Implementation of Emergency Projects by Volunteers in Humanitarian Organizations

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Abstract
The purpose of this review was to analyze the factors affecting the implementation of emergency projects by volunteers in humanitarian organizations. The paper sought to find out how training, volunteer retention, working conditions, community participation and monitoring affect the implementation of emergency projects by volunteers in humanitarian organizations. The significance of the study is that it provides a useful guide to humanitarian organizations with regard to how they can overcome the challenges they face when dealing with volunteers. The study concludes that training, working conditions, community participation, volunteer retention and monitoring are possible factors affecting the implementation of emergency projects by volunteers in humanitarian organizations.

Key Words: Volunteers, Emergency Projects, Humanitarian Organizations
1. Introduction

This chapter contains the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations and scope of the study as well as the conceptual framework.

1.1 Background to the study

According to KRCS (2003), the success of any program depends on the skills of the volunteer base and hence the effective commitment and participation of communities’ right from the onset should provide appropriate entry point into target village communities and schools. The volunteers should not participate because they expect job opportunities but rather because they have expertise and willingness to offer to the lesser fortunate members of society or victims of a disaster.

In humanitarian organizations, the quality and swiftness of the services offered can play a major role in alleviating further disasters and saving lives. Effective service delivery refers to producing work that is of high quality and recognized as efficient (Cole 1996). The long-term success of any organization ultimately depends on the efficiency of the services offered. Organization objectives and the strategies for achieving those objectives are meaningful only when people with the appropriate talents and skills are available to carry out the strategies. In emergency projects work efficiency becomes paramount.

During a disaster, humanitarian agencies are often called upon to render immediate response and recovery services. To be able to respond effectively, these agencies must have experienced leaders, trained personnel, adequate transport, logistic support, appropriate communication and guidelines for working in emergencies. If the necessary preparations have not been made, humanitarian agencies will not be able to meet the immediate needs of people. The aim of emergency response is to provide immediate assistance to maintain life, improve health and support the morale of the affected population. Such assistance may entail providing limited aid such as assisting refugees with; transport, temporary shelter, food and establishing semi-permanent settlements in camps and other locations. It also may involve initial repairs to damaged infrastructure. The focus in the response phase is on meeting the basic needs of the people until more sustainable solutions can be found. According to Mwangi (2008), working as a volunteer calls for sacrifice, courage, commitment, selflessness and determination. Volunteers are vulnerable human resources. They need to be supported and motivated appropriately to reduce turnover and to help avoid burnout. Long term volunteer service in the community requires a larger volunteer circle that works a few hours each month. Volunteer management are deemed successful if volunteer actions are measurable and can make a difference. According to Choudhury (2005), the real source of uncertainties are the people...
themselves, irrespective of whether they have been brought to the project by contract arrangement or in-house organizational arrangement. Volunteers are an essential resource in humanitarian organizations as they influence the performance and success these organizations. It is imperative in any working organization to foster a culture that allows staff to maximize and maintain their level of work performance. If people are to feel that their work has value, then their achievements must be acknowledged. Regular and positive feedback can be a powerful tool to motivate and enhance performance in a working environment. This study sought to analyze factors that influenced the implementation of emergency projects.

2. Literature Review

This review examines previous studies and highlight the factors affecting the implementation of emergency projects. This section reviews past studies related to the current study.

3. Effects of Training of Volunteers on Implementation of Emergency Projects

Training may be looked at as the systematic modification of behavior through learning. This occurs as a result of education, instruction, and planned experience. Training is task oriented as it focus on a specific area of work. The training standards are derived from the job description or task requirements of the job. Training is provided when there is a skill gap between expected and actual standards of work performance (Armstrong 2000). Training is a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skill behavior through learning experience. It aims at achieving effective performance in an activity or a range of activities. Its purpose in work situation is to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy the current and future manpower needs of the organization.

Training is a major component of enhancing business skills within any organization. According to Cole (1996) businesses can keep employees up to date with the latest knowledge and business skills through on-line and e-training programs, which are less costly to the company as compared to training workshops. Development of technical skills and making the latest technology available in the organization, pave way for organisations to turn challenges into a cutting – edge innovations that will improve their competitiveness in a fast paced, techno-centric business climate. Job analysis for training purposes means examining in detail the content of jobs, the performance standards required in terms of quality and output and the knowledge, skills and competences needed to perform the job competently to meet the performance standards. This involves analyzing what the individual needs to know be it professional, technical or commercial knowledge; economic, or market environment; the materials or equipment to be used or the procedures to be followed; the customers, clients,
colleagues and subordinates he or she is in contact with and the factors that affect their behavior; or the problems that occur and how they should be dealt with (Armstrong 2000).

There is also need to analyze the skills. This includes what the individual needs to be able to do if results are to be achieved and knowledge is to be used effectively. Repeated training or other experience builds skills progressively whether manual, intellectual, perceptual or social skills. The behavior competences needed to achieve the levels of performance required should be stressed. According to Armstrong (1992) approaches to training and development of human resources in an organization include use of systematic and planned training approaches, adopting a policy of continuous development and ensuring that all training activities are performance related. Emphasis should also be laid on the disposition to behave or to perform in a way that is in accordance with the requirements of the work (Ibid). Training must have a purpose that can be defined only if the learning needs of the organization, the group and individuals within it have been systematically identified and analyzed. Training needs analysis is partly concerned with defining the gap between what is happening and what should be happening. It’s the difference between what people know and can do and what they should know and be able to do. According to Cole (1997) a training need is any shortfall in employee performance or potential performance, which can be remedied by appropriate training. According to Bennett (1989) the purpose of training is to improve employee’s performances and increase their skills and knowledge in their current jobs and or equip them for more demanding rules. Training seeks to improve and develop the knowledge skill and attitudes of employees apart from benefits accruing from the individual work, many advantages do accrue to the firm.

A well-planned training programme should result in reduction of waste and spoilage, improvement in methods of work, reduction of learning time, reduction in supervisory burden, improvement in quality of products, improvement of production rate, improvement of morale, reduction in grievances, improvement in efficiency and productivity. Graham and Bennett (1998) observed that like any other business process, training can be very wasteful if it is not carefully planned and supervised. Without a logical systematic approach, some training may be given which is not necessary or the extent of the training may be too small or too great.

Providing adequate and appropriate training for volunteers is a key element of good practice for organizations. As with all other aspects of working with volunteers, issues need to be carefully thought through and planned. The fundamental reason for training volunteers is to improve their effectiveness in achieving tasks, and, therefore, increase their ability to meet the needs of those they are working for. Training should, in theory enable volunteers to develop skills, examine attitudes and gain further knowledge regarding the work of the organization. It can also provide a forum for exploring ideas and sharing experiences. Many organizations, for
example, rely on volunteers to provide services which often call for particular skills - counseling, advocacy, advice, befriending - and as such, volunteers need to be equipped to do this. Training may enable volunteers to feel valued while availing the organization an opportunity to give information, cover practical issues and introduce new ideas or legislation (Conway 1994). Training if given to all staff develops consistency within the organization. It may also enable a consistent delivery of service within the organization and enable a group of people to get to know one another. If organizations relied on or expected volunteers to already have the skills to the job, many people would be denied a volunteering opportunity simply because they would not have had a chance to develop those skills. By providing training, organizations open the door to much wider range of people (Scott 1998).

4. Influence of Employee Retention on Implementation of Emergency Projects

According to IFRC and RCS (2003), volunteers and volunteer networks are the main comparative advantage of National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. Recruiting, supporting and retaining volunteers require managers to recognize and understand the needs and contributions of volunteers. It has been shown that the national societies are able to mobilize large numbers of volunteers to assist in the short term campaigns. But the real test will come when there is a need for structured approach to support volunteers during long term efforts and campaigns.

According to Kartz (1974) managers need conceptual skills in order to retain employees. Supervisors need technical skills to manage their areas of specialty. All level of management need human skills in order to interact successfully with other people whether colleagues and clients. Drucker (1965) observed that managers are the basics vital resources of an enterprises. Where the abilities of managers fall below the standard needed, the firm’s business will encounter many problems. This suggests that lack of effective management might be one of the factors that lead to low organizational retention.

According to Hill (1987), many organizations lack managerial training and experience. They develop their own approach to management, through a process of trial and error. As a result, their management style is likely to be more concerned with day-to-day operations than long-term issues. This management style presents problems when complex decisions have to be made. According to Cole (1996) an organization structure is the total sum of ways in which an organization divides its levels into distinct tasks and then achieves co-ordination between them. The structure is the basic framework within which the executives’ decision making behavior occurs. The quality and nature of decisions made are influenced by the quality of communication in the organization. The structure shows the grouping of various organization’s departments and the provision of authority should be planned so that conflicts do not occur. A
structure helps in the division of work and departmentalization and shows linkage of different records and activities.

According to Cole (2002), the effectiveness of an organizational structure can be analyzed through the five mechanisms of coordination. He states that there must be mutual adjustments that achieve the coordination of work by the simple process of informal communication. There should be direct supervision where coordination is achieved by having one individual taking responsibility for the work of others. According to Armstrong (2000), in any business, performance management processes should be a prime source of information about individual learning and development needs and an integral part of the organization structure. The performance management approach concentrates on the preparation of performance improvement programmes and learning contracts or personal development plans, which are related to jointly determined action plans. The emphasis is on continuous development. This involves a description of work activities, including tasks performed and the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully complete the tasks (Noe, 2000).

With the continuing development of Internet–based marketing initiatives and processes, it becomes imperative that organizations have not only the equipment to handle such challenges, but also the training to best utilize the technology. Technology alone however does not guarantee the success of an organization nor staff retention. It also requires excellent managerial skills, marketing capabilities and a supportive organization. Having an e-organization increases efficiency and reduces bureaucratic red tape. Technology can help ensure availability and increase performance while at the same time reducing costs and complexity.

5. Effect of Community Participation on Implementation of Emergency Projects

According to Reid, (2000) Community participation is one of the key ingredients of an empowered community. Participation is the heart that pumps the community’s lifeblood—its citizens—into the community’s business. It is a principle so important that USDA has made active citizen involvement in all aspects of strategic plan development and implementation, a condition for continued participation in its Empowerment Programs. But community participation is far more than a requirement - it is a condition for success. Studies have documented that communities that engage their citizens and partners deeply in the work of community development raise more resources, achieve more results, and develop in a more holistic and ultimately more beneficial way. Community participation is therefore critical to community success as it not only lead to developing true democratic processes, but also leads to higher rates of volunteerism and a brighter community spirit. Communities that have chosen to follow the principle of participation find that not only do they derive more satisfaction from
the joy that comes from open community involvement, but they also achieve more results more rapidly, and with greater benefit to the community as a whole. According to Munt (2002), building community participation and involvement, is likely to ensure community 'ownership' of a project, suit local circumstances, and increase a project's sustainability. However, developing and maintaining the participation of stakeholders can often be a challenge.


Different volunteer management practices have different underlying purpose while all volunteers like to be recognized for their contributions to the organization or community, this kind of external motivation may not be necessary for charities that have made long-term commitments to their volunteers, a practice that appeals to the intrinsic motivation of individuals. Long term commitments are exemplified by training and professional development opportunities, regular communication and supervision, and liability coverage. These are precisely the kinds of practices more likely to be adopted by those charities that use volunteers who spend a lot of hours working for the charity. Charities that work for episodic volunteers adopt different strategies, such as providing external validation through public recognition of volunteers (Brudney and Hager 2004).

To sustain the participation of volunteers, charities must create a good experience for them. They must be equally concerned with implementing practices designed to make sure that they involve volunteers wisely and well, and commit sufficient support resources to this endeavor. Charities that adopt practices most directly concerned with satisfying volunteers reap the highest retention. Practices that cater more to the needs of the charity than the needs of volunteers are unlikely to motivate volunteers. Charities should also allocate sufficient funds to support volunteer involvement, cultivate an organizational climate that is welcoming to the volunteers, give their volunteers an experience that is worth sharing, and enlist volunteers in recruiting other volunteers one on one (Brudney and Hager 2004).

Security is a major factor that affects implementation of humanitarian projects. Taking a case of the larger East Africa; much of the region is flooded with guns, predominantly small arms, and a large number of those weapons spill over into Kenya (Human Rights Watch, 1999). Since the late 1970s the countries bordering Kenya to the north (Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda) have experienced long periods of unrest and internal armed conflict. During the cold war these wars were fueled in part by the huge quantities of arms pumped into East Africa by the United States, the Soviet Union, and their allies. The torrent of free or subsidized arms flowing to the African continent subsided significantly after the end of the cold war, but large quantities of arms have continued to pour into the region from numerous arms producers,
including China, Bulgaria, and other countries of central and Eastern Europe (Human Rights Watch, 1999). This poses a major challenge to the volunteers’ security.

Some governments in East and Central Africa have amply supplied rebel forces in other countries with guns and ammunition, thereby adding to the number of weapons in circulation (Muggah, and Berman, 2001). Fighters from wars in these countries are a prime source of weapons back in their home country which they often sell for subsistence. Kinship ties among pastoralist communities that straddle international borders can facilitate the movement of firearms from one side to another, as well as the spread of localized conflicts.

7. Effect of Monitoring on Project Implementation

Kaplan and Norton (1996) introduced the Balanced Scorecard as a strategic management tool. The scorecard translates the vision and strategy of the organization into four perspectives: financial, internal business, learning and growth, and customers. The organization measure itself against all of these as opposed to the tendency to consider only the financial aspects of its business. In so doing the organization attempts to achieve a balance in which the development of the organization and its staff, as well as the focus on the customer, is brought into play. The project environment requires more than just the mere managerial functions of, planning, organizing, coordinating, leading and controlling. In 1987 the Baldrige Criteria for performance Excellence were launched by the United States government and set the scene for a range of excellence models (Watson and Gallagher, 2005). The Baldrige model currently identifies seven key areas (Bliosi et al, 2003) or drivers that determine an organization’s results. These include Leadership, Strategic planning, Customer and market focus, Measurement, analysis and knowledge management, Human resource focus, Process management and Excellence levels and trends. Drawing together the management focus, links can be made to the desired results and the necessary Managerial development and competences required to achieving the results (Watson and Gallagher, 2005).

Monitoring is the ongoing process by which information is gathered concerning the implementation and evolution of the project. Monitoring involves techniques designed to keep track of resources and the quantity and quality of operations carried out during each phase of the project so that its objectives are met. It also enables managers fulfill the controlling function of management. In this function manager must make sure that the organization’s actual performance conforms to the performance that was planned for it. The purpose of monitoring is to make sure that the organization or the project team stays on the quality path that it planned to follow. The other aim of learning is to provide the organization with information that will enable learning. This is facilitated by comparing the assumptions made at the planning stage and the real out come at implementation. Monitoring also aids in stating the degree of success.
of a project. It takes into consideration the environment in which the project was executed, the challenge faced and the remedies taken (Ibid). Monitoring should continue throughout the project and be organized so that it is helpful in alerting staff to problems that develop and changes needed. It is a valuable management and learning tool for everyone concerned. During monitoring sessions the following are under review: the resources needed for the project, including staff, equipment, supplies, logistical support and funds, to assess if they are available when needed and if they are being appropriately used; the activities of each team member and their relations to the project as a whole, to assess if the work plan is being carried out as planned and what delays or difficulties, if any, have emerged that need to be addressed; the flow and quality of the data that are being collected; and to what extent they meet the objectives or answer the research questions; and The project team’s communication and co-ordination with the stakeholders (Saleemi 1997).

Monitoring will usually take place at team meetings during field activities. If there is a gap in the fieldwork, it may be necessary to convene a special meeting. It is advisable to keep close track of changes in the work plan and problems encountered and solved (or not solved) so that the relevant authorities are kept informed. Monitoring information is collected at specific times: daily, monthly or quarterly. At some point the need to bring this information together so that it can answer questions such as: how well are people performing? What difference are they making? Project managers use the Project Monitoring and Controlling Process; and project teams to ensure the team is making satisfactory progress to the project goals. The purpose is to track all major project variables – cost, time, scope, and quality of deliverables. The overall objectives of the process being: track and review actual project accomplishments and results to project plans, revise the project plan to reflect accomplishments thus far, and to revise the plan for remaining work - if needed, provide visibility into progress as the project proceeds, so that the team and management can take corrective action.

Deliverables from monitoring and controlling include: written status reports, updates to lists of action items; updates to the plan and schedule to reflect actual progress, comparisons of actual costs to budgeted costs as well as the cost/benefit analysis used when starting the project, and utmost audit and review reports of the activities and work products under development. The scope of monitoring and controlling processes are based on the plan, thus the tailoring for monitoring and controlling is much like the tailoring for planning. For many medium and large projects, the plan is likely to undergo change, to reflect the resolution of items that were unknown or that have changed since the start of the project. Performance reporting is an important tool in monitoring and is a formal documentation of what is happening in an organization often taking the form of a progress report. Progress reporting is therefore the provision of detailed information on how resources are used to achieve the projects objectives.
Performance information and measurement, forecasted completion dates, quality control measurements, the progress management plan, approved change requests and deliverables are all inputs in progress reporting. The performance report would be provided as a status report (describing, where the project stands as at a specific point in time), in terms of meeting the triple constraints of time, scope and cost (Saleemi 1997).

A typical progress report should cover the following – summary (key points during the period), achievements (milestones met), issues (a euphemism for problems), escalations (issue requiring attention from higher level in the organization), forecasts (estimated for the forthcoming reporting period of spending, time to completion, milestones that will be completed). Reporting also serves the following purposes in project monitoring and evaluation: Acts as a blue print for the execution of the project that is, it guides the project team at project implementation, describes the function, authority and activities along the line of cost, time and technical parameters. It sets standards for time cost and work with which actual can later be compared as and when the work progresses. It promotes confidence between the project team and other stakeholders as it updates them on progress and shows the determination of the team to attain the project goals.

Being a formal documentation of what is happening in the project, a progress report will contain a snapshot of the state of the project, its schedule, budget and other major issues under the following contents: summary, achievements, issues, escalations and forecasts. Its frequency, except for the smallest projects there is a requirement for regular, possibly frequent, progress reports. Information on cost, time and quality compared with estimates on reaching designated milestone in the project or at specified time intervals is disseminated to stakeholders either as an update or for relevant corrective measures. The frequency thus varies from one organization to the other and depending on specific stakeholder interest. Another important aspect of monitoring in project managing is a project status review which is an undertaking determined by specific milestones attained on laid down time spans to assess the achievement of the project against the expectations. It necessitates brainstorming on the highlights of progress reports thus initiation of corrective measures. Reviews are conducted with the following objectives: to control multi-disciplinary activity of the higher level, ensure all involved understand the contents of work products and identify any changes needed before any continuation, to revise progress plan including estimates and schedule to accommodate significant changes so that the documented plan inflects the plan in use by the progress team. Several types of reviews are conducted during project progress review. Technical review is carried out at task level in a meeting attended by all task force members and aims to review the status of tasks, that is, fitness of technology in use, equipment and if need be changes made. Design review is held at sub-system level and systems level and addresses the changes in design.
which happens during execution either due to constraints on land, buildings, local environment, and change in raw material specification or government policies. Programme review is a higher level review involving key personnel from all functional areas. It can lead to modification or dropping in light of the new situation. Project status review has consequences which include: taking policy decisions about changes if need be. Change in design, scale, schedule staffing, delegation of power could be an outcome and viability of the progress is either confirmed or declined.

8. Conclusion

The review paper was aimed at establishing the factors affecting the implementation of emergency projects by volunteers in humanitarian organizations. It can be concluded that several factors affect the work of volunteers in humanitarian organizations. The literature supports the proposition that training has an influence on the implementation of emergency projects. Similarly, retention of volunteers is a factor that influence the implementation of emergency projects. The review indicated that the longer the period one stayed in the service the higher the level of experience. This has the likelihood of improving the services offered. On the aspect of the working conditions, the review pointed out to the fact that they affect the implementation of emergency projects by volunteers in humanitarian organizations. Another factor that was cited in the reviewed literature is community participation. It was noted that community participation affects implementation of emergency projects due to purposes of ownership, resource mobilization and information on areas where impact would be felt. Monitoring the projects also affects their implementation and effectiveness.

9. Recommendations

The reviewed literature shows that humanitarian organizations rely on the services of volunteers in the implementation of emergency projects. A clear understanding of volunteer management practices is necessary. Effective management of volunteers is essential when it comes to the implementation of projects especially during emergencies. Most of the studies that have been undertaken are on how to manage the volunteers effectively, but there is need to establish the factors that affect the implementation of emergency projects by volunteers in humanitarian organizations and carry out an empirical study, especially in developing countries.

References


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