## UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

## PRE-COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF SELECTED NGOS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: A STAKEHOLDER APPROACH



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## PRE-COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF SELECTED NGOS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: A STATKEHOLDER APPROACH



A dissertation in the Department of Development Communication, School of Communication and Media Studies, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts (Development Communication) in the University of Education, Winneba

NOVEMBER, 2023

## DECLARATION

### **Student's Declaration**

I, Jacqueline Agyeiwaa 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 original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE: .....



## Supervisor's Declaration

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

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: MR. KWESI AGGREY SIGNATURE: ..... DATE: ....

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to myself and everyone who has in their smallest way contributed to my growth. I appreciate you.



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#### ABSTRACT

This research examines the pre-communication strategies employed by two Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Greater Accra Region, specifically focusing on their community development projects. Utilizing stakeholder and participatory theories, the study investigates the characteristics and implications of these strategies. Data were collected through observations and interviews. Findings indicate that the NGOs prioritize the identification of primary and secondary stakeholders, conducting comprehensive stakeholder analyses that consider factors such as power, influence, demographics, and needs. The NGOs engage in a variety of activities, including collaboration with community leaders, interaction with donors and partners, social media engagement, and face-to-face communication. These strategies are vital for assessing community needs, enhancing stakeholder understanding, reducing operational costs, fostering community belonging, and building trust. The thematic analysis reveals the complexities inherent in NGO-community interactions, offering critical insights for improving communication strategies within community development initiatives. This study employs a qualitative research approach and a case study design.



#### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Background to the study**

NGOs are often defined as private, self-governing organizations that work on a nonprofit basis to improve the quality of life of underprivileged people (Duong, 2017). The World Bank defined NGOs as private organizations that pursue activities to alleviate suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or engage in community development, as stated by Gibbs et al. (1999).

The execution of development projects has increasingly been linked to nongovernmental organizations over the past decades (Dilevko, 2018). Brophy (2020) posits that NGOs are seen as strategic affiliates of the public sector and play an essential role in the provision of services. Bano (2019) asserts that there are undoubtedly several factors at play to explain such a dramatic change of focus from the state apparatus to NGOs as a complimentary solution to our issues with development. Non-governmental organizations have excelled over the years in the fight against poverty and have gained recognition for their efforts on an international, national, and local level. Globally, nongovernmental organizations have become significant entities in changing how people live in society. Non-governmental organizations are seen as groups that reflect the attitudes and opinions of individuals by international institutions, especially the European Commission, who treat them as partners and key participants in many discussions (Kucheryavaya, 2017).

Luwis & Kanji (2010) postulate that non-governmental organizations began playing a much bigger part in development starting in the late 1980s. Adding that the international donor community first recognized and then praised NGOs for offering innovative

solutions to persistent development issues characterized by ineffective government-togovernment aid and ineffective development projects, NGO activities have existed in Ghana since the 19th century colonial times (Edward & Hulmes, 1996). Since then, NGOs and other private groups have been working in Ghana's marginalized communities to provide social services. The number of non-governmental organizations had gradually grown by the mid-1990s. These aid organizations provide development services such as the provision of clean water, the construction of clinics that cater to the health of people in rural areas, the provision of agricultural tools and small loans to farmers, as well as educational initiatives such as the construction of libraries (Bawa, 2007). Bawa (2007) spells out that Ghana has two primary categories of NGOs. These are the local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that operate in Ghana. The local NGOs (LGOs) work in collaboration with international NGOs (INGOs), which act as the primary sources of funding and give their Ghanaian counterparts technical assistance as well as advice. LNGOs, in turn, provide financial and technical assistance for development initiatives in rural communities.

The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals stated by the United Nations relies heavily on Non-Governmental Organizations (Odoom, 2020). Abiddin (2022) defined NGOs by four characteristics; they are non-profit, non-partisan, non-criminal and are voluntary. Besançon et al. (2022) posit that NGOs are organizations that 'raise awareness and mobilize; develop capacity; design and carry out projects; monitor and review policies; gather data; provide technical expertise; and both support and hold governments accountable to their commitments. They are organizations created from within civil society by enabling people with similar objectives to come together (Tshiyoyo, 2022). Put simply, non-governmental organizations try to find the needs of the marginalized and work to fill the void.

Brass (2018) argues that even though the advocacy campaigns non-profit organizations undertake may vary from nation to nation and from one target group to another, their ultimate objectives, which are grounded in the original principles of humanitarian organizations, remain the same. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are purposefully established to assist local communities with their developmental problems. Their resources are therefore strongly connected with their activities (Bright 2019). NGOs are regarded as the state's development partners by the government as well as by people in general. Bawah (2007) argues that a lot of NGOs believe that their services are essential to the growth of the nation, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas. They also see their jobs as enhancing government initiatives to fight poverty. Although NGOs have supplied and continue to provide relief services to many impoverished areas in Ghana, she argues that many rural people still endure extreme poverty. As organizations that serve a wider range of social needs, NGOs play a crucial role in ensuring success (Paras, 2014). They build their reputations and strong relationships, which are integral to effective stakeholder engagement (Paras, 2014).

Tetteh (2021) contended that putting NGOs into categories would not help people understand them better. Although there are different types of activities, some NGOs frequently change the number of activities they carry out. However, the World Bank managed to categorize NGOs into two groups. Operational and advocacy NGOs. Operational NGOs primary purpose is to design and implement development-related projects, while advocacy NGOs focus on pushing particular issues. In contrast to advocacy NGOs, which focus on organizing protests or campaigns to support or

advance a particular cause, operational NGOs carry out initiatives, according to Willetts (2010). Therefore, organizations engaged in operational activities concentrate on development projects in areas such as education, health, water and sanitation, agriculture, emergency relief, economic development, and disaster preparedness, among others, whereas organizations engaged in advocacy drive a particular agenda concerning the lives of people they work for, particularly women and children, as well as general human rights issues and championing other areas (Tetteh, 2021). Regardless of the category or aim, NGOs are known as promoters of development.

Guuru and Adede (2022) contended that communication has become essential in many aspects of contemporary society. Any initiative, whether initiated by the government or by a non-governmental organization, needs an effective communication plan or strategy to be successful. Appiah and Ofosu-Ennin (2018) asserted that NGOs communication strategies are the strategic use of communication by those seeking to advance a social or public policy initiative. Galli (2022) asserts that because communication strategies are built around the aims of a project, they differ from one another. Adler et al. (2014) argued that a communication strategy is a communication plan, a document that expresses the goals and strategies of an organization's outreach activities. In this situation, sponsors and possible financing agencies are included. It outlines what an organization aims to communicate to the public and who it is aiming to target. When a target group hears a persuasive message from the communication strategy, this becomes achievable (Odoom, 2020).

#### **1.1 Selected NGOs**

The study was initiated to investigate the following selected NGOs in the Greater Accra Region.

#### 1.1.1 Achievers Ghana

Achievers Ghana is a nonprofit organization that focuses on empowering girls in slums through education. They embark on a transformative journey that unlocks their potential, fosters growth, and cultivates a future where every girl thrives, learns, and leads with confidence and purpose. The organization aims to give holistic education to girls, educate parents, and provide guidance to help them realize that pushing a girl child into marriage is not the solution to the acute poverty we are facing; rather, educating them to a higher level for them to be gainfully employed and earn a good living will subsequently solve their problems.

#### 1.1.2 RUFPA Ghana

RUPFA Ghana is a social and environmental NGO into sustainable development seeking the welfare of the less privileged in society located in Accra, reaching more than thousands of people in deprived communities. It was founded in 2008 and seeks to thrive solely on contributions from private individuals, foundations, businesses, and international donors.

RUPFA's mission is to serve rural and urban people who benefit from equal opportunities for resources in life, especially those in deprivation areas in Africa. The organization envisages fighting against poverty and reversing the trend of rural and urban migrations, which is socially healthy.

#### **1.2 Statement of Problem**

The goal of communication in development projects is to provide individuals who benefit from the program with important information so they may participate in the project's planning, development, execution, and sustainability. As a result, several strategies for communication are employed (Quaye, 2017). Okyere (2021) posits that

communication strategy has become an indispensable element in organizational success. The effectiveness of an organization's communication, however, is deeply rooted in the strategy it employs to disseminate information among its public. However, earlier studies on communication strategies have mostly focused on communication strategies during project intervention, neglecting communication strategies before project initiation. For example, the work by Mary and Santas in 2022 focused on communication strategies for campaigns towards the eradication of FGM/C in select states.

Mary and Santas (2022) identified the communication strategies adopted by NGOS for campaigns to end mutilation, determined the level of adoption, and determined their effectiveness regarding social and behavioral change. Hue (2017) posits that it is an NGO that is involved in advocacy and social movement, and it is possible to better understand how this NGO develops its communication strategies to achieve its objectives. Hue (2017) details how remarkably coherent communication strategies were discovered within the business under assessment. Cottle and Nolan's (2007) contended from a critical perspective that the communication strategies employed, which are based on media logic, run the risk of conflicting with the humanitarian values of the NGOs.

Duong (2017), focused on fourth-generation NGOs communication strategies in social campaigns and resource mobilization, how NGOs engaged people and organizations in their social campaigns and financing initiatives, and the process by which the NGO established and activated their communication strategies.

Mefalopulos (2008) contended that most non-governmental organizations fail because of communication lapses at the beginning of the project life cycle. Pigman (2019)

asserts that often times NGOs and other development initiators fail to recognize the need to engage local communities in identifying social problems and subsequent selection of courses of action (Pigman et al., 2019). Due to this, many project initiatives fail to achieve their intended goals. Poor communication is a major problem that NGOs still face (Shava & Maramura, 2016). The poor state of communication at the micro level has, for instance, been reported right from goal setting and proposal development levels (Guuru & Adede, 2022). Beatty (2017) notes that project failures in the NGO sector are often brought on by a lack of communication, which increases program ineffectiveness and breeds mistrust between these organizations and their communities. Guuru and Adede (2022) postulated that NGOs are among the guiltiest of development players who fail to engage communities through participatory communication. Beltran (2004) and Mefalopulos (2002) conclude that by adopting the tools and practices of the two-way communication model from the beginning of the intervention, many failures and problems of a project could have been easily avoided in the last decades.

Awekya and Bory (2017) contended that non-governmental organizations play an important role in promoting community development projects around the world. These organizations often implement various strategies to effectively communicate with the community before intervening in development projects. The nature of these pre-intervention communication strategies employed by NGOs is the focus of this thesis (Servaes, 2009).

Although extensive documented literature on NGO communication strategies is available, there is limited information related to NGOs and their pre-intervention communication strategies for community development projects. This study therefore focuses on NGOs and their pre-intervention communication strategies for community development projects.

#### **1.3 Research Objective**

The general objective of the current research is to study two selected NGO's and their pre-intervention communication strategies for community development projects.

The specific objectives are:

- 1. To Investigate the nature of the pre-communication strategies employed by the selected NGOs in their community projects.
- 2. To Examine the implications of these pre-communication strategies.
- To Identify the challenges faced by the selected NGOs in implementing their pre-communication strategies.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study's conduct in order to attain its intended objectives:

- 1. What specific pre-communication strategies do selected NGOs employ in the initiation phases of their community projects?
- 2. What are the Implications on these strategies employed by the selected NGOs?
- 3. What challenges do NGOs encounter in implementing pre-communication strategies?

#### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The study examined the Pre-Communication Strategies employed by some selected NGOs. The research was limited to selected NGOs in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana with a focus on Achievers Ghana and RUFPA Ghana. A sample size of six (6) was taken for the study. Two communication members from the selected NGOs and a

community member from each organization. This collection of data is limited to indepth Interviews and Observation. Participation in this study is confined to only members and committed community members of the organizations under study.

#### **1.6 Significant of the Study**

The significance of this study evolves around its potential to contribute to the field of communication for development and inform policymakers, researchers, and NGOs about the importance of effective pre-intervention communication. Understanding these strategies is important because it can provide meaningful insights into the ways in which NGOs engage with communities, foster participation, and build ownership. Additionally, examining the implications of these strategies can shed light on the effectiveness of NGO interventions and their impact on the community. Finally, analyzing the challenges faced by NGOs in implementing their pre-communication strategies can help identify the barriers that stand in the way of effective communication and suggest ways to address them for improved community development outcomes.

#### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

There will be five (5) chapters in this study. The introductory chapter, which is chapter One (1) provides information on the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, scope, significance, and structure or organization of the study. Chapter two (2) comprises a review of the literature pertaining to the study.

The research methodology, including the target organizations, sampling techniques, data gathering procedures, and data analysis procedures, will be covered in depth in Chapter 3. Chapter four (4) constitutes the analysis and presentation of data and the discussion of results and findings. Finally, chapter five (5) will present the summary of findings, recommendations, and conclusion for the thesis.



#### **CHAPTER TWO**

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter reviews literature related to NGOs communication strategies. The concept of development and communication will be covered in the first part, along with NGOs communication strategies and their significance, the background and theory of development communication, and other works on the subject that have been documented by researchers and scholars and are pertinent to the current study. Additionally, the links between communication and nonprofit projects will be discussed. The final part of this chapter will also discuss the conceptual framework of the research.

#### 2.1 The Concept of Development

Through the evolution of human history and consciousness, the concept of development, here understood to be roughly similar to social progress, has undergone numerous significant changes (Kent, n.d). Development, according to Edwards (2007), is the intentional process of lowering material desires and improving people's capacity to live lives they deem to be good over the broadest possible spectrum in a community. Odoom (2020) contended that development means different things to different people. Mayonzo (2012) confirms that development cannot be defined unless it is known. Todaro and Smith (2006), as cited in Odoom, assert that development is a state of mind in which society secures the means to lead a better life. Through this process, society makes sure that everyone has improved access to resources, opportunities for intellectual advancement, and high-quality living situations. (Odoom, 2020) Zakaria (2011 posits that development is a transition process that leads to a

betterment or increase in people's social, economic, and political lives. Perroux (1978) argues that development is the result of people making decisions to grow their own actual and global output in a cumulative and appropriate manner. The concept of development was first viewed from an economic point of view. During this period, development was characterized by quantitative rather than qualitative changes (Rabie, 2016). This viewpoint, which predominated between 1950 and 1960, emphasized economic indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), gross national product (GNP), individual income and wealth, foreign and domestic investments, and so on as indices of development (Rabie, 2016). Semasinghe (2020) posits that the basic idea of the economic view of development is that developed countries have successfully built their economies, as represented by GDP. Considering this, the focus of developing countries was on increasing their production capacity in order to boost GDP.

The World Bank supported this viewpoint and seeded early models of development from the economic perspective of development; it was later shown that GDP growth did not automatically result in major improvements in the lives of many people (Semasinghe, 2020). Tayebwa (1992), as stated and cited in Popoola (2020), also views development as a broad term that includes economic growth, welfare, and material well-being in addition to other economic, social, and political aspects of the entire society, such as security, culture, social activities, and political systems. Bidney (2009) asserts that the meaning of development must be seen from a deeper perspective, which is through the lens of an individual's own experience. However, Rogers (1976) defined development as a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment. He emphasized the importance of providing everyone with equal opportunities to access information and benefits of development, participating at the grassroots level, creating projects that are pertinent to their own development goals, and incorporating various concepts and elements that would specifically cater to the needs of the local community (Melkote, 2006).

#### **2.1.1 NGOs and Development**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a pivotal role in development work worldwide, both as providers of services to vulnerable individuals and communities and as policy advocates. (Lewis and Kanji, 2020) The World Bank defined Developmental NGOs are defined as private, non-profit organizations that work with developing countries to alleviate suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or engage in community development. NGOs play an essential role in global social development, facilitating human development as measured by the UN Human Development Index (HDI) (n.d.). NGOs have taken the lead in supporting long-term community development. Because of their unique ideology and nature, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) excel at reaching out to and mobilizing underprivileged and rural people (William, 2018). They also help these communities reclaim control of their lives by collaborating with and strengthening local groups. Nikkhah & Redzuan (2010) assert that such nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can carry out projects more efficiently and at a lesser cost than government agencies and, most significantly, promote sustainable development.

These organizations, independent of government control, are driven by a commitment to address social, economic, and environmental challenges (William, 2018) Owusu (2014) postulate that in development, NGOs function as catalysts for positive change,

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implementing projects that aim to uplift communities, alleviate poverty, promote education, and foster sustainable practices. Tetteh (2021) asserts that NGOs often bridge gaps in areas where government resources may be limited or insufficient. Their work encompasses a wide range of sectors, including healthcare, education, environmental conservation, human rights, and economic empowerment (Tetteh, 2021) NGO Development goes beyond mere economic growth. It involves holistic improvements in the well-being of individuals and communities, addressing issues of social justice, equality, and environmental sustainability (Bright,2019) NGOs contribute to development by executing projects that empower marginalized groups, advocate for policy changes, and promote inclusive and participatory approaches. Santas (2022) asserts that the relationship between NGOs and development is dynamic, with organizations adapting strategies to evolving global challenges. Effective communication strategies are crucial for NGOs to engage with communities, secure funding, and garner support for their initiatives.

#### 2.2 The Concept of Communication

Communication as a concept is based on the idea that group media, the Internet, radio, television, and telephones can support the general betterment of less privileged people in developing nations (Scrampical, 2006). The definition of communication has been explored by numerous academics. The Association of Perioperative Practice holds that the Latin term communis is where the word "communication" first originated. In a social setting, communication is generally viewed as an interaction. A sender (source) and a recipient are typically involved in communication. It entails the exchange of messages between the interactants (Fatimayin, 2018). According to Daniel (2016), the communication process is complete when feedback has been sent back to the sender (source), which entails the receiver reacting to the signal by starting a new circle of

meaning exchange. Clevenger (1959) posited communication as "any dynamic information sharing process." While Bertalanffy (1968) asserted that communication frequently involves the flow of information within a system, Mefalopulos (2008) viewed communication as the transmission of information and messages. O'Reilly and Pondy (1979), who defined communication, supported Bertalanffy's (1968) meaning. To better understand communication, Mefalopulos identified four types of communication, which included corporate communication, which is the type of communication that communicates the mission and activities of an organization, mostly to external audiences, through the use of media outputs and products to promote the mission and values of the institution. Mefalaopulos (2008) contended that internal communication facilitates the flow of information within an institution by ensuring the timely and effective sharing of relevant information among the staff and institution units. Advocacy communication focuses on the influence of change at the public or policy level and promotes issues related to development. Development communication, on the other hand, supports sustainable change in development operations by engaging key stakeholders.

#### **2.2.1 NGO Communication Strategies**

Communication strategies are plans for conveying knowledge about a particular topic, circumstance, community, or event. Adler, Rodman, and Cropley (2014) argued that "a communication strategy is a communication plan, a document that expresses the goals and strategies of an organization's outreach activities." In this situation, sponsors and possible financing agencies are included. It outlines what an organization aims to communicate to the public and who it is aiming to target. When a target group hears a persuasive message from the communication strategy, this becomes achievable. Rogers (2003) contends that the more recent views of development suggest that communication

has a different and generally wider role. (Olutimayin, 2002) asserts that it is impossible to overstate the importance of communication strategies for the overall development of rural communities. The communication criteria are different, so if it is to be effective, a full planning process is required (Mary et al., 2023).

They postulated that the most important requirement for communication in the operation of NGOs is the formation of favorable relationships. The relationship could be with donors, stakeholders, volunteers, participants, or beneficiaries. The connection that binds all of these relationships is good communication or the proper communication strategy required (Mary et al., 2023).

#### 2.2.2 Pre- Communication Strategies

Pre-communication strategies refer to actions and planning undertaken before engaging in any intervention. These strategies are intended to guarantee that communication is successful and produces consequences that are both clear and effective (Zerfaß et al., 2018).

Zerfaß et al. (2018) postulate that this involves preparing stakeholders, community leaders, and members for future changes, ensuring they understand the rationale for the intervention. This helps in resolving any concerns raised by the community. Effective communication is essential for gaining support and minimizing community resistance during the intervention process. This may involve considering the audience, setting objectives, choosing appropriate channels, and anticipating potential challenges to ensure effective and purposeful communication. (Quaye, 2017).

Aruma (2018) asserts that it is believed that communication is the tool that connects members of a community for the purpose of enhancing their quality of life in the

participating community. Engaging members before project initiation has a significant potential to help people in the communities understand that they have the skills needed to recognize their own issues, the needs of the community, and how to best meet them (Sima, 2022). Aruma (2018) continued to contend that every stage of community development, from raising awareness to community needs assessment, identification of needs and prioritization, planning for community development, execution of projects and programs, management of projects and programs, and project monitoring and evaluation, is impacted by communication as an essential tool for human existence in the environment.

The role of communication in non-governmental organizations is usually regarded as one of the most crucial elements that contribute to program implementation success (Guruu and Adade, 2022). However, poor communication remains a major issue among organizations in this field (Shava & Maramura, 2016). Zakargae et al. (2021) stressed that the success of a project depends on the participation of stakeholders at all levels. However, the facilitation of two-way processes that involve stakeholders, enable mutual understanding, analyze the situation, and choose the best course of action for change is now more important than just focusing on the channels, audiences, or messages used in communication (Mefalopulos, 2002). Mefalopulos contended that the effectiveness of development communication suffers greatly when it is not included from the beginning. Beltran (2004) and Mefalopulos (2002) conclude that by adopting the tools and practices of the two-way communication model from the beginning of the intervention, many failures and problems of a project could have been easily avoided in the last decades. Concerns about the participatory approaches used for stakeholder engagement were expressed by Pigman et al., 2019; Melkote & Steve, 2015; and Manyozo, 2008. Pigman et al. (2019 observed that participants can mutually understand each other's values and perspectives and that preferences can change.

#### 2.2.3 Strategic Communication and Development

Strategic Communication for Sustainable Development (SCFSD) opined that strategic communication is more than just disseminating information; it also entails actively soliciting stakeholders' viewpoints. It promotes two-way communication, tackles human elements such as sociology, psychology, culture, behavior, and politics, and aids in the development agenda's consensus and partnership building. Internal and external elements influencing human communication must both be considered. Human characteristics such as standards and values, attitudes and behavior, emotions and beliefs, culture, and social ties are examples of internal elements. The process of creating and negotiating collective, coordinated systems of meaning through symbolic practices oriented toward the achievement of organizational goals (Mumby & Kuhn, 2019).

Paul (2011) asserts it as the coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of signaling or engagement intended to inform, influence, or persuade selected audiences in support of specific objectives. Hallahan et al. (2007) describe strategic communication in its broadest sense as purposeful communication to advance an organization's mission. Strategic communication, according to Grunig (2006), is a "bridging activity" between an organization's stakeholders and the organization as a whole. The information gap that exists between stakeholders and organizations is practically addressed by carefully distributing information from the organization to the

stakeholders and collecting input. Hallahan et al. (2007) posit that strategic communication implies that people are involved in the deliberate practice of communicating for or on behalf of organizations, causes, and social movements. Both definitions regard strategic communication as a type of goal-oriented, definitive communication; however, the earlier definition (Paul, 2011) implies that strategic communication entails persuasion or manipulation (Qyaue, 2017). Strategic communication as a concept is multidisciplinary (Holzhausen & Zerfass, 2015).

According to Vuori (2012), the basic principle behind strategic communication is the focus of information transmitted to the targeted audience in such a way that the final goal is achieved. According to Sewestianiuk and Voitovici (2013), strategic communication identifies power and leadership as the core aim of organizational communication. It is defined by Vasquez and Taylor (2000) as the communication that exists between the general public in a community and the organization, while Clampitt et al. (2000) define it as the macro-level choices and trade-offs executives make based on their organizational goals and judgement about others 'reactions. Despite many developments in the field of strategic communication that have come from the field of public relations, strategic communication is also used in political communication, health communication, advertising, public diplomacy, management, development, and marketing (Holzhausen & Zerfass, 2015). Scholars in the aforementioned domains have also made significant contributions to our understanding of strategic communication. Following on from this, strategic communication may be viewed as an umbrella word that can be used to describe purposeful interaction and engagement efforts across a variety of fields. (Quaye, 2017) Strategic communication is becoming more recognized as a developing field within communication. As such, it investigates the capacity of all organizations to engage in intentional communication. Strategic communication in this sense includes not just the government, military, and companies but also civil society organizations. The approach's key value is its emphasis on strategy rather than specific methods (Argenti, Howell, & Beck, 2005). According to Murphy (2008), strategy is the utilization of various methods and means to attain specific goals. The strength of a communication strategy thus rests on the strategy' (the how) that organizational leaders and communicators attempt to employ to leverage the capabilities (means) available to achieve specific goals.

#### 2.3 Theories of communication

Communication as a field of study has resulted in the formulation of numerous theories. The interactionist theory asserts that language is used to communicate and that children can only learn it through social interaction with adults and other children. It emphasizes the significance of the setting and culture in which language learning takes place. Critical theories focus on societal conflicts of interest and how communication maintains the dominance of one group over another, while interpretive theories explore how people truly understand their own experiences. (Kalyani, 2003). In their book Four Theories of the Press, Western theorists Siebert, Paterson, and Schramm presented the earliest theories. (1956). These theories include the development communication theory, the uses and gratification theory, the diffusion of innovations theory, and the two-step flow theory.

Lazarsfeld (1940) introduced the two-step flow of media messages when he questioned the generally accepted notion that media messages extend from a content producer. Proponents of the two-step flow theory, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Goudet, argue that ideas often flowed from the radio and newspapers to opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of society. The communication accommodation theory developed by Howard Giles in 1973 argues that when people interact, they adjust their speech, their vocal patterns, and their gestures to accommodate others. It explores the various reasons why individuals emphasize or minimize the social differences between themselves and their interlocutors through verbal and non-verbal communication (Asemah, 2022).

The communication theory of diffusion of innovation, as propounded by E.M. Rogers in 1962, describes how an idea or product gathers steam and diffuses (or spreads) throughout a particular community or social system over time. People eventually accept a new idea, behavior, or product as a part of a social system as a result of this diffusion. Diffusion of Innovations offers three valuable insights into the process of social change: 1) What qualities make an innovation spread successfully? 2) The importance of peerto-peer conversations and peer networks. 3) Understanding the needs of different user segments (Robertson, 2009) Diffusion critiques like Servaes & Malikhao (1998) argue that the theory only takes a vertical, or one-way, perspective on communication and that participation in the communication process itself is the primary approach for development to accelerate. Research suggests that interpersonal interactions and communication strategies that are founded on them are more effective at teaching people new things. At the most fundamental level, individuals must be informed of the facts before they can discuss and solve problems. (Servaes & Malikhao, 1998). A brand-new theory of communication, the development communication theory, was presented with this claim. According to the theory, communication is essential for growth.

#### **2.3.1 Development Communication Theory**

This research concentrated on development communication theory, also known as communication for development (ComDev), and will be referred to as such. Development communication is the use of communication to support development. According to Mefalopulos Paolo (2008), development communication involves stakeholders, creates conducive conditions, analyzes risks and possibilities, and fosters information exchanges in order to bring about good social change through sustainable development. He asserted that the fundamental tenet of development communication is that communication is essential to all aspects of development. Development could be regarded as the weightier one; it is the progressive improvement of the quality of life that needs to happen. But communication is the vehicle that carries development forward. (Quebral, 2002).

Manyozo (2012) asserts that power and resource conflicts are at the heart of development. According to Manyozo (2012), there are essentially three strategies involved in communication for development. Firstly, communication for development is a fight to preserve the development discourse from the perspective of the underclass by increasing their awareness and understanding of development, according to Marxist historians like Edward Thompson (1963). Second, communication for development engages in a Gramscian war of positions from the viewpoint of postcolonial theory. Thirdly, from a Marxist perspective, communication for development is in and of itself an act of advocacy aimed at changing the political economy of development so that more people can realize what Quebral (2002) refers to as greater socioeconomic equality and individual potential.

Marxists view development as a form of class conflict that involves the transfer and contestation of power between opposing groups. As a result, it is a place where the classes that consume tea and those that grow it compete for resources and influence. But more significantly, development is a conflict over representation, including the tools and discourses used for that depiction, according to Marx (1852–1937) and Escobar (1995). A discourse must be considered and created in order to define a development strategy (Escobar, 1995). Marx believed that the classes that cultivate tea lack adequate and mutual intimacy, dependable networks of communication, social ties, and social interaction. As a result, they are unable to engage in multiple relationships with one another, which limits their ability to speak for themselves. As a result, they must be represented by the executive authority, which is the subordinates' society (Ganiu, 2014).

Development communication is defined by Bessette (2006) as "the planned and systematic application of communication resources, channels, approaches, and strategies to support the goals of socio-economic, political, and cultural development." According to Ascroft and Masilela (1994), "participation translates into individuals being active in development programs and processes; they contribute ideas, take initiative, and articulate their needs and their problems while asserting their autonomy." This is why development communication is primarily participatory. Ganiu (2014) posits that the goal of development communication is to promote consensus-building and information exchange in order to bring about positive change in development initiatives. It uses empirical study, two-way communication, and stakeholder dialogue to disseminate knowledge. It is a management instrument for determining opportunities and risks in sociopolitics. Mazud (2012) also believes that developmental communication can produce fruitful and long-lasting outcomes by bridging gaps and

enacting change through action. Techniques for development communication include information dissemination and education, behavior change, social marketing, social mobilization, media advocacy, communication for social change, and community participation (Ganiu, 2014).

#### 2.3.2 The Development Media Theory

The basic truth that motivated the development of this idea was that there can be no development without communication (Asemah, 2022). Under development communication theory, or development support communication, as it is also known, the media assumed the responsibility of carrying out good development initiatives while accepting limits and orders from the state. The goal of development media theory was to recognize that societies transitioning from underdevelopment and colonialism to independence and better material conditions frequently lack the infrastructure, money, traditions, professional skills, and even audiences required to sustain media institutions comparable to those in the First or Second World, where the four theories could take root. (Virtual University of Pakistan, 2012) It emphasizes the following objectives: the importance of the national development challenge; the pursuit of cultural and informational autonomy; support for democracy; and solidarity with other development media theory in 1987.

This theory attempts to explain the normative behavior of the press in nations that are generally designated as developing countries. It is important to recognize certain common circumstances or characteristics of developing countries that make it difficult to apply other normative theories of the press. Okunna (1999), as cited in Santas and Asemah (2013), states that the development media theory evolved in the 1980s to fill

the growing gap between developed and poor countries. It explains that the development media theory agrees that economic development and nation-building should take precedence over the press and individual freedom.

#### 2.4 History of Development Communication

Even though development communication was first used in the 1940s, it wasn't until the 1950s that it was used extensively (Ganiu, 2014). With the help of Daniel Lerner, Wilbur Schramm, and Everett Rogers, communication studies began to emerge in the 1950s. Both Childers and Quebral emphasized that DC encompasses all forms of communication, from person-to-person to mass media (Ganiu, 2014). The concept of "development communication" was coined in 1972 by Professor Nora Quebral, who defines the field as "the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfillment of the human potential" (Quebel Nora, 2001). Quebral's pioneering ideas on development communication appear to imply that the discourse was not simply about informing or training people to embrace new attitudes, knowledge, practices, or technology. It entailed deconstructing and uprooting the core causes of structural inequality, marginalization, and disempowerment that impede individuals and societies from making radical changes to enhance their lives and welfare.

The World Bank Defined development communication is the "integration of strategic communication in development projects" that is based on a comprehensive understanding of indigenous realities. (Manyozo, 2006) After her initial definition, Quebral later re-defined the concept of development communication. Quebral (2002) redefines development communication as "the art and science of human communication

linked to a society's planned transformation, from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth, that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential." Three critical components of Quebral's updated concept of communication for development have gained widespread acceptance in theory and practice (Ganiu, 2014). The first is that communication for development is primarily concerned with people and that media technologies are merely tools for achieving this communication agenda. (Quebral, 1988, 2002; Lennie and Tacchi, 2011). Second, participation is a vital component of both development and development communication, allowing for the articulation and assimilation of diverse voices and interests in development policy design, implementation, and evaluation. (Quebral, 1988, 2002; Lennie and Tacchi, 2011; Servaes, 2008). Finally, in order to increase external validity, communication for development strategies should be guided by coherent theory and explicit methodologies.

Development communication, also known as Communication for Development (ComDev), has its roots in modernization theory, the development thinking and practice that dominated in the post-World War II era. (Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada, 1998).

The prevalent notion at the time was that 'traditional' practices in developing countries should be eliminated and replaced or supplemented with those of modern cultures. The mass media were considered to have the capacity to operate as significant change agents by spreading modernization into remote traditional villages and replacing life structures, values, and behaviors with those seen in modern Western societies. (FAO et al., 2011).

This modernist strategy was criticized by later scholars. According to Servaes (1996), issues with development were brought on by the unequal division of resources that

Western capitalism's globalization had caused. He contends that Marxist and critical theories, which hold that the Third World's problems reflect the overall dynamics of capitalist development, served as the basis for dependency analysis.

2.5 Common Types	of Communication in D	Development Organization
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Types	Purpose/ Definition	Main Functions
Corporate Communication	Communicate the	Use media outputs and
	mission and activities	products to promote the
	of the organization,	mission and values of the
	mostly for audiences.	institution; inform selected
		audiences about relevant
		activities.
Internal Communication	Facilitate the flow of	Ensure timely and effective
	information within an	sharing of relevant
	institution/ project.	information within the staff
		and institution units. It
		enhances synergies and
	ADUCATION FOR SERVICE	avoids duplication
Advocacy Communication	Influence change at the	Raise awareness on hot
	public or policy level	communication methods
	and promote issues	and media to influence
	related to development	specific audiences and
		support the intended change
Development	Support sustainable	Establish conducive
Communication	change in development	environments for assessing
	operations by engaging	risks and opportunities;
	key stakeholders	disseminate information;
	<b>y</b>	induce behavior and social
		change

Source: Mefalopulos 2008

# **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

Stakeholder theory and participatory communication theory were employed in this study. Both ideas can be used to explain how communication works and is structured in development programs.

# 2.6.1 Participatory Communication Theory

Participatory communication is defined by Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) as a kind of interruptive communication that encourages the exchange of opinions, perceptions, and information between stakeholders and people who are marginalized. One of the primary theories that underpins strategic communication is participatory communication. The Development Communication Approach, which first appeared in the 1980s as a critique of the modernization paradigm and its diffusion model, gave rise to the multiplicity paradigm known as participatory communication (Servaes and Malikhao, 2005). This approach places a strong emphasis on the necessity of involving stakeholders in the development programs intended for them.

The participatory approach to thinking that gave rise to modern participatory development approaches, including participatory communication as one key tool for development, was adopted by contemporary development communication as a result (Hannides 2011). Making people the focal point of the process is the main premise behind it (Sow, 2014). In accordance with this, Freire (2010) asserts that participation should be a fundamental component of communication for development. In order to alter oppressive and biased relationships, Freire (2010) contends that people must act through discourse, participation, consciousness, and knowledge. The participatory

approach has been discussed by academics from a variety of perspectives, who have proposed frameworks and definitions of participatory communication. Wissenbach (2007) asserts that different events and processes in various parts of the world have given rise to participatory approaches to communication. Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, a book about adult education, poverty, exploitation, and domestication in northern Brazil, was the inspiration for the Participatory Development Communication Theory, according to Hannides (2011). The educational philosophies of Paulo Freire, according to Hannides (2011), highlight communication so that underprivileged people can become aware of their own reality and fight against oppression and progress that is not based on one-way communication between individuals and groups. A detailed examination of Freire's analysis, according to White (1994), reveals many similarities with the sorts of communication that must exist between local project stakeholders and the development agency represented by its staff in order for meaningful participation to take place.

Participatory approach became a crucial component in the applications of ComDev to Sustainable Development at the end of the 1980s, when ComDev was conceived as the planned and participatory use of communication methods and tools that facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information, participation, and a change in attitude and practices aiming to achieve development goals agreed upon by all parties, as emphasized by the World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD) (2006). Research on how to attain and maintain the process and results of ComDev was recommended by the 9th UN Roundtable on Communication for Sustainable Development, held in Rome in 2004. This necessitated a collaborative strategy, a framework shared by development organizations and local stakeholders, and community involvement in the creation, implementation, and dissemination of the plan (FAO, 2005).

Effective communication is incomplete until the sender and the receiver are totally engaged, according to Mefalopolus (2008). In other words, effective communication should encourage meaningful participation at all levels since doing so will promote knowledge-gathering through the exchange of ideas and, ultimately, problem-solving. According to a study conducted by the World Bank in 1999, the need to be heard or to have a voice was among the replies that received the most votes (World Bank 1999). In response, Warnock et al. (2007) point out that having excellent communication skills is what poor people most want to be able to do. According to Warnock et al. (2007), for development to be sustainable, it must fundamentally be a process that empowers people and communities to act as change agents, drawing on their own creativity and knowledge to find solutions to problems and realize their full potential.

# 2.6.2 Typology of Participatory Communication

Diverse views of participation can be identified by eliminating the limits between participation as a goal and participation as a tool employed in particular project stages (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009). There are different levels of participatory communication, according to Mefalopulos and Tufte, 2009. These are rated according to the degree of influence that development projects have on the beneficiaries. Passive participation, participation by consultation, participation by collaboration, and empowerment participation are the four levels.

Passive Participation: Passive Participatory among the four levels, is the least participatory. By being informed of what will happen or has already happened, primary stakeholders in a project can contribute. People rarely or never provide feedback, and

involvement is measured through procedures like head counting and contribution to the debate (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009).

Participatory by Consultation: For Mefalopulos &Tufte, 2009, beneficiaries take part in discussions and analyses of the project's predetermined goals by forming groups and joining in. Because the outcomes are frequently already predetermined, participation often leads to significant modifications in what should be accomplished. However, in the end, this consultative method maintains all decision-making in the hands of outside experts who are not required to take the opinions of stakeholders into account.

Participation by collaboration: With this participation, primary stakeholders are organized into groups through collaboration in order to engage in the debate and analysis of the project's established objectives. The level of engagement does not typically lead to significant changes in the objectives, which are frequently predetermined. It does, however, call for active participation in the process of deciding how to get there. This includes a collaborative effort across all stakeholders to improve horizontal communication and capacity. Collaboration has the ability to develop into an independent form of involvement over time, even if it is initially dependent on outside facilitators and specialists. (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009).

Participation by Empowerment: Is the point at which the main stakeholders are able and willing to start the process and engage in the analysis. Joint decision-making about what should be accomplished and how results from this. In participation by Empowerment, while outsiders are equal partners in the development endeavor, primary stakeholders have the most influence over decisions that affect their daily life. Critical challenges are identified and analyzed through conversation, and solutions are found through the sharing of information and experiences. The major stakeholders are

responsible for ownership and management of the process (Mefalopulos & Tufte, 2009) Interesting typologies of participation were offered by Pretty et al. (1995), who identified seven distinct types of applications based on how development organizations view and use participation in their area of expertise. Pretty et al. (1995) began with passive participation, where individuals are only regarded to be participating by attending meetings, and ended with self-mobilization, where participants fully assume responsibility over decisions that affect their life. There are many options between these two extremes, but none of them can be viewed as totally participative (Mefalopolus, 2004).

In conclusion, the participatory theory asserts that the use of participatory approaches may result in a more concrete outcome. This is due to the fact that when stakeholders actively participate in the planning and execution of development initiatives, they have a propensity to adopt it as their own. Additionally, dialogic communication is required to engage different stakeholders and include everyone in the community in the development activities. Table 2.1 illustrates the various typologies of participation as explained by Pretty et al (1995)

Typol	ogy	Characteristics	The use of Communication
	Passive Participation	By being informed of decisions or events that have already occurred, people can participate.	Communication is only necessary when project implementers wish to publicly declare their choice to move forward without considering the reactions of the people.
2.	Manipulative Participation	With "people's" representatives on official boards who are not elected and have no authority, participation is merely a pretense.	Due to the small number of participants, communication is minimal in this sort of participation.
3.	Participation by Consultation	People take part by answering questions or being consulted.	Analyses are controlled by external agents who identify issues and the ways in which information is gathered. There isn't a lot of communication.
4.	Functional Participation	External organizations view participation as a means of achieving project objectives. People can take part in the project by establishing groups to accomplish set goals related to it.	In this approach, communication is used to actively involve people in decision-making, but they are not involved in making significant decisions.
5.	Participation for material incentive	People participate by contributing resources.	Communication takes place onl when communities are needed t contribute but are not involved in actual planning and implementation of the projects
6.	Interactive Communication	Participation is valued as a right rather than as a tool to help a project succeed.	The project involves communication from the start since decisions are made by the community and project implementers.
7.	Self- Mobilization	Individuals take action to change systems on their own, without the assistance of external institutions, and they establish connections with those institutions in order to obtain resources and technical guidance.	Communities are the only ones who make decisions. It uses communication as communities take the initiative and communicates to external agencies for support.

# **2.6.3 Typology of Participation: How People Participate in Projects and Programs for Development**

Source: (Pretty, 1995)

# 2.7 Stakeholder Theory

The conflict between Berle and Dodd in the 1930s led to the development of the stakeholder theory (Asemeh, 2022). However, Freeman is generally credited with popularizing the stakeholder concept in 1984. The stakeholder theory addresses the principle of who or what really counts."

The concept generally focuses on what the organization should be and how it should be conceptualized. The objective of the organization should be to manage its stakeholders' interests, needs, and opinions, according to Freeman (2006). Therefore, the stakeholder theory is predicated on the idea that organizations, whether private or public, have duties to various social groups. This is because, according to Asemh (2022, stakeholders are the individuals and organizations that are crucial to the life of the organizations; they have an impact on what the organizations do or are affected by organizational actions. The stakeholder theory has proved useful in development circles since it is based on an understanding of interdependence (Quaye, 2017). This is a typical relationship management theory, successful project planning and execution require the participation of all development partners. Usadolo & Caldwel (2016 posit that stakeholder identification, categorization, and activation must be done correctly for stakeholder participation to be effective.

# 2.7.1 Categories of Stakeholders

Usadolo & Caldwel (2016 assert that it is important to identify and classify stakeholders during the design and implementation of development, depending on their involvement and relationship with the development intervention. There are two main categories of stakeholders that can be distinguished: primary and secondary stakeholders. (Reed, 2008) Primary stakeholders are the individuals or groups who could be the most affected by an agency, institution, or organization's activities, whether positively or negatively. In addition to other identified categories and people who are likely to be directly impacted by the development intervention, these include members of the community, cooperating local institutions, and others (Reed, 2008).

Secondary stakeholder: Secondary stakeholders are people or groups who are indirectly affected, either positively or negatively, by an effort or the deeds of an institution, organization, or agency. Other people and organizations who are not directly involved in the project but could be impacted by it include implementing partners, political actors in the local communities, and others. People or entities that are accountable to primary stakeholders may also be considered secondary stakeholders (Reed, 2008). Another group of stakeholders exists who do not fit into the traditional categories of primary and secondary stakeholders but whose influence and involvement are crucial to the success of development programs. Key stakeholders are those people or organizations. Legislators, the media, businesspeople, and other significant societal figures can all have an impact on how development projects turn out. These individuals are considered key stakeholders (Usadolo & Caldwel, 2016).

Aguera (2013 opines that by categorizing stakeholders according to how much of a stake they have in the project, it is possible to define the boundaries of each stakeholder category. To understand the power dynamics among them and their individual interests in the project, it is also important to classify and rank stakeholders. Once they have been identified, it is necessary to prioritize the stakeholders based on their influence and areas of interest.

Development agents can determine which interests and values are shared by stakeholders as well as which interests and values are particular to each group through communication with all stakeholders. More stakeholders will likely be interested in a development intervention if they stand to gain or lose more as a result of its adoption. Usadolo and Caldwel (2016) also observed that the more stakeholders who could be impacted by a project, the more deeply engaged they are in it and the more vested they are in it. Mefalopulos & Tufte (2009 affirm that due to the growing significance of stakeholder participation in project design, implementation, and assessment, this theory is crucial to the work of non-governmental organizations.

In order to increase project success, stakeholder theory and participatory communication theory recommend developing strategies to guarantee effective stakeholder participation. In this study, these theories are brought together to investigate the types of communication strategies employed by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and how these strategies affect project success. Both theories are appropriate for the study since they are useful in understanding the patterns of stakeholder participation. The theories can also be used to examine how stakeholders ensure that all participants in development projects are adequately informed about the project and gain fairly from their participation.

#### 2.8 Summary

This chapter reviewed related literature as well as the theoretical frameworks guiding the study. Examined what NGO communication is about, the various ideologies, and the categories. The participatory communication theory and the stakeholder theory were reviewed in relation to their relevance to NGO work, communication strategies, and the topic under study.

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# CHAPTER THREE

# METHODOLOGY

# 3.0 Overview

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

# **3.1 Research Approach**

To help study the use of pre-communication strategies among selected NGOs in Ghana, a qualitative research approach was employed. Qualitative research is the development of a comprehensive, largely narrative description of social or cultural phenomena to help the researcher understand them, them. (Anas, 2022) Shank (2002) defines qualitative research as "a form of empirical inquiry into meaning" (p. 5p. 5). He uses the phrase "planned, ordered, and public" to describe the systematic application of rules set forth by the qualitative research community. By empirical, he means that this type of inquiry is grounded in the world of experience. Inquiry into meaning says researchers try to understand how others make sense of their experience. This is relevant to the study because the research attempts to investigate the communication strategies some NGOs use in their work.

Qualitative methods, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), comprise gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and writing study data. Both survey and experimental research have specific procedures for selecting a sample and population, describing the type of design, gathering and analyzing data, presenting the findings, providing an

interpretation, and modifying the research in a way that is appropriate for a survey or experimental study. Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge (2009) asserted that qualitative research focuses on the reasons why certain social events occur as well as how to better understand how social phenomena came to be as they are. In light of this,this, the study evaluates the reasons behind the employment of specific communication by some NGOs in their community development projects.

Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), requires a realistic and interpretive approach. To find out about things in their natural state and to give those things significance based on the perspectives of the peoplepeople involved, researchers utilize a qualitative approach. The explanation provided by Denzin and Lincoln (2011) is crucial to this study because it lookslooks into the communication strategies employed by some NGOs in their projects. When researchers want to provide an indepth explanation for a phenomenon, Creswell (2014) notes that the qualitative approach is best. I chose the qualitative approach because, as stated by Denzin (1989), it tends to make it possible to understand concepts in greater depth and to provide participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences in thick, rich descriptions. Again, the qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study because it allows researchers to create meaning that is shaped by and through culture (Corbin and Strauss, 2008)..

#### **3.2 Research Design**

Creswell (2014) asserts that research design refers to the strategy, plan, and structure used in the execution of a research project. project. He explained that choosing a research design is mostly influenced by the audience the study is being undertaken for, the nature of the research topic or issue being addressed, and the researcher's personal experiences. Qualitative case study design was chosen for the purpose of this study. Case studies, according to Yin (2018), are an empirical investigation that delves deeply (in depth) into a current phenomenon and examines it within its real-life context, especially in situations where it can be difficult to distinguish between the phenomenon and its context. Stake's (2005) reliance on the case study as a product of inquiry and Yin's (2018) view of it as a design different from other qualitative designs are brought together by Merriam (1998), as stated in Yazan (2015). Merriam (2009, p. 19p. 19) defines a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, process, or a social unit." This definition of Merriam aligns with Punch's (2009, p. 119p.) definition, definition, where he stated that the case may be an individual, or a role, or a small group, or an organization, or a community, or a nation." For the purpose of this study on the design and study of pre-intervention communication strategies on community development projects by some NGOs, both the Merriam-Webster Merriam- and Yin definitions of the case study approach were used. Merriam (2009) and Yin (2018) both agree on the level of depth case the case study. However, while Merriam (2009) uses the term the term intensive', Yin (2018) uses 'in-depth, a factor that I considered in my study. I collected in-depth information from the community NGOs, thus enabling a "holistic description" (Merriam, 2009) in the process. It is interesting that in the Merriam-Webster definition, there is a specific a specific mention of 'programme' as one of the different forms of forms of a case, which was the exact situation of my study that involved collecting data on multiple cases in order to produce the project's specific research questions and outcomes.

# 3.3 Case Studies

Yin (2008) contended that there are two main types of case studies: single-case and multiple-case. I used the multiple-case study design for this study. A multiple--case study entails concurrently studying the same phenomenon from several bounded systems, according to Creswell and Poth (2017). Yin (2009) asserts that case studies are usually used when researchers are faced with "how" or "why "questions that questions that have limited influence over the issues at hand and want to focus on a phenomenon that has already happened.

A case study needs to be bounded, according to Stake (1995), so that the case is a distinct entity in terms of time, place, or some physical boundary. According to Stake, this limited system, which could consist of activities, events, or programs, could be as basic as a person or a group or as sophisticated as an organization or culture. This point of view from the stakeholder perspective is significant for the research on NGO communication strategies since it allowed for an in-depth study of the distinctive qualities of each NGO studied.

# **3.4 Sampling Techniques**

Sampling, according to Hammond (2018), is the process of selecting units from a population of interest so that, after studying the sample, the results will be generalized back to the population from which they were chosen. Probability sampling and non-probability sampling are the two main categories of sampling. In order to determine the likelihood of selecting population elements, the probability sampling approach depends on a random or chance selection method (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Purposive sampling was used in the study to choose the case and the participants from whom data was collected. Purposeful selection selects samples with the richest

characteristic(s) of interest to the researcher or the study in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the case(s). (Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling was designed to help the researcher choose the cases and select the most information-rich sample from each case (Palinkas, 2015). Purposive sampling's primary objective is to locate the cases, people, or communities most suited to assist you in addressing your research question. Schwant (1997) defined purposeful sampling as the selection of sites or cases based on reasonable grounds to think that the events there are important for understanding a process or idea, testing, or developing a previously developed theory. With a specific goal in mind, respondents are chosen from an empirical study using the purposeful sampling technique. In other words, selecting participants with the knowledge and experience of the problem being studied in mind (Berg, 2007).

RUPFA Ghana and Achievers are the two NGOs chosen for my study on preintervention communication strategies in community development projects because both RUPFA Ghana and Achievers have a significant presence in the local community and have a history of working on community development projects. This makes them relevant choices for studying the impact of pre-intervention communication strategies. These NGOs have different approaches to community development, with RUPFA Ghana focusing on social and environmental issues and seeking the welfare of the less privileged in society, while Achievers Ghana focuses on girls and women's education. Studying two organizations with distinct focuses allows for a more comprehensive analysis of communication strategies.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) assert that there are various kinds of purposeful sampling, such as convenience, maximum variation, typical, unique, and snowball or chain sampling (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). I chose to study participants using the

snowball sampling technique. With the use of the snowball sampling technique, the researcher can identify an early key sample that possesses the qualities of interest for the study and then rely on referrals from the early key participants to find more study participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I initiated contact with a knowledgeable individual within the field of community development and NGOs. The initial contact provided me with insights and referrals to key individuals within RUPFA Ghana (located in Awoshie, Accra) and Achievers Ghana (located in Maamobi, Accra) who were knowledgeable about their pre-intervention communication strategies. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the recommended individuals from both NGOs to gather information about their pre-intervention communication strategies for community development projects. These interviews helped me to better understand their communication approaches, target audiences, and the impact of these strategies.

Patton (2015) states that when early participants connect the researcher with newly developed cases with a wealth of information, the snowball effect grows. During the interviews, I requested these individuals to refer me to other relevant contacts who might provide further insights or corroborate the information gathered. I was able to keep growing my network of connections within these NGOs by using the snowball sampling technique. I conducted follow-up interviews with fresh referrals until I thought I had reached data saturation.

# 3.5 Sample and Sample Size

Frey and Gary (2016) define a sample as a subset of a population. It has also been described as a group's representative "taste" (Berinstein, 2015). There are several dimensions on which sampling occurs. People, setting, events, processes, activities, and time are examples (Miles & Huberman, 2018). The study purposely chose RUPFA

Ghana and Achievers Ghana. Eight individuals were interviewed in all, with two people from each organization. Two communication officers from each organization were sampled. In addition, two community members were chosen from each of the organization's project sites. These participants took part in in-depth qualitative interviews about the various pre-communication strategies employed by organizations in their work, and two community members were also interviewed about how those communication strategies utilized by NGOs assist them. In-depth interviews and observation were used because they are best for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences (Neale, Thapa, & Boyce, 2006).

#### **3.6 Coding Responses**

The analysis is based on six (6) in-depth interviews conducted at Achievers Ghana and RUPFA Ghana at Awoshie and Mamobi, all in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Two respondents were drawn from each of the two organizations, and in addition, one respondent was drawn from each of the host communities of the two non-governmental organizations. The study found that the respondents' educational qualifications ranged from senior secondary school to a master's degree. These were the departments in which the sampled respondents for the study worked. Respondents were presented using alphanumeric codes such as ACHG-1, ACHG-2, ACHG-3, RUPG-1, RUPG-2, and RUPG-3 to uphold the idea of anonymity and protect respondents' personal identities. Achievers Ghana is a non-profit organization in Ghana that focuses on empowering girls in the slums through education. They embark on a transformative journey that unlocks their potential, fosters growth, and cultivates a future where every girl thrives, learns, and leads with confidence and purpose. RUPFA Ghana is a social and environmental NGO into sustainable development seeking the welfare of the less privileged in society located in Accra, reaching more than thousands of people in

deprived communities. It was founded in 2008 and seeks to thrive solely on contributions from private individuals, foundations, businesses, and international donors.

#### **3.7 Data Collection Instruments**

# Interview

McNamara (2007) posit that interviews are especially effective for learning the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can obtain detailed information on the topic at hand. There are three types of interview designs, according to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2006): (a) informal conversational interview, (b) generic interview guide approach, and (c) standardized open-ended interview. This study used the standardized open-ended interview method because it is extremely structured in terms of question phrasing, and participants are always asked identical questions, but the questions are organized so that responses are not limited.

According to Gall, and Borg (2006), this open-endedness allows participants to contribute as much detailed information as they want, while also allowing the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up, which is exactly what happened during the researcher's data collection process. Participants were free to speak whatever they wanted, and follow-up questions were asked to acquire a better understanding of what was stated.

# Observation

As a researcher conducting observations for the study on pre-communication strategies of two selected NGOs in community development projects, the researcher employed a systematic approach to gather insightful data. Utilizing a participant observation method, the researcher immersed herself in the environments of the NGOs, actively

engaging with stakeholders and observing their interactions, behaviors, and communication strategies.

Prior to the observations, the researcher established rapport with key personnel within each NGO to gain access and permission for the study. Throughout the observation period, I remained non-intrusive while carefully documenting relevant details such as stakeholder's identification and analysis, stakeholders' engagement levels, and the implications of pre-communication strategies employed by the NGOs as well as challenges they (selected NGOs) faced.

The researcher utilized field notes, audio recordings (where permitted), as advised by Creswell (2013) and photographs to capture and later analyze significant moments, patterns, and dynamics observed during the interactions. This method allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the pre-communication strategies employed by the NGOs and their impact on stakeholders' perceptions and engagement in community development projects.

# **3.7.1 Interview Guide**

An interview guide is a collection of questions that an interviewer might ask an interviewee or research participants (Hammond, 2018). It is important when interpersonal contact is necessary and when opportunities to follow up on interesting comments are desired (Mahoney, 2006). They are identified by extended probing and open-ended questioning. The researcher used this sort of interview as it allowed her to delve deeper into comments that did not make sense to her as well as other views on the responses that were provided. Boye and Neale (2006) provided an all-inclusive description of in-depth interviews, stating that "in-depth interviews are 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."

Two semi-structured interviews were carried out with the communication officers of the NGOs included in this study. I called both of them, one via phone call and the other in person, for a casual introduction of myself and the purpose of the study. The study caught the interest of both of the communication officers and I scheduled a face-to-face interview with each of the communication officers after they agreed to participate in the study. The interview sessions aimed at answering the research objectives and precommunication strategies adopted by their NGOs.

# **3.8 Data Analysis**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) assert that qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of deriving meaning from data in response to the research topic. Breaking down data into themes, concepts, and propositions is part of the meaning-creating process (Clarke & Braun, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) contend that data analysis understanding conveys study findings and provides straightforward answers to the question(s) posed by researchers. This research identified themes and patterns, categorized the transcribed interviews according to the themes discovered, and interpreted them by searching for commonalities, linkages, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs, or explanatory principles (Lapadat, 2010). Because of the extensive nature of data collection under the case study design, significant volumes of data are typically collected, and it is the qualitative researcher's responsibility to properly organize these data into manageable units that can be analyzed (Patton, 2015).

Coding is the process of giving notations to pieces of data that are thought to be relevant in addressing research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher carried out

repetitive reading in order to become more familiar with the data and produce codes. These codes were then classified into categories or themes. These themes represented wider phrases or words for which many codes were assigned. Thematic analysis is tactical for reducing and handling vast volumes of data without losing context, getting near to or immersing oneself in the data, organizing and summarizing, and focusing on the interpretation. For the thematic analysis of this study, the researcher used a variety of materials, including interview transcripts, and field notes. Clarke and Braun's (2018) six-step approach to qualitative data analysis was used for data analysis: becoming acquainted with the data, generating initial codes, looking for themes, rethinking themes, identifying themes, and write-up.

# **3.9 Ethical Consideration**

The study's ethical concerns include following community protocol before beginning data collection (Quaye, 2017). In the effort to improve the research process for all studies, the concept of ethics and consideration in research development has grown in relevance in the field of research today (Mensah, 2021). Welman (2005) contends that ethical deliberation and ethical behavior are as crucial in research as they are in other fields of human activity. This part of the research guides the reservation of respondents' rights, as human beings should be respected at all times (Yin, 2003). The principle of informed consent requires that the researcher inform potential participants about the nature and aim of the study, gain their consent to participate in it, and ensure their anonymity (Kusi, 2012). Based on this, respondents were guaranteed that their right to privacy would be respected in order to permit responses without fear or intimidation.

### **3.10** Validity of the Study

According to Creswell (2014), validity in qualitative research does not carry the same connotation as it does in quantitative research. He asserts that in qualitative research, "validity is used to determine whether findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Member checking or responder validation, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the most reliable way of ensuring trustworthiness. Member confirmation entails verifying the research findings and conclusions with the participants from whom the data was collected. I presented the study's findings and conclusions to the interviewees for confirmation that the findings were an accurate portrayal of the thoughts and opinions they shared. I also demonstrated validity by carefully reporting to my supervisor my data collection and analysis methods. My results and conclusions were presented in detailed descriptions to help readers understand.

#### 3.11 Summary

The chapter provided an outline of the research methods employed in data collection for the study. The sample technique employed, as well as the rationale for selecting the organizations and individuals. The data collection instruments, as well as how the data were gathered and discussed

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

# ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

# **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis of the findings of this research. It explores the nuances of pre-communication strategies used by selected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the beginning of their community projects. The research explores the terrain of NGO work with the goal of understanding the particular pre-communication strategies, assessing the implications of those strategies, and shedding light on the challenges faced by the NGOs. The findings are based on interviews and observations with representatives of Achievers Ghana and Rural Urban Partnership for Africa (RUPFA Ghana), all in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

The analysis of the results was guided by the following research questions:

- 1. What specific pre-communication strategies do selected NGOs employ in the initiation phases of their community projects?
- 2. What are the Implications on these strategies employed by the selected NGOs?
- 3. What challenges do NGOs encounter in implementing pre-communication strategies?

# 4.1 RQ 1: What specific pre-communication strategies do the selected NGOs employ in the initiation phases of their community projects?

The first objective of the study was to gain an understanding of the pre-communication strategies of some selected NGOs. This was on the back of Mujab et al.'s (2020) assertion that pre-communication strategies are the actions and plans implemented before initiating communication to ensure its effectiveness and success. Alatalo (2012) defined communication strategy as the decisions and goals that are put into practice and

applied using the organization's communication resources in order for it to succeed both now and in the future. These selected NGOs are Achievers Ghana and RUPFA Ghana. Moist (2022) asserted that, for projects to be implemented successfully in the field of development initiatives, especially those under the jurisdiction of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), good communication is essential. Achievers and RUFPA Ghana emphasize a comprehensive approach to pre-communication planning for community development projects. Using stakeholder and participatory theories, these themes were examined to explain the specific pre-communication strategies adopted by the selected NGOs.

#### 4.1.1 Stakeholder Identification

Asemeh (2022) asserts that stakeholders are the individuals and organizations that are crucial to the life of the organizations; they have an impact on what the organizations do or are affected by organizational actions. Benn et al. (2016) contended that stakeholders are people, organizations, or groups who are impacted by the project's results or who have a stake in it.

The findings of the study revealed that the selected NGO takes a systematic approach to stakeholder identification, beginning with a thorough review of their organization's objectives and mission statement. This step ensures that they have a clear understanding of their goals and the impact they aim to achieve. Following this, they conduct extensive research to identify all individuals, groups, and communities who may be directly or indirectly affected by their initiatives. Achievers Ghana participant 1 articulated:

For us, our stakeholder identification process begins by reviewing our objectives and mission statement. Yhh, it's like a guide to us. We then conduct research to identify all individuals, groups, and communities who are directly or indirectly impacted by our initiatives. (*ACHG-1*)

RUPG 2 added;

I will say it enable us to map out our stakeholders and ensure ermm inclusivity in our engagement activities. Oo yeah... like demographic data, and our existing partnerships.

By mapping out their stakeholders, the selected NGOs ensures inclusivity in their engagement activities, enabling them to effectively address the needs and concerns of all relevant parties. This approach helps them build stronger relationships with stakeholders and ultimately enhances the success of their projects and programs. The findings revealed that the NGOs were involved in stakeholder identification, stakeholder analysis, and engagement before project initiation.

This aligns closely with stakeholder theory, which emphasizes the importance of recognizing and involving all individuals or groups that can affect or are affected by an organization's actions. Wanjue (2022) postulated that identifying every possible stakeholder who might be touched by the project is a systematic process known as identification. In the beginning stages of their community projects, NGOs use a variety of pre-communication strategies, with stakeholder identification and segmentation being an essential strategy (Nie, 2021; Lewis, 2001). The process entails the identification and classification of diverse stakeholders, including beneficiaries, government agencies, volunteers, participants, and members of the community, followed by the adaptation of communication strategies for each group. NGOs'

strategies can differ according to their reliance on resources and ability to negotiate (Nie, 2021).

Hyvärinen (2015) asserts that NGOs are essential in building community resilience during times of emergencies by working with different stakeholders, especially citizen groups, and communicating effectively. The study revealed that the selected NGOs segmented their stakeholders into primary and secondary stakeholders.

# I. Primary Stakeholders

Primary stakeholders are the individuals or groups who could be the most affected by an agency, institution, or organization's activities, whether positively or negatively (Benn et al., 2016). The selected NGOs understudy identified community members, participants, staff, and volunteers. Beneficiaries are individuals, groups, or communities that stand to gain or benefit from the outcomes of the project (Aga et al., 2018). During the interaction with the researcher, the NGOs postulated that they see beneficiaries as primary stakeholders of the community who directly receive their services and resources resulting from their project's implementation. The project managers of the NGOs identify the community members who are likely to benefit from the project. This confirms Sakyi-Darko & Mensah's (2020) assertion that identifying beneficiaries is crucial for ensuring that the project's objectives align with the needs and priorities of the intended recipients.

Brass (2018) contended that community project beneficiaries are an important group of stakeholders, but a lack of well-designed assessments and an inexperienced use of participatory concepts may impede their effective involvement. Particularly in low- and middle-income nations, ignoring their needs and interests can result in project failure (Tetteh, 2021). Paul (2020) asserts that project success depends heavily on community

participation, as demonstrated by the World Bank's experience. It was revealed that for the two selected NGOs, one got their beneficiary target right before project initiation, while the other got it right after project initiation. Achievers Ghana, in its efforts to empower young girls residing in the slums, encountered a setback in its project implementation, as evidenced by the experience of RUPFA Ghana. An instance of misalignment with project objectives occurred when RUPFA Ghana failed to adequately identify its beneficiaries, leading to the project's failure. Specifically, the organization's initiative involved the construction of a public toilet facility for a community located in the eastern region of Ghana. Despite engaging with the community's male population and traditional leaders to initiate the project, subsequent monitoring revealed that the facility was predominantly utilized by men and eventually abandoned. This outcome underscores the importance of accurately identifying primary stakeholders in project planning and implementation processes.

... ermm I will say such a project failed because we did not engage the core community members. Now we take our pre-intervention communication seriously, which has changed the way we engage our stakeholders. - (RUPG - 2)

Adedokun et al. (2010) postulated that to address these challenges, organizations involved in community development projects must invest in effective precommunication strategies, such as identifying stakeholders before project initiation. These findings are consistent with the stakeholder theory, which is predicated on the idea that organizations, whether private or public, have duties to various social groups.

Freeman (2006)

.... Participant ACHG 2 said;

Erm.. the thing is, we do these projects for them; they are the reason we do all these, so we identify them and try to put communication strategies together. (*ACHG*)

Muniu et al. (2017) contended that participants are people who are actively working on the project and usually give their time, knowledge, or resources to help it achieve its objectives. An extensive range of stakeholders participate in community projects, including social organizations, organizations, government agencies, and local citizens (Sow, 2014). While citizens play an integral part in community development, the other groups act as leaders, supporters, and intermediaries. (Jun-bin, 2008). Through the analysis of the data collected in this study, it was revealed that the selected NGOs carefully select participants as part of their primary stakeholders who are likely to commit their time, expertise, and resources to accomplishing the project's goals, as evidenced by field research and data analysis. By using this focused strategy, the selected NGOs are able to involve people who are both willing and able to actively support the projects, increasing the project's influence on the community.

These findings are in line with the participatory communication theory because it encourages the exchange of opinions, perceptions, and information between stakeholders and people who are marginalized. (Tufte and Mefalopulos, 2009) It was also discovered that the process of identifying and segmenting stakeholders allows the selected NGOs to tailor their engagement and communication strategies to meet the particular needs and preferences of different stakeholder groups. This is in line with Usadolo & Caldwel's (2016) assertion that it is important to identify and classify stakeholders before, and during the design and implementation of development, depending on their involvement and relationship with the development intervention. This was what a participant said in an interview with the researcher:

.... We try to identify the stakeholders that we can work with because we cannot do the work alone. There are people who are willing to help us with any project that we do, so we try to bring them on board. (*ACHG -1*)

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Another participant said;

... When we started operating, we were doing things by ourselves and we erm...faced challenges as a result, so now when it comes to identifying participants, we take that exercise with all seriousness because this is non-profit work, so we look out for committed people or those share into our vision (*RUPG-1*)

This corroborates Freire's (2010) assertion that before starting a project, NGOs should carefully choose participants to achieve true community involvement. This is very crucial for ensuring the achievement of project objectives, especially when it comes to giving the underprivileged and marginalized people advantages and chances (Gibbs, 1999). The application of suitable sample techniques and ethical concerns should direct the selection procedure (Latunde, 2017).

One of the primary stakeholders identified by the selected NGOs understudy is volunteers; these are people who give freely of their time, skills, and energy to support different causes and organizations without expecting payment. (Sabina,2019). Sabina (2019) asserts that volunteers are the backbone of many community organizations, providing essential support and services that would otherwise be unavailable or unaffordable.

The findings revealed that volunteers, as a primary stakeholder, play an important role for the NGOs, expressing some volunteers' dedication, passion, and willingness to contribute their time and skills to the NGO's mission. The importance of volunteers was pointed out by participants from the selected NGOs in their pre-communication strategies. They (selected NGOs) stressed the importance of volunteers as key players who are committed, passionate, and have multiple skill sets to support their projects. In order to increase volunteers' dedication and influence in championing the objectives of the organization, they (NGOs) highlighted the significance of cultivating a sense of ownership and belonging among them.

Participant RUFG 2 discussed how volunteers have over the years bring diverse perspectives, expertise, and energy, enhancing the organization's impact and reach within the community.

... I will say we have offices across the country, and I must say the volunteers we identified have been very helpful because they are the ones who, I will say, manage our projects there even before we go there sometimes. (*RUPG-2*) Respondent ACHG1 reiterated ...

.... For us, we see them as valuable stakeholders deserving of respect and recognition for their contributions. (ACHG-1)Below are some snapshots of Achievers Ghana volunteers;





# Figure 4.1 Achievers Ghana volunteers

Source: Fieldwork

# II. Secondary Stakeholders

Amoako et al. (2022) posit that secondary stakeholders are stakeholders who are indirectly impacted by the decisions and actions of organizations. The analysis of the data gathered established that government agencies and other private organizations are part of the secondary stakeholders identified by the selected NGOs before project initiation. The government agencies are public sector entities responsible for regulating, funding, or overseeing certain aspects of the project. That is, depending on the nature of the project they embark on, government agencies like local, regional, or national authorities involved in areas such as planning permissions, environmental regulations, education standards, or financial support. They ensure that proposals sent to them are seen as projects that could serve the best interests of the community and country at large. Some scholars from the literature readings argued that the government may see NGOs as competition as they may pose a threat, while others believe otherwise.

Fisher (1997) emphasizes the political implications of this relationship and the necessity of placing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in a larger framework of conflicting practices and ideologies. NGOs' performance and accountability may be jeopardized by official aid, according to Edwards (2006), who expresses concerns about this effect. Teegen (2007) highlights the limitations of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in global governance and value creation. Brown (2009) gives an excellent case study of how government and nonprofit organizations can collaborate to fund projects while highlighting the importance of trust and cooperation in upholding high standards of accountability and service.

RUPFA 1 participant said;

... We sometimes partner with some of the government and private agencies for project initiations. This is because they also have these developmental goals, and sometimes, er, I will say, they have more resources, so it's best to partner with them for a better result. (*RUPFA-1*)

RUPFA Ghana, whose one of its focus areas is climate change, partnered with the Forestry Commission to embark on the Afforestation Project, now the Green Ghana Project, which aimed to restore the lost forest cover of Ghana and contribute to the global effort to mitigate climate change. Achievers Ghana, on the other hand, is into more private partnerships. Achievers Ghana partnered with the KGL Foundation to provide a haven for the girl child in the slum, support its general operational costs, and specifically help run activities effectively and efficiently. Through its collaborations, the RYTHM Foundation (RF) provided funding for an e-reader project for Achievers Ghana by sponsoring fifty Kindle e-readers that were completely pre-loaded with one hundred books. The idea behind this was that these specially made e-readers would

offer greater mobility and flexibility for book access, in addition to greater cost and space efficiency, instead of building libraries and stocking them with actual books.

The research understudy revealed that the NGOs use partnership agreements, or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), to formally establish their relationships. Each partner's roles, obligations, and expectations are outlined in these documents. This was proof that during the pre-communication strategies stage, NGOs need to consider third parties that could help or sponsor projects.



Figure: 4.2: KGL Foundation and Achievers Ghana signing MOU

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

As a stakeholder in NGOs, the government has a challenging and varied role. In his challenge to established paradigms in international business research, Teegen (2007)

looked at how NGOs are expanding worldwide reach as well as their involvement in global value creation and governance.

# 4.1.2 Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder analysis is a method used to identify and prioritize the interests of individuals or groups involved in a project or organization by gathering and examining relevant information about them. (Agyabeng & Preko, 2021). Pandi-Perumal et al. (2015) assert that stakeholder analysis involves systematically assessing and prioritizing stakeholders to effectively manage and engage with them. The world bank (2021) contended that, stakeholder analysis is the process of identifying individuals based on their involvement, interest, and influence in your community of practice.

The research revealed that after the discovery, the stakeholders are segmented by categorizing them into groups based on certain criteria. They are segmented into power or authority, influence, demographics, and needs. The NGOs divide stakeholders into groups according to how much authority or influence they have on a project or organization. Stakeholders are ranked according to their influence or power in the community or industry through the use of their stakeholder segmentation strategy. This enables them to concentrate their communication activities on prominent people and important decision-makers who have the power to affect change or support their projects. They create solid bonds with these stakeholders and use their backing to increase their effect by locating and interacting with them early on. The selected NGOs made it known that this includes groups such as donors, government agencies, partners, community leaders, and the media.

Participant ACHG 1 remarked;

.... It helps because, by understanding the dynamics of power and influence within our network, we can easily tailor our communication strategies to effectively engage with each stakeholder group. ultimately enhancing our ability to mobilize support and resources for our cause. -(ACHG1)

.... Participant RUPG 1 said;

There are different groups that contribute to the success of our projects, so we try to figure out those that are most powerful and influential and have a relationship with them. (RUPG 1)

This confirms Adade (2020) that, obviously, there is a need to segment this set into something more manageable. If this is not done, all stakeholders will be treated the same. Or, often worse, the most vocal stakeholders will be the only ones that are heard. This also corroborates Barnett's (2018) work that identifying those with influence, authority, and power who can have a big impact on a company's operations is necessary for stakeholder segmentation. For stakeholders' interests to be included in the planning process, it is essential to comprehend their relative power levels (Daake, 2009).

The significance of stakeholder segmentation in nonprofit organizations is emphasized by both Rupp (2014) and Knox (2007), with Rupp emphasizing the necessity of suitable target groups and Knox offering a methodology that blends stakeholder relevancy and modern marketing practices. The importance of stakeholder identification and segmentation in pre-communication strategies is highlighted by these studies taken as a whole, since it allows organizations to better tailor their messages and engagement efforts to the unique requirements and preferences of various stakeholder groups.

# 4.1.3 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is the process of involving people, groups, or organizations that have an interest in a particular project, decision, or organization (Kujala et al.,

2022). Mefalopolus (2008) asserts that when communities are engaged through dialogues, the sustainability of development initiatives can be guaranteed. The NGOs use a variety of pre-communication strategies during the initial stages of their community projects, with stakeholder segmentation and identification being an essential strategy (Sherman, 2014). After they segment them, they try to meet all the stakeholder groups and engage them in a project, which includes;

# **4.1.3.1** Community Leaders Engagement

From the data gathered, it was revealed that the NGOs engage community leaders before project initiation. Participants in the study revealed that they see community leaders as trusted liaisons between their organization and the community, hence the reason to consider engaging them. They highlighted that community leaders often hold significant influence and credibility within their respective communities, making them important allies in fostering trust and facilitating effective communication. For achievers, the community in which they operate is dominated by religious leaders, so for everything that the organization does, there is a need to engage them. For them, the community leaders are the chiefs and mallams in the community. The Mallams have lot of influence on the community, as they revere them to the core.

A participant of Achievers Ghana revealed that the likelihood of their organization not being able to succeed if they had not engaged the community leaders cannot be overlooked.

This approach corroborates with the Participatory Theory, which advocates for the active participation of stakeholders, including community leaders, in decision-making processes.

Participant ACHG 1 remarked;

.... In everything that we do, we make sure it is aligned with the religion. One of the problems that we face is that most of the Mallams (community leaders) did not understand what we intended to do, so we needed to go there and explain it to them first before we publicized it. (ACHG-1)

Another participant reiterated;

.... Initially, when we first started this project, they used the Mallams against us because they did not understand our mission. It was later that we realized that we needed to approach the Mallams individually and explain our mission to them that we are not here to empower women against the religion but rather to support the religion. Ermm, I will say there was a need to involve them. With the introduction of pre-communication, we are now in good relations with them. (*ACHG -2*)

Kinyata and Abiodun (2020) asserted that the community should be given the opportunity to participate in the project's planning and execution, rather than having development initiatives imposed on them. It was revealed that involving community leaders offered them priceless insights into the various cultural differences and historical factors that may affect communication and project execution.

... One thing is for sure: you cannot just enter someone's house without their concern; in this case, you cannot enter a community without a native, a community leader's, or an elder's concern. So, for us, when we plan to embark on a project, we consult the community leaders in charge of that particular community. (RUPG-2)

Through close collaboration with community leaders, the NGOs were able to personalize their communication strategies to align with local cultures, traditions, and communication preferences. This is explained by the stakeholder engagement theory with respect to delivering value to the majority of their stakeholders and making the project successful.

The findings revealed that the NGOs acknowledged community leaders as important two-way communication mediators who enable meaningful dialogue and feedback exchange between the community and the organization. That is, in order to guarantee that development projects are sensitive to local needs and ambitions, they emphasized the significance of giving community leaders the authority to speak for the issues, goals, and desires of their people.

Responding to the question on how they are able to get the community leaders to collaborate with them, a respondent at RUFG said...

...Uhm we engage the community leaders about what we intend to do after they welcome us, then we give them the opportunity to tell us their issues and needs. I mean what they wish we do for their community and once it comes from them, you have their full support. They even go to the extent of telling how to communicate to their people to in order to get them involved (RUFG -1)

A participant at ACHG reiterated;

.... I must say that the community leaders used to be against our projects because they taught our aim is to empower girls in the slum against the Islam Religion so yes, they were against us until we began to engage them and made them feel we are working with them (ACHG-1)

The NGOs also emphasized the importance of community leaders in creating lasting relationships and encouraging community participation in development initiatives.

### 4.1.3.2 Donors and Partners Engagement

Findings of the study revealed that the selected NGOs underscored the integral role of donors and partners in their pre-communication strategies for community development. The selected NGOs assessed that engaging donors and partners early on allows them to incorporate their perspectives and expertise into their project planning process, ensuring that their initiatives are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the community.

.... Our donors and partners are our support system, so we try as much as possible to engage them early. That way, they are able to contribute their expertise to the planning process (ACHG-1)

This approach resonates with the Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes the importance of considering the interests of all stakeholders, including donors and partners, in organizational decision-making. ACHG 1 acknowledged the significance of involving donors and partners in the early stages of project development as stakeholders and seeks to address their interests and concerns, ultimately contributing to the sustainability and effectiveness of their community development projects.

Participant RUPG 2 also emphasized the collaborative nature of their engagement with donors and partners. RUPG 2 contended that by engaging donors and partners in meaningful dialogue and co-creation, RUPFA Ghana empowers them to contribute to the design and implementation of community development initiatives, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability among all stakeholders involved.

.... For us we view donors and partners as active participants rather than mere funders. Our pre-communication strategies prioritize open dialogue and cocreation, allowing us to leverage their resources and expertise for more impactful outcomes. (RUPG-2)

This aligns with the Participatory Theory, which advocates for the active involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes to promote empowerment and ownership.

#### 4.1.3.3 Social Media Engagement

Davis (2016) defines social media as a collection of interactive online tools known as social media that makes it easier for users to create, curate, and share material, whether individually or in groups. For her, everyday life is becoming more and more reliant on them.

Through interviews and observation, the research revealed the power of social media platforms in expanding the reach of the selected organizations beyond traditional communication channels. The organizations highlighted how social media sites like

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Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter are helping them engage with a wide range of people, including members of underserved communities who might not have access to some channels of communication and potential partners and donors. However, the researcher's observation revealed that Achievers Ghana has a strong social media presence as compared to RUFPA Ghana. Achievers has a social media presence and is very active on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn.

Through observation, the researcher found that Achievers Ghana posts images and videos on their social media platforms, which communicate and inform their partners, beneficiaries, and donors. They communicate with and update their followers on almost every project they embark on. The researcher's findings revealed that by consistently sharing images and videos of their projects on social media, Achievers Ghana effectively communicates with and informs their partners, beneficiaries, and donors. This transparent approach fosters trust and confidence among stakeholders, demonstrates the tangible impact of their support, and encourages ongoing engagement and support. Also, it allows for storytelling and advocacy, humanizing their work and inspiring empathy and advocacy among stakeholders. Overall, this strategy strengthens relationships by promoting transparency, involvement, impact demonstration, storytelling, and open communication, ultimately enhancing Achievers Ghana's ability to achieve its community development goals.

This social media engagement approach by Achiever's Ghana promotes inclusivity, transparency, two-way communication, and active participation, all of which are fundamental principles of stakeholder theory and participatory theory.

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RUPFA Ghana, on the other hand, is only active on WhatsApp and Instagram, and not too active on social media, with the exception of WhatsApp, where they communicate with their partners, volunteers, and some community members directly.

Participant RUPG 1 pointed out how his organization uses social media to raise funds for their projects.

... When there is a project that we need a lot of financial assistance in order to execute such project, we sometimes create a go fund me account for donors to donate towards the project (RUFG-1)

Achievers Ghana and RUPFA Ghana participants noted the value of social media in facilitating real-time engagement with stakeholders. They described how platforms like WhatsApp enabled them to maintain ongoing communication with volunteers, community leaders, and donors, providing updates on project progress, soliciting feedback, and addressing concerns promptly. Larasati (2013) asserts that WhatsApp is an instant messaging application that allows us to share conversations and information while exchanging audio, video, and image messages. It has become a tool that is widely utilized by organizations and community members as a medium of communication (Himpong et al., 2023).

To put this into perspective, the researcher's analysis of data from the interviews and observations revealed that WhatsApp provides communication opportunities for anyone who installs the application on a smartphone with internet connectivity. The data also showed that project leads, members, donors, and partners of the selected NGOs exchange images, videos, audio files, and messages on their WhatsApp platform. The results of this study support the assertion made by Barhoumi (2015) that WhatsApp allows the exchange of written, audio, video, and image messages. WhatsApp helps

spread messages and facilitate the sharing of photos, music, and video files with others,

according to Kumari and Mittal (2017), who support Barhoumi's (2015) assertion.

This affirms Trisnani's (2017) work that WhatsApp allows for real-time coordination among our project participants. Volunteers' do things like tasks, arrange meetings, and address any issues that arise quickly on the WhatsApp platforms.

One of the participants articulated;

... We create WhatsApp groups for specific community projects. These groups include project organizers, I mean our people, volunteers, and community members interested in or affected by the project. So, we create a WhatsApp platform for the Regions that we have offices situated at and we communicate with whenever there is a program. Oo yes... Some are even outside the country so we have different groups. (*RUPG-1*)

Another also said

We also share updates about upcoming projects, like ermm... dates, locations, and objectives. So, we try and make sure everyone is informed and can participate or provide input err yes... (RUPG-1)

Trisnani (2017) posits that communicators employ WhatsApp as a communication medium; messages are delivered more successfully and satisfactorily because of information technology.

A community member of ACHG said ...

Oo sometimes s $\epsilon$  program bi  $\epsilon$ ba a, omo texti y $\epsilon$ n wo whatsapp  $\epsilon$ ma yedi nkomo wo so

This translates:

.... Yeah, sometimes when there is upcoming program, they text it to us on whatsapp, we sometimes even deliberate on it and all that... (*RUFG 3*)

Another community member of RUPG added...

.... Oo I am even on one of their platforms, it is whatsapp group that they share information with us, sometimes too erm we ask questions like if they want us to something for them and we don't understand what they are saying we ask questions- (RUPG-3)

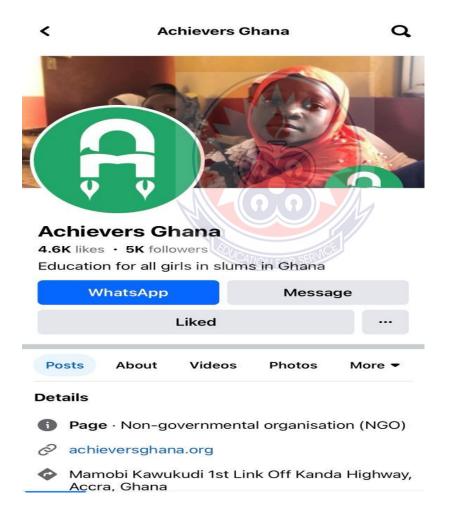
Another Participant added...

...Yeah, sometimes they add some of us to a WhatsApp group and communicate to us in the group. Sometimes too they text individually. Me for instance when they are about to do any project in or around our community they message or call me on phone...oo yehh because of the relationship we have  $\dots$ (*ACHG-3*)

Mcnamara (2019) contends that while formal gatherings and conversation are crucial,

they may alienate other social groups that are more comfortable interacting and conversing online.

## Below snapshots from their social media pages;





Quality Education for All Girls in Deprived Communities



Figure 4.3: Achievers Ghana with their facebook page cover

Source: Field work 2023



# Figure 4.4: Rupfa Ghana LinkedIn page

Source: field work 2023

# 4.1.3.4 Face-to-Face Engagement

Nazır (2020) opined that face-to-face communication occurs when two or more individuals engage in conversation while facing each other. It allows for a better exchange of information since both speaker and listener are able to see and interpret body language and facial expressions. The data from the interviews and observations disclosed that the two selected NGOs hold face-to-face meetings with their stakeholders to discuss issues relating to their projects. This could also take place in a virtual environment or during an actual in-person conversation. Face-to-face communication, which included visiting community members and other stakeholders in their homes and officers, was revealed through an interview with the participants. Data from the recently released Freeman Trust Report 2023 indicates that face-to-face interaction at live events is positively correlated with brand trust. Specifically, over eight out of ten young people and more than three-quarters of all respondents said they trust brands more after having a face-to-face interaction (Carufel, 2023).

Participant ACHG shared that ....

... we physically visit households within the community. When we do that, we get direct and personal interactions with individuals and families in their own environments. I must say by meeting the people face-to-face in their homes, we are able to establish trust and some rapport with community members (ACHG - 2)

Aruma (2018) asserts that effective communication is essential for any community development initiative, as it is a social development project that involves many groups of individuals in the participating communities

.... When the going become though, we ended up adopting the face-to-face approach where our volunteers help us to go door to door...(RUPG-2)



Figure 4.5 A volunteer helping during the face-to-face exercise.

A community member confirmed that:

...oo they have been coming around. They talk to us about what they do, have a nice conversation and all that. You know some us we don't know what they are doing but when they come around and explain things to us, it makes us happy (ACHG 3)

The data gathered revealed that Face-to-Face is the most effective channel of communication adopted by the selected NGOs.

This is evidence that face-to-face engagement in communities supports both participatory and stakeholder theories by promoting inclusivity, empowerment, trustbuilding, and alignment of activities with stakeholder interests and priorities.



Figure 4.5: Screenshots of ACHG meeting community members face to face Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The study found that other forms of face-to-face engagement adopted by the selected NGOs includes;

#### I. Family Engagement

The selected NGOs emphasized the importance of involving community members in community projects following their engagement with community leaders. This approach aligns with the findings of Weiss and Lopez (2018), who argue that family participation significantly contributes to the success of community initiatives. Participant ACHG 1 highlighted their organization's commitment to integrating families into the decision-making process, particularly in project planning and execution. This involves actively seeking input from families, attentively listening to their suggestions, and taking into account their unique needs and perspectives.

...oo by prioritizing family involvement, we aim to foster a sense of ownership and inclusivity within the community, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of our projects. *(ACHG 1)* 

ACHG 1 explained that the indigenous people of the community often have valuable insights and experiences that can contribute to the success of projects, as they understand the dynamics and goals of the community firsthand. The two selected NGOs believe that by including families in the process, decisions become more inclusive and reflective of the diverse needs of the community. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and cooperation, ultimately leading to better outcomes for everyone involved. (Quaye, 2017)

Participant RUPG 2 mentioned that community member engagement is crucial for enabling families to take charge of development projects and goes beyond simple consultation. The research revealed that in order to foster a sense of accountability and ownership and increase sustainability and impact, the NGO involved families in decision-making and resource allocation. As asserted by Weiss & Lopz (2018), family engagement guarantees that initiatives are more pertinent and responsive to community needs.

## ACHG 2 affirmed;

.... to be frank with you, the family used to oppose the idea because the community in which they live in, it is designed in a way that the girl child should be in the kitchen. Some get beaten by their parents for visiting our centre so now what we do is we have a conversation with the parents of the children. So yeh... once we are able to convince the parents and all the family involve, part of the problem is solved (ACHG-2)

Weiss & Lopz (2018) contended that family engagement works best when it unites communities, educators, and families to create shared strategies that produce outcomes that are acceptable to all parties.

A similar phenomenon was reported at RUPFA Ghana. A participant remarked:

... This issue is delicate because, for us, we witnessed an entire family refused to use a project that we constructed for them with the aim of stopping open defecation. The women were shy about using it, and eventually they influenced their children not to use it either. In the end, the project was abandoned. So, ermm I will say such a project failed because we did not engage the core community members. Now we take our pre-intervention communication seriously, which has changed the way we engage our stakeholders. - (*RUPG* - 2)

Participant ACHG 1 added;

... Family can make and unmake oo. In fact, family can determine the success of your community project. So, we don't joke with them. Once a family member is able to convince his/her members not use let's say a community clinic your organization built for them, they will prefer to die than to entre that clinic for healing. So yeah, we find ways to engage families and talk with them about the upcoming project (ACHG-1)

The organizations under study could easily recall the many times that their projects failed as a result of failing to engage families and get families and community members to participate in the initial phase of planning. Sow (2014) asserts that meaningful participation and engagement with community members are essential for the sustainability of development projects. This is explained by the participatory theory with respect to delivering value to the majority of their stakeholders and making the project successful.

#### **II. Engagement through Social Events**

A social event is an event that is organized to give people or groups the chance to meet, talk, celebrate, or partake in shared activities (Jepson & Clarke, 2014b). Jepson and Clarke (2014) contended that because events have a significant cultural and social impact, they both create and recreate their histories, which in turn leads to the development of community values, customs, and behavioral patterns.

Findings from the study revealed that both Achievers Ghana and RUPFA Ghana engage community members through social events. They highlighted that it helps people feel more connected and trusting with each other. These events let everyone chat and get to know each other in a relaxed setting, which makes it easier to build relationships and get along with everyone in the community.

Responding to how helpful social events are to their project planning;

Participant RUPG 2 said;

... the social events organized by the community serve as an opportunity for us to connect with community members on a personal level, fostering trust and rapport that forms the foundation of effective stakeholder engagement (RUPG-2)

.... Another participant said;

...oo through participation in social gatherings such as church meetings and funerals, we gain deeper insights into the needs and concerns of the community, enabling us to tailor our initiatives more effectively (RUPG-1)

Engaging with stakeholders in their familiar social settings not only facilitates communication but also ensures that our interventions are culturally sensitive and respectful of local traditions (Asemeh, 2022).

Participant ACHG-1 revealed that attending social events allowed their organization to establish long-term relationships with community leaders and influencers, which in turn amplified the impact of their initiatives by garnering broader support and participation.

.... We engage the mallams so they announce it in the various mosques during special events. You see we have a lot of small small mosques. On Fridays for instance, all the most get full so once they announce it, we are hopeful the parents will be understanding and allow their girl child to come for grooming (ACHG - 2)

The selected NGOs view social events as valuable opportunities for conducting needs assessments and gathering feedback from community members. Through informal conversations and structured feedback mechanisms, such as focus group discussions, they seek to gain insights into community needs, concerns, and aspirations, which inform the design and implementation of their development projects.

ACHG remarked;

.... Ghanaians love funerals and religious gathering and other special events so we utilize it too. What happens is you get most people who don't attend normal gatherings at funerals and church grounds. (*ACHG-2*)

The analysis revealed that during these interactions, they share details about their upcoming initiatives, answer questions, and encourage community members to get involved or support the projects in various ways. This approach allows them to reach a

diverse group of people who are already gathered together in a trusted and familiar environment, making it easier to connect with them and communicate the importance of the projects.

A community member said...

...Sometimes they come to our Makalanta and talk to about their organization and what we do yeah, we see them especially on Fridays and Saturdays-(ACHG-3)

RUPG-1 said:

... let me add that even churches, oo we get them paa. All we do is to seek permission and when granted we go to talk to the congregation. They listen more. There are even groups in some of the churches. (RUPG-1)

This confirms Jepson and Clarke's (2014) assertion that without acknowledging the role religion plays in fostering a sense of community both locally and beyond, the typology of community celebrations and festivals would be incomplete.

# 4.2 Research Question 2: What are the Implications on these pre-communication strategies employed by the selected NGOs?

The study inquired whether the pre-communication strategies adopted by the two selected NGOs have any implications for the organizations. The organization's understudy revealed that the implications of identifying, analyzing, and engaging stakeholders include:

### 4.2.1 Helps in assessment of Needs and Concerns:

The selected NGOs articulated how important stakeholder engagement is to them because it aids in their understanding of the needs of their stakeholders. They are able to efficiently tailor their programs and services to each group's unique needs by identifying the groups and individuals impacted by their work. The research revealed that when it comes to meeting the needs of stakeholders such as community members, government agencies, partners, and donors, Achievers Ghana focuses more on their community members, partners, and donors as they work with these stakeholders more. RUPFA Ghana, on the other hand, works with all the mentioned stakeholders.

Participants of the selected NGOs contended that every community development initiative starts with the people that live there. Explaining that sometimes all they need is a higher standard of living and the availability of basic amenities such as schools, hospitals, and toilets, among others; however, if their organization did not engage them, they wouldn't know what they truly want.

To give insight into this, participant RUPG 2 reiterated:

.... During the initial stages of one of our projects, we failed to engage all the stakeholders but went ahead to build a bole hole for the community and guess what? they were still fetching water from the stream. When we conducted research, we realize the need of the people was rather a health facility (*RUPG-2*)

RUPG-2 added

... ermm now through stakeholder engagement activities such as let's say community meetings, and focus groups, we are able to gather valuable insights into the needs and preferences of different stakeholders. (RUPG-2)

For achievers, the engagements help them set priorities for their work and allocate resources to the most important stakeholders. Adding that they believe this, among other efforts, is having a significant and long-lasting effect on the areas they serve by understanding and meeting the demands of their stakeholders.

...Through these interactions, we are able to hear what our stakeholders have to say, understand their needs, and pinpoint the areas that most require our assistance. It could be skilled training like STEM program we do- (ACHG 1)

The participants noted that their NGOs are able to fully understand the diversity of needs existent in their communities through the processes of stakeholder identification, segmentation, and engagement. They stressed the value of specific plans and stakeholders' active participation. Owusu (2007) asserts that this allows organizations to effectively address those interests and align their strategies with stakeholder expectations.

This supports the stakeholder theory which suggests that businesses and organizations should consider the interests of various groups affected by their actions, including employees, customers, communities, and shareholders.

RUPFA Ghana participant 1 explaining how they collaborate with Government Agencies said

... You see the government entities like the local government like this, they play a crucial role in community development projects and their needs mostly center around promoting errmm something like social welfare, economic development, and let me add sustainable governance. So, a stakeholder like this may erm... obviously seek projects that align with government priorities. For example, a municipality may support our afforestation project because let's say the project addresses pressing needs identified in their development plan (RUPG-1)

Achievers Ghana Participant 2 also explained that community development projects, donors, and development organizations are likely to offer them some financial and technical support depending on how the project resonates with their needs. They frequently want projects with innovative ideas, growth and development potential, and long-term sustainability to be in line with their funding aims and rules, have a demonstrable impact, and be funded.

This corroborates Brass et al.'s (2018) assertion that in order to effectively fulfill their mission and goals, NGOs need to consider the needs, interests, and concerns of their stakeholders.

#### 4.2.2 It helps in Stakeholder Analysis

The research understudy revealed that the selected NGOs engaging stakeholders enables them to identify powerful and influential people who can advocate for their cause within the community. For instance, whenever the NGOs want to embark on a project, community leaders emerge as influential figures who can mobilize resources and support for some specific initiatives. Some leaders might be well-known community activists who are regarded and trusted by the general public, elders in the area, or leaders from various religions.

Banks et al. (2015) contended that NGOs need to consider power and influence among stakeholders because it plays a crucial role in determining their ability to achieve their goals and create meaningful impact. By recognizing the power dynamics and influence of stakeholders, NGOs can better navigate relationships, build alliances, and advocate for change. (Brass et al., 2018).

Participant ACHG 2 disclosed that they found out that some teachers and young leaders have a lot of influence on their peers while working on their project. Even though they might not have official positions of authority, these people have the capacity to inspire youth and promote collective change.

.... Oo the teachers helps us a lot I must say. The know the children well, in fact they live with them so they able to easily influence them (ACHG 2)

The selected NGOs obtain access to a network that can effectively help with the promotion of their projects and activities by interacting with these powerful young

leaders. Through engagement with stakeholders, they are able to manage the community's power dynamics effectively.

Participant RUFG 2 expressed:

... Let me give you one example, you see, during the planning phase of our environmental conservation project, some community members expressed concerns about deforestation caused by illegal mining activities. Through stakeholder engagement workshops, our NGO identified passionate individuals who are willing to lead efforts to help reduce deforestation (RUFG-2)

RUPG Participant 1 also said;

...while working on erm a poverty reduction program, our organisation collaborated with local government agencies, financial institutions, and prominent community organizations. Through stakeholder engagement, our NGO identified key decision-makers within institutions who can support our initiatives through funding, policy advocacy, or technical expertise. We do this in order to gain their support and leverage their influence for the benefit of the organization (RUPG 1)

Once stakeholders have been identified, segmented, and engaged, organizations can develop targeted strategies to engage and build support from each group (Reed, 2008). Participant ACHG 1 indicated that for stakeholders who are supportive and have a high

level of power or influence, their organization focuses on maintaining their support and

involving them in decision-making processes. This, according to RUPG 1, helps the

organization build a strong base of support for their project, increase the likelihood of

successful implementation, and mitigate potential resistance or opposition.



Figure 4.6 Achievers Ghana with a community leader

## Source: Fieldwork 2023

Community members of the selected NGOs confirmed;

... Sometimes I see them with erm... our elders in the community. Yeahh... the mallams, they are powerful here and most of the time people go to them for advice so when I see the NGO people, I am not too surprised (ACHG-3)

RUFG member also reiterated;

...I remember one time they came to me and started talking about their project, I just directed them to our leaders because in our community, it the community leaders that are powerful (RUF-3)

# 4.2.3 It helps reduce cost

Yaya and Li (2014) assert that cost reduction is the deliberate step that companies take to reduce costs and maximize resources in order to increase profitability.

The NGOs understudy revealed that the pre-communication strategies adopted helped them reduce costs by focusing their resources on the most critical stakeholders. Identifying stakeholders allows the selected NGOs to focus their work on engaging with individuals and organizations that are directly impacted by their programs. For Achievers Ghana, which is an education-focused NGO, they identify stakeholders such as teachers, students, parents, local education authorities, and community leaders.

The data establishes that engagement with these groups is prioritized in order to successfully gather information, solve problems, and develop educational programs to match the specific needs of the community. This targeted approach reduces unnecessary outreach costs and ensures that resources are allocated effectively. Segmenting stakeholders helps NGOs customize their communication strategies to resonate with different groups. RUPFA Ghana, an environment and poverty alleviation NGO, segments stakeholders into government agencies, private organizations, and community-based organizations. Recognizing that each group has unique interests and communication preferences.

RUPFA Ghana reduces costs and maximizes the effectiveness of their outreach initiatives by matching their communication strategies with the needs of stakeholders. The research under study revealed that engaging stakeholders promotes cooperation and chances for resource sharing, which reduces costs. To carry out educational initiatives, Achievers Ghana works with community organizations and schools. Participation from stakeholders helps them find opportunities to contribute resources like volunteer support and educational resources. Through the use of these partnerships, Achievers Ghana is able to significantly lower the cost of their educational programs by reducing the need for expensive staffing and material expenses.

#### ACHG Participant reiterated;

... Sometimes we collaborate or partner with other organizations to help because the work is huge so others coming on board helps us to reduce some cost. So mostly we consider organizations that have similar goals like ours. Errm... that way it becomes a bit easy working together (ACHG-1)

The research revealed that among other partners Achievers has worked with that have helped reduce costs are RisingSun Montessori, MTN Hero of Change, Projects Abroad, Tech Needs Girls, Oasis Capital, Circumspecte, Munipa Foundation, Rayuwa Foundation, and Star Ghana.

RUFG Participant also remarked;

...well, I will say some of the projects are beyond our financial control, that is to say some of them are beyond our budget to we look for partners and work with them.

Stakeholder engagement helps them to identify innovative solutions and cost-effective approaches to program implementation. For instance, RUPFA Ghana engages stakeholders in participatory planning sessions to brainstorm innovative ways to tackle poverty in rural communities. Through these discussions, they discover local resources and expertise that can be harnessed to address community needs. They partner with agricultural cooperatives to provide training and support for small-scale farmers, leveraging existing networks and knowledge to reduce program costs while maximizing impact. Identifying and managing potential dangers through early participation allowed the selected NGOs to avoid costly setbacks.

This relationship led to cost savings by reducing the need for legal battles, protests, or other forms of opposition that can escalate expenses.

RUPG 1 said:

For instance, involving local residents in the decision-making process for a development our project help mitigate resistance and minimize expenses related to community backlash.

It was discovered that through stakeholder engagement, the NGOs are able to gather valuable insights and feedback from diverse perspectives. This information, they said,

allows them to prioritize resources more efficiently, focusing on initiatives that are most likely to succeed and deliver the intended impact. By avoiding unnecessary expenditures on less critical activities.

Participant ACHG 2 said:

...ermm Once we are able to engage them, we build relationship to the extent that some stakeholders donate resources for our projects which helps us to reduce cost (ACHG - 2)

These findings are in line with participatory theory, which is a kind of interruptive communication that encourages the exchange of opinions, perceptions, and information between stakeholders and people who are marginalized.

#### 4.2.4 It creates a Sense of Belonging

Helsinki (2016) contended that a sense of belonging is the extent to which a person experiences inclusion, acceptance, and support from others in diverse communities. The research revealed that the strategy adopted by the selected NGOs helps them create a sense of belonging, which in the end leads to sustainability. They conduct regular stakeholder meetings involving parents, teachers, and leaders. Through these meetings, they learn about the challenges faced by community members and make it a point to resolve them.

The selected NGOs foster a sense of belonging by working together to address these issues, which results in constant assistance for the educational projects. Allen et al. (2021) postulated that people may feel disengaged and uncommitted to the project if they don't feel like they belong, which will lower their motivation and involvement. Their lack of ownership or commitment to the project may impede its advancement and long-term sustainability.

Participant ACHG 1 said;

...I must say Including stakeholders like parents, teachers, community leaders, community members and students in our projects helps them feel more responsible and owned -(ACHG-1)

Participant 2 of RUPFA Ghana asserted that they engage businesses, government organizations, and people in waste management and tree-planting activities. For him, participating in all stages of the process, from planning to carrying out and overseeing the project, gives community members a sense of ownership of the environmental projects.

... We try our possible best to make them feel part of the project and that where the magic is. (RUPG-2)

This corroborates with the participatory theory which advocates for active participation and collaboration among stakeholders in decision-making and problem-solving processes.

The study found that the two selected NGOs actively collaborate with local authorities, NGOs, and community-based organizations to address social and environmental issues. They gain the community's trust and credibility by including stakeholders in the decision-making process and maintaining transparency in operations. Because of the deeper partnerships that result from this trust, the NGOs are able to utilize more resources and experience, which eventually helps to ensure the sustainability of their projects.

#### 4.2.5 It helps build trust

The study revealed the strategies adopted help them build trust and cooperation among all parties involved in the project, and once they feel heard and valued, they are more likely to support their organization's initiatives. Engaging stakeholders in decision-

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making processes and providing them with access to relevant information fosters. Allen et al. (2021) assert that stakeholders have trust in NGOs when they're transparent about their objectives, actions, and challenges. Trust is strengthened when stakeholders see that the selected NGOs are willing to be held accountable for their promises and commitments.

#### Participant ACHG 2 said;

...oo when we do that, we I mean keep them in the known of the things we do and even how we do it, we win their trust. They always want to feel ermm... included and once they are assured of that, you get their trust and I will say it feels good to know your stakeholders trust you.

The research understudy revealed that when the selected NGOs prioritized the voices and needs of their stakeholders, they demonstrated respect and trust in their capacity to contribute meaningfully. In their work, NGOs create strong, lasting relationships based on respect and understanding by working together and communicating with stakeholders on a regular basis. Gradually, trust was built up in these relationships.

It was disclosed that some stakeholders of the selected NGOs are able to voice their dissatisfaction to the project managers of the NGOs. They are able to share ideas and contribute to the planning due to the trust vested in them. This confirms Manyozo's (2017) assertion that in order to successfully implement participatory communication, it is necessary to challenge top-down hierarchical approaches and investigate the power dynamics that exist between professionals, donors, and local people who choose what constitutes participation. Manyozo (2017) asserts that this strategy gives local communities the chance to challenge power structures in ways that are radical and empower people to intervene, critique, and change their environment to suit their own needs.

Since the selected NGOs demonstrated their commitment to addressing conflicts and finding mutually beneficial solutions, trust in their integrity and ability to manage challenges has grown.

Participant RUFG 1 said;

.... for me when communities feel that they have a stake in our activities, they are more likely to trust our intentions and ermm support our work and I will it's a good sign. (RUFG-1)

The research revealed that the stakeholder engagement exercise by the selected NGOs allows them to gather diverse perspectives and insights, enabling them to adapt their strategies and approaches based on evolving needs and circumstances. When stakeholders in these selected NGOs see that they are responsive and willing to learn from their experiences, the trust they have in them increases.

# 4.3 Research Question 3: What challenges do NGOs encounter in implementing pre-communication strategies?

Auma (2008) contended that a new community foundation faces at least some significant problems when it is founded, some of which carry over from the start-up phase, despite how challenging and long this first phase may be. Baldo (2008) asserts that non-governmental organizations play a crucial role in creating social change and addressing various issues in society; however, when it comes to implementing pre-communication strategies, NGOs often face several challenges (Maranga, 2010).

The researcher, in her quest to ascertain the challenges the selected NGOs faced in implementing their pre-communication strategies, found out the NGOs face the following challenges:

#### **4.3.1 Delays in Decision Making**

Participants in the NGOs understudy revealed that engaging all stakeholders often involves seeking consensus among diverse interests and viewpoints. This process can be time-consuming as it requires negotiation, compromise, and alignment of priorities. They explained that involving multiple stakeholders makes it difficult in decisionmaking processes. Each stakeholder may have different opinions, preferences, and expectations, which need to be addressed and integrated into the decision-making process.

Participant ACHG 1 asserted that communicating with a wide range of stakeholders, especially in diverse communities, can be challenging. It may take time to reach all stakeholders, gather their input, and ensure that everyone is adequately informed and involved in the decision-making process.

The research found that the selected NGOs often have procedural requirements for stakeholder engagement, such as conducting consultations and seeking approvals. Decision-making times may increase as a result of these procedures' tendency to add organizational levels.

In order to use the participatory theory approach, NGOs strive to ensure inclusivity by engaging marginalized or underserved groups in decision-making. However, reaching these groups and ensuring their meaningful participation require additional time and resources. Though including all stakeholders in a project is crucial for its validity, transparency, and sense of ownership, it can also cause delays because of the difficulties in managing differing interests, communication, and inclusivity issues.

Participant ACHG 2 reiterated;

...you know ermm sometimes some of the stakeholders need more knowledge or I will say experience to make informed decisions regarding the project and before making a decision, they ask for more time to acquire information or speak with experts if they believe they are lacking. Ahaa...mostly they evaluate the project's possible impact or viability to know whether to get involved or pull out. (*ACHG-2*)

The study revealed that the fear of failure makes stakeholders deliberate for a long time in an attempt to reduce risks and guarantee the project's success. Some stakeholders are sometimes reluctant to make decisions that could have negative implications. Lack of resources, both material and human, also delays some of their projects. It could take some time for stakeholders to commit to a project in order to obtain finance or additional resources.

Participant RUFG 2 said;

.... fear of failure influences our ability to make decisions. We ermm often consider in great detail to reduce risks since we want to make sure that our projects succeed.

RUFG 1 also said;

.... Hmm sometimes we make decisions with the fear of failure hanging over us. Our progress is slowed because we are frequently afraid to take risks and make bold decisions that can backfire.

Participant ACHG 1 revealed the process they go through to secure funding for

projects, which sometimes delays their initiatives.

.... Sometimes you may project ideas but once funds are not available it becomes difficult to execute such projects (*ACHG-1*)

# 4.3.2 Limited Financial and Human Resources

The NGOs expressed how they have limited financial and human resources, making it

challenging to effectively implement pre-communication strategies. The two selected

NGOs expressed difficulty in getting financial assistance to implement projects since they have to engage all stakeholders involved, stressing how capital intensive it is to adopt these strategies.

Participant ACHG recounted...

.... People thinks we have gone for huge sum of money and we have to give them their share, even the Mallams thinks so whatever we do, whether engagement with the community or the children, they demand some money from us but financially we are down. Imagine engaging all these stakeholders at every step of the project. (ACHG - 1)

The public sector, the organization's own internal revenue generation, and the private sector are the three main sources of funding for non-governmental organizations, as stated by Mymunah (2015, P9) in her work, "challenges faced by NGOS in mobilization of funds for operation."

The authors state that the funding of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is divided as follows: 10% comes from private nonprofit donations; 43% comes from government support and public sector payments like grants and contracts; and 47% comes from private fees and payments, which are often generated from contracts for goods or services. (Barr & Associates, 2007). Many additional organizations and individuals provide goods and services to NGOs so they can run their initiatives, as noted by Larson and Wambua (2011).

The research found that the selected NGOs had trouble reaching underserved communities along the line due to a lack of funding. They wanted to identify the stakeholders who would be impacted by their projects, but financial limitations prevented them from undertaking door-to-door research in remote areas, so they were unable to collect feedback from families that were unable to access communication or transportation. When it comes to face-to-face engagement, Achievers Ghana participant 1 lamented that engaging stakeholders face-to-face was limited due to their financial constraints, impacting their ability to build personal relationships.

.... The goal was to engage our all our stakeholders face-to-face in areas where we operate but there were times, we couldn't do that due to financial challenges (*ACHG-1*)

The data showed that NGOs were unable to promote their face-to-face engagement activities through extensive outreach initiatives due to a lack of resources. Sometimes they struggled to afford advertising materials and community mobilization efforts to raise awareness and encourage stakeholder attendance. As a result, turnout at events was lower than expected, impacting the diversity and representativeness of stakeholders engaged in the discussions.

Due to a lack of funding, the selected NGOs had problems communicating with community leaders, which hindered their ability to win support from the community. To promote their programs, they sought to work in collaboration with local leaders. But in the absence of funding for community gatherings, leaders were less likely to devote both their time and money to supporting or taking part in the organization's operations.

..... I will say limited logistics and resources is a challenge. You see this work requires money and other materials to implement a project. This discourages or I will say limit us from engaging community members. We need to budget including the people who are not officially part of our team but we need their service. (*RUPG-1*)

Another participant said...

.... Hmm even to volunteers to help sometimes it becomes an issue, you know most people do not want to do things for free so yeah there are challenges (RUPG-2)

The researcher observed that RUFPA Ghana is less active on social media. RUFPA Ghana explained that they recognize the importance of social media in engaging stakeholders. However, without funds for sponsored posts or content creation tools, their social media presence remained stagnant, limiting their ability to disseminate information and mobilize support for their cause effectively.

#### 4.3.3 Limited Time

The NGOs understudy recounted how complex stakeholder engagement is. They lamented that engaging multiple stakeholders, such as government and private agencies, communities, and other NGOs, can be challenging due to conflicting interests and priorities. Stakeholders, especially those from different organizations or sectors, have conflicting schedules due to their other responsibilities or commitments. This makes it difficult to find a suitable time for meetings or discussions.

Participant ACHG 1 said;

... If a project involves let's say erm stakeholders from government agencies, private companies, and community groups, aligning their schedules for a meeting can be challenging due to their diverse work hours and priorities. (ACHG 1)

The selected NGOs revealed that stakeholders are sometimes located in different regions or countries, making face-to-face meetings impractical and time-consuming. Coordinating virtual meetings across different time zones can be challenging, especially when trying to accommodate stakeholders with busy schedules.

... Participant RUFG 2 reiterated that for instance, if a project involves stakeholders from multiple countries collaborating on scheduling virtual meetings to accommodate different time zones can be a logistical challenge. (RUFG-2)

Participant RUFG 2 narrated that important stakeholder, such as high-level executives or government officials, may have limited availability due to their busy schedules, contrary to what they envisaged; therefore, waiting for their availability to discuss project details or gain approval may delay the project initiation process.

Participant RUFG 2 giving and example said;

.... if a project requires approval from a government ministry, coordinating with the minister's office to schedule a meeting may take time, delaying the project timeline (RUFG -2)

Aside from the complexity, it was explained by the organizations that they normally have limited timeframes and deadlines for their projects, which makes it difficult to engage all stakeholders in pre-communication strategies within the given timeframe. They revealed that trying to engage all stakeholders before project initiation mostly delayed their projects.

The research found that the NGOs find themselves rushing through pre-communication activities due to tight project timelines, compromising the quality and depth of their engagement with the community. The NGOs also revealed that the pressure to meet donor deadlines often leads them to prioritize project implementation over investing time in building trust and consensus with the community. Owing to time constraints, they are mostly compelled to depend on top-down communication strategies, such as distributing informational materials, rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue and collaboration with community members. Adding to that, limited timeframes hinder their ability to adapt and respond to evolving community needs and dynamics throughout the project lifecycle.

.... Hmm the thing is we work with donor time and sometimes the project is a year and it comes with deadlines mostly quarterly so it's hard sometimes to engage all stakeholders (*ACHG-2*)

#### 4.3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter analyzes the findings from the data gathered through interviews and observation. The data collected on the three research questions was critically explained and analyzed using stakeholder theory and participatory theory. The first research question, which sought to examine the specific pre-communication strategies adopted by some selected NGOs, revealed that the selected NGOs adopted stakeholder identification (for primary and secondary stakeholders), stakeholder analysis, and stakeholder engagement as their pre-communication strategies. The selected NGOs identified community members, participants, government and private organizations, and volunteers in their stakeholder identification and segmentation processes. The selected NGOs revealed four (4) themes under stakeholder engagement: community leader engagement, donor and partner engagement, social media engagement, and faceto-face engagement, which include family engagement and engagement through special events. Research question two generated five (5) themes: needs and concerns, power and influence, cost reduction, sense of belonging, and trust. Research Question 3, which sought to find out the challenges these selected NGOs face in implementing the precommunication strategies, revealed four (4) themes: limited financial and human resources, limited time, and delay in decision-making.

#### **CHAPTER FIVE**

#### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This study assessed the pre-communication strategies of selected NGOs in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. This chapter presents a summary of all major findings of the study, including the limitations of the study, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for future studies.

#### 5.1 Summary

This thesis delves into the pre-intervention communication strategies employed by two selected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their community development projects. Grounded in stakeholder theory and participatory theory, the research objectives aimed to investigate the nature of these strategies, evaluate their implications, and analyze the challenges encountered by the NGOs in their implementation. Through a comprehensive review of literature and empirical analysis, the study provides insights into the dynamics of pre-communication strategies within the context of community development initiatives.

The study used a case study design (Yin, 2014) and a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, the methodology and design gave the researcher a better understanding of the importance they assigned to the phenomenon. The purposive sampling technique was used to choose the study's participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). Interviews and observation were the methods used to gather the data. For the study, a sample of six (6) participants was purposefully selected. Semistructured questions served as the interview's direction. The data was subjected to a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2018).

#### **5.2 Findings and Conclusions**

This research sought to answer three research questions that supported this study. In this chapter, the data collected were critically described and analyzed using the concepts in the literature as well as the theoretical frameworks.

Key findings led to several conclusions. The first research question sought to examine the specific pre-communication strategies adopted by some selected NGOs. The selected NGOs adopted stakeholder identification, stakeholder segmentation, and stakeholder engagement as their pre-communication strategies. The selected NGOs have adopted a set of pre-communication strategies which include Stakeholder Identification and Segmentation, Stakeholder Analysis, and Stakeholder Engagement. Through these strategies, they aim to effectively engage with various stakeholders before project initiation.

The study identified two main categories of stakeholders for these NGOs: primary and secondary. Primary stakeholders consist of beneficiaries, community members, participants, and volunteers, who directly benefit from or participate in the NGOs' activities. Secondary stakeholders include Government agencies, partners, and donors, who provide support, resources, and funding to the organizations.

To establish partnerships with potential collaborators, the NGOs conduct research on other organizations with similar interests or operating in related fields. This involves attending conferences, workshops, and networking events to connect with potential partners. Formal relationships are established through partnership agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), which outline the roles, obligations, and expectations of each party involved. This underscores the importance of considering third parties that can contribute to or sponsor projects during the pre-communication stage.

In the stakeholder analysis conducted for the study, stakeholders were categorized based on several criteria, including power or authority, level of influence, demographics, and needs. This segmentation approach allowed the NGOs to effectively group stakeholders according to their impact on a project or organization. By segmenting stakeholders based on their authority or influence, the NGOs were able to identify key individuals who hold significant decision-making power within the community or industry. Stakeholders were then ranked according to their level of influence, enabling the NGOs to prioritize their communication efforts towards prominent figures and important decision-makers who have the capacity to enact change or provide support for their projects. This strategic segmentation facilitated the development of solid bonds with influential stakeholders, allowing the NGOs to leverage their support early on in the project lifecycle. By identifying and engaging with these stakeholders at an early stage, the NGOs were able to maximize their impact and increase their effectiveness in achieving project goals.

The stakeholder engagement strategies identified in the study encompass five main themes: Community leader engagement, social media engagement, Face-to-face engagement which include family engagement, and engagement through social events. Community leader engagement emerged as a crucial aspect, with participants recognizing the significance of community leaders as trusted intermediaries between the NGOs and the community. They emphasized the influential role these leaders play in fostering trust and facilitating effective communication due to their credibility and influence within their respective communities. The study points out the power of social media platforms in expanding the reach of the selected NGOs beyond traditional communication channels. Despite variations in social media presence between the two selected organizations, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter were identified as valuable tools for engaging with diverse audiences, including underserved communities and potential partners and donors.

Face-to-face engagement was emphasized as the most preferred channel for information exchange, enabling nuanced communication through the interpretation of body language and facial expressions. The study revealed that both NGOs prioritize face-to-face meetings with stakeholders to address project-related issues, thereby fostering deeper connections and understanding. The study also revealed other forms of face-to-face engagement such as family engagement. Family engagement emerged as an important component for empowering families to actively participate in development projects. The study revealed that involving families in decision-making and resource allocation fosters a sense of accountability, ownership, and sustainability, thereby enhancing project impact and community ownership. Asemeh (2022) asserts that stakeholders are crucial to the life of organizations; they have an impact on what the organizations do or are affected by organizational actions.

Engagement through social events was highlighted as a means of fostering community cohesion and trust. The two selected NGOs organize social events to facilitate informal interactions and relationship-building within the community, ultimately promoting a sense of connectedness and solidarity. The study concluded that face-to-face engagement remains the most effective communication channel adopted by the selected

NGOs, emphasizing the importance of personal interaction in building relationships and fostering collaboration within communities.

The second research question explored the implications of the pre-communication strategies employed by the selected NGOs. The findings revealed several significant implications:

Firstly, stakeholder engagement was found to be instrumental in assessing the needs and concerns of stakeholders. The NGOs emphasized the importance of understanding the diverse needs of their stakeholders to tailor their programs and services effectively. By actively engaging with stakeholders, they were able to identify specific groups and assess their unique needs, thereby enabling them to design targeted interventions. This confirms Secondly, stakeholder engagement facilitated stakeholder analysis by enabling the identification of powerful and influential individuals within the community. Through these interactions, the NGOs were able to identify key stakeholders who could advocate for their cause and support their initiatives, thereby enhancing their influence and impact within the community.

Moreover, the pre-communication strategies adopted by the NGOs were found to reduce costs by focusing resources on critical stakeholders. By identifying and prioritizing stakeholders, the NGOs were able to allocate resources efficiently, thereby maximizing the impact of their programs while minimizing unnecessary expenses. Additionally, the strategies employed by the NGOs fostered a sense of belonging among stakeholders, leading to greater sustainability. By actively engaging with stakeholders and soliciting their input, the NGOs created a sense of ownership and involvement, thereby fostering long-term commitment and support for their initiatives. Finally, the pre-communication strategies were found to build trust and cooperation among all parties involved in the projects. By listening to the concerns and perspectives of stakeholders, the NGOs demonstrated their commitment to inclusivity and transparency, thereby building trust and cooperation among stakeholders. This trust and cooperation were identified as critical factors in achieving project sustainability and long-term success.

The third research question aimed to identify the challenges faced by NGOs in implementing pre-communication strategies. The study uncovered several key challenges. Participants highlighted the issue of delay in decision-making as a significant challenge. Engaging multiple stakeholders often requires seeking consensus among diverse interests and viewpoints, which can be time-consuming. This process involves negotiation, compromise, and alignment of priorities, leading to delays in decision-making processes.

The selected NGOs expressed concerns regarding limited financial and human resources, which pose significant challenges in effectively implementing precommunication strategies. The participants emphasized the difficulty in obtaining financial assistance to support projects that require engaging all stakeholders. They highlighted the capital-intensive nature of these strategies, which requires substantial investment of resources. Additionally, limited time emerged as a significant challenge in stakeholder engagement. NGOs recounted the complexity of engaging multiple stakeholders, including government and private agencies, communities, and other NGOs. The participants expressed difficulties in managing conflicting interests and priorities within limited time frames, hindering effective stakeholder engagement efforts. These challenges identified by the NGOs understudy underscore the complexities and resource constraints faced by their organisations in implementing precommunication strategies.

## **5.3 Limitations**

Owing to the nature of the work of the participants, there were a few limitations to the study, which are as follows:

The study was not able to include visits to many of the NGOs' project sites because of scheduling constraints. Although this limitation might have limited the amount of knowledge regarding dynamics on the ground, efforts were taken to make up for it. Additionally, in spite of the researcher's best efforts to arrange meetings with participants, problems with scheduling resulted from the participants' inability to fit into the researcher's schedule.

However, these limitations did not in any way affect the credibility of the study.

## 5.4 Suggestions for further studies

The study suggests that future researchers can follow up on the work by exploring the long-term impacts of pre-communication strategies on community development projects. The study also suggests that future researchers can follow up on the work by conducting a comparative analysis of pre-communication strategies adopted by NGOs operating in different sectors or regions.

#### **5.5 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

The findings showed that NGOs utilize stakeholder identification (primary and secondary), stakeholder analysis, and stakeholder engagement as their primary strategies. These strategies collectively provide a strong foundation for building genuine relationships with stakeholders and creating the conditions necessary for a

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project's effective execution. The study therefore encourages the selected NGOs to continue prioritizing stakeholder identification, segmentation, and engagement in the initiation phases of their community projects.

The findings also showed that these strategies had a significant impact on how the NGOs controlled their expenditures, exercised power and influence, responded to the needs and concerns of their target areas, promoted a sense of community among stakeholders, and developed trust. There was an impact on the identification and addressing of stakeholders' needs and concerns. The strategies influenced stakeholders' perceptions of power and influence within their respective communities. This study therefore recommends that non-governmental organizations should assess and address the specific needs and concerns of stakeholders identified during the precommunication phase. Thorough research and listening exercises must be done to understand stakeholder perspectives and tailor communication strategies accordingly. NGOs should also consider empowering stakeholders by involving them in decision-making processes and providing opportunities for meaningful participation. This helps in building trust. Trust can be built through transparent communication, consistent engagement, and responsiveness to stakeholder feedback.

The findings also indicate that the selected NGOs face challenges that include limited financial and human resources, limited time, and delay in decision-making as challenges faced by their organizations. The study therefore recommends that;

To address the challenge of delays in decision-making, NGOs should implement streamlined processes that facilitate consensus-building among stakeholders. This may involve establishing clear decision-making frameworks, assigning decision-making authority to specific individuals or committees, and leveraging technology for efficient communication and collaboration.

Given the limited financial and human resources faced by NGOs, efforts should be directed towards diversifying funding sources and strengthening partnerships with donors, government agencies, and other stakeholders. This could involve exploring grant opportunities, engaging in fundraising activities, and leveraging the expertise and resources of partner organizations.

NGOs should prioritize their engagement efforts based on the potential impact and importance of stakeholders to overcome resource constraints by focusing on key stakeholders who have the greatest influence or are most directly affected by their initiatives, NGOs can maximize the effectiveness of their pre-communication strategies within limited resources.

The study recommends that, recognizing the complexity of stakeholder engagement, NGOs should allocate sufficient time and resources to planning and coordination. This may involve setting realistic timelines, identifying critical milestones, and proactively addressing conflicts or challenges that may arise during the engagement process. Additionally, leveraging technology and communication tools can help streamline communication and decision-making processes, thereby optimizing time management. NGOs should also invest in building the capacity of their staff and volunteers to effectively implement pre-communication strategies. This could involve providing training and mentorship opportunities, sharing best practices and lessons learned, and fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement within the organization.

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The study finally recommends that, recognizing the interconnected nature of development issues, NGOs should prioritize collaborative partnerships with other organizations, government agencies, and community stakeholders. By working together towards common goals, NGOs can leverage complementary strengths and resources, thereby maximizing the impact of their initiatives and overcoming challenges more effectively. In the face of evolving challenges and changing circumstances, NGOs should remain adaptable and flexible in their approach to precommunication strategies. This may involve regularly reviewing and updating strategies based on feedback and lessons learned, as well as being open to innovation and experimentation in order to effectively address emerging needs and priorities.



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#### APPENDIX

#### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

My name is Jacqueline Agyeiwaa, a graduate student at the University of Education, Winneba, pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Development Communication. I am conducting a study titled "A Study of Two selected NGOs and their Pre-Intervention Communication Strategies on Community Development Projects and I will be pleased if you can assist me in the collection of data. All responses will be kept confidential as the data is strictly for academic purposes. I therefore humbly request your participation in this discussion to help me complete this process.

## **Communication Officers from selected NGOs**

- 1. Can you describe the pre-communication strategies your NGO employs when initiating a new community project?
- 2. How do you determine the target audience for your pre-communication efforts?
- 3. What channels or methods do you use to communicate with the community before starting a project?
- 4. Can you provide an example of a successful pre-communication strategy your NGO has implemented in the past?
- 5. How do you address any feedback or concerns raised by the community during the pre-communication phase?
- 6. Have you encountered any challenges in implementing pre-communication strategies, and if so, how have you overcome them?

# Community members of the selected NGOs

- 1. Can you recall any instances where you were informed about a community project before it started? If so, how were you informed?
- 2. How did you feel about the information provided to you before the project began?
- 3. Did you feel like your input or feedback was considered during the precommunication phase? If yes, how?
- 4. Were there any challenges or concerns you had about the project before it started? If so, were they addressed adequately?
- 5. In your opinion, what could the NGO have done differently or better in terms of pre-communication?
- 6. What recommendations do you have for NGOs to improve their precommunication strategies in future projects?