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COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF SELECTED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOS) IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA
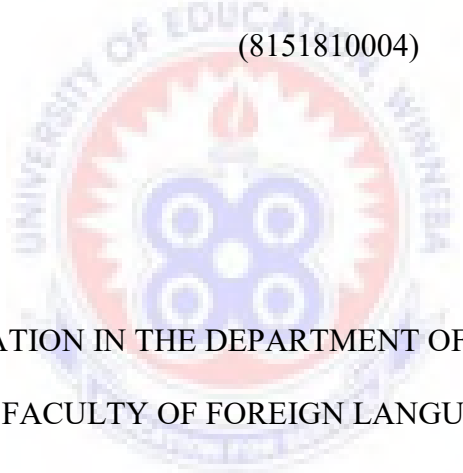
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COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF SELECTED CIVIL SOCIETY

ORGANISATIONS (CSOS) IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA

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DEGREE

JULY, 2017

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Patience Quaye, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE: ……………………………………

DATE: ……………………………………………

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: Mr. Kwesi Aggrey

SIGNATURE: ………………………………

DATE: ……………………………………

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All is well, that ends well. The Journey to Pursue an MPhil hasn't been without the valuable support from God and several individuals to see to its successful completion.

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To my best cheer leaders Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Deborah Quaye, Enoch and Benjamin Quaye I dedicate this thesis to you. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the communication strategies used by three Civil Society Organisations in the Northern Region of Ghana. It identified the nature of the communication strategies of the selected Civil Society organisations; and as well, the reasons for using these communication strategies and how they meet the needs of the community members. The three CSOs engaged in the study were the Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA), the Youth Empowerment for life, and the West African Network for Peace Building-Ghana (WANEP-Ghana). The qualitative research approach was employed for the study, and the design was a case study. Respondents were purposively sampled and responses were thematically analysed. The analyses were done from the perspective of the participatory communication and stakeholder theories. It was found that the nature of the communication strategies were dependent on the philosophy and operational focus of the CSOs. The study also discovered that the decisions to use particular communication strategies were influenced by a series of factors like the cultural space, purpose of the communication, needs of target audience, existing communication networks, budgetary considerations and the internal capacity of CSOs staff. It is recommended for WANEP, GDCA and YE4L to deploy pragmatic communication approaches such as using already existing traditional communication channels to improve the participation and empowerment of community members to lead the process in their own development.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background to the study

Recent years have witnessed a significant upsurge of organised private, non-profit activities in countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Ghaus-Pasha**,** 2004). Many centuries ago in ancient Greece, the concept of civil society as a political idea began (Souri, 2007). The recent idea of civil society was largely influenced by political theorist Thomas Paine and George Hegel then came up with the notion of civil society as an area parallel to, but separate from the state (Cerothers, 1999). The writings of Gramsci and Marx also influenced the concept of civil society (Makumbe, 1998). Antonio Gramsci, was among the 20th century thinkers who started a discourse among civil society to rebuild the idea of community (Buttigieg, 1995).

According to Fukuyama (1995), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have long been recognised as providers of relief and promoters of human rights and are increasingly viewed as critical contributors to economic growth, civic and social infrastructure essential for improving the quality of life for all.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have become key partners, contributing immensely in various aspects of development as Ghana charts its path to progress.

In spite of being central in the development circles, there is no universally acceptable definition of the term 'civil society'. Different scholars therefore have different positions on what is to be included or excluded in a definition of the concept (Fierbeck, 1998). Souri (2007) also notes that the present day rise of broadly related terms reflect the confusion and disagreement attached to the notion of Civil Society.

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Another contentious issue about civil society concerns was its relationship with the State, regarding whether it should be cordial or hostile and whether or not business associations should be included in the parameters of civil society.

Civil society can also be described as a domain of social interaction between the household and the state which is demonstrated in the norms of community cooperative, frameworks of voluntary association and networks of public communication (Veneklasen, 1994). CIVICUS World Alliance for Civic Participation (2013) defines civil society as "the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests."

Drah defined civil society as "the presence of a cluster of intermediary organizations/associations that operate between the primary units of society (like individuals, nuclear and extended families, clans, and village units) and the state. These intermediary groupings include labour unions and associations of professionals, farmers, fishermen, women, youth and students; religious and business organizations, cultural and recreational clubs, as well as political parties" (Drah 1993: 73).

The researcher believes that despite the ideological debate on what civil society is, civil society is there not as a counter to the state, but to compliment the efforts of the state in ensuring that needs of the masses are met. And these civil society organisations do by forming networks, associations either at the national, regional or community level with different mandates and interest to support an aspect of the society. It is in the light of this notion that this study takes a look at the various forms of civil society in the Northern region of Ghana and the strategies they use in communicating.

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The African experience of civil society is largely focused on the people's struggle against despotic rulers, repressive regimes and governments that violated both individual and collective rights (Makumbe, 1998).

In most sub-Saharan African countries, political developments in the late I980s and early I990s created an awareness and development of civil society organisations. The collapse of the socialist world in the late I980s, following Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost, appears to have triggered widespread civil unrest in Africa.

Most of the civic groups throughout Africa were destroyed by colonial governments because they were viewed with suspicion by the colonial rulers, who feared they could be used in mobilising the colonised against the colonisers (Makumbe, 1998). Additionally, the colonial regimes actively discouraged the formation of civic groups which could have participated in the political processes in their countries. Thus the only civic groups that took active part in politics during the colonial era were those whose membership comprised the settlers and the colonists themselves. For most of Africa, civil society would include trade unions, professional associations, church and Para- church organisations, resident, student, business and other special interest associations, the media, and various types of non-governmental organisations (Makumbe, 1998).

In Ghana the story is no different since there is a long tradition of civil society dating back to the pre-colonial era. Before colonisation, there were several CSOs, mainly community-based organisations (CBOs) that had been established to champion the cause of the indigenous people against any possible encroachment on their rights by the British colonialists (Gyimah-Boadi, 2000 cited in Abdulai and Quantson 2009). Among these

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were the Fante Confederation and the Aborigines Rights Protection Society, with the aim of protecting the rights of the indigenous population (WANEP, 2004).

Ghana witnessed an upsurge of CSOs during the inter-war period in the 1930s. The Ghana Associational Life and Protest Movements as well as voluntary self-help organisations and ethnic solidarity movements sprang up as part of the process of rapid urbanisation and intense social mobilisation of that period. Following independence in 1957 up to the early 1980s, the relations between the state and civil society became fluid with different degrees of incorporation, co-optation and control. Civil society organisations operated in an oppressive political climate which left them little room to participate in the public policy arena (Abdulai & Quantson, 2009). In the early stages of the PNDC revolution, civil society organisations such as the churches were viewed not only as potential threats to the regime, but as political competitors struggling to secure power (Hutchful, 2002). Two distinct kinds of CSOs came up in 1992. They were the pro-democracy CSOs, which included organisations such as the Ghana Bar Association, National Union of Ghana Students and the Christian Council (cited in Darkwa et al, 2006).

Government in 1995 individually drafted an NGO Bill which mandated both foreign and local NGOs to register with an Advisory Council. The Bill described NGOs as non-political entities (Mohan, 2002). The Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC) and other CSOs however resisted the Bill on the grounds that it was a direct attack on the independence of NGOs. The advocacy roles of CSOs became more prominent in the 2000s with most concentrating on service delivery because of the gap created as a result of cuts in government expenditure. But prior to 2000, there were a

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number of CSOs like the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), and Africa Centre for Human Development, amongst others which supported community development initiatives. It is worth noting that until the late 80s, most NGOs focused on service delivery and were not actively engaged in policy dialogue and influence (Abdul`ai & Quantson, 2009). For example; donors played a crucial role in pushing for an improvement in the environment where CSOs engage. This was based partly on the fact that the Government of Ghana lacked the necessary institutional capacity to implement the Program of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) which was a huge programme and also for local CSOs to act as vehicles for implementation of the donors' programmes in the country (Gray, 1996). Additionally, the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) process required the active participation of CSOs, and therefore the government's options were limited.

Talking of poverty reduction programmes, most CSOs in Ghana are concentrated in the zones of highest poverty, or where donor programmes are most concentrated, with the northern and eastern regions having the largest number (CIVICUS, 2013). Giving credence to this is the 2010 population and housing census which states that the national poverty statistics puts poverty level in the Northern region of Ghana at 52%. (CALID, country strategic plan 2011-2020). Based on the 2010 population and housing census, the Northern Region has a population of 2,468,557 people. This comprised of 1, 210,070 men and 1,257,855 women. It shares boundaries with the Upper East and the Upper West Regions to the north, the Brong Ahafo and the Volta Regions to the south, the Republic of Togo to the east, and La Cote d' Ivoire to the west. It was divided into 20 districts in

2009 with Dagomba, Nanumba, Mamprusi, Gonja and Komkombas as the main ethnic groups.

Inferencing from the above, the advocacy on efforts made to reduce poverty level in the Northern Region is done through communication. Communication according to Galanes et al. (2004) is a process in which signals produced by people are received, interpreted, and responded to by other people. Communication is more than transmitting information. It can be used to influence and inform people through community mobilization and to help modify behaviours by educating and managing change where people have options to change their ways of life (Servaes, 2008). Mefalopulos (2008) stated that it is about generating new knowledge and consensus in order to facilitate change. Without communication, the whole system of representation and decision making comes to a deadlock (McChesney, 2007). Communication is a key element of project success in development projects. Communication is the link between cells, without it nothing would work.

Communication strategy is defined as the definitions, choices and objectives that are implemented and applied using its communication resources in order for the company to prosper now and in the future by setting its course and aligning its central targets and actions (Juholin, 2009). Projects are built around successful communication and more than half of management problems in projects are more or less caused by poorly looked-after communication (Ruuska, 1996).

The above on CSOs and the highest numbers in the Northern region makes it important to study what is happening in terms of development projects aimed at reducing

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the poverty levels, more so when communication is a central part of advocacy and hence the need to adopt various communication strategies in order to achieve a desired result.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) largely use communication to achieve their goals (Lewis, 2005). The aim of communication in development projects is to enable the people who benefit from the programme have relevant information so they can be part in the planning, development, implementation, and sustainability of the projects. The communication therefore takes various forms of strategies.

Communication strategy has become an important aspect of development initiatives. Many works have been done with respect to the use of communication strategies. For example, Horlali (2012) looked at how health institutions like the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIS) use communication strategies in its work, Ouwenhoven, Ernestus and van Mulken (1999) studied the various communication strategies used by educational institutions in teaching new language learners, and Odetola (2013) researched on the communication strategies used for entertainment awards. However, all of these works were in areas other than civil society organisations. This study therefore looks at communication strategies used by civil society particularly selected CSOs in the Northern Region of Ghana.

1.3   Objectives of the Study

There has been a significant growth in the activities of civil society in the late twentieth century and in Ghana CSOs are playing an important role in the country's development efforts. These organisations (CSOs) employ various forms of communication. This study therefore seeks to;

1. Identify the nature of communication strategies of selected Civil Society organisations in the Northern Region of Ghana.

2. Investigate the reasons for using these communication strategies.

3. Examine how these communication strategies meet the needs of the community members.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives above, the following research questions guided the conduct of the study:

1. What is the nature of Communication Strategies of selected Civil Society Organisations?

2. What are the reasons for using those communication strategies?

3. How do those communication strategies meet the needs of community members?

1.5 Significance of the Study

According to Cooke, Hague and Ackay (2016), the Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report using the 6th Ghana Living Standards Survey, poverty in Ghana is a rural phenomenon concentrated among food crop farmers. It further notes that at the regional level, the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions continue to have the highest poverty rates, with the Northern region doubling as the region with the least progress in poverty reduction as well as the region with the largest number of poor people out of the ten regions of Ghana.

A study on the activities of CSOs and their modes of operation become very important because of what they are doing in poverty zones. as the results could serve as a guideline to Civil Society Organisations, development partners as well as other

organisations interested in community works to plan, design and implement programs, projects, other social interventions as well as aide their sustainability results. Development practitioners and academia can also rely on to modify their strategies in terms of content for implementation for teaching. It is also expected that the results of this study would add to existing literature on development communication and contribute to scholarly works on communication strategies.

1.6   Scope of the study

The study is focused on Civil Society Organisations to investigate the communication strategies used by Civil Society Organisations in carrying out their activities. CSOs in the Northern Region of Ghana were specifically chosen for this study given the fact that most CSOs are concentrated in the poorer regions and the northern region is one of the regions.

1.7   Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The introductory chapter comprises the background to the study, the problem statement, research questions, objectives of the study, and significance of the study as well as the study's scope. Chapter Two discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study. It also presents a review of relevant literature and related works pertaining to the study. Chapter Three throws light on the methodology. This comprises the sample selection and method of analysing the data among others. The presentation and discussion of findings is in Chapter Four. Chapter Five contains the summary and conclusion of the study as well as the recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature related to communication strategies of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The materials reviewed in this section include academic journals, books and commissioned reports. A number of themes were reviewed on the objectives of the study. The thematic areas explored include the evolution of civil society, nature of civil society in Ghana, strategic communication, and significance of strategic communication among others. The theoretical underpinning of the study is also presented in this chapter.

2.2   Evolution of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

The concept of civil society is a controversial issue in political and cultural circles in Africa and other parts of the world. This is because civil society has been used and misused for cultural capital and political expediency, a situation which has stymied the progress of civil society organisations as mechanisms of development (Hassan, 2009). Civil society is a Western idea which can be traced to Liberal and Marxist traditions. Both traditions emphasise the contribution of social institutions in either strengthening or challenging state power. The idea of civil society was introduced first as closely knit with the concept of Law and Social Contract in the 17th and 18th centuries Europe. As a mark of political modernity politics at the time was detached from religion and traditions to that of the social sphere (Bratton, 1994; Hassan, 2009).

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One of the earliest uses of the term 'civil society' was to set apart a public sphere in which social relations were not based on fixed hierarchy of legal institutions but rather a free association of individuals. Classical writers such as the philosopher Georg Hegel, and Karl Marx, the revolutionary theories, viewed civil society as an inclusive concept of society without state. Civil society was considered as the emergence of a distinct political economy in which individuals related to each other as independent agents rather than as people who filled prescribed social roles. Understandings of Civil Society was further shaped in the 19th century mainly by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). Gramsci considered civil society as the aggregate of the super structures such as the trade unions, associations, political parties, the media and churches (Bratton, 1994; Brown, 2000).

In spite of its early emergence in Africa in the colonial days, Civil Society was given fresh breath in Africa in the latter parts of the 19th century. Along with democratisation, civil society was carried from South America to Africa through Eastern Europe, and was adapted in the African context. The concept of 'civil society' has since become an integral part of the political discourse in Africa, and international development organisations are preoccupied with its promotion (Neubert, 2014).

Scores of scholars (Bratton, 1994; Hassan, 2009, Lewis, 2002; Mamdani 1996) have observed that over the years civil society has been understood and practiced differently in non-western societies. This difference accounts for the early failure of donor agencies to achieve significant local development using the civil society approach. Civil society was exported by Western donors in the attempt to build good governance in developing or

transitional countries. In his (Hassan, 2009) view, the conceptualisation of civil society in Africa is much different and wider as a result of the local social structure.

Hassan (2009) argues that in many rural regions of Africa, ethnic communities constitute another example of African Civil Society, as they enjoy a certain degree of independence from the state. They generally strive to fulfil local communal needs such as local schools and health care centres, besides communicating local demands to the state (p 69). This shows that the understanding and practice of civil society in Africa differs from other parts of the world. Notwithstanding, civil society in Africa and other parts of the world is complete and separate from the state although it functions within the state.

In accounting for the difference in the conceptualisation of civil society in Africa and Western states, Bratton (1994) explains that it was because of the difference in the level of socioeconomic development and cultural attitudes in different regions of the world. Bratton (1994) suggests that it is normal, even expected for civil society organisations in Africa to be different from those in other parts of the world. As a result, Bratton (1994) argues that it is regrettable that many development agencies and other interventionists tend to put too much faith in civil society as magic wands to bring about or restore democracy, economic growth and social justice in every state.

In spite of the conceptual differences, one generally marked feature of civil societies is that throughout their evolution, civil society organisations have been concerned about state domination of public life. Civil society organisations also press for reforms in the wanton resort to revolution as strategies for political change and election (Brown, 2000).

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The evolution of civil society and the meaning of the concept have clearly been associated with various meanings. The concept can be used both as an analytical construct for understanding the relationship between the state and other actors in the public sphere, and it can also be understood as a policy tool for development intervention. After examining the local meanings being created around the concept of civil society mainly in African contexts, Lewis (2002) avers that civil society has become part of a continuing universal negotiation between citizens, states and markets around the world. This is because as Mamdani (1996) indicates, much of the discourse on civil society organisations has to do with competing ideologies about how to match universal governance ideals against existing institutions (whether traditional or modern).

From the perspectives of the researcher, civil society has come to stay and especially in Africa where there are lots of interventions needed to ameliorate the hardships of citizens, civil society continues to be more or less the mediator between not only governments but donor agencies, communicating problems or issues on human rights, service delivery, economics, governance, and solutions as well as results. This they do using mostly advocacy.

2.3   Nature of Civil Society Organisations in Ghana

Broadly, CSOs can be described to include all non-market and non-state organisations outside of the family in which people organise themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. CSOs are voluntary associations whose governance and direction comes from citizens or constituency members, without any major government-controlled participation or representation (Neubert, 2014).

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Keane (2009) posits that whilst the concept Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) is sometimes used interchangeably with CSO, NGOs are better understood as a subset of CSOs involved in development cooperation, although some NGOs have no clear boundaries. Constituency-based organisations, such as professional associations or trade unions, for example, usually do not identify themselves as NGOs, but rather as CSOs.

As the umbrella term, CSOs consist of diverse set of organisations ranging from small, large, non-formal community-based organisations to the large, high-profile, international NGOs working across the world through local partners. The governance structures of CSOs are varied, a function of their mandate and constituency. However, Keane (2009) contends that all NGOs share a common characteristic, which is their independence of direct government control and management.

It is quite impossible to write about a civil society that is the same all over Africa (Neubert, 2014). This is because the fifty-four countries of Africa show significant differences in culture, social structure and economics, and they cannot simply be clubbed together for convenience. It further narrows down to civil society organisations in the Northern Region of Ghana (Neubert, 2014).

Ghana has an active and diverse civil society sector which has over the time distinguished itself as a significant participant and contributor to good governance and development in the country since the 1980s. There are various kinds of civil society organisations (CSOs) operating in Ghana. Marinkovic (2014) identified the following four levels of civil society organisations in Ghana, namely; national civil society organisations, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs), networks and coalitions.

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Civil society organisations by their structure and functions commit to specific areas. Civil society organisations in Ghana are mostly focused on the following thematic areas; education, health and governance, environment and social protection for the vulnerable. There are also vibrant civil society organisations in Ghana focused on human rights, women's rights, judicial processes and poverty reduction among others. Marinkovic (2014) asserts that CSOs have been a crucial factor in shaping the conventional conceptualisation of governance in Ghana, by pushing the government to improve upon public services, demanding rights of citizens and the overall enhancing of democracy in the country.

The activities of civil society organisations in the Northern region are well documented as the region has a significantly high concentration of civil society organisations, especially NGOs. According to Ateng and Abazaami (2016), civil society organisations in Northern Ghana are well known for their activities in peace building and development. While also admitting that a number of NGOS have made important development interventions in the Northern region. Dietz, der Geest, and Obeng (2016) indicate that living conditions have not seen much positive change.

It follows from this review that civil society organisations are different in their operations. This difference could emanate from even the composition of the objectives that these organisations were set up for. Although civil society organisations in Ghana are involved in diverse activities, most of these activities can be put under the umbrella of development (socio-economic) intervention.

2.4   Strategic Communication

Strategic communication is an important communication concept, but it means different things to different people. Paul (2011) defines it as the coordinated actions, messages, images and other forms of signalling or engagement intended to inform, influence, or persuade selected audiences in support of particular objectives. Praised as one of the clearest deconstructions of the concept, Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Vercic and Sriramesh (2007) define strategic communication in its broadest sense as the purposeful communication to advance an organisation's mission. Hallahan et al. (2007) further hold the view that strategic communication implies people are engaged in the deliberate practice of communication for or on behalf of organisations, causes and social movements. Both definitions consider strategic communication as a form of goal-oriented definitive communication, however the earlier definition (Paul, 2011) suggests that strategic communication involves persuasion or manipulation.

He contends that the earliest use of the concept strategic communication was in the fields of military and government communications in the United States of America (USA).

One American Defence periodical, the trouble with strategic communication described strategic communication as focused United States Government processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences in order to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favourable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programmes and actions synchronised with other elements of national power (Murphy, 2008). From the military and government perspective, strategic communication involves understanding and engaging key audiences

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in order to change perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and ultimately behaviours to help achieve military goals.

As a concept, strategic communication is multidisciplinary (Holzhausen & Zerfass, 2015). Although many developments in the field of strategic communication have emerged from the field of Public Relations, strategic communication is practiced also in the fields of political communication, Health communication, advertising, Public diplomacy, management, development and marketing (Holzhausen & Zerfass, 2015). Suffice it to say scholars in the fields mentioned above have also made important contributions to the understanding of strategic communication. Sequel to this, strategic communication can be seen as an umbrella term suitable for describing intentional interaction and engagement activities in various disciplines.

Meanwhile, strategic communication is also increasingly recognised as a budding subfield within communication. As such, it explores the capacity of all organisations for engaging in purposeful communication. Strategic communication in this sense is not limited to government, military and corporations, but also civil society organisations. The core of the approach is its emphasis on strategy rather than on specific tactics (Argenti, Howell & Beck, 2005). Murphy (2008) holds that strategy is about the use of ways and means to achieve definitive ends. The strength of a communication strategy thus depends on the 'strategy' (the how) organisational leaders and communicators seek to adopt to utilise the capabilities (means) available to achieve particular objectives (ends).

It stands to reason that strategic communication as an approach is particularly valuable given the increasing challenges faced by organisations in reaching their target audience,

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differentiating among communication activities and achieving the right alignment in message selection and medium choice.

2.5   Communication strategies for Civil Society Organisations

Civil Society organisations serve as platform for dialogue and local capacity building but also as private sector partners, government watch dogs, and government service providers (Mamdani, 1996). It is part of the nature of civil society organisations to encourage the free exchange of ideas and experiences between various categories of stakeholders. This role of Civil Society Organisations requires that they resort to purposeful and internal communication in order to facilitate inclusion and local participation. Suffice to say, CSOs require communication strategies to function effectively (Azcarate & Balfors, 2013).

Steyn (2004) observes that communication strategies emerge from overarching management strategies and the two must necessarily be in sync. As such, a communication strategy can be seen as the outcome of a strategic decision by senior communicators and top managers regarding the identification and management of communication with strategic stakeholders. From this perspective, communication strategy acts as a framework within which organisational objectives are implemented. Thus, having a communication strategy is a requirement for effective management.

A Communication Strategy is an idea or series of actions that are designed to guide the external communications efforts of an organisation. Communication strategies help CSOs to focus their communication and outreach efforts around a certain set of goals – usually the mission and objectives of an organisation or a particular project (Shaheen & Haneef,

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2014). A communication strategy is necessary to help CSOs effectively promote their activities among stakeholders and partners. A good communication strategy when effectively executed also contributes to the success of development intervention or programmes (Shaheen & Haneef, 2014).

The communication strategies of many Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) especially Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) feature the following essential elements; advocacy, social mobilisation and behaviour change communication. (UNICEF, 2008; Azcarate & Balfors, 2013). Effective communication relies on the synergistic use of three strategic components. The three elements are explained further.

2.5.1   Advocacy

Advocacy is the active support of a cause or idea expressed through methods and tactics that influence the opinions and decisions of people and organisations. The advocacy component of NGO communication strategy informs and motivates stakeholders and partners to establish a supportive environment necessary for the attainment of programme objectives and development goals. In the socio-economic development context, the goals of advocacy are multifaceted. Advocacy seeks to facilitate the enactment or change of particular laws, policies and regulations. It can also influence the distribution of resources or other decisions that may affect people's lives and ensure that such decisions lead to implementation (UNICEF, 2008).

Advocacy may be broadly directed at policy makers such as government officials, politicians and opinion leaders, but also private sector partners whose decisions impact many lives, as well as those whose opinions and actions influence policy makers.

Advocacy as a component of NGO's communication strategy is fundamentally political, hence a deeper appreciation of local level or community political dynamics is at the core of effective advocacy (Azcarate & Balfors, 2013). Noting this, Sprechman and Pelton (2001) suggest that the success of advocacy tactics or methods depends on the character, approach and credibility of advocates and the receptiveness of those they are seeking to persuade.

2.5.2   Social Mobilisation

This is another basic component featured in communication strategies for its instrumentality in strengthening human and institutional resource development at local level. Social mobilisation is the bed-rock of participatory approaches in community development and poverty reduction programmes. This component engages and facilitates involvement of institutions, community group/networks and other identifiable groups (social, civic, religious) to increase the demand for or maintain progress toward particular development objectives. Social mobilisation strengthens participation of local stakeholders in local decision-making, and enhances their access to social and production services. In resource constrained programmes especially, social mobilisation ensures efficiency in the use of locally available financial resources, and increases the opportunities for asset-building by the local people (Mukundan, 2003; Shaheen & Haneef, 2014).

The successful Social mobilisation of different stakeholder groups, requires that there is improved access to public information on local development issues directly linked with the livelihood and interests of the identifiable groups. This can be attained effectively by facilitating free access to public information on local development programmes and

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activities. Another way of achieving effective social mobilisation is to help stakeholders form Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in key sectors of the rural economy to promote mass mobilisation. This has been a critical factor in the success and sustainability of many rural development projects executed by NGOs (Mukundan, 2003).

2.5.3 Behaviour change

Behaviour change communication requires face-to-face interaction with stakeholders as much as practicable. Behavioural change in the communication strategy of NGOs involves dialoguing with individuals or groups to inform, motivate, plan or problem-solve with the objective of promoting and sustaining behaviour change (UNICEF, 2008). Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) is a process in which communication is used to motivate people to adopt and sustain better behaviours and lifestyles. Sustaining an improved behaviour often requires a continuing investment in BCC as part of an overall intervention or programme (Shaheen & Haneef, 2014).

Behaviour Change Communication has been pivotal in the success of many health and development programmes implemented by NGOs. These NGOs rely on behaviour change communication to improve people's health and social wellbeing, including family planning and reproductive health, maternal and child health, and prevention of infectious diseases. BCC is also present in the communication strategies of programmes targeted at improving sanitation conditions and financial discipline among others, because all such changes are linked to behaviour. Successful behaviour change communication is necessarily face-to-face and requires that stakeholders are transparent and specific about the desired change, and how to achieve this change (Shaheen & Haneef, 2014).

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Although the various elements such as clarity, transparency, and the specific change desired have been described separately, effective communication strategies have the right balance of a mix of these elements. Featuring these elements in communication strategies ensures message harmonisation and message integration, as well as helps development partners prioritise effective communication intervention - focusing on the right message, to the right audience at the right time. The communication strategy is mostly followed by an implementation plan and a framework for monitoring and evaluation. These are intended to minimise duplication, enhance synergy and optimise efficiency.

2.6   Significance of Strategic Communication for Civil Society Organisations

Strategic Communication is essential for the success of any project or programme, whether it is initiated by State or Private actors or Non-Governmental Organisations. Communication strategy is designed around the goals of a project or programme. Communication strategies vary from project to project; that notwithstanding, communication always plays an important role in the activities of NGOs because of its many contributions to the success of projects and programmes.

2.6.1   Social change

Social change is alterations of culture, social structure and behaviour over time. This is a complex process involving interactions between various social elements such as economic, political, environmental and personal facets of human endeavour (Abah, 2009). Some development projects are designed to achieve some form of desirable social change, and effective communication enhances the chances of achieving the goals of such projects. In the social change process for example, the role of communication is to galvanise stakeholders to take into their own hands the communication processes that will

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allow them to make their voices heard (Luecke, 2003). In that process, communication seeks to establish horizontal dialogues with planners and development practitioners to take decisions on the development issues that affect their lives and to ultimately achieve social changes for the benefit of their locality.

In this regard communication activities are designed with the intent to reduce or break barriers and to foster a peer to peer relationship between development experts and other stakeholders. This eye-ball to eye-ball relationship fostered through strategic communication is what makes development interventions sustainable as it is owned by all stakeholders (Luecke, 2003).

Strategic communication also helps change agents to garner stakeholder support for projects. Change agents like NGOs require solid communication strategies that suit the local context and are responsive to the needs of that very society in order to involve and mobilise communities in a development project (Cabanero-Verzosa, 2003; Luecke, 2003). Communication is therefore an important part of the development plan and mobilisation of communities because its main objective is to establish systems, modes and strategies that would provide opportunities for all stakeholders to understand the development project easily. This is crucial as deriving maximum benefits from the development project is corollary to understanding the project (Cabanero-Verzosa, 2003). Participatory development communication is used under such circumstances to involve the local community in development process and procedures using different techniques and at various levels of development research and implementation.

Participatory communication requires the involvement of the local community in not only the implementation of projects but also in the planning phase so they can work more effectively and feel a sense of partnership and empowerment (Tufte, 2009). There are four levels of community participation, namely; passive participation, participation by consultation, participation by collaboration, and empowerment participation (Tufte, 2009). Suitable communication strategies can ensure the highest levels of participation desired for any particular development project.

2.7   The four levels of community participation

Participation is essentially about control and power to decide, these can only be achieved through involvement. Stakeholder participation thus implies getting stakeholders involved so that they can exercise control and power to influence decisions (Mwiru, 2015). However, there are different levels of participation. Tufte (2009) suggests that there are four main levels of stakeholder participation, namely; passive participation, participation by consultation, participation by collaboration and empowerment participation.

At the Passive Participation level, people are told what is going to happen or has already happened. This level of participation usually involves top down information with experts in charge. The participation by consultation occurs when stakeholders are consulted, and external agents listen to the views of the stakeholders which are usually their problems and possible solutions. Stakeholders are not really involved in the decision making process at this stage. Further to that, stakeholders may also get together for joint analysis and joint actions; this is what is referred to as participation by collaboration. Participation

by collaboration may involve the use of new institutions or strengthening existing ones to enable and empower people to have a stake in maintaining structures or practices. At the empowerment participation level, people or stakeholders are mobilised and empowered to take decisions independent of external agents. The last level, namely empowerment participation is the highest level of participation (Mwiru, 2015; Tufte, 2009).

Further, strategic communication facilitates the empowerment of local stakeholders and helps them accept "change" more easily. It is difficult to implement any meaningful development intervention and get the desired goals without empowering the local community and preparing it to embrace the change (Adedokun, Adeyemo, & Olorunsola, 2010). The communication strategy adopted by change agents and development practitioners in conveying the message to the local audience will affect the results of a development project. The communication strategy determines the way of exchanging ideas and establishing contacts with the community, it also helps to establish a strong sense of empowerment in local stakeholders, and helps to get the desired results (Adedokun, Adeyemo, & Olorunsola, 2010).

Moreover, greater social impact is achieved when communities decide their own agenda and identify different stakeholders with whom to work closely or independently to get better results. Communication is an integral part of the social change so its role in the change process in society is not in doubt. However, by using the right strategy for communication, NGOs can have a more resounding and lasting social impact (Luecke, 2003). Strategic Communication helps project stakeholders to sit together, dialogue and to identify their needs and make a plan to fulfil those needs through various practical

steps. Participatory communication for example is an important approach to engaging the local people as active citizens in society and helps in developing different life skills for a better living (Luecke, 2003; Tufte, 2009).

Additionally, effective communication strategy is an essential tool for building and maintaining a good social and working relationship with all partners and stakeholders throughout the project life cycle. This is because it ensures constant change of ideas and interactions among different people but also for keeping relationships intact and for resolving conflicts that may emerge. Husain (2013) sees effective communication as a necessary part of every aspect of group functioning.

However, community development is more complex as it is a complete process of involving and motivating people from different backgrounds. This calls for a well thought out strategy in the community development process, for engaging the masses in different tasks related to development and managing conflicts that may come up in the process. As a result, good communication strategies help to define, identify, analyse and solve problems that come up during projects (Adedokun, Adeyemo, & Olorunsola, 2010).

Existing literature (Luecke, 2003; Mwiru, 2015; Tufte, 2009) shows that strategic communication is beneficial to NGOs in a number of ways. Strategic communication enhances the process of achieving project goals, it also ensures involvement and mobilisation. Strategic communication is again reported to ensure the empowerment of local stakeholders and leads to improved social impact of communication projects. Lastly, strategic communication was found to facilitate conflict management and helps in keeping the relationship intact. A good mix of mass media tools, interpersonal

communication tools, traditional media tools and information and communication technology (ICT) when used effectively can help NGOs in realising the identified significance of strategic communication.

2.8 Factors influencing effective communication strategy

A number of factors influence the effectiveness of communication strategies used in local communities by NGOs. Imoh (2013) explains that the low social and economic status of rural inhabitants who have historically been marginalised politically in the decision-making process affects their personal confidence and trust for development projects. In connection with this, social factors such as poverty, illiteracy, poor housing and the lack of basic services such as sanitation and clean water are, for instance, important factors that also limit the effective implementation of communication strategy.

Further, the near absence of formal communication channels, institutions and workers to convey vital development messages and services to remote rural communities have made it difficult to achieve the goals of development programmes targeting rural communities (Imoh, 2013). These factors may make even modest development inventions less feasible owing to the lack of supporting infrastructure (Cabanero-Verzosa, 2003). The social context within which communication strategies are implemented also has significant influence on the effectiveness of the communication strategy. As a result of this, the feasibility of particular strategies ought to be examined in line with the contextual constraints affecting the execution of the communication strategy (Gusta, 2008). Sufficient to say that communication strategies and consequently the messages involved must be created and fine-tuned to fit the mental and cultural context that are acceptable to

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local communities. Sometimes this alone can slow the project as targets may have to be revised as often as possible to suit level of readiness of stakeholders.

Poor facilitative research and unavailability of reliable data can also hamper the effectiveness of communication strategy to a great extent. Cabanero-Verzosa (2003) opines that much of the formative research that precedes development of a communication strategy should help clarify a number of issues such as the behaviour - related actions already being taken by project communities. Good formative research should also help in elucidating motivations of local level stakeholders in taking particular actions; and also ascertaining what keeps them from not acting in a particular way. Poor formative research or the unavailability of such information may render well intentioned communication strategies impotent even before implementation begins (Imoh, 2013).

The successful implementation of communication strategies also depends on the nature and approach of the development project. Community development is now integrated, multi-sectoral, multidimensional and participatory. Projects that do not take into consideration this paradigm of development interventionism are destined to struggle and ultimately fail no matter the communication strategy deployed (Sarvaes & Liu, 2007). Accordingly, development partners, change agents and communication experts are embracing the challenge to forge new alliances with both local and national governments, civil society organisations and the private sector. Similarly, identifiable groups such as traditional institutions, women groups and the youth are also seen as important development partners whose involvement ensures that development policies, plans, and

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programmes targeting the rural people are sensitive, inclusive, endogenous and participatory (Sarvaes & Liu, 2007).

Pressend, Mthethwa, Hlabane, and Mara (2001) report that; there are also inherent challenges in effectively communicating some complex messages to local populations. Environmental issues for instance may be complex and sometimes difficult for some constituents of the public to understand owing to technicalities and legalities involved. Some health issues are also difficult to communicate for similar reasons. These complexities may make it difficult to ensure true dialogue and participatory communication, as local knowledge and understanding may fall short of appreciating some of the complex issues brought to the fore by development agents.

This section has brought to the fore the need for strategic communication to be effective. it has suggested that for strategic communication to be effective it should take into account the factors that determine or influence the conditions and lived experiences of stakeholders. Also, while it is essential to be purposeful and intentional about communication, civil society organisations must endeavour to understand the local dynamics as these affect how local people perceive development programmes, the problems they face, and their readiness to actively participate in strategies to overcome the identified issues.

2.8.1 The influence of Traditional Values, Norms, Customs on Communication strategy.

Most local communities in which NGOs work are rural, conservative and have strong ties to traditional values, norms and customs (Marinkovic, 2014). As a result, one of the key concerns of NGOs in deploying strategic communication is the cultural milieu within

which projects are implemented. This implies the involvement of Interested and Affected Parties (IAPs) or stakeholders in the planning, design and ultimately decision-making processes.

Lederache, (1995) defines culture as the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them. Cultural values, norms and customs can also be described as the shared patterns of thought and ideals that identify the members of a culture group while also distinguishing those of another group. Culture has a strong influence on peoples understanding of themselves and the world, as a result, the development of a mind-set, with accompanying values and habits, is a big part of socio-economic improvement (Lederache, 1995).

Cultural values, norms and customs affect how people think and act, and more importantly, the kind of criteria by which people judge others. In the light of this, cultural meanings render some behaviours as normal and right and others strange or wrong. This causes some challenges for strategic communication in local areas as messages in development projects need to be clear, precise, accurate and above all culturally appropriate (Madzingira, 2001).

The influence of cultural values, norms and customs in communication is conspicuous for some projects and yet latent in others. There may be clash of cultures and even serious conflict when change agents and communication practitioners do not adequately reflect on the cultural realities of different stakeholders and the implications of this for development projects. Gusta (2008) avers most culture collisions happen not due to lack

of knowledge of other cultures but lack of knowledge of one's own culture that causes unawareness of one's own assumptions which are culture-bound. Goman (2011) reinforces this view by Gusta (2008) that all cultures have rules that its members take for granted. Only a few people are aware of their own biases, because cultural imprinting commence at a very early age.

In examining the nexus among communication, culture and development, Madzingira (2001) suggests that African cultural values and communication approach have a hand in the continent's unenviable position as the least developed region in the world. Dwelling on the differences in the modes of communication available in traditional settings and more advanced ones, Madzingira (2001) suggests that cultural factors in communication and development process must be strongly considered in the planning and implementation of development.

Meanwhile, Yankah (1992) reported that Akan traditional modes of communication such as folklore are vital channels with immense potential for communicating policy issues. Furthermore, investigating culture, communication and technology in Ghana, Ayensu (2003) posited that Ghanaian culture is receptive to new forms of communication such as those enhanced by technology. It is thus possible, even pragmatic to balance indigenous forms of communication in rural areas with advances in technology if the supporting infrastructure is available. Ayensu (2003) came to this conclusion based on evidence that shows a historical predisposition to wireless communication in Ghana and the fast rate of diffusion of communication technology. It is however noteworthy that Ayensu's study

was conducted among Ashante communities which are southern states and have cultural values different from other local communities in the country.

Ayirebasia (2008) reports that in indigenous Northern communities, indigenous modes of communication such as the use of traditional musical instruments among the Boosi of Northern Ghana are no longer used in development communication projects. Ayirebasia (2008) laments that this is because much of communication that happens in development projects is now based on modern means of communication especially mass media communication. Traditional modes of communication are considered by recent development workers as tedious and slow to deliver, notwithstanding, these modes of communication are reliable, audience specific, and relatively inexpensive. Ayirebasia (2008) fears indigenous modes of communication are in danger of extinction if they are not used for communication in development projects.

The materials reviewed above (Ayensu, 2003; Ayirebasia, 2008; Madzingira, 2001) demonstrate the important link between communication and culture. Whilst various researchers have acknowledged the strong place of traditional or indigenous modes of communication in the planning and implementation of development projects, less attention was focused on how cultural values, norms and customs affect the communication strategy beyond the choice of channel. This gives the current study an opportunity to investigate how cultural values impact communication strategies besides the use of indigenous modes of communication. An example is the use of the talking drums.

2.9   Theoretical Framework

The participatory communication theory and the stakeholder theory were adopted for this study. Both theories are related and relevant for explaining the communication process and strategies in development projects.

2.10   Participatory Communication Theory

Participatory communication is a multiplicity paradigm born from the Development Communication Approach which emerged in the 1980s as a criticism of the modernisation paradigm and its diffusion model (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005). This theory emphasizes the need for stakeholders to be involved in the development programmes that are meant for them. Contemporary development communication therefore took up the participatory way of thinking that has led to the recent participatory development approaches, including participatory communication as one important instrument for development (Hannides 2011).

Participatory approaches to communication have developed from various events and processes in different parts of the world according to Wissenbach (2007). Hannides (2011) notes that Participatory development communication theory evolved from Paulo Freire's (1970) Pedagogy of the oppressed, a work on adult education, poverty, exploitation and domestication in northern Brazil. Hannides (2011) adds that the educational philosophies of Paulo Freire place importance on dialogue where poor people gain consciousness of their own reality to defeat the oppressor and challenge the development that is not based on a one-way interaction between individuals and groups.

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White (1994) also reports that a careful review of Freire's analysis reveals many similarities with the kinds of communication that need to exist between local stakeholders of a development project and the development agency represented by its staff if true participation is to occur. A number of principles (interactivity, feedback, transparency) have become known as fundamental to participatory communication and these principles came from globally high-ranking thinkers to contribute to the framework under which participatory communication has evolved (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009).

2.10.1 Forms of Participatory Communication

Mefalopulos and Tufte (2009) put forward levels of participatory communication. These are ranked based on the level of influence that beneficiaries derive from development interventions. The four levels are passive participation, participation by consultation, participation by collaboration and empowerment participation.

Passive participation

This level of participation is occasionally referred to as 'the participation by information' as it is the smallest amount of participation of the four typologies. Basically, people's feedback is rare, and their participation is assessed through methods like head counting and contribution to the discussion (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009).

Participation by consultation

This level of participation is known as the extractive process; it is the process within which local participants provide answers to questions posed by outside experts. This process, in effect, keeps all the decision- making power in the hands of external professionals who are under no obligation to incorporate stakeholders' input (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009).

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Participation by collaboration

With this type of participation, beneficiaries form groups to participate in the discussion and analysis of predetermined objectives set by the project. The level of participation does not usually result in remarkable changes in what should be accomplished, because the results are often already determined. It does, however, require an active involvement in the decision-making process about how to achieve it. Participation by collaboration incorporates a component of horizontal communication and capacity building among all stakeholders (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009).

Empowered participation

In this level of participation, primary stakeholders are capable and willing to initiate the process and take part in the analysis. This, however, leads to joint decision making about what should be achieved and how. Outsiders and primary stakeholders are considered equal partners in the development effort; where they dialogue, identify and analyses critical issues, and also exchange knowledge and experiences which ultimately lead to solutions. Consequently, the ownership and control of the process rest in the hands of the primary stakeholders (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009).

The last level of participation (empowered participation) produces enduring or sustainable results. Participatory development approaches have also influenced changes in the way media is used in development, to include people in the process of 'media-making' Thus, the removal of any constraint to pave way for a more equal and participatory society (Heusca, 2002).

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The participatory theory, in sum holds that a more tangible outcome could be attained when participatory strategies are employed. This is because when stakeholders are actively involved in the planning and implementation of development interventions, they tend to accept it as their own. Also, in order for all community members to be part of the development efforts, there is the need to use dialogic communication to bring various stakeholders on board. However, often celebrated as highest level of participation, empowered participation does not always lead to the concentration of ownership and control in the hands of the primary stakeholders. This is because of the complexity of communication processes, group dynamics and power relations which all affect the total empowerment of primary stakeholders.

2.11   Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory has been applied severally to explain the relationship and interdependence between different social actors. The stakeholder theory is used in this study to explain how strategic communication can be used to rally together development partners.

From its early articulation in Stanford Research institute in the 1980s, stakeholder theory has sought to deconstruct and conceptualise the notion of value creation through trade or transaction (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010). The stakeholder theory was propounded by Edward Freeman in the United States where it first gained much popularity in the 19th century (Aguera, 2013). Stakeholder theory was born out of need to find answers to the nature of the relationship between businesses and other social institutions. In the light of this, the unit of analysis for the stakeholder theory is relationship between organisations and the groups and individuals who can affect or are

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affected by it -stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2010). The stakeholder theory is useful in development circles because the theory is built upon recognition of interdependence. This is a typical relationship management theory which is a development strategy by itself. From the stakeholder theory perspective, the cooperation of all partners in development is necessary for effective project planning and implementation. Notwithstanding, stakeholder participation will not be effective when stakeholders are not properly identified, categorised and activated (Usadolo & Caldwel, 2016).

2.11.1 Stakeholder Identification and participation framework

The term stakeholder implies that development agents are responsible not only to funding partners and their institutions of allegiance but also for other individuals and/or groups which are affected by decisions of development agents. In this regard, change agents must develop development strategies that are in line with this stakeholder interests (Agüera, 2013).

In planning and implementing development, it is important to identify and categorise stakeholders based on their interest and relationship with the development intervention (Usadolo & Caldwel, 2016). Two broad groups of stakeholders can be identified, namely, primary and secondary stakeholders (Reed, 2008). Primary stakeholders are the people or groups that stand to be directly affected, either positively or negatively, by an effort or the actions of an agency, institution, or organisation. These include the community people, collaborating local institutions and other identifiable groups and individuals who are likely to be directly affected by the development intervention (Reed, 2008).

Secondary stakeholders are also individuals or groups that are indirectly affected, either positively or negatively, by an effort or the actions of an agency, institution, or

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organisation. Secondary stakeholders include implementing partners, political actors in the local areas and other individuals and organisations who do not have a close relationship with the project but might be affected by it. Secondary stakeholders may also be people or individuals that are responsible for primary stakeholders (Reed, 2008). Projects that have young people as primary stakeholders for instance would have parents as secondary stakeholders.

There is another category of stakeholders that do not belong to the classic categorisation of primary and secondary stakeholders but their contribution and influence is vital to the success of development projects. These are referred to as key stakeholders. Key stakeholders include legislators, the media, economic actors and other important social actors who can influence the outcomes of development projects (Usadolo & Caldwel, 2016).

Categorisation of stakeholders helps to identify the boundaries of each stakeholder category based on their stake in the project. It is also important to categorise and prioritise stakeholders in order to better understand the power relations between them and their specific interest in the project. There is the need to prioritise stakeholders based on their interest and influence once these have been identified, this can be achieved through dialogue (Agüera, 2013).

Through dialogue with all stakeholders' development agents can make determinations of which interests and values are shared by stakeholders, as well as which interests and values are unique to each group. The more stakeholders stand to benefit or lose by the implementation of a development intervention, the stronger their interest is likely to be.

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Similarly, the more stakeholders stand to be affected by a project the more heavily involved they are in the project and the stronger their interest as well (Usadolo & Caldwel, 2016).

This theory is very important to the work of civil society organisations because of the increasing importance of stakeholder collaboration in project design, implementation, and evaluation (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009). The stakeholder theory and participatory communication theory suggest establishment of mechanisms to ensure effective stakeholder participation to enhance project success. These theories are used together in this study to investigate the nature of communication strategies of selected civil society organisations and how these strategies are contributing to project success. Both theories are suitable for the study as they are beneficial in identifying the participatory patterns of the stakeholders. The theories are also suitable for probing the points of interdependence, and how stakeholders make sure all partners are sufficiently informed about the project and receive proportionate benefits from their involvement in development projects.

2.12   Summary

This Chapter reviewed related literature as well as the theoretical frameworks guiding the study. Examined what civil society is about, the various ideologies and the categories. The Participatory communication theory and the Stakeholder theory were reviewed in relation to their relevance to civil society work, communication strategies and the topic under study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This chapter focuses on the processes and methods adopted by the researcher in undertaking the study. It describes the research approach, design, and population, sampling techniques and size, selection of the study area, as well as validity and reliability issues during the study. The chapter concludes on the data analysis strategies and procedures that were used for reporting the findings of the study.

3.2   Research Approach

To help study the use of communication strategies among selected civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Northern Region of Ghana, a qualitative research approach was employed. Qualitative research is an approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied (Bryman, 1988). This is relevant to the study because the research attempts to investigate the communication strategies CSOs use in their work.

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), qualitative methods involve the processes of collecting, analysing, interpreting, and writing the results of a study. Specific methods exist in both survey and experimental research that relate to identifying a sample and population, specifying the type of design, collecting and analysing data, presenting the results, making an interpretation, and writing the research in a manner consistent with a survey or experimental study. Qualitative research borders on why things happen in the society in a particular way as well as widen or deepen the understanding of how things

become the way they are in the social world (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009). Given this definition therefore the study assesses why CSOs use certain communication strategies for the work they do, and why they do so.

Also, qualitative research makes reference to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and description of phenomenon (Berg, 2007). Meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics of key terms and issues have been brought up by this study hence a qualitative approach was best for the study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach. This means that researchers use qualitative approach to find out about things in their natural state, and make meaning out of those things based on the thinking of the participants involved. The explanation by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) is important to this study since the study investigated the communication strategies used by CSOs in their projects.

3.3 Research Design

Research design according to Creswell (2014) can be described as a strategy, plan and a structure of conducting a research project. He states that the selection of a research design is mostly dependent on the nature of the research problem or the issue being addressed, the researcher's personal experiences, and the audience for whom the study is conducted. Since the issue being addressed is the communication strategies used by CSOs, the study preferred a multiple case study design which enabled the researcher to look at what pertains in each of the different CSOs engaged.

3.3.1 Case study

According to Yin (2009), case studies are used mostly when questions on "how" or "why" are asked as well as when the researcher has little control over issues and when the attention is on an existing event. Stake (1995) indicates that a case study must be bounded so that the case is a separate entity in terms of time, place, or some physical boundary. For Stake, this bounded system which may include programmes, events, or activities may be as simple as an individual or a group, or as complex as an organisation or culture. This view by Stake is important for this study on communication strategies used by CSOs because it helped looked at the unique characteristics of each of the CSOs individually studied.

Gall, Gall & Borg, (2007) also maintain, a case study is the in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in its real-life context such that this context reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon. This definition by Gall, Gall and Borg means that the case study was the design used to facilitate the identification of the different communication strategies used by the different CSOs from their point of view.

Yin, (2009, 2012) posits that case study is a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially in evaluation studies by which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a programme, event, activity, process, or one or more entitites.

Yin (2012) distinguishes between varieties of case study approaches ranging from a single case study to multiple case studies.

3.3.2 Multiple case studies

There are three case study designs under multiple case studies according to Yin. The first is the exploratory case studies, where case studies are conducted before a research question is identified. This type may be considered more or less, a precursor to a large study. The second is the explanatory case studies, and these are the causal case studies in which information from the cases are related to a theoretical position. Descriptive case studies are the third under the multiple case studies and this is where a study follows a descriptive pattern throughout the research. A multiple or collective case study according to Yin, (2003) allows the researcher to analyse within each setting and across settings. In a multiple case study, the researcher examines several cases to understand the similarities and differences between them. This current study therefore employed multi case study design to ascertain what communication strategies the three CSOs used in their work. This enabled the researcher unravel the variety of communication Strategies used by the different CSOs. This was to ensure that data accessed were valid especially when several data sources validated each other.

From the explanations above, it is evident that the multiple case study design is more appropriate for the study than the single case design as it gave broad descriptions and explanations to the issue under study and demonstrates the issues across a varied range of circumstances from the perspectives of the different selected CSOs than a single CSO could provide.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

Sampling technique is the process of deciding on units of analysis, including individuals, groups, objects and locations in a manner that maximises the researcher's ability to

answer research questions set forth in a study (Tashakkori & Teddie, 2003). Also, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) indicate that sampling is a process of selecting a set of units from the population which is accessible to the researcher.

3.4.1 Types of Sampling

There are two major types of sampling; Probability sampling and Non- probability sampling. Probability sampling method relies on a random or chance selection method so that the probability of selection of population elements is known (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Types of probability samples are Simple Random, Systematic Random, Stratified Random, Random Cluster and Complex Multi-Stage Random sampling. Non-probability sampling method is the method in which the probability of selection of population elements is unknown. Types of non-probability sampling are Convenience, Purposive and Quota sampling (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). This study employed the Purposive sampling technique to select the cases for the study.

Purposive sampling strategies are non-random ways of ensuring that particular categories of cases within a sampling universe are represented in the final sample of a project. The rationale for employing a purposive strategy is that the researcher assumes, based on their a-priori theoretical understanding of the topic being studied, that certain categories of individuals may have a unique, different or important perspective on the phenomenon in question and their presence in the sample should be ensured (Mason, 2002).

Purposive sampling is described by Schwant (1997) as sites or cases that are chosen because there may be good reasons to believe that what goes on there is critical to understanding some process or concept or to testing or elaborating some established theory.

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Purposive sampling technique is the selection of respondents from an empirical study with a specific purpose in mind. That is, choosing participants based on the understanding that they have experience and knowledge of the issue under investigation (Berg, 2007). The Northern Region was chosen because it is one out of the two regions with the highest number of CSOs and it forms part of the northern zone which is characterised as the poorest, with a high frequency of CSO interventions at the micro level (CIVICUS, 2013).

3.4.2 Sample

A sample is a subgroup of a population (Frey, Carl & Gary, 2000). It has also been described as a representative "taste" of a group (Berinstein, 2003). There are a number of dimensions on which sampling takes place. These include people, setting, events, processes, activities and time (Miles & Huberman 1994, Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). This study purposely chose the following: Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA), Youth Empowerment for life, and the West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP) all based in the Northern region of Ghana.

3.4.3 Brief on Sampled Civil Society Organisations

The Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA), a Ghanaian registered Non-Governmental Organisation operating in the Northern Region of Ghana. It was established in 1980 as a Partner to a Danish organisation known as the Ghana Friendship Groups in Denmark. They exist to empower people of deprived communities and the socially excluded in Ghana. It is the umbrella organisation for a seven community - based organisations. The approach of GDCA is to involve people to become aware of their situation; and ultimately realise that change is needed in their lives (GDCA, 2017).

Also, documents from Youth Empowerment for Life stated that the Youth Empowerment for life is a Community - Based Organisation. It is a local pressure group in Northern Ghana that works through advocacy, resource mobilisation and harmonisation of stakeholder efforts to contribute to the achievement of their mission which is tailored towards the youth. This they do by carrying out research and using the findings to engage with duty-bearers for either a change in policy or improvement in youth-related policy.

The West African Network for Peace building Ghana (WANEP-GHANA), a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) was formed in December 2002. WANEP-GHANA is a subsidiary of The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) which was conceived in 1996 but formally launched in 1998. After 15 years of peacebuilding practice, WANEP has grown to become a household name in West Africa with national offices in all the ECOWAS Member states.

WANEP-Ghana is the Ghana Secretariat of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) with a national secretariat office in Tamale, Northern Region. WANEP-Ghana has a network of over 130 grassroots civil society organisations across the country, and is engaged in a wide range of education, peace and conflict research, gender-based (including women, youth and vulnerable groups) peace building and human security early warning and response activities. WANEP-Ghana facilitates the creation of a sustainable culture of non-violence, justice, peace and social reconciliation in Ghanaian communities by ensuring coordination and effectiveness among peace practitioners in order to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize the use of resources for more effective responses to conflict situations (WANEP, 2013). These organisations in the Northern Region were

chosen as sites for the study because; each falls under the strands of Civil Society Organisations. Again each is active and works in various areas with different forms of communication strategies.

3.4.4   Sample size

In all nine participants were interviewed, this was made of three participants from each organisation. For each organisation, three heads and officer in charge of communication were sampled. Additionally, a community member each from the organisation's project sites was selected. These participants were engaged in in-depth qualitative interview on the various communication strategies the organisations use in their work; and in the case of the community members too they were engaged on how those communication strategies used by the CSOs benefit them. In-depth interviews were used because it is best for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences (Neale, Thapa & Boyce, 2006)

3.5   Data Collection Instruments

3.5.1   Interviews

Interviews, according to McNamara, (1999) are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can get in-depth information on the topic. It is important when interpersonal contact is necessary and when opportunities to follow up on interesting comments are desired (Mahoney, 2006).

According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), there are three forms of interview design; these are (a) informal conversational interview, (b) general interview guide approach, and (c) standardised open-ended interview. The standardised open-ended interview design was employed by this study because it is extremely structured in terms of the wording of the questions, and participants are always asked identical questions but

the questions are worded so that responses are not limited. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) state that this open-endedness allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up and this was exactly what happened during the researcher's data collection process. Participants were allowed to say all they had to say and follow-up questions were asked in order to get clearer picture on what was being said. Creswell (2007) states that since open-ended interviews call for participants to fully express their opinions in as much detail as desired, it can be quite difficult for researchers to extract similar themes or codes from the interview transcripts as they would with less open - ended responses.

However, according to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), open-ended interviews reduce the researcher biases within the study, particularly when the interviewing process involves many participants. The study was conducted in three different sites and three participants each from each site hence the researcher's biases in the study was reduced.

3.5.2 In-depth Interviews

Mahoney (2006) states that; in-depth interviews help the researcher to obtain rich and detailed material that can be used in the analysis. They are characterised by extensive probing and open-ended questions. This type of interview was employed by the researcher due to the fact that it allowed her to probe further on responses that did not make meaning to the researcher as well as various angles to the responses that were given.

The researcher spent sufficient time in the field so as to have meaningful engagement with all the participants from the three CSOs under study, to quiz their perspectives on

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the communication strategies that they use, and how unique it was as well as how those strategies benefit the beneficiaries. The above account on spending sufficient time in the field is corroborated by Boye and Neale (2006) who gave an all-inclusive description of in-depth interviews by stating that "in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation". To Boye and Neale (2006, p.3), in-depth interview is useful when a researcher wants detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviours or wants to explore new issues in-depth. As stated by Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003:141) that in-depth interviews is "a form of conversation with purpose," the researcher engaged the various participants in a simple, relaxed conversation but was with a purpose of getting the best of their communication strategies and the benefits that they derive.

3.5.3 Documents

They are the "paper trail" left in the wake of historical events and processes. Documents in an organisation indicates what the organisation produces; how it certifies action (e.g. license or deed); how it categorises events or people (e.g. membership lists); how it codifies procedures or policies (e.g. manuals); and in what ways it informs or instruct the membership (e.g. notice boards, newsletters and shareholder reports), explains past or future actions (e.g. memoranda), memorialise its own history or achievements (e.g. yearbooks), and tracks its own activities (e.g. minutes of meetings) (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; p. 117).

This study used documents as part of its data collection tool. The Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA) gave the researcher both their electronic and hard

copy version of their communication strategies. Hard copies of newsletters and community entry approach guide were also given to the researcher. On the part of the Youth Empowerment for life only electronic copies of their communication strategy were made available to the researcher who studied it for this research. The West African Network for Peace Building Ghana (WANEP-Ghana) on the other hand, also gave the researcher a soft copy of their communication strategy and hard copies of their newsletters, brochures, flyers and issue briefs; all of which the researcher spent time on to study and use for the analysis of this research.

3.6   Data Collection Procedure

The researcher collected data from the Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA), Youth Empowerment for life and the West African Network for Peace Building Ghana (WANEP-Ghana) through the use of interviews and documents. The rationale for using these organisations was because the organisations fall under the types of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and are active. The researcher sought the permission of the Executive Directors of the organisations prior to the interviewing of participants. Interviews with participants within the organisations were done in their various offices, whereas interviews with community members were done in their respective homes. In all the data collection process took two weeks to complete.

The study employed the standardized open-ended interview design by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) which allowed the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desired and also allowed the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). An Olympus digital voice recorder as well as an LG phone was used as a primary tool to record every detail and transcribed for

analysis while a note book was used along-side to write down some vital details. This helped in capturing themes and major issues that came out of the interviews. The researcher spent two days interviewing each organisation and beneficiaries in their respective offices and beneficiary communities. Comparatively the communities were Saboba, Karaga and Bimbilla and interviews lasted between Monday March 13th and Monday March 20th. A verbal appreciation was given to all participants at the end of each interview session as well as a courtesy call was made by the researcher on the organisations to say thank you for the warm reception and also bid farewell to leave the Tamale metropolis. Upon arrival on campus the researcher sent an email thanking the organisations for their time, warm reception and resources used to ensure a successful data collection exercise.

3.7   Data Analysis

3.7.1   Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a data set in relation to a research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research identified themes, patterns and coded the transcribed interviews according to the themes identified; and interpreted it by seeking commonalties, relationships, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs, or explanatory principles (Lapadat, 2010). Thematic analysis is tactical for reducing and handling large volumes of data without losing the context, for getting close to or immersing oneself in the data, for organising and summarising, and for focusing on the interpretation. The researcher consulted a wide range of sources including interview transcripts, field notes, and policy documents, for the thematic analysis of this study.

3.8   Ethical consideration

Ethical issues considered in the study included observing community protocol before embarking on the data collection, participants' consent was sought to record interviews; they were also assured of confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity. The principle of informed consent demands that the researcher should inform potential participants about the nature and purpose of the study and should obtain their permission to be part of it, and should assure them of confidentiality (Kusi, 2012). The researcher sought the consent of the respondents before engaging them in the interview process. Respect for confidentiality is an established principle in research ethics codes and professional codes of conduct (Ogden, 2008). Participants in this study were made aware of the protection of their identity especially for respondents from WANEP due to the sensitive nature of the issues WANEP deal in which normally is conflict and security. The researcher also presented an introductory letter indicating the purpose of the study to the Executive Directors of GDCA and Youth Empowerment for Life as well as the National Network Coordinator of WANEP to know the study was purely an academic exercise.

3.9   Validity and reliability of the study

Creswell (2014) observes that validity in qualitative research does not carry the same connotation it does in quantitative research. He asserts that in qualitative research, "validity is used to determine, findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher account" (Creswell, 2014, p.201). Cohen and Crabtree (2006) mentions that validity might be addressed through richness, depth, honesty and scope of data achieved, the respondents approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or

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objectivity of the researcher. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) observe that in qualitative research, "validity is used to determine if findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher account".

3.10   Summary

The chapter gave an overview of research methodology used in collecting data for the study. The sampling technique used and the justification for the selection of the organisations and individuals. The data collection instrument and how the data were collected and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of findings of this research. The findings are based on interviews with representatives of the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA) and Youth Empowerment for Life (YE4L) all Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the Northern region of Ghana. Also, key stakeholders in the communities in which these organisations are active were interviewed. The following research questions guided the analysis of findings.

i.   What is the nature of communication strategies of the selected Civil Society Organisations?

ii.   What are the reasons for using the particular communication strategies?

iii. How do the selected strategies meet the needs of community members?

4.2 Coding of responses

The analysis presented in this section is based on nine (9) in depth interviews conducted from Monday March 13th to Monday March 20th 2017 in Saboba, Karaga and Bimbilla all in the Northern region of Ghana. Two respondents were drawn from each of the three organisations; and in addition, a respondent each was selected from each of the host communities of the three Civil Society Organisations. The themes of this analysis were generated from the pattern of responses. Alpha-numeric codes were used to present respondents in order to fulfil the principle of protecting the personal identity of

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respondents by keeping them anonymous. The alpha-numeric coding system used is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Coding of responses

Organisation	Designation of Interviewee	CODE
1. West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP)	National Network Coordinator	WANEP-1
	Programs manager	WANEP-2
	Traditional ruler of Bimbila	WANEP-3
2. Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA)	Technical Advisor, Policy and Governance	GDCA-1
	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	GDCA-2
	Traditional ruler of Saboba	GDCA-3
3. Youth Empowerment for Life (YE4L)	Executive Director	YEL-1
	Capacity building officer	YEL-2
	Karaga youth centre chairman	YEL-3

Source: Field Data, (2017).

4.3   Research Question 1: What is the nature of the communication strategies of the selected civil society organisations?

The first research question sought to examine the communication strategies of selected Civil Society Organisations, namely, West African Network for Peace building (WANEP), Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA) and Youth Empowerment for Life (YE4L).

According to Shaheen and Haneef (2014) Communication Strategy, notes is an idea or series of actions designed to make communication efforts of organisations more purposeful. Communication strategies help CSOs to focus their communication and outreach efforts around a certain set of goals – usually the mission and objectives of an organisation or a particular project (Shaheen & Haneef, 2014). This research question was addressed through analysis of interviews but also based on the communication strategy documents of the selected organisations. The communication strategies of each chosen case (organisations) are separately examined in detail and later examined collectively.

4.3.1   Communication strategy of WANEP

The West African Network for Peace building (WANEP) is a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) that exists as a network with a wide focus on West Africa. However, the communication strategy and interviews analysed are specific to the organisation's operations in Ghana, particularly its activities in the Northern region of Ghana where it was active in a total of twenty-eight (28) districts at the time of this study.

4.3.2   WANEP's Communication strategy/ Policy document

It was found that WANEP has a codified communication policy for its internal and external communications. The organisation also has designated officers and teams that were charged with the responsibility of leading the execution of the organisation's communication strategy. This was codified in the organisation's communication strategy document as follows:

> While everyone in the organization may see themselves as spokespersons, however, a professional approach is essential as communications in modern day social interaction is deliberate and

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follows laid down rules and procedures The communications strategy therefore will be anchored by the Communications and External Relations Officer (CERO), with the active support of the WANEP Corporate Communications and Publicity Team (CCPT), as the gateway of ensuring that information is delivered to the targeted publics (WANEP's communication strategy, p3).

The quote above shows that there are clear responsibility and accountability lines for communication in the organisation.

It was further found that as an organisation which strategically engages major actors, particularly state actors in a bid to establishing platforms for dialogue, experience sharing and learning, WANEP had an overarching goal for its strategic communication activities. According to Azcarate and Balfors (2013), it is important for CSOs to have strategic communication goals that are tied to the overarching organisational objectives.

The rational for WANEP's strategic communication is:

To promote WANEP's work with the public, private, civil society, the media and community stakeholders via a structured plan in order to provide a platform for promoting and sustaining peace and security (WANEP's communication strategy, p3).

The strategic communication goal of WANEP as provided above is in alignment with the organisation's objective of collaborative peace building. From the perspective of Azcarate and Balfors (2013) this alignment of organisational objective and communication goals increases the chances of success of the communication strategy.

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WANEP also has a diversified communication portfolio through which it seeks to execute its strategy. WANEP's communication profile includes; Website, Twitter, Facebook, Blog, Newsletter, and other periodic publications such as policy briefs, issue briefs, reports, and brochures. The communication strategy document further stated that the organisation's use of this diversified portfolio does not exclude media relations and direct encounters with stakeholders. This indicates that WANEP's communication strategy is both online (via internet) and offline using a combination of personal and mediated communication. This kind of diversified communication portfolio is indicative of an all-encompassing strategy that is likely to meet the needs of various categories of stakeholders (Cabanero-Verzosa, 2003).

4.3.3   Targets or Publics of the Communication Strategy

Communication strategies must be necessarily targeted at specific audiences as these strategies are meant to inform, influence, or persuade selected audiences in support of particular objectives (Paul, 2011). It was found that communication activities at WANEP were discreet and targeted at security organisations and officers owing to the sensitive nature of some of the issues the organisation handles. One respondent explained in an interview that WANEP's communication activities were not targeted at only sections of the public but also at key security operatives such as the Police Service, the Bureau of National Investigations (BNI) and National Security operatives who are all key stakeholders of WANEP. WANEP 2 had this to say on their communication;

> We have bilateral communication, for instance with the security code
> meters with BNI, the Police commanders, National Security staff so that
> there are some things it is not everyone that needs to know, because we

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want to, as much as possible, do not also create fear and panic but give the relevant information to those who really need to be the ones involved in terms of addressing the issue.

This quote above shows that the communication activities of WANEP are controlled and targeted at specific stakeholders, usually security operatives. The targeted nature of the communication strategy is in line with the prescription of Paul (2011) for effective communication strategies.

4.3.4 Approach to Implementation

Murphy (2008) underscored the importance of approaches to implementing communication strategy when he opined that the strength of a communication strategy depends on how organisational leaders and communicators seek to adopt and utilise the capabilities (means) available to achieve particular objectives (ends). In the interviews, it was realised that as a civil society organisation working in the area of security, WANEP handles very sensitive information and hence it relied on close collaboration with stakeholders at the national and community level to execute this communication strategy. In that, based on the exigencies of the project at hand, WANEP deploys variants of communication tactics to work closely to bring about change through collaboration.

The National Network Coordinator of WANEP captured this succinctly when he explained:

It's [the approach to communication] is very dynamic so very often we look at what changes we can create by adopting a certain strategy. Because we want to always change the dynamics so that people can begin to have the platform to exchange ideas, learn from each other and to be

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sensitised and educated. So basically, we look at what changes we can create with a particular communication strategy.

The finding above shows that the organisation is dynamic in the implementation of its communication strategy. According to the response above the implementation approach depends on the change desired or the goal to be achieved with that particular communication activity.

4.3.5 Communication strategy of Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA)

GDCA is a civil society organisation based in the Northern region of Ghana but with very close ties with the Danish funding partners. This CSO operates as a voluntary association that exists to: Empower citizens of deprived communities and the socially excluded in Ghana to work for social, political and economic development and engage in sound environmental practices for sustainable living (GDCA profile p 2).

4.3.6 GDCA Communication policy/strategy document

It was realised that by the nature of its activities, the GDCA is a network of various Community Based Organisations (CBOs) as it maintains close association with the CBOs it works with. The GDCA has a communication strategy which, among other things, facilitates the organisation's attainment of high goal of organisational development, strategic positioning and community engagement.

Although the organisation did not produce a codified communication strategy document or policy, the organisation's Deputy Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and Capacity Building officer constitute the communication team. The organisation made use

of a combined communication profile of online and offline communication tools such as website, newsletters, and community fora to deliver its communication strategy.

4.3.7 Target

The target of GDCA's communication activities are wide and numerous. The organisation's technical advisor on governance and policy outlined the following important stakeholders:

> When we talk about external communication we are looking at the beneficiaries, those giving us funding, or other stakeholders who are collaborators like National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), the District Assemblies, among others. Also, we engage the media, and how this is done is clearly outlined in our communication strategy so no one sends wrong information to the outside world.

The responses above shows that the communication activities of GDCA were also well targeted at carefully identified key stakeholders. Meanwhile, it was found that the communication profile of GDCA includes website, Facebook, newsletter, media relations and direct community meetings.

4.3.8 Implementation Approach

It was discovered during the interviews that GDCA has a number of subsidiary programmes under its watch, and therefore, depending on the needs of the programme, different communication approaches were adopted. In explaining the implementation approach, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of GDCA stated:

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> There is a step by step guide on when to use what and why. The approaches are in categories to help achieve a certain purpose. So, for example we have what we call the newsletter. We used to do hard copies only but because of what we have learnt from the process, we now do hard and soft. So, in order to achieve a result, we combine one or two.

The organisation thus maintains a dynamic approach to the implementation of communication strategies based on the needs they want fulfilled. It was further realised that GDCA relies on both formal and non-formal approaches of communication, and the approach to communication varies at different levels of the organisation depending on the issues to be addressed.

One respondent explained:

> We have various WhatsApp platforms, we have one for media, staff in the field, stakeholders; and we have groups on thematic areas and it's to ensure that issues that arise are solved at that level before it gets to the top. The information to share also determines the approach to use in sending that information.

The use of WhatsApp platforms shows that GDCA encourages the speedy delivery of information through semi-formal or non-formal channels for key stakeholders such as the media. However, as the respondent indicated the level of approach adopted is dictated by the information to be shared.

Taken together, the examination of GDCA's communication strategy reveals that the GDCA has a communication strategy which, among other things, facilitates the organisation's attainment of interrelated goal of organisational development, strategic positioning and community engagement. The strategy is targeted at community people

and collaborators like National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), and the District Assemblies. The organisation's approach to implementation is quite dynamic because it runs different concurrent programmes in different focal areas and communities. Therefore, depending on the needs of the programme, different communication approaches are adopted.

The communication strategy of GDCA shows that as observed by Mamdani (1996), GDCA as a civil society is not only into building local capacity but also serves as an important collaborative partner to state and private actors. This strategy emanated from overarching management strategy of the organisation and meets the prescription of Steyn (2004) who suggested that communication strategies must emerge from organisational philosophy and the particular needs to be satisfied by the strategy.

4.3.9 Communication Strategy of Youth Empowerment for Life Program (YE4L)

Youth Empowerment for Life is an on-going collaborative programme in three districts of the Northern region, namely Mion, Karaga, and Savelugu Municipality. Youth Empowerment for Life works to bring about change in the project communities through civil society groups, and organisations to enable them to actively drive and influence social, economic, and political development initiatives and pursue their interests and rights.

4.3.10 Communication Policy/Strategy Document

It was realised that the entire focus of Youth empowerment for Life is to build local capacity of partners in order to improve their lives. As such, much of the work of this programme is based on advocacy. Youth Empowerment for Life has a documented advocacy and communication strategy which was designed to: Provide guidelines for

conducting advocacy and communication within the program and to detail the role out plan for implementing advocacy and communication (YE4L Advocacy and communication strategy, p 4].

The document however gave a definite duration for which this communication strategy will be implemented (from 2015 to 2018). This specific time limit is because Youth Empowerment for Life is ran as a programme, and this makes it different from the two organisations earlier examined. However, the advocacy goal of Youth Empowerment is for:

> Youth Empowerment for Life (YE4L) and its partner organisations to be able to play a role as strong and active players in civil society and to promote the interests and rights of local CSOs and groups locally, nationally and internationally through advocacy, partnerships and networking (YE4L Advocacy and communication strategy p 7).

Thus, the communication and advocacy focus of the programme involves being collaborative, dwelling on partnerships, and networking to promote the programme's interests nationally and internationally. The communication profile of YE4L programme is partly online and partly offline as the organisation closely engages stakeholders in communities and partners outside the country. The organisation however also undertakes media engagements if there is the need to reach wider audiences.

The communication strategy of YE4L demonstrates that the leaders and communicators at GDCA undertake a deliberate practice of communication for and on behalf of the organisations, in support of particular causes. This is consistent with the objective of strategic communication as espoused by Hallahan et al (2007). Additionally, the focus on

advocacy is apt as UNICEF (2008) observes that advocacy is a major focus area for many CSOs.

4.3.11 Target

The target for the communication and advocacy activities of Youth Empowerment for Life programme includes decision makers, pressure groups, allies and detractors. It was discovered that the organisation considers detractors as people, organisations, institutions and companies who may have opposing interests and counteract YE4L's actions or actively hinder the organisation in pursuing its agenda. Allies however are like-minded organisations that share the values and beliefs of YE4L and whose work and support the YE4L can depend on to achieve its advocacy objectives.

The target specification of YE4L is quite detailed and broad as it includes even people and organisations that might oppose the advocacy mission of the organisations. This is commendable because Azcarate and Balfors (2013) suggest that advocacy may be broadly directed at policy makers such as government officials, politicians and opinion leaders, but also private sector partners whose decisions impact many lives, as well as those whose opinions and actions influence policy makers. Advocacy as a component of NGO's communication strategy is however fundamentally political, hence a deeper appreciation of local level or community political dynamics is at the core of effective advocacy (Azcarate & Balfors, 2013).

4.3.12 Implementation approach

The Youth Empowerment for Life programme is implemented through a Community Driven Social Change (CDSC) approach; and this directs the approach to executing the organisation's communication strategy. It was found that the implementation of

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communication strategy was based on thematic areas of the programme, namely education, youth empowerment, food security, and livelihood concerns. Others are governance, gender and peace. Based on these thematic areas, approaches are then developed together with the materials that can ensure the implementation of communication strategies.

As a community-led programme, opinion leaders play a major role in the implementation of communication strategy at YE4L, for example YE4L puts it this way:

> We use them (opinion leaders) at the community level. We also deal with them on specific issues and activities. We engage opinion leaders who are connected to the chiefs more. Examples of such opinion leaders are; youth chairmen, Zaachi (an elder in the palace who speaks on behalf of the youth), Magaazia (a woman leader who represents women in the palace).

The view of YEFL the Capacity Building Officer (YE4L) reproduced above shows that the implementation of communication strategy at Youth Empowerment for life at the grass root level involves opinion leaders. Again, this shows that the nature of engagement depends on the thematic areas being explored and the specific issues involved. According to UNICEF (2008), the implementation approach to advocacy needs to be facilitative because the advocacy component of NGO communication strategy informs and motivates stakeholders and partners to establish a supportive environment necessary for the attainment of programme objectives and development goals. The approach to advocacy at YE4L is facilitative as suggested by UNICEF but is also dynamic as it incorporates the needs of programme and the exigencies of the communication situation.

In general, the findings of the study with regard to the first research question shows that communication strategies of CSOs are dynamic and cut across different levels of the organisations. All the CSOs had nuanced communication strategies that featured a bevy of different communication tools and tactics which cater for the needs of various stakeholders. Meanwhile, it was also realised that the nature of communication strategy is contingent on the organisation's philosophy and their area of operational focus. This notwithstanding, all the CSOs consider community leaders, the media, and state actors as key stakeholders.

The nature of the communication and strategy of selected CSOs is coordinated, purposeful and intentional as is expected of strategic communication. The nature of the different communication strategies examined also shows that the strategies are designed to advance the mission or organisational aspirations of the various CSOs as suggested by Hallahan et al. (2007) and Paul (2011).

The findings of the study with regard to the first research question also affirms the conclusion of Azcarate and Balfors (2013) that by their very nature CSOs encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences between different categories of stakeholders as they facilitate local participation. Shaheen and Haneef (2014) also identify with this assertion and added that communication strategy is necessary to help CSOs effectively promote their activities among stakeholders and partners. A good communication strategy when effectively executed also contributes to the success of development intervention or programmes.

The communication strategies of selected CSOs examined in this study however seem to favour advocacy and social mobilisation more than it does for behaviour - change. The advocacy component of CSO communication strategy informs and motivates stakeholders and partners to establish a supportive environment necessary for the attainment of programme objectives and development goals (UNICEF, 2008). Mobilisation is also a basic component of communication strategies that seeks to engage and facilitate the involvement of institutions, community group/networks and other identifiable groups (social, civic, religious) to increase the demand for or maintain progress toward particular development objectives. Social mobilisation strengthens participation of local stakeholders in local decision-making, and enhances their access to social and production services. On the other hand, behaviour change involves Behaviour Change Communication (BCC), a process in which communication is used to motivate people to adopt and sustain better behaviour and lifestyles. The latter component was less evident in the communication strategies examined.

4.4   Research Question 2: What are the reasons for using the identified communication strategies?

The second research question concerns the motivation or reasons that inform the choice of communication strategies and approaches adopted by the selected civil society organisations. Communication strategies of CSOs are designed around organisational or programme goals, but the choice of particular strategies differ from organisation to organisation (Mamdani, 1996; Steyn, 2004). The motivation for the choice of communication strategies used by selected CSOs was investigated through interviews with identified representatives of the selected CSOs.

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4.4.1 Reasons for using communication strategy (WANEP)

The dynamic nature of WANEP's communication strategy is such that the organisation is able to deploy different communication approaches based on the needs of the communication situation. It was realised however that the motivation for deploying communication strategies at WANEP was primarily based on the dynamics and cultural sensibilities of the target audience.

The executive director of WANEP explained:

> Now the other thing is, we look at the cultural sensibility of the groups we work with. Then the composure of the people, how well educated or informed they are. Otherwise certain communications can create problems for us, as we do not want to do harm to the process and affect the processes negatively.

It can be deduced from its response above that WANEP as a security-based CSO is very cautious of its communication. This caution is necessary as WANEP works mostly in conflict areas to quell conflicts or use alternative approaches to resolve conflicts.

It was further confirmed in a separate interview that WANEP is sensitive to the cultural dynamics of the communities in which it works because usually community representatives are either defensive of their stance in conflict or are uncooperative with the dialogue process at the initial stage. The recognition and incorporation of cultural dynamics communication strategies thus increases the chances of success of communication efforts.

The choice of communication strategy may also depend on the purpose and context of the communication. One respondent explained:

> We work in Hot and Cold zones. We work to ensure peace in such communities; we work in 28 districts as part of Northern Ghana governance activities. Depending on the communication activity such as early warning or documentation and evidence, the communication goes through particular processes.

This response shows that WANEP varies its communication approach according to the prevailing situation and also depending on the level of engagement. What this means is that communication seeking to create early warning is for example different from communication strategies to mitigate conflicts or to broker peace.

Another respondent explained the reasons for engaging the media in particular, as follows:

> In communicating with the media, for instance, and getting them involved in our programming and implementations, they become part of our trainings and part of dialoguing at least. We take them as participants so they understand our programs, our vision and mission and what they should communicate to the public. And because of that, they are also aware of what they should not say in terms of complex-sensitive reporting. Why we do that is for the public to be aware and we want it to be as wide as possible; so, for instance if it is about a security threat, we want everyone to know. So that people are aware of the threat zones and what is becoming of that threat.

The underlining reason for which media engagement is part of WANEP's communication strategy is to satisfy the organisation's need to reach out to the general public leveraging the power of news media as purveyors of information. However, WANEP is also

cautious about how the issues are reported so it offers training and sensitization to the media on how to report these issues.

The findings of the study show that in choosing communication strategy, WANEP takes into consideration the purpose of the communication, the target and the local context. The reasons for the choice of communication strategy are commensurate with the surmise of Mukundan, (2003) that communication strategies must be tailored to embrace the nature of the intervention (advocacy, mobilisation, and behaviour change), context, organisational capacity and unique needs of stakeholders. Mukundan, (2003) adds that in resource constrained mobilisation programmes especially, communication strategies are deigned to make efficient use of locally available financial resources, and to increase the opportunities for asset-building (economic empowerment) of the local people.

4.4.2 Reasons for using communication strategy at GDCA

Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA) works in 122 communities in five administrative districts of the Northern region spanning Saboba, Karaga, Miong, Savelugu and Kumbungu. The GDCA also works with subsidiary organisations and partners on different levels. It was realised that this makes the GDCA quite large and complexly networked. This situation affects the choice of communication strategy used by the organisation.

First of all, the choice of communication strategy depends on the target audience of the communication. One respondent explained:

> It's based on what we want to communicate. If we are dealing with the
> assembly as a structure, we would normally consider their level of

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education and understanding of issues, and then decide whether to give them a newsletter or published report they can make meaning out of. But that would not be the same with a group in a community. Considering their level of understanding of issues, a meeting probably would be used. So, we sit with group members and they ask questions and get answers.

What this mean is that GDCA takes into consideration the demographic dynamics of its target audience as evidenced in the response reproduced above. It is based on this that the organisation relies on both formal and non-formal approaches to communicate. The choice of communication strategy adopted by GDCA are also because the organisation have developed relationships with the community members and this has used to cut back on the usual bureaucracies that are often characteristic of large organisations.

We have several community-based organisations, farmer groups, women groups, youth groups, education groups, governance and advocacy groups, among others. If we want to engage on gender issues like teenage pregnancy, using advocacy becomes appropriate. Our engagement with them was in the form of a meeting, led by the district team; and because they had worked with them for a number of years, they have developed ways of dealing with them. They have an organiser so the coordinator tells the organiser when they want the meeting and the number of people needed, and therefore make themselves available.

The complex nature of GDCA requires that the organisation relies on conventions and networks established over several years of work in the communities. It also shows that GDCA is pragmatic in the choice of communication strategy as the reasons for the selection of particular strategy is based on whether the strategy would work for that

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immediate purpose. This helps the organisation to achieve the desired results while reducing red tapes in the way official channels of communication work.

Citing another example to illustrate the reasons for using non-formal approaches, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer described how GDCA arranged for the researcher to meet the chief of Saboba who is a local opinion leader and traditional ruler.

> In arranging for the meeting with the chief for you (referring to the researcher) to interview, we had to use the driver to facilitate the process. Now you would expect that as a driver he is tied to his vehicle, his oil and fuel but the driver is the person leading the process for us to get to the chief.

This again shows that at GDCA, the choice of communication strategy is influenced by the existing network of relationships that the organisation has established over the years of work in the communities. This notwithstanding, some employees of GDCA are indigenous from the project communities and this also creates opportunities to use local contacts who are also employees to achieve effective communication.

It was also found that the choice of communication strategy at GDCA is influenced by the capacity of staff. In the quest to deliver messages clearly and effectively, GDCA adopts particular approaches or tactics based on the capacity of staff communicators available to lead the communication effort. GDCA-1 for example, notes:

> We have a format that we use. For example, if we want to communicate gender issues to the groups, we don't start directly with the groups, we start with our staff. So, the staffs are trained on the gender aspect of what we want to communicate to the groups and then a manual or a module is

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developed. This is because the people [staff] who will be communicating to the people [targets] what we intend to share with them should be people with internal capacity. But if we do not have internal expertise, we bring somebody from outside to train us on exactly what we want to tell our groups.

This response shows that the choice of external consultant and the approach to communication is based on available internal capacity. Similarly, when the media is involved in the communication strategy of GDCA, it is because media has capacity to disseminate the information in a manner that GDCA cannot do on its own. GDCA-2 explains:

The engagement on teenage pregnancy was in the Miong district. With this one, a media person was involved because it was a discussion with opinion leaders, students, teachers, so that after the discussion it could be played on air for the benefit of those who could not have the opportunity to be part of it.

The response of GDCA-2 above further buttresses the point that the organisation is strategic about its communication activities and one of the reasons for adopting strategies is the capacity of the organisation to deliver particular messages. Another reason for the choice of communication strategy is the need to recognize existing traditional channels of communication and keep same stable. GDCA-2 had this to say:

You see our groups though they look homogeneous, but internally they have their own structures. There are some communities that when you want to engage a group, you must go through the traditional council like the Saklo area because it's a typically Komkomba area and the settlements are a bit dispersed.

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This implies that the communication approach is also sometimes dictated by the community dynamics and existing channels of contact. The communication team recognises the existing communication pathways and tries to use same for the benefit of the development intervention.

The study discovered that the choice of communication strategy at GDCA is not only influenced by the traditional communication networks in the community, but also the target audience of the communication. The capacities of staff to design and deliver particular messages are another consideration in the selection of communication strategy at GDCA. Tufte (2009) observes that CSOs in local communities could use communication strategies in development process and procedures at various levels of community development based on multiple and complex reasons. However, the reasons identified in this GDCA experience sounds a bit unique and also justifiable owing to some organisational limitations and the need to utilise the indigenous channels of communication in project communities to ensure local participation and overall project success (Cabanero-Verzosa, 2003).

4.4.3 Reasons for the choice of communication strategies at YE4L

The rationale behind a particular communication strategy is important because communication strategy determines the way ideas are exchanged to establish contacts with project communities (Adedokun, Adeyemo, & Olorunsola, 2010). As an advocacy-focused project, communication is the primary tool at Youth Empowerment for Life (YE4L). The communication strategy adopted by this programme was facilitative as its goal is to promote and ensure joint advocacy efforts across partner organisations and thematic areas of the programme.

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The findings showed that the main reason for using this approach was to forge alliances with excluded groups to cultivate interest and hold duty bearers accountable. YE4L-1 had this to say:

> Our target varies. We translate messages into the local language and go down to their level to communicate with them (stakeholders) because we want to make them a part of everything we do so their active participation is very important to us.

This finding shows that communication at YE4L is intentionally brought down to the level of community targets in order to make them interested in the issues discussed. This is also done to ensure that community stakeholders participate in the communication process.

Another respondent explained:

> We understand advocacy as the pursuit of influencing outcomes that directly affect people's lives. This includes engaging in organised actions that seek to highlight critical issues that have been ignored, so we combine these approaches and use our own publications and the media to also reach out to stakeholders who are not in the community.

The verbatim quote of YE4L-1 above shows that the organisation keeps many fronts and combines approaches in the quest to reach out to various stakeholders inside and outside programme communities. However, the Capacity Building Officer indicates that the organisation does not rely on the media, particularly television, so much because of cost.

> We deploy media strategically to cover our programs because the media is part of our partners and include; Ghana News Agency (GNA), Citi Fm,

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and Daily Graphic. But we observed that getting TV stations to cover programs is expensive so we do not patronise them frequently.

This indicates that budgetary considerations are also key in deciding the communication approach to adopt at YE4L. This shows that Civil Society Organisations incur some expenses when media representatives are invited to cover programmes. This expense also varies because YE4L is able to afford print, radio and digital but find television to be expensive.

The nature of the communication strategy and the approach deployed at YE4L was also found to be heavily influenced by the culture of the communities in which the programme is active. Respondents explained that they work in typically traditional communities and were thus required or even compelled to align their communication strategy to the values of the people.

The Executive Director of YE4L explains:

> Traditionally there are some communities that do not accept certain messages. In other communities, women do not lead in anything. In this instant, we deploy men in our activities as in, for example, Mashegu. Men are given serious attention in the north. Their traditions and customs place more value on men than women. Due to this our men lead most of the activities in such areas. For instance, there are some communities that even me as a leader of the organisation cannot go during the implementation of a project because they can't stand a woman telling them what to do. They give more respect to men than women.

Apparently, traditional values also dictate the communication strategies and tactics that are used. It is as a result of the cultural dictates explained above that YE4L relies on

chiefs and opinion leaders as key partners because these are the most respected people in the communities. This is quite a serious issue influencing even the leadership of the selected Civil Society Organisations in the area because apart from the Executive Director of YE4L, all the respondents were males. This shows that the organisations are aware of the dynamics of the male chauvinistic cultural environment in the Northern region and hence try to plan their work according to this unspoken expectation. The rationale for the choice of communication strategy used by YE4L validates the assertion of Marinkovic (2014) that local communities in which NGOs work are rural, conservative and have strong ties to traditional values, norms and customs. As revealed in this study, the strong ties with culture also largely define the framework within which communication strategies are designed and implemented.

Confirming Hussain (2013), this study reveals that communication strategy is an essential tool for building and maintaining a good social and working relationship with all partners and stakeholders in community development. Meanwhile community development is a complex process which involves mobilising and motivating stakeholders from different backgrounds. This calls for a well thought out communication strategy in the community development process, for engaging stakeholders in different tasks related to development and managing the issues that may come up in the process (Adedokun, Adeyemo, & Olorunsola, 2010). Regarding the second research question, the study revealed that the decision to use particular communication strategy is influenced by a battery of factors that can be categorised as organisational and social factors.

Organisational factors are the internal considerations that mainly emanate from what the organisation is trying to achieve with its communication efforts, and the unique circumstances surrounding the delivery of particular communication goals. Internal factors include organisational capacity, budgetary considerations and most importantly the communication goals of the organisation. Organisational or internal factors vary for each organisation because these are specific to the organisation although there can be similarities (Hallahan, et al. 2007).

Social factors on the other hand are the external environmental factors that influence the communication strategy used by CSOs. Social factors such as stakeholder dynamics and local culture of the community strongly impact the choice of communication strategy (Imoh, 2013). All the selected civil society organisations give important consideration to organisational factors but they are also influenced by social factors. Social factors are crucial and may be difficult to deal with because, for example, stakeholders vary according to their interest and influence. As a result, different communication approaches are required for different categories of stakeholders. Imoh (2013) also reported how complex environmental factors can become very critical to the success of communication strategy. According to Imoh (2013), social factors such as poverty, illiteracy, poor housing and the lack of basic services such as sanitation and potable water are, for instance, important factors that also limit the effective implementation of communication strategy. In all the organisations the local culture of the people influenced the choice of communication strategy. Cultural values such as the reverence for traditional authority and gender role divisions also influence the choice of communication strategies. In their bid to communicate effectively, the selected organisations try to circumvent these

environmental influences by combining communication approaches, but also by adopting pragmatic and traditionally acceptable means of conveying their messages, sometimes this required tampering organisational interest with community values.

The findings of this study corroborate earlier studies (Cabanero-Verzosa, 2003; Gusta, 2008; Imoh, 2013) that the social context within which communication strategies are implemented have significant influence on the effectiveness of the communication strategies. The outcomes of the study also validate the surmise of Sarvaes and Liu (2007) as well as Pressend, Mthethwa, Hlabane, and Mara (2001) that identifiable groups such as traditional institutions, women groups and the youth are important development partners whose involvement ensures that development policies, plans, and programmes targeting the rural people are sensitive, inclusive, internal and participatory.

4.5   Research Question Three: How do the selected strategies meet the needs of local community members?

The third research question sought to investigate how the various communication strategies deployed by selected civil society organisations meet the needs of community members. This research question also had more focus on the perspectives of opinion leaders in communities where the selected organisations are active. Investigating how suitability communication strategies of CSOs meet the needs of community members is imperative because of the strong emphasis of stakeholders' involvement in development communication programmes (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005). Essentially, this research

question probed the suitability of the different strategies used by the selected organisations.

4.5.1 Suitability of WANEP's strategy in meeting the needs of local community members

The purpose of communication strategy is to make communication intentional and effective. The opinion leader interviewed who was also a traditional leader indicated that WANEP had won the admiration of the local community and the respect of outside bodies because WANEP is credible. Explaining why he believes WANEP's strategy was achieving results locally, the respondent stated:

> Considering primarily the image and credibility of the organisation in the entire sub-region, WANEP's way of engaging is very participatory. We have been able to have a number of meetings and they give us the space to operate. The people who work there too have some respect for themselves.

This response shows that WANEP is scoring some important points with its participatory approach to communication and this has earned it the respect of the community people.

Also, it was found from WANEP-3 that through the communication activities of WANEP's work community, members were refraining from reprisal attacks:

> Overwhelming majority [of community members] came up to accept that reprisal attacks don't help and was not the solution so we stopped. They have also built the capacities of locals involved. But there are some families and individuals who have still not been able to recover from the 1981 conflict so I wish everyone will think about it and stop the fight.

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The verbatim quote of the traditional leader is also evidence of the fact that the communication strategy adopted by WANEP was gradually drawing together parties in conflict, implying that some opinion leaders are beginning to see dialogue as a useful alternative to conflict.

Further, WANEP's use of community engagement through stakeholder meetings also ensures that the local people were part of the project in order that they own the processes and outcomes. WANEP-1 had this to say:

> Much as we want to work with them, we are also a bit careful ensuring quality assurance in our processes and once we are in there, we want the people themselves to take over the communication so that they own the processes and they own the outcomes and they are accountable for whatever been laid.

This community engagement approach suggested in the quote above also meets the needs of the local people by placing them in charge of their own progress and development.

The findings are indicative of a situation of equal and highly participatory environment, one that accedes to the removal of constraint to pave way for empowerment as Heusca (2002) suggests. From the participatory theory perspective, this strategy is suitable because it facilitates the attainment of tangible outcomes such as behaviour change, greater consensus and mass mobilisation. This is possible because when stakeholders are actively involved in the planning and implementation of development interventions, they tend to accept it as their own (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009).

4.5.2 Suitability of GDCA's strategy in meeting the needs of local community members

The communication strategy of GDCA was also found to be beneficial particularly in ensuring sustainability. It was found that traditional leaders in whose communities GDCA operates were always consulted at the community entry stage and also during the maturity stages of the project.

One opinion leader who was himself a traditional ruler explained that the consultations they had with GDCA were not special demands but rather expectations for harmonious coexistence.

> Most of the things expected of CSOs are not because they are new in the area, even if someone lives in the community, and wants to go and ask the chief for a favour, for support or something, he has to go through the same process. So, it's always good to find out so you were made aware of how far you could go, what you could do and what you couldn't do. GDCA is critical of these traditional norms because they want their projects to be sustained (GDCA-3).

The response of the traditional ruler above shows that by recognising traditional rulers, GDCA was observing the dictates of tradition and custom, this helps to sustain the project. Suffice to say that so far as the projects were implemented within the framework of local custom, opinion leaders and community members found the strategy suitable.

Again, it was realised that the communication strategy also improves the level of stakeholder participation in the development intervention from project inception to maturity. The traditional leader explained the extent of their involvement:

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> We are involved in the initial planning stages, we identify what the communities need, we make contributions, and also, how these issues identified can be solved. So, we have been part of the policy and part of how to implement the policy.

This shows that the communication approach of GDCA also leads to heightened participation at various stages of the project life cycle. From the organisational perspective, the Capacity Building Officer of GDCA explained that the communication approach used by GDCA is empowering and suited to the needs of the local people. GDCA-2 explained:

> We are creating access and platform for the community to use their knowledge on the issues around them. Now here under our advocacy programme we identified that literacy is an issue so we are providing some form of adult literacy, not the regular classroom A, B, C, D, but non-formal education. All with the view to achieving community driven social change. Let's use the farmer groups for example; at the beginning of the program when we do our work plan, we do for all, but at a point it wasn't working because we go and the farmers are not in the farm or they are itching to leave because there is some other thing they needed to attend to. So, based on that feedback, we had to plan for them separately, so you will see that many activities that are related to farmers' groups which are not on-farm activities we do them during the dry season.

This response shows that GDCA seeks to transfer knowledge and to capacitate the local people to take charge of their own development. On the whole, the communication strategy of GDCA can be considered collaborative and empowering as it centers largely on stakeholder interests. This strategy is suitable because stakeholder theory postulations hold that successful relationship management is necessary for project success (Usadolo &

Caldwel, 2016). Again, from the stakeholder theory perspective, the cooperation of all partners in development is necessary for effective project planning and implementation. (Freeman, Harrison,Wicks, Parma & De Colle 2010)

4.5.3   Suitability of YE4L's strategy in meeting the needs of local community members

Youth Empowerment for life as an advocacy based programme was found to have employed very beneficial strategies for communication. One of the manifestations of the suitability of the communication strategies is how this has led to local acceptance of girl child education, and helped young girls developed more interest in schooling.

The opinion leader YE4L-3 explained:

> The youth, especially girls, are trained to know the importance of education. Adults are sensitised to know the importance of education and the need to support and encourage the girls to grow into responsible adults.

The increased interest in education evidenced in the quote above is manifestation that the outcomes of the Youth Empowerment for Life (YE4L) programme are being achieved; it also shows that the communication strategy adopted was suitable.

From the organisational perspective however, the communication strategy of YE4L has enabled the organisation to secure the support of opinion leaders. These opinion leaders, as the interviews revealed, act as local champions that facilitate the change process. YE4L-1 explained:

> They [opinion leaders] act as facilitators to facilitate certain processes and programs. They are influential and help bring about the change we

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want. They sometimes act as facilitators because they understand the cultural issues well and are able to communicate to their people.

These findings show that securing the support of opinion leaders and engaging opinion leaders as local champions helps YE4L to navigate the cultural complexity safely in trying to put across its message. This is because the opinion leaders are respected local leaders who know the right language and approach to use in mobilising support for change.

The findings of the study are indicative of the fact that YE4L has properly defined stakeholders as suggested by Reed (2008). These identified stakeholders including the community people, collaborating local institutions and other identifiable groups and individuals who are likely to be directly affected by the development intervention are engaged at various levels to ensure that their needs are addressed.

Generally, communication strategies are suitable and beneficial when they help to define, identify, analyse and address development needs (Adedokun et al., 2010). For Mwiru (2015) and Tufte (2009), communication strategies are suitable when they enhance the process of achieving project goals and ensure involvement and mobilisation at the local level. Again, suitable communication strategies are those that lead to the empowerment of local stakeholders and stimulate improved social impact of development projects (Shaheen & Haneef, 2014). It's sufficient to say that communication strategies must first of all meet the needs of stakeholders and be catalysts for social impact in terms of achieving project goals.

The findings of the study show that the communication strategies deployed by selected CSOs were relevant for the purposes for which they were deployed, and these strategies also satisfy the aspirations of community members. This is because the communication strategies deployed by the CSOs were appropriate for the cultural milieu as suggested by Marinkovic (2014), but also because the strategies satisfy the need for stakeholder participation as the participatory communication theory demands.

The influence of cultural values in communication cannot be discounted as neglect for cultural values could result in challenges for strategic communication in local areas as messages in development projects need to be clear, accurate and above all culturally appropriate (Madzingira, 2001). The recognition and sensitivity to the local culture of community members helped the CSOs to circumvent collusions and conflicts that could arise in the implementation of development projects in traditional areas as reported by Goman (2011) and Gusta (2008). However, despite the fact that the CSOs did not evidently deploy traditional modes of communication such as folklore, the blend of personal and mediated communication approaches satisfied the needs of community members.

Theoretically, under the stakeholder theory perspective, community members are primary stakeholders as they constitute people or groups that are directly affected either positively or negatively by the effort or the actions of change agents (Reed, 2008). This identification and accurate categorisation of stakeholders ensured that the needs of stakeholders are catered for in order to guarantee their participation (Agüera, 2013).

From the participatory communication theory viewpoint, the communication strategies deployed by the CSOs also satisfied the need for stakeholders to be involved in the development programmes that were meant for them. The level of participation was however largely consultative and collaborative although the aspirations of the CSOs was to attain the level of empowering participation which is the peak. Among the CSOs, GDCA is the closest to attaining empowering participation because part of their approach is knowledge sharing and developing indigenous pragmatic solutions to addressing development issues identified and defined by the local people. At the empowering participation level, primary stakeholders are capable and willing to initiate the process and take part in the analysis. Consequently, the ownership and control of development processes rest in the hands of the primary stakeholders (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009).

4.6 Summary

This chapter paid attention to the findings of the study by discussing the research questions that sought to investigate the the nature of Communication strategies used by civil society organisations, their reasons for using those communication strategies as well as how the identified communication strategies meet the needs of community members.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

This study assessed the communication strategies of selected Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the Northern Region of Ghana. This chapter presents a summary of all major findings of the study. Additionally, the chapter presents the limitations of the study, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for future studies.

5.2   Summary

The study was specifically, purposed to examine the communication strategies of three CSOs namely, the West African Network for Peacebuilding, Ghana (WANEP-Ghana), Ghana Developing Communities Association (GDCA) and Youth Empowerment for Life (YE4L). It further examined the motivations for the CSO's choice of communication strategies and the suitability of the communication strategies in satisfying the needs of the local communities in which the CSOs were active. To achieve the purpose of the research, the study concentrated on three objectives;

1. To identify the nature of communication strategies of the three selected Civil Society organisations in the Northern Region of Ghana.

2. To investigate the reasons why the Civil Society Organisations use these communication strategies.

3. To examine how these communication strategies meet the needs of the community members.

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The study found that all the CSOs had various communication strategies that featured different communication tools and tactics to cater for the needs of various stakeholders. The nature of the communication strategies were found to be dependent on the philosophy and operational focus of the CSOs. As such WANEP, for example, was cautious and dynamic but discreet with communication. GDCA was adaptive and semi-formal in its approach whiles YE4L deployed a communication strategy that ensured close collaboration with local stakeholders.

The study also discovered that the decisions to use particular communication strategies were influenced by a series of factors. The factors that influenced the choice of particular communication strategies were among others, the cultural space, and audience, purpose of the communication, needs of target existing communication networks, budgetary considerations and the internal capacity of CSOs staff. These factors can be categorised as social and organisational. Social factors are broad environmental factors that are external to the organisations; on the other hand, organisational factors are closely associated with the internal dynamics of the individual organisations. Although both categories of factors were prevalent, the organisational factors varied in magnitude for different organisations but social factors such as stakeholder dynamics and local culture of the community were constant and strongly had an impact on the choice of communication strategy.

Again, it was found that the communication strategies deployed by the CSOs were relevant for the purposes for which they were deployed, and these strategies also satisfied the aspirations of community members. This is because the communication strategies

deployed were appropriate for the cultural milieu of the communities in which the CSOs operated. Under the stakeholder theory perspective, community members were recognised by CSOs as primary stakeholders. Identification and accurate categorisation of stakeholders ensured that the needs of community members were catered for in order to guarantee their participation. From the participatory communication theory viewpoint, the communication strategies deployed by CSOs also satisfied the need for stakeholders to be involved in the development programmes that were meant for them. The level of participation was however largely consultative and collaborative although the aspirations of the CSOs were meant to attain the level of empowering participation.

5.3   Conclusion

This study investigated the communication strategies of selected Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the Northern Region of Ghana. Based on the key findings of the study, it can be concluded that the nature of the communication strategies of the three selected CSOs is coordinated, purposeful and intentional as is expected of every strategic communication. The nature of the different communication strategies examined also shows that the strategies were designed not only to advance the mission of participation but also to satisfy stakeholder aspirations for involvement which is therefore consistent with views of Hallahan et al. (2007) and Paul, (2011) that Communication strategies are deliberate coordinated actions, engagements or messages, intended to inform or influence, selected audiences in support of particular objectives of organisations.

Meanwhile, the different communication strategies of WANEP, GDCA and YE4L were by nature predisposed to deliver more on advocacy and social mobilisation than behaviour change.

As suggested by Hussain (2013), this study found that community development is a complex phenomenon but communication strategy is an essential tool for building and maintaining a good social and working relationship with all partners and stakeholders in community development. The communication strategies of the three selected CSOs in the Northern region of Ghana were influenced by social and organisational factors. Stakeholder demographics and cultural values such as the reverence for traditional authority and gender role divisions were the common issues which run through the reasons for choosing communication strategies. In their bid to communicate effectively, the selected organisations tried to circumvent these environmental influences (such as stakeholder demographics and cultural values by combining communication approaches) but also adopted pragmatic and traditionally acceptable means of conveying their messages.

This corroborates the assertion of Cabanero-Verzosa (2003), Gusta (2008) and Imoh (2013) that the social context within which communication strategies are implemented has significant influence on the effectiveness of the communication strategies.

The communication strategies used by WANEP, GDCA and YE4L are relevant, purposeful and fulfil the needs of local community members. These communication strategies have been particularly beneficial for advocacy and social mobilisation. More importantly, community members consider the strategies as engaging, participatory and

culturally acceptable. However, with the exception of GDCA, the strategies of the various organisations stop short of empowering participation.

5.4   Limitations

Some limitations were encountered in the conduct of the study. Firstly, if not for the resource and time constraint, the researcher could have visited many project sites of the three organisations to get varied views from different opinion leaders instead of each of the single communities each visited. Besides that, the inability of the researcher to speak any of the indigenous languages of the study communities, was a challenge.

Again, the sample size was not gender balanced, most respondents were males. It was difficult to find female opinion leaders in the communities in which the study was conducted because of the seemingly male dominant cultural values in the selected communities.

5.5   Recommendations

The outcomes of this study have implications for planning and executing development interventions in local communities in the Northern Region of Ghana. First of all, realising the power and influence wielded by different categories of stakeholders, it is recommended that, CSOs operating in localities of the Northern Region of Ghana could endeavour to properly define their stakeholder's in order to engage them appropriately for communication effectiveness. Also, it emerged in the findings that traditional authorities, opinion leaders, and the local media were key stakeholders in community development projects, therefore, it is recommended that CSOs should collaborate closely with these

key stakeholders and leverage on the support of such stakeholders for the free flow of information for decision making and mutual benefit of all stakeholders.

Again, based on the discovery of strong attachments to cultural values in the communities investigated, it is recommended for WANEP, GDCA and YE4L to deploy pragmatic communication approaches such as using already existing traditional communication channels to improve the participation and empowerment of community members. Additionally, based on the findings regarding the influence of stakeholder demographics on communication strategy, it is recommended that CSOs should employ quality formative and background research to enable them understand the sociocultural dynamics of the communities they work in.

Furthermore, considering the background of the officers in charge of communication for the three CSOs, it is recommended that CSOs should endeavour to employ officers with communication backgrounds to help boost the way communication is handled in the Civil Society space.

5.6   Suggestions for future studies

This research mainly looked at the communication strategies used by three Civil Society Organisations in the Northern Region of Ghana, with the conclusion that practical approaches suited the local needs of the primary stakeholders and are more suitable for CSOs. Further studies are therefore necessary to understand the communication strategies required at different stages of the development communication process in these communities.

Additionally, future research can focus on the background of officers in charge of communication within the various Civil Society Organisations.

Future researchers may also consider examining the communication strategies used by CSOs operating in other parts of Ghana. This could help future researchers to ascertain whether the influence of cultural values are only particular to communities in the Northern Region.

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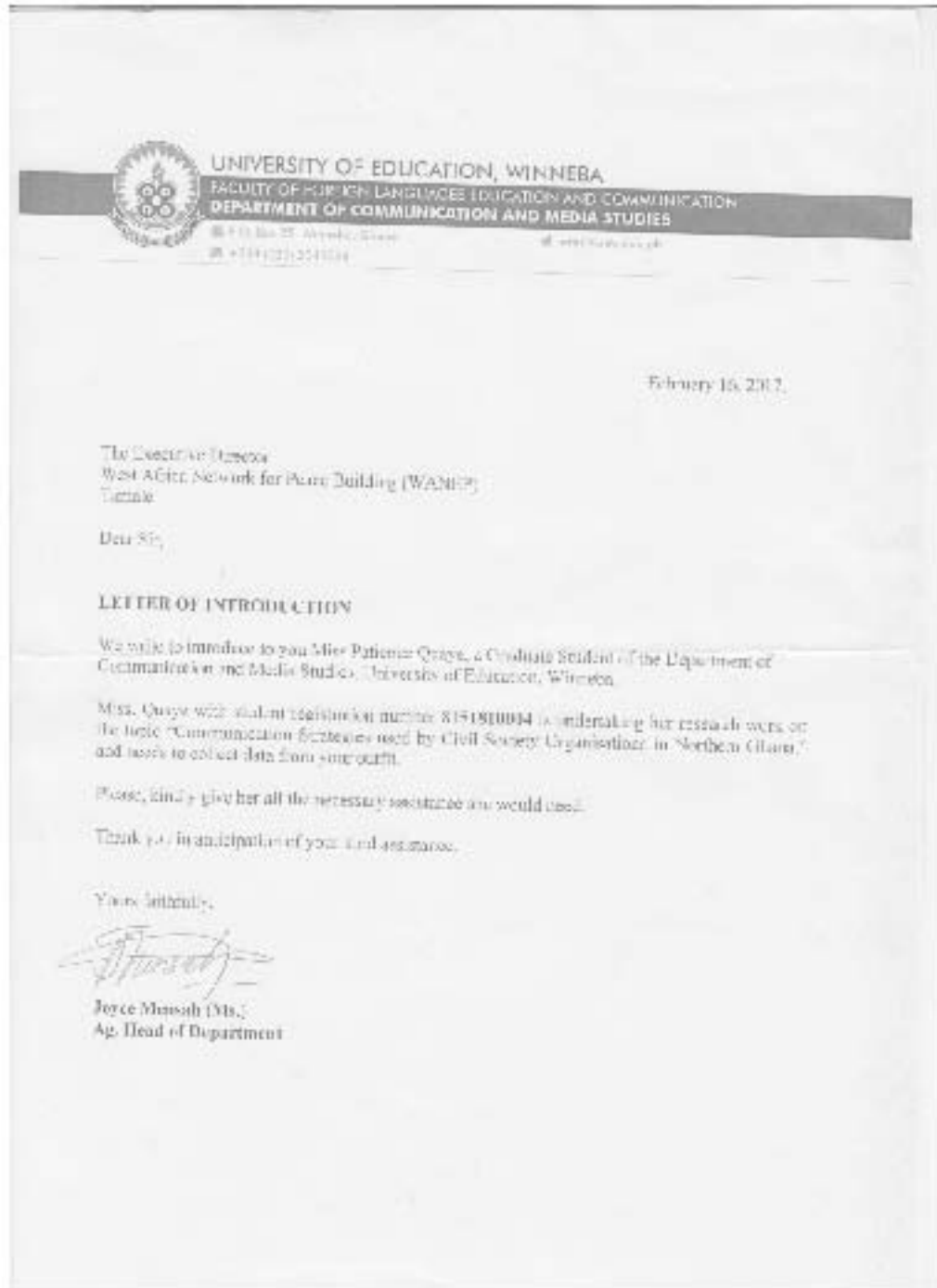Yin, R. K. (2012). *Applications of case study research* (3rd ed.). Washington DC: Sage Publications, Inc.

Appendix 1

Introductory Letter from researcher's department to the Ghana Developing Communities
Association (GCDA)
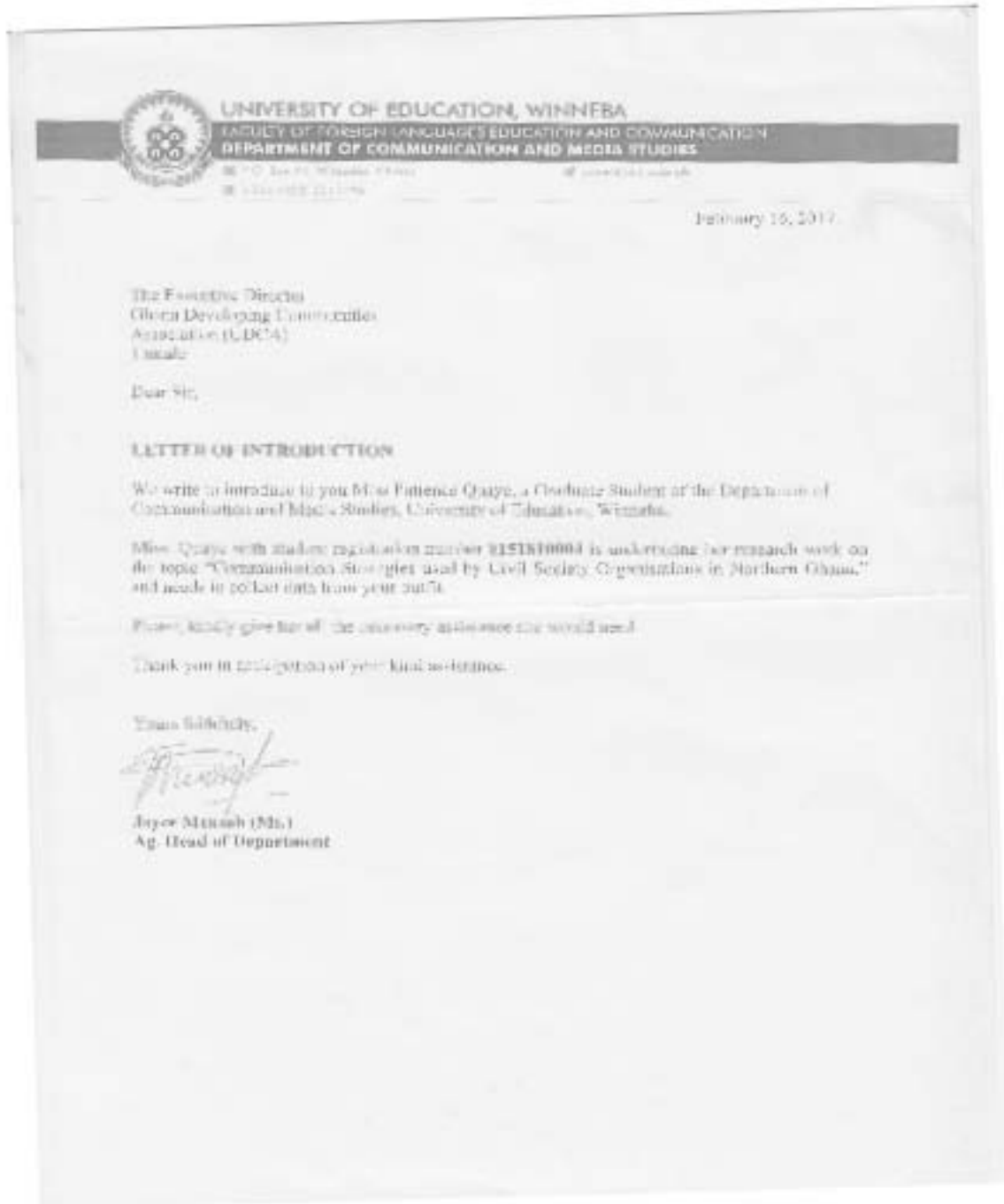
Appendix 2

Introductory Letter from researcher's department to West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP)

Appendix 3

<div align="center">

Interview guide for CSOs

**COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF SELECTED CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANISATIONS (CSOS) IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA**

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Interview guide for CSOs

Preamble

This study is designed to facilitate preparation of a thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy in Communication and Media Studies. The purpose of the study is to know your views as a member of the communication team and find out the communication strategies used by your organisation. I am hopeful that your feedback will assist me to have a deeper understanding into the subject matter of this study. I will be very much appreciating if you can offer your opinion on the subject of this study. I guarantee that your feedback will be used strictly for academic purposes only. I therefore humbly request your participation in this discussion to help me complete this process.

RQ1: What is the nature of Communication Strategies of the selected CSOs?

1. How long have you been in this organisation?
2. How many communities does your organisation work in?
3. Does your organisation have a communication strategy? How long has it been in use?
4. What is entailed in the communication strategy?
5. Which communication strategies are mostly used and why?

RQ2: What are the reasons for using the communication strategies?

1. Based on your experiences in this role, what are some of the factors that you consider before using a particular strategy?

<div align="center">107</div>

2. In your opinion how does the strategies you use aide the work of your organisation?

3. Does your organisation consider a comment, view, or concern made by any stakeholder on the communication strategies you use?

4. How has your organisation made an attempt to address those concerns in rolling out new projects?

5. Where does your organisation place traditional values, norms, and customs?

6. How are opinion leaders engaged?

7. What role do opinion leaders play in your projects?

8. How do traditional values, norms, and customs influence your organisations communication strategies?

9. What role do these values, norms and customs play?

Appendix 4

Interview guide for opinion leaders

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF SELECTED CIVIL SOCIETY

ORGANISATIONS (CSOS) IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA

Interview guide for opinion Leaders

Preamble

This study is designed to facilitate preparation of a thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy in Communication and Media Studies. The purpose of the study is to know your views as a member of the communication team and find out the communication strategies used by your organisation. I am hopeful that your feedback will assist me to have a deeper understanding into the subject matter of this study. I will be very much appreciating if you can offer your opinion on the subject of this study. I guarantee that your feedback will be used strictly for academic purposes only. I therefore humbly request your participation in this discussion to help me complete this process.

RQ3: How do the communication strategies meet the needs of community members?

1. How long have you been working with this organisation?

2. What are some of the things you have done for the organisation in any of their projects?

3. What are some of the customs, norms and values you hold dear?

4. What role do these values, norms and customs play?

5. Do you see that they pay attention to traditional values, norms and customs?

6. Based on your experiences as an opinion leader, what are some of the things you consider before telling them anything or agreeing to be part of any project?

7. In your opinion how does their encounter or involvement with you aide or influence the way they communicate?

8. What have your community benefited from them?