

The Relationship between the Kaimosi Rural Service Programme's Mission Objectives and Its Activities in Vihiga County in Kenya.

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyse the relationship between the Kaimosi Rural Service Programme's (RSP) mission objectives and its activities in Vihiga Sub-county County (formerly Hamisi district). The contingency theory guided this study, which shows how factors interact in an interdependent manner to produce either positive or negative results. The analysis adopted a descriptive survey research design where the relationship between the NGO's mission objectives and its activities was investigated. This study applied two approaches: qualitative and quantitative, to collect data. The analysing unit was made up of the RSP staff and field officers, key informants and twelve Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), six from each of the two divisions of Vihiga Sub county. The study used both probability and non-probability. Data was obtained through focus group discussions, questionnaires, and observation schedules. Data collected was processed and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Tables and figures were used to summarise the findings. The study revealed that RSP is meeting its objectives. However, it still faces the challenge of matching its mission and its operations on the ground. If the decisions made affect some staff, this can be a point of contention within the organisation. Furthermore large percentage of respondents was of the view that the organisation structure is closed.

Key terms: programme, mission objectives, contingency theory, Hamisi district.

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INTRODUCTION

Vihiga Sub County, previously part of the larger Vihiga District (now Vihiga County), has many development organisations. According to the District Development Officer (DDO) Vihiga County, there are 49 NGOs in total operating in Vihiga (DDO, 2011). These include government nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), religious organisations, and community-based organisations (CBOs). One of these organisations is RSP, with extensive services in most areas of Western Kenya. Those services include agricultural extension support, community health, resource mobilisation, water development, savings and credit schemes, and special programs for widows, people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA), orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), among others.

Despite the RSP having various development programmes, its impact in the area seems to be insufficient. The state of poverty is as severe in Vihiga Sub-county as documented in the Vihiga District Development Plan 2002-2007 that a meal is hard to come on (Ganira, 2008). The report from the District office of Vihiga shows that poverty is widespread throughout the district (District Statistic Offices, Mbale, 2001). According to the Second Report on Poverty in Kenya, in June 2000, about 62 percent of the population in Vihiga County live in absolute poverty, and about 60 percent of the population is food poor. This indicates that half of the population is in a state of poverty. This poverty level has implications on the district's efforts in development initiatives since no meaningful development can occur with the half population still unable to meet their basic needs. The contribution of the district to national poverty is 3 percent. Luanda, Emuhaya, Tiriki East and West and Vihiga Divisions are areas where poverty is found to be highly concentrated.

Poverty has diverse causes and includes a lack of capital to invest, high population rates, un-economical land units, high dependency syndrome, HIV/AIDs, alcoholism, high

cost of education, poor infrastructure, lack of market for farm inputs and negative cultural beliefs and practices. The trends in poverty indicate a possible increase in the levels of both overall and food poor in the district unless urgent measures, both short term and long term, are put in place (Strategic Plan Vihiga County, 2005-2010).

The study on the socio-economic state of Vihiga Sub-county shows that the area has very high levels of poverty (Strategic Plan Vihiga County, 2005-2010). According to the District Development Officer Vihiga County, 49 NGOs are operating in the area to address poverty in the area (DDO Vihiga 2011). Rural Service Programme is one of the main and leading NGOs in Vihiga Sub-county with varied programs which have been in operation since 1946. These programs are aimed at empowering the communities and reduce poverty, particularly in Vihiga Sub-county. The question is, why, then, are there still high levels of poverty in Vihiga Sub-county? This question prompted the researcher to examine the environmental factors affecting the performance of RSP, the leading NGO in Vihiga Sub-county.

LITERATURE REVIEW

How the Organisation's Mission Objective are related to the Activities of RSP

The Mission Statement is a critical element in the strategic planning of a business organisation. Effective mission statements can be an excellent asset to an organisation. When every person works together in a defined manner, more significant organisational objectives are achieved. A statement of the mission is a stepping stone in a planning process that is strategic. Therefore, it is important that when an organisation implements a mission statement, it applies it to its functional strategies and consider input from various groups.

Organisation's Mission

An organisational mission statement is a salient variable that really makes a difference in any organisation. It is an overriding factor as it states the purpose for the existence of an organisation (Bart, 1998). And it clarifies the reason for the organisation's existence (Daft, 2010, p.104). No matter how big or small, every company needs a mission statement as a source of direction, and a type of compass that lets its employees, customers, and even stockholders know where it is headed and what it stands for (Abrahams, 1995). Furthermore, a mission statement gives everyone the opportunity to know what the organisation is about and what it is not about (Thinking Ahead, 1998). With this in mind, an individual is able to decide if this mission is something that they can commit to (Thinking Ahead, 1998).

A well-developed mission statement offers several potential benefits. These benefits include direction, focus, policy, meaning, challenge, and passion (Thinking Ahead, 1998). Direction states what the organisation does and what it wants to be successful in Focus concentrates on the company's strengths and competitive advantages and tells people how to obtain them (Thinking Ahead, 1998). Policy is a guideline of what a company finds acceptable and unacceptable and states organisational values. Meaning shows what a company strives to achieve and why they wish to do so. Challenge is the setting up of goals and measurements for employees' performance. Finally, passion makes everyone involved with the organisation show feelings of enthusiasm, pride, and commitment (Thinking Ahead, 1998).

Amazingly, some organisations do not establish a well-developed mission statement with all of these benefits. However, suppose a good mission statement is developed. In that case, it will not be effective unless every member of the organisation knows how the mission will be accomplished (Bailey, 1996) and how it impacts the work environment. For this reason, mission statements should be stated clearly and concisely. According to the Kaimosi

RSP Project Coordinator, the current RSP organisational mission statement is:

Empower the marginalised people and the poor guided by biblical principles through sustainable agricultural extension services, community health, appropriate technology, clean, safe water and sanitation, trusting upon God (Ayodi, 2012).

It would be difficult to capture the mission objectives without clarity of what business the organisation is in. The difficulty of developing a good mission statement is to create a sufficiently broad text to encompass the many possible activities in which the organisation wishes to engage (Wolf, 1990, p.8). According to Wolf, this is crucial as the law obligates the organisation's trustees to limit their activities to those covered by the organising charter's mission statement. Daft and Lewin (1990, p.9) say that in designing a mission statement, it is essential to remember that whatever is decided on is not cast a stone and that the mission statement should be reviewed and revised periodically, as this process is itself valuable in helping clarify the desires and assumptions of those most involved in the organisation. As the statement is reviewed and updated, employees of the organisation need to be informed accordingly. The question is whether RSP reviews its mission periodically and if the staff is informed accordingly?

The leader's task is to guide the organisation toward fulfilling its mission by clarifying objectives and developing strategies that require others to design and implement tactics and hold them accountable for their efforts (Dym, & Hutson, 2005, p.104). In today's quality-conscious and highly competitive environments, an effective mission statement helps the organisation in serving the needs of customers or clients in a relevant manner.

Therefore, it is important to evaluate RSP's mission in light of the above point to see if its mission is in some way affecting the performance of RSP positively or negatively.

According to Daft and Lewin (1990, p.9), a good mission statement should serve long term goals. From these studies, it is quite precise that the performance of NGOs is largely dependent on how clear and concrete their mission statements are. Thus, a good organisational mission is a prerequisite for its successful organisational performance. Conversely, a poorly written unclear mission statement or lack of it may hinder the organisation from meeting its objectives.

METHODOLOGY

The area of study was Vihiga Sub-county in Western Kenya. The study was a descriptive survey of RSP programs extended to twelve CBOs in two divisions of Vihiga Sub-county. It targeted 70 respondents who directly benefit from RSP services. Under this category, the researcher was interested in widows, orphaned youths and children. Also targeted were RSP staff (both management and employees), field officers, and key stakeholders (church leaders and local administrators). Therefore, the unit of analysis included 5 management and 10 employed staff of RSP, 10 field officers and 20 beneficiaries from 12 CBOS of widows, youth, and the orphaned children, and key stakeholders. A mixed-methods research design was used. Data collection tools included questionnaires that were administered to the RSP staff and key informants, interview schedules were carried with the focus groups, and direct observation checklists were used to check the status of the projects. However, few questionnaires were issued to a few students of Friends Theological College to test their reliability. The study applied two sampling techniques: probability and non-probability. Data cleaning was done, and the relevant data was coded by use of descriptive statistics such as frequency, means and percentages. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used in generate percentages, frequencies, mean scores and standard deviation. Thematic analysis was essential in analysing qualitative data, which means the categorisation of related themes. Quantitative data were

analysed using Chi-square. Data was presented in a narrative form, tables, figures, or charts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to determine if the RSP mission objectives related to the activities on the ground. The study revealed by respondents showed that RSP is meeting its objectives. However, from the researcher's observations, RSP still challenges matching its mission and operations on the ground. The study, for example, revealed that RSP has two models of mission statements, the old and the current updated one. And that the RSP staff is familiar with the old and not the updated one. Another finding showed that not all members of RSP participate in the decision-making process. If the decisions made affect some staff, then this can be a point of contention within the organisation. Furthermore large percentage of respondents was of the view that the organisation structure is closed.

How RSP's mission objectives are related to its activities on the ground. This section focuses on identifying the objectives related to the mission of RSP, which was the study's first objective.

Table 1: Reasons for the achievement of the mission

Reason	Freq.	Percentage
Many widows have been empowered, and now most people are visiting VCTs	3	25.0
People's livelihoods has improved	2	16.7
The project are going on well	3	25.0
They are assisting the less fortunate in society	4	16.7
They are assisting the less fortunate in the community (orphans and widows)	2	16.7
Total	12	100.0

Results indicate that 25.0 percent of respondents said that many widows have been empowered and now most people were visiting VCTs, 16.7 percent were of the view that people's livelihoods has improved, project are going on well (25.0 percent), the less fortunate in the community (orphans and widows) were being assisted (16.7 percent). The factors above indeed confirm that RSP was doing a good job in empowering the community. Furthermore, results from interview schedules indicated that the organisation was realising its objectives. Goals define the desired future condition that an organisation seeks to achieve and are selected on the basis of the defined mission (Drucker, 1990, p.63). Thus, goals motivate people to act (Kinicki, Kreitner, Cole, & Dawn, 2006, p.187).

Discussions of the Findings

Findings showed that many of RSP employees were not aware of the current operating mission statement of the organisation. This lack of awareness about the RSP's operating Mission could be hindering the organisation from meeting its objectives. This was evidenced by the fact that two mission statements emerged from the respondents. The one given by the coordinator of RSP was clearer than the one the staff seems to know. The following example can clarify this point. One by employees was: *To facilitate socio-economic empowerment of the poor and marginalised for the attainment of decent livelihoods guided by biblical principles of Jesus Christ*. The one given by the coordinator was: *To empower the poor and the marginalised people guided by Biblical principles through sustainable agricultural extension services, community health, appropriate technology, water and sanitation trusting upon God*.

These statements also do not capture all programs that RSP runs. For example, there is a special program for widows and OVCs and another for savings and credit and resource mobilisation and management. This investigation has revealed that RSP might not be relying wholly on their mission statement when working with the communities in

Vihiga Sub-county. This observation concurs with various studies as reviewed earlier. Drucker (1990, p.109) has observed that non-profit organisations often fail to perform as they do not begin with the mission statement. Again a mission statement gives everyone the opportunity to know what the organisation is about and what it is not about, as has been observed by Thinking Ahead (1998). With this in mind, an individual is able to decide if this mission is something that they can commit to. Not only that Bailey (1996) argues that if a good mission statement is developed, it will not be effective if every member of the organisation does not know how the mission will be accomplished.

Again Thinking Ahead (1998) lists benefits if a good mission is developed and used. These benefits include direction, focus, policy, meaning, challenge, and passion. Direction states what the organisation does and what it wants to be successful in; Focus concentrates on the company's strengths and competitive advantages and tells people how to obtain them; Policy is a guideline of what a company finds acceptable and unacceptable and states organisational values; Meaning shows what a company strives to achieve and why they wish to do so; Challenge is the setting up of goals and measurements of achievement for employees; Passion makes everyone involved with the organisation show feelings of enthusiasm, pride, and commitment.

Although the majority of the respondents were of the view that RSP was meeting its mission objective, the review of the literature revealed that this first mission was not clear as it did not show specific objectives of the way the mission was going to be achieved. And the second one, which is clearer, was not known to most employees of RSP. Generally, it was revealed that the ignorance among the employee of which mission statement were in operation makes these responses questionable.

Looking at the statistics, (80.0 percent) of respondents was of the view that RSP was achieving its mission, while 20.0 percent were not sure. This indicates that RSP was playing a role in enhancing its mission. Specifically, 25.0 percent of respondents said that many widows have been empowered, and currently, most people were visiting VCTs to establish their status. Furthermore, 16.7 percent of the respondents were of the view that people's livelihoods have improved, 16.7 percent felt that their projects are going on well, and (25.0 percent) of the less fortunate in the community (orphans and widows) were being assisted (16.7 percent). The factors above indeed confirm that RSP was doing a good job in empowering the community. However, the situation on the ground, as observed by the researcher, looked different. This is yet, evidence that people do not know what objectives need to be achieved. Observation from the researcher on the external factor could help understand this contradiction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study's objective was to determine the overall mission and objectives that relate to the activities or

operation of RSP. The researcher found out from the results that RSP achieves a bigger percentage of its mission through the reality on the ground shows that poverty levels are still very high. From the observations made on the ground, the researcher concluded that the levels of poverty could be an indicator that there are not many active NGOs in Vihiga Sub-county apart from RSP that enjoys the monopoly of serving the region in this respect. And that RSP, working hard, is overwhelmed by the ever-increasing needs in the communities in the area.

Recommendations: The study recommends that RSP management ensure all staff members understand RSP's mission objectives and how to link them to the organisation's activities. There is also a need for RSP to restructure its internal system to make it more open and flexible. This gives the employees opportunity to participate in decision making, thus, be creative and self-confident. Lastly, the RSP management should enhance the working environment to enable its staff members to achieve their mission objectives.

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