STRATEGIC RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN CRISIS: The Humanitarian Example

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Submitted to the MIT Sloan School of Management on May 10, 2013 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

ABSTRACT

The discourse on Haiti is both vast and varied with public attention soaring when an earthquake hit the island in January 2010. Many questions have since been raised by global stakeholders as to how the situation was handled. The primary purpose of this work is to investigate communication cycles between aid organizations and the Haitian community, and to compare the effects on the execution of projects during and after the crisis. The objective is to gain entry into the psyche of both the helpless and the helper, and to show that socio-cultural immersion makes for better trust building which as a direct derivative, smoothes the communication exchange between aid organization teams and the host community.

Information was gathered in the narrative style, with story-telling as the major tool for collecting vital cues on thoughts, feelings, and expectations of respondents. This technique is particularly appropriate in Haiti’s cultural context where stories are an integral part of social record-keeping. From the narrations, insightful answers are found to the research questions guiding this work: What communication gaps existed? What communication mistakes were made? What can be done to avoid such pitfalls in future situations? Building on these, results are presented within each chapter showing the problem or communication mistake, and how the application of my Strategy-Planning-Immersion-Communication-Execution (SPICE) theory addresses these shortfalls and makes for smoother project executions. In conclusion, this work shows that for aid work to have full effect (physical and psychological) on the receivers, team leadership must be immersed into the culture of the host community. The SPICE theory is therefore advanced as a process guide to integrating immersion as a key ingredient in the strategy-to-execution process.

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To all the respondents who spoke off-the-record; and to others like Brad Lovelace, Taylor Quarles, Pierre Liautaud, Ambassador Peter Oyedele, Rita Gakii Gitobu, Rachel Pratt, Chris Beatty, Clay G. Clark, Etelka Prosper, Kokoevi Sossouvi, Kako Bourjolly, Jerry Bousiquot, Jerry Rosembert, Hugline Jerome, Gadi Maciaq, Emmanuel Jean-Francois, Yolene Choute, Ricky Juste, Yvetot Gouin, Caroline Akinyi, Adrien Brisson, Chantal Dolce, Stephane Hyppolite, David and Fatima Mighty, Emile Robitaille, Cassandra Bousiquot, Lev Bouillon, Aissatou Diallo, Patrick Yourouga Bassole, Mayena Chery, Gregory Berrouet, Michel Chataigne, Louis Robert Malebranche, Moliere Desrivieres, Pierre Hughes Henry, Rachel Merisier, Roy Ojiligwe, Stanley Honorat, Thierry Hyppolite and Harrison Kavingi who shared their personal experiences and professional insight on Haiti. To the members and staff of Fondation Voila, Trilogy International, Caribbean Life Group, Mercy Corps Haiti, MINUSTAH GIS Team, Croix Rouge Canadien, Building Goodness Foundation, UNIGLOBE Haiti, Digicel Foundation, Habit for Humanity, KRL International, Clinton Foundation, CRS Haiti, Pro-NICHE Inc, and T-CASH Haiti, for sharing their policies, experiences and operational challenges.

I thank you all.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

"Agreeing to come to Haiti considering the image portrayed externally of the country speaks of Ms. Michaels’ courage, curiosity and I dare say valor. It took less than a month for her to confirm these attributes in the course of her professional duties. Ms. Michaels’ curiosity allowed her to quickly and astutely gain and form an accurate picture of the Haitian culture. Just two months after joining our team, Ms. Michaels held court in our corporate offices in Fort Lauderdale during a strategy session to define our brands positioning and communications going forward. It was there that she proved that her perspective and understanding of the Haitian culture was on target...

"Ms. Michaels also said that our visual imagery should reflect the fast pace at which Haitians are forced to move through life while reflecting our musical tendency... The net result is in just two months our company with 1:3 market share differential has successfully occupied the TOP of MIND positions in recent market surveys.

"I could probably go on for pages of the quality and professionalism of her work. However there can be no better testament than the following: In six years we have gone through no less than seven international experts at this position, not a single one was able to assimilate to their colleagues or the country. Ms. Michaels today is fluent in the local language Creole, and has forged such relations with her local colleagues that they no longer see her as an expatriate employee. Her leadership and ability to connect to people has allowed one of our shyest employees Emmanuel Jean Francois to get out of his shell and lead our PR efforts..."

  Fort Lauderdale FL. Dec 9, 2011

Before responding to the call from Haiti, I had served as Head of Corporate Marketing for Samsung in West Africa, a sub-region known for its cultural and linguistic diversity. Prior to that, I had held leadership positions in brand marketing and communication with brands like Coca-Cola, Rothmans, Heineken, and Subaru. I had the privilege of working in the UK, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. In all these end-markets, I have found that understanding one’s audience and communicating in a way that they can understand and ‘own’ requires immersion into their culture. The SPICE method was developed out of my personal experiences on various brands across different markets. My work in Haiti, especially doubling as co-founder of CLF - a private relief group, allowed me to put it into practice and see it work. It is my hope that socio-cultural immersion will play an increasingly more active role in the practice of communication.

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I. BACKGROUND: DISASTER IN HAITI

While the purpose of this work is not to undertake an exposé on the history of Haiti, a brief description of her geographical location and the character of her land is necessary to set the stage for our discourse, and to enable one better understand the context within which the earthquake and ensuing unrest took place. The republic of Haiti sits upon the Western side (or one-third) of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with The Dominican Republic on the other side, occupying the Eastern side or (two-thirds). The histories of both halves of the island have been the subject of many authors for centuries. Beginning from the Spanish conquistadors who found berth in Santo Domingo around 1492 to the thriving plantations that gave the region a special place in the trade route, and which gave natural support to the slave trade
from the African continent. From the slave uprising led by Toussaint Louverture through to
the defeat of Napoleon's army and onto independence in 1804. Haiti was the first independent
country in Latin American and the Caribbean cluster and also the first Black republic in the
world, governed by its former slave population.

Given its history of combatant victories against the French slavers and the against the army of
napoleon sent to recapture the island, the Black population of Haiti grew a strong, assertive
nature that lent itself well to physical expression, and often gave rise to outbursts of violence
against a common opponent, or against factions that have developed amongst its people.

Mulatto elite gradually grew to the top of the social ladder, with better living conditions,
better education and more exposure to foreign influence, the balance of power between the
color-conscious elite and the poorer land-workers became the reason behind much of Haiti’s
socio-economic upheavals.

Between 1804 and 2010 when the disastrous 7.0 magnitude earthquake occurred, Haiti had
gone through a series of unfortunate incidents ranging from political unrest, to military
dictatorship and despotism. It had recorded economic collapses, had been aided by foreign
governments, had been through a number of coups d’état with distrusted elections and re-
elections and had been governed provisionally by an interim leadership which oversaw the
elections of 2011 from whence the present administration emerged. As at 2010 when the
earthquake shook Haiti and forced the modern world to take a closer, more personal look at
this poorest of Caribbean nations, Haiti was ruled by a government which did not enjoy the full
trust of the people; a distrust which was worsened by the events brought on by the
earthquake, and which showed itself at the polls in 2011 as a new kind of leadership was
chosen by the surviving population of Haiti.
In the wake of the earthquake, the leadership of the nation was perceived by many as invisible and inaudible in the face of the disaster which had befallen its people. Many, Haitians and non-Haitians alike adjudged then President Rene Preval as having failed to make a decisive and sufficiently strong appearance at the helm of restorative efforts. The mismanagement of communication and relationship management between the leader of the nation and its people, between the aid community and the largely illiterate bottom of the pyramid gave rise to the Crisis Situation that this work undertakes to analyze.
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Of the vast body of literature that has trailed the devastation of Haiti by the earthquake of January 2010, very few scholarly works can be found to adequately represent the socio-cultural aspect of Haiti’s national character. Although there are various articles and websites pointing to certain areas of life in Haiti and to the prescribed way of life and interaction guidelines for visitors to the island, few of these actually show the effect of proper relational communication with the host communities of Haiti.

The Canadian Centre for Intercultural Learning has gone to great lengths to provide extensive and detailed guidelines and immersion advice for visitors or expatriates to Haiti. These guidelines emphasize the importance of knowing the history and learning the culture of the people with regards to (verbal and non-verbal) communication styles. This is a pointer to how important it is to be culturally-sensitive to the host community in Haiti.

“If you are in a position of authority, it is best to keep a formal distance. Standing too close could be misinterpreted by the person to whom you are speaking... Eye contact makes conversation more congenial and gestures reinforce it... Do not be arrogant or overly reserved...

Greetings and communication with people is very important in Haiti... It is expected that if you are the individual entering a room or gathering of people that you be the first to greet by saying “bonjou or bonswa” depending on the time of day. Men and strangers will usually greet with a handshake. Women or youth greeting elders and friends will often kiss them on one cheek upon meeting. If you are greeted by someone else, even passing on the street, it is expected that you respond to the greeting appropriately... Humour and laughter is a large part of Haitian culture. Making an appropriate joke or smile will add a lot to conversations with strangers and will often make people more willing to help (for example in the market)...
Whistling and pointing are both considered disrespectful and should definitely not be done in the presence of elders.”

In her article ‘Exploring public relations in Croatia through relational communication and media richness theories’, Maureen Taylor (2004) uses the theories of relational communication and media richness to evaluate unconventional PR practice in Croatia. Her work showed that personal influence, person-to-person networks and contact had more positive impact on media relationship management than the traditional methods of public relations practice. In a similar way, this works shows that personal influence and socio-cultural integration with the host community yields better communication in Haiti. Human beings react positively to the personal effort seen in the attempts of newcomers to ‘reach out’ and learn the ways of their host community.

Warren Breed’s article on Mass Communication and Socio-Cultural Integration expounded the dual role of integration as normative and functional, where the functional involved the clear delineation of roles and duties in society, while the normative integration involved a shared consensus over the value system of a society. He goes further to say that anomie is a direct result of the failure of this consensus and makes examples of the upheavals in France (c.1930), Shanghai (1948) and Kentucky mine wars in Harlan County between 1931 and 1932. The separation of social elements on the basis of labor roles alone diminish the power of normative integration which anchors on the humane or personal side of social relationships. In like manner, the role-based relational policies of many aid organizations operating in Haiti prevented them from seeing the realities of the populace and fostered the kind of anomie that resulted in the upheavals witnessed in cities like Léogane, Cité Soleil and Delmas where recipient apathy and general frustration translated strained role-based social relationships into widespread violence.
Margaret Archer writing in the British Journal of Sociology, explained the fundamental difference between “Cultural System Integration (a logical property characterizing relations between ideas) and Socio-Cultural Integration (a causal property pertaining to relations between people).” Where Breed anchored on the functional versus the normative, Archer expounded the juxtaposition of Culture versus Structure where structure refers to the corpus of roles, institutions, organizations and systems, while culture in a less explicitly defined way refers to the inter-relations of people. In this work with specific reference to Haiti, structure is acknowledged as a fundamental part of the strategy that forms the skeletal system on which organizational operations must rely. However, the place of culture in ensuring that the structure performs its functions is emphasized. The inclusion of cultural immersion is therefore presented as being in support of the strategic structure of aid organizations and not as a replacement of that strategic structure.

Given the dearth of extensive literature for review on this topic with specific reference to Haiti, future research may be directed to focus on the general effect of socio-cultural immersion on the public relations and mass communication efforts of all organizations whether commercial or non-profit. There is also room for in-depth comparative study of the effect of socio-cultural immersion on other markets and cultures with specific focus on Asia, Africa and the Middle East for example. The analysis of human response to humanitarian aid in crisis situations, and the psychological effect of immersion and integration on both the newcomer and members of the host community may also be researched.

Limitations to this study include the inability to capture the government or political side of the story for the purpose of this work. There also exists a possible skew in the fact that less than 1/3 of all open respondents were female, making the larger part of the information gathered inadvertently masculine in character and opinion portrayal. Lastly, there are limitations to
uniformity as a result of differences in the location of each respondent, in the method of
information collection, as well as the differing levels of respondent proficiency in self-
expression and communication of emotional experiences.
III. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This work explores the importance of Relational Communication, and its influence on humanitarian aid delivery methods in host communities of Haiti, during disaster response. It takes on three major research questions with regards to the period between January 2010 and January 2013:

What communication gaps existed?

What communication mistakes were made?

What can be done to avoid such pitfalls in future situations?

In finding answers to these, it takes a close look at the management of organizational communication with the public in crisis situations, and considers the appropriateness (or otherwise) of communication methods in carrying out the relief duties. The particular focus is on Haiti and the management of communication during the earthquake and in the three year period immediately following that natural disaster. The choice of Haiti is informed mainly by the fact that Nature cannot be controlled or appealed to, and by the peculiarity of the Haitian problem with its socio-economic ramifications that make it an interesting case to review.

There is also the first-hand knowledge, on-the-job training, and personal experience gained through my work in the heart of post-earthquake Haiti. These all make for a more robust review showing the hows, whys, and whens of aid service delivery within the broad Haitian community.

International conflict and crisis management is a field which has gained momentum in the past decades due not only to clashes between Man and Man; but perhaps more as a result of clashes between Man and Nature. Where the Man-and-Man clashes can be managed through mediation and creative conflict resolution, the clashes between Mankind and his natural
habitat is one which often defies mediation, and which finds resolutions by and of itself.

Increasingly, in situations like what we see in Japan, Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, earthquakes, forest fires, tsunami, and volcanic eruptions are responsive to human mediation only when adequate strategic preparations had been put in place before the crisis took place.

This work focuses on individual experiences as an inroad to learning how aid-workers should deal with communication-related issues during times of crises, especially in situations where managerial ingenuity and creative communication make the difference between a mutually-beneficial project, and utter chaos. It examines how to handle multiple layers of responsibility where there are little or no formal channels of information dissemination, and considers simple ways of maintaining tactile contact with the audience in multi-crisis situations. In the series of analyzed situations, each one shows the respondent’s personal point of view, and goes on to examine the different models for communication planning, engagement, integration and through-the-line execution used by ground teams working within inter-related but autonomous organizations.

Key players in several organizations were surveyed and interviewed to show the key communication challenges they faced, and to reveal the ways in which those challenges were eventually resolved. Due to budget constraints, the interviews were mostly carried out over the telephone with the first question being: What were you doing on the 12th of January 2010? The follow-up questions depended largely on the narration given by the respondent, and were phrased to guide the interviewer into a better understanding of the situation in which the respondent found him/herself. The same questions were posed to respondent organizations on the same tier of operations and their responses were subsequently compared and contrasted with each other.
Personal accounts of the events of that crisis period were taken down, and a descriptive-narrative approach has been used to allow the reader to gain deeper insight into the individual challenges faced by earthquake victims and the aid work community in Haiti. This allows a proper and more holistic perspective on the situation with a view to appreciate the merits or demerits of each communication approach and to use these as a guide for decision-making in future crisis situations.

The survey was built such that each situation review addressed four key points:

- What the situation was
- What communicative actions were taken
- What reactions were received
- What lessons were learned

In November 2012, a general email was sent through my personal network of public relations and communications practitioners in Port-au-Prince asking for referrals to persons who had experienced the earthquake and were willing to speak about their experiences from the communication point of view. A total of 56 interview recommendations were consequently forwarded to me, of which 47 positive responses were received. 9 refusals were received mostly from subjects in government-related or political positions. Of the remaining 47, 41 respondents granted open interviews, while 6 preferred anonymity and requested to remain off-the-record. The 41 open respondents consisted of 21 humanitarian aid workers and 20 aid recipients. 28 of the open respondents were male and 13 were female. The population of Haiti has an approximately 50-50 gender mix. Athena Kolbe and Roy Hutson’s 2006 study of Haiti’s population put females in the majority with 52.7%. With regards to education levels, access to professional networks and jobs in urban centers, the males are in the majority as is clearly
reflected in the ratio of males to females in the workplace. The effect of the earthquake on Haiti’s population dynamics and gender split has not yet been robustly studied and published.

<table>
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<th>Interview Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Responses</td>
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<td>Refusals</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Total Respondents:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aid Recipients</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
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</table>

All interviews were conducted on weekends between January and March 2013. Interview methods varied based on location and respondent’s preference. 8 were conducted using written notes; 9 were in recorded person-to-person conversations; 17 were from long-distance telephone conversations; 11 were Skype discussions and 2 were sent in as hand-written personal accounts.

Two methods of presentation are used: the Narrative/Story-telling method is used to present the situation, the personal circumstance and the problem, while the Theoretical/Sense-making method is used to present the explanation, recommended action and strategic solution. The results from each chapter show the positive effect of having socio-cultural immersion as an integral part of the complete market entry strategy for humanitarian organizations.
CHAPTER 1:

RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND THE SPICE THEORY

Relational communication is a branch of interpersonal communication which focuses on the methods of expression and the various interpretations of messages within relationships. The subset embraces relationships between individuals, groups, communities and factions. The concept in itself has been controversially defined in many ways, and its branches have been extended to cover a multitude of areas. Scholars generally agree on the fact that relational communication involves the use of verbal and nonverbal methods of communication, with listening as a key addition to cultivate, develop and maintain relationships between individuals or within a group. While some scholars consider it to be the study of relationships between persons of a nuclear group, work team or immediate family, others narrow it down to the study of relationships of a non-platonic type. These focus solely on the ways in which individuals relate within sexual relationships, and on methods for improving communication between partners in marital or pseudo-marital relationships. Still others consider relational communication to be the study of communication between people of autonomous and homogenous groups like families, organizations or communities.

It is generally agreed that Relational Communication helps to define and to showcase the social fabric of a group, and that it indirectly compels new entrants to conform to the norms of interpersonal engagement laid out in the relational examples observed within the group. For the purpose of this work, Relational Communication is the study of message interchange and cultural behavior interpretation between foreign aid workers and the host Haitian community into which they enter.
SPICE Theory

The SPICE theory is a step-process marker that I personally developed for use on my cultural integration projects as a marketing communications practitioner. It maps the process of project initiation from the first decision to enter a new location, through the determination of entry strategy, to the planning and logistic estimation exercises, and advocates socio-cultural immersion before the project is formally introduced and communicated to the host community. The first four steps are a necessary pre-requisite for the final step at which point the project goes into full-scale execution.

Humanitarian aid work has been handled as acts of charity with minimal formalities in the handling and management of the social implications to the receiving communities. It is widely assumed that people are glad to receive help, and are thus always amenable to accepting newcomers into their communities, as long as these newcomers come in peace, and often arrive bearing gifts. In communities where a history of newcomer apathy has been established due to previous unpleasant occurrences, it is common for the people to harbor an aversion to foreigners and to resist the intrusion occasioned by the onslaught of foreign traffic into their local economies. The effect of forex-spending expatriates and the importation of new
(purportedly superior) cultures on the established social code of the host community can be unwelcome, and thus contribute to host community aversion even in the wake of massive disasters like the one that took place in Haiti.

The investment of time and efforts in using the SPICE theory becomes a valuable down-payment towards the eventual success of the whole project, as well as setting the scene for more positive interactions in the future. When ground teams are well-prepared, they have a strategy that recognizes the challenges of the location. This strategy needs to be worked out by the organizational leadership, and should precede the constitution of a ground team. It should inform the choice of ground team members, with different but complementary strengths and capabilities, and should be agreed upon and signed off by the organization’s decision makers.

When ground teams are well-prepared, they have been given a concrete set of plans detailing the length of their stay, the funds available for the project, the resources made ready for them, as well as the boundaries of their project. At this point, logistic details are agreed and confirmed, with fall-back or contingency planning to ensure flexibility in the face of new developments beyond the control of the organization or ground team leadership. The ground team needs to be well-briefed on the project strategy and on the plans laid out for each aspect of the project before their arrival at the location, and needs to have fall back steps that can be used as step-changers if the original strategy has any failings.

Next, the ground team needs to be immersed into the culture of the people to which they will be entering. The organization may need to find experts on that particular region and location to educate and inform the outgoing team. Residents and natives of the area are also good resources, as are tools like movies, books, online blogs and news extracts. It is important to
have a member of the team who understands and speaks the language of the locality and who
can serve as a first point of contact between the ground team and the host community. Upon
arrival at the new location, it is advised that ground team members spend some time
immersing themselves in the culture and social fabric of the host community before officially
commencing work as a project team. This period (however short) is to help them situate
themselves mentally and psychologically, and to allow them time to analyze the environment
and make adequate connections that will help them get the project work done as quickly and
as efficiently as possible. In the face of natural disasters, it is often not possible to take the
SPICE process one step at a time, and ground team leadership will need to decide on how the
steps can be managed concurrently or in strategic subsets. Strategy and Planning can be
combined, while immersion and communication can be run concurrently.

Communication is the key to the success of any project. From the internal information sharing
process, to the ground team dynamics and interpersonal relationships, and through to the
interaction with the host community to prepare their minds for the actual project work,
communication is the single thread that runs through the tapestry of humanitarian work. It is
important that all stakeholders are aware of the purpose and scope of the project. It is also
important that all stakeholders have relationships based on mutual respect, and co-
dependency with one another on the project. While immersion allows the ground team to
understand the perceptions and values of the people, immersion should also be used to
communicate the perceptions and values of the organization, and to show how their values
and objectives are aligned for mutual benefit. Communication is responsible for project
success or failure, and often does not restrict itself to printed, oral or visual methods. The
behaviors and attitudes of the ground team, as well as their willingness to absorb the host
culture can be perceived by the community and will form part of the indices by which the
ground team is judged by the host community.

In order to communicate correctly and properly, the immersed ground team must always be
aware of and conversant with the host community’s cultural paradigm. This involves increasing
familiarity with the power structures and leadership ladder of the society, the way in which the
community is organized, the control systems and laws (written or implied). It is equally
important to be familiar with the rituals and routines of the people as passed down from their
ancestors, and with the processes by which information is passed, checked, confirmed and
relayed to the broader community. Most importantly, it is the stories and symbols of the
society which give better insight into their values.

The Need for Socio-Cultural Integration

Socio-cultural Integration is the conscious attempt of an individual or group to become familiar
with the norms, values, and ways of another individual or group, such that a better
relationship is formed, clearer communication is enabled and stronger cooperation is
achieved. In crisis situations, it is important to ensure that this step is not overlooked in the
haste that often characterizes such situations. A great deal of damage can be done when one
little cultural faux-pas causes a chain reaction that involves the broader community and sets
back the project, or brings the project to a premature end. It is important to note that when organizations send teams to crisis areas, these on-ground teams are seen not as representatives of the organization, but as the organization itself. It is a human oversight, and one which is common to all spheres of life and endeavor. The tendency to judge an entire group by the actions of one or a few individuals and to react accordingly has been the cause of many conflicts across time.

In the case of Haiti, an organization like the Red Cross, for example, was present in many capacities. The American Red Cross, The Canadian Red Cross, The Haitian Red Cross, The British Red Cross were all present in teams across the country. To the average Haitian however, there existed no differentiation between these different teams. They simply saw the activities of The Red Cross. The same was said of the United Nations Corps stationed in Haiti. Despite the fact that MINUSTAH officers came from the armed forces and police of over 38 different countries, each group with its own cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns, they were all referred to as MINUSTAH, and the actions of any one member of the corps was seen as the collective deed of the entire organization.

Perception in such situations is uni-directional because the host community only interprets what it sees, and it does not see ground teams. The host community sees the organization. In
a similar way, the parent organization itself due to size and distance often does not see the host community either. The actions and nature of the host community is explained and interpreted through the ground teams, whose perception may or may not be the correct ones. This multiplicity of perceptual directions makes it difficult for information to be correctly interpreted and sometimes gives rise to conflicts of opinion and confrontational action. Socio-cultural integration, when done correctly minimizes the negative effect of perception silos and allows teams to perceive the host community in more relational terms. This integration offers a better understanding of the reasons behind reactions to ground team activity, and thus enables the ground team to address the host community’s concerns more directly, and gives the host community an opportunity to provide feedback to the team without the distortion caused by informal word-of-mouth or speculative channels. This naturally creates a better overall perception for the parent organization.

Below: Foulger’s model shows that consumers are not just message receivers, but are co-creators because they respond and give feedback which is integral to communication.

The perception of a community is largely dependent on the perception of a collection of individuals who have had direct interactions with the organization’s ground team, and who have taken the time to pass the details and outcomes of that interaction to other members of the community. The opinion of persons whom the community members have known for many years, and have thus come to trust as one of their own, will often outweigh the truth of any matter where the foreigners or newcomers have a conflicting opinion. For this and other reasons, the ground team needs to have a member of the community on board who will serve as a feedback link conveying information on a person-to-person basis and getting the ‘feel’ of the community. This person (informant) will also be able to point the ground team in the correct direction with regards to norms, values and socio-cultural cues. It is important that the local liaison be sufficiently knowledgeable on both sides of the project divide. This means that he or she must be able to relate simultaneously with the job on ground (having appropriate technical knowledge) and also be able to relate directly with the people (having appropriate cultural knowledge). This enables the liaison to observe, decode and interpret in real time, while helping the rest of the ground team to do the same.
CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY

The earthquake was an unexpected disaster, yet it was more devastating because no prior provisions had been made to deal with disasters of that magnitude in Haiti. The most alarming problem for many was the lack of information. Tika, an earthquake survivor who worked for one of the telecommunications companies, spoke in an interview at her residence in Port-au-Prince. Her account describes her personal experience of the earthquake and shows the mayhem that occurs when there is no strategic preparation in place, while revealing the horrors of having no specific direction in the face of such a crisis.

TIKA: THE TREMBLING OF THE EARTH

It was nearly 5pm on a normal Tuesday afternoon. The final half-hour of most weekdays were spent going over the activities the day and preparing for the commute home from work. Action points from our Monday morning meetings had been tackled, and reports had been prepared for sign-off before our mid-week review on Wednesday. It was almost time to go home. Most Tuesdays were long, demanding days at the headquarters in Port-au-Prince, and it was not uncommon for staff to plan a strategic escape at exactly 5pm. Just in case the boss suddenly had a great idea, and decided to call a ‘quick meeting’. That was not uncommon either, and I was too tired to be useful in any after-5pm meetings, so I wanted to escape badly.

In those days, our customer service and communication teams were always ‘on call’ so the boss could give us tasks at any time of the day. Industry competition was stiff and results from the year-end promos were being analyzed and criticized by senior management. Team Leads were demanding specific break-down information from their teams across the island, and
many direct-reports at the headquarters were on edge for days on end. I had been on edge for about one week. Many of my colleagues had been called back from their extended Christmas vacations, just in case something was needed which could not be asked or sent by email. At that time, I was the general dogs body of the Marketing Communications unit. I handled just about anything and everything that was required to co-ordinate a team of ten graphic designers, script writers, social media analysts, and public relations officers.

At about twenty minutes past four, I reached under my table and pulled out my dark brown handbag. I remember which bag I was carrying that day because it had been a gift from my roommate at college in Florida. I lost the bag that day, along with all the things in it. Anyway, so I picked up my bag and opened it. The zipper screeched a bit as I opened the side panel to pull out my little makeup kit. I looked up to see if my boss was looking in my direction.

Through the glass partition that separated our two offices, I could see that he was engrossed in a Skype call, and his back was turned towards me. The other occupants of our open-plan office were busy putting final touches to their tasks too. I knew everyone was eager to leave. So I walked very quickly to the ladies, holding my make-up kit in my hand. I entered the restroom and laid out my makeup stuff on the counter. As I was about to wipe off my face and put on a fresh coat of powder, I heard voices in the restroom corridor, and tried to listen to what they were saying. Honestly I was just praying that my boss had not called any last minute meetings.

I quickly applied my one layer of light powder and picked up my lipstick. I was applying the dark red lipstick to my lower lip when I suddenly felt the mirror move from in front of me.

The wall shook as though a giant punch had slammed into the middle of the building, and I watched the big mirror fall down into the sink and the sink fall down into the floor. As the mirror dropped, I remember seeing that my face had an ugly dark red line across my right cheek, and I was wondering how I am going to be able to wipe the lipstick off without a mirror.
I think I must have been confused like that for like thirty seconds or so. I couldn’t think straight and I didn’t understand what was happening. Behind me, one of my colleagues was screaming in English from one of the cubicles. She was just screaming, “Help me! I’m trapped. I’m stuck! Help, this wall is on my leg!” She just kept on saying that over and over. Eventually I think I realized that I could move because the building had stopped moving. I didn’t know what else to do, so I moved towards her voice, and tried to open the cubicle door. It was still locked from the inside but I could see that the outer wall on the other side was no longer there. I was looking outside through the slit in the cubicle door. She was screaming so hard that it confused me even more. I shouted back at her through the door.

“Who is in there?”

“It’s me,” she was sobbing so bad. “It’s Rosalie!”

“Oh my God, Rosie!” I pushed at the door but nothing happened. I was too small to even move it. So I shouted back at her. “Hold on! Lemme go and get help!”

I ran into the restroom corridor, and out to the open office shouting “Someone is trapped in the restroom. Rosalie LeBrun is in the restroom and she is hurt!”

I had to stop in my tracks because I saw that the building beside our office was now partly inside our open office. People were running and falling over each other as they tried to get out of the building. We were on the sixth floor, but the elevator was not an option. The stairway was missing in parts and I saw people actually climbing over friends and colleagues just to get out of the creaking building. I couldn’t move. I just stood still looking at the madness in front of me. From somewhere at the back of my head, I kept repeating myself. “Rosalie Lebrun is stuck under the restroom wall. Rosalie is hurt. Rosie is under the wall.” But no one was listening to me. They were all trying to get out of there. Finally I saw a security operative
whom I recognized. He was a French national, and had given me a ride once when I was with an expatriate friend. The senior security operatives were bodyguards for the expatriates. You know, we had a serious kidnapping problem even back then. Anyway, I grabbed his sleeve and told him that Rosie was stuck under the restroom wall. He took a moment to recognize me, then he spoke loudly over the noise, pointing to the broken stairway. "Descendez-vous vite, Mademoiselle Tika. Après la tremblement, ons va chercher les autres!"

He grabbed me by the arm and somehow push-dragged me through to the third floor balcony where a construction ladder had been propped against the scaffold used by our window washers. I held on tightly, mindless of my torn skirt, and my cement-powdered face and bleeding hands. About two feet from the ground, a massive crack appeared on the building’s outer wall as the earth trembled again under us. I fell to the ground, hitting my shoulder against the curb and just managing to roll over before the man on the ladder ahead of me came crashing down from three floors up. I couldn’t look. I was weeping and weeping, that was all I could do. Somebody grabbed me and put me in a big truck with other sobbing colleagues.

I remember that I suddenly started thinking about my mother. She would have been on the road somewhere close to my office. I had no car at that time, and Maman usually picked me up on the way down the hill from the hospital in Thomassin where she worked some days. I began to weep again as I remember poor Rosie. The wall that just tore away was the same one that had moved and trapped her earlier. I didn’t dare think too far. I tried calling out to one of the guards running by the truck. "Please help Madame LeBrun. She was trapped on the sixth floor!" but no one heard me.
Our truck began to move. None of us knew where it was going. Some people said it was going to the General Hospital, that some Cuban and Haitian doctors had set up an outside hospital there. Then some others said that the General Hospital was no longer there, that it had fallen when the first shake happened. Somebody had heard that the palace was in rubbles, that the Prime Minister and all the cabinet had been crushed, that only President Preval had survived, and they were not even sure if he would live. Another person said he had got a text that the whole of Léogane was underwater after the earthquake. People were just saying different things, and confusing us the more.

My cellphone had been on my table when I went to put on my makeup. I wish I had put it in my pocket. My mother always says that it is called a mobile phone because you can be mobile with it. I wish I had remembered her words then. I just needed to find a way to reach my mother. Or my sister, or my brother-in-law. Anyone. I just needed to tell them that I am alive, and to find out if they are. I didn’t even want to consider the alternative. I began to pray. Then somebody asked if anyone a cellphone that he could borrow. There were cell phones, but there was no coverage. Something had happened to the networks and no one was getting through. Our IT Manager was in the corner of the truck, he shouted at the driver to turn on the radio, so that we could hear news of what was going on in the country.

“Pagen radiyo nan machinn la, Boss!” the driver shouted back. There was no radio in the truck. Who bought a truck in 2010 with no radio in it? Or maybe it broke? People started to grumble about not knowing if the worst was even over, and not knowing where we were being taken.

I couldn’t feel my left shoulder. I didn’t know if I was hurt in other places. I didn’t know where I was being taken. I didn’t know where my family was. I didn’t know what had really happened.
I didn’t know if the earth was going to keep trembling at intervals, or if it was going to stop trembling. And if it was going to stop, then when? As the truck tried to find its way through the crowded rubble-covered streets, I realized that I didn’t know anything. And as I looked around me, I saw wounded people squeezed together in the truck and I realized that none of us did. We knew nothing. We had been told nothing. Although we had heard everything under the sun. We had even been told that the end of the world had come, and the earth was breaking apart because of our sins and our voodoo. I didn’t know what to believe, but I just needed to reach my family, and to know that they are safe too.
FROM FIRST VOICE TO FIRST RESPONSE: Relational Communication at the Onset of Crisis.

Every respondent expressed the fact that the worst part of the earthquake was not knowing what was really going on. The lack of information fuelled fears that led to mass confusion and general unrest, which made the rescue missions harder to accomplish. It was difficult to manage the expectations of a people who did not know what to expect, and therefore did not know what to do and where to go. Although help was on the way from the United States and the rest of the world, it was hard to get the message of hope, help and rescue across to the man in the mountainous interior whose family lay buried in the ruins of his crumbled home. Due also to the level of development and urbanization in Haiti, and to the big differences between infrastructure in the cities and urban centers and infrastructure (or the lack thereof) in the provinces and rural areas, information dissemination was nearly impossible in the time frame that would have mitigated further panic and the general pandemonium that followed the actual natural disaster. The most important desire of the average Haitian at that moment was to be spoken to, and if possible, to be heard in return. Unfortunately, this was hardly possible because of the peculiarity of the circumstances.

In situations such as these, relational communication is better suited to the psychological state of the people. Lyons and Wilker in the book Interactive Project Management, differentiate between two key communication types in the sharing of information: the Transactional, and the Relational. The transactional type of communication may be more impersonal in that it involves process-related matters like document sharing, financial information, and project status reports. These do not require direct interaction and may be communicated through non-touch media platforms like emails, letters and faxes. The relational type of information sharing involves critical issues that require personal attention and direct communication, thus making it necessary to engage the audience at touch points that are more direct. Telephone
calls, visits, explanatory broadcasts and speeches are more appropriate when the issue involves a larger number of people. This is especially true when passing across information that is sensitive, when giving difficult status reports or when communicating tragic news. The need for speed, accuracy and empathy tops the list for these highly critical situations, and often makes the disaster much easier to manage.

Below: Lyon and Wilker show which communication type is appropriate for what situation.


**STRATEGIC CHOICES (The 'GO' Decision)**

Every executed project is the output of a plan, and needs to be strategically managed in order to fulfill its purpose. In project management, as with business development, the most critical decision is the one where the team or its leader agrees whether or not it is viable to initiate a project in the first place. The decision 'to go, or not to go' and the internal support or lack
thereof has been known to be a key determinant in the success of many projects from concept to execution. When the go decision is taken solely by the leadership of an organization, it imposes its decision on the entire team and makes the project a collective responsibility regardless of team sentiments.

When the go decision is taken with the input of the team however, it opens the matter for broader discussions and more direct examination of the situation on ground, and of the perceived needs and requirements of the team in undertaking that particular project. It is notable that the traditional models of strategic decision-making have overlooked the socio-cultural aspect of the new environment. It is not enough to consider the market (as an economy) including key indicators like macro economy, regulatory policies, operations and operational risks, and competition within the industry without also considering the character of the community which will either receive or reject the organization and its business or aid activity.
Below: Decision-making is evolving from the traditional paths shown below, to more inclusive models.

The greatest risk that any enterprise or project runs in a new environment is the risk of rejection. This is made all the more difficult by the fact that rejection can often not be predicted or rationalized by the organization. Host community apathy may stem from any one of a million reasons and may be the deciding factor in the success or failure of the project, regardless of how laudable the organization’s purposes and intentions are.

It is therefore important that prior to stepping into a crisis situation, a thorough analysis of the socio-cultural nature of the host community is done, and furthermore, that members of the ground team are given basic to intermediate training on the values, customs and belief systems of the host community before arrival. As much as possible, new members of the ground team should be made to experience a direct immersion/integration process in the earliest days of arrival at the location. The preventive value of socio-cultural integration in relational projects far outweighs the commitments in terms of cost and time spent at this phase of the project.
The Red Cross: A Strategic Integration Example

Many respondents made references to Red Cross liaisons who came into the interiors with the medical teams and helped to explain what, why and how to the largely illiterate communities of the inner provinces. These people, being Haitian were able to quell the fears of the community and establish a basis for mutual trust which became extended to the ground team, and which made the project much easier to accomplish. In Saint-Marc, the Canadian Red Cross team was said to have employed local youths who had completely high school, and gave them administrative and clerical jobs. This singular act ensured that the community was aware of the purpose of the project and was shown the positive side of the outcome even before completion. Many of the employed youth became spokesmen and women for the HIV/AIDS awareness program, as well as for the Cholera Prevention campaigns.

Location-specific information: Despite the fact that Haitians indigenously speak one language which is Kreyol, it was erroneous to approach the Haitian population with the belief that the same culture and norms where perceived in the same way, and permeated in the form across the nation. There were differences amongst city Haitians and province Haitians. There were customs that were not observed in the city, but which constituted gross disrespect if not observed in the provinces. One respondent cited the specific case of entry into an abode, a hall or a gathering. Whereas in the city, it was acceptable to enter with a simple “Bonjour” or “Salut”, in the province of Hinche where her team was stationed, one had to proclaim “Oneh!” meaning ‘honor’ to those within, while they in turn responded “Respeh!” meaning ‘respect’. The failure to observe this seemingly simple custom often made the difference between acceptance and rejection of the newcomer. If the newcomer was seen as disrespectful, pompous or discourteous, he or she was simply ignored.
It is imperative that little aspects of everyday living be explained to new ground teams so that their work may progress smoothly, and so they do not run foul of the local community values. It is not enough to provide socio-cultural information that applies to the broad community of a host country, but with regards to specific cities, towns, villages and communities, the ground team needs to be adequately prepared, well briefed and ready to learn more. The issues associated with addressing community leaders, speaking to large groups, teaching new approaches to old traditions and showing the merits of technology or better processes are all made easier when adequate preparation has been made, and ongoing learning is being embraced by the project team.

Below: Social Learning Networks provide various avenues for cultural learning within and beyond the workplace.

**HOST COMMUNITY ‘IMMERSION’ AND SOCIAL LEARNING.** CorpU Weekly Digest: Social Learning (2012-September-3)

**Sourcing ‘unavailable’ data:** In the case of Haiti, as with most third world locations, there is a great dearth of data. Even basic information like educational, financial and population data is largely unavailable and where available, correct only in part. This makes it harder to make provisions for projects that require estimated numbers. Most ground teams have to gather
their own information when they arrive on site, or rely on information shared by other groups who have worked, or are presently working in the area.

One respondent shared the example of inner-city camps which sprang up as a result of destroyed homes, destitute families and other displaced individuals immediately following the earthquake. These camps came up as a human resolution to a human problem, with no direct government involvement in location or maintenance of the camps. It fell to the NGOs and other relief groups to help co-ordinate, and in some cases to relocate such camps. When the living conditions became worse, the relief groups where quick to see that the few cases of Cholera were fast increasing and growing to alarming levels within these camps. This was not unexpected, giving the close proximity within which people were forced to live, and also giving the hygiene inadequacies of living in such camps. It was estimated that in one camp in Petionville, where the Red Cross had recorded about one hundred and seventy campers, it was believed that an estimated two hundred units of tarpaulin tents would be required to provide shelter from the oncoming rains, and that fifty mobile latrines would be sourced to served this camp community. Unfortunately, this estimate was very far from the reality. It turned out that over two thousand individuals actually resided in the camp, with some rotating their occupancy by slots where someone slept from about 6pm till about midnight, another (or others) slept from midnight till about 6am, and yet another slept from about 6am till noon and so forth. For the purpose of Red Cross record-keeping, only one individual was recorded as having being allocated a tent.

This unrealistic information had a huge ripple effect on the management of the project, and negatively affected the control of Cholera which was fast becoming an epidemic at the time. For example, the mobile toilets which were shipped from the US arrived at the camp and were placed at different corners of the settlement. The supplies and structures were estimated for
a group of two to three hundred people, but ended up serving more than two thousand. The pile-up was incredibly impossible to manage, and contingency plans did not nearly contain the problem. A new (and much costlier) consignment of mobile toilets was quickly ordered, and were received after weeks of trying to cope with the overflow, during which time the Cholera epidemic had kicked in with full force, and mortality rates had increased drastically within the camp. Without piped water supply, electricity or drainage, the camps had become a death trap for many individuals and families.

It is imperative for aid organizations to get ‘closer’ to the community and to ensure that data is sourced as directly as possible. This is where local liaisons are exceptionally useful as they are better able to get to the root of most matters which indigenes would not normally reveal to a newcomer or foreigner.

**Aligning Capabilities: Involving the Local Resource**

As in the case of The Canadian Red Cross in the coastal town of Saint-Marc, Haiti, it is possible to align capabilities even in the most remote areas of any relief location. While it is imperative that technical expertise is not compromised, the team leadership needs to make early decisions about how much local content is needed in the workforce. Many team managers are conscious of the budget constraints that characterize such operations, and thus do not plan to include many locals who will need to be trained, remunerated and managed.

It can however be argued that the cost of training is far outweighed by the value added by these local workers. They act as ambassadors to the host community, and bridge the perception gap between the ground team and society. When local members of staff are seen and related with directly, members of the host community gradually begin to see the parent organization as a ‘friend’ and they begin to relate with the ground team as persons in their
own right, not just as emissaries of a large unknown organization. When the situation calls for
dialogue or some form of direct communication, it is easier for indigenes to approach fellow
locals within the organization as a first point of contact. The local staff can then refer the
matter to a senior team member who can direct matters appropriately.

The case of the Petionville camp was properly understood only when a camp resident
gathered enough courage to trust and confide in a Haitian member of the organization's junior
staff who explained the real situation to her superiors. The Cholera epidemic may have been
better controlled, or perhaps avoided altogether if the truth of each community was known to
the team leadership. The value of local inclusion cannot be evaluated in monetary terms alone.

On the average, local workers are paid a lot less than the expatriate team members, require
less in terms of benefits and job perks, and bring a wealth of local knowledge to the project.

Recruitment and Inclusiveness in High Tension Situations: In many crisis situations, tensions
rise for often unknown or unforeseen reasons. The frustration of suffering, displacement,
physical, emotional or psychological pain, and the normal human rebellion against unwanted
change can cause explosive and violent behavior. It is not unusual to find that the first victims
of such violence are those who are new to the community or who are viewed as harbingers of
the unwanted change, or representatives of the 'perceived' cause of the problems faced by
the agitators. During the violence that broke out sporadically in Cite Soleil, a poor
neighborhood in Port-au-Prince, it was noted that many relief workers who were caught in the
fray were actually housed and protected by locals until the situations calmed enough for the
foreigners to be returned to the other side of the city. The presence of local team members
who had established relationships with key members of the community ensured that the
violence of the agitators was not extended to the members of the Red Cross teams, whom the
local team members reminded the community were 'helpers of the people'.
The recruitment of local hands by The Building Goodness Foundation of Virginia USA gained the group a special place amongst the people of Thomassin and Kenscoff in the mountains on the east of Petionville. The organization had initially sent teams of expatriates to rebuild community structures like schools, churches, halls and clinics which had been destroyed during the earthquake. The American builders hired, trained and mentored teams of local laborers and taught them basic masonry, carpentry, and other aspects of construction. As at May 2011, BGF had informally trained more than 200 hundred local Haitians and had given each of these men a means of livelihood which remained valuable to them for life. Displaced families were helped to rebuild their homes and the men were given jobs at the building sites to help them earn a living to support their families. All this was done at a time when employment was at its lowest nationwide, and when the usual skills were no longer viable for most low income Haitian families. From laborers, to builders, to site guards BGF employed Haitians from the local community and built a team of local talent that was supervised directly by a Haitian foreman.

Word had spread quickly, and sons of the community who had wandered off to the city to look for jobs, were being called back by their relatives, and being introduced to the BGF manager for consideration on one of the sites. By March 2012, BGF had only one expatriate in charge of the Thomassin/Kenscoff area with building projects estimated at over four million US dollars being handled almost entirely by the indigenous teams. The manager, Mr. Clay G. Clark had been stationed in Haiti for two years, and had taken over from a fellow Virginian who had served two years as well. Each of these men had lived amongst the people of Thomassin/Kenscoff and had learned to speak the local language. The cost of material procurement and labor had lowered drastically because of the fact that bargaining with the Haitian contractors was done by the Haitian staff, and man hours were monitored by fellow
Haitians who were well aware of the habits and possible loopholes which could be exploited by Haitian workers. The experience of these local supervisors made it possible for BGF projects to progress at greater speed and with better results than most other projects in the locality.

The local workers did more because they saw themselves as co-owners of the buildings which were being erected for the Thomassin/Kenscoff communities. They also acquired skills that they used in constructing their own homesteads to better standards, and which they did often with the assistance of the BGF manager who gave free consulting to any member of his local team who had a personal building project.

Below: BGF was able to attain multi-directional perception through relational communication and involvement of the host community.

![Diagram](image)

**Fig 2.3** BUILDING MUTUAL PERCEPTION: The BGF Example of Multi-Directional Perception Building.

To this day, BGF although small compared to bigger organizations like Mercy Corps and the Clinton Foundation, is one of the most influential aid organizations in that part of Haiti. BGF
officials have been known to be invited to sit in on community meetings, to attend weddings, christenings and other personal celebrations, and in certain cases, to stand as godparents to newborn babies whose parents feel their lives have been touched by these ‘god sent’ individuals. In such rare cases as that of the Building Goodness Foundation and its ground team members, the relational communication between the team and the host community changes the perception indices and allows the tripartite players to gain a more accurate multidirectional view of one another.

CHAPTER 3: PLANNING
There can be no adequacy of planning for a natural disaster, since no one can accurately predict its magnitude. The action of the MINUSTAH team on the ground in Haiti at the moment of the earthquake has been hailed as valiant and well-planned. Mr. Harrison Kavingi worked as a cartographer for the UN during the earthquake. His experience of the earthquake is twofold: first as a survivor himself, and secondly as part of the GIS team who worked tirelessly to help to chart the path to those who were wounded, displaced or killed in the disaster. He recounts his experience as part of a team with strategic direction and well-coordinated efforts, but which was handicapped by inadequate infrastructure, information bottlenecks and insufficient planning detail. His interview was given by telephone during his vacation in Nairobi, Kenya where he hails from.

HARRY: HELPING THE HELPERS

I was at work in the UN compound when it happened. At first, we did not really understand what was going on. Our offices are in pre-fabricated cabins placed on concrete, so the shaking did not cause structural damage. We had originally assumed that some construction work was going on in the compound, and the machinery was causing the earth to shake beneath our offices. When the shaking persisted and we began to hear shouts and screams from around the perimeter, we realized that it was something serious. Some of us came out of the cabins and walked out to the greater yard to see what was happening. We basically gathered there in the open until the shaking stopped. I tried to call my friend, but realized that my cell phone was not connecting. None around me had a working cell phone. That is when many people began to understand the magnitude of what was happening around us. If people could not communicate, how would the situation be managed?

Our HQ building was in ruins. Being a brick building, it did not have the flexibility of the cabins, and it had completely collapsed. It came down with all the people in it. Many people rushed outside the compound to see what other damage had been done, and to see what was happening outside our compound. One thing I remember clearly is that once we realized what was happening, everyone automatically began to recall and revalidate the rules to one
another. We reminded each other that there were security measures in place, and although we were all briefed on arrival, many had never imagined that it come to a point where those measures would be needed and enforced at such a critical pace.

It took hours, but we all hurried to the appointed rally points. All UN organizations had to go directly to the Evacuation Point at MINUSTAH near the airport. UNDP, UNOCHA, WFP, WHO—all had to go there. I remember seeing the crowd and commenting that I had never seen everyone in one place at the same time, and in such a state of mind, too. The place was very full. There were many people there, and it was impossible to tell who was accounted for and who was not. All who were safe and able to move had made it to the muster point at MINUSTAH compound. Some civilians and local staff had come as well because they really had nowhere else to go in the midst of the panic that was setting in around the city.

Our Chief finally spoke to us at the muster point. He did not say much, and no one said much after that either. Communication was sporadic and short. We were to stay safe. We were to stay together. We were to keep within the dictates of our contract. We were to obey all directives with regards to our security and to the security of the organization as a whole. We were to notify the appropriate authority and get the required permission before going anywhere. We were not to go out on our own to save people. We were to let the appointed groups handle that. Before long, our military was out on the streets carrying out recovery missions in places that had been affected by the earthquake. The search and rescue was the hardest part of the situation on ground. Before the international community had heard the news, rallied its resources and made it down to Haiti, the UN military was already doing the best it could to search and rescue the distressed victims of the earthquake.
Amazingly, the Israeli unit responded first, with about 25 men setting out into Port-au-Prince to assess the damage and give help while assuring the people that more people were coming to help. The French unit followed quickly as did the Spanish, American and Canadian units. The US Marines did a very commendable job. These men went out to affected towns and cities for search and rescue. They set up medical tents in the town, and transferred the critical cases that could be moved to the UN hospital in MINUSTAH compound for treatment. The wounded from our HQ were given first aid, and those who were very badly injured were moved into the UN hospital immediately. The efficiency of these teams saved many lives and encouraged those of us who were unharmed to step in and help as much as we could.

The communication vacuum was worsened by the fact that many of us were unable to reach out to our families and let them know that we were safe. News of the devastation in Haiti had reached the world through social networks and cable television, but many of us could still not call out. Some UN officials had satellite phones which were up and running, and these people became temporary call centers for their colleagues. We generally looked around for anyone who had a satellite phone, and we quickly called our families to tell them we were alive and would be in touch again when things settled a bit. Remarkably, by the following day internet was restored within the UN using our satellite connections. We got right back to work as much as was possible. For most of us, depending on our duties, the work started immediately. For those in ICT and transport units, it was seamless since all depended on them. As for my team and I, we had to produce thousands of maps to aid in identifying where there were casualties, and which were the best routes to reach them. As more aid organizations arrived on ground, they needed maps to the interior regions of the country and even inner city maps showing blocked out streets and destroyed bridges. We had to keep producing these materials, so simply never stopped working. In fact, we worked for like 20hrs a day for about two weeks. It
was not a matter of choice, we just did what we had to do. The units needed us to get maps out to the search and rescue teams and to keep churning out GIS material for all those in the field. And that is what we did.

After the muster point briefing, some of us were permitted to go return to our quarters while others were evacuated to Miami or the Dominican Republic over a two-day period. Many of those had been badly affected by the earthquake and many had lost their homes, close associates or loved ones. UN staff registered according to divisions and teams, so that tents and medical supplies could be handed to those who needed them. Then tents and medicines were given to the locals as well. It was hard to know exactly who had died and who had survived. It was a very painful period for us. Many unidentifiable corpses were buried in mass graves. What could we do? There were no morgue certificates to issue. There were no dental records to fall back on. Some were dismembered and there was just no way to identify them. We could not just leave bodies to rot, and we had no facility with the capacity to preserve that amount of fatality until more could be done. They were simply given the last honors, and quickly buried. If anyone had not been seen, had not reported at the muster point or at work, then they were considered deceased. Most of the international staff who died in the HQ building were identified by face, and their next of kin were notified and the remains transferred to their home countries. It was a very hard time for us all. We were overwhelmed by the sheer mass of wounded, dead and dying, and by the obvious inadequacies in provision, speed, infrastructure and expertise to manage such a crisis.

The major problem with the response was lack of infrastructure, and that made it very difficult for us to be efficient. No system is foolproof, and even if we had known that an earthquake was going to happen on the twelfth of January 2010, we would still not have had a perfect response ready. It is always difficult to be perfect. No matter where a disaster happens, there
are always up and downs in time of emergency. Despite that fact, communication between management and staff should be well managed. I believe our external and internal communication could have been better enhanced since most of the people just wanted to know about their loved ones. For international staff, there should have been a process in place for contacting the next of kin immediately such disasters happen. This is just to reduce the anxiety, and prevent panic from spreading locally and internationally.

The people of Haiti were heartbroken. They waited to hear comfort and hope from their leaders. They wanted to hear that things would be restored, that more help would come, and that this would be a lesson learned so that they would never be at such a disadvantage again.

But the leadership itself was heartbroken and largely silent. It did not help that there were blackouts in most neighborhoods were the power supply which was originally not at its best, had now become non-existent. Most people could not get access to up-to-date information, and did not know where to turn for help. They just waited, and waited and when they could not wait anymore, there was a unanimous outburst by the masses. It was generally not intended to be violent, because these were people whose psychological backbones had been broken by the sheer force of the disaster and the tragedy that came with it. There was widespread frustration among the locals. It is hard to explain, but the truth is that although a lot of relief, assistance and medical supplies had been sent by the international community in a short time, it was not nearly enough to reach all of the population of Haiti in the vast reaches of the republic in those far-out places where huge devastation had taken place, but where most international aid groups could not reach as yet.

Morale was extremely low, as many Haitians were pained at being so totally helpless, so completely dependent on the help of strangers, on the charity of the international community. And it did not help that communication was at zero levels. No power supply, no television, no
news except for the rich or privileged whose private infrastructure kept them informed and whose financial state enabled them to evacuate themselves and their immediate families outside the country. Many people were rendered homeless by the earthquake. Internally-Displaced Persons (IDP) found any open ground and basically just congregated there. It was easier to stay together even in their grief, and that made it easier for aid to reach them. The compounds of schools, churches, squares, sports fields, orphanages, empty lots — any open space at all was used as a camp by IDPs. We went on volunteer camp duty in our spare time, and we helped as much as we could. I tried to cheer up as many people as I could. Life is hard enough already, people needed to gradually begin to see a brighter side, and to have hope.

My personal life has changed a lot since the earthquake. I now see life as very fleeting. It just passes second by second without us knowing what could happen in the very next second. I believe the whole experience has also made me more human. It has taught me to consciously be my brother’s keeper all the time. We are all in this together, no matter what the world brings, we will need to deal with it together. That is the main lesson for humanity.
ONE DISASTER, THREE LEVELS OF CONFLICT.

Respondents reveal a very broad scope of varying crisis management policies across four types and tiers of operations: Government, Private Sector Commercial (for profit), Large-Scale Humanitarian (NGO) and Small-Scale Humanitarian organizations. The action-reaction-result cycles of each group come across clearly in the light of the specific Haitian crisis situation. The cross-section of respondents considered and categorized the conflict situation on three levels:

- People versus Nature
- People versus Government
- People versus People

People versus Nature: Many respondents expressed the feeling of total helplessness in the face of nature's unforeseen and unplanned for destruction. It was generally agreed that the earthquake was beyond human control, and could not have been prevented. In the face of such devastation, the people of the land could not have adequately prepared for the crisis that ensued.
“We had donors lined up. We had private businesses beginning to make investments. There was so much hope about Haiti’s future, hope that had not been present for years... And along comes Mother Nature and just flattens it.”

- US Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton

The people of Haiti had been suddenly and unexpectedly besieged by Nature. The adversity of the environment could not be bargained with, peaceably resolved or appealed against.

**People versus Government:** There was also a general consensus amongst respondents and the general Haitian public that the government’s response was unsatisfactory to the people. The absence of a visible government representation at close proximity to the people left them feeling that the government was not showing enough empathy towards the suffering masses who needed to hear directly from their leaders.

“We have a vacuum of government. The big question is ‘who is in charge?’ We don’t feel as though there is someone organizing all this.”


**People versus People:** Many respondents were quick to cite the demographic differences across different parts of the nation as having led to mass violence in the face of crisis.

Respondents from the poorer neighborhoods described their frustration and disappointment at having received little consideration from compatriots who were better off and were in positions to have given aid to the less privileged among them. The pre-historic divide between the wealthy elite and the masses was more pronounced in the face of crisis and led to unrest in the highly volatile low-income neighborhoods.
“Haiti was...pure, free enterprise...no public education, no public health care, no social services, no pension schemes, no regulations, no taxes. A corrupt elite helped siphon off all the dollars sent there. Any social work to help the poor (was) done by charities, missionaries and NGOs...Not so perfect for the non-elite Haitians though. They scrambled to look after themselves. Children may have had to eat dirt, but if you’re poor you deserve it, don’t you?"

- Anne Peterson (US citizen, commenting on CBC News)

Planning Top-Down and Ground-Up Communication in Crisis

Communication in itself is a multi-directional concept. In many crisis situations, information tends to flow more formally from the top to the bottom of the influence line. Government officials and organization leaders tend to pass information down to the people through their channels of communication. This method often does not allow for information to flow back from the people to the leadership of the state or organization. The feedback loop is as much a part of the initial problem as it is a key to the eventual resolution.

Intuition and immediate Responses: The importance of intuition cannot be overstressed when it comes to handling communication during crisis. The first instinct is to reassure, and to clarify issues such that further complications are avoided. The communication plan has to be accurate and timely because delaying often gives rise to tensions which in turn aggravate the existing problematic situation. It is advisable to give what information is available as it becomes available, and to clarify as things unfold. Most communities are sensitive to silence, and people tend to feel belittled when kept in the dark at crucial points during the management of a crisis situation.
Managing Recipient Apathy: It is normal for recipients of charity to sometimes develop an apathy towards the situation in which they find themselves. This can be transferred subtly or in some cases, aggressively to the persons or groups whom they perceive as being either instrumental to or representative of their problems. In order to mitigate or prevent this situation, the ground team needs to have established rapport with the community and to consistently work towards trust-building by using their community ambassadors.

Escalation and Delegation of Communication Duties: Since it is generally not possible for the leader of a group or nation to be seen everywhere during the crisis, it is right for delegates and representatives to be sent out to the people so that leadership remains visible. When issues are raised that fall outside the delegate’s or representative’s level of authority or expertise, such matters should be escalated to the next level of leadership and a speedy comeback given to the people. The management of communication in the midst of crises often determines the direction of the constituency in subsequent choice situations. A vote of no confidence is easily passed on a non-visible leader, while one who rises to the occasion is often and easily rewarded with the people’s gratitude and mandate.

Stakeholder Communication Alignment: With every group, there are identifiable stakeholders. It is important that leaders ensure an alignment in the information being circulated to all stakeholders, and in the agreed modes of communication with the wider group. Stakeholder trust must be well-cultivated and mutual in nature so that all aspects of the crisis resolution can be smoothly run.

Logistics, Mobile Money and the Convenience-Banking Platform: Project finance management was a challenge faced by every organization who responded to the need of Haiti in the wake of the earthquake. Due mostly to the simple nature of the financial environment in
Haiti, many low income indigenes did not have bank accounts, and were not familiar with the concept of a cashless economy. The amount of cash involved in the running of a humanitarian project is huge, and funds meant for use in the far away provinces ideally could not be moved physically, especially in a crisis situation like the one in Haiti. The common problems of theft, organized armed robbery and fraud were recurrent and disturbing to both the relief organizations and the security details that were attached to them. The delays that hampered progress due to travel distances also made it more difficult to conduct ground team business without needless interruptions. Supplies were delayed, service delivery was delayed, and payment of staff was delayed. All these affected the subsequent provision of relief to victims beyond the cities and immediate towns.

The Clinton Foundation in conjunction with the Bill and Melissa Gates Foundation co-sponsored an innovation drive encouraging the local telecommunication companies to develop mobile money platforms that would enable relief organizations to move funds into remote locations without endangering the lives of those persons in charge of the money. This high-octave technology drive forced the telecoms giants to apply themselves to a viable solution for the money transfer problem. The innovation drive gave birth to mobile money solutions T-CASH (from Comcel) and TCHO-TCHO (from Digicel) which became the main platforms for money transfer between unbanked individuals and organizations who needed to pay them without moving cash physically.
CHAPTER 4: IMMERSION

The importance of story-telling as a form of social record-keeping amongst Haitians cannot be over-emphasized. The sharing of experiences in the narrative form allows each member of the community to contribute his or her personal journey to the ‘library’ of the community. Yolene Choute, my housekeeper for two years in Pétion-ville, Haiti in a face-to-face interview shares the story of how she found her displaced family after the earthquake through the passing of stories across the community. For many aid workers in Haiti, immersion is quickened by sharing in the body of stories which make the people of the island so unique in their oral culture.

YOLENE: EVERYONE HAS A STORY

I may never have found my mother and ten year old daughter if it had not been for someone who heard a story and told me about it. Both my mother and my daughter Loulou were at the shop on Routes des Freres when the earthquake happened. Maman minds the shop for me because of my regular job in the city where I have to resume at 7am every morning except Sundays. And I usually don’t close until 5pm, although I sometimes get off early. So when I am at work, Maman stayed at the shop, and Loulou always went there from school too. I would meet them there after work and when it was about 9pm, we would all go home.

When the trembling of the earth began, my mother panicked and began shouting for Loulou to come out into the open. They made it out onto the street just in time to see the shop get crushed between the two fallen building on its left and right sides. Maman remembered that she had left everything inside the shop in her haste to get out. The mobile telephone, her purse, Loulou’s bag, all the money from that day’s sales, and any means of identification she may have needed. But she was thankful that she and the child had made their way far enough from the collapsing buildings. Just as she was wondering what to do next and trying to make
some sense of the chaos around her, the earth began to tremble again. She and Loulou were standing in the middle of the road, opposite the supermarket when the trembling started again. Suddenly, the Star Market building, which had withstood the first shaking began to tremble with this one. From nowhere, a big stone tumbled down and debris began to fly in all directions. Maman grabbed Loulou and tucked her under her arm just as a huge stone flew from a pillar and struck her on the head.

I didn’t know what had happened and I had no way of getting in touch with them. In fact, I did not get through the debris and blocked streets until the following day. By that time, the shop area was deserted, and those who had survived the earthquake had been taken to the Red Cross tent beside the General Hospital. I made my way to the General Hospital and got no help. Everyone was running around, no one had even heard the names of my mother or my child, and many critically injured people were being brought in for medical attention. I searched for my mother and Loulou for over a week after the earthquake. I nearly went mad, because I imagined the worst had happened to them, especially when I saw that not one, but two buildings had collapsed on top of my little shop.

Finally, on the following Thursday, I happened to come across a co-worker who told me that there were some people at the foreign Camp, and that they were from different parts of the city. She advised me to check there because she had heard that there was an old woman there who gathered people around to tell stories. I got on the first motorcycle I could grab and rode all the way to military Camp outside the city. When I arrived there, I was not allowed into the camp because I was not injured, and the guards had been instructed to keep all unauthorized visitors away from that part of the camp until further instructions were given. I had nowhere else to go, so I sat across the road from the big gates. There were a few other people there, and we all just waited together. I heard that a fight had broken out amongst the young men of
Cite Soleil a few days before, and that the violence had escalated to the point where the MINUSTAH forces had to step in. The rioters had threatened to burn down the camp and had even thrown petrol bombs at some MINUSTAH vehicles. The gates had been closed shortly afterwards, and only very important people were allowed to go inside.

I was not important to anyone except my aged mother and my little girl. We did not have anyone else. My husband had been killed in a random shooting during the Tontonmakout era, and my father had died when I was only about fifteen. So it was just Maman, Loulou and I. I had gone to school with the missionaries while my father was alive, and I could speak some English. But that was all I had. I knew it was not enough for anything beyond the housekeeping working that I did for expatriates at one the telecoms companies in Petionville. I want more for my Loulou. I want her to be well educated, and to marry a man who is well educated and from a good family. I want her to be able to take good care of her family, and take care of me too when I am old like my mother is now. I was not ready to even think that my family had died in the earthquake. Not that I was more worthy than all those other people who had lost everything, including lives. But I somehow knew that they were alive. They were somewhere, even if I didn’t know exactly where. I don’t know how I knew, but I just knew that I would have known if my mother or my child had died.

So I just sat outside the big gates and waited. Finally, a well-dressed lady came out of the side gate where only people can pass through. As she was walking to her car, I realized that I knew her. She was a friend of my boss’ wife, and she sometimes came to the house at Rue Rigaud where I worked as a day housekeeper. I ran after her, and called out “Madamn! Madamn Yannick!” She turned and recognized me, so she waited by her car as I ran to catch up with her. I told her why I had come, and how I had been sitting down across the road because no one would let me in to check the wounded for my mother and child. Madame Yannick said she
was not sure she could get me inside, she herself was volunteering at the MINUSTAH Medical Centre because her friend had told her they needed more doctors, especially Haitian ones. So she worked some hours there each day, and worked at the General Hospital too. She said she was tired and running late, but if I gave her my mother’s name and description, she would do a quick check for me the following day. I was a little disappointed, but I was thankful.

I had not asked her what time to meet her the next day, so I just came back at the crack of dawn and I waited until almost 2pm when I saw her car drive up to the wall and park. I quickly ran up to her, and thanked her for helping me out. I took out a picture of my little family which we had taken just the Christmas before. Though it seems like ages ago now, with all the tragedy that had befallen our people since then. I told her my mother’s name as I handed her the photograph. Madam Yannick exclaimed as she looked down at the picture. Maman was sitting on the studio chair holding Loulou’s hand in her lap as we stood on either side of her. She was smiling very happily. Maman loves Christmas. She always said God knew why He put the Good Lord’s birthday at the end of the year. She used to say that it was because God wanted us to have more reasons to be thankful for all He had given us.

“That is the granmoun who tells the stories!” Madame Yannick was hurrying towards the gates with the photograph in her hand, and without thinking twice, I simply ran after her. When she got to the gate, she showed the photograph to one of the guards who had a bandaid over his left eyebrow, and she pointed at me. The guards opened the door, and we were inside before I could ask how come. I was soon given a tag, and made to sign my name at the little house to the left of the gate. Then my handbag was taken through a machine that looks inside it without opening the bag. When it came out on the other side, a uniformed lady waved a stick across it two or three times and then set it on a small table by the other door. She asked me to step through a door that had no walls, just a frame. Like a metal frame. The door started
screaming as I walked through it, and I was told to go back and empty my pockets. I took out the 25 Goud coins in my pocket, then I took out the spare keys to the shop and the apartment. I don't know why I still kept the keys, both places had been destroyed by the earthquake, and I had been sleeping in the laundry room of my boss's house since the earthquake happened. I finally walked through the door without walls, and the lady waved the little stick at me from the front and from the back. Then she told me to pick up my handbag and follow Dr. Yannick.

We found my mother sitting up in her hospital bed, with a big bandage around her head. She began crying when she saw me, and soon everyone in the ward had come to meet me, and it seemed like they were all talking at once. I got the story in little bits from different people. My maman had been injured by flying debris which had fallen on her head and her hip. She had lost consciousness, but somehow Loulou had dragged her into the road just as a MINUSTAH truck was passing by. They said my little girl would not move out of the way unless the soldiers helped her grandmother. They said she kept screaming at them “You soldier, good man. Help us!” eventually, out of frustration, an Argentinean sergeant had grabbed the kid and threw her in the cab and they had laid Maman out on the back of it and raced back to camp. It turns out many people had loaded their wounded onto UN vehicles without wondering what would happen. They simply believed that given the circumstances, there was more assurance of help wherever those vehicles were going, than there would be in the streets anytime soon.

I was told that Loulou was very intelligent. That she stated her name as Lorraine Jean-Pierre, and her mother's name as Yolene. But Jean-Pierre is a very common last name in Haiti and Yolene is a very common first name. Maman was out cold for days on end and when she finally came to, she could not understand what had happened, or where she was. They said finally, one day, Loulou had pulled up a chair beside Maman's bed and had offered to tell her a story. My daughter had repeated a story about why the tortoise had a cracked shell on his
back. It was a story that Maman had told me as a child, and one which she had told Loulou many times because Loulou loved to hear it.

Many people in the ward listened with tears in their eyes, because the child’s story was winding and flawed, but she told it with a strong heart, and they admired her. One old man told me that my Loulou was like the Haitian women of before, who were strong and fearless, and brave even in the face of danger. Maman’s mind was reopened by the story, and she began to cry. They say that when Loulou finished, a woman on the other side of the ward began to tell another story, and that was how they passed the time. It soon became a tradition that in the evening, people who could walk, would come to the old woman’s ward and listen to the old Haitian stories. Then someone told a story of how a stranger had helped him into a MINUSTAH truck, and saved his life. Gradually, people began to tell about where they came from, and what had happened to them on January 12th. Everyone was kind to the other, and everyone promised to help find the other’s family members when they were strong enough to leave the camp. And that was how someone got to hear about an old woman with a little girl who were in the foreign military camp.

When people speak bad of the foreign corps, I understand that there are many stories in life, and that some people have received pain, so they are maybe justified in what they think. But me, I cannot say bad things about these people. God sent those soldiers to pass Route Freres at that time. They could have refused to help, but they did not do that. They helped my mother and my child. They took them to a place of safety, gave them food, and care, and medicine. And they saved the life of those who are dearest to me, and I can never forget that. Me, I have a story that ended well, and I pray for those people whose stories did not end well. It is the way life is, you know.
Story-Telling as a Key Immersion-Communication Tool in Crisis Communities

"...it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place or that person."

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. TED Talks, Oxford England.

The power of a well told story lies in its ability to connect the audience with the situational message, using the storyteller as a conduit. When addressing a community, the storyteller aims to become almost invisible while the message becomes tangible to the hearers. Stories are told to establish truth and possibility, to show or arouse empathy, and to elicit hope and goodwill. Just as a community’s repertoire of stories define its social and moral fiber, so an organization’s story also communicates its objectives, values and long-term intentions to the host community. Beyond the fact that stories are easy to understand, interpret and apply to everyday life, they also form a bridge across different cultures by showing a familiar path to the collective destination of the people and the organizations that have come to live amongst them. In the case of Haiti, having a history of strong folklore meant that indigenes were more receptive to story-type communication platforms. They were also better able to pass on information when a story is associated with the key message.

The SPICE reference ‘Immersion’ involves familiarity with the stories of the host community and allows the ground team to make cross-cultural links with these stories. These will help to explain key concepts and ideas in ways the population can better understand and relate to.
Personal and communal stories are a major part of on-going cultural immersion. There is a fundamental driving force behind storytelling, which almost compels the listener to anticipate a resolution or an end, and often to predict the conclusion ahead of the storyteller. It is a challenge and an invitation to explore the frontiers of possibility and fantasy, to partake in the creation of new storylines, if possible, and to share these new stories as continuations of the earlier ones. From the beginning of time, stories have been used by mankind to impart wisdom, teach morals, encourage positive behavior and denounce wrongful deeds and bad behavior. The same can be said of the process of organizational storytelling today, where the recounted incidents are retold to commend company heroes, and to denounce organizational villains. Stories are especially sensitive to cultural nuances because they are in themselves repositories of the wealth of the people who constitute the community. They are records of the valor, the bravery, the sacrifice, and the brilliance of the community, and are passed on as communal heirlooms to be transferred to new members and used as a basis for teaching them the ideals of the community.

Common Superstitions, Old Wives’ Tales: Every society has its own peculiar collection of superstitions and Old Wives’ Tales. From the crossing of one’s path by a black cat, to the
dropping of coins into a fountain, cultural codes have been passed from one generation to
another and whether or not science and modern living has dispelled the power of these beliefs
is a matter for another forum, and for a different discussion. History has, however, shown that
despite the knowledge of perfectly plausible explanations for certain superstitions, people
often hold on to them out of sheer loyalty, and as a conscious preservation of the old ways.
The same can be said of the Haitian population, especially in the interior provinces where
traditional beliefs are still held in much higher esteem than modern explanations. In relating
with the people of these communities, the project team must be aware of the superstitions
common to the area, and of the consequences attached to them. In many cases, a stranger
will be forgiven for ignorance of certain things, yet the same stranger will be heavily penalized
for disregarding others, depending on the severity of the perceived offense.

The peculiar history of the nation of Haiti gives the people a special combination of cultural
content from the African, to the American Indian, from the Spanish to the French and the
North American. All these come together in a huge melting pot that makes it difficult for a
newcomer to differentiate one aspect from the other, and to relate with the whole that is the
sum of all these different parts. Surviving tribes of native Indians in the mountainous areas of
Hinche for example, still maintain most of their prehistoric beliefs and live in communities not
very unlike those in which their ancestors lived. The newcomer to such communities must
respect the uniqueness of these people, appreciate the beauty of their culture and learn how
best to relate with them in achieving the goals of each project. One respondent, a ground
team photographer who grew up in the city of Port-au-Prince, tells the story of a group of five
Habitat for Humanity members who happened upon a native Indian settlement in the hills
north of Mirebalais. After speaking with the male elders of the clan who came forward, they
distributed medicines and gave the chief a cellular phone which they showed his eldest son
how to operate. Before leaving, they asked permission to take some photographs of the settlement, and provisional permission was giving to the photographer. He was, however, told not to take any pictures of a particularly beautiful young maiden who had happened to pass through the place of meeting just as they were rounding up. The photographer was told in Kreyol that she was a special one, and not to be copied in a camera. He did not find that explanation to be sufficiently satisfactory, and a fit of self-gratification ‘stole a shot’ of the said girl as she stood by a hut. When the team had taken their leave and where on the way back to Hinche, the photographer scrolled through his digital camera to peruse the pictures he had taken during the visit. The picture of the special girl was strangely taken. He could clearly see her form and the surrounding environment, but where her face should have been, was a flash of blurred light as though he had been staring at the sun. It is uncertain whether or not it was a mere coincidence that no image of the maiden was recorded, but he remains convinced that he had taken a perfect shot, and something just was not right about the whole episode.

It is right to deduce that having been raised amongst Haitians himself, the photographer ought to have been sufficiently conscious of the superstitions of the people of the area, and should have respected the boundaries set by the elders of the clan. In many situations, entire projects have been jeopardized by such disregard for communal superstitions.

**The African Griot and Culture of Folk Custody:** The African influence in Haiti’s folklore is easily traced to the slavery days, and the cultural import that such transplants occasioned. The African tortoise tales are also told in Haitian folklore, as are the ancestral allusions to a pantheon of gods or ‘Iwa’, a host of ancestral spirits, and countless tales about the relationship of these beings with the humans who live on the land today. The traditional system of gathering around a storyteller at the end of a long day, and hearing the funny, yet serious lessons of life imparted through stories, is still upheld in parts of Haiti today. The African griot
was the embodiment of knowledge of the legacy and heritage of a people from one generation to another, and he in turn handed that knowledge over to a younger griot who would continue to tell the old stories to the next generation. This system is still very much alive in Haiti and has been a major reason why the old African folk tales have survived into the twenty-first century. One of the most popular folktale series known to Haitians is the Bouki and TiMalice set of stories, where Bouki, a simple, naïve man is always outsmarted by TiMalice, his cunning friend. This duo have been icons of Haitian culture from slavery days, and several themes have been woven around the two characters and told as wisdom imparting stories to the young children of Haiti.

In today's Haiti, the Bouki and TiMalice story has been variously used in marketing campaigns, awareness drives and infotainment projects. The stories range from the probable to the incredible, and are attributed to some brand, project or company. Most Haitians remember these brand-associations because the stories are based on a platform that is prehistorically familiar to them, and which is easy to simply add to the already long list of Bouki and TiMalice adventures known to the average Haitian from childhood. Stories like these are essential tools for leveraging oral culture in Third World Communities, and for ensuring that the key message of the project or campaign is absorbed and understood by the host community. By walking the ancient paths of the Haitian, and by learning the cultural relevance of the people's values, beliefs and superstitions, an organization is better able to relate to and communicate with the community.

Below: The integrators and interpreters are key stakeholders in the process of communicating effectively by translating ideas and concepts from the ground team's home culture to the culture of the host community.
A classic example can be found in the use of Bouki and TiMalice to communicate disease prevention during the anti-cholera drive that followed the explosion of camp populations after the earthquake. Used on television, radio, billboards and posters the campaign showed Ti Malice secretly watching for Bouki to emerge from using the restroom. He sneers to himself, remarking that Bouki is a simpleton who never washes his hands after a visit to the restroom, and who will catch a fatal bout of cholera soon enough. Once Bouki gets cholera, TiMalice intends to take over all his property. The TV campaign shows Bouki come out and make an elaborate show of washing his hands with soap and water, after which he takes a ‘secret stash’ of hand-sanitizer and thoroughly rubs his hands, wrists, arms and elbows too. He keeps muttering to himself that his wife and children need him, his farm needs harvesting, and the sun must rise upon a healthy Bouki tomorrow. The popularity of that campaign was greatly instrumental to the arrest of cholera within the camps. Hand sanitizing became a near-obsession with the Haitian public, friends and neighbors could be heard exchanging good-natured jokes about each other’s tents or chairs or other property which could be taken over.

Although based on humor, the story sent a very serious message of self-preservation, and showed how best to prevent the spread of the deadly disease that had claimed hundreds of lives in camps across the country. The message of culture-influencing communication
materials needs to be put across in a way that strikes a balance between the home culture from which the message originates, and the host culture into which the message is going. In order to achieve high acceptance and easy recall, the message needs to have a cultural fit with the audience for which it is intended. Most organizations make the mistake of attempting to communicate with host communities in the same way that they would communicate with their own communities back home. In most crisis areas, conventional message platforms are weak at the best, and non-existence in the worse cases. It therefore becomes imperative that an integration system be used in developing messages to the host community. The organization needs to engage members of the host community as social ambassadors to help review the cultural fit of any outgoing message, and empower ground team members to serve as interpreters between the host community’s needs and the parent company’s provisions for communications.

**Communicating Health and Personal Hygiene:** Five basic Cholera Prevention Messages were circulated by the Haitian Ministry of Public Health and Population in collaboration with UNICEF, UN, Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and other organizations:

1) Drink and use safe water.*
2) Wash your hands often with soap and safe water.*
3) Use latrines or bury your feces (poop); do not defecate in any body of water.
4) Cook food well, keep it covered, eat it hot, and peel fruits and vegetables.*
5) Clean up safely—in the kitchen and in places where the family bathes and washes clothes.

The organizations mounted a concerted effort to tackle the Haitian cholera epidemic which has been described as the worst in recent times. To the parent organizations, five key messages were simple enough for people to follow; however, ground teams interpreted the messages in creative ways to ensure that the messages were not lost on the populace. The
campaign addressing the use of restrooms, and attention to personal hygiene made the most impact on the population because it was humorous and made it easier to recall the other key messages with regards to personal care with regards to hands, and the use of safe water and soap in washing hands, utensils, and food-contact surfaces.

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURAL PARADIGM

The audience is the most important part of any form of communication or messaging. The communicator needs a good knowledge of who is listening, and how they will perceive, receive, interpret and react to the message. Cultural Context is at the core of all communication, and it takes into account both the conscious and subconscious nuances of cultural behavior. It is therefore pertinent that each outgoing message-process should be managed and monitored in the cultural context of the audience, and within the applicable cultural paradigm.

Fig 9.0 Communicating in Cultural Context
Referring directly to culture within an organization, the Sergay Group of consultants expounds on how culture affects the workplace. This explanation is equally applicable to situations where the workplace overlaps with the living area or home environment of the host community.

"[Culture] is the collective way we do things ... It involves a learned set of behaviors that is common knowledge to all the participants. These behaviors are based on a shared system of meanings which guide our perceptions, understanding of events, and what we pay attention to... Culture is about individuals in a group sharing patterns of behavior. There is no cultural absolute...

"Culture plays out in a variety of ways. We can identify the specifics of it from how information is communicated, feedback is given, performance is managed, and projects are co-coordinated ... Culture is often defined by the systems that are used, the processes that are followed, and the rituals, symbols, and stories that abound ... It is even reflected in how meetings are held.”


In situations like the one in post-Earthquake Haiti, the successful relay of messages between persons or groups of different cultural origins made the difference between failed projects and successful partnerships. Notably, Sergay Group differs from the traditional approach by placing ‘Stories’ and ‘Symbols’ under one category, while giving recognition to ‘Processes’ as a separate subset in the study of culture. The subset formed by Stories and Myths now includes symbols which are associated with, and often originated from these stories and myths. An example is the symbol of the arrow of Cupid in representing the concept of love. This in itself came from Greek mythology and from passed down stories about the Ancient Greek pantheon.
and the roles of immortals in the lives of the mortals who inhabit the earth. Such stories, myths and symbols abound in human society and become a major part of the society’s cultural references.

A thorough immersion into the culture of the host community allows the ground team to find common grounds where their different cultures meet, and where mutual understanding and
audience trust can be established. An understanding of the message relay processes of the community is also key to establishing credibility within that society. Whereas it may not be possible (or plausible) for all aid organizations to undertake a full study of the host community's culture before entry into that community, it is always helpful to have the answers to some basic questions about the world view of that community, and to establish some fundamental pillars of cultural information upon which further interaction can be built.

According the Edgar E. Schein, in Organizational Dynamics: Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture. (1983) a cultural paradigm forms some basic assumptions which allow the newcomer to identify important cues that point to the values and beliefs of the community.

"2. The Nature of Reality and Truth. Here are the linguistic and behavioral rules that define what is real and what is not. What is a "fact", how truth is ultimately to be determined, and whether truth is "revealed" or "discovered"; basic concepts of time as linear or cyclical, monochromic or polychromic; basic concepts such as space [being] limited or infinite and property as communal or individual; and so forth.

### Haiti: Reality and Truth Paradigm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The linguistic and behavioral rules</th>
<th>Established, validated and reviewed by the community. By agreement, rather than by research. Simple linguistic structure, unambiguous and uncomplicated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is real and what is not</td>
<td>As seen, hear or felt. Reality is passed on with little or no question. A trust-based informal information system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a &quot;fact&quot;</td>
<td>Something that is known, seen or heard by a trusted person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How truth is ultimately to be determined</td>
<td>By observation and by consensus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether truth is &quot;revealed&quot; or &quot;discovered&quot;</td>
<td>Often revealed rather than discovered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. The Nature of Human Relationships. What is considered the “right” way for people to relate to each other, to distribute power and love? Is life co-operative or competitive; individualistic, group collaborative, or communal; based on traditional lineal authority, law, or charisma; or what?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>time as linear or cyclical, monochronic or polychronic</th>
<th>Time is cyclical (seasonal) like ‘dawn to dusk’ rather than ‘5am till 6pm’. The concept of time is very polychromic, this is not uncommon within the region.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>space [being] limited or infinite</td>
<td>Space is infinite and divinely given, therefore to be used for good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>property as communal or individual</td>
<td>Property is considered communal in that what one has, one shares with one’s community. However, responsibility is individual even within the communal setting. A man is expected build his own house before marriage, and to feed and cater for his wife and children. As a gesture of unity, he may also contribute to the welfare of other families, and assist with the building of new homes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“5. The Nature of Human Relationships. What is considered the “right” way for people to relate to each other, to distribute power and love? Is life co-operative or competitive; individualistic, group collaborative, or communal; based on traditional lineal authority, law, or charisma; or what?”
consensus. Charisma is very important in persuasion and audience conversion. However, traditional (family) alliances and affiliations count towards audience trust, credibility and acceptance.
CHAPTER 5: COMMUNICATION

The average Haitian adult had gone through many regimes, different governments, several upheavals and had faced many dangers before the earthquake of January 2010. To these resilient people, living meant taking whatever came along in their stride. Yet the events of that fateful day took more from them than any despotic government could have. Pierre’s interview was conducted in his new studio in Port-au-Prince and took the best part of an entire afternoon to record. Poignant and ruminative, it shows the pain of a man who lost more during the earthquake than could ever be accounted for. As a member of the media himself, he recounts the yawning emptiness that followed the disaster, and the inability of the wounded to send information and requests for help across to the rescue teams. The wait for rescue cost many lives and the lack of clear communication between rescuers, medical teams and the wounded added to the suffering of the victims.

PIERRE-RICHARD: WAITING FOR THE UNKNOWN

I was on the evening shift that day. I wasn’t due at the studio until about 7pm, so I decided to spend some more time with my wife. She had been sick so often in the last eight months that whenever she had a clear week, I often reduced my work hours to get the extra time with her. We didn’t live here though. We had a little two-storey house in Bordeau. It used to be my Uncle Richard’s house, and he gave it to me before Stephanie and I got married in 1996. It was just off the road, in a small corner that overlooked the valley on that little road that cuts through the hills to the airport area.

I had just recorded a new jingle for Digicel, and I wanted her to listen to it before I sent it to the client. She used to do that for me all the time, and she was often brutal with her comments, too. But that was normal to me. Stephanie was the strong, tough one in our marriage. She always took the harder decisions, but in the end, it would always feel like it was
my idea from the beginning. I don’t know how she did it. She was just a good woman like that. So I played the tracks to her from the CD player beside our living room sofa. She listened to them twice, then she told me to consider taking out the last line from the male voice-over. She said it somehow didn’t sound like something a Haitian man would say. "Moun Ayisyen pa pale konsa, cheri." She shook her head as she said it slowly—Haitians don’t talk like that. And when I thought about it, she was right on the money. That last line sounded too American. It sounded too foreign. Too blan. I kissed her and asked if she would come work for me at the little studio. It wasn’t in this building then. It was just a little hole-in-the-wall suite that I had started about a year before that day. So we just called it Ti-Studio, and that was what it was. A little studio that did little jobs. I remember how Stephanie had laughed when I played that line again. I was always asking her to come work for me. It was my humorous way of telling her how much her input meant to me, and how great the value was that she brought to the business with her wisdom and unusual insight. Stephanie was so smart, and so humble about it. Except when she was teasing me. That evening she just stuck her tongue out at me and laughed "Ou paka peye’m, Richard." She bragged that I couldn’t afford her. And I laughed back and told her that it was true, I couldn’t! I needed her at home, getting better, feeling stronger, and someday not too far away si bondye vle (if the Good Lord wills) safely having and quietly nursing our child.

I was about to go make us both some coffee when I felt the whole house jump up and move from side to side as if we were in a basket, and someone had given the basket a huge shake. The kitchen area immediately tore away from the rest of the outer wall, and I could suddenly see the valley through the open gap. I screamed and reached for Stephanie just as the ground began to shake again. Before we could do anything, the ceiling came crashing down and the entire bottom of the house just collapsed under the living room.
Stephanie had flung herself from her chair and flew in my direction. She landed on my chest just as we felt the ground part way beneath us, and we fell through the gash together, hanging half upside-down between the floors. My right leg was almost completely gone from the thigh. The flesh was white and I could see the other half of it hanging limply on the other side of the torn concrete slab. I could not feel any pain at the first point, although I saw the blood slowly drip into the grey dust that now surrounded us. Stephanie still lay on top of me, her head on my chest with her face turned slightly sideways. She coughed, and I felt a thick warm liquid seep through the light cotton of my pajama shirt. It was blood.

I began to cry. I am a man; do not think that I was weak. But you see, Stephanie was my world. Even today, she still is. We had met in Jacmel during the carnival in 1989, and although we were both only teenagers, I fell madly in love with her. Her father had been forced to leave Haiti during the hard dictatorship years, and I didn’t see her for a long time. But when she completed her college degree in Boston, she had come right back to Port-au-Prince and had moved in with me. Her mother had been so mad at her then; it had been a big issue between our families. You see, I didn’t have anything in those days. I lived in a shared room with my cousin Jean in Delmas 32. My parents were old and things were tough, but we had a good name and the people respected our family. We were a good, well-respected Haitian family, although my Uncle Richard had been exiled for speaking against the incumbent administration at the time, and he had to flee from Petionville, through Jimaani and Duverge on the border into Barahona in the Dominican Republic. He was hidden on a friend’s boat and taken along the coast of the Caribbean sea all the way to Santo Domingo where he finally boarded a flight out. When it was clear that no one wanted to get directly involved in helping him leave Haiti, I had volunteered to drive him across the border to the point at Barahona where the boat was waiting for him.
At the checkpoints, he told the tired-looking police men that we were going to inspect some farmlands for a government agriculture project in Santo Domingo, and that he didn’t like to fly when he could drive and admire God’s beautiful earth and the majestic mountains of his fatherland. They didn’t really believe him, but he was a nice, funny man and he carried little envelopes with Haitian gourds, and American dollars which he handed out frequently, depending on the rank of his interrogator and the number of juniors behind him. We also carried cartons of Babancourt Rum in the backseat, and some foreign biscuits. Gifts were much appreciated, because even these policemen were needy. They didn’t really care what quarrels the educated gran-moun (big people) had with the government. As long as we had papers saying the same thing we were saying with our mouths, they let us by without any trouble.

When we reached Barahona, Uncle Richard took me to the house of his friend Don Luis, who was also his lawyer. We stayed the night there and early the next morning, Uncle Richard signed his house in Bordeau and the land in Kenscoff to me. He also gave me a bank cheque of $25,000 in American money, and he told me to stop being a bum and go marry that brave, beautiful girl. That’s how I got a chance to really start life. Stephanie insisted that I had to go to college. She hounded me through the TOEFL and GMAT exams, and when I got accepted to UF, she followed me to Florida where I studied Graphic Arts and Media for three years. Then we came home and I got a job at the following February.

We found a place close to Rue Rigaud in Petionville and paid for a small 3-room office suite where we started putting the studio together. Stephanie managed everything from décor to accounting, from marketing to hiring and everything else in between. The earliest clients came as a result of her constant door-knocking, and gradually people in the corporate sector began to see my work and realize that I was good at what I did. I got an ad deal from PubliGestion
and when that ad went on national television, I became a popular name. Plus, I was still on radio four days a week, because Stephanie insisted that it was good PR for my personal brand and for the little studio too. So I didn’t quit. That’s how I made it big, Funke. My wife made me.

But then the earthquake happened, and I watched her eyes slowly go far away as I wept and screamed for help in the name of God. I could hear neighbors screaming from all around us, and I wondered if they could hear me too. The gash was big enough to suspend us through its open end, but the ceiling had also fallen onto us, and it was Stephanie who had taken the weight of that slab of concrete. A piece of metal rod had pierced through her hip to the side of my half-thigh and neither one of us could move. We just lay there, hoping someone would come, praying someone would find us before the unthinkable happened.

I kept talking to Steph. She said she felt like sleeping, that she was so tired. She told me to stop being a baby with my crying. That she was okay. She said she was happy that we were both safe, and that our life was a good life and we were blessed by the good Lord. She said she had got what many women pray for, and that if this life was ending, and if there was a second life like our people always said there was, then she would find me and be my girl again. I told her to stop talking nonsense, that somebody would find us soon. I felt blood flowing from somewhere near her leg and I knew that we wouldn’t be having this baby to hold and raise. But I didn’t care much about that because I trusted God to give us other ones. I just wanted my wife to be safe. I wanted Stephanie to be okay. I needed help to come quickly. I felt my severed leg throb like something beyond human description, but I didn’t worry about that much. It was just a leg. All I wanted was for Stephanie to be helped. I kept telling her not to worry, that they would find us soon. In that way, I was telling myself not to worry, not to panic. I was helping myself to be strong, to be a man. When I didn’t hear her speak for a while, I called her name and asked if she was sleeping. She sounded so weak, but I could hear the
smile in her voice as she said to me in English “Thank God your chest is so broad, Ricky. This is the most comfortable position to be.” After that, she didn’t say anything else. I don’t know how long we were there for. I noticed as the sun began to set, and the shaking still continued in smaller bits. Once in a while, when I could find some strength, I would scream again, just so people around could know that we were there. Although I kept my arms around her, I could feel Stephanie’s temperature dropping as the hours passed. I did not know if help would ever come. I did not know if it would come in time. I did not know where it would come from, I did not know if anyone out there was aware of our whereabouts. I didn’t even know if the earthquake had affected other neighborhoods and other towns. I prayed that someone at the radio station would notice my absence, and send help. I prayed that medics would come and somehow revive my wife, and make the cold go away. I prayed that someone, anyone, would come looking for us. I prayed and waited. Then I don’t remember anything else.

I woke up at the Red Cross tent in Saint Pierre’s square. They had cut off the hanging part of my right leg, and they had put me in bandages. I tried to ask about my wife, but the women didn’t speak any English or French, or Kreyol, and my Spanish was very limited despite the time I had spent in Florida. They simply put me to sleep again and again. I think they did it because I wouldn’t shut up. Nothing much happened for a long time. Except that many of my wardmates died. I was there for days and days, I think. Eventually, someone came and asked me my name. I never heard anything about what was happening on the outside. I didn’t know what was happening to the world outside the Red Cross tent. I didn’t know where my Stephanie was, or what state she was in. I didn’t know where my parents were, and if they knew what had happened to us. I didn’t know anything, and no one was telling me anything. I knew only that the whole of Haiti was in pain, and that no one knew how to cure it. We all just waited. We waited and we prayed.
RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION DURING CRISIS

When disaster struck Haiti in the afternoon of January 12, 2010, there was no first voice to rally the people and reassure them of coming help, rescue and relief. This is not necessarily a failing on the part of one group or the other (despite countless accounts of people blaming the Haitian government of the day) but more a justifiable oversight given the suddenness and severity of the situation. The earthquake had hit the country in non-selective parts, with damage on a massive scale which rendered the conventional information channels inadequate or downright useless.

Below: Communication as the most important part of crisis management constitutes the fourth element in the SPICE theory. It is the progress-defining step before actual execution.

![Diagram of SPICE theory]

The leadership of the country itself had to contend with the damage of its buildings, the death of leaders, administrative and legislative staff, the destruction of many media houses with infrastructure rendered useless, and the complete disruption of normal communication channels. The damage to telecommunications equipment crippled the nation’s largest carrier Digicel, and forced Haitians in the Diaspora to call their relatives on the second largest network, Voila. The volume of calls from within the country and from outside the country in itself jammed the network and made it near impossible to reach anyone. The loop reinforced
itself in an endless line of fear-stricken callers unable to connect with their loved and thus unable to ascertain the situation on ground in Haiti.

There was a need for innovative solutions to the problem. Twitter messages did much to create a global awareness of the disaster but was not an appropriately reliable source of information about the exact situation on ground in Haiti. Pandemonium had broken out with the huge numbers of wounded and dead victims continuing to climb at unbelievable rates, and with different sources given differing (and often conflicting) data about the crisis. There was more external communication from Haiti (or some people in Haiti) to the world, than internal communication from the leadership of Haiti to the people who were caught in the eye of the disaster and needed direct, personal and relational messages from trusted Haitian sources.

Below: The Relational Influence Conduit illustrates the pipeline from establishing commonalities to earning a position of influence with the host community.

Figure 1.3 RELATIONAL INFLUENCE CONDUIT (Crisis Situations)

In crisis situations, authority is often belied by relational influence, and shifts into a secondary position behind more sentimental perceptions of commonality. The host community looks to
persons who are considered ‘one of them’ and who have the same or similar goals, values and norms; speak the same language, either as natives or as foreign speakers, and who have demonstrated an understanding of the social dynamics of the community. The closer in race, nationality and provincial origin a spokesperson is, the more likely it is that he/she will be listened, believed and accepted. The accepted spokesperson is therefore vested with the authority to speak to the community and to act as an information conduit between the host community and the organization, government or corporation that he/she represents. The validity of such authority is often backed by technical expertise (or by proximity to persons who possess such technical expertise), and in more administrative cases, by the mandate of the people having been given earlier – either to the speaker, or to one by whom the speaker has been appointed.

Authority may also be accorded for reasons of age or cultural relevance. In many cultures, elders are considered to be repositories of knowledge, experience and situational wisdom. They are therefore given first voice in most crisis situations, and by extension are allowed to appoint spokespersons for the community. Cultural relevance arises in certain places where a person’s position or occupation makes the community naturally invest authority in them. Priests, Imams, teachers, doctors and witch doctors have been known to receive unanimous votes of confidence from the community, and thus often act as spokespersons for or to the community. These are the types of people whom the ground team must identify early upon arrival in any location, and who must be related with and convinced of the merits of the project in hand. They are natural ambassadors whose word is believed by the community often with little or no resistance. Communication in itself is both an art, and a science. It requires a good understanding of the audience and its frames of reference, but also requires technical expertise to convey the correct message, in the proper way and elicit the desired
response. In situations where tensions are high, and discomfort is commonplace, it is best to take an honest approach to communication, and to share as much information as is needed to reassure the population. A problem-solving attitude is mandatory as this shows the audience that not only are efforts being made to resolve the issues on ground, but that the person speaking to them is an integral part of the effort and is contributory to the eventual solution.

In certain cultures, it is expected that the bearer of sad news must be stoic, firm and resolute so that his authority is carried through unquestionably. It is perhaps for this reason that many leaders do not come out to address their constituents in the middle of their grief or at times when they are emotionally vulnerable. The need to present a strong focused front is thus counteracted by the need to show empathy and to be seen as sharing in the pain of the people. An ideal spokesperson is able to carry through both extremes and find a comfortable, acceptable balance. The ability to constantly and consistently demonstrate this balance is what the host community sees and judges as trustworthiness. When a group or organization through its spokesperson is perceived as trustworthy and as being on the same side as the community, then such a group is given open access to the thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears of the community. This open access is what we refer to as Relational Influence.

Relational influence naturally qualifies the group or organization to function as part of the community and to influence actions and reactions to any situations that may arise in relation to the project. Relational influence extends beyond the operational project work and reaches into the personal and individual lives of people in the community, encouraging them to put their trust in the organization or group and to have confidence in the positive outcome of that decision. Humanitarian organizations in troubled communities must strive to achieve relational influence, and thereby to institute communal trust and mutual respect as a foundation for an enduring relationship.
COUNTER-COMMUNICATION

This respondent (whom we shall call Christopher) requested anonymity, and the names have been changed for that reason. The interview was given over a meal at Thomassin, Haiti and basically points at the difference in the management of expatriates versus the handling of local staff during the earthquake. Most corporations operating in Haiti have big insurance investments on their expatriate staff and go to great lengths to ensure that these VIPs are well-protected. In contrast to the general chaos of the period immediately following the quake, the rescue process and evacuation plans for these non-native workers were more detailed and were carried out with utmost diligence by the security teams of those corporations. Since the location of each expatriate was known to the security teams, it was easier to reach and rescue expatriates. Christopher cites the fact that they were not permitted to remain in the country and give assistance to the public as a mistake on the part of the company.

CHRISTOPHER: MISSION IS POSSIBLE

My team and I had been consulting for the telco on its CSR platform in Haiti from 2008. None of us were strangers to the island, having worked with the organization in various capacities before initiating this new project to build schools for the interior province communities. Two of us had arrived from Washington DC that morning, and had been in different meetings with stakeholders during the earlier part of the day. We were slated to have dinner with the Executive Director of the Foundation, who would be meeting us at Villa Kreyol where we were staying. Our team lead thought it would be better if we each took some time to handle some administrative errands before we had that meeting over dinner. So we parted to our separate rooms and agreed to reconvene at the poolside by 7pm.

Although I had been travelling now for over 18 hours, the jetlag had not fully set in yet. I had done a dizzying trip covering Seattle, Boston, Fort Lauderdale, Washington and Port-au-Prince
in a space of two days. I had not begun to really feel the fatigue, so I was going to milk it to the last and retire early. I would not be going to the Latin Quarter with the rest of my crew.

Although it was Tuesday, there was always some entertaining place to be on any evening in Port-au-Prince. The island has that kind of charm. My team had a particular bias for the family that owned Quartier-Latin, and we nearly always went there for the food and wine, or for the dancing and the crowd, which was made up of mostly expatriates and aid workers from different countries of the world.

Well, that evening I took a quick shower so I would remain alert. I got dressed and sat the desk in my room to finish my financial reporting for the team, and send some important emails before I had to go have dinner. I was at that desk when the earthquake began. The pandemonium was instant. The moment people felt the earth move, they panicked. It was a natural reaction for any human being. We expect the earth beneath our feet to not move. So when it does, it makes us afraid, naturally.

It took a brief moment for the magnitude of the matter to sink in. I tried to get on the internet to see what was going on, and what the world was saying about it. I couldn’t get a connection on my phone as I trotted out to the lobby of Villa Creole. For some reason, I was not in frenzy yet. I could see people running all around me, but then I remembered that I had read somewhere that more damage was done when people panicked, than when they were rational. So I returned to my room and got my phone, my passport and my toilet bag. I don’t know why I had to have my toilet bag at that point, but I went and got it. As I stepped out of the room, I realized it was happening again. This time, I think I must have panicked a little at that point because it occurred to me that this was not a California-quake. I had experienced those as a child living in Los Angeles. I began to look out for members of my team and to look for the management of the lodge. I tried to reach the lobby again, but saw that the corridor
connecting the rooms with the lobby had completely collapsed. I saw real pandemonium break out as people on one side of the collapsed section tried to call out to people on the side of it. I looked for a sturdy doorway or pillar to stand under, but there was no point trying to do that, because no one else was trying to be rational. People were simply trying to get out of there as fast as possible.

I tried to call my team mates but could not get through. Then I tried calling the security detail that had brought us from the office in Petion-ville to the hotel earlier that evening. He was one of the expatriate guards and spoke passable English. When I heard his phone ring at the other end, a strange relief washed over me. He picked it up at the second ring, and I could hear the shouting and screaming at his end of the line. I shouted over the noise at my end and tried to tell him who I was. He screamed back that I should stay where I was, put my boots on and keep them on my feet, find a pillar to stand under and wait for the security detail to arrive. He said they knew where each of us were, and they would come and get us as soon as possible. He told me to keep my line open and to ensure that I had battery power. He said they were in touch with other members of my team and that the security department was aware of the destruction at Villa Creole. He asked me to stay calm, and assured me that they would get us out in the shortest possible time. And he sounded like he knew what he was doing. I believed him.

I stayed out there in the open yard for about three hours. Around 8pm that night, we heard the lobby wall fall completely into the other side as the rescue from Voila had arrived and were carefully collapsing it to reach those of us on the opposite side of the destruction. The people on my side rushed forward and were warned to stay well away from the wall in case another portion of it collapsed. It took about a half hour, but we could see the progress being made, and it made us feel more secure. Help had arrived and we would be taken to a safer
place. We did not know what was really going on outside those walls, but we could hear cries of agony and wails of people in the streets. I did not speak Kreyol, but I understood the language of panic and pain, and fear. Eventually, the Voila security team could pass through the opening in the wall. Three of them came through and assessed the situation on our side of the building, then they helped women and children across the collapsed lobby first, followed by elderly people, and finally the rest of us were handed through one after the other. True to his words, the Security Attaché was there in person, and he smiled as he saw me emerge from the debris. He escorted me to a Land Rover and put me in the backseat on the passenger side. He told me I would be taken to the rallying point, and that his boss would be in charge over there. I asked about the rest of my delegation, and he told me that almost everyone had been retrieved, and that the others would meet us at the rallying point.

I think it was easier for me to deal with the situation once I knew that someone was coming to get us. It didn’t make the situation less grave, and it didn’t take away my fear of the unknown, but it gave me some kind of comfort just to know that I was being looked for. That I would be found and rescued was the best part of the psychological process for me. Even after we were evacuated and put on a plane to Miami, I felt that perhaps the first step should not have been to leave the island. We could have done more good if we had stayed because we had some knowledge of the terrain and could have been of value to the larger population. But I believe it was a corporate decision to evacuate all expatriates. The insurance cost implications were enormous, and as much as possible, the company had a primary responsibility to get us to safety as quickly as possible. I did return two weeks later, but that is another story altogether.
COMMUNICATING SAFETY AND SECURITY

In any crisis situation, it is natural for people to feel fear, uncertainty and often outright panic. The presence of persons of authority does not always alleviate the panic that comes with threats to life and safety, especially in situations where nature has gone awry. In man-made crisis situations, the presence of law enforcement and community leadership counts towards restoring the feelings of confidence in the eventual resolution of the problem. However, in natural disaster situations, the presence of law enforcement and leadership takes a backseat in the face of uncontrollable, unpredictable destruction which gave no reasons or prior notice. When situations like these arise, the place of humanitarian aid workers is with the social ambassadors and thought leaders of the community. It is imperative that relief teams be seen to be working with the community and for the benefit of the community.

It is commonplace that most relief organizations mobilize teams to the disaster location only after the disaster has already happened. The time lapse between the actual occurrence and the arrival of ground teams is the most critical period in disaster management. The leadership of the population or community needs to be clear in communicating the situation, and in stating how the problems are being addressed systematically. It also helps that leadership be visible in more frequent interactions with the people as this gives confidence to those who are waiting for institutional assistance to arrive. Immediately following the earthquake in Haiti, people expected to hear from the government of the day. They expected to hear that the government was still in place; that efforts were being made to reach those people who were caught in destroyed buildings; that help would arrive from the international community; that the government was making provisions for the care of the people, especially those who had lost their loved ones, their means of livelihoods, or their homes. The pandemonium that broke
out in certain locations happened mostly as a result of widespread panic stemming from uncertainty.

**Organized Security and the need for panic-control:** It is impossible to adequately predict and prepare for natural disasters like earthquakes. It is right to have processes in place for crisis management in locations that are disaster prone. The study of and expertise in crisis management, relief co-ordination and disaster effect mapping should be encouraged among the populace of such nations as Haiti and Dominican Republic which are known to be sitting in easy-trigger points on the globe.

**Dealing with Violence, Vandalism, Social Upheavals and Incidental Crime:** The management of the earthquake situation was greatly compounded by the unfortunate fact that Haiti did not have an army, and was operating a police force which in itself needed quick rehabilitation. The violence that was kicked off in high-density areas was escalated because of the low law enforcement presence. The UN troops were as much in the fray of the disaster as other members of the Haitian community, and had suffered great loses to lives and equipment as well. The effect of panic mixed with chaos results in mass destruction, vandalism and violence against vulnerable members of the society.

**Evacuation Plans and the “inclusive care” policy:** For most multinationals operating in Haiti, the situation was hard to get under control, and the first reaction of company leadership was to evacuate as many of their people as possible. Many Haitian respondents made comments about the evacuation of expatriates; whereas the Haitian colleagues were left to largely fend for themselves. The contractual burden of guaranteed safety borne by these companies makes it mandatory for them to evacuate those members of staff who are not indigenous to the area, and who are in the country solely on the business of the organization. It is naturally
assumed that for those who hail from the country, a local support system would be available to them, and they would know where and how to receive direction, assistance and sustenance. While this may have seemed a simple enough matter to the management of any group or organization, the perception of the indigenous Haitian population was not well considered. For many Haitians working in capacities close to or even at par with those of the expatriates, it was wrong to have shown specific preference for assisting and evacuating expatriates first. No communication of intention or explanation of the implications were made to the general staff, and the systematic evacuation of all expatriates could not have gone unnoticed by the Haitian native workers, and by the public. It is therefore not surprising that many concluded that the organizations placed higher value on expatriate lives than on indigenous ones.

Panic-free Communication: The Voice of Reason cannot prevail unless it is first heard by the people to which it speaks. In most crisis situations, active listening is a difficult thing to do, especially for people who are on the affected side of the situational divide. The providers of guidance and assistance need to first relate directly and empathically with the receivers of rescue assistance, guidance or other form of help.

Language and the Process of Trust-Investment: There is untold power in having indigenous ears, and the ability to listen to words, while actually hearing the sentiments of the people. It is important to find a liaison to communicate with the community: a native or near-native speaker of the language or languages of the region, as well as people who are knowledgeable about the norms, values and belief systems of the host community. Immersion and integration is possible only when the host finds it easy to trust the newcomer. In the case of Haiti, previous encounters with foreigners had been viewed as harbingers of political unrest, upheavals and government toppling. The ‘occupation mentality’ kept many Haitians wary of the ‘well-meaning’ foreigners. Despite the emergency situation on ground, it was difficult to
by-pass the psychological reaction to foreigners or ‘blan’ as they are called in the local language.

Many survivors stressed the fact that they were afraid. The fact that help was arriving was simply not enough to allay their fears. In crisis situations, the need to allay communal and individual fears is uppermost on the to-do list of aid workers and other organizations offering assistance to victims. There is a natural propensity to be vague, or to avoid addressing painful matters directly. Many respondents have indicated that this can be counter-productive. In the words of Mr. Juste, “We needed them to be truthful, but thoughtful.” The candid, objective explanation of the situation as well as a reassuring portrayal of hope and speedy resolution did more to settle the minds of crisis survivors than the best medical intervention alone.

The need for psychological balance was expressed by a great percentage of respondents. The fact was the fact, no one could deny the destruction that was before their eyes. However, many felt that the aid community was made up of people who had lived most of their lives in first-world countries where things ‘worked’ and thus had no deep understanding of the ways of the Haitian people. They were unable to relate with the reality before the calamity, and because of this lack of reference, they could not understand the extent to which the earthquake had affected the life, the expectations, the well-being, the hopes, and the self-confidence of the average Haitian who had been through the terrible occurrence of January 12, 2010.

The injured were not only suffering from physical injury, they were also stoically bearing the psychological pain of their material losses, of the losses of loved ones, and of the displacement friends, family members and known neighbors from their homes. Some had relatives that were still missing, some had children who were still unaccounted for, and others because of the distance travelled daily or weekly into the cities, were still unable to get word to their
extended families about their whereabouts and well-being despite the injury that immobilized them. This type of situation calls for more empathy than sympathy, especially when dealing with a people whose fierce pride and inner strength forbade them to appear weak in the face of problems.

In the communication of plans, many aid workers wrongly assumed that it was enough to manage expectations on a daily basis. On the contrary, crisis survivors are clear about the need for 'hope and encouragement' in dealing with the future. The population within the makeshift hospitals needed to know that other such hospitals existed, and that plans were being made to restore the General Hospital to a state of operational efficiency and take the wounded out of tents and into solid structures. There was a need to understand that a national registry was being prepared to record all survivors, wounded or not, and that this registry was to be circulated across the country and even amongst the Diaspora so that people could find their lost loved ones, and reach them as soon as possible. The proper communication of plans, projects and future efforts would have gone a long way resolving much of the fundamental fears of a population-in-crisis, and may have prevented the outbreak of violence which resulted from long-stifled emotions and unalloyed fears.

**Clarity and repetitive emphasis in messaging:** More than three respondents emphasized the fact that in a situation like the one in Haiti, it was not enough to say it once. The clear, repeated easy-to-recall type of messaging needed to be taken beyond face value in this case. The truth is that confidence comes from hearing a message frequently, as emphasis suggests truth, and reiterates believability of the message. This also makes it easier to transfer the message across different demographic sections of the population, until it permeates the entire fabric of the society. Word-of-mouth proved to be a more efficient resource than the basic media platforms in getting important community-messages to the people; therefore,
organizations sought to use stories that were easy to transfer from mouth to ear for spreading key messages across the population.

To begin the propagation of solution messages, there was an initial need for social ambassadors who were eloquent enough to carry the messages correctly and powerfully without losing the impact of the message on the populace. The first task was to convince these social ambassadors of the value of the projects and show them in clear and unambiguous terms how these projects would positively affect the Haitian community and benefit the country in the long term. It is important to note that many respondents from the organizations were quick to point out that remuneration of social ambassadors was never an issue. Many of the people who came forward initially and who took it upon themselves to speak up or to ask questions were natural candidates for these positions. In the early days, many of these liaisons worked tirelessly to assist the aid workers in reaching the community and got nothing more than the odd meal and cups of coffee in exchange for their efforts. When the emergency had reached a point where stock could be taken, some ground team leaders formally absorbed such volunteers into their payroll, and gave them a token stipend to help with transportation and other needs. Two respondents cited cases where the remuneration package was turned down, because the liaisons declared that they were only doing their duty to their fellow men, and were happy enough to be alive, sheltered and in good health.

As time passed, others realized the value of such remuneration opportunities and came forward to offer their services to the ground teams. Translators, project monitors, camp supervisors, and clerical staff were thus taken on. Basically anyone who was bilingual was considered useful in carrying information across the demographic borders of the Haitian society, and such people were encouraged to tell others what they had learned.
CHAPTER 6: EXECUTION

The camps of Haiti have been the focus of many studies and news articles. Nearly every NGO in Haiti has had to work with camps and provide some kind of service to the displaced population of the island. The bulk of project executions are meant for this demographic, and the most critical area of humanitarian project management in Haiti is getting the camp dwellers to buy into a project. The living conditions in these camps are a cause for alarm on many levels, and the spread of disease has cost thousands of lives across the country. For those who live in the camps, it is more a matter of necessity than one of choice. Tatyana is a displaced Haitian woman in a camp in Downtown Port-au-Prince. The interview was conducted in Kreyol while sitting outside the tent where her family lives. Her story shows the migration of displaced persons into major cities immediately after the earthquake, and reveals aspects of belief, faith and superstitions that influence their decisions. It also shows how the proper method of communication can dispel the old myths, change the habits of a community and help save lives by preventing the spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS and Cholera.

TATYANA: CAMPING INDEFINITELY

We have lived in the camp for about three years now. This is the third camp that we have lived in. First we were in front of the cathedral in Petionville because it was the first camp we saw when we arrived after trekking for about three days all the way from Seguin in the mountains far beyond Kenscoff. It is southeast of the city, and we had trekked for a very long time before we arrived in Petionville. It was a very difficult time when we came down because we did not know what else to do.

When the earthquake happened, Daniel and I had been married for nearly two years. Our house was built on the small farm that his father had on the mountains, and we all worked together. We used to walk all night to reach the Kenscoff market in the morning so that we could sell our farm produce. Our baby was about six months old and Daniel’s ma used to look...
after him when we took the goods to the market. It was only once every week, and I liked to go. Once in a while, we took a tap-tap and came into Port-au-Prince if Daniel or his papa needed to buy some special things. And then we used to come again during the carnival.

Those times were very happy for all of us. My mother died when I was very young, and my papa never married again. He raised my sister and I in Seguin, and when I became a young woman, he told me to marry Daniel because he is hardworking and his father had been friends with my father from when they were young. My sister followed the Baptist missionaries to the city when she was young. They sent her to school and she moved to Santo Domingo many years ago. She is much older than me. I was not very good with books, so I did not go to school much. I can write a little, and I can read a bit. I never thought that life would be like this, you know. But we must take it as it comes to us. It is how the Good Lord meant for it to happen.

When the earthquake happened, Daniel’s ma was in the house with my Ti-Charles. And when the house collapsed, they were both inside. There was nothing people could do. Many houses had collapsed like that and people were trying to help their own families too. My father-in-law was not able to bear it. He has not been the same since that day. After we buried them, Daniel and I put some things in a bag and began walking to the city. We heard that there was work here if we could help to clear the fallen houses and do other small jobs. That way, we could send money home to Seguin because nobody was farming our land after the earthquake, and Papa Charles was too old. That is why we came here.

I tried to see if anyone knew my sister, or knew how we could find her and let her know what had happened to us. She did not come home very often in the early years, and even when our papa died, she had only stayed until after the ceremonies where completed. She did not even know that I had given birth to a beautiful baby boy. We did not have her address, and we did
not know where she worked in Santo Domingo. I know that she must have come back when the earthquake happened. Maybe she tried to look for me. But she did not get to Seguin, because somebody would have seen her, and they would have told us. Maybe she is still looking for me.

I was pregnant when we came down to Port-au-Prince, but that baby died too. The cholera was very bad, and she was not very strong because of all the things that happened and we didn’t have money. She died before the blan from Mercy Corps gave us clean water and taught us how to keep cholera away. It was a very bad time for us. But now I have two children and they are well. They are strong. And I will have another one in a few months. Daniel is doing construction work now, and he brings enough money to feed us well and to send some money to Papa Charles. I sell cold drinks in a cooler outside the camp, right next to the woman who sells rice and griot (fried pork). Business is good, and the people are like family, so I like it in this camp.

We had to leave the camp by the cathedral around Christmas in 2011. They did not tell us what was happening. Some people say that big companies from abroad gave our government plenty money to build houses for all of us in the camp. But we didn’t get any money or any house. They just came one night and they cleared everything. We had nowhere to go. That time, we were not even registered. We used to share a tent with two brothers that we knew in Kenscoff when we used to sell farm produce there. When the camp was torn down, they put a Christmas market there, and rich people came there to buy beautiful things for Christmas. And after that, they made a beautiful garden where the camp used to be. The garden is still there, you will see it at the roundabout of Saint Pierre. We didn’t have family in the city, and we didn’t know what else to do because we could not go back up the mountains. The brothers we were sharing with also had to go and share with someone that they knew, and that person
could not take us in. So we had to move to the camp near Canape-vert and we lived there for about six months until the owners of the land got the government to relocate the camp because they said it was disturbing business in the area. So now we are here. You can see that they will build the palace, but what about us? When the government decides to clean up this square, what will we do? We cannot return to Seguin now, there is nothing there for us. No house, no work, nothing. Papa Charles has been sick and weak for very long, we do not know when we are going to receive sad news. But even he does not want us to go back. He says we are safer in the city, and I agree with him. But now we are more than just a tent, you know. I am grateful to God for these children. He has given me back the ones that I lost, but now I am praying that He will make our life better, so that they will not suffer as we have suffered. I want them to go to school and learn a lot, so that they can have a better life, and they will not be uneducated like us. I am happy to be alive, but I pray for more.
Relational Communication and Problem Resolution in Crisis – Project Execution

Relational communication in crisis depends largely on the cultural contexts of all the parties involved, as well as their openness to direct dialogue. Western cultures (to which most aid organization leaders belong) are more frontal in their approach to addressing the reasons behind a conflict, and in discussing the elements of concern to each party, while arriving at an end result that is mutually beneficial.

Certain cultures are not as frontal in their approach and may actually be perceived as rude if one party were to approach the conflict so directly. In his book, Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns (1992), David Augsburger seeks to desensitize us about using the conventional (Western) methods and mindsets in approaching conflict resolution and problem solving when dealing with different cultures. He explores the influence of communal history, cultural origins, folklore and native wisdom in dealing with situations, and shows that many of the conflict patterns and resolutions styles are different from what obtains in the more tradition or pedagogical sense. Different cultural realities dictate the different patterns of conflict, the preferred paths to resolution and the sets of rules or values that govern the
resolution of different types of conflict within the community or between one community and the other.

Vino Swami (1992) advocates the use of social mediators to take the more indirect route to communicate hard news or difficult facts to the other party in intercultural conflicts. Religious and social leaders are highly experienced in dealing with conflict and are better able to present issues in a better light, using appropriate cultural cues, and relational storytelling.

Haitian culture, very much like the culture of native Africa finds subtle ways to reach the same mutually beneficial end result. It is considered more mature and more honorable to approach a disagreement with caution, and with wisdom through mutually trusted mediators. Social ambassadors are exceptional useful in this context, and are the bridge between cultures and between parties.

My experience in Haiti revealed more undeclared battles in dealing with the crises that attended the earthquake. There seemed to be a reasonable cultural explanation for every conflict encountered in the course of project executions. This chapter shows examples of informal conflict situations where relational communication was needed to resolve the problem between the host community and the aid organization. The following responses are excerpts from other interviews conducted while researching this thesis, with respondents revealing the cultural contexts of the situation, and showing how it was not possible to use the old models of resolution to arrive at a common goal.

1) **When it became clear that law enforcement was not able to single-handedly manage the safety and security of property, how did your organization get people to stop looting?**

- There was really nothing we could do about it. We are talking about the masses here. People were hungry, and homeless and poor. Many of them had lost their loved ones, and had
lost their jobs or petty businesses due to no fault of their own. And help was not that quick to reach certain areas of the country. We sort of knew that that could happen, and it did. For us, we just sat it out and counted our losses afterwards. It would have been seen as inhuman of us to mount an armed guard against them. That would have escalated the situation. We just waited it out. That was the only way to do it.

2) When the STD issue came up in camps, how did you make people commit to protecting themselves and their loved ones?

- First you have to understand that living in camps is not an easy thing to do. Although, culturally, Haitians are a community-centered society, they have maintained levels of personal privacy and nuclear family units in enclosed quarters for centuries. To then be forced by circumstances beyond their control to live with complete strangers, that’s a hard thing for anyone to do.

- Camp life is hard enough for those who are forced to live that way. Personal space is almost non-existent. They have no jobs. Morale is low. Many of them are young, sexually active people, with this proximity to so many potential partners, it’s a wrap. Sex sort of becomes a way out of the drudgery, a way to feel up the empty space in their lives and make use of the unfilled time on their hands.

- It took a while, but I finally understood the problem for their point of view. Truth is, contraceptives are expensive, and condoms are considered unpleasant. Pregnancy was not regarded as necessarily wrong. Children are considered a gift from God, whichever way they came. Many had been lost to the disaster, and people somehow felt deep within them that they needed to re-populate. We decided to speak with the community through our social ambassadors before introducing our solutions. We found that it was easier to discuss the use
of condoms, pills and hormonal injections before showing up at the camps with packets and syringes. Initially, when we simply brought the items, most of the camp residents did not participate. It was better when we had sessions where we listened to their concerns first, then we came to execute only after explaining in detail, addressing their concerns and clarifying grey areas. I have had to explain several times that hormonal injections do not contain or promote HIV/AIDS, but that they do not prevent it either; that condoms don’t reduce your pleasure that much, and that they do give you peace of mind when you know that you are protecting yourself and your partner. I have explained that with most modern contraceptive options, you can start having children again whenever you and your partner are ready to do so. It has not been easy, but it has been better, and has made our campaigns more successful.

- I think my biggest take-away in the name of a project...if you give the project or campaign a culture-friendly name that is easy to remember, then it seems more indigenous, and is better received. That’s how we got the condom campaign to become popular with the men. That, and using role models like Kako and Kreyol La on our ‘kapot’(condom) ads. They were targeted mainly at the men because they were the ones we needed to convince first.

3) It has been three years since the earthquake, and I see that some of the camps have been cleared, but some others still remain. How did you get the people to leave those camps? And why are the other camps still full?

- We have to remember that the camps didn’t just spring up. It was necessary for people to find somewhere to go, some place to lay their heads after their homes were destroyed. Many of them stay because they have nothing to go back to. Others stay because they need to be in the city to get menial jobs. There are no jobs outside the city. We have to help them find their
feet first, then we can integrate them back into the residential plan that the government is putting together with the help of foreign aid and international organizations like ours.

- For many of these people, it is simply easier to stay here in the camp. Aid organizations like us can find them more easily and they receive help and what provision we can give them. After being here for so long, the camp is home to them now. There are kids here who have known no other kind of life. We know the camps are not pleasant to look at, but until the right provisions are made to evacuate them, we will keep seeing relocations to other camps when one camp is forcefully evacuated.

- Basically, as far as I am concerned, it is a bureaucratic problem, this issue of the camps. The government needs to put in place a proper plan to resettle this population. Simply giving them money to return to the province will not work, and building residential units in far away places will only make them come back into the city. This is where the work and the money is, and anyone who can find work, will want to stay as close to it as possible. Humanitarian organizations cannot be expected to do it all.

- Many of our relocation efforts have been frustrated really. There are bureaucratic bottlenecks everywhere. Some government officials just would not cooperate with us. Some sign-offs were delayed endlessly, some funds were completely diverted, and sometimes personal interests have stood in the way of doing the common good for the people. I am not saying that this does not happen in other places. I am just thinking that if we really want to solve this problem, we could do it without having to re-invent the wheel. If the government understands why the camps are still there, they would understand how to resettle the people. Nobody wants to live in a tent if he can live in a house.
Inspiration to Contagion: Stories As Communication Tools for New Relational Identities

- *Sinema Ambaz Etwal* (Starlight Cinema) Many stories, many lessons: the wake of the earthquake, with the burden of lost lives, lost livelihoods, and lost homes weighing heavily on the Haitian public, British volunteer David Fitzsimmons and his one assistant set out across the nation to share a breath of humor with the camps populations numbering over one million displaced persons. They had one generator, a makeshift screen, one projector, and a lean collection of ‘pleasant’ movies. The popular Wallace and Gromit shows became a favorite with the children of the camps, and brought some comic relief to the tense, pain-filled life they were forced to live in the camps.

Soon, more volunteer teams were travelling the country with mobile, open-air movie shows and ‘*sinema ambaz etwal*’ or movies under the stars, became a popular pastime for camp dwellers. The aid organizations were able to eventually leverage these platforms as opportunities to dialogue with the gathered community. Issues ranging from nutrition to child-spacing, rape to birth control, and from HIV/AIDS awareness to care of Persons Living with AIDS were discussed openly and without shame or stigma. The cinema shows received sponsorship from local and foreign corporations whose CSR budgets were put to use in these avenues. The shows became an avenue for people to learn more about better ways to live, and better methods for coping with day-to-day challenges faced by the locals. Information, education and entertainment became a steady diet that enlightened as the people were entertained.

At a similar event in the city of Saint Marc, I personally witnessed the dramatization of a prevention campaign, where the dance drama plot told the story of two couples who fell in love. One couple was mutually exclusive, used protection, got tested and received help with
birth control. Conversely, the second couple lived a carefree life with multiple partners, and no protection. The results were predictable and the audience was clearly entertained while the key messages were well understood. At the end of the performance, questions were invited from the audience of over two hundred residents. Men and women of varying ages came to the stage to ask questions about specific issues relating to protection, abstinence and treatment. The team of experts answered questions with candor and gave insightful information that dispelled many myths associated with such ‘hushed’ topics.

By creating a conducive atmosphere, and using a more informal platform, these organizations were able to relate directly with the host community in their natural environment. They were better able to communicate with the audience in a language and form that is easy for them to understand. More importantly, they were able to pass on paradigm-shifting messages that dispelled many misconceptions about the prevention and spread of the virus. Such creative avenues often developed informally, and give the ground team unusual opportunities to gain the confidence of the local community.

RELATIONAL MEDIA STRATEGY IN ACTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: A CSR Example

Educating a ‘Painful Public’: Diarrhea, Cholera, HIV/AIDS: When the Voila Foundation was set up by Trilogy International in 2007, it was established as the CSR platform for Trilogy’s telecom brand in Haiti, Communication Cellulaire d’Haiti, also known as Voila/Comcel. The foundation became Voila’s public tool for relational communication, project initiation and management, as well as local program sponsorship. By 2010, Voila Foundation had built schools, equipped libraries, and created computer literacy centers in key province towns around the nation. It
was a voice that the Haitian public was accustomed to hearing, and one which would resonate well with them in the wake of the earthquake.

**Media Platforms and Organizational Voices:** The company was very badly hit with the devastation that came with the earthquake, losing untold amounts in infrastructure, equipment, human resource and revenue. It was, however, the only network that still worked during the eye of the earthquake, and most people who were able to connect with one another before the network got jammed with traffic, were able to do so with Voila to Voila on-net calls. Voila was thus able to innovate within a tight period and come up with bulk text messages to users of the network, and with information about where to go for immediate medical care, and who to call to report an emergency. Although these messages were available to only the million or so on-net customers who had possession of their mobile phones, the quick spread of that information ensured that more people were able to reach the emergency medical centers in time to be helped. When other conventional media platforms had been badly hit by the earthquake, and when the power outages and mass destruction of life and property had made television, radio, internet and newspapers inaccessible to most Haitians, the mobile phone became the most reliable source of information and means of communication with the Haitian public. Text messages, MMS pictures and voice calls made it across to the Diaspora and ensured that Haiti began to get pledges of help, and preparations for relief dispatch.

Many respondents remember that the very earliest messages that went out were via mobile telephony, and that most people who could be reached were eventually reached on their Voila mobile phones. The tips that came through in French and Kreyol helped many people to address the concerns of those around them by providing some information. The customer service centers were live and running within the hour, and clients who could get through to
the network, were able to relay their locations and give brief situation reports about their localities and the effects the earthquake had had on those areas.

Using the Arts as Communication Platforms in Crisis Situations: The Voila Foundation set the pace for artistic information dissemination during the weeks and months that followed the earthquake. By gathering popular Haitian musicians, stage performers and comedians, they were able to use these iconic ambassadors to get key messages across to the Haitian public. Live performances in public squares, or televised shows for a broader audience ensured that even the most difficult of messages were passed in culturally-appropriate, easily digestible ways. The foundation used a 3-pronged approach to reach the hugely different demographic groups in the 8 million strong population of Haiti. They used a formal, a semi-formal and an informal artistic platform depending on the particular stratum of society they were aiming the message at.

The formal platform was targeted more at high society, with the internationally-mobile, well educated, French-speaking public forming the core of this group. The social ambassador for that platform was Emmanuel Jean-Francois, a member of the PR department of the parent organization who is well-known across the nation as an orator, journalist and political spokesman. Emmanuel had served in various capacities within former governments of Haiti, having vast socio-political experience and contacts among the leadership of the nation. He had been the spokesperson for the previous Prime Minister, and had led some of the most impactful outreach campaigns in recent Haitian history. Emmanuel became the face of Voila Foundation communication to the press, the formal sectors, and the higher echelons of Haitian society. He spoke beautifully in well-accented French, addressed issues with clarity and fielded questions with practiced dexterity. He was trusted and well-liked, and soon became a conduit for reaching the upper-middle class with Trilogy's other communication projects. Mr. Jean-
Francois worked within my team for nearly two years, and I found him to be a surprisingly quiet man whose character became completely transformed when he stood before an audience. Much of Voila’s relational influence in urban Haiti is attributed to the singular efforts and talents of this man.

The foundation’s semi formal platform was more artistic in nature, using the talents of well-known cartoonist Jerry Bousiquot whose cartoons were featured in Haiti’s only newspapers Le Matin and Journaliste. The work of Jerry Bousiquot while having a humorous side to it, basically reported the realities of life in the country and showed a more palatable truth to the populace. The foundation used Bousiko cartoons to show positive behavior types, and to explain difficult concepts in simple, native ways. The reach of Bousiko cartoons and posters was more varied because that audience cut across upper class Haiti through the regular working class to the average man on the street who was semi-literate but aware of the issues of the day.

Jerry Bousiko became the artistic voice of Haiti to world. Although his regular job was as a part of the graphic arts team within my communication department, Jerry was able to establish a persona beyond the job he did, and started the Cartoon Movement group which he later went on to manage exclusively. Jerry’s work for the Voila organization gave his ‘voice’ a platform of its own, which grew into a mutually-beneficial association in the minds of the Haitian public. He is one of the many artists in Haiti whose contribution to relational communication with the people of the land, made life-changing impact and catapulted otherwise mundane careers into international limelight. Jerry now works with several relief groups and aid organizations across the Caribbean and Latin American to create eloquent cartoons that send messages of hope and guidance to the people.
The post-earthquake work of Jerry Bousiquot earned him many accolades and international recognition, and placed him on a global pedestal where he now exhibits across the Caribbean, Europe and North America.

The foundations informal platform also exploited the Haitian love for street art, and used the work of Jerry Rosembert, an ‘undercover’ graffiti artist to send messages to the people in areas where conventional media platforms would not resonate. The secret art of graffiti painting was illegal in Haiti and attracted heavy fines, forcing graffiti artists to work under cover of the night and in places where patrols were not likely to catch the artist or his lookout person. The Voila ground team found an innovative way to legalize graffiti messaging by approaching the city council and securing permission to post organizational messages on
certain walls within the inner city. These walls were then used as canvases for graffiti that spoke directly to the situation on ground.

Jerry Rosembert became a part of my communication team only after a year had passed since the devastating earthquake. During the year that had elapsed, we had learned many lessons and had made a few mistakes which opened our eyes to new ways of reaching and relating with the Haitians living beyond the reach of conventional media. As we travelled across the nation of Haiti, bringing enhanced connectivity to the network, new school buildings, water projects and sanitation infrastructure to inner province communities, we found graffiti to be increasing eloquent, and better received than flyers and posters. Combined with the comedy platform with Kako Bourjolly handled with practiced eased, graffiti became a way of telling the truth like it is, while showing a better way to move forward as a nation.

Jerry Rosembert was not an employee of the organization, but he was a contractual ambassador, paid to travel with my team and work on pre-agreed themes specific to each town, area or inner city location. The themes of his work were then echoed by the Comedian Kako Bourjolly at the gathering or project rally where the people were entertained with music and comedy while discussing the project and its effects on their lives. Both platforms were used to explain how new jobs were being created for the locals, and how the new mobile money platform T-Cash was being used to pay workers in the interior areas for their work. The parent organizations provided free mobile telephones and ground team members taught the new workers how to activate and run their mobile money accounts. The informal atmosphere made it easy for people to see us as being a positive addition to their everyday lives, and made them more receptive to our teams as we travelled the country with the message of new jobs, renewed hope, better conditions and continued living.
Row 1 from top right: the children are the future of Haiti; in the middle, Voila’s mobile money platform empowering people in the regions; wipe our tears graffiti with artist Jerry Rosembert.

Row 2: Lave men’w campaign (meaning ‘wash your hands’ in Kreyol); clean hands graffiti, part of CRS Clean Water and Sanitation Project; Jerry and the Hope for Haiti Graffiti Campaign;

Row 3: The elders bear the wisdom of the land; Haiti will blossom anew; Haiti pap peri (meaning ‘Haiti will survive, not perish’)
CHAPTER 7: SPICE THEORY IN POST-CRISIS PROJECTS

Bwasley’s interview was granted at his home in Virginia, far away from the crisis in Haiti but still carrying the philosophical graveness of most people who have been touched by the realities of the island. As the founder of the CLF group, Bwasley speaks from the point of view of one who knew Haiti before, and after the earthquake of January 2010, and as one whose most recent past has been lived among the people of Kenscoff and Thomassin, constructing new buildings and helping local workers to learn a lucrative trade and earn a decent living. Before CLF, he had worked as part of an aid group which did not have adequate communication and community-involvement policies in place, and which faced many difficulties in project execution. By way of conclusion, his story reveals the how and the how not to of community relations in Haiti, and shows the merit of the SPICE in actual use.

BWASLEY: DWELLING PLACES

Many years ago, my father had worked in Haiti. As a teenager I went to see him on four different occasions, loving the island and not wanting to return to my mundane life in the states at the end of my summer vacation. Life was simpler on the island, the people were very friendly and the grown-up feeling of being allowed to do odd jobs on the site of the government administrative building was a huge perk. It was my dad who first planted the love of buildings in my heart. He would sit for hours, looking over plans and walking through buildings in his head. He saw things that most people couldn’t see and he taught me to look beyond the drawings and see the reality before it was even built. Dad returned home in my senior year, and we somehow never got to go back to Haiti after that.
When we heard about the earthquake, it was as though something was calling me back. I remembered the boys who played with me after the site closed. I taught them to speak some English and they taught me to speak some Kreyol. They called me Bwasli instead of Bradley, and they walked me back to the house at all hours. I was not a blan to them, I was Bwasli, their friend from America. I remember returning to Virginia with one two t-shirts because I had given most of my things to my friends. I had a lot more back home, so it was okay. I remembered them when the earthquake happened, and I realized that I probably would not recognize them now. I was turning forty-six that year, but it seemed my teenage years had not been that far away. I knew I had to go to Haiti and help out in whatever way I could.

If there was one thing that people needed after an earthquake, it was construction. And I was the man for the job. I got on the internet and searched for organizations who were looking for volunteers in the area of building. It didn’t take long. There were many, and one had an office right there in my county, within fifteen minute’s drive from my home. I didn’t think to ask my wife first. For some reason, I knew that she would understand the reason behind my need to help, and she would support me through the whole process. Lily has always been that kind of girl, a pillar of support, a firm reassuring hold on your hand.

I was packed and on the plane within a week. Headed to Port-au-Prince through Miami. What I saw on arrival completely floored me. The place was much different than I remembered, and the condition of the people was far worse than I imagined. Even the news coverage on TV had not quite captured the destruction that I saw. It made me hurt inside to see the happy people of the island going through so much pain. I had not been following the political issues of Haiti too closely, so I was not familiar with the turmoil that had been in the land for the past few decades. Although I knew that all had not been well politically, that vague knowledge did not prepare me for what I saw that Wednesday afternoon.
I was taken to a guest house up in the hills of Thomassin where the effects of the earthquake had not been too bad. The building was still intact, although there was obvious damage to the chalet and the staff quarters. The family who owned the guest house were very friendly, and they helped me settle in front of a computer as quickly as possible. I had my full team by the end of the next day, and we dug right into the project head-on. So many things happened at that time that it is hard to tell the whole story without wasting a lot of time. Suffice it to say that what we met was not what we expected. The land we were building on had been allocated by the community with the approval of the government. The building plans had been reviewed and approved by the council officials, and the cost estimates had been signed off by the head office in Virginia. But we couldn't work well because we were facing too many battles. Some people thought the government had paid for the building, and some thought we had simply come out of nowhere and taken their land. Some city officials came to ask for impossible unheard of documents that we of course could not produce, and they demanded payment of fines on the spot before work was allowed to continue. The community was not directly involved with us because our approvals had come directly from the government of the republic, and the team had never actually been officially introduced to the community. They left us to deal with the numerous officials whichever way we could.

At the end of my third month when it was time for my first break, we had not gone as far as the lintel level, and work was slowing down because the rains were getting heavier. I felt so defeated and deflated. The project costs had gone up, the timelines had long since been exceeded and the management back home was breathing so heavily down our necks that we couldn't have gotten much done even if the conditions were more favorable. And then we had the loss problems. Everything got stolen from the site. If it was not locked in and chained down, it was taken away before morning. And even some materials that were locked in and
chained down still got stolen. We had a guard from the city who carried a gun to scare off thieves. But his shed was in the front of the site, near the entrance, whereas the storage had been built in the back near the end wall. He could not watch both ends at the same time, and we could not afford to hire two nighttime guards every day until the project was complete. I tried to explain things to the Head of Ops back in VA, but he had never been to Haiti, and he did not even begin to understand what we were talking about. He eventually allocated more funds for the project, and hired two additional expatriates to join us. We tried to explain to him that it was problem that needed to be addressed from the root, and that more expatriate experts was not the solution we required. When I returned to Haiti after two weeks, the building had been defaced, the storage had been broken into, and part of the metal gate had been torn away by a big storm. That set us back another six to eight weeks, and the cost of material replacement blew our budget out the roof.

The hurricane season was in full swing, and our work was delayed even further by the weather. One of those days when it was impossible to work, and we were forced to return to the guest house, I sat with the two young men who had joined the team and we tried to find a proper solution to the problems we were facing. We made a list of things we knew we would not get from the head office, and we wrote down alternative ways to get those things done. We did not make much progress, but we were encouraged just by trying. While we talked in the living area, some other guests watched TV and shared news from their home countries. The rain didn’t let up at all, and I wondered if the next day would be like that as well. The guest house steward, an elderly man called Abel was just about to take his leave. He said goodnight as he passed beside our table, and he held out an old black umbrella as he opened the door.

I asked him where he lived, and he said up in the mountains not too far from here. I figured he wouldn’t get very far with that old umbrella against the fury of the rain, so I offered to drive
him in the site truck. He declined at first, but I knew he was being polite. I got the keys from my colleague Tony and I ran for the 4X4. Abel followed me meekly. I struck up a conversation with him as we drove down the road and up the side into the hilly track. He told me that he had four children, and that one of them was disabled. He said he had married late because he didn’t build a house until he was older, and then he could marry. He said his wife was a very hardworking woman, and that she worked in a supermarket nearby. When we had travelled for about twenty minutes, he told me he would get out at the next corner because that was how far a vehicle could go. I was surprised that he had been planning to walk that distance in the heavy rain, and I really wanted to know where he lived. So I told him to keep directing me, and that the truck could go farther than most other vehicles. Eventually after another five to seven minutes of real off-road driving, we reached a steep climb that had only a foot track to the cluster of houses that I could see in the distance. He pointed towards them and told me he lived in one of the shelters. I did not understand, so I got out of the truck, picked up a halogen torch from the backseat, and told him to lead the way.

That evening I realized that the man who worked so hard to ensure our comfort at the guest house did not have a real roof over his head. He and his family lived in a shack built out of zinc sheets, cement sacks and old wood. He showed me where the old house had been knocked down during the earthquake. He told me they were alright, and that he was saving money to build again but that it was not easy. I felt so ashamed of my worries as I was greeted by Abel’s family and offered a drink of warm soda. I sat outside on the wet ruins and drank the Couronne with gladness. I handed the empty bottle back, thanked Abel’s wife and set out towards the truck. I promised myself that I would do something for the man and his family. I couldn’t afford to build him a home, but I knew people who could do help do it.
When I reached the guesthouse, I went straight to bed. The following morning I made some calls to friends and sent out an email to about four people whom I had become friends with while on the project. Before that day was over, we had committed seven thousand dollars to the Home for Abel project, with some people offering their services for free. When the community building was finally at roofing level, I decided not to renew my contract with the head office in Virginia. I handed the project over to one of the young men I had trained, and I began to work on the Abel project. Together with friends, colleagues, and members of Abel’s immediate community, we built him a three bedroom home with adequate amenities.

That was how the foundation started. We have not stopped building since then. We don’t get bogged down with bureaucracy, and we don’t do formalities. Our processes are very simple. We just find a person who has a real need, we lay the case before the partners, and we make a project estimate. We contribute as much money as we can, and we involve the community from the beginning to that they support our work. We encourage the family and community to support the project as much as possible, and we hire them and train them to do construction work that helps them get building jobs long after our project is complete. I have found that most people are more than willing to help out when they see complete strangers rising to assist one of their own. The greatest lesson I have learned in doing this is that a little effort can do a whole lot if one can get support from those around.
Caribbean LIFE Foundation: Summary of SPICE Process Mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outline Corporate Strategy, Project Strategy, Entry and Exit Strategies</strong> to all new team members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong> is to rebuild homes and community structures destroyed by the earthquake, using private funding, volunteer workers, and local assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on outskirts and interior locations, already many aid organizations concentrated in the capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountainous terrain and hard-to-reach communities as identified on GIS map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish six stations with two teams of full complement staff handling three each.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget to be centrally managed by the Country Team Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocations to be based on on-site assessment with Team Lead approval in writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All extra-budgetary expenditure to be endorsed by Country Head of Operations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete feasibility review, position analysis, resource planning, funds allocation, additional sponsorship sourcing,</td>
</tr>
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</table>
human resource, and general administrative planning.
- Ground teams to arrive and convene at Port-au-Prince within 24 hours of go
- Brief two-day first-immersion exercise anchored by Haitian liaison officer while logistics.
- All third party deliveries for first trips to be received by the logistics team by or before the end of Day 2.

### Immersion

- Emphasis on the need to learn to culture of the host community.
- Immersion preparations on corporate and individual levels.
- All volunteers must attend pre-departure immersion classes for social structure review, first hand ‘day-in-the-life-of...’ experience.
- Language basics, religion, creed, and traditional respect symbols.
- Country historical summary and introduction to location-specific social structure.
- Discussion of social ambassadors and key link persons.
- Transportation to location and introduction to community leaders.

### Communication

- Clarity on what we want to say; why we want to say it; whom we want to speak to; how we will speak to them; when we will speak to them; and How we want our message to be heard and received; what results we want to get from passing our message across.
- Introduction of ground team members. Each must express condolences, and inspire hope and trust in a better future. Affirm that we have come to help.
- Presentation of branded tokens to elders and community leaders at first meeting.
- On-site assessment and need analysis in conjunction with social ambassadors, community leaders and liaison.
- Explain the source of funds for the project, clarify the general concept of doing-without-government, and highlight opportunities for community members to gain new skills that can lead to more lucrative jobs. Ask for the support of the leaders to reach the entire community.
- Give a brief explanation of relief project plan. Estimate timelines, size of workforce, and identify areas where help may be required with passing messages to the whole community.
- Purposely ask for advice and feedback from community leaders. Evoke a genuine sense of joint-ownership of the project.
Execution

- Allow time for local information dissemination before commencing work openly.
- Use first day of arrival to ‘befriend’ the community. Be seen in public places with community leaders and/or social ambassadors.
- Give out branded first consignment of branded t-shirts and sun-hats to members of the community.
- Be especially friendly with children. It is not uncommon for your hair, clothing, or other apparel to be touched or examined. Ask the liaison to interpret. Smile. Everyone understands the language of smiles.
- Begin building open-front shelter in Day 2 of arrival. Do not dismiss onlookers.
- Begin building secure materials storage on Day 3. Hire local labor and begin on-the-job training using storage structure as first project.
- Appoint local supervisor/foreman from storage building laborers.
- Commence Project Phase 2.

CLF: Summary of Lessons Learned From Previous Projects

| Poor Strategy       | • Haphazard Execution  
|                     | • Project Failure       |
| Inadequate Planning| • Logistics and Timing Problems  
|                     | • Bad Budgeting          
|                     | • Project Over-Expenditure |
| No Immersion        | • Inter-cultural conflicts and needless misunderstandings.  
|                     | • Project Rejection, and Host Community apathy |
| Poor Communication  | • Wrong assumptions and little community cooperation.  
|                     | • Chaos from miscommunication of intentions leading to project failure.  
|                     | • Personal danger to ground team and insecurity of organizational property. |
| Poor Execution      | • Often a result of mistakes in the steps above.  
|                     | • Sets bad precedents, alienates host community, disappoints the ground team and organizational leadership.  
|                     | • The ‘dead water’ projects (boycott of installed water structure, no maintenance for pumps, no electricity to power water systems). |
Clockwise from top left: Ruins from the earthquake of January 2010; makeshift shelter where the Abela family lived; part of the CLF founding team (Taylor Quarles, Funke Michaels and Nick Lovelace) hands-on building the new Abela home in Thomassin, Haiti; men of the community who worked together on the construction projects.
CONCLUSION

The journey of this thesis is one that begun long before I knew that it would be written. It began with the call I received, asking if I would like to come out to Haiti. It became my journey when I stepped onto Haitian soil for the first time, and realized just how like my native Nigerians the people of the island were. It gave me a reason to want to learn more about the culture, the history, and the very psyche of the Haitian people. It helped me admire their strength, resilience and unwavering faith in a better future for them, and for their children.

With Relational Communications, it is important to understand the background of the society within which one is about to live and work, and to understand how best to relate with the people of that community. I set out to show the nature of the Haitian community, the way in which they viewed, handled and overcame the tragedies that befell them in the wake of the earthquake of January 2010, and to show the communication gaps that existed because most organizations did not take enough time or efforts to get immersed into the nature and culture of the people. I sought to show the importance of relational communication in dealing with crisis situations like the one that happened in Haiti, and how the SPICE theory should be used in such situations.

I wanted to get the perspectives of different groups of people, different types of stakeholders, and different positions with regards to the actual communication exercises and the shortcomings perceived by the policy-makers themselves. Unfortunately, I was not able to get any government officials (present or former) who were in the system during the earthquake to go on record about the matter. If I had the opportunity to follow up on this work, I would like to dedicate a full study to the role of the government of the time in communicating with the
people within, as well as the process of communicating with the diaspora. I would like to undertake a comparative study of the process of external communication (directed at the global population) with the process of internal communication (directed at the people of Haiti) and to see how the principles of relational communication were used, if they were.

Similarly, I would like to undertake a comparative study of the Haitian situation with that of other nations that have gone through periods of internal crisis (natural or political) and to see how the principles of relational communication were applied in those cases, while putting the SPICE theory to use in a broader variety of crisis situations. This is how far this particular leg of my Haitian journey has brought me. I do, however, look forward to future opportunities to do further research on the island that was rightly called the Pearl of the Caribbean.
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**CHAPTER 2**


**CHAPTER 3**


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**CHAPTER 4**


CHAPTER 5


**CHAPTER 6**


CHAPTER 7


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