

ASSESSMENT TO “COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED BY WORLD VISION TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN NKAYI COMMUNITY” 2014-2015

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the communication strategies used by World Vision to alleviate poverty in Nkayi community from 2014 to date. Communication is essential for every organisation to survive in its operational environment and to create a rapport and mutually understanding with the surrounding community. The study also focuses on identifying the communication strategies that are used by World to alleviate poverty. The study had to assess the effectiveness of communication strategies used by World Vision and the extent to which the community of Zhende and Manton in Nkayi expressed satisfaction. The study was influenced by two way communication, stakeholders' salience and open system theory. Furthermore, the study was guided by qualitative research design to attain results that are closer to reality. Interviews, questionnaires and participation observation were used to tape information from the targeted population who are World Vision workers from various departments and community members in Manton and Zhende. The study seeks to establish the importance of communication by non-governmental organisation like World Vision, and the extent to which poverty can be reduced.

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KEYWORDS: Communication, Strategies, Vision, Nkayi, Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION

The study focuses on the communication strategies used by World Vision from 2014 to date, to assist the Nkayi community, particularly Manton and Zhende village in reducing poverty. Communication is a process whereby messages are transmitted and distributed in space for control and people (Carrey 1989:13). The study is essential in the sense that it would assess the effectiveness of strategies used by World Vision to alleviate poverty in Nkayi community. The study would be guided by qualitative research and it would enable the study to attain results that are closer to validity and reality. It would be also guided by theories of open system, stakeholder salience and two way communications. The study also employed in depth interviews, participant observation and questionnaires as methods for data gathering. This would assist the study to get effective results since some people might not freely give accurate answers in face to face interviews. In addition, the study seeks to find out if communication strategies used by World Vision reinforces two way communications that creates mutual benefit between Nkayi community and World Vision from 2014 to 2015. Effective communication in an organization like World Vision can be achieved through implementation of corporate strategies that involve stakeholder participation address the needs of the communication in order to alleviate poverty in Nkayi. Corporate strategy is functional and

operational strategy that is concerned with how corporate communication can develop communication programmes towards different stakeholders.

Background to the Study

World Vision is an Evangelical, relief and developmental organization whose goal is to follow the Lord and Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation. World Vision is one of the largest relief and development organizations in the world. The late Bob Pierce was the founder of the World Vision organization.

The dilemma of children which Bob Pierce saw on his and later trips to China and Korea affected him deeply. They encouraged him to write in the front of his Bible: 'Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.' He made it his passion and commitment to find a way of supporting missionaries and other local people he met on his trips, who were caring for orphans and widows. This resulted in him establishing World Vision in 1950. World Vision later on spread to developing countries in a way to alleviate poverty that was emerging in those countries. During the 1970s World Vision began training families to build small farms by teaching agricultural skills. Around the world, World Vision is working in partnership with more than 400 million

people in nearly 100 countries in their struggle to alleviate poverty, hunger and injustice and religious beliefs. World Vision began operating in Zimbabwe in 1973, mainly providing assistance to children's homes and offering relief to Zimbabweans in refugee camps. After independence in 1980, focus changed to rehabilitation and development programs to accommodate returnees from exile and previously displaced groups.

There are significant differences in poverty rates among the provinces. Matabeleland North has the highest poverty rate in the country, with 70 per cent of its inhabitants classified as poor or extremely poor. This statics has lead the researchers to choose Nkayi as a case study since it is between the poorest provinces. Poverty is also concentrated in the south-eastern provinces of Manicaland and Masvingo, which are among the driest and least productive areas in the country. World Bank (2000) argue that, with the rise in unemployment and consequent male migration away from rural areas, households headed by women are increasingly common. These households are nearly always the most disadvantaged.

In the study, the researchers deduce that the root causes of poverty in Zimbabwe can largely be attributed to the disintegration of the traditional African society following the inception of colonialism. It cannot be disputed that casualties of poverty in traditional society were kept at a minimum because interaction between family care, community support and institutional provision was especially intricate. This was so because the ideological framework insisted that individualism was alien to the African culture, hence the extended family system served as a social safety net for the poor.

Corporate Communication in Nkayi

Corporate communication was developed 158 years ago. The move towards less stable, more competitive markets and harsher economic circumstances led to constant redefining of the scope and practices of communications in many organisations. It is argued that corporate communication evolves from persuasion and propaganda to more open and symmetrical dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders in their environment. However, most companies take issues to do with external stakeholders to be of less importance thereby concentrating on the business side forsaking the stakeholders.

Corporate communication is a management function that offers a framework and vocabulary for effective coordination of all means of communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with the stakeholder groups upon the organisation is dependent

(Cornelissen:2008). The MACS department in World Vision Nkayi allows the free flow of information from the community to the organization and vice versa without bias.

Development Communication Through World Vision Communication Strategies

Development communication is a group of method-driven and theory based employment of media and communication to influence and transform the political economy of development in ways that allow individuals, communities and societies to benefit (Manyozo, 2012:9). The guiding principles include gender mainstreaming, equity, diversity, tolerance and partnership that promote change and solidarity in the community. Development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to speedy transformation of a country and a mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth (Quebral ,1975, 1988, 2002 and 2011). In development communication, communication is used to engage stakeholders and devise effective strategies leading to better and sustainable development initiatives. Development communication's purpose is to communicate the mission and activities of the organization, mostly to external audiences (Mefalopus 2008:5). In this case World Vision communicates through media products and outputs to promote its mission and values as well as informing selected audiences about relevant activities.

Poverty alleviation is among human development. The article 6 of general assembly (1997) asserts that development for communication stresses the need to support two way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communication to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development. The group of grassroots communicators (noted as journalists), gather success stories from the community to the organization that are used to alleviate poverty. World Vision communicates with everyone who is affected and affects the existence of the organization in Nkayi. Children who are sometimes given blind eye when it comes to development are confronted by the organization seeking to find their thoughts on how they would like to view their community after poverty has been eradicated. Children communicate their thoughts through drawings. For example children draw their dream school and homes to their respective sponsors hence enlightening the sponsors on how they can assist to develop Nkayi community. More so, World Vision has adopted the dominant language (Ndebele) of the community, when communicating with the stakeholder most of the times.

Corporate Social Responsibility by World Vision Nkayi

Corporate social responsibility is defined by Reddi (2009:160) as the process by which a corporate participates in the welfare of both internal and external community, enhancing its environment and well being to the advantages of the organization and the community concerned. However, one may critique the above statement arguing that the movement from Neo-classical economic to socio economic theory is to try to increase the profits of the organization. World Vision Nkayi Greenfield engages itself in corporate social initiatives to support the health and education development of the host communities. World Vision has donated computers to more than five schools which include Dimpamiwa primary, Nkayi primary, Mathetshaneni primary, Tohwe high and Nkayi high. Mpumelelo high has pioneered the ICT education using I-Pads. Village health workers are trained under different themes under the expense of World Vision.

Health clubs are formulate and sponsored by World Vision. All this is aimed at building strong relationships with the stakeholders, at the same time alleviating poverty in the community. Organizations must create convergence between its corporate social responsibility agenda and stakeholder's social expectations thereby increase corporate legitimacy (Colleoni; 2013:229). Redefining the relationship between the business and society brings about the creation of a new form of corporate legitimacy and implications for business to open a dialogue in society. This means World Vision would interact with Nkayi community so that it considers societal priorities and include them in their contribution to social responsibilities that World Vision is meant to fulfil.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the three theoretical framework namely stakeholders salience theory, Open system theory and two-way communications theory. The concept of Stakeholder Salience was proposed by Mitchell et al (1997). The authors proposed a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Salience in response to the many competing definitions of stakeholder and the lack of agreement 'Who and What Really Counts' in stakeholder management (Mitchell et al. 1997:). Considering the principle, proposed by Freeman (1994), of 'Who and What Really Counts' Mitchell et al. (1997) argue that the first question calls. Salience may refer to the property of being important and notice on a certain environment. In this study the theory will assist in finding out how World Vision prioritizes their stakeholders. The open system theory was propounded by a biology scientist called Von Bertalanffy. It was immediately applicable to all disciplines including social science. Bertalanffy

(1956) argues that systems which in this case are naturals relate with surrounding environment to be effective. Lubbe and Puth (1994) cited in Masuku (2014) discusses system approach which is similar to open system theory. Open system theory requires an organization to respond to feedback from the environment. Two way symmetrical model of communication consists of a dialogue strategy between the organization and its publics. Reddi (2009:48) asserts that the two way communication is based on the ideal of mutual understanding. This model is relevant to the study of World Vision communication strategies in the sense that it allows equal opportunities for expression and free exchange of information through advertisements, training, campaigns, newsletters and face to face communication.

METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by qualitative research design and methods. Gray (2009:166) asserts that qualitative research is not built upon a unified theory or methodological approach and can adopt various theoretical stances and methods such as observations, interviews, questionnaires and document analysis. Another important distinguishing feature of qualitative methods is that they start from the perspective and actions of the subjects studied, while quantitative studies typically proceed from the researcher's ideas about the dimensions and categories which should constitute the central focus (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2005:4). In addition, the researchers employed non-probability sampling like purposive sampling whereby the researchers choose the sample based on who they think would be appropriate for the study. As a result the manager, human resources and staff members from communication department were selected using purposive sampling. Convenience sampling was also used in the article to select appropriate population to provide required information. Convenience sampling differs in that sample selection is less preconceived and directed, more the products of expediency, chance and opportunity than of deliberate intent (Deacon, Pickering, Golding and Murdock 1999:54). "Weak" convenience sampling where sampling units were selected simply because they are nearest to hand were used. All World Vision workers that could be accessed together with the Mantoni and Zhende village were interviewed and some were issued questionnaires to fill. The researchers developed two different sets of questionnaires. Overall the researchers distributed seventy questionnaires. One set was meant for World Vision's employees including the manager. The researchers found themselves distributing a total of seven questionnaires to the World Vision staff as the organization are composed of seven workers. Five were females and two males, as it is the structure of the organization. The researchers decided to give all staff members

questionnaires as they all partake in communication, whether internal or external.

The other set was meant for the stakeholders of the organization mainly the two selected villages which are Zhende and Mantoni. A total number of sixty three questionnaires were distributed in the field. Balance between male and female who answered the questionnaires was made, having thirty male and thirty three female. However, males were hard to find since most of them are out of the community for employment to sustain the remaining family. The questionnaires were successfully returned and ensured hundred percent. On questionnaires the community needed translations from English to isiNdebele, since some of the members were not able to understand English and they were free to answer in isiNdebele. In addition, as the researcher is competent enough to read and understand isiNdebele even though she is Venda. Allowing the respondents to answer in isiNdebele made the respondents to freely express themselves in answering the questions.

Targeted audiences of the study were both interviewed and filled the questionnaires. World Vision staff and Nkayi community (Zhende and Mantoni village) were both interviewed. A total number of thirty people were interviewed. The study made a total number of four focus groups, made up five people. The rest were interviewed individually, especially the World Vision staff. This assisted the study to gather all the information that might be skipped if one used one method for data gathering. The study interviewed six workers from World Vision as the step user for sponsorship excused herself due to tight schedule. In the study the researchers interviewed the staff using structured questions. The interviewees would express their feelings both verbally and non-verbally. This also assisted the researchers to depict meanings from non verbal communication that was expressed by the interviewees. The community would even stress their points using hands to add value to what they were saying.

Interviews in Zhende and Mantoni were conducted in isiNdebele for the benefit of those who are not able to understand and speak English. The researchers faced a challenge of balancing female and males for the interviews as males are a scarce resource in the community due to lack of employment. Out of twenty four people interviewed ten were male and fourteen were female.

Table 1

Methods	Males	Females	Total
Questionnaires	32	38	70
Interviews	17	23	40

Response Rate for Questionnaires and Interviews

The above table illustrates the respondents’ rate of the questionnaires and interview. Out of seventy questionnaires distributed in Nkayi for the study. Questionnaires were effectively returned. However, only three questionnaires were invalid for the study as they were not well answered. Interviews were conducted with World Vision staff, Zhende and Mantoni community. More women in contrast with men were interviewed in the study. Most men are out of the community for employment seeking since Nkayi is a rural area without enough employment for all.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Communication Strategies Used By World Vision To Alleviate Poverty

The study found out through participant observation and interviews with the MACS department that World Vision uses various communication strategies to communicate with the Nkayi community from Zhende and Mantoni from 2014 to date. The study also found out that World Vision communicates with its stakeholders in many different strategies, depending on the type of the stakeholder they are focusing on. Sixty seven questionnaires and thirty five interviews highlighted that World Vision make use of telephones, letters, meetings, brochures, posters and community newsletter to disseminate information to their stakeholders. The other eight indicated ignorance on the communication strategies used by World Vision in assumption that they failed to understand the question well.

The study also found out through interviews, questionnaires and participant observation that World Vision makes use of brochures to communicate with the community to alleviate poverty. Fifty questionnaires, of which three quarters were female, stated that the brochures are used mainly in addressing issues of health. Poor health is identified as part of being poor by Chinake (1997). Through interview with the development facilitator working with health issues she highlighted that World Vision partners with the ministry of health to promote health facilities of the community. This is a strong way of communicating with the community of Nkayi as an attempt to alleviate poverty in the community. This has been concluded after one of the villagers in Zhende highlighted that:

“okungamabhuku lokhuyana kuyachaza ukubala njengoba kubhalwe ngesiNdebele, kusinika imifanekiso kanye lolwazi lokuqatheka kokuvikela imikhuhlane. Lokhu kusenza ubuyanga besigaba bunciphe”.

The researchers in the study also discovered that World Vision uses grassroots communication. Thirty

interviews illustrated grassroots communicators as community members selected to gather stories for the newsletter. World Vision has a total of almost twelve grassroots communicators. These individuals are selected in the community by the community, for them to communicate with the organization on behalf of the community and vice versa. Every citizen has a right to information. The grassroots communicators are also entitled to write stories for Nkayi World Vision newsletter. These stories pertain to the developmental stories that are done by the organization. Skills on story writing and photographing have been disseminated to grassroots communicators. Good quality angled pictures are shot and used for newsletter. Through participant observation the researcher noted that grassroots communicators are essential strategy for communication. Most of the stories that happen at community level could not be captured by World Vision as they do not provide enough evidence.

Effectiveness of Communication Strategies used by World Vision

From the interviews conducted by the researchers with the manager, the study found out that the communication strategies employed by World Vision are effective as they allow participation of the stakeholders in coming up with suitable strategies. The MACS department has made it clear that community must feel free to engage with the organization in whatever issues they have concerning the organization. In an interview, a member of Zhende community highlighted that the impact of newsletter in communicating with the community is less effective. The newsletter is not enough to be given to all the community members and some does not have the opportunity to get hold of the newsletter. In the questionnaire some highlighted that the newsletter is written in English language that make some of the community members to be restricted to read the newsletter and benefit from it since they cannot read English.

Sixty questionnaires administered to the community reveals that content written allows proximity and prominence. All information that is included is from within Nkayi community, hence the community would love to associate themselves with news drawn local. Posters are designed with pictures of community members mainly the influential leaders like chiefs and kraal heads making it easier for the community to accept the information that is communicated by World Vision. By using prominent individuals the organization is certain that whatever is associated with leaders is viewed in a positive way. Through participant observation the researchers discovered that children have fallen in love with the newsletter. Distributing the newsletter, children would even ask for more newsletters as they highlighted that they feel special to be seen in the

newsletter by other children. Children would not only view images but also read the stories, attain skills of poverty alleviation. Hence communication strategies employed by World Vision are effective to Nkayi community. World Vision found that the community of Nkayi has low literacy rate, therefore by introducing the newsletters, brochures and posters it is trying to boost the literacy in Nkayi. The community would improve their reading and writing competence by reading the stories from newsletters and brochures and writing the stories for the newsletter.

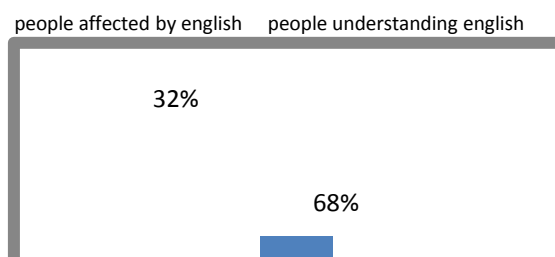
Challenges on Communicating Strategies used by World Vision

Through seven questionnaires from World Vision staff and an interview with the department of MACS it was found that English language to communicate with Nkayi communities is a challenge. However, they have decided to stick to English which is a universal language. “Some of our stakeholders are not able to read isiNdebele, while others cannot read English language so it becomes a challenge for us on choose language that can suits all stakeholders” reads one of the questionnaire response from the World Vision’s staff.

Judging from twenty three interviews conducted with Nkayi community specifically Mantoni and Zhende, the community highlighted that the communication strategies use the language they do not understand as a community. The response from the community highlighted that they are not familiar with the newsletter that is produced by the organization reflecting that it is a challenge as they do not bring enough copies that can reach each and every individual in the community so they may partake in addressing issues of poverty in the community.

The study deduced through questionnaires from the community that even though most of the community has cell phones that can be used as a communication strategy to alleviate poverty. They are challenges of connectivity as the network might be down most of the times. Moreso, the community faces challenges of power to recharge the mobile phones leading to communication to be a challenge when relying on phones.

Pie chart 1



Number of People Affected by the English Language used for Communication

The pie chart above shows the number of people who are affected by the English language used in communication strategies used by World Vision. A total number of 23 which constitute sixty percent of the community identified themselves as having problems with English as they do not understand the language. Thirty two percent are the ones that understand English. The low percentage of people understanding English reinforces the fact that World Vision should consider to be bilingual in communication.

Inter cultural communication is more important for communication to be effective. Intercultural communication is defined as the relationship or acceptance of each other’s culture for communication to be effective. World Vision during the review meeting was told that the culture of community seeks all people to stand up as sign of respect and to welcome the head man. Hence World Vision has to abide by that culture in order for communication to be effective and not cause challenges. To avoid challenges in communication one has to liaise or accept the culture of the other. This would assist in building good relationships between the organization and the community. The challenges that the organization and the community face in the communication strategies is because they fail to accommodate each other’s culture. World Vision is failing to accommodate the isiNdebele language in compiling their newsletter hence the community would find itself developing an attitude towards the newsletter hence communication not effective to alleviate poverty in the community.

The open system theory requires the organization to interdependent to the environment. Bastedo (2004) argues that for organizations to survive in unpredictable environment they is need for the organization to be flexible to change. The challenge is that the organization would not be constant on the communication strategies they used to alleviate poverty. Once the organization uses isiNdebele in their newsletter, those who cannot even read isiNdebele would also be complaining to the organization for alternative medium that would accommodate them. Hence World Vision would be mainly dealing with the community’s issues relaxing on meeting their objectives.

Prospects on Communication Strategies used by World Vision

Basing on the study findings from face to face interview with the management of World Vision, the researchers found out that to improve the effectiveness of current communication strategies would improve the eradication of poverty in a speedy way. This means that the communication strategies

need to be revised by the organization together with the community of Nkayi in order to enhance two way communications at the same time. The Nkayi Newsletter needs to be revisited on the issue of language. In order for communication to be effective they should be something common to both the sender and the receiver, and language is one that must be common to both the sender and receiver. In order to solve the issue of language the organization has to develop multi lingual newsletter. Each publication of a newsletter must be publish in two languages which are English and Ndebele to cater for those who does not understand English or Ndebele to have an option hence making the communication strategy of newsletter being effective to reduce poverty in the community.

On the questionnaires, the community highlighted that World Vision does not communicate effectively with community. This is because the organization relies on one communication strategy to disseminate information. Therefore it would be ideal if the organization may try to make use of more than one communication strategy. For example, they may write letters to the community at the same time making phone calls so that information may reach all the targeted audiences. Without the community of Nkayi, the organization of World Vision Nkayi would cease to exist. Hence dependency is essential to all the parts. Stakeholder salience is never static. It is always in a form of change. World Vision therefore needs to also change the communication strategies that they use for the stakeholders as their salience and relevance always change.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on the communication strategies used by World Vision to alleviate poverty from 2014 to 2015. Communication strategies employed by World Vision were established also highlighting their importance in alleviating poverty. The targeted population was the Manton village, Zhende village, World Vision organization mainly the Marketing and Communication in Sponsorship (MACS). The two villages were selected basing on the fact that they are part of the area development programme (ADP) of World Vision. The communication strategies assessed were the community review meetings, Nkayi Newsletter, posters, brochures and grassroots communicators. The analysis of the organizational political economy would assist the readers to understand better the environment which the organization operates. Theories related to communication in a community such as the stakeholder salience theory, two way communication and open system theory were used to guide the study on assessing the effectiveness of communication strategies used to alleviate poverty in the community of Nkayi form 2014 to date. Basing from the findings of the study, the researchers strongly recommends

World Vision to use communication strategies that enhances two way communications which is dialogical. Meetings, social media such as Whatsapp, facebook should be used since they enhance transactional communication which can enable World Vision and Nkayi community to reach mutual understanding. Again the researchers recommend World Vision to use suggestion boxes in the community so that they may post their suggestions to the organization.

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