Växjö University
Department of Social Science
Spring semester 2007
Master Thesis in Peace and Development Work
Tutor Göran Palm

GRASS ROOT COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE
A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNICATION WORK IN A NAMIBIAN NGO

Author
Åsa Olsson
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many people have carried me forward through this process. I would like to send my thankfulness to the women in Sister Namibia. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be in the organization and learn more about the work you are doing. You are all very inspiring women, keep on fighting! To my tutor Göran Palm - thanks for support and motivation. Without support from my friends I would never have made it. Thank you all.

Växjö 2007-06-08

Åsa Olsson
ABSTRACT

The principal objective of this inductive study is to map the communication methods that are being used in the organization Sister Namibia. I intend to find communication mechanisms that together can constitute a communication framework. The main questions at issue are; How is the organization working from a communication perspective? What methods and channels are central for their external communication work? What messages are they trying to convey to the target group? The questions will generate in analyses and deeper understandings of communication processes in a NGO.

The conceptual approach for the study is Development Communication, which can be seen as the integration of strategic communication in development projects. Communication for Social Change is an approach of development communication, where focus lays on an elaborated social change agenda rather than the agenda of strategic communication. The study has a qualitative approach and it is built up as an inductive case study with the NGO Sister Namibia in focus.

Sister Namibia is a non governmental women organization that fights for women’s rights in the Namibian society. I have found several factors in their communication work that together can create a communication framework. Dialogue is vital in their communication work and it can be seen as a prerequisite for social change. Another central aspect of their communication framework is networking. Sister Namibia can be seen as a piece of puzzle in a bigger network that allows the organization to reach a wider audience and it is a strategy for how they can gain power, grow and establish deeper in the society. The diversity among women makes it necessary with a communication framework that provides flexibility, which includes different communication methods and channels depending on the target group. A holistic approach in the communication framework is important; the communication have to be focused on change at individual, societal and governmental levels. Furthermore, I have observed that to be able to understand processes of communication it is vital to look at the whole social context. In this social context knowledge, power, and material & social needs have been found as central aspects. They are needs and factors that are gained and created by individuals and groups in societies, and can be seen as prerequisites for social change to appear. Finally, this study shows the importance of looking at communication not just as a tool for spreading information, but also as the goal of development. Through communication it is possible to create a social environment where private and public dialogue can take place.

Keywords: Development communication, Communication for Social Change, NGO, Dialogue, Networking, Flexibility, Holistic approach.
5.1.1 Sister Namibia Magazine ............................................................................................................. 23
5.1.2 Women’s voices ............................................................................................................................ 25
5.1.3 Information campaigns ................................................................................................................. 27
5.1.4 Networking .................................................................................................................................. 29
5.1.5 The influence of new technologies .............................................................................................. 30
5.1.6 Workshops ................................................................................................................................... 31
5.1.7 Using and changing the media .................................................................................................... 32
5.1.8 Influence on the government ...................................................................................................... 35
5.1.9 Summary ...................................................................................................................................... 38

5.2 Addressing Strategic Issues ................................................................................................................. 41
5.2.1 Lack of human and economical resources .................................................................................. 42
5.2.2 Power relations ............................................................................................................................. 43
5.2.3 Heterogeneous target group ....................................................................................................... 44
5.2.4 Language barriers & illiteracy ..................................................................................................... 45
5.2.5 Summary ...................................................................................................................................... 46

6. DISCUSSION ........................................................................................................................................ 48
6.1 Reflections in a Wider Perspective .................................................................................................. 48
6.2 Further Research ............................................................................................................................... 50

7. LIST OF REFERENCES ......................................................................................................................... 52
7.1 Books and Articles ............................................................................................................................ 52
7.2 Magazines .......................................................................................................................................... 53
7.3 Pamphlets .......................................................................................................................................... 53

APPENDIX 1 ........................................................................................................................................ 54
1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is huge. Everything is linked to communication, communication to women, getting your message out, to small communities and to world communities. Communication touches every aspect of what we do!

The quotation above is coming from a non governmental organization that is fighting for equality in the Namibian society. The organization, with the name Sister Namibia, has a strong conviction that a more equal world is possible. Through communication work they try to struggle for a society liberated from patriarchal domination in which all people, no matter whether you are a woman or a man, should have equal rights and opportunities.

In the world there are still many social, political, and cultural pressures that are working against empowerment for women. But what can not be forgotten is the scope of optimism. There is a wide range of women all over the world who struggle and take many steps forward. The importance of understanding gender roles in development is definitely an area that is becoming more important. In the struggle for gender equality NGOs and grassroots work play an important role. More and more NGOs are putting gender issues firmly on the agenda. But unfortunately they are rarely seen as a given partner on the social and political arena, they constantly have to struggle next to bigger and more powerful institutions in the society. They often have a limited economy and have to struggle hard to become visible to the big mass. In the struggle to become more visible and spread their messages to a wider audience, communication can be seen as a powerful tool.

It seems like there is a growing evidence of the impact of communication for development all over the world. In the struggle to bring social, economical and political improvements, communication becomes an important catalyst. More and more organizations integrate communication in developing projects and due to the changing information and communication environment new communication opportunities are being created for social change. Research and practice show that communication and information are strong tools in development work and in the struggle for social change. However it seems as if the processes of communication are not sufficiency understood - which can be seen as an argument for doing this study.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to map the communication methods that are being used in the organization Sister Namibia. I intend to find communication mechanisms that together can constitute a communication framework. This communication framework will summarize the most central aspects of the external communication work in the organization, and can be seen as an overriding pattern for the communication processes. In this case study Sister Namibia will serve as an example, an example that can create points of departure for further research in the area of communication processes in NGOs or other organizations.
In a wider perspective I have a desire that this study will attract attention to the role of communication in development work, and contribute with increased knowledge and understanding about the topic.

1.2 Questions at Issue

The questions below will further break down the purpose of the study and should serve as a guide for the focus of the thesis. They will generate in analyses and deeper understandings of communication processes in a NGO.

- How is Sister Namibia working from a communication perspective?
- What methods and channels are central for their external communication work?
- What messages are they trying to convey to the target group?

1.3 Disposition

The first chapter has just been presented, with an introduction part, a formulation of the purpose of the study and a presentation of the questions to be answered. The second chapter contains an informative background of the study. Further on the third chapter outlines the conceptual approach that has inspired me in the study and it is divided into two themes, Development Communication and Communication for Social Change. It is followed by a description of the methodology that is presented in chapter four. The empirical findings will be presented and analysed in chapter five and in the last chapter there will be a final discussion in which I try to systemize my findings into a communication framework in a wider perspective. Some thoughts will also be presented about further research.
2. BACKGROUND

In the following chapter I intend to give an introduction to the study, starting with a short discussion about women issues in the Namibian society. It follows by an opening description of Sister Namibia - the organization that is in focus of this study.

2.1 Women in Namibia

Various structural factors in the Namibian society, like in many other parts of the world, constrain women from ownership and control over production such as property, land and cash. This is keeping a lot of women in a cycle of poverty. Employment levels are still lower for women than for men. Another widely spread problem is women's lack of control over sexuality. Many girls are forced to participate in risky relationships that expose them to HIV infection. Discriminatory attitudes of men are common. Furthermore women participate less than men in the political arena; women are not as likely as men to run as candidates or to be elected to political office. In the new Namibian government (2005) only 5 out of 25 are women. The reason to this can be due to a numbers of barriers like traditional family responsibilities, discriminatory cultural beliefs and lack of education. And many of the challenges that women face in Namibia have been influenced by the historical imbalance of power between women and men, where factors as unemployment, poverty and related social problems have played a big role. It is common among people to use “tradition” and “culture” to justify the patriarchy, that give men more power than women.¹

The Namibian constitution acknowledges and encourages equal power relations in all spheres of social, legal and economic life. The Namibian government has also signed several international declarations to promote gender equality. These international instruments provide guidelines for national gender equality programmes. But still there are several proposed law reforms that have not yet been passed by Parliament. There is also a general lack of knowledge and understanding about the constitution not only among the population but even among lawmakers themselves.²

Changing laws and government policies are a key step in institutionalising 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 national level, which is a challenge for implementing gender policies. Most cultural practises and beliefs reinforce patriarchy and limit women's ability to control their lives.³

³ Ibid.
2.2 Sister Namibia - Basics about the Organization

Sister Namibia is a non governmental women’s human rights organization that is based in Windhoek in Namibia. Its goal is to increase awareness in the society of the ways political, social, cultural and economic systems of power in the society control girls and women. A part of their work is also to challenge racism, sexism and homophobia. Through media work, capacity building, research, documentation, networking and collective action they struggle for gender equality. They are trying to affect the fields in which women are denied participation; social, political, educational and the economic area. Through their communication work they try to give women access to voice and information, and create greater social inclusion and participation for them.

Sister Namibia provides many resources and services to women, for instance the organization has a resource centre that provides books, articles and other resources regarding gender issues. The centre also conducts research and provides training for women on women’s leadership, human rights and HIV/AIDS. Every second month they publish a magazine that goes under the same name as the organization. Sister Namibia Magazine is putting women issues on the agenda and is increasing access to information for women.

An important goal for Sister Namibia is the need of political and legal empowerment for women. Sister Namibia struggles to promote women’s participation in the political system based on gender justice. Many laws have made it possible for women to be marginalised on racist and sexist grounds. The sexism and racism remain in the laws, and also in society in the daily practice. Although the constitution stipulates that all persons should be equal before the law and prohibits any discrimination on grounds of sex. Sister Namibia therefore expresses a strong belief that political change is a prerequisite for social change.
3. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

In the following chapter I will present the conceptual approach I use to carry out my task. I examine Development Communication through five key ideas; each of them will be presented shortly. Further on there will be a discussion about Communication for Social Change. It is important to mention that in an inductive study like this the content in the conceptual approach will not necessarily serve as an analytical instrument. But they are all concepts that can be connected to the research area, which is important to present and be aware of before beginning the fieldwork.

3.1 What is Development Communication?

In International and Developmental Communication development communication in the third world is discussed from different perspectives. Srinivas R. Melkote argues that there is no meaning of study development communication without defining the term development as well as communication. Conceptualizing development is a hard task. The term has different meanings in different situations and to different practitioners. Even if the definitions and the understanding of development vary a lot, most people agree that development is about improving the living conditions of people and societies. It is a multidimensional process which can differ from one society to another. Basic needs, empowerment and self-reliance can be seen as goals of development and so can liberation from oppression, with focus both on individuals and communities. A common argument is that development can not be studied without its interrelation to culture and facets of social change.⁴

Some people view the process of communication as something that is woven together with the processes of culture and development. For some, communication means community empowerment, for others, the work of media and other information technologies. Public relations are another connection to communication. Other finds it as a more complex process, which is sustained and challenged by politics, economics and ideological structures and processes. This division can also be seen in the field. Communication can for instance be seen as an instrument helping development projects to achieve specific goals. Communication in that sense involves methodologies and tools for spreading information in order to achieve a certain result. 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 goal 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 transmitting information.⁵

Development communication is about finding effective ways to use communication to affect the development in a society. It is sometimes argued that when communication is a main part

of the development process, the progress of development is more sustainable.⁶ In research
done on behalf of The World Bank the authors argue that development communication is the
integration of strategic communication in development projects. They point out that
communication can be used as a powerful tool to improve the capacities of development
projects. Successful development communication is about building consensus with the target
groups, to get information to particular audiences and listen to their feedback. Through this,
public understanding can be raised and a dialogue between people can emerge. One of the
main goals with development communication is to raise awareness and change people’s
behaviour. This behaviour change communication can be seen as the traditional understanding
of the role of communication in development work. It focuses on persuading people to
increase their knowledge about certain things, which is seen as a prerequisite for changing their
behaviour. However, changing knowledge and attitudes does not necessarily lead to change of
behaviour. It is also essential to try to understand why people do what they do and what is
creating barriers. This is why it is important with a holistic thinking in development work. The
whole social context has to be considered.⁷

In Media and Glocal Change Bessette is pointing out participatory development communication
as a different perspective on development communication that is commonly used today. It can
be seen as a planned activity that is based on media and interpersonal communication, but also
on the participatory processes.⁸ A dialogue between different parts around the specific issue is
central. This dialogue is supposed to facilitate and contribute to a solution of the problem.
Servaes means that the point of departure must be at community level. It is at this level where
most of the problems that have to do with living conditions are being discussed. For instance,
Servaes points out that it is vital for the community members to have the right to participate in
the planning and production of media content.⁹

3.1.1 Five key ideas

In Media and Glocal Change, Silvio Waisbord argues that development communication can be
connected to five key ideas. He points out that there is a budding consensus among
researchers around these five ideas of thinking and practising development communication.¹⁰

The first idea is about the centrality of power. Empowering people can for instance be done by
gaining knowledge about certain issues, facilitate for people to make decisions for themselves
and also work for higher community participation. The author indicates that power should be
the main goal of interventions.¹¹

The second key idea is the importance that top-down and bottom-up approaches need to be integrated.
The top-down perspective is many times connected to problems. During the last years there
has been an increasing support for decentralization in many areas, for instance in the area of

---

¹⁰ Hemer, O & Tufte, T (2005) p. 77-82.
¹¹ Ibid.
education. To gain more power to the bottom-up perspective there has been an increased focus on community-based approaches and community empowerment has became a central concept. But still it is important to not neglect the role of governments. There are many examples of interventions that have been successfully carried through due to governments and their way of handling developing issues. The government’s action and many times inaction, can affect a huge amount of people, especially the ones that are poor and are living under marginalized conditions. Many times it is obvious that if a government gives priority to a certain issue or not, can affect the prospects of development work. It is therefore unquestionably important to have in mind the role that the governments can play when it comes to addressing and tackling development issues. Methods that are helping to improve governments to contribute to development are essential.\textsuperscript{12}

The \textit{third} key idea is the importance of having a \textit{“tool-kit” approach} to communication. The author is pointing out that communication strategies have to be multiple to be able to work for better living conditions for people in communities. The contexts are never exactly the same and problems and priorities can change. In some development work situations millions of people have to be reached in a short period of time, and regarding other issues the development thinking can be more long termed. To be able to deal with the multiple dimensions of development issues it is necessary to adjust the message and the way of get across with the message. Different information channels and new ways of using media play an important role.\textsuperscript{13}

Key idea number \textit{four} has to do with the need to \textit{combine and integrate interpersonal communication and multimedia} activities. To combine interpersonal communication with multimedia activities facilitate the work of persuading people in certain believes and practices. The importance of using media as a way of spreading a certain message should not be underestimated. The media is extremely important to reach the population to gain higher awareness and knowledge about issues.\textsuperscript{14} By using mass media the way to reach a certain audience can be efficient. When media over a long time of period cover an issue and solutions for the issue, the awareness among the population increases. It is obvious that the multimedia activities have a lot of power, but it is also important to not neglect the role of interpersonal communication. Media centered models that are not including interpersonal communication are insufficient to achieve behaviour change. Workshops and other kinds of interpersonal ways of communicating are fundamental when it comes to persuading people about specific beliefs.\textsuperscript{15}

The \textit{fifth} key idea that is connected to communication for development has to do with the importance of \textit{focusing on both individual and social factors} to be able to understand behaviour change communication. Both personal factors and contextual factors have to be included to understand issues and to be able to find solutions. Not only an individual-centered approach can be considered to change behaviour in a society, there also has to be a focus on societal factors that are affecting individual behaviours. The both go hand in hand. It can be difficult to separate between what issues that are internal and personal and what issues that are more

\textsuperscript{12} Hemer, O & Tufte, T (2005) p. 77-82.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
connected to the environment, one clear example of that are issues connected to gender. It is hard to tell if gender issues can be seen as something that is a consequence of the contextual in the culture or if it is something that is more related to individual behaviours. To get closer to issues that are connected to both social and individual behaviour it is necessary with a multiple levels approach. When examining the relations between them it is vital to look at factors such as the political system, where laws and policies play an influential role.\textsuperscript{16}

### 3.1.2 Development communication campaigns

Communication campaigns are seen as useful tools and common strategies in communication for development. It is a communication strategy for development that is organized and directed to a certain audience. How it works depends on the type of behaviour and context. Central for the campaign is a particular goal that is supposed to be achieved. The goal can always be connected to development in one or another sense, for a certain part of the population or a whole country. Central in the communication campaign is also a target group to which the communication channels have to be adjusted to. Communication campaigns have become an important instrument to fight for a number of issues in the world. For instance when it comes to reduce extreme poverty, work for higher gender equality or reduce child mortality. HIV prevention is many times relied to communication campaigns were information is being spread, for instance to promote condom use. The messages in the communication campaign can be spread through different channels. Many times the media is being used, but common is also outreaching through interpersonal contacts.\textsuperscript{17}

Participation is an important factor when it comes to affecting people in the developing process. Participatory campaigns involve the audience and links people together. Participatory approaches also empower the audience, and are considered to be more democratic. But that is depending on how the participation is taking place. Furthermore they can strengthen local organizations and the probability that the participation is leading to increased sustainability for a developing project over time is high. Another positive consequence of participatory campaigns is that through participation it is easier to convince frustrated people that change is possible. What can complicate participation is the fact that participatory campaigns have to look for participation in the target groups that many times are very heterogenic. It can include people of different ethnicities, ages, gender, classes and so on. An example of the participatory approach is when a campaign involves members of the target group to be communicators. Perhaps members from an involved community can head the team and design and implement the campaign. The bigger the participation among the audience is, the bigger is the participation of outreach workers, which will lead to better message quality in the end.\textsuperscript{18}

Advocacy campaigns are another way of achieving developing change in a society. Through advocacy it is possible to influence laws, regulations and policies. Advocacy can be directed at various levels of government or other institutions or individuals. The most common target group in an advocacy campaign is decision makers in governments. Women’s rights are an

\textsuperscript{16} Hemer, O&Tufte, T (2005) p. 77-82.
\textsuperscript{17} Snyder, L.B in Mody, B (2003) p. 167-170.
example of an area that has been affected through advocacy campaigns. Lobbying is a way of managing advocacy campaigns. Lobbying can be about educating policymakers, organizing mass demonstrations, or letter-writing campaigns to governments. A particular type of information needs to be communicated to influence a given strategic objective. Grassroots lobbying is a way for interests groups in the civil society to provide information to voters and legislators that can influence election outcomes or the outcome of a particular legislation.

3.2 Communication for Social Change

A perspective on development communication that is getting widely spread today is communication for social change. This perspective is taking the step away from connecting development communication with strategic communication, and it is moving towards a more elaborated social change focus. Communication for social change is for instance being used when it comes to find underlying causes and structural determinants that can lead to a specific phenomenon. An example is HIV/AIDS communication where underlying causes and centre of concern can be issues like gender inequality and human rights.

In the report Communication for social change the authors argue that communication for social change can be seen as a way of communicating, it is an approach of development communication. It is focusing on direct, many-to-many communications and it seeks to empower people instead of persuade them. The main goal is to improve the lives of the politically and economically marginalized people. To be able to do this, public and private dialogue among and between communities is central, also between people and the government. When thinking about communication in this way it is important to also consider communication to be a process rather than as a series of products.

A process of public and private dialogue through which people define who they are, what they want and how they can get it.

In these dialogues people define their needs and how they can satisfy and reach them. The focus lays on that people themselves have to define there needs and the changes. The dialogues can play an important role in enabling people to control their own lives. In many parts of the world there is a lack of information outside peoples’ nearest communities, which is preventing them from getting their voices heard, having dialogues, taking control over their lives, and shaping their aspirations.

22 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
3.2.1 Empowerment

A central part of communication for social change is empowerment. Empowerment has been in focus since development studies have come to include more of a gender approach. It is a complex phenomenon that takes different forms in different spaces of women lives.  

Empowerment is the process by which individuals, organizations, and communities gain control and mastery over social and economic conditions, over democratic participation in their communities and over their stories.

Empowerment has to be defined at different levels; individual, organization, and community level. It also has to be operationalized in different contexts. A definition that is being pointed out in International and Developmental Communication is that empowerment is about the sense of personal control, social influence and political power. It is clear how empowerment is strongly connected to development. Women who become empowered are expected to take a more active role in society, both when it comes to political, economic and social activity. Through empowerment, change and development can be achieved with justice. Empowerment can bring people who are outside the decision-making process into it.

Empowerment can not be discussed without talking about power. There are many different ways of looking at power. “Power over” has mostly negative associations, and it can be connected to for instance domination, discrimination and repression. Having “power over” something or someone, implies that the power is taken from someone else. When talking about empowerment in relation to development communication it is common to talk about power that is forming more equal relationships. “Power with”, involves dialogue to achieve certain goals. People together are more likely to tackle problems and achieve goals. Another way of talking about empowerment is “power to”, which is a productive way of power and it creates possibilities to act, for instance the ability to make decisions. To achieve “power to” it is necessary with skills and knowledge. A common term of empowerment is also “power within” that can be achieved through increased knowledge and awareness about one’s rights.

can be connected to the respect for and acceptance of others as equal and it can make people hold to a certain position even if it is risky and the opposition is immense.\textsuperscript{32}

Communication for empowerment can be defined as; “the process of increasing control by groups over consequences that are important to their members and to others in the broader community”.\textsuperscript{33} In \emph{Media and Glocal Change} the authors are pointing out that communication for empowerment has to be seen as a process rather than a technique. It is an ongoing process that involves group participation and critical thinking through which people can work together to gain more control over certain factors.\textsuperscript{34} Servaes means that there is not just one strategy or communication channel to be used in the work to empower people. To make the impact of empowering communication sustainable it is necessary with a multiple approach. Multiple information channels have to be considered and the ways of forming messages have to be adjusted to different target groups. One key to empowerment is access to information and another one is the availability of option. The dialogue is central and it is more important with learning together than delivering information through one-way communication.\textsuperscript{35}

\subsection*{3.2.2 New information and communication technologies}

The early theories of communication were devised in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then much have happened and enormous advances have been made in new information and communication technologies. The innovations of the Internet have changed the communication environment in a broad way, and play an important role in communication for social change today. The communication capacities have changed, and it has opened up access to more information, especially concerning global issues. Internet has had a great influence for many people and organizations around the world. It allows expanded possibilities for information access, information sharing and coalition-building.\textsuperscript{36} There are more possibilities to communicate rapidly and the Internet has opened up for opportunities when it comes to social and political discourse. The deployment of Internet makes it easier for people to organize, advocate and lobby beyond physical boundaries. Internet is also opening up for opportunities for people and organizations in developing countries to communicate information easier. Due to the Internet the spreading of messages becomes cheaper and more powerful.\textsuperscript{37}

New information and communication technologies have to be seen from a more critical view as well. The new communication environment does not give access to all people. And it can not be taken for granted that the new environment empower poor and marginalized people and give them a bigger voice compared to how it was before. The development of Internet has created a wider “information gap” between rich and poor people and countries.\textsuperscript{38}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid.
\bibitem{Hemer} Hemer, Oscar & Tufte, Thomas (2005) p. 149-154.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
3.3 Conclusion of the Conceptual Approach

Development communication can be seen as the integration of strategic communication in development projects. This perspective on the role of communication in development work is seen as the traditional one. From this view one of the main goals with development communication is to raise awareness and change behaviour, as a prerequisite for development in a society. Five key ideas can be connected to development communication, these are; **top-down and bottom-up approaches**, “tool-kit” approach to communication, combine and integrate interpersonal communication and multimedia activities, and focusing on both individual and societal factors.

Another important part of the conceptual approach that has been discussed in this chapter is communication for social change, which can be seen as an approach of development communication, but where focus lays on an elaborated social change agenda, rather than the agenda of strategic communication. The private and public dialogue is more central and in these dialogues people define their needs themselves and how they can satisfy and reach them. One of the main goals with communication for social change is to create an environment that is empowering people. This environment involves group participation and critical thinking and two of the key elements to empowerment are access to information and availability of option.
4. METHODOLOGY

I have given a general background and a review of the conceptual approach for my study. In the following chapter I present the methodology that has been used. To begin with there will be an identification of the central characteristics of an ethnographic case study, which also includes a motivation of the qualitative approach. Further on there will be a discussion about the way I conducted the study and in what ways the material have been collected. The chapter will end with a methodology discussion where I reflect upon critical aspects, challenges and weaknesses of the study.

4.1 Case Study as a Method

A case study is a study that focuses empirically and analytically on one case of something. This ethnographic strategy is commonly used when examining NGOs and movement related processes. The central characteristics of a case study include investigation and analysis of a social phenomenon which will generate a detailed elaboration of this specific phenomenon - in my case the communication work in a NGO. The strengths and major contributions of a case study is the fact that it generates in a holistic and deep understanding of the process that is in focus of the study. It is common to collect material with multiple methods in a case study, which can generate in a more detailed description and analysis than a single methodology would do. The chosen methodological approaches in a case study can be both qualitative methods, but also quantitative. This study has a qualitative approach because this is an advantageous method when striving for deeper understanding for 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.

In this case study where I intend to find theoretical ideas from the information that have been gathered, an active inductive process is involved. The goal is to develop principles about a specific phenomenon, in this case the external communication work in an NGO. The observations from real life that have been done in the study will together serve as a base for the theoretical communication framework that I am intending to establish. A framework that summarizes the most central communication mechanisms in the communication work in the organization.

4.2 Conducting the Study

The choice of organization has been a process, which started during the fall semester 2006. I contacted non governmental organizations in the southern part of Africa, all focusing on gender issues. Sister Namibia was the organization that gave me the most positive response, and since I have been interested in Namibia for a long time, the choice was easy. The first contact with Sister Namibia was established and my main contact was with the director at the

organization. The project planning was followed by more e-mail contact to find out more about the organization and their developing work in the Namibian society.

The case study conducted over a period of time, it included seven weeks in the field, when I was observing the communication work in the organization. The long time in the field has improved the prospect of capturing data from different processes, events and activities as they emerged. The field work followed by two weeks at Växjö University, when focus was on writing and finishing the thesis.

My research study has been conducted so that it has been flexible both considered the design and implementation of the research. The study began with a broad set of questions and wonders about the organization in general, and through the process I became more focused on the communication processes. During the study new data sources and processes have occurred, which in turn has lead to new formulation of questions and ideas for new angles. This fact has made the process lively and dynamic. I am aware of that there are many other interesting angles that could be in focus in a case study like this. By choosing to look at communication from only the sender’s perspective and not the receiver’s perspective, I probably close many interesting aspects, but selection is necessary.

4.3 Collecting Data

The data has been collected through semi-structured interviews. To broaden my understanding of the communication in the organization I also used data sources, investigations, participant observations, documents, pamphlets, and magazines as a part of collecting the material. 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 an organization.

4.3.1 Interviews

The interview data was gathered through eight interviews, the informants are all working in the organization, but as different roles and with different tasks. To get deeper understanding of the communication work I wanted to get as many workers’ opinions as possible, and I ended up with interviewing more or less all employees in the organization, for instance the director, media director, secretary, library assistant, etc.

As mentioned before I have been using semi-structured interviews as one of the methods for collecting material. Semi-structured interviews allow more space for reflection and deepening of thoughts. The interviews were created around a prepared interview guide where different topics and questions where listed. Using semi-structured interviews allowed both parts to change the direction of the interview, and it helped to avoid the feeling of being forced into the role of respondent. By using semi-structured interviews as a method the interviews also became more informal, and it was possible to change direction of the interview according to
the answers from the informants. What could differ from one interview to another was
different detail and following up questions, depending on what direction the interview took.\textsuperscript{41} I always started the interview situation with a presentation of the purpose of the project. In the end of the interview the informants got the chance to ask me questions if something was unclear or if they were curious about something else. All the interviews have been lasting around one hour and all of them took place in the organization office. The informants are anonymous in the study, why specific names are not being mentioned. When values and attitudes are being illustrated through quotations, no names will be connected to the quotations. And I do not think that mentioning name would contribute to anything in the analysis.

The interviews have been recorded on a tape recorder since it is difficult to concentrate on what the informants are saying at the same time as writing and talking. Recording the interview made it easier to listen and follow the conversation, I was able to devote full attention to the interviewee. Using a tape recorder also facilitated the control of the material afterwards, and it decreased the risk for misunderstandings. But it is also important to reflect about possible risks with recording interviews. I sometimes got the feeling that the recorder encouraged the interviewees to perform in a certain way. So it has to be mentioned that eliminating the recorder would possibly make some conversations more relaxed and spontaneous.

\subsection{4.3.2 Other sources}

Besides receiving data through interviews, I have also taken part of protocols, documents and evaluations to measure and notice different behaviours. Another way of collecting material has been to read Sister Namibia Magazine, where the content can be seen as good source of material for the study. Furthermore, I have had access to different pamphlets that Sister Namibia has produced for their communication campaigns.

Participant observation was also possible due to the actual visit in the organization. Participant observation can be seen as the most basic ethnographic research method.\textsuperscript{42} It allows involvement with people in their natural environment and in my case it allowed me to get a deeper understanding of the daily activities in the organization. One example of participant observation was when I was observing meetings with women and girls planning for the Women’s radio broadcast show. Being able to listen and observe the meetings gave me the opportunities to collect data that otherwise would be hard to get. Through this kind of participation I also found out about and learnt common knowledge shared among the workers in the organization. It made it easier to gain knowledge about the “unwritten rules” in the organization.\textsuperscript{43}

These different ways of collecting material have all served as a good complement to the interviews to get a deeper understanding of the communication work in the organization. The

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{41} Fife, W (2005) p. 94-95.
\item\textsuperscript{42} Fife, W (2005) p. 72.
\item\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
information that I gathered from these sources was closely related to the information gathered from the semi-structured interviews, the patterns of information were similar.

4.4 Analyzing the Material

The process of analysing data started already in the field, it has been a continuous process through the whole study. After collecting the material, reading it was the first way to achieve a foundation of understanding about its wholeness. During the first review of the material from the interviews new ideas and perspective have appeared which has lead to new angles of the material during the way. To get a deeper understanding of the answers I have been categorizing them in relation to the questions to be answered.\(^4\) This has lead to reduction of some of the material, which has been a necessity due to the extent of collected material. The analysis of the material has a point of departure in the questions that should be answered. The inductive process has been present throughout the study. Trying to find patterns from studying the communication work has been in my mind both when gathering the material, but also during the analysis. To make the analyzing process easier I was first trying to focus on the micro information that was found, for instance more basic information about the organization. Then I have been trying to link it to a macro perspective, for instance larger issues and factors in the Namibian society that have an influence on the communication processes. This process of analyzing the material has made it easier to find conceptual themes and to get a deeper understanding of the communication processes.\(^5\)

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. But it is concepts that can be connected to the research area, which is important knowledge to be aware of before beginning a fieldwork like this. The concepts have served as a guide for the research along the way.

4.5 Methodology Discussion

Critical methodological points and challenges always occur in a field study. An issue that needs to be taken into consideration is the conception and view that the respondents have of me, not only as interviewer, but also as a student from a foreign country. This is something that is needed to have in mind when interpreting the material from the interviews. There is a risk that the informants express what the interviewer wants to hear and that parts of the answers are shaped in a certain direction just to appear in a way that benefit the organization.

The attempt was to acquire a detailed holistic understanding of the communication in the organization, but it has to be mentioned that this can be harder for a single researcher. Being more researchers increases the chances to gain various angles and perspectives, it also increases access to more data, when it comes to variety and depth.

---

\(^4\) Fife, W (2005) p. 120.
\(^5\) Fife, W (2005) p. 120-121.
4.5.1 Reliability & validity

The striving for high reliability and validity has been present through the whole working process. Carefulness has been in my mind, which is important to be able to get as high reliability as possible. Reliability intends if the study is measured in a reliable and correct way. When it comes to qualitative studies a common concept connected to reliability is “trustworthiness”.

How can I as a researcher ensure that the empirical material can be trusted? When using interviews it is important to reflect on whether the answers and the information you get can be trusted. To ensure trustworthiness I tried to compare different informant’s answers. The fact that I used other ways of collecting material than interviews is also something that decreases the problem. I have tried to use quotations and show the readers as much as possible of the empirical material and the procedures that have led to the conclusions.

When talking about reliability, objectivity is also something that has to be taken into consideration. A researcher is always shaped by experiences, values and opinions that affect the study. However, interpretations are never objective when it comes to action research. In my case the study is touching an area that I have a deep interest in, which is affecting the way I approach the study. Another reality that has to be taken into consideration is the fact that in action research it is common with a closer relation between the researcher and the subject of research. In my case I was observing the organization for a long time, which sometimes led to feelings of being a part of their team. Although, my intention has always been to strive for a critical, analyzing, and reflecting approach to gain deeper understanding and knowledge.

The validity has to do with if the study measures what is says. A study can have high reliability although the validity is nonexistent, whereas a high reliability is a prerequisite for high validity. Qualitative studies differentiate between internal validity and external validity. Internal validity has to do with to what extent you are investigating what you claim to be investigating. The way of formulating the interview questions can be connected to internal validity, were I have tried to formulate them in a way that connect them to the aim of the study. I have also chosen the sources for empirical material, in order to achieve the purpose with the study. The choice of methodological tools is another thing that affects the validity. A qualitative attempt, with interviews and participant observations as main empirical collecting methods, can be considered as reasonable to reach the purpose of the study. Furthermore the long period in the field increases the chances for intern validity.

Extern validity has to do with the extent the study has wider applicability and can be adapted to other situations or other contexts. One of the weaknesses with a single case study is the lack of generalizability. When we think about generalization we mostly connect it to statistic generalizations. But there are more types of generalization, for instance analytical and theoretical generalizations that case studies are more likely to pursue. As Yin points out; one of the goals with a case study is to expand and generalize theories and not to enumerate frequencies. My case

---

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
study is not aimed to generalize, but I would say that the conclusions about development communication that I have drawn are reasonable representative and applicable in other occasions, for instance other NGOs. This is the result of a strong connection between the conceptual approach and the empirical material.
5. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

In the following chapter my aim is to identify information and communication methods in the organization to be able to create a communication framework. The results and analysis are being presented in two blocks, where I start with mapping the methods of communication in the organization and focusing on finding central aspects to understand the processes of communication. This will be followed by a review of strategic issues that influence the communication. Parts of the results are presented through quotations to make the result more understandable. The quotations all are comments from workers in Sister Namibia.

5.1 Methods of Communication

There are various methods and channels of external communication that Sister Namibia uses in their struggle for equality in the Namibian society. After doing an inductive study different expressions and communication mechanisms have been found in the communication methods. I will try to bring out these mechanisms; they can all be seen as central aspects in a communication framework and in the communication processes that the organization is practising.

5.1.1 Sister Namibia Magazine

Sister Namibia Magazine is presenting women through text and images. It is a magazine that provides a forum for reporting on women’s issues. The goal is to raise awareness about women issues in the society and the magazine is introducing new perspectives on issues that affect the lives of women in the country. Those voices that have a harder time making themselves heard in the mainstream media.

*It is a platform to celebrate women. It is a place where we can celebrate achievements and what strategies women are using out there. We want people to be empowered through these strong women. It is not just about statistics, another rape victim, like the national media is reporting about.*

The magazine is showing the readers that there are different ways of being a woman, not just the ways that the stereotypes are constructing women and men. In the magazine different women are given a voice, the magazine is portraying women in politics, economics, sport and culture, etc. The magazine is often distributed free and can be found not only in the bigger cities, but also in many rural areas in Namibia.

*We distribute to schools, community libraries and prisons throughout the country, members of parliament, law makers, local and regional councillors, all the UN agencies, to the embassies NGO - and then NGOs take the magazine to their projects. So this is our free distribution. We also have subscriptions, we have exchanges with other media channels, and then we also have sales.*
The target group for the magazine is mostly women, but Sister Namibia indicates that not all women can be reached through the magazine. There are issues like literacy and accessibility that is important to keep in mind. Most of the readers are professional women, university students and girls in secondary education. Sister Namibia points out that these girls and women can be seen as role models for other people in the society and their job is to have a dialogue with people that for instance do not have the access to the magazine, they have a role to explain the content to other women. Women in the Namibian society can see the role models as educators that give them guidance and knowledge about gender equality, which will lead to increased empowerment. The role models get a powerful and important role and can be compared to opinion leaders, whose commission is to educate and spread information and messages to people with less knowledge. In this comparison Sister Namibia is using the magazine to inform opinion leaders 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 unforeseen ways. 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 alternative feminist media like Sister Namibia Magazine is the fact that they are dealing with the issue how women and men are being constructed in the national media. Sister Namibia points out the importance of trying to influence and access the mainstream media in a wider sense. News in the national media are mostly about men, and they are depicted as powerful actors and expert decision makers, while women are being constructed as victims, wives and mothers and obsessed with beauty. Sister Namibia makes mention of the difficulty with competing with mainstream media that has a lot of power in the society and money to produce what they want to produce.

According to reader surveys made by the organization, the readers find the information in the magazine accessible and understandable. It is relating to many people’s personal situations, meaning that the communication is on a personal level. The information is helping to raise questions, rather than trying to educate. Sister Namibia points out that the information needs to be realistic, relevant and also culturally sensitive. They put a lot of effort in the magazine and right now they focus on making it more exciting and even more personal through connections to the reader’s lives.

Sister Namibia 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.

5.1.2 Women’s voices

Community radio is one of the most effective communication tools in the developing world. Radio has for a long time been used to motivate people into political activity. By broadcasting it is possible to reach a wide range of people, and it has also accessibility to many poor and marginalized people. In Namibia this important medium is covering around 98% of the population.51 A common opinion is that local broadcasting is more effective, when it comes to communicate information about issues in the society, than the national broadcaster. Sister Namibia has the opportunity to broadcast a radio program once a week at evening time, at the local community radio station in Windhoek. The radio show, Women’s voices, is used to provide information, build awareness and educate people about women issues in the Namibian society. The main language of the radio show is English, with small parts being translated in Afrikaans.

The fact that it is a radio program that you can listen to, you do not have to read to get the information - I think that is really important. You can not get information that easy somewhere else. You can listen at the same time as you do other things, work for example. If you do not read the magazine, maybe if you are not able to read, you still have the radio that you can get the information from.

The participants consist of a group with around ten women, where only a couple of them broadcast, some collect material for the content of the show, and others just help out to plan for the show. The women set their own broadcasting agenda together. This is a chance to increase empowerment, because giving women the right to participate in planning and production of media content can lead to increased empowerment.52 Examples of topics that they cover are; lobbying, divorce, rape acts, homophobia, women sexual rights, sexual harassment at workplace, employment, teen’s pregnancy, domestic violence acts, women’s health, HIV, environmental issues, healthy pregnancy, women musicians, etc. Sometimes they are talking about laws and having debates around them. For instance the sexual harassment policy; what rights do women have at the workplace? What are people’s experiences? A holistic thinking is important because gender issues and gender inequalities touch all aspects of women’s lives and can be found everywhere in the society.

One priority is to get out information about for instance all these laws that people do not know about. They do not know how for instance to get a protection order. If you do not know you can not do anything about it, it is not going to help you. So getting out information is a very big part of it.

It can be seen as a platform where information about women issues is spread. The program supports the opportunity for women to participate in radio programming, which is enabling them to exchange information about their livelihoods and have a voice out to the community. It has an interactive character; an important goal is to build relationship between women.

I think that it is a way of connecting people. It is a chance for women who do not usually get a chance to share their voices and stories.

The content of the radio show is considered good and effective by listeners. Most of the listeners are living in Windhoek and more specifically in Katutura, one of the shanty towns in Windhoek. Sister Namibia indicates that gender issues are more noticeable in this area where poverty is widely spread. But there is a need to broadcast all over Namibia, north and south, to urban cities, but also to rural areas. To spread the messages to a wider part of the country Sister Namibia has a will to record the show and then send it out to other community radio stations in Namibia. For the moment it is impossible because of the equipment which is not technically good enough.

Radio is the most spreading medium in Namibia; many people have access to it. Especially important is it in the northern part of Namibia, where other mediums are not very common. That is a reason why it is important to record the programs so northern regions have access to them as well.

Sister Namibia defines the broadcasting show as a key empowerment tool in the work they are doing. As mentioned before in the conceptual approach, an important part of empowerment is to give people access to voice and information, to gain greater social inclusion and participation. In this case, communication through a radio program makes it easier for women to identify their needs and challenges. Women are given a voice that makes it possible for them to communicate their perspectives in the public domain, a public dialogue and debate can occur. To make people genuinely involved in gender issues it is of a central role that voices of the people that are affected are being heard. Through the radio channel they are able to discuss and voice their perspective on the issues that concern them and that they find important. For instance the broadcasting is trying to help women build up confidence when it comes to relationships with men and practising safe sex. Sister Namibia has a strong believe that the broadcasting have resulted in increased debate and more participation in the society. The community radio is strengthening and supporting the development and social change for women.

I am of the opinion that radio plays an important role for spreading a message. I can not think about any other medium or other radio show where you can get information of that nature.

Women’s voices radio broadcasts also uses a kind of “edutainment”, that can be seen as a powerful tool of informing people about different issues in the society. Edutainment is an old way of spreading information about certain developing issues. The message can be spread through shows, dance and songs. In areas where media reaches the population, radio and TV is being used as successful mediums where the entertainment campaigns can take place.\textsuperscript{53} Radio drama depends on dialogue, music and sound effects to help the listener imagine the story. Young girls from schools around in Windhoek are working together in groups to create a radio drama show. The content in the shows is about different gender issues that are present in their daily lives. The girls themselves points out that this opportunity allows them to share

\textsuperscript{53} Snyder, L, B. in Mody, B (2003) p. 177.
experiences and open up about issues that can be hard to talk about in other circumstances. The radio drama that involves group participation and dialogue is a clear example of communication for empowerment.

5.1.3 Information campaigns

When the goal is to send a wide message about a certain topic, Sister Namibia is working with public education and awareness campaigns. As being discussed before it is a communication strategy for development that is organized and directed at a certain audience. How it works depends on the type of behaviour and context.\(^{54}\) In the campaigns that Sister Namibia is organizing, participation is a central aspect. As mentioned earlier, in these campaigns the audience plays an important role and the campaign link people together.\(^{55}\) The 50/50 campaign before the election 2005 is an example of a participatory campaign. The main goal with the campaign was to increase the representation of women in local and national government in a way that increases participation and leads to a more equitable and responsive government. Through participation in the campaign they were trying to convince people that change is possible and also strengthen the role of women in the Namibian society.

50/50 was the idea about equal representation, we wanted an equal system, we wanted a zebra list, mixed with men and women on the election lists. Both on national, regional and local level. We need to get women out there!

Some think that when we talk about gender we are talking about women, but gender is about balance, we want balance in the communities where we live.

The campaign advocated for “zebra style” lists where political parties alternate female and male candidates for all elections. Sister Namibia points out the importance that women should have access to all areas and all levels of public life. Women should have the same access to political structures and participate in economic decision-making as men. They emphasizes that views from women that have been long neglected in the society can bring new perspectives to policy making and to more responsive governance.

To have women in local and national government is not just a pre-requisite for representative democracy; it is also indispensable to transforming society.

There are issues that women feel more passionately about than men, especially at the local level. By simply being present, women make a difference. They become role models and shattering the myth that only men can walk the corridors of power.

The greatest focus on the 50/50 campaign was on governmental decision making positions, through raising awareness about the under-representation of women in decision-making

\(^{54}\) Snyder, Leslie, B. in Mody, Bella. 2003. s. 167-170.
\(^{55}\) Ibid.
positions. Sister Namibia was lobbying political parties to develop systems of selecting candidates that should be fair to both women and men.

Through the campaign, members of political parties also began to realize that they did not know the policies of their parties.

They developed information resources and advocacy tools on strategies to achieve equal representation on a local, regional and national governmental level. They engaged in the fields of media, education, training, research, advocacy and cultural activities, in order to promote women’s full participation. The 50/50 campaign was developed collaboratively and translated into six local languages so that the information could be understandable to as many as possible. Posters and pamphlets were spreading messages calling for laws to put 50% women into elected positions at all three levels of government. They received television news coverage of some of the national and local activities and they held press conferences to attract media. They also drew the media and public awareness through conducting marches.

An example of the participatory approach in the campaign was that it involved members of the target group to be communicators. Sister Namibia brought together and trained women from towns and villages all over Namibia to facilitate local workshops. Not only workers from Sister Namibia were leading the campaign, they also tried to involve members from involved communities to lead teams and design and implement the campaign. As discussed earlier this is an important strategy in participatory campaigns.

Networking was also a very central aspect in the campaign. Women all over Namibia, individuals and groups, united across all differences and brought their knowledge and experience into a process of collective action. The campaign itself became a platform for democracy and practising citizenship. The campaign also ensured that Sister Namibia gained much recognition and more economical support from donor agencies.

The 50/50 campaign was successful. We were testifying and then we where bringing women together. We where marching, we did press releases, wrote in the magazine, we did radio talk about it, developed slogans, held training and workshops about it, and networked with other organizations. Through all this we tried to let the people out there know what was going on.

Sister Namibia has the belief that the campaign had strong influence on the election 2005. They point out that today, long time after the campaign, the media is still covering and raising the issue of women’s participation. But there is still a long way to go. Sister Namibia makes mention of that today 29% of parliamentarians in the National Assembly are women, a number that increased during the election 2005. But in the National Council that consists of two representatives elected from each of Namibia’s 13 Regional Councils, the numbers of women are still very low, only 8%.

---

5.1.4 Networking

Sister Namibia promotes dialogue not only to women out in the community, but also with others that are working with similar issues. One of the great strengths of Sister Namibia’s communication work lies in their strong networking skills. Sister Namibia points out that networking with other NGOs helps the organization to strengthen the process and gives them a lot of inspiration and new ideas. Sister Namibia means that networking is helping women to exchange experiences, find common ground for cooperation and also participate actively. Sister Namibia, like many other NGOs is an organization with economical limitations, but the networking allows them to share voices and exert strength together with other organizations, not only in Namibia but also in an international perspective. They not only collaborate with other NGOs, but also government agencies and the media. Sister Namibia 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. Networking has an empowerment potential of linking the tools together between different areas, not just gender. By working in partnership with other development actors it is easier to fulfil a holistic thinking of development work.

We can come together, we can support each other, and we can lobby around issues together.

After the independence 1990 a lot of women felt that a women’s network was needed to support women and work for political and social change in the Namibian society. Women started to formulate their agendas to approach the government and fight for women rights. Several NGOs in Namibia were promoting women’s participation in power-sharing and decision-making. Women organizations, one of them Sister Namibia, tried to create a big umbrella organization to unify women that was fighting for the same things. The purpose was to share ideas about different situations and together try to empower women. It ended up in the Namibian Women’s Manifesto Network, which Sister Namibia today is a part of. The network provides advocacy and lobbying and train female leaders for elections. For instance they organize workshops where they try to raise awareness on women’s political and human rights. A big part of the Namibian Women’s Manifesto Network was the 50/50 campaign that was mentioned before. The 50/50 campaign is a clear example of successful networking between Sister Namibia, other NGOs and the civil society. Over thirty NGOs supported the demands of the campaign, support that was built up through creating a big network. Sister Namibia was acting like a lead agency for the campaign which led to big consequences for the organization. It grew, and from being an organization that was mostly focusing on Sister Namibia magazine, it turned out to be an organization in charge of building a nationwide network. Sister Namibia make mention of that the network was sustained strong through trust and solidarity and by valuing both small and big contribution.

In the Namibian Women’s Manifesto Network we are training other NGOs and women about gender sexuality, HIV, laws etc. Together we do training and after that we all go out and spread the messages to communities, which is building an even bigger network.
5.1.5 The influence of new technologies

Around the world new information and communication technologies have changed the lives of individuals, organizations and also entire nations. Due to the changing information and communication environment new communication opportunities are created. Internet plays a more important role and it provides a powerful tool to support the communication work in many organizations. The importance of Internet lies many times in the ability to facilitate the distribution of useful information and to support communication. Internet can be used to support empowerment communication by providing people with access to information.

In Sister Namibia Internet is an important communication channel both within the organization, out to the target groups, but also for networking with other organizations and groups. Other communication technologies in the organization are mostly focused on communicating one-to-one (telephones) or few-to-many (broadcast and print media). Internet allows more social networking and it seems like it is in networking that Sister Namibia have most effective use of Internet.

Sister Namibia points out that Internet can create a public sphere where debates can occur and where collective political action can be organized. A public sphere that can be closely related to what was mentioned before when describing the magazine as a platform where information about women issues can be spread. Internet can be seen as a variety or enhanced version of this platform function.

Internet also helps the organization to build awareness, to reduce costs, to raise funds, to manage information, and to publish information. Sister Namibia means that Internet definitely allows expanded possibilities for information access, and information distribution, which was discussed earlier in the theory chapter as one the advantages with Internet. For instance, stories from Sister Namibia Magazine are regularly being posted on Internet.

Internet is a very good source for the news part in the broadcasting show and for the magazine and also for looking into other women organizations and see what they are doing. Right now we are using Internet to get information to make stories, to get contact with other women organizations. It is a way of linking organizations together, national, but also international. It is hard to imagine working without Internet.

Internet opens up the possibility to see what other similar organizations are doing. It makes it easier to develop network with other organizations. It also opens up for a global network.

Sister Namibia is of the opinion that Internet is building new channels for social awareness and networking women. They emphasizes that it is contributing to democracy. They are discovering the effectiveness of Internet in their communication work, but at the same time they point out the problematic that there are benefits with Internet that they have not taken advantages of. They have not yet fully initiated disseminating their own information through Internet. For instance a webpage could be used as a linkage to other organizations and provide online service information. A webpage could make a big different for the information work in the organization, it could contain compelling and professionally presented articles, it could also
increase the network with other organizations and groups in the society. The organization is aware about the advantages that a website could contribute with and for the moment they are in the planning phase of a website, which will hopefully be completed in the nearest future. Lack of economic resources and knowledge about website production has delayed the construction.

People always look for a website nowadays. Developing a website would be an important place to archive our magazine, articles and things that we feel are important for women rights. People can find more information about the organization, get information about campaigns, read the magazine online and find out what is going on in the radio show. It would also be a good way to connect with international organizations. Internet is crucial for an NGO like Sister Namibia.

When it comes to the use of Internet in the future Sister Namibia points out that they have a will that the use will increase. The use of Internet is also enhancing the social use of traditional media like radio. They want to be able to use Internet for broadcasting and extend radio’s reach and capacity. They also have a wish to take more advantages of Internet as an organizing tool to coordinate their activities and as growing tool for networking.

The telecom market in Namibia is one of the most developed on the continent. The development of mobile telephone system in Namibia has created many communication opportunities for Sister Namibia. Sister Namibia points out that mobile phones can transform the lives of people with access to them. Mobile telephony can be an agent of development, due to the fact that mobile telephony gives access to information, it is cost effective and it presents new ways of communicating. The whole organization takes advantages of mobile phones in their communicating processes and they rely on them in their daily work. They view mobile phones as an effective tool for organizing meetings, networking, exchanging information and a contacting instrument. Mobile telephony enables Sister Namibia to have contact with women and other NGOs in parts of Namibia were there is no access to Internet or other communication possibilities.

5.1.6 Workshops

Sister Namibia supports the empowerment of women through different workshops. Instead of only spreading information through writing material, the dialogue in the workshop plays an important role. One example is the writing workshops which is a way of encouraging young women to write and express their feelings and attitudes through writing.

The girls, who are all learners from high schools based in the capital, will meet each month to explore a different topic that affects them, and then they write a short story or poem on the topic.

Sister Namibia points out the importance to use written language to gain power. The writing workshop wants to empower girls through discussion and creative writing on issues that they deal with on a daily basis. Through the writing workshops the women can become more aware
of their rights, be confident and more able to act, which can generate in more debate and analysis. Just like discussed before, communication for social change requires dialogue through which people define who they are, what they want and how they can get it. This can be connected to empowerment, one of the key ideas for social change. Through writing workshops women gain knowledge, they get confidence in what they do and perceive that they can make choices and changes in the society.

Sister Namibia make mention of the problem area; lack of written skills among Namibians. The education in school does not give enough writing training for students. This is making it hard for people to try to affect the society by writing in different media, to the media, or to the government. This is a reason why Sister Namibia finds it important to promote women’s writing and encourage them to write more. Through the workshops they also get closer to the problem with the high rates of illiteracy.

The girls in the workshops are using writing as a way of expressing themselves, which is also a way of gaining power. Girls definitely need to be encouraged to write, many of them have a lot to say, not just stories that can affect other women, but everyone.

Sister Namibia also arranges workshops where they are trying to empower women by educating them about their rights and responsibilities at different laws. Furthermore they organize workshops to train trainers so that they can inform their communities about laws. Other workshops can be about educating women in different lobbying methods, so that they can learn how to advocate for their own rights.

Through different workshops Sister Namibia can identify and analyse the needs of women, which is necessary to assess and achieve impact through the influence work. The workshops can be seen as participatory techniques; through the workshops it is possible to get closer to the women’s perspective, lives and needs. The women get the chance to express them selves and participate in discussions and they can define their own strategic and practical needs. They also get a higher understanding of their own situation. The workshops can be seen as a strategy to increase empowerment among the women. Just like mentioned in the conceptual approach, group participation and critical thinking is central aspects to reach empowerment. Through working together women can gain more control over certain factors that they share the lack of.

5.1.7 Using and changing the media

Ever since the term The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was coined in the end of the 1970, where the recommendations were to make global media representation more equitable, media has played a more central role in development processes. Namibia has made a significant progress towards achieving a better gender balance in the news, but there is still a long way to go. As in the past, media continue to portray women

negatively. Women’s voices are still grossly underrepresented in the Namibian media. Women are both under-represented in the media and portrayed in limited roles that do not reflect their contribution to society. Women are typically portrayed as victims, objects of beauty and almost never as spokes persons.

You get a lot of statistics, this has happened, for instance when it comes to violence against women. But there is no deep coverage of why and the reason behind, no deeper journalism. No one ever explore why it is happening.

You get some coverage about gender, but I do not feel like there is a real feminism discourse or real break down about these issues. We have to break through the sensationalism to get to deeper analysis. That is very important.

Sister Namibia means that some progress has been made in reporting on gender issues, but the dominant part is about men’s views and opinions. Sister Namibia points out that it is important that the media give equal voice to both men and women. In order to promote women’s access to the media and increase awareness of gender issues in the media Sister Namibia are working with advocating. They point out that all media should adopt gender policies to promote women into positions of decision making and to include gender training as an integral component of all training for media workers.\(^55\)

An important part of their communication work is to influence and access the mainstream media in a wider sense. The organization can see a big value in strengthening the capacity of the media to reflect women voices and women issues. Sister Namibia is trying to highlight the voices of vulnerable groups in mainstream public debate. They have to keep track of how the media is covering gender issues. By being kept updated they can find out who is supporting a certain issue and who is not. Through finding out what types of arguments they are using it is also easier to prepare responses to the arguments. The goal is increased participation and representation of the perspectives of women in media debates and media reporting. Sister Namibia means that it is very important to bring women issues of concern on the media agenda. Media directed strategies are important to encourage debate and dialogue about gender issues in the national media and media plays an important role when it comes to empowering women.

Sister Namibia is also trying to use the national media as a channel to women and men in the country. They acknowledge the importance of using mass media to reach a larger audience. National media is spread in the most parts of the country and in different languages to make it a powerful way of getting through to many people. Sister Namibia make mention of the importance of including media in the communication work for instance to gain publicity for a cause, but also by gather information about a certain issue from media. Parts of this work include engaging with media regulatory authorities, trying to have a dialogue with media decision-makers and trying to get their written articles published.

Using media can also lead to positive economical effects, through awaking fundraisers interest for the organization. However, using media for communicating a message also has less positive

consequences. Sister Namibia speaks about the difficulties with working with media and they make mention of how the messages, for instance a press release can be distorted and manipulated when it is published in the newspaper. Another negative thing that Sister Namibia makes mentions of is the fact that it is hard to get something published because gender issues are far away from being prioritized.

If there is something that you want to be covered in the media, you call them and they normally say; email the information or fax the information. The editor is the one that take the decision but chances are not very big that it is getting published. They rather write about other issues.

Furthermore Sister Namibia indicates that an important part of using media as a channel of communication is to build up good relationships with journalists. This can be seen as a strong media strategy which the organization is using as a deliberated tool to gain more media attention and to get effective media coverage for an issue, which can help reach the objectives. A good start of building a good relationship with journalists is to choose one person in the organization that can act as a spoke person with the media and the journalists. To establish and develop a good working relationship with journalists it is important to be reliable, accurate and provide useful information.

A very important thing is what relationship you have with the journalists. If you do not have a good relationship with them they will not publish your story. If you need an interview on air, you can use your contacts and it is way easier to get things done. But it takes time to develop a relationship with a journalist.

It is necessary to keep up a dialogue with the media because there are many journalists out there that are not specialists in humanitarian issues.

Other parts of the media work that Sister Namibia points out are press conferences, giving interviews to journalists, write opinion letters to different editors etc. They are all good ways of expressing opinions and to educate people about an issue. Another way is to use photographs to get information into a newspaper. Some public events that Sister Namibia organizes can be seen as an interesting photo opportunity for the media. They point out that nothing sells a story like a good picture. To make a certain happening visual, for instance a demonstration, can make a big different. If the media does not show up, Sister Namibia sends the photographs to different newspapers. Sister Namibia also points out the importance of following the guidelines that many papers have, otherwise there is a risk that nothing will be published.

One of the most central methods that they are using to get the media’s attention is communicating a message through a press release. Advantages with the press releases are that they can give advance notice of a certain event or campaign. It increases the chances to get something published in the newspapers and it is making it easier for the journalists to get the facts right. Sister Namibia usually sends the press releases to as many media as possible that are relevant. They always have a contact person from the organization who can be contacted for more information. Sister Namibia emphasizes the importance of keeping the press release short and informative and simple. They also points out the importance of making the heading
interesting. Useful is also to include a quote in the hopefully following published story. See an example of a press release below.60

Press Release from Sister Namibia
(Contact person: Shilombo, tel: 230618)

Homophobic attack includes HIV-positive people

Sister Namibia strongly condemns the hate speech against sexual minorities made by Home Affairs Deputy Minister Theopolina Mushelenga. In her address at a Heroes Day Commemoration Rally at Omaalala Village, Ms Mushelenga reportedly accused gay and lesbian people of being responsible for the HIV/Aids pandemic. Despite high hopes that the Pohamba era would herald a time of inclusiveness and tolerance for diversity in our country, verbal violence against gay and lesbian people from government officials continues unabated. To make matters worse, HIV-positive people are being included in this discrimination.(...) It is unacceptable in this time and place for a government official to scapegoat sexual minorities in the name of HIV/Aids, which only the truly ignorant consider to be a ‘gay disease’. It is common knowledge that the primary mode of HIV transmission in Namibia, as in most of Africa, is through unprotected heterosexual sex. This is the message the government should be spreading. At the same time sexual minorities should not be ignored, but should be explicitly included in prevention campaigns. We call on government officials, churches, political parties, NGO and business representatives, and on the office of the ombudsman, to speak out strongly and take forceful action against any verbal violence or abusive treatment of homosexual people and instead work towards the elimination of discriminatory laws and abusive practices which violate the basic human rights to equality, dignity, privacy and health for all, and which seriously undermine the enormous amount of hard work presently being done in Namibia around HIV/Aids education, prevention and treatment. Furthermore, we call on those responsible for drafting Namibia’s policy on HIV/Aids to include measures to ensure the basic human rights of people infected with and affected by HIV/Aids in this country, regardless of their sexual orientation.

5.1.8 Influence on the government

The second communication key idea for development, that top-down and bottom-up approaches need to be integrated, is something that is influencing Sister Namibia’s communication work. Methods that are helping to improve governments to contribute to the development are essential.61 Sister Namibia indicates that trying to affect the government is an area that is really necessary to work with. The problem lies within the governmental system, which needs to be changed to make it more women friendly. Sister Namibia has for a long time attempted to influence the drafting of the new Namibian state’s constitution. Article 10 of the Constitution of Namibia (1997) stipulates that all persons should be equal before the law and prohibits any discrimination on grounds of sex. Even though the constitution says women have the same rights as men, most Namibians do not believe it. Sister Namibia attempts to

---

60 Sister Namibia Magazine, Vol. 18 # 3 July 2006
61 Hemer, O & Tufte, T (2005) p. 77-82.
influence the constitution, because it is not fully understood and it is far from being followed out in the society. There is a general lack of knowledge and understanding about the constitution, government policies and international agreements, not only among the population but even among lawmakers themselves.

Legally men and women are on an equal footing, but in practice women are relegated to second or third place because they do not take part in the decision-making process. It is time for women to have the opportunity to take part.

Within the local, regional and national councils in Namibia women are underrepresented. Sister Namibia means that it is important that communication strategies for empowerment need to be rooted in a broader political analysis. Sister Namibia has an important role to play when it comes to make the government aware of the importance of increasing women’s participation in politics. Women and men should have equal opportunities to stand against each other in the politics. Sister Namibia is giving advices on how the government can encourage and value the contribution of women in national development and the development of the society as whole. They point out that when men see women performing well in positions of power they realise that it is okay for women to lead. However, having more women political leaders does not necessarily translate into women moving gender issues forward, but Sister Namibia points out that it is a key step in institutionalising women’s equality.

Before starting an advocacy campaign to influence the government Sister Namibia indicates the importance to define and analyse the strengths (for instance public support and good access to decision-makers), the weaknesses (for instance lack of funds and skills) and the opportunities (for instance if an election is coming up). What also is essential is to have access to someone who is in a position to implement the change directly, or someone that can persuade the relevant decision makers to implement the change. A strategy that Sister Namibia is trying to use is to show people in power that it will benefit both them and Sister Namibia if they make the changes. Sister Namibia states that this strategy put the person in a position of authority with a higher motivation to make the changes.

In the struggle to influence the government and affect bills and laws in the Namibian society, Sister Namibia indicates that it is important to enhance the relationship between the organization and the government. Sister Namibia is working with government departments at national, regional and local level, to develop and implement regulations and laws. Once again it shows the importance that top-down and bottom-up approaches need to be integrated, and that the role of government can not be neglected.

A good relationship with the government can result in that they choose to support the programs and train their counsellors to work for women rights. Many times also the government is looking for solutions. And I think it is important to look for solutions together instead of just looking at the problems, otherwise we are not getting anywhere.

Without a relationship with people that makes the bills, it is impossible to change them.
The growth of the mass media in Namibia has made it easier for representatives from the government and NGOs to communicate with each other, and technological advances have made it easier for groups to generate letters, phone calls, telegrams, when an issue or bill comes to a head. Advocacy campaigns that Sister Namibia is involved in usually include both direct communication and indirect communication with decision makers. It combines and integrates interpersonal communication and multimedia activities. It can be about arranging meetings to discuss issues with government representatives or making phone calls and writing letters. Sister Namibia considers personal meetings with decision makers a very effective way of delivering messages directly to a person who has the power to make changes. In a meeting they have the opportunity to determine where the decision maker stands on the issue and what type of campaign will be most effective to convince the decision maker to take the action necessary to achieve the goals. In these kinds of meetings Sister Namibia also tries to educate the decision makers about the importance of taking action.

*It is important with well organized meetings with the government to find out information that can help structure a more effective campaign.*

There are also many benefits of writing campaigns and express something through letters. They are sending the letters to a person who has the power to make the changes that will meet the goals. It is an easy way for people to take action and feel involved and allows targeting different audiences. Sister Namibia also emphasizes that it is a low cost method. An example of advocacy through writing a letter is the one to President Hifikepunye Pohamba that Sister Namibia was writing 2006 together with other NGOs, to hold back the appalling escalating phenomenon of violence against women. The letter was expressing in a clear way what the problem is and what needs to be done to decrease violence against women in the society. The arguments were clearly expressed in a strong language. It is important to use words that will get the message across clearly and effectively. The communication was personalized and precisely targeted, which is more effective than depersonalized methods. It is also important to sustain one key message throughout the letter; otherwise there is a risk that confusion will occur. The response to the letter was very positive and the president took the request with a great seriousness.

Another successful example was the Children’s status bill that Sister Namibia together with other NGOs was fighting to change last year. They organized an advocacy campaign that started with a march to the parliament in 2004 when the bill was first tabled. The march was trying to make the National Assembly to conduct hearings all over the country to get input on the bill. The first part of the advocacy campaign turned out to be successful and it ended up with that the standing committee in 28 towns and villages all over Namibia conducted the hearings. Sister Namibia also spoke at the National Council hearings and it resulted in that the Gender Minister agreed to meet with civil society representatives before tabling the Bill in the National Assembly again. In the end it turned out to be successful. It has been seen that it was a long way to go and most of the times two steps forward followed by three steps backwards. Sister Namibia points out the importance of being patient and persistent. Sometimes it might

---

take years to achieve the goals. But as Sister Namibia also emphasizes; every fight is worth fighting for if the result is making the situation for women in Namibia any better.

Another used strategy to influence government that Sister Namibia points out is a confrontational strategy. It can for instance involve mass protests and demonstration. The confrontational strategy has to do with informing, motivating and educating the public and the government. A demonstration for instance can be used to show government that you have public support for your cause. It also gains media attention and publicity. This strategy usually receives much attention, for instance media attention, but Sister Namibia points out that it usually does not lead to changes in a longer perspective.

Sister Namibia also uses petitions as a useful tool to show government that there is a widespread support for a certain opinion. A petition is a letter signed by many people. It is a plea or request for the government or parliament or some other decision makers to take some action that is within its power. Sister Namibia means that the power with petitions, same as with mass demonstrations, is the fact that it is showing that many people in the society show that action needs to be taken.

A problem that Sister Namibia points out when it comes to communicating with the government is that grass roots organizations sometimes tone their messages down just to gain acceptance from the government.

I think you need to form partnerships with the government to get things done. But at the same time I think it is important not to give up the struggle just to be partners. You still have to keep your issues important and on the table. Keep them real and not tone them down just to be acceptable. So I think that is a challenge to getting accepted and getting passed and at the same time getting women issues through.

5.1.9 Summary

Sister Namibia promotes an information-sharing culture and they show a deep awareness of the power of sharing information. Access to, and applications of knowledge and information play an important role in the struggle for increased empowerment among women. There is a deep understanding in what ways information on the issue of concern can be spread and in what ways this information enables people to come to their own understanding of it. The communication for raising awareness is effective in the organization, channels, tools and the topics are selected clearly to the different target groups. There is not just one strategy or communication channel to be used in the work to empower women. Press-conferences, radio campaigns, distribution of pamphlets, workshops, the magazine, women’s voices broadcasting etc, are all different ways of creating spaces for public debate, dialogue and action. Sister Namibia has a tool-kit approach to communication, an importance that was being discussed in the conceptual approach chapter as one of the key ideas for development. The issues that the organization deals with are of multiple dimensions, their communication strategies therefore

---

63 Hemer, O & Tufte, T (2005) p. 77-82.
also have to be multiplicity and different strategies may work best for different issues and target groups.

From now on in this summary I intend to lift out the most central expressions and communication mechanisms that have been found. They will together create a model of the communication framework in the organization. The following figure is a result of the inductive study and shows the most central aspects in the communication framework. Empowerment can be seen as the foundation and main goal of intervention in their communication framework.

The communication framework in Sister Namibia takes into account individual, social, political, cultural, and economic dynamics that influence gender in the society. It includes horizontal and vertical relationship building, top-down and bottom-up political action. It has also been identified that dialogue is important and a central aspect in the communication processes. In the organization dialogue is being stimulated and sustained, which they see as a prerequisite for social change. This is an example of how the communication work in the organization focuses on an elaborated social change agenda, rather than an agenda of strategic communication. The dialogue is central in all their work and Sister Namibia points out that in the dialogues it is important that people define their own needs and discuss how they can satisfy and reach them.

Another central aspect in their communication framework is networking. Sister Namibia extends power through networking with others, both inside and outside their own social group. The work to create different networks and cooperations can be seen as a potential and prerequisite to be able to force through real changes in the society. Sister Namibia can be seen as a piece of a puzzle in a bigger network that allows them to reach a wider audience and it can be seen as a strategy for how they can gain power, grow and establish deeper in the society.

The organization’s target group is women in particular in the Namibian society. But women cannot be seen as a homogenous group, they have different backgrounds, different cultures, different ages 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 and the networks are identified, analysed 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 flexibility of the communication processes can also be seen in the choice of various methods of communication that the organization take use of. Sister Namibia combines the new information and communication technologies with other communication methods. This
has proved effective in the way it is providing the Namibian society with access to different types of information. It has been seen that in the future Internet will exert more and more influence in the communication work of Sister Namibia. Through a webpage they will be able to network online and organize and assemble for collective action. Sister Namibia has increasingly used the Internet to put forward advocacy. There is an important need to involve women in the development of new information technologies; it is both practical and political. From a practical perspective, new information technologies like Internet can be seen as a powerful tool for networking, communication and information exchange regarding gender issues. From a political perspective Internet can be seen as an empowerment tool, it is providing a social arena and public sphere that creates forums for public debate and it gives women a voice.

Flexibility can also be seen in the way Sister Namibia adjust the information and communication strategies to different levels in the society. There is a **holistic approach** in the communication framework; the communication is focused on change at individual, societal and governmental levels. Just like one of the five key ideas for development says; not only an individual-centered approach can be considered to create development in a society, there also has to be a focus on environmental factors that are affecting the individual behaviour. If women are to be truly empowered, the holistic approach is vital. It is clear that Sister Namibia addresses individual and social behaviour as well as political factors that influence gender in the society. Their framework takes into account individual, social, political, cultural and economic dynamics. Working on a political level to influence and change bills and laws plays an important role in the organization’s struggle for equality. But as Sister Namibia indicates, *government sit in their offices without always know what is going on out in the communities.* Changing laws does not necessarily lead to changed internalised norms and values in the society. This is a reason why it is important to work both with the government and with education and create a dialogue with the people in the society.

*The laws are not getting on the ground. It needs a big push to educating people, not just change the laws.*

It is understood that advocacy through different communication methods is being used by Sister Namibia as a powerful way of influencing the society. The communication work of the organization can be seen as a profoundly **political tool**. No matter if the focus is on individual, social or governmental level, it most of the times comes down to be about politics in the end. The political dynamics needs to be taken into consideration no matter what level the communication is focusing on. Sister Namibia states that social, cultural and economic roots of gender inequalities are closely related to politics. For instance, it is hard to attain gender equality in social, cultural and economical spheres of the Namibian society, without greater participation of women in power sharing and decision-making structures. As discussed earlier it is therefore fundamental that all communication is rooted in a broader political analysis to be able to identity the factors that explain gender inequalities in the society.

---

64 Hemer, O & Tufte, T (2005) p. 77-82.
Sister Namibia’s communication work is not structured in a specific communication strategy. The question is if a formulated communication strategy would benefit the organization? It has been showed in other organizations that a communication plan can help to identify and facilitate all activities that they are working with. But it seems like much of the communication in Sister Namibia can be seen as tacit (silent) knowledge. The expertise within the organization is not clearly written down and formally expressed, therefore the communication work in the organization can rather be related to tacit knowledge than documented knowledge. They all have knowledge about communication to a great extent, but it seems like they many times carry the knowledge in their minds, rather than have it documented. They know more than they can tell. The knowledge that they posses is experience based and it can be related to social insight. It takes a lot of practice to gain the communication skills that they possess, the knowledge involves learning and skills. The fact that tacit knowledge seems more present than documented knowledge makes it harder to follow a specific communication plan that is telling them how to act in specific situations. Sister Namibia also make mention of this;

“We have our goals and we have our mission and I think that guides our work, what we want to do with the magazine, radio program and the training work shops we have. We do not have a specifically communication strategy that is saying that we will do this and we will do that. But everything we do is kind of based on the idea of empowerment, breaking down the discourses about sexism, racism and homophobia. This is guiding all the work.”

In the development work that Sister Namibia is doing, it is clear that communication plays a central role. They are using communication as a tool to promote social change for gender equality and gained empowerment for women. The communication for empowerment methods that they are working with plays a key role in contributing to the effectiveness in fulfilling their goals. From what I have seen, Sister Namibia’s communication work is more focused on a social change agenda where dialogues are central, rather than a strategic communication agenda where behaviour change is the most central aspect. This can be seen when looking at their view of communication. They are not only viewing communication as a tool for spreading information in order to achieve a certain result. It has also been seen that they define communication as the goal of development. Development should be aiming to prove private and public dialogue, rather than just transmitting information.

5.2 Addressing Strategic Issues

There are always factors in the society that have an influence on the communication in an organization. In the following part I will address factors that have an influence on Sister Namibia and their information and communication work. The factors have been pointed out by the organization, but also showed through the observations that have been done. A description of the factors will follow, but also a discussion in what way they affect the communication work and how Sister Namibia work to tackle them.
5.2.1 Lack of human and economical resources

Sister Namibia states that the communication work in their organization can involve smaller steps that cost virtually nothing, but it can also be a large expensive campaign involving many people and many activities. A problem when it comes to the bigger campaigns is sometimes lack of human resources and skills. It is necessary with communication skills to meet the needs of the campaign. Even if the organization has the skills, they need to include more people from the society with enough skills, for instance people with writing skills. This is one of the reasons behind working with workshops, where women can be trained for different kinds of advocacy work. Lack of human resources goes hand in hand with economical limitations; limited economical resources make it harder to hire enough people in the organization.

*Money is always a big issue. We are a donor money organization, which means that a lot of time goes to trying to solve all the financial things out. Trying to find donors etc. Lack of economy makes it hard to hire the staff that you needs. So that is a big constrain as well.*

Sister Namibia points out money as an issue that affects their communication work. Funding is important for the sustainability of any organization, especially for NGOs. Like many other NGOs they are dependent on financials from different donors. An important part of their work is therefore to try to gain recognition and more economical support from donor agencies. Sister Namibia indicates that lack of foundations specifically makes long term planning harder, because it is hard to predict the economical situation in a longer term. The economical limitations also have consequences on the technical equipment, for instance the radio show. More advanced equipment would facilitate the program recording, which in turn could make it possible to send the show from other community radio stations in the country.

*Editing equipment, training equipment etc. cost a lot of money. Soft ware for developing a website cost a lot. It is an issue that we struggle through.*
5.2.2 Power relations

Power relations are everywhere. Sometimes they are very visible and other times they just occur without people thinking of them. No matter if we are aware of them or not, they are there and they affect how we communicate with each other. Sister Namibia points out that power relations is very present in their work. Power relations between women and men are the basis of all their work and without these power inequalities the organization would probably not exist. To be able to find out where the power relations exists Sister Namibia indicates that it is fundamental that all communication is rooted in a broader social analysis. Through this analysis it is possible to identify the power relations and the factors that explain gender inequalities in the society.

Power relations always play a role in the work that we are doing, just because of the fact that they are always there. Our organization is doing a very strong platform, we have a pretty powerful voice, which is good, but I do think that the power relations are always there, they always play a role. But sometimes you do not really think about it.

Power relations are also present because of the fact that Sister Namibia is an organization working from a grass root perspective and a big part of their work is to communicate from a bottom-up perspective and affect the government. They point out that many times it feels like the power inequalities are very present, especially when communicating directly with the government and it is easy that feelings of powerlessness appear. To easier handle the power situations Sister Namibia makes mention of the importance to recognize the government structures and identify and acknowledge the relationship to the government. Once again, it is important to take a look at and analyse social factors in the society, because political power is rooted in social factors.

Communicating with media is another area where the power relations have an influence. As mentioned earlier there are difficulties with competing with mainstream media that has a lot of power in the society and money to produce what they want to produce. For smaller, alternative media, like Sister Namibia Magazine it is harder to be seen and influence the society. But at the same time, as Sister Namibia also make mention of, there is a big importance that alternative media like Sister Namibia Magazine challenge the power concentration in large media corporations. The media in Namibia is not informing and empowering all members of the Namibian society, which is a reason behind the increased demand for independent alternative media.

There is an important need of trying to influence and access the mainstream media. The power inequalities between alternative media and the mainstream media are making it way harder, but it also shows that there is a big need of change of power structures.

To be able to compete with mainstream media and reach more people Sister Namibia has to adapt the messages to many different audiences. They also have to keep up with the expansion of new communication and information channels to be able to compete with mainstream media. By being a part of the development of new information and communication technologies Sister Namibia gains more power.
5.2.3 Heterogeneous target group

Women cannot be seen as a homogenous target group. There is a wide difference between women all over Namibia, like everywhere else in this world. There are differences in interests, values, ages, cultures, race etc. Different women have different potentials and needs. Women empowerment can be defined as something totally different for a woman in the rural areas up in the northern part of Namibia, compared to women living in the urban areas.

*In Namibia we have so many different cultures and age groups. So that is something that we are trying to challenge. How do you get the message out to groups that are different ages and different cultures? It is hard to get a balance. So I think that is a big challenge for the way we perform a message. Are we making it interesting for all women?*

If target groups are too heterogeneous, it is difficult to communicate clear 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 Sister Namibia has to struggle with in their work. For instance, a communication campaign has to be aware of different contexts and cultures. When planning a campaign the specifics of the differences within the target group have to be taken into consideration. Different groups of women sometimes require different communication methods. It is therefore vital that activities must be need oriented.

*If you for instance go up north, women are also different and they have their own ways of doing things, different cultures. Cultural beliefs create the difference. There are more modern influences in the bigger cities. This is a reason why you have to work in different ways to reach out to people.*

*It is impossible to say that there is one Namibian culture that represents all women in the country.*

There are big cultural differences between groups in Namibia. Cultural attitudes about gender in different Namibian groups vary a lot. Cultural attitudes about gender also vary by urban and rural location. In some cultures it can be interpreted as low social status and lack of “manhood” for a man to only have one sexual partner. In another culture it can be strict forbidden for men to have more than one partner. In some cultures there is an idea that delay of sexual behaviour can cause negative consequences like infertility and mental illness. Myths and rumours about sexuality differ in different areas and among different cultural groups. Dealing with the 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? In the way they are performing messages and spreading information they have to keep in mind and deal with cultural norms and constrains. Sister Namibia emphasizes that it is challenging to provide information that is cultural sensitive. They put a lot of effort in adjusting information and communication to make it understandable for people from different cultures. To be able to adjust the information and communication it is vital with an analysis that seeks to provide a clear picture of the attitudes, values, and needs of the group of women. Through such an analysis Sister Namibia can get a deeper understanding
of women’s different experiences, and they can identify factors that explain these differences. Sister Namibia points out that this is an area that they need to work more with. They need to analyze the local patriarchal cultures more closely in which women are living and working. For instance many male dominated political structures in the northern parts of Namibia, has blocked Sister Namibia’s access to women. Sister Namibia make mention of that future campaigns and communication activities therefore need to develop strategies more on a local level, that take into account for instance traditional leadership, an area that the organization does not have very much experience of.

Sister Namibia also points out that it is impossible to get a deeper understanding of all cultures in Namibia. But it is vital to be open and have a willingness to try to get understanding and more knowledge about the cultures that they are attempting to communicate with. Being able to understand cultural differences promotes clearer communication and breaks down barriers, builds trust and strengthen relationships. They indicate that this is another reason why it is necessary with going out in the society to different communities and try to create a dialogue, where the women get the chance to express and share their values, thoughts and beliefs.

Furthermore Sister Namibia indicates that also among women from same background and culture there can be a variation of opinions and values. Even though there are cultural differences that sometimes can be seen as a barrier for communication, women are all far more alike than different. Instead of looking at the differences it is important to try to focus on the similarities to be able to struggle together. Cause in all groups of women in the country gender inequality in the form of patriarchy can be found.

In one way we are all united as women and we all want to live in a society free from patriarchy and oppression.

5.2.4 Language barriers & illiteracy

As being discussed above Sister Namibia has an awareness of the importance that the information has to be accessible and understandable to women all over the country. Due to all the different cultures in Namibia, the diversity of languages is also wide. To be able to communicate with women all over the country, a message has to be translated in a widely range of languages. Even if there is an awareness of the importance of giving the information in different languages, it has been seen that the organization has problems to be able to reach women all over the country, especially women up north in the rural areas. To be able to reach more women it is necessary to find solutions to make information translated into more languages and making work shops available also for people that do not speak English. This problem goes hand in hand with the economical limitations as well as the lack of human resources that many NGOs have to struggle with.

Language is definitely a barrier to information. The dominating part of the magazine is in English, only small parts in Afrikaan and Oshiwambo. The radio program is most of the time in English, sometimes it is being translated Afrikaans. I think the further away from Windhoek you get, the more challenging with languages it gets.
Illiteracy is a serious problem facing Namibia. Although education has been free, illiteracy is still high, mostly among the indigenous people. Women are also a specifically exposed group. Women in rural areas relieve 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 newspapers. It is a problematic area that Sister Namibia is aware of, and they point out that the illiterate people are at a bigger risk of being left out of information in the Namibian society, because one of the important keys to empowerment is access to information.

I think a big problem when it comes to any kind of written texts is illiteracy. So it is definitely an issue that is affecting the way people can take part of the information. Especially if you go to the rural areas. And that is why it is important to get the radio program out to other community stations as well.

Sister Namibia means that the fact that communication can not always be accessed due to illiteracy puts radio on a central stage. It will probably continue to be the most appropriate communication technology that is available to most people in Namibia. The problems with illiteracy are also being challenged through the workshops that Sister Namibia arrange. As mentioned earlier the writing workshops train women in writing, which can be seen as a way of gaining power and supporting empowerment for women.

5.2.5 Summary

It has been noticed that some factors in the Namibian society can be seen as barriers for the communication work in the organization. Sister Namibia’s communication work is affected and influenced by cultural differences, power relations, economical limitations, and sometimes lack of human resources and skills. Illiteracy and the wide range of languages that people speak can also be considered as a barrier. Due to the fact that the proportion of the population that is fluent in the official language is small, Sister Namibia has to consider translation of information into more languages. A clear example of that was the 50/50 campaign where material in the campaign was translated into six local languages, so that the information could be understandable to as many as possible. This example can serve as a successful example for the future, so that more people can take advantages of for instance reading the magazine and listening to Women’s broadcasting show.

What also can complicate the communication is the fact that women as a target groups is very heterogenic. The target group includes women from different ethnicities, cultures, geographical areas, ages, classes, etc. All these various factors contribute to the existence of differences among women in Namibia and the differences need to be approached in different ways. A prerequisite for tackling problems is to create a deeper understanding of the groups of women. Before creating a campaign, a number of a magazine, or the content of the radio show, it is very important with an analysis that seeks to provide a clear picture of the attitudes, values, and needs of the differences among women in the target group. Through such an analysis Sister Namibia can get a deeper understanding of women’s different experiences and they can identify factors that explain these differences, and through that approach the groups in different ways.
Everywhere in the Namibian society there are power fields that have an influence of their communication work. Through analysis of the social and political structures it is possible to approach the power relations. Sister Namibia indicates that power relations are specifically present when communicating with government. Sister Namibia empowers themselves by understanding how they are affected by current and potential policies and structures. By recognizing the government structures and identify and acknowledge the relationship to the government it is easier to struggle against the power barriers. Likewise developing a good relationship with the government can lead to increased power for an NGO. Being a part of the new technology development also plays an important role when struggling with power inequalities. New technologies create new communication channels that can gain power for NGOs.
6. DISCUSSION

In this final discussion I will draw some important conclusions that need to be taken into consideration to be able to understand processes of communication in development. I will move from the concrete context in my study and look at it from a wider perspective. What do the outcomes of the study mean in a broader perspective? Finally I will encourage to further research.

6.1 Reflections in a Wider Perspective

I have during this case study become more aware of the importance of the role of communication in development work. The study shows the importance of looking at communication not just as a tool for spreading information, but also as the goal of development. Through communication it is possible to create communication. Communication definitely promotes an information sharing culture and through communication it is possible to create a social environment where private and public dialogue can take place. It is possible to take the step out from women issues and look at it from other perspectives as well, for example the area of homosexual rights, and environmental laws that have been forced through. It is many times changes that none of us can imagine a society without. And it is all social changes that depend a lot on communication. It is not an overstatement to say that communication needs to be integrated in the planning and implementation phases of all development projects. But it is not a simple task.

As this study shows, dialogue, networking, and flexibility, can be seen as basic concepts in the communication framework of Sister Namibia. To be able to understand processes of communication in development work, it is also vital to have a holistic approach and take a look at the whole social context. Communication in development work can not be studied as an isolated phenomenon. It is determined and shaped by the whole social context. It is a social embedded process that has to be studied together with the social actors and the environments they act in.

I have seen that there are three main concepts that can be found in the social context that communication are depending on. They can be seen as prerequisite and a basis for social change. The first concept is knowledge, which is fundamental to the development process. What possibility a person or group has to change their situation depends on the level of knowledge. Access to knowledge allows individuals and communities to expand their choices, which in turn can lead to increased empowerment. This takes the discussion further on to the next concept which is power. Power can be referred to many things, for instance the ability to make choices or influence outcomes. Through increased power people can improve their life situations, and gained power in one sphere of activity can lead to increased power in others. Social & Material Needs is the last concept and the first one refers to how people come together and form groups for a number of functions. Among individuals and groups were social needs can be satisfied, the conditions for social change increase. Social change also depends on
material needs. Lack of material needs can put limits in what you can do and minimum basic material needs can be seen as a precondition for social change to appear.

The three main concepts in the social context can not be seen as separated from each other, there is a close connection between all of them. They go hand in hand. Without knowledge it is difficult to gain power. Without power it is harder to gain knowledge. Without social and material needs it can be hard to get knowledge about certain things and also gain power. It is an infinite and interactive circle.

This circle, also referred to as the social context, consists of groups and people that have different possibilities to reach social change by help of communication. They have different potential in communicating, which depends on different factors; social position is one of them. The communicative possibilities decrease for a person or group in a subordinated position. This means that a person in lower position also has more difficulties to gain knowledge, due to the fact that the possibilities and conditions to get information are smaller. Being a part in the social context as a group, for instance a community or a NGO, leads to increased communication potential. Being a part of a group increases the chances to influence and control the surroundings. Together with other people we are more powerful, and have more chances to gain knowledge and the prerequisites for social & material needs are better. This in turn increases the chances to transform the communication potential from groups in higher social positions (for instance the government) to other groups in the society. Which in turn increases the chances for social change to appear. This shows that the capacities that people have to communicate are closely related to their capacity to create changes in their societies.

I will end this final discussion by showing a model that I have designed to illustrate the processes that have been discussed above. The model can serve as a summary of the concepts in the communication process that I found most central. The bottom part of the model shows the aspects that are vital in the communication framework, and important to consider when working with different communication processes. These aspects are, as mentioned earlier, dialogue, networking, flexibility and a holistic approach. The top part of the model illustrates the social context, where knowledge, power, and material & social needs have been found as central aspects. They are needs and factors that are gained and created by individuals and groups in the society, and can be seen as prerequisites for social change to appear. The arrows show how they are all connected and interacted with each other.

To understand processes of communication in development work, all parts of the model have to be considered and analysed. In a society where people feel empowered, satisfied with social and material needs, and have access to knowledge, an environment can be created in which social change becomes possible. And this environment are much depended on if developing communication consist of dialogue, networking, flexibility and a holistic approach.
6.2 Further Research

For further research it would be interesting to bring the knowledge and experiences from this case study and take the step further and use it for a comparing study. By increasing the amount of cases it would be possible to find out if same kind of communication patterns can be found in other organizations. Is the communication framework in Sister Namibia a part of a wider communication pattern that is being used in other organizations as well? If other communication patterns can be found, an interesting perspective would be to find out to what extend Sister Namibia’s communication work is successful compared to other models of development communication.

Another interesting aspect for further research is that it appears in this study that gender issues are generally understood as women issues. Most gender activities that are being done in Sister Namibia are directed only towards women. Some have the belief that gender issues should include also men, and require changes for men as well as for women. Development communication strategies should then include both sexes. For instance through organizing workshops also for men, to increase their understanding of the importance of gender equality.

Therefore it would be interesting to look at what is being done when it comes to include men in the work for equality in the Namibian society. In what ways are grassroots organizations
communicating to men in the struggle for gender equality? For further studies it would be possible to carry out a study with the aim to explore in what ways development work in Namibia is inspired by the WID and GAD perspectives. WID (women in development) has a focus on women and how they should be empowered and brought into development, whereas GAD (gender and development) considers the importance of dynamics and structures of gender relations in development.
7. LIST OF REFERENCES

7.1 Books and Articles


### 7.2 Magazines

*Sister Namibia Magazine*

Vol. 18 # 3 July 2006  
Vol. 18 # 1 & 2 May 2006  
Vol. 18 # 4 September 2006  
Vol. 18 # 5 & 6 December 2006  
Vol. 19 # 1 March 2007

### 7.3 Pamphlets


The Namibian Women’s Manifesto Network (2004). *50/50 Campaign Women and men in government – get the balance right!*
APPENDIX 1

Interview questions

Communication and information channels

• What information channels are you using to reach the peer group? (Face to face, magazine, Internet, mail, phone, edutainment)
• Why do you choose these particular information channels?
• Can you see any particular information barrier in the way you spread the messages?
• Is there a formulated communication strategy plan that the organization is using?
• Are you working with any special communication campaigns? If yes, describe them.

Networking

• Is Sister Namibia included in some kind of network? If yes, what are the advantages and disadvantages?

Sister Namibia Magazine

• Describe the content of the magazine Sister Namibia.
• What is the purpose with the magazine?
• Who is the intended receiver of the magazine?
• Languages?
• Do men also read the magazine?
• In what area is Sister Namibia Magazine being spread?

Women’s voices broadcasts

• Please describe the content of the radio program?
• What importance does women’s voices broadcasts play?
• Do you know who is listening to the show?
• Is the radio program in a language which most people that are affected speak?

National media (regional, local)

• To what extent are gender issues covered by the national media?
• Connections between government and media?
• Does the organization cooperate with the national media? If yes, in what ways?
  Advantages/Disadvantages
• Does Sister Namibia have relationship with journalists? If yes, please describe the relation.
• Are you using press releasing as a way of communicating? If yes, in what ways? And how is the respond?

New Media – Internet

• How is the organization influenced by Internet?
• Has new information technologies like Internet changed the way you are working?
• Disadvantages/advantages?
What can a webpage contribute to the organization?
Describe the content ideas for the webpage?

Government
- In what ways does the organization communicate with the government and with those in authority?
- Advantages/Disadvantages?
- What is the response to this communication?
- Do you think they laws represents values and attitudes in the society?

Other questions
- Can you see any disadvantages in your NGO when it comes to technical facilities?
- Are there any differences between Windhoek and other parts of the country when it comes to work for women rights?
- In what ways are you listening to feedback from the peer group?
- In what ways have you seen change since you started to work with Sister Namibia?
- What importance do you consider communication in your organization?