of the focus on for-profit organisations who may not face the same resource constraints as INGOs.

7.3.4.2 Form-related barriers and challenges

Form-related barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9: Form-related challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapters 2-4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Form-related	Scarcity of resources Ambiguous missions Subjectivity of the values on which INGOs missions are based	Lack of human resources Vague or broad strategic intent Difficulty living-up to expressed values

As was the case with the theory discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, several challenges from the case evidence can be directly related to the INGO form. To start with, resource constraints were identified as a challenge for all cases, echoing Burnett's (2007:6) characterisation of CSOs as having limited resources. In the smaller network and global organisations, this primarily took the form of a lack of human resources where the communicator had to fulfil multiple roles and internal communication is often the first to be

dropped. In the larger federations, the constraint was having the resources to implement effective internal communication across the wide array of national affiliates.

Second, four of the cases studies identified a challenge related to their strategic intent. These challenges ranged from a very broad strategic intent in Case C to a complete lack of an organisation-wide strategic intent in Case E. This reflects the observation in the literature that CSOs generally and INGOs in particular have vague value-based missions (Glasrud, 2001:37). As noted in Chapter 4, a clear strategic intent is a pre-requisite for internal communication to function strategically. By improving internal communication, particularly through the use of dialogue around strategic intent as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, these organisations may be able to further refine and negotiate their strategic intents to develop a cohesive understanding among internal stakeholders.

Finally, there was evidence in three cases, the network and the federations, that the organisation was not living up to its values in all its actions. This failure can impact on the perceived internal and external legitimacy of the organisation. As discussed in Chapter 2, lack of legitimacy is a major critique of CSOs and INGOs (Long, 2008:51). None of the interviewees made the link between the conflict between their values and actions, their legitimacy and ultimately their organisation's reputation, which as discussed at the end of Chapter 4 is a problem for many INGOs (Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2007:255). However, this conflict is a major challenge that can have ramifications for its funding, reputation and the commitment of the workforce.

7.3.4.3 Structural barriers and challenges

Structural barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.10.

Table 7.10: Structural challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapters 3 & 4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Structural	Programme silos caused by the INGO funding structure Need to balance flexibility with a clear focus on a strategic intent to avoid both bureaucracy and mission displacement	Funding structure resulted in focus on specific programmes and not organisation as a whole Difficulty differentiating between internal and external stakeholders

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, the structure and particularly the funding structure in INGOs (Srinivasan, 2007:189) can pose challenges and barriers for developing strategic alignment through internal communication. In four of the case studies, there are indications that programme funding and silo structures result in the primary focus being on specific projects, programmes or regions, with the organisation as a whole only a secondary consideration. Thus internal stakeholders' primary commitment is to their project, programme and region. It is a challenge for internal communication to build commitment to the organisation as a whole despite these barriers.

An additional structural issue relates to how INGOs are structured to relate to their external environment. Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006:23-24) identified associations as one legal-entity form a CSO can take. The main characteristic of this form is that it has a membership to whom it is responsible. Case A and Case C both identified themselves as having members. This results in a further challenge because of a lack of clarity around who is internal and who is external. For example, the network organisation considered internal communication both in terms of its employees and its member organisations. Similarly, Case C, as a federation, considered internal communication at the level of its international and regional offices and at the level of its national affiliates.

This challenge reflects a general theme in the internal communication theory that was mentioned in Chapter 4: external and internal communication are becoming increasingly blurred as employees are often also customers, beneficiaries or other classes of stakeholders (Cheney *et al.*, 2004). However, the internal communication literature found did not specifically discuss the challenge of members, possibly because of a focus primarily on for-profit corporation. Still, a postmodern approach to internal communication, with a focus on dialogue as an agent of shared understanding, could help address the member challenge. However, asymmetrical communication appeared to be the norm in the case studies. Overall, being able to address the needs and expectations of the different audiences is a challenge for internal communication.

7.3.4.4 Cultural barriers and challenges

Cultural barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11: Cultural challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapters 3 & 4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Cultural	Action culture Multiple cultures Static cultural attitudes	Action culture

The literature identified several cultural challenges including action culture, multiple cultures and static cultural attitudes (Lewis, 2007:113). In the case studies only action culture was evident as a challenge. In three of the five case studies, the network, one global organisation and one federation, there was evidence of an action culture. The evidence suggests that the result of this action culture in these organisations was that less importance was given to activities with less tangible and immediate results, such as internal communication. This reflects the theory around the NGO culture of action, described by Lewis (2007:13) and discussed in Chapter 3. The postmodern approach to internal management discussed in that chapter, argues that an organisation needs to become a learning organisation in order to shift from this ‘action’ orientation to a focus on long-term learning and improvement (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003:33). However, only Case D, with a specific impact planning and learning unit, showed evidence of moving in this direction. Case D also did not have any evidence of an action culture.

7.3.4.5 Workforce-related barriers and challenges

Workforce-related barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.12.

Table 7.12: Workforce-related challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapters 3 & 4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Workforce-related	Managing across geographical and cultural differences Managing diverse teams with differing commitment levels to the organisation Developing a workforce with continuity	Language and time zone issues Teams ‘hording’ information and not identifying what might be useful to others Regular changes in the workforce, around both poor retention and rapid growth

All the case studies faced challenges related to an international workforce. For example, language issues and coordinating work across time zones were identified as a challenge in

three of the five cases. In addition, three of the five case studies noted a tendency for individuals and groups to hoard information, which, coupled with a lack of realisation of what information should be shared across the organisation, can result in poor communication flows between different sections of the organisation. As was noted in Chapter 4, strategic internal communication has a role to play in overcoming this challenge by raising strategic consciousness so that individuals and work groups interpret and implement the organisation's strategic intent within their own area of work (Puth, 2002:196) argues. By helping each programme gain a greater understanding of the organisation's strategic intent, internal communication helps them to see how the information they hold may be useful to other parts of the organisation.

In the networks and the global organisations, regular changes in the workforce, around retention and growth, were identified as another major challenge and reflects what has been found in other studies (see Hume & Hume, 2008:130). This challenge was not apparent in the federations. One reason for the difference could be the resources available. For example, as noted by the regional most senior communicator in Case B, the lack of financial rewards results in poor retention rates and low staff morale in the organisation. This opinion reflects the theory which identifies lower-than market level remuneration as a characteristic of CSOs (Anheier, 2005:216). This characteristic is further compounded in INGOs where expatriate staff tend to have poorer retention than local staff (Walsh & Lenihan, 2006:417). However, the case studies did not indicate that this second reason was an issue for them. Overcoming the barrier posed by poor retention is a challenge for internal communication.

7.3.4.6 Communication barriers and challenges

Communication barriers and challenges were identified in both the theoretical and empirical phases of this study and are summarised in Table 7.13.

Table 7.13: Communication challenges in the theory and case studies

	Challenges identified in theory (Chapter 4)	Challenges identified in case studies
Communi- cation	Organisational reputation Realistic expectations Information management	Poor information flow Poor understanding of the role of internal communication

Of all the challenges in Chapter 4, the communication barriers and challenges identified in the theory differed the most from those identified in the case studies. Of the three challenges identified in literature, only information management was also discussed in the case studies. For example, Case D noted poor flow of communication among disparate teams and a tendency to hoard information compounded by poor understanding of what information would be of use to other teams as a major challenge. As noted at the end of Chapter 4, building a better understanding of how a team's work contributes to the organisation's strategic intent helps to increase understanding of what information may be useful to others.

In terms of the remaining two challenges identified in the literature, the large federations both mentioned internal branding when discussing their internal communication function; however, they did not link this internal function with the overall reputation of the organisation. The literature identified brand and reputation management in INGOs as being particularly problematic (Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2007:253). In addition, the literature noted the difficulty of building realistic expectations of an INGO among both internal and external employees. However, the primary view of internal communication within the case studies looked only at how it could facilitate task-accomplishment and not its integrated role with external communication and stakeholder management.

A potential explanation for why organisational reputation and realistic expectations were not considered internal communication challenges is because of the poor understanding of the role internal communication can play in that regard. The primary communication-related challenge and barrier identified in the case studies was the poor understanding of the role of internal communication itself. This challenge reflects the literature which identified poor knowledge of the strategic role of communication and internal communication as one of the primary reasons these functions do not fulfil their potential

(Grimshaw & Mike, 2008:28; Steyn & Puth, 2000:10). In both federations this lack of clarity on the role of internal communication was identified as a major issue that posed various challenges including: work being given to the function that should not be its responsibility, the function not being involved in activities it should be, and impossible expectations from internal stakeholders that the function cannot meet. Both interviewees in these cases emphasised the need to address these expectations. They argue that this involves building understanding in the organisation regarding internal communication's role as a facilitator and not the sole implementer of communication within the organisation.

Neither global organisation mentioned this challenge and the network only hinted at it in passing. However, the less developed nature of internal communication in these organisations could mean that this more specific challenge for the function has not yet appeared. That said, all the cases did note the need to improve overall internal stakeholder engagement in the internal communication process.

7.4 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 defined strategic internal communication as *"the strategic management of communication to align the organisation's internal stakeholders with its strategic intent."* None of the case studies cited strategic alignment and strategic intent as the core elements of their internal communication. While the larger federations showed evidence of operating more strategically than the smaller organisations, all the cases have the potential to be more strategic in their internal communication. There is evidence that postmodern strategic management and communication would be of value to the case studies both in terms of helping them be true to their values, meeting the many expectations placed on them by the different stakeholders and adapting to their changing external contexts. However, the evidence shows that the case studies are still primarily using traditional asymmetrical communication with only some evidence of dialogue. Overall, there are a variety of barriers and challenges that the case studies must overcome in order to implement strategic internal communication.