

Credocast

A publication of Credo Advisory

Vol. 4 Issue 5. March 2020

A photograph of a woman with her hair in braids, wearing a brown top and a patterned skirt, smiling as she works in a vibrant green field. The image is framed by a white border.

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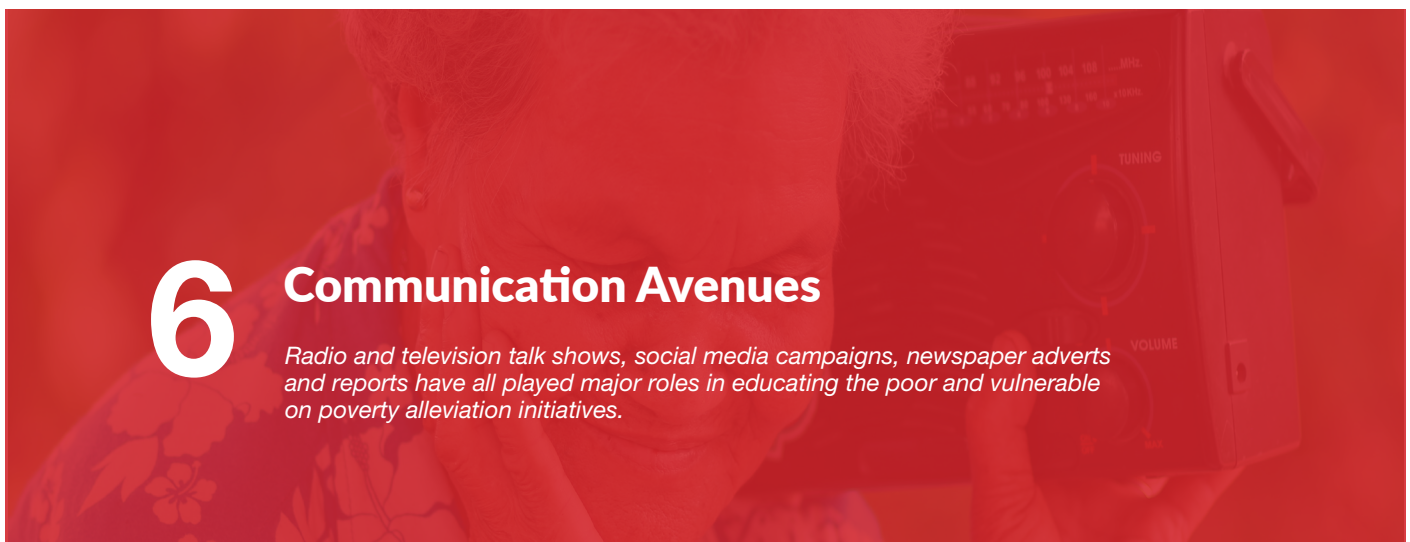
Communication Avenues



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About Credo Advisory

Credo Advisory is a strategic communications firm that specializes in designing and implementing strategic, operational and tactical communication initiatives. We provide a full suite of communications support to our clients, which include public communications and advocacy, government relations, community engagement, media relations, crisis communications, digital communications and capacity building.

Our mission is to develop bespoke communications products, activities and campaigns based on knowledge, research and industry insights. With our ability to communicate effectively with diverse audiences and stakeholder groups, Credo's mission is to provide impactful strategic communications advisory from inception to implementation. At Credo, we are committed to improving the way societies communicate.

www.creadoconsulting.com



“Policy makers often fail to leverage the power of communication in designing anti-poverty programmes.”

Policy Awareness

In September 2015, 193 world leaders converged at the United Nations headquarters in New York to endorse and adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG was embedded in a historic agenda titled ‘Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’.¹ Also known as the global goals, the SDGs are made up of 17 goals with ‘No Poverty’ at the top of the agenda.²

Listing “No Poverty” as goal number one, clearly underlines the importance world leaders give to the task of combating poverty. A critical question to ask however is; given current global statistics, does this importance that world leaders attach to the task of combating poverty actually reflect the quantity and quality of poverty alleviation programmes implemented in the less developed countries of the world?



Addressing Programmes Shortfalls

There is plenty of talk about ways to improve income, reduce illiteracy, ill-health, and empower women. The increased attention given to these issues and pledges of additional financial assistance by world leaders are not matched by new and effective national initiatives that can significantly reduce poverty. So far, none of the poor countries have been able to achieve any of its key developmental targets. The emphasis is still on more funding for programs that have been in existence for many years. Yet these programs have had only marginal effect, and have not kept up with population increase.³

This is the backdrop against which this thought piece examines the role communication plays in designing and promoting engagement strategies for poverty alleviation; paying particular attention to how strategic communication could improve policy awareness especially amongst intended beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes.

Designing Poverty Alleviation Programmes

Policymakers often fail to leverage the power of communication in designing anti-poverty programmes. Very often policy makers resort to top-down communication of what areas they want to cover with their poverty alleviation programmes.

¹ Sustainable Developmental Goals. Summit Charts New Era of Sustainable Development. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/09/summit-charts-new-era-of-sustainable-development-world-leaders-to-gavel-universal-agenda-to-transform-our-world-for-people-and-planet/>

² United Nations Development Programme. Sustainable Development Goals. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

³ Wharton University of Pennsylvania. Why the Fight Against Poverty is Failing: A Contrarian View. Available at: <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/why-the-fight-against-poverty-is-failing-a-contrarian-view/>

“Online polls and surveys can help lawmakers and international donors identify areas where citizens demand improvement.”

This often leads to a situation where issues most relevant to poor people like education, food supply, job creation, etc. are totally neglected or poorly approached even when they are chosen as the focus of poverty alleviation programmes.

Engaging the grassroots using communication activities; like town hall meetings, face-to-face interactions and participatory policy development workshops will significantly help policy makers identify the specific needs of the people, thereby improving the strategic design of poverty alleviation programmes. This additionally will facilitate the achievement of most significant change as project beneficiaries get improved policy awareness and have a chance to make inputs into policy design.

In February 2020, the Nigerian public was outraged at an attempt to implement a poverty alleviation programme that donated head pans, shovels, wheelbarrows and trowels to rural women and youths.⁴ The project was denounced by many who pointed out its lack of relevance to the lives of the youth and women of the target community.

Strategic communication with potential programme beneficiaries would help tailor life changing projects and avoid wasteful and reckless expenditures. An example of this can be seen in the falling apart of a \$70 million port project established by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in Haiti. The project was created to replace port facilities destroyed in the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. However, Haitians had no hand in the design and location of the port, this led to the total failure of the project.⁵

To design impactful poverty alleviation programmes, policymakers must effectively communicate with community leaders to discern the exact needs of these communities, using strategic communication design and methodologies.



In the course of the last decade or two, the use of social media and electronic platforms have strongly emerged to completely redefine global geography and boundaries, especially with respect to how the world communicates. Social media is a powerful tool that can be used to help governments design impactful poverty alleviation programmes. Online polls and surveys can help lawmakers and international donors identify areas where citizens demand improvement. A recent poll in the United States of America revealed that 77% of Americans believed that the government's efforts towards fighting poverty over the last 10 -15 years have been ineffective.⁶ With access to such insightful data which social media based communication tools offer, key stakeholders and policy makers can access strategic information with which they can strategize and redirect efforts towards launching more effective poverty alleviation programmes.

⁴ Enugu Local Government Chairman Allegedly Empowering Women With Head Pans and Shovels. Available at: <https://www.lindaikojisblog.com/2020/2/enugu-local-government-chairman-allegedly-empowers-women-with-head-pans-and-shovels-photos-2.html>

⁵ Workers World. A rain of Protest as Poverty Worsen in Haiti. Available at: <https://www.workers.org/2019/11/44406/>

⁶ Cato Institute. Poll: 77% Say Government Efforts to Fight Poverty have Been 'Ineffective'. Available at: <https://www.cato.org/blog/poll-77-say-government-efforts-fight-poverty-have-been-ineffective>

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Integrating Communication

A major setback to the success of poverty alleviation programmes has been the failure of various governments and lawmakers to integrate strategic communication at the programme design stage.

In most cases, a communication team is engaged only after a programme has been developed and is ready to launch. The early engagement of a communication team affords the government access to ample creative strategies that can be utilized in executing successful poverty alleviation schemes. A good communication team can and will provide support in the structuring and control of data flow and in the assessment and shaping of public perception at every stage in the life cycle of a poverty alleviation programme. In India, poverty alleviation programmes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (mgnrega) and the Conditional Cash Transfers failed to a large extent to move people out of the poverty line. The failures of the programme has been linked to the absence of systematic identification of the poor, lack of engagement to determine their needs and a meagre monitoring and evaluation process.⁷

The expertise of a communication team can be leveraged in crafting strategic and tactical messaging that resonates with the target audience.

Harnessing Communication Tools



Deploying the right communication channels is critical to the success of any poverty alleviation strategy. The most suitable medium of communication must be identified and deployed in communicating policies and improving access to government pro-poor initiatives.

Communication Avenues

Citing examples from Africa; mixed use of mediums carefully chosen to provide a multi-platform approach has selectively yielded results in the dissemination of poverty alleviation strategies and opportunities. Radio and television talk shows, social media campaigns, newspaper adverts and reports have all played major roles in educating the poor and vulnerable on poverty alleviation initiatives.

⁷ DownToEarth.Poverty Eradication – Why Do We Always Fail?. Available at: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/governance/poverty-eradication-why-do-we-always-fail-56927>

“Thousands of people in Nigeria have been lifted off poverty levels after taking advantage of training and entrepreneurial workshops programmes announced on Brekete Family Radio, in Nigeria.”

Radio Talk Shows

New media has changed the way people communicate; however, it cannot substitute for the efficacy and efficiency of traditional media like radio, television and newspaper in empowering the masses with necessary information and opportunities.

Thousands of people in Nigeria have been lifted off poverty levels after taking advantage of training and entrepreneurial workshops programmes announced on Brekete Family Radio, in Nigeria. Breteke family is a reality radio programme that airs on Human Rights Radio 101.1 FM; the programme gives government agencies, corporate organisations and private businesses ample time to sensitize Nigerians on poverty alleviation programmes, encouraging them to take bold steps towards improving the quality and standards of their lives.⁸ The programme also provides a two-way communication platform where beneficiaries of government and private interventions call in to share their experiences and suggestions on ways to foster poverty alleviation projects.

Radio dramas, playlets and infomercials can help in educating people on existing policies, strategies and opportunities that can empower the poor in society.



Social Media

Success stories usually illustrate how a project has improved the lives of people. These stories influence and shape public perception; it gives a human face to the programme and showcases the impact on the masses. The Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP), a social intervention programme designed by the Federal Government of Kenya to deliver timely and accessible cash transfers to poor and vulnerable households, used its Twitter and YouTube accounts to share the captivating story of drought victims in Northern Kenya who were able to transform their lives, thanks to the government's poverty alleviation programme.⁹

Social media has been highly effective in sharing testimonials and project impacts to a wider range of audiences, this in turn has led to an increased public awareness on poverty reduction issues.

⁸ Brekete Family. Brekete Family Programme 30th November 2019. Available at: <https://breketefamily.com/brekete-family-programme-30th-november-2019/>

⁹ Twitter. How HSNP Drought Emergency Cash Emergency Transfer is Cushioning the Poorest in Arid Northern Kenya. Available at: https://twitter.com/h SNP_kenya/status/837214496301137920

“ For proper grassroots development and poverty reduction to be achieved, participatory communication must be integrated into poverty alleviation programmes.”

Documentaries

Documentaries cover human angles and experiences and give intricate knowledge on issues. Documentaries are powerful tools in raising public awareness of poverty alleviation measures and skills. Due to its power to influence change, documentaries can also be used to call-for-action from governments and international bodies; images of sickly children, close to death or starving have mobilized actions towards poverty alleviation.

A Nigerian Television Station, Galaxy TV, released a documentary highlighting the federal government’s poverty reduction initiatives and efforts put in place to combat it.¹⁰ The documentary which was released on YouTube and aired on national TV stations, increased public knowledge and awareness of existing government initiatives.

Print Media

Print media is an important tool in raising public awareness on poverty eradication as a majority of the poor and vulnerable still depend on local news outlets and the daily newspapers for information.

At the commencement of the National Home-Grown Feeding Programme (NHGFP) national newspapers and print media outlets like The Sun, Premium Times, Tribune and The Guardian, extensively reported the story on their platforms, educating Nigerians on the intended impact and focus of the programme.¹¹

Credo Experience

Credo Advisory is lending her communications expertise to combating poverty at all levels in Africa. Development communication is an important element of what we do at Credo Advisory. We provide strategic support to the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) in ensuring the smooth execution of poverty eradication objectives. Credo Advisory is providing strategic communications support that will assist the Nigerian government’s goal of eradicating poverty through its social safety net programmes. Credo’s client support to the FGN is focused on providing communications strategies for public advocacy on poverty alleviation initiatives. Through the development of creatives such as social media flyers, banners, explainer and testimonial videos, GIFs, handbills and pamphlets, Credo is helping to promote anti-poor strategies across Nigeria.

Conclusion

For proper grassroots development and poverty reduction to be achieved, participatory communications must be integrated into poverty alleviation programmes. Governments must seek and utilize strategic communication tools which allows for engaging with the opinions of members of target communities.

The fight against poverty can only be won when people have the right information to help them combat impoverishment and access pro-poor initiatives and benefits.

¹⁰ Galaxytvonline. Documentary of Poverty In Nigeria. Available at: <https://www.galaxytvonline.com/video?play=fO-mdtz2eOo&page=CLQBAAA>

¹¹ National Social Investment Programme. Home Grown School feeding Programme Available at: <https://n-sip.gov.ng/nhgsfp/>