

ANALYSIS OF APPROACHES OF COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF AMHARA NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE WOMEN AFFAIRS BUREAU (ETHIOPIA)

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to examine the communication approaches of Amhara National Regional State Women Affairs Bureau (ANRS WAB). The research particularly shades light on the communication channels of the bureau to reach the target audiences and stakeholders. To this end, qualitative methodology has been applied to assess the communication process of the organization. The findings of the study show that the bureau has used top down approach of communication with target mass and horizontal communication with the stakeholders. The top down approach of the bureau could not address women issues at the grassroot levels. The study also unearthed those different factors such as lack of human and economic resources, heterogeneous target groups; illiteracy and stereotyping that impede the communication works of the bureau in its social change process.

Key words: Social change, development communication, gender disparity, top down communication approach, horizontal approach, participatory communication, and empowerment.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Much is left to change the fact that women are deprived of many advantages. History tells a lot about their marginalization from social, economic and political participation. They have passed multidimensional domination and suppression. In many parts of the world, women have lost their freedom and independence even when the world has sung about freedom, equality and justice. Instead of being served by the different political, social and economic systems of modern world, they have been marginalized and dehumanized by these systems (UN News Center, 2009).

The male dominated mentality, which governs the world, seems to accept the equality and freedom of humankind. However, one can notice its paradox by observing the actual practices. Women are still dependent, abused, dehumanized in different forms and degrees in different parts of the world. Tradition, culture, religion and ideology have had their own role for these unbalanced socio-political and economic systems-the abuse of human kind by their fellow.

In many parts of the world, rape is not considered a crime, goes unpunished and continues to be used as a tool of war. Even in highly developed countries, violence against women of all kinds is routine, and often condoned. Female sexual slavery and forced prostitution are still terrible “facts of life” for poor, often very young, women. Genetic testing for defects of the unborn is used in some parts of the world to determine the

sex of the fetus, so that females can be aborted... Forced marriage and bride burning are still prevalent (Lopez-Claros, A and Saadia, Z. 2005)

Especially in underdeveloped countries, women's problems are worse due to poverty, illiteracy, lack of good governance and infant democracy, poor information and communication infrastructures, etc. Like many developing countries in the world, women in Ethiopia are disadvantaged. "Although women's rights are, today, protected by the Ethiopian Constitution, male dominance remains the order of the day in both public and private spheres." (Pathfinder International/ Ethiopia, 2006). Ethiopian females are chained by poverty and domination much more than males. This shows how social change is necessary in Ethiopia. Although many years are spent on the feminist movement with lots of works, the change has left with many assignments that need much attention and more efforts that are restless. "Despite the intense efforts of many agencies and organizations, and numerous inspiring successes, the picture is still disheartening, as it takes far more than changes in law or stated policy to change practices in the home, community and in the decision-making environment" (Bogalech and Mengistu, 2007). In Ethiopia, women traditionally enjoy little independent decision making on most individual and family issues, including the option to choose whether to give birth in a health facility or seek the assistance of a trained provider. Harmful traditional practices, including female genital cutting, early marriage and childbearing, gender-based violence, forced marriage, wife inheritance, and a high value for large families, all impose huge negative impacts on women's life in the country (Bogalech and Mengistu, 2007). All these facts are prevalent in Amhara Region too.

According to gender activists, there is a high prevalence of gender violence in the Amhara Region. Early marriages (as young as three-year-old girls) are still arranged by families in the region. Other varieties of violence such as abduction, rape, circumcisions also prevail in the region. Pathfinder expresses this bitter fact as follows:

In the Amhara regional state of Ethiopia, 50 percent of girls are married before the age of 15. Many are betrothed even earlier and sent to live with their future husband's family by the age of nine or ten. Early marriage is one of many harmful traditional practices that are particularly prevalent in rural areas, along with female genital cutting, abduction, and unattended births (Pathfinder, 2006)

As mentioned by Pathfinder the discriminatory political, economic and social rules and regulations prevailed in Ethiopia has barred Amhara Region women from enjoying the fruits of their labor. Without equal opportunities, they have lagged behind men in all fields of self-advancement. Because their participation in the economy has not been valued, Amhara Region women have not received their fair share of the nation's wealth. In other words, the majority Amhara Region women lack economic and social independence.

In addition to the above mentioned problems, HIV and AIDS are other serious challenges of Amhara Region women which come up with additional health, social, economic, and psychological threats and crises. Contrary to the wide prevalence of HIV, many women are commercial sex workers in the region. It has its own physical, social, and psychological pain on women. Besides, even at individual household levels, female in most families is of lower status and commands little respect relative to male counterparts that is a reflection of the country/regional level gender disparity. Land ownership problem and illiteracy are common problems of women in the region. From the region civil servant only 37% are women despite their

number in the region that share more than 50% of the total population. The worst is only 10% of women are professional from the civil servants. This shows the dimension of illiteracy impact that banned women from public domain.

Although the Ethiopian constitution acknowledges and encourages equal power relations in all spheres of social, legal and economic and political life (Article 35) and changing laws and government policies are a key step in institutionalizing women's equality, but it does not alone guarantee changes in the society. There is still a widely spread negative attitude towards gender equality, both at community level and at regional/ national level, which is a challenge for implementing gender policies. Most cultural practices and beliefs reinforce patriarchy and limit women's ability to control their lives. All the above multidimensional problems tell us that social change should be a hot issue in the region. The researcher argues that communication for social change should be at the center of such multidimensional problems since CSC can facilitate social change process. "Societies cannot develop and change with out communication" (Quebral, 2005)

The role of communication to alleviate such deep-rooted social problem is decisive. For this, using appropriate and integrated approach of communication is vital. Examining these issues is the driving force to start this research.

Especially when the world is changing to become a village due to huge and fast information flows on the age of globalization, the role of communication for overall social change has become great. Hence, understanding the role of communication for social change is crucial. To understand the role of communication for social change, understanding the different approaches of communication is vital. In this era of communication and information, communication approaches are determinant for the success or failure of different social change goals and projects. Research and practice show that communication and information are strong tools in development programs and in the struggle for social change (Olson, 2007).

Development communication is about finding effective ways to use communication to affect development/social change in a society. There are different views about the role of communication in social change process. Some people view the process of communication as something that is intricate with the processes of culture and development. For some, communication means society empowerment, for others, the work of media and other information technologies. Moreover, others find it as a more complex process, which is facilitated and affected by politics, economics and ideological structures and processes. This division can be clearly seen in the field of development communication. Communication can, for example, be seen as a mechanism helping development projects to accomplish specific goals. Communication in that sense engages methodologies and tools for spreading information in order to achieve a certain outcome. This is what can be called strategic communication and it is helping to maximize the delivery and effectiveness of messages. Communication can also be defined as the target of development. In that sense, development should for instance be aiming to prove dialogue and the access of information. Within this definition, communication is about building a community rather than disseminating information (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). The main underlying assumption of communication for social change (CSC)/development communication is that we can find successful ways to use the field of communication to make better contributions to the process of social change (Rockefeller, 2001).

Under these frameworks, the researcher believes that there are many questions that should be addressed in the bureau for its social change goals. For instance, how does Amhara Women Affairs Bureau practiced communication for social change? How does the bureau viewed communication? What are the role of communication to avoid or at least, narrow down gender disparity and many other problems that chained Amhara Region women? How does the bureau communicate with its target audiences and stakeholders? How does the bureau fight the multidimensional problems of women? These and other similar questions need much attention to change the life of women in the region.

Thus, this study scrutinizes the communication approach of Amhara Women Affairs Bureau that enables to show the appropriateness of their communication approach for the success of social change efforts in general and women empowerment in particular. The study will indicate the strength and weakness of the communication approaches and strategies of the bureau by considering the theoretical foundation of development communication/ communication for social change. Research and practice explain that communication and information are powerful weapons in development effort and in the struggle for social change (Servaes, 2008). But, it seems as if the processes of communication are not adequately understood (Olsson, 2007) - which can be taken as a reason for doing this study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The principal objective of this study is to investigate the communication approaches that are used by ANRS Women Affairs Bureau.

Specific objectives:

- To identify and examine the communication strategies that are used by the bureau
- To investigate barriers of communication which hinder the bureau's work.
- To suggest appropriate methods of communication that would be effective to alleviate the deep rooted problems of women in the region.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research as a Method

This study has a qualitative approach because this is an advantageous method when striving for deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon in the society. Through a qualitative approach it is also possible to map and evaluate processes and find information that otherwise would be less possible to find. The strength and major contribution of qualitative approach is the fact that it generates in a holistic and deep understanding of the process that is in focus of the study (Reinard, 1994). The goal of such qualitative approach can be to develop principles about a specific phenomenon, in this case the external communication works in an organization-ANRS WAB. Identifying underlying factors, exploring decision processes, mapping range of contributory elements are diagnostic of qualitative research. Processes of a phenomenon such as communication works in ANRS WAB can be evaluated by this research method. These characteristics of qualitative research enable the researcher to scrutinize communication approach of ANRS WAB.

Collecting Data

The data have been collected through extensive semi-structured interviews; consideration of documents, pamphlets, and magazines. All these are subjects of the study. All these tools are used as a part of collecting the data. These different methods are all grounded in real life situations and settings, which is a prerequisite to get a holistic and detailed understanding of the communication in a bureau.

Analyzing the Data

The practice of analyzing the data began during the information gathering. It was uninterrupted process through the whole study. After gathering the information, transcribing was the first task. After transcription, reading it was the next step to reach a foundation of understanding about its completeness. To make the analysis easier, it was first tried to focus on the micro information that was found, for instance more basic information about the bureau. Then it was trying to link it to a large-scale, such as larger issues and factors in the Amhara region women situations that have an impact on the communication processes by constructing meaning. This process of analyzing the material has made it easier to find conceptual themes and to get a deeper understanding of the communication processes. It is important to mention that in an inductive study like this the content of the conceptual approach will not necessarily serve as analyzing instrument (Keyton, 2001). But it is concepts that can be associated to the research area, which is vital knowledge to be aware of before beginning research like this. The concepts have used as a guide for the progress of research. At the beginning, efforts were made to be well familiarized with the data analysis focusing on understanding the general nature of the situation to address issues raised on research questions. At the time of analysis, it is very important to understand that explanatory method is an ongoing discovery-identifying themes and developing and interpreting concepts and propositions (Taylor & et al, 1998)

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Methods of Communication

There are various methods and channels of external communication that the bureau uses in its struggle for equality of women in the Amhara Region. After doing an inductive study, different expressions and communication mechanisms have been found in the communication methods. All the mechanisms will be presented and discussed in this section. The communication mechanisms can all be seen as central aspects in a communication framework and in the communication processes that the bureau is practicing. Magazine, leaflets, networking, and interpersonal communication are the communication mechanisms that the bureau used.

Gender Magazine

Gender Magazine is presenting women issues through texts and pictures. It is a magazine that offered a forum for discussing on women's issues. The objective is to raise awareness about gender issues in the society and the magazine is introducing new outlooks on issues that affect the lives of women in the region. In the magazine, different women are given a voice; the magazine is portraying women in politics, economics, education and culture, etc. My interviewee says "We distribute the magazine mainly for our regional and woreda offices, sector offices, different women associations and gender clubs, community libraries and NGOs. The main goal is to raise awareness about gender equality and indicate ways of

empowerment by presenting role models”

The target group for the magazine is mostly women; however the bureau shows that not all women can be contacted via the magazine. There are issues like illiteracy and accessibility that affect its distribution. The bureau is using the magazine to inform opinion leaders/ they called them gender activists/ and to motivate them to further communicate and channel the information in the magazine to other women. This means that the information in this case reaches the public indirectly via the opinion leaders and it shows how communication messages can travel in two ways. From the mass medium to opinion leaders-gender activists and then to the target audiences. This goes with two steps flow theory of communication as stated by Lazarsfeld et al (cited in <http://www.tcw.utwente.nl/theorieenoverzicht>) information from the media moves into two distinct stages. First, individuals (opinion leaders) who pay close attention to the mass media and its messages receive the information. And then opinion leaders pass to the general public. This communication through two stages is a clear example of one of the key ideas for development communication. It is combining and integrating mass media with interpersonal communication. It also reminds of the importance of using different channels in communication.

An important part of feminist media like Gender Magazine is the fact that they are dealing with the issue how women and men roles are being constructed in the region. Challenging traditional attitudes and practices is the mission of the magazine. As elsewhere in the country, mostly men are depicted as powerful actors and expert decision makers, while women are being constructed as victims, wives and mothers and obsessed with beauty in many peoples mind in the region. Gender magazine challenges such deep-rooted attitude by presenting and telling about role model women and narrating their success.

It is relating to many people’s personal situations, meaning that the communication is on a personal level. The information is helping to raise awareness about the old-fashioned patriarchal world and backward traditional environment that dominate women in the region. It shares new perspectives about diminishing labor division in the family and in the society, about how to run business by women, and many other hopeful and bright future indicator stories. In the magazine, one can observe the untouched traditional labor divisions are upside down. We can observe when a husband is cooking ‘wot’, and baking ‘injera, the traditional regular food among most Ethiopian’; a wife is plowing that were unthinkable before in the region. Gender shakes traditional practices that chained the Amhara region women under the cover of culture, religion and above all ignorance. For instance, if we observe publication no 5, 2000 E.C Gender magazine on pages 36 & 37, we can observe the above mentioned facts in Awi Zone, one of the 11 zones in the region. A husband is baking ‘injera’ and a wife is plowing the farm. Besides, we can observe male model farmers who prepare traditional coffee ceremony, all these belong to women under traditional labor division.

Gender Magazine is making it easier for women to talk about what they see in the society and encouraging them to look at the world through women’s eyes. This is making the magazine to an empowering and eye-opening medium. Mostly, this is done through literature especially by presenting poetry. The feminists are calling for social change and preaching new perspectives about gender issues in the region via poem line. For instance, Gender magazine no 6, 2001 on page 20 Amharic verse states this fact. This Amharic verse tells us that traditional division of gender should be banned. The verse expresses its immorality and irrationality and advocates the upside down of such demarcations. Similarly, Gender fights HTP through its

verses. Through the verse, the magazine has condemned HTP especially genital mutilations and early marriage. It expresses the physical and psychological pains of HTP.

Besides, when we read the different publications of the magazine, we can notice that the role of women association is great to alleviate poverty which is deep rooted in the region and empowering the marginalized society-women.

The Bureau Leaflets

Another important channel of communication in the bureau is leaflets. The goal is to raise awareness. Giving information about harmful traditional practices such as early marriage, circumcisions, abduction, wench, wife inheritance, etc that severely affect the women in the region. The other concern of the leaflets is promoting gender mainstreaming in the sector offices. The leaflet promotes priority for women and affirmative action should be taken for on job trainings to compensate the historical scar of women.

The information flow follows similar trends as the Gender magazine. It flows from gender activists to the masses. Two step flow of communication is also observable as a communication mechanism.

Networking

One of the great strengths of ANRS WAB's communication work lies in their strong networking with the stakeholders. ANRS WAB points out that networking with other organizations helps the bureau to strengthen the process and gives them a lot of inspiration and new ideas. ANRS WAB, like many other governmental organizations in the country, is an organization with economical limitations, but the networking allows them to share voices and exert strength together with other organizations. They collaborate not only with other governmental bureaus, but also multilateral and bilateral non-governmental agencies. Networking is especially valuable for the practice of gender mainstreaming at sector bureaus.

ANRS WAB indicates that network can help reach the society more effectively. Together with other organizations, they are able to better meet their common goals of women equality and empowerment. By working in partnership with other development and social change actors such as UNDP, UNICEF, ANRS HAPCO, Japan Embassy, etc it is easier to fulfill a holistic thinking of development work. ANRS WAB usually conducts dialogue with the stakeholders to resolve multiple problems of women. Especially for gender mainstreaming the bureau is working with forty two sector bureaus, offices and institutions. Besides, this networking enables the bureau to resolve different accidental problems of women by dialogue with stakeholders. For instance, to resolve women's problems related to land ownership, they are usually bargaining with the agriculture bureaus and offices. One of the remarkable examples of successful networking is enabling women to owner of their land by giving ownership book. This is done with the help of UNDP .To resolve financial problems of women; the bureau is working with micro finance offices and other donor agencies. For instance, "Acham and Zewdie Lemlem Enjera Acrobot" association has received 1.5 million birr from Japan Embassy in 2009. This enables the association, which holds poor women, bought 16 mills which leads them to further investment that may be a good way to the betterment of their life. By so doing, the bureau tries to empower these poor women. Rape, abduction and sexual harassment, etc are usually

resolved with the collaboration of police offices and justice bureau. Generally, the network provides advocacy and lobbying.

Besides, dialogue with other organizations, ANRS WAB uses reporting as a way of networking. Written report is the usual formal way of communication among different stakeholders in the bureau. Reporting is especially valuable to follow up and evaluate the practice of gender mainstreaming at different sector bureaus and organizations. As mentioned by the officers of the bureau, in practice gender mainstreaming means

Identifying gaps in gender equality through the use of gender-disaggregated data; developing strategies to close those gaps; putting resources and expertise into implementing strategies for gender equality; monitoring implementation; and holding individuals and institutions accountable for results.

The ANRS WAB has a written report communication with sector bureaus, offices and institutions in the region. The bureau has exchanged annual reports quarterly from the sector bureaus. This enables the bureau to evaluate the practice of gender mainstreaming at each sector bureaus that leads to them monitoring. The nature of communication in these networking is different from communicating with the target groups. Here, the information flow is usually horizontal i.e. from the bureau to the stakeholders (sector bureaus) and vice versa.

Here, the researcher raises one crucial issue. If the bureau uses internet technology, it can scale up its scope of networking. Opining webpage can be a good step. Internet is fast, cost effective and easy to access and to communicate with sector bureaus, bilateral and multilateral organizations. Moreover, internet enables the bureau to network other national and international organizations. This might give chances to establish relationships with other feminist organizations and associations. So, the bureau can adjust itself to use new information and communication technologies in its social change process.

As mentioned by the interviewees, the practice of gender mainstreaming is challenged by the following factors: lack of understanding the value of gender equality for development, reluctance lack of commitment, budget problem

Interpersonal Communication

ANRS WAB is an organization working from a two-step flow/opinion leader's perspective and a big part of their work is communicate from a top-down approach of communication with its target audiences. In addition to using magazine and leaflets, the bureau has given different trainings, held conference and conducted workshops for attitude change and raise awareness. Usually, the training is given for gender activists, community leaders and officials, members of gender associations and clubs. For example, the bureau gave training for two days about "gender and management" for the region council members including head of the regional state, cabinets, sector bureau officials and other institutions and office officials across the region. It was given in June, 2008 with the collaboration of UNICEF. The main concern was increasing awareness of the management to practice and follow up gender mainstreaming. Similarly, the bureau gave training for selected gender activists who came from each Woreda on June 10, 2009 about addressing gender equality. The intention is to

make aware these limited number of representatives to reach the mass target audiences and stakeholdThe bureau communicates those target audience and stakeholders via representative whose can be taken as opinion leaders. The information flow from training, conference and workshops has similar trends i.e. from opinion leaders (gender activists) to the mass. This clearly shows that ANRS WAB does not have a direct contact with the mass at the grass root. This means the bureau communicates with its target group by top down approach. This top down communication approach is a reflection of the bureau's perception of development. Development is seen as a top-down process in the bureau. The nature of information flow is two-step. We can not get genuine participation and feedback from this communication approach. As stated by Synder (1998), effective communication in a social change process cannot be one-way because it requires feedback and constant exchange of information between partners and interest groups, communities and officials.

However, for multi dimensional deep-rooted problems like women's problem in Amhara region, direct participatory communication at the grassroots level can be better than two step way. In most developing countries, this method is going up in a better result. For instance, as Born (2008) states communities around the world are entering a new era of community building. Whether improving economic conditions and reducing poverty, re-energizing citizens and social programs, reducing crime, or revitalizing a troubled neighborhood, they are engaging people from all sectors as never before to work together as equals to improve their quality of life. At the heart of this engagement are community conversations, in which common goals are embraced by a diverse array of people with different backgrounds and needs, and influencers are drawn from multiple sectors, including community organizations, the various levels of government, and business sectors.

Based on Born's idea, the researcher argues that community conversation/dialogue can be a good communication approach to tackle the multidimensional problems of women in the region sticking only to top down approach to communicate with mass at the grass root. Because community conversation facilitates dialogues, it provides a platform in which people can engage in open discussions about sensitive issues like gender disparity and other women problem in the region. More than this, the ultimate goal of CC method is to help people show transformation in many aspects of their life. It is about empowering people to think through the way their behaviors, values and practices-and those of their families and neighbors – affect people's lives, and to reflect on and discuss these issues with others (Born, 2008).

By using CC ANRS WAB could address common problems of women in the region such as divorce, rape acts, women sexual rights, sexual harassment at workplace, employment, teen's pregnancy, domestic violence acts, women's health, etc. This indicates the potentials of participatory communication for social change in the region. ANRS WAB can take this as a good example and take as a communication strategy for the betterment of women in the region. Women's problems such as HIV cannot be alleviated without the full involvement of the target audiences. Women problems in the region such as HIV and AIDS, abduction, circumcision are often related to culture, tradition, and religion. In such patriarchal Amhara society, dialogue and consensus by participation at all levels might be a prerequisite for social change. As Alfonso (2009) stated many communication projects in the context of development have failed due to lack of participation and commitment from the subjects of change.

Moreover, in developing countries such as Ethiopia, radio can be a potential mass medium for social change. Radio can

inform the Amhara mass better than any other mass media because of its cost- effectiveness, high illiteracy rate and problem of electrification. However, the ANRS WAB does not use this medium as a potential channel on its agenda. The bureau does not have a regular radio and television program.

Barriers of Communication

Lack of Human and Economical Resources

ANRS WAB states that money is an issue that affects their communication work. “As governmental organization in Third World countries money is always a big issue in our social change process”. ANRS WAB has a huge responsibility- social change at societal level! Empower the powerless, participate the marginalized section of the society, help the helpless, support the poorest of the poor needs a huge amount of money. It is clear that such kind of big mission needs many economic resources. As the above quotation tells, the bureau has financial limitations that affect its work in general and its communication work in particular. Exploring the communication channels reveal this fact. As we have seen in the previous section there is no regular radio and TV program transmitted by the bureau despite their potentials to reach the rural and urban masses. Irrespective of their potential use for social change the bureau does not use regular broadcast programs partly due to lack of money and partly due to strategic difference. The economic limitations also have consequences on the number of copies of the Gender magazine and leaflets of the bureau. Money can increase the number of copies which intern increases number of readers. Distributing only 2000 copies at regional level shows the worst shortage of money that affects their communication work. All shows that lack of economic recourses have influenced the communication works of ANRS WAB.

The bureau’s communication work is also affected by lack of educated work force in the area of communication or public relations. As the bureau’s staff profile shows there is no communication expert or public relations experts that design and facilitate communication works. The bureau’s communication work-preparing the magazine and leaflets is mainly performed by two language experts. Here the researcher argues that lack of professionals in the area of communication or public relations affects the communication works of ANRS WAB. This lack of professionalism does not enable the bureau to apply potentially effective communication approaches and strategies in its social change process. It is clear that this affects their communication work and can be one of the reasons for weak communication performance of the bureau. How can social change be possible without effective and direct communication with the stakeholders? Which communication strategies are suitable for what kinds of audiences? The bureau does not address such crucial questions. Unless the bureau addresses such crucial questions, women’s empowerment and its other objectives will become unattainable goals.

Heterogeneous Target Group

Women are not a homogenous target group. There is a wide difference between women all over Amhara Region, like everywhere in Ethiopia and in the world. There are differences in educational status, economic power, interests, values, ages, cultures, religions, etc. Different women have different potentials and needs. Women empowerment can be defined as something very different for a woman in the Amhara rural areas compared to women living in the urban areas. Moreover, even among the urban women the above-mentioned differences are prevailed. A merchant woman does not have similar perceptions about empowerment with civil servants or housewives. These natural and socially constructed differences can be

challenges of social change if we see in the perspective of communication for social change.

If target groups are too heterogeneous, it is difficult to apply similar communication strategies everywhere and it becomes harder for a message to come across to the whole target group. How information can be transferred to different groups of women is therefore something that ANRS WAB has to struggle within their work. For instance, a communication work has to be aware of different contexts and cultures. Different groups of women sometimes require different communication methods. It is therefore vital that communication activities must be need-oriented. For instance, to address traditional rural women, designing suitable message and using appropriate channels is essential which is quite different from the urban counterparts. For rural women, CC, mainstreaming and community radio can be suitable methods of communication. Using traditional folk media would have a good potential to address the rural mass. On the other hand, the bureau can approach urban women by TV, newspaper, magazine, etc besides CC and radio.

There are also cultural differences between groups across the region. Cultural attitudes about gender in different Amhara zones are significant that needs special attention. For example, in some cultures, extra marital/ regular sexual partners (Kimit) prevail. Widow inheritance (wirs), wife sharing (warsa), prevails in other areas (East Amhara). Early marriage and female genital mutilation or circumcisions are widely spread in rural areas than urban areas. Temporary marriage (Sirya) (North Showa), providing unmarried girls to elders (jebeta), etc are also practiced by some cultural groups in the region (Gojjam, 2009). The cultural groups usually interpreted the above mentioned HTP as normal and consider them as manifestations of good social status. For instance, early marriage and abduction are still seen as types of marriage in some places (Mulunesh and Kerebih, 2007). In another culture, it can be strictly forbidden for men to have more than one partner. In some cultures widow inheritance, boy friend (yekenfer wedaj) and abduction are considered as immoral and evil acts. Perceptions and rumors about sexuality differ in urban and rural areas and among different cultural groups. Dealing with such differences can be seen as a barrier in the communication work. How does the organization think to handle cultural differences and in what ways do cultural differences affect their communication work? How the bureau addresses men in the struggle of gender equality since without men's involvement gender equality becomes a night mare. In the way they are performing messages and spreading information, the bureau has to give attention and deal with cultural norms and constrains. The bureau did not address such crucial issues that affect their communication work. The bureau does not have appropriate communication strategy to address the heterogeneous target group. Every where they distribute the magazine and leaflets and try to influence targets through their opinion leaders. Even their gender activist/opinion leaders did not gave such kind of culturally sensitive training. To change women's life all over the region, the bureau should perform a lot of effort in adjusting information and communication to make it sensitive and understandable for people from different traditions, beliefs, religions and cultures. To be able to adjust the information and communication, it is fundamental with an analysis that seeks to grant a clear picture of the attitudes, values, and needs of the group of women. Audience analysis can be a good way here. Through such analysis ANRS WAB can get a deeper understanding of women's different experiences, and they can identify factors that explain these differences. The researcher states that this is one of the main areas that the bureau needs to address. They need to analyze the local patriarchal cultures more closely in which women are living and working before communicating them. The researcher argues that future campaigns and communication activities of the ANRS WAB therefore need to adjust and

develop strategies more on a local level not on regional level that take into account such as, traditional leaderships and the participation of the peoples at the grass root. As Serveas (1999), states being able to understand differences promote clearer communication and breaks down barriers, builds trust and strengthen relationships. As the scholar indicates, that this can be a reason why it is necessary to try to create a dialogue, where the women get the chance to express and share their values, thoughts and beliefs. Moreover, dialogue gives a chance of men's involvement for social change. As we have discussed in chapter two, "Participatory communication thrives on input from people from all walks of life and of every socioeconomic sphere" (McPhail, 2009). Furthermore, the researcher argues that among women from similar background and culture there can be a variation of opinions and values. The bureau can address such differences by audience analysis for the effective implementation of its vision.

Illiteracy

As being discussed in the previous section, information and communication have a great importance for social change. For social change, the information has to be accessible and understandable to the target audiences-women all over the region. Due to the high illiteracy rate in the region, communication efforts are highly affected. Illiteracy is a serious problem facing Amhara region as the rest of the country. Although education has been free, illiteracy is still high, mostly among adults. Especially, women are highly exposed group. Women in rural areas receive less education and have a lower level of literacy compared to women in urban areas. Illiteracy leads to more difficult access to information, which for instance is affecting people's ability to read and understand the bureau's magazine and leaflets. My respondent expresses how illiteracy affects communication for empowerment as follows:

Illiteracy, one of the regions main enemies, causes a huge problem to communicate by using gender magazine and the bureau leaflets especially within the rural audiences. No doubt! It has an influence on women's empowerment in our social change journey.

This tells us that the problem with illiteracy has challenged social change efforts that can be seen as a hindrance of gaining power and supporting empowerment for women.

Stereotyping

One of the greatest barriers to communication in the bureau's work is stereotyping. The prevalence of prejudice about Women Affair bureau expressed as follows:

There are peoples who perceive our bureau as anti-culture, anti religion and even a cause of divorce. Both from the target audiences and the stakeholders have such attitudes. What is worst is there are women who have such negative attitude about the bureau-they look the bureau as anti- culture and religion.

It is clear that such stereotyping causes peoples to typify the bureau and its workers on oversimplified conceptions, beliefs, or opinions. Such stereotyping is a barrier to communication when it causes people to act as if they already know the message that is coming from the sender or worse, as if no message is necessary because it is against the statuesque- "the indigenous culture, tradition and belief". It is clear that in the patriarchal Amhara society; social change agents have faced such negative

attitudes because change agents are against the deep-rooted problems of women that are encircled by tradition, belief, culture and religion.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The research was conducted to scrutinize the approaches of communication for social change in ANRS WAB. The main concern was to identify and examine the communication strategies that are used by the agency and investigate barriers of communication which hinder the bureau's work.

To this end, qualitative approach of research was used. Interview and document analysis were the tools of data gathering. The analysis part was presented in to two blocks that discussed the communication works of the bureau and barriers that obscured the bureau's communication works. The study came up with the following findings:

There is not just one strategy or communication channel used in the work to the quality of women's life. The magazine, distribution of the bureau leaflets, interpersonal communication and networking are all different ways of creating spaces for public debate, awareness and action towards gender equality, HTP and women empowerment, all are problems of women in the region. The issues that the organization deals with are of multiple dimensions. The communication strategies therefore also have to be multiplicity and different strategies may work best for different issues and target groups. Political, cultural, and economic dynamics that influence gender in the society should be addressed in different ways. However, the bureau has failed to use multiple approaches of communication to alleviate the multidimensional problems of women. As we have seen in the analysis part, the bureau does not use appropriate communication mechanisms to reach the poor women at the grassroots level. Potential communication channels to alleviate women's problem such as CC, radio, folk media etc are not used by the bureau. Because of this, the communication approach of the bureau with the target mass can not address multiple problems of women.

The bureau's communication approach with the target groups are top down. The information flows not directly from sender to receiver. The communication approach is two step flow of information. The information flows from the bureau to the opinion leaders/gender activists and then the target mass. For this, the Gender magazine and the leaflets are tools of communication besides interpersonal communication such as trainings and conferences. There is no participatory communication that invites dialogue of the mass at the grassroots. On the other hand, the bureau's communication with its stakeholders follows horizontal approach. In their horizontal approach networking is at the central aspect in their communication framework. The bureau extends power through networking with stakeholders, such as the sector bureaus and other bilateral and multilateral organizations. The work to create different networks and cooperation can be seen as a potential and prerequisite to be able to force through real changes in the society. It can be seen as a path to a bigger network that allows them to reach a wider audience and it can be seen as potential strategy for how they can gain power and reach their target audiences via stakeholders.

The organization's target group is women in particular in the Amhara Region. But women can not be seen as a homogenous

group, they have different backgrounds, different cultures, different ages, belief and religion with different economical and educational status, etc. The diversity among women makes it necessary with a communication framework that provides flexibility, to be able to reach as many women as possible. The channels should be identified, analyzed and adjusted to different groups of women, which is essential to be able to deliver messages and disseminating information to the diversity of women. The bureau has failed to use different communication channels or methods of communication by considering that diversity. The communication works of the bureau does not give women at the grassroots access to voice and information, and create greater social inclusion and participation for them. Especially, the rural poor mass can not get chances to speak for themselves. As discussed earlier it is therefore fundamental that all communication should be rooted in a broader societal analysis for social change. The study also investigated those different factors such as lack of human and economic resources, heterogeneous target groups; illiteracy and stereotyping that obscured the communication works of the bureau in its social change process.

Recommendations

The result of this study revealed that the communication approach of the bureau with the target mass is top-down. This top down approach of communication does not enable to address the problems of the marginalized groups. The approach of the bureau does not give chances for those unheard voices to be heard. Based on the proponents of participatory scholars such as (Serveas, 2008) the researcher strongly recommends that the bureau can use participatory approaches of communication besides the one that it follows. Participatory approaches such as CC enables to reach the mass at the grassroots level. Dialogue is important that people define their own needs and discuss how they can satisfy and reach the desires (Born, 2008).

Considering the heterogeneous target groups and adjusting appropriate communication mechanisms accordingly may be the better ways to attain the goals of the bureau-to empower the powerless, to enrich the poorest of the poor- women in the region. Community dialogue enables the bureau to challenge the communication barriers such as illiteracy, heterogeneous target group and stereotyping. Through dialogue the bureau can narrow down the gap with the target audiences. Besides, radio, traditional folk media, community radio, etc can be good media of communication to reach the target mass at the grassroots.

There is no a holistic approach in the communication framework; the communication is focused on change at individual level and governmental levels, not at societal level. Just like one of the key ideas for development communication says; not only an individual-centered approach can be considered to create change in a society, there also has to be a focus on environmental factors that are affecting the individual behavior (Serveas, 2008). If women are to be truly empowered, the holistic approach is vital. For this, integrating top down and bottom up communication approaches might be pre-requisite for social change.

The bureau should address individual and social behaviors as well as political factors that influence gender in the society. To do this, holistic approach is vital. For instance; it is hard to attain gender equality in social, cultural and economical spheres of the Amhara society without greater participation of both women and men in the social change process.

As we have seen in discussion part, networking is one of the important and potential communication strategies of the bureau with the stakeholders. The bureau can get more power and can benefit a lot if it applies new information technologies like Internet because internet can be seen as a powerful tool for networking, communication and information exchange regarding gender issues. Internet can widen and facilitate the scope of networking this in turn enables to create public debate about gender issues.

The researcher also suggests the following points for further research in the area of development communication/communication for social change. As we have seen the previous sections, this study only focuses on analyzing the communication works of the bureau from the perspectives of the organization. However, studying from the audiences' perspective is also a fertile area for further research in the area to contribute a few in the struggle of social change especially gender equality. How the target mass at the grassroots perceives the bureau's communication work can be an interesting point to unearth additional information that contribute to adjust communication approaches for planners and policy makers on gender issues. This can be a fertile area for further research to have a better understanding of the role of communication for social change.

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