Demystifying Participatory Development Communication: Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA), Ethiopia in Focus

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Abstract

This study demystifies the paradox about participatory communication. It explores the perception and practice of participatory communication in development process focusing on a leading local non-governmental organization (NGO) named Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA) in the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS), Ethiopia. This qualitative case study used in-depth interview, focus group discussion (FGD), document analysis and field observation for data collection. The research results revealed that the dominant perception and the practice of development communication in the organization is found in line with the assumptions of the top-down development approaches. The study shows that the premises of participatory communication are not found in ORDA both at the perceptual and practical levels. The study further concludes that development communication in general and participatory communication in particular is not used as a means of liberation from the chain of poverty and dependency syndrome which deeply persists in the region. To avert this condition, the study recommends the application of genuine participatory communication for sustainable development in rural Amhara/Ethiopia.

Keywords: Development communication, participatory communication, development, top-down approach, holistic development, Ethiopia

Introduction

Having the second-largest population in Africa, Ethiopia remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Ethiopia is placed at the bottom of the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) human development indexes. The country ranks 174th out of 187 countries in 2011, 173rd out of 186 countries in 2013 and 2014 UNDP's Indexes (UNDP 2011b; 2013;

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2014). As one of the poorest countries in the world, the question of development is a big national agenda in Ethiopia**.**

The ANRS, the focus of this study, is situated in the north-western part of Ethiopia. The regional state is divided into 11 administrative zones and one special zone, 126 rural *woredas* (districts) and 3,105 rural *kebeles* (smaller administrative units). With a population of 21.1 million in 2017, Amhara is the second most populous region (making up 22.4 per cent of the Ethiopian population), Apart from a small percentage of the population engaged in the service and industry sectors, nearly 84 per cent of the population reside in rural areas and are engaged in agriculture (CSA, 2017 projection).

 ANRS is one of the biggest administrative regions in the country, characterized by deep-rooted poverty and the severity of the socioeconomic problems and social status is gravely significant in the rural areas of the region. (Ethiopia. ANRS Bureau of Finance & Economic Development, 2009).

The main economic activity of the region is agriculture which is characterized by traditional farming practices, heavy dependence on annual rainfall, and low level of productivity (UNDP, 2011a). Hence, farmers in the region, like most farmers in Ethiopia, are particularly susceptible to seasonal shocks and food insecurity (UNDP, 2011a). Meeting basic needs is often difficult and hence many people live in extreme poverty in the region. For instance, 48 of the 105 *woredas* in the region are identified as drought prone and chronically food insecure (USAID, 2000). Accesses to social services like health care, adult education and clean water are limited. In addition, the provision of basic infrastructures such as road and electricity is proportionally inadequate and insufficient to the population and to the vast geographic area of the region (Central Statistics Authority, 2011). Besides, low adult literacy rate (54 percent for men and 25.15 for women), low and poor quality health service coverage (only 10 rural hospitals) across the region (Ethiopian Central Statistics Authority, 2011), food insecurity and rural poverty are the daily phenomena of the region.

Therefore, this study argues that participatory development model has the potential to tackle multi-dimensional problems such as persistent poverty, food insecurity and lack of infrastructure in health and other basic

services. The participatory paradigm assumes primarily a holistic approach to development where the local community is placed at the centre for development process. It enables development agents to work with the local community and help the society use their potential for change and development. Participatory paradigm could also mobilize the community and their resources for social change and development. It enables them to decide on their future and empowers them to administer the desired changes and development. With dialogical participation, the local communities could understand their situations (economic, political, cultural or societal), identify root causes of their poverty, thereby stimulating them for change. With dialogue, the development paradigm invites all the development actors or stakeholders to participate in equal spirit for the common desired goal. The paradigm assumes that development is not one-time activity and stimulates the local community to actively participate in the development process for long period of time (Bordenave, 1994; Thomas, 1994; White, 1994; Mefalopulos, 2008; Servaes, 2008; Macphil, 2009).

Theoretical Framework: Participatory Theory

The failure of the modernization and dependency paradigms to achieve the desired changes necessitates the emergency of an alternative approach to development. The participatory paradigm which claims development as a participatory process of social change has become an option development perspective. Participatory paradigm has evolved as an important alternative approach for development since 1970s. This approach emerged in contrast to models and theories of the dominant development paradigm (Huesca, 2008; Mefalopulos, 2008; Serveas, 2008; Melkote & Steeves, 2001). This new paradigm is more focused on the cultural contexts of development rather than on its political-economic dimensions. By rejecting the one-dimensional approach that promoted economic growth as the sole path to development, this new approach promotes a multidimensional approach that includes equity, social justice, and economic growth. There was a major shift in conceptualizing development from economic growth towards human development. Rogers (1976) defined development as participatory process of social and economic change as well as equity and freedom.

Different from the top down and one-way communication approach of the modernization and dependency paradigms in the process of development, the participatory approaches acknowledge dialogical and horizontal nature of communication for achieving development. This alternative paradigm presumes the indispensible role of two-way communication for empowerment of the poor and marginalized sections of the developing nations and rejects the old assumption that mere transmission of information could not be enough for achieving development (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). Even though it is possible to apply two-way communication by using mass media, interpersonal and group communications allow for dialogical engagement with the local community.

The participatory paradigm assumes the participation of the local community in the development endeavors and promotes culture specific holistic development approaches. The main assumption of participatory paradigm is that the active involvement of the local community in all the development phases of development projects determines the success of achieving sustainable and effective development. In other words, development is better realized when the local community internalizes the desired change and is empowered to decide on the development issues and objectives. Failure to do this is the reason for the failure of development projects across developing nations (Mefalopulos, 2008). Another assumption of participatory approach is that there is no universal path to development that every culture should imitate. This, in turn, gives chance to the local people to use their cultures, knowledge and potential for sustainable development. Specifically, development is understood as not something that is imported from outside or from the west, rather it is something that can be achieved through the active engagement of the development actors (Bordenave, 1994; Thomas, 1994; White, 1994; Servaes, 2008; Macphil, 2009).

The increasing acceptance of the participatory paradigm both at theoretical and practical levels is mentioned in literatures of development communication (e.g., Moemeka, 1994; Jacobson & Servaes 1999; Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Waisbord, 2002; Mefalopulos, 2008; Mcphail, 2009; Servaes, 2008). For example, Mefalopulos (2008) argues participation has been getting recognition, and enjoying prestige in the development discourse. Similarly, Jacobson (2003) contends that participatory communication is the major subject of development

communication debate and research at the current times. In this new paradigm, participation has been considered as a basic ingredient for sustainable development. Therefore, this research used participatory communication theory as a theoretical framework of the study.

Generally, in light of the above mentioned development related contexts and the arguments discussed so far and by considering the potential roles of participatory communication to achieve development, this study explores the perception and practice of participatory communication in ORDA.

Objectives

The main objective of this research is to explore the perceptions and practices of participatory development communication in the Ethiopian context focusing on ORDA's experience. This is done to demystify the paradox of participatory communication between its theoretical and practical levels.

The specific objectives of the study are two-fold:

1. To identify the development practitioners' perceptions of participatory development communication in their development endeavors
2. To analyze and describe the practice of development communication of ORDA based on the participatory paradigm

Research Questions

1. How do the development practitioners of ORDA perceive participatory development communication in their development endeavors?
2. How do development practitioners of ORDA practice participatory development communication?

Research Methods

This study employed qualitative research method that enables readers to understand the perceptions and practices of development. In the present study, the experiences and perceptions of development practitioners or change agents and the local community towards development communication were explored based on the qualitative research perspectives.

ORDA as a Case Study

ORDA as a non-governmental and local development organization was founded in February 1984. It was originally established as Ethiopian Relief Organization (ERO). Combinations of economic, social and political crises that severely affected the region's people were pushing factors for the establishment of this indigenous organization. ORDA (2014). ORDA began its aid in 1984 by the members of Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) in Waghemera, just after two years of ANDM's birth. This created special affiliation between the organization and ANDM (ANDM, 2012). Even this special relation confused some of the local people, and sometimes people assumed ORDA and the government to be the same. It is also very clear that the local people accommodated the then insurgents during the war time, and they considered the aid an affirmative action for the war struck region and should sustain it as long as the government exists. ORDA has been working in Amhara region for three decades. The organization has carried out different development projects, and has been a long time partner of the people. The 1991 political change of the country was a turning point for ORDA to change itself into a local development organization. Then it was organized as a means for fighting against poverty via the development works.

Data Collection Techniques and Analysis Procedures

Among the various development intervention areas, the research focused on three zones. These are Wag Hemra Zone (Sekota District), North Wollo Zone (Wadela District) and South Gonder Zone (Lay Gayint District). The three districts where ORDA has been working for long period of time were the targets of the study. The field work was carried

out in Sekota, Wadela, and Lay Gayinet in three phases. The first phase focused on visiting the study sites, establishing rapport, making pilot study and arranging things for interview and FGDs. The second phase was organized for actual data gathering in the three sites (Sekota, Wadela & Lay Gayint) which are far from the researcher home town. The third round was gathering data at the head quarter of ORDA, Bahir Dar. Generally, the field work was carried out for a period of two months. This research used in-depth interview, FGD, document analysis and observation as data gathering instruments. The individual interviews and FGDs were conducted with development workers, experts and the local communities. Field notes and different documents of ORDA were used for analysis as a method of triangulating the data. Such triangulation is a means of achieving the validity and reliability of the data.

The interviews were conducted in a bottom up process in the same way as a participatory development paradigm does. That is, the interview started with the local people first, then it was conducted by the professionals and managers from the lower to higher levels. With the local community, two individual interviews and two FGDs were conducted in each of the three sites. Forty-two local community members participated in the FGDs. Twelve individuals from development practitioners and coordinators and five members of the management of ORDA were interviewed. On average, each FGD session took two hours while the individual interviews lasted for 45 to 120 minutes. The reason for such variation of time duration was because of data saturation.

The interviews with development workers, communication officers and managers of the organisation were conducted in the offices of the organisation while the interviews and FGDs with the local community were conducted in Farmers Training Centres and under the shade of big trees in the rural areas.

The data analysis process started with preparing the data for analysis; then it proceeded to deeper understanding of the data, representing the data and conducting interpretations of the wider meaning of the data using the theoretical framework of the study (Creswell, 2002, p.220). The research themes which emerged out of the data were classified into major thematic categories, which are presented and discussed below.

Results and Discussion

Based on the data, the major issues emerged out of communication activity of ORDA can be grouped into four major themes. These are communication as:

1. dissemination of development information
2. image building activity
3. relationship building, cooperation and information sharing
4. orientation and persuasion

The section below presents these dimensions of communication in ORDA focusing on its perception and practices.

Communication as Dissemination of Development Information

One of the dominant development communication perceptions of ORDA is related to dissemination of development information. The following excerpts from the development workers demonstrate how communication is perceived as dissemination of information. "Development communication is a dissemination of development information to the public" (DW interview 3). "It is reporting the development activities of the organization to inform and motivate the stakeholders about development" (DW interview 8). "It is advocating development to tackle poverty in the region and to secure food sufficiency" (DW interview 11).

From the excerpts above, it could be understood that development communication is perceived as dissemination of development information from the organization to the general public. The major communication channels for dissemination of information and advocating development are the regional mass media agency, namely the Amhara Television, Amhara Radio and Bekur Newspaper; and other national radios and television channels, namely Ethiopian Broadcast Corporation (EBC), Fana Broadcast Corporation (FBC) and Ethiopian Radio, and the print media, namely Addis Zemen newspaper. Experts from the communication and IT department of ORDA stressed that ORDA has good relationship with the above government owned mass media especially with the regional mass media agency. They added that such intimacy enables the organization to broadcast different programs about the performances of the organization such as water supply, environmental protection, irrigation projects and livelihood activities. The wider coverage of mass media using Amhara Mass Media Agency reflected on the soil

conservation, plantations of trees and environmental protection, irrigation projects, potable water coverage, introduction of apple and eucalyptus trees to farmers in the organizations project site such as Wadela, and the introduction of cassava in Bati project area.

The dissemination of information by the organization has two major objectives. The first is informing the general public about development activities and motivating them for development and self-reliance. The second is building the organization's image. In both cases information dissemination is predominantly success orientated, and focuses on portraying strives for economic development. A one-way top-down information dissemination model is also practiced in ORDA.

Emphasizing on success stories and framing development as economic growth are reflections of the country's journalistic practices at the wider level which dominantly follows development journalism model. That is, the development journalism model has become the major practice of development reporting in the country, especially by the government media (Skjerdal, 2011, Negeri, 2012). For instance, Negeri (2012) contends:

> Success stories mainly originated from government sources were given more emphasis in development reporting. The success stories are basically economic in nature and are framed from the government officials' perspectives. (2012, p. 128)

Generally, such results sound like the old Development Journalism under the Marxist perspective of Dependency theory. It deviates from the usual conception of participation. This form of development journalism, which reports chiefly the positive aspects of the economic development, is the dominant trend in the country. This has blinded the media, so they cannot see the gaps and malpractices of the development process. In other words, the media reports of the organization are made and broadcast by the aforementioned government owned media that claim to advocate development journalism in the way mentioned above. There are also media tour programs organized by ORDA that invite journalists from government mass media for the purpose of information dissemination and image building (CO 1, 2 &3).

Therefore, the aforementioned pushing factors and the organization's strong affiliation with the ruling party pave the way for consolidation of the information dissemination practices under the influence of old development journalism. This tends to be in contradiction with the role of mass media in the participatory communication paradigm that, unlike the old development journalism approach, the mass media should not fall under the control of the power holders. And, they also should work for the interest of the mass, at the grassroots level (Somavia cited in Servaes & Malikhao, 2005).

Generally, the development journalism practice and its economic framing of development reflect the strong affiliation of ORDA with the current government as indicated in the methodology part. Even such thinking of development journalism is shared by ORDA's communication officers. During the interview, one of the communication officers claims that he is a development journalist. Even such development journalism thinking of ORDA's communication officers is observed in the contents of the communication materials prepared by the communication and IT department. The communication materials such as the organization's magazines, newsletters and case stories published on its website are dominated by success stories. The communication works are primarily success stories of the economic dimension of development though ORDA has been facing several challenges in the development works.

Communication as an Image Building Activity

One of the dominant communication conceptions of ORDA is considering communication as an activity of image building. The main objective of such conception of communication is selling the organization's image mainly to the international donors. Once again communication is perceived as information transmission for image building. The interview responses of senior management members as well as the communication officers note that the main mission of the communication department is image building. For example, one of the participant said:

> The main function is image building. It serves to give information about the performance of ORDA to the local community and the donors. It is a means to get funds. It is a strategy for lobbying to secure funds. Such activity also informs the government about the performances of the

organization. It might also motivate the community for change. However, the communication work is not strong. It is working in a traditional manner. (MMT interview 4)

The position of the communication department in the organizational hierarchy reveals that communication is conceived as an image building activity which is similar to public relations (PR) work. When one observes the management structure of the organization, ORDA has a Communication and IT section placed at the headquarter level (see Figure 1) only where it functions as a unit. The structure does not extend itself to the district levels or project levels, where major development projects are implemented. This creates a huge vacuum in the communication work of the organization at actual development projects' implementation. As the organization's structure shows, there is a resource mobilization and communication office, which is found only in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia where there is no actual project implemented. This also implies that resource mobilization and communication does not seem to be necessary at grassroots level. Of course, one of the main purposes of this office is hunting funds from different organizations and donors residing in the capital and having such mobilization and communication department would be appropriate for such purpose.
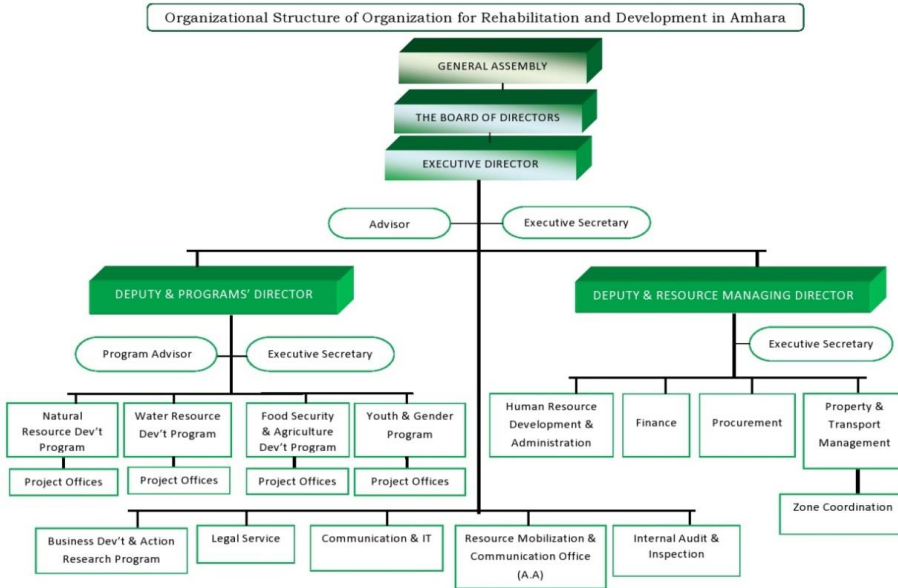
Figure 1: ORDA's organizational structure (ORDA 2014, taken from the organization website)

The absence of communication department out of Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa may indicate the marginalization of development communication in ORDA. The absence of communication departments and experts in the project offices could make the communication work to be performed by 'everybody' with no formal training and principles. That is, knowledge and required skills of development communication seem to be disregarded. In other words, the duty of communication in the project implementation area becomes everybody's responsibility, regardless of their profession. This could lead to unprofessional practices of communication in the development works. One of the research participants says:

> The major problem is that we do not practice communication scientifically. We work communication in a traditional way. Communication is not taken as a critical component of the development work. For example, there are times that we are working without communicating with the local community; we conduct baseline study without

> interacting with the local community. We do not work on awareness creation after the project design is approved for the local community. We don't do community conversation; hence we do not create a sense of belongingness. Because of these gaps, to be honest, there are failed projects. For example, last year there was a failed irrigation project called Gizan irrigation project found in Dangela, West Gojjam. It failed because of lack of communication. We did not communicate with the local people and the concerned government officials appropriately. (MMT interview 3)

The above participant indicated not only the poor status of communication practice in the development process but also the adverse effects that communication barriers had brought. That is, communication is marginalized in the development process as it has not been taken as a basic ingredient of the development process and such marginalization of communication might have caused projects to fail as the above research participant reported.

The organization's structure reveals that the communication's main function is regarded as image building. This, in turn, implies the little emphasis given to communication by the management of the organization. The interview responses of senior management members as well as the communication officers stressed that the main mission of the communication department is image building.

> The main function is image building. It serves to give information about the performance of ORDA to the local community and the donors… It might also motivate the community for change. However, the communication work is not strong. It is working in a traditional manner. (MMT interview 4)

Consistently, it seems possible to argue that the focus of the organization on image building and success stories reveals that there is the 'PR-ization' of development communication and such activity has become the refection of the country level picture. The 'PR-ization' here refers to the huge influence of public relations in the area of development communication and journalism in the country. The majority of the

development reports by the mainstream mass media of the country used government sources which mirror the influence of PR on development journalism practice. Regarding this, Negeri (2012) in his study wrote as follows:

> Eighty-five percent of the practitioners depend on government information for their development reporting. Media portrayal of the government as the champion of development and good governance and the selective presentation of only success stories equated the practices of government media journalists [to] image building exercise. On the other hand, the finding indicated that the practice related to investigating problems in development and good governance activities was found to be unsatisfactory.

The above excerpt reveals that the media environment of the country is under the influence of government public relations. In other words, the government public relations are major sources of the development reports disseminated by the government owned media. It is clear that working in a government-controlled media climate across the country has influenced ORDA's communication work. Therefore, practicing development journalism to report success-oriented reports with a top down approach using government (PR) sources could blur the boundaries between PR and development journalism in the country in general and in ORDA in particular.

Communication as Means of Building Cooperation and Relationship

This section presents the communication practices among the development teams of ORDA. ORDA's internal communication among the development staff is based on building and maintaining cooperation and relationship building. The development staff are also called "development army", a name taken from the current government's terminology which has been used to refer to the civil servants and others who are in the front line of development works. The development army is defined as an army who fight against poverty. The essence of development army refers to two things. One is the organization's strong affiliation with the ruling party, and the other is a means of considering the development workers the vanguard in the development activities of

the organization. ORDA calls the development workers an 'army' marching at the forefront in the fight against poverty. One of the development workers responded:

> We are a development army in the sense that we are fighting against poverty and food insecurity. We are at the front line in this war. We consider ourselves to be living in a war zone as far as poverty and chronic food insecurity are living with us. (DW interview 5)

The notion of development army may be good for initiating the development workers for social change and development. Drawing out poverty as a living matter in a war zone could drive strong commitment out of the workers. However, the notion is a mere propaganda as mentioned by the research participants. And hence, it could not mobilize the people at the grassroots level. They say it as "it is not something unique, it is simply propaganda. Nothing is changed in our work and life" (FGD 5). Therefore, it is difficult to become a winner in the battle against poverty and food insecurity without the genuine involvement of the main stakeholders – the local community.

In the field visit the researcher observed that there was a good team spirit among the development workers of ORDA in the three research sites (Sekota, Wadela and Nefas Mewcha project offices). They respect each other and communicate freely without considering the organizational hierarchy. The project coordinators were not bossy; rather they considered themselves a development team coordinator. Other staff members also see them as not bosses but coordinators. One of the project coordinators said:

> I do not consider myself a boss. I'm simply Ayelle. I am simply the development team coordinator. All staffs in our office call me by my name. I urge the new comers to do so and they accept it. There is no boundary between me and other team members. We are working for the common goal and development works that needs open interaction and smooth relationship. (MMT interview 1)

The researcher observed such open interaction and smooth communication among development teams in ORDA. When they communicate and discuss an issue, it seems that there is no position difference among them. There is a horizontal communication between

project managers, development experts, program coordinators, animators and promoters. At the project office level, interpersonal communication is the dominant communication mechanism. Since the staff size is manageable at the project office level (between 15 to 20 on average) interpersonal communication enables them to build a good relationship. It is also common to hear the development teams calling each other with pet names, a kind of informal communication that can be evidence for their intimacy and friendship. They consider communication at this level as a means of relationship building and cooperation.

> We are like a family living inside a house. We respect each other, communicate freely and work together for a common good. We have a good understanding and cooperation among the staff. I did not experience and observe any significant communication problem among members of the development team. (DW interview 2)

The quotation above and my observation reveal that the development team has been working in an equal situation. The team members are open to give and admit comments, suggestions and feedback about their performances. Interpersonal communication is the dominant communication method among the development workers. However, such free communication environment is not observed in the communication with the local community. That is, the communication between the local community and the project officers is dominantly top down. This is in contradiction with the notion of dialogical communication advocated by Freire (2005). ORDA has failed to broaden horizontal communication experience into its communication process with the local community.

Communication as an Orientation and an Activity of Persuasion

The fourth theme of communication focused on the communication works of ORDA for hard development issues. The point here is exploring how the organization communicates development issues to the local community. The communication works for the hard development issues such as water projects, environment protection, agriculture and livelihood projects are perceived as information transmission and persuasion activities. Typically, it is under the information transmission model characterized by a one-way and top-down communication approach. Community gathering is the dominant communication means of getting

the local community. The information from the development experts revealed that communication with the local community is perceived as information and persuasion activities. For instance, one interviewee noted:

> Communication in our context is giving orientation about the relevance, dimension, procedure and duration of the projects. It is used to convince the local community for participating in the project. (DW interview 3)

Such conception of communication is further substantiated with the following statements given by another communication practitioner of the organization:

> After planning of development projects, communication is used for the implementation. The purpose is to convince the local community in order to participate in the development works. For example, to construct potable water, they might contribute labor and materials such as sand, stone and water or they might cover the fence. We convince them to do these by informing the benefits of potable water. Participating in these activities creates a sense of belongingness. This makes the local community think as owners of the project. We call it community mobilization. Communication is used to mobilize the community to participate in the development works. (CO interview 2)

The above excerpt could show that formal communication work is not practiced during the design stage of development project. The communication work is started during the implementation of development projects for the purpose of information dissemination and persuasion of the local community. Pretty (1995, p. 61) refers to this form of participation as "passive participation". The scope of this type of participation is limited to information transmission. The local people are informed about development projects by change agents working around them.

Furthermore, the conception of communication as transmission and persuasion in the development process shapes conceptions of participatory communication. In other words, participatory communication is perceived as the gathering of the local community to

participate in the orientation and persuasion sessions about development projects. Such perception of participatory communication is stated by a development expert:

> Participatory communication is orienting the beneficiaries of development projects about the relevance of the projects. It is informing them about their potential contribution and their responsibility. It is the participation of the community members in these discussions. (DW interview 2)

These responses reveal that the main purpose of such communication (information transmission) is to orient and convince the community for labor and material contributions, and administration after handover of the projects. This shows communication has a purpose to inform predetermined objectives of development decided without the involvement of the local community. In this context, it is unlikely to use communication for empowerment rather it may be used to manipulate local community since the development workers (change agents) might work in favor of the organization's priority. Sonderling (1997) calls such role of communicators as 'agents of propaganda' since "the change-agent is always in the business of persuading the mass to accept the institutional propaganda" (Freire cited in Sonderling, 1997, p. 39). Therefore, there may not be genuine participation that empowers the community in the development process.

The preceding data and discussion reflect ORDA's low level of perception and practice of participatory communication. That is, the participatory communication culture of ORDA manifests information sharing stage which is not regarded as genuine participation by scholars like Mufalopulos (2003; 2008). Such phase of participatory communication is simply labeled as information dissemination from development experts to the local community in a top-down fashion. That is, the main purpose of communication is not empowering the community by redressing the power inequalities in the area but restricting them to persuasion and information sharing.

Development communication in general and participatory communication in particular is perceived as and practiced primarily for dissemination of development information, image building, awareness creation, and orientation and persuasion. This reveals that ORDA's practice on the

ground confirms that monologic model of communication for development is the dominant one which is at the expense of the dialogical model of communication. As a result, communication is not a basic ingredient of the development process. These reveal that the basic ingredients of the participatory development paradigm such as dialogue, empowerment, endogenous, involvement, cultural renewal, action and reflection and liberation (Freire, 2005; Moemeka, 1994; Mefalopulos, 2008) are missing in the local development efforts of ORDA. Using Huesca's (2008) explanation about the instrumental approach to participatory communication, such experience of ORDA reflects the absence of normative theories of participation as opposed to functional or administrative perspectives.

The data clearly showed that the organization conceived communication as a tool for development though the overall place of communication in the organization is not a central ingredient of the development process. The above functions of communication such as transmission and image building could be labelled as information dissemination levels of participation that indicates the lowest form of participation. It involves the stakeholders by simply disseminating information, and is usually referred to as pseudo-participation. It is also characterised by one-way, top-down communication approach (Mefalopulos, 2003; 2008). In participatory communication, however, scholars advocate that communication is not just a means towards predetermined development goals; it is rather a part of the development process that empowers the local community. Besides, the process could be dialogical and dynamic, not linear like the top-down approach of communication (Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Huesca, 2008). In contrast to this notion, the communication process is not an important issue for ORDA. The approach to communication is for its end result. This communication as a means to an end perspective is in line with Guimaraes's (2009) notion which elucidates that participation may, for instance, mobilize the local people's contributions via involvement in implementation of development works, to increase projects acceptance and a sense of ownership.

The findings clarify that communication is superficial and participatory communication is missing in the development process. ORDA does not invest on participatory development communication hence it affects the sustainable development process. ORDA's experience tends to contradict to the idea of scholars such as Mefalopulos (2005) and Melkote and

Steeves (2001) which states that people's genuine participation and empowerment are the two basic ingredients of communication for sustainable development. In conclusion, ORDA's communication works for sustainable development became insignificant and genuine participatory communication was not found in the development process. Both in the conception and practical levels, communication does not appear to be a basic component of the development process. This finding, thus, contradicts with the following notions of communication in the development process:

> We reaffirm that communication is a fundamental social process, a basic human need and a foundation of all social organisations. Everyone, everywhere, at any time should have the opportunity to participate in communication processes and no one should be excluded from their benefits (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007, p.18)

Generally, the conception of communication in the development efforts seems to be in line with one-way, top-down traditional approach. This is contrary to the new approach of the alternative (i.e., participatory/dialogical) paradigm that advocates the conception of communication as a two-way process requiring the active engagement of stakeholders (Mefalopulos, 2008). In other words, considering Mefalopulos category of participatory communication in a development process, it could be concluded that high levels of participation known as collaboration and empowerment (Mefalopulos, 2008) are hardly observed in ORDA's communication practices. More specifically, genuine participatory communication tends to be practiced rarely in the development projects of ORDA.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The major communication practice of ORDA is best described as one-way top down communication approach which is inconsistent with the principles of participatory communication. ORDA's communication work for sustainable development is superficial and genuine participatory communication is missing in the development process.

Therefore, it is good to recommend what should be done for successful development. ORDA needs to use two-way communication or dialogical model of communication at project planning and designing stage in order

to achieve sustainable development. In addition, the research results show that participatory communication tends to be marginalised in the development efforts of ORDA. Then, reversing such trend is critical and ORDA should mainstream participatory communication for sustainable development. Such action might include redefining the roles and objectives of communication for development in ways that are different from public relations. Furthermore, the study shows that the communication structure or unit in ORDA is found only in the head-quarter and this paralyses communication for development practices. It is important to note that the structure or communication unit should be reached up to the project office levels where actual development works are performed.

Studying other local development organizations' experience in other regions and compiling the lessons about participatory development communication could enrich our current knowledge and experience about participatory paradigm. Studying participatory communication in government development organizations is also a fertile area for future research to understand the perceptions and practice of participatory communication by different development actors.

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