

# The theory and practice gap in participatory communication

## A Caribbean case study

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*Abstract: This article addresses the application of the participatory approach in a campaign that addressed gender-based violence in the Caribbean. The project brought together key funding agencies in the region and seven local women's organisations to address the increasing rate of violence against women in Jamaica. Based on information gathered qualitatively from in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and project documents, the article delineates the problems that subvert well-intentioned participatory communication projects when executed using models that otherwise sound good on paper. The article makes key contributions to participatory approach theory and practice by identifying two new areas for future studies to explore, namely the motivations and gratifications of project participants as important predictors of the success or failure of development projects, and the need to focus on a society's value system and its compatibility with the philosophical assumptions behind the participatory approach.*

*Keywords: participatory communication, gender-based violence, qualitative research, Caribbean, development communication, theory application*

The Caribbean faces several development challenges related to social, political and economic underdevelopment. As a less-developed region, these challenges are compounded by the bigger problems faced by the small island developing states (SIDS) which include natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes, diseases, high crime rates, uncertain small economies, and migration challenges. Crime and violence in the Caribbean is mostly attributed to political conflicts, drug use and gang

activities, but gender-specific violence, including domestic violence, rape, incest and other forms of sexual assault that is directed towards women, is equally prevalent (Ffolkes 1997; Lewis-Garraway 2002; Walker & Gill 2000).

In Jamaica, the high prevalence of gender-based violence is also well documented through research and media reports (see for example Ffolkes 1997; Lewis-Garraway 2002; Muturi & Donald 2006; Royes, Samiel, Tate & Fox 2008; UNDP 1999; Walker & Gill 2000). For instance, data from the Kingston Crisis Centre indicate that in 1998 alone, 3,844 women sought help from the centre due to some form of violence against them. This included 109 rapes, 58 incest cases and 1,037 domestic violence cases (Muturi & Donald 2006). Figures from the Victim Support Unit (VSU) show that violence against women more than doubled between 2002 and 2006. About 70% of the reported cases were rape and carnal abuse, while half the victims were under 16 (*Gleaner*, 21 April 2008). Data from the Economic and Social Survey and from the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) also demonstrate that about 24% of all motives to commit murder are linked to domestic violence. This motive is second to reprisals (30%) and higher than drug- and gang-related crimes, at about 21% (Royes et al 2008). New trends have included victimisation of children and the shadowy trafficking of women and minors (Royes et al 2008), which has become a concern among UNICEF and women and children's rights advocates (Muturi & Donald 2006). Over the years, local and international agencies have invested time and resources in an attempt to eradicate it with little or no success.

This article focuses on one of the most notable communication interventions, which sought to address violence against women and girls in Jamaica through a participatory approach. With the leadership of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), several agencies came together and attempted to apply the participatory model in the design of an anti-violence campaign in Jamaica. This article describes the campaign and analyses it against the key tenets of the participatory approach. It addresses some of the challenges in the application of the participatory communication process as experienced in the Jamaican project.

## THE PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION APPROACH

The participatory communication approach has dominated the field of development communication since the 1970s, when Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, proposed the replacement of the pedagogical system with a more liberating type of communication that would contain more dialogue and would be more receiver-centred and more conscious of social structure (Freire 1970). The concept has been integrated fully in the development field since the 1990s (Jacobson & Storey 2004), leading to the discourse on the ideal meaning of participation and application challenges.

Over the years several definitions of participatory communication have emerged from scholars' and practitioners' perceptions of the real meaning of participation in

the development field. For some, participation is the process of joint message construction within a group that aims at the improvement of their existential situation and to change of the social structure (Mody 1991). It is also associated with people's empowerment to enable them to actively contribute in the decision-making process within development programs (Karl 1995; Melkote & Steeves 2001; Nelson & Wright 1995; Okigbo 1996; UNDP 1993).

Participatory communication has been viewed as a process of creating and sharing knowledge, understanding and meanings among stakeholders, and where the project beneficiaries (targeted for change) are actively engaged in the design and implementation of project activities at various levels to achieve the desired goals (Piotrow et al 1997; White 1994). This emphasis calls for a two-way interactive process in which all participants both encode and decode information. Dialogue is among the key tenets of the participatory approach and a revolutionary concept that de-emphasises the transfer of information and expertise, and concerns itself with existing knowledge at the grassroots. The concept of dialogue is associated with Freire, who argued that citizens have the capacity to map and understand their own problems and possible solutions through a dialogic process that could help them make meaning of their circumstances and the available choices. Habermas's theory of communicative action also emphasises bringing the issues into the public sphere, as a key informant and influencer of the participatory approach (Jacobson & Storey 2004).

A valuable contribution of the participatory paradigm is the emphasis on planning and stakeholder participation. This involves creating public participation in identification and addressing their most felt or pressing societal needs through community-based strategies (Agunga 1997; Ascroft & Masilela 1994; Berkowitz & Muturi 1999; UNDP 1993) that are culturally appropriate. A culture-centred approach involves all stakeholders where cultural participants actively engage in identifying the issues that are critical to the community (Dutta & Basu 2007). However, Dutta and Basnyat (2006) note that what is missing in the process is people's voices. They note that:

Practitioners adopting the participatory framework ... ought to examine the ways in which the cultural context and the voices of cultural participants are reflected in such projects. Projects that have a predetermined agenda and seek to use participatory platforms to diffuse this agenda in the community are fundamentally top-down projects in which participation is used as another communication tool for achieving predetermined change. (p.11)

Understanding (or lack thereof) of the participatory process has implications for the success of any project that attempts to apply this approach. Several issues relate to stakeholder involvement (Chambers 1997; Wilkie, Peat, Thomas, Hooper & Croft 2005). From their experiences in Africa, Ascroft and Masilela (1994), for example, raise the issue of operationalisation of the concept (exactly how to measure individual involvement), which is internally inconsistent, abstract and ambiguous in the social sciences. Other issues relate to lack of proper planning and practising top-down deci-

sion-making processes with the justification of not having the time or resources to plan and involve stakeholders (Agunga 1997; Stöh 2007). Mele and Zakaria (2005) warn that participatory methods ought to be used in a creative and flexible way and, if needed, in combination with other approaches, depending on local circumstances; otherwise, these methods risk becoming yet another imposed, top-down approach designed to fulfil and satisfy one's agenda.

The Jamaican project discussed in this article is an example of projects that have attempted to apply the participatory approach in addressing gender-based violence, an issue that directly impacts the society, something recognised as one of the deleterious challenges to Caribbean development and required to be addressed from that perspective. Royes et al (2008) note that 'in view of the systematic manifestation of violence in Jamaica, gender-based violence must be identified and treated as one of the primary and intrinsic sources of violence' (p.vii). With the leadership of the UNDP, a leading international development agency, the project brought together local non-profit organisations and international development organisations in the design and development of an inter-agency campaign that attempted to address the problem using a participatory communication approach. The ultimate goal of this study therefore was to examine the process and challenges faced in the project design and implementation as they attempted to apply the participatory model. The study attempts to answer two research questions: (1) How was the participatory approach applied? (2) What challenges emerged in the application process that others attempting to use it could learn from?

## METHODS

A qualitative approach was found appropriate for this study because of the sensitivity of the topic itself (i.e. violence against women and girls) and the need to understand the issues involved in the participatory intervention campaign. The intent of qualitative research is to understand the deeper structure of a phenomenon and to increase understanding of the phenomenon within cultural and contextual situations (Trauth 2001). As Caroline Allen (1997) argues, 'qualitative research is more appropriate to questions of why and how and it emphasizes the inner world of the values which motivate human behavior' (p.270). Feminist scholars (e.g. Patricia Hill Collins 1990; Madriz 2001) have indicated the importance of qualitative methodologies for studying women-related issues because this approach gives them an opportunity for self-expression and empowerment.

Data for this study were gathered within a period of six months in 2005 and 2006 through a combination of qualitative methodologies. The first phase gave a detailed review of project documents, including project proposals and campaign and financial reports submitted to funding agencies, to collect information on the planning and implementation process and to identify key participants. This was followed by in-

depth interviews with identified respondents who were also identified through a snowball method once the initial contacts were made. In total, 25 key informants who were involved in the project inception and implementation were interviewed, with each interview lasting for a minimum of two hours.

We conducted interviews in English and Patois, the Jamaican Creole, which required little translations. This was done simultaneously with transcriptions and analysis, with the help of two research assistants, both Jamaican natives, who were actively involved in recruiting participants and coordinating interviews and who typed the transcripts. After listening to the transcripts, the first author and one research assistant checked the transcripts to ensure accuracy (Easton, Fry McComish & Greenberg 2000). The researcher and both research assistants also coded the transcribed information to ensure greater reliability and validity of data (Lincoln & Guba 1985). We started data analysis with open coding, which involved identification of discrete concepts (Dutta & Basu 2007) while keeping in mind the broad research questions.

Following analysis, findings were shared with local agencies that had participated in the study at a meeting organised by the Gender Equity Fund of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Findings were also shared in a report that was submitted to CIDA and distributed to key campaign participants for feedback as requested. These two activities were opportunities for member-checking and sharing of study results with participants and community members.

## RESULTS

### *Description of the inter-agency campaign*

The inter-agency campaign, which addressed violence against women and girls in Jamaica, was implemented between November 1998 and November 2001; it was envisioned by UNDP and the Government of Jamaica operating through the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ). Framing gender-based violence as a development problem, UNDP invited several international funding agencies and local non-profit agencies to participate in the campaign planning and implementation. The participating international agencies included the United Nations Fund for Women and Development (UNIFEM), CIDA, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), and the Government of Netherlands through the Royal Netherlands embassy in the Caribbean. These international organisations are at the forefront in providing financial and technical support to the development projects specifically related to gender empowerment. Local agencies invited to participate in the campaign were heavily involved in gender issues in the Jamaica and the wider Caribbean region. They included the Association of Women's Organisations in Jamaica (AWOJA), the Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA), the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, Fathers Inc, Sistren Theatre Collective (Sistren), Woman Inc, and the Women's Media Watch Jamaica. Fathers Inc, the only

male-oriented agency, was invited based on its work on gender issues. As one respondent noted:

The men [Fathers Inc.] came in because we recognize that if we are going to deal with violence against women we have to bring in the men and since they were doing the work of building positive images towards men, because men have a different perspective and you need to get what their perspective is. They worked with the Judges. I don't know that there was any organization that could have taken on the sensitization with the Judges, apart from Women Inc and we are working with the police. (Woman Inc)

The need for male inclusion in the campaign was based on the recognition of men's role in gender equity and empowerment that was emphasised in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and again in the 1995 Women's Conference in Beijing. Following this recognition, Fathers Inc had received funding from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to focus on violence prevention among young boys and girls, and had several community projects that made the agency recognisable among other community-based organisations. Similarly, Teens in Action (TIN), a youth-oriented agency, was also involved in the campaign implementation because of their focus on youth. This agency worked collaboratively with the Sistren, an agency that focuses on the older population and within the inner city communities using theatre as a tool for information dissemination and sensitisation about gender-based violence and other social problems facing women in Jamaica.

## PARTICIPATORY FRAMEWORK

Stakeholder involvement in program planning and implementation is critical in participatory approach. Under UNDP's coordination, representatives from several agencies formed a planning committee that would develop a participatory framework outlining the role of each participating agency. Within that framework, AWOJA, the umbrella association for the non-governmental women's organisations, became the coordinating agency for the NGOs while the UNDP coordinated the funding agencies. When asked about the decision to nominate AWOJA for the project coordination role, one respondent noted:

All the persons who were there were members of AWOJA and at the time none of us had the capacity to do the overall coordination. The initial suggestion was that we would put in more staff at the AWOJA Secretariat and they would handle reporting, or whatever to assist UNDP instead of several different persons reporting to UNDP. We would all report to AWOJA and they in turn take all of that report to make one big report and send it off to UNDP. The UNDP would do the same and report to the other donors who gave the money to them. (Women's Media Watch)

### Campaign goals and objectives

The overall campaign goal was to promote an environment in which women and girls can live a life free of violence and be recognised as valuable partners in life, in the development of society, in the process of democratic governance, and in the advancement of a culture of non-violence and respect for universal human rights (Muturi & Donald 2006). This goal would be achieved through raising awareness and increasing sensitivity in relation to violence against women and its deleterious impact on social, economic and human development. Specific objectives included:

- To conduct gender sensitivity training workshops and seminars on gender-based violence
- To increase the general public's awareness of, and sensitivity to, the problem of violence against women
- To increase the public's access to information (printed and via the electronic media) on violence against women
- To mobilise public support for initiatives to combat the problem of violence against women
- To mobilise the media community to highlight the issues of violence against women and to encourage sensitive coverage of the issue.

Various strategies and tactics were implemented with key stakeholders in the prevention of violence against women. These stakeholders included lawmakers and keepers – police force, judges and other member of the judiciary; teenagers in selected high schools and in government homes of safety in urban, inner-city and rural communities; women and men in selected inner city and rural communities; media workers; health workers; household workers; parliamentarians; and church communities, specifically ministers of religion in major and para-church communities. The campaign sought to sensitise these stakeholders, among other publics, on gender- and violence-related issues and to equip them with useful tools in understanding, among other subjects, legislative and policy changes, at national and international levels related to such violence.

### Campaign activities

The campaign objective, strategies and implementing activities were prioritised through a series of meetings among all participating agencies, laying out the roles of each agency towards achieving the overall campaign goal. A similar approach was used among funding agencies that supported certain elements of the campaign based on their program focus. This collaboration among funding agencies ensured that all activities and agencies received funding, some for the first time, from the international community, which was viewed as strength in addressing a common good. As one respondent noted:

Unity is strength, and at times combined effort helps to send a more thorough and forceful message which cannot be ignored. The campaign created also an opportunity to pull on the strengths of other agencies to get the overall work done. (BWA)

Each agency targeted a certain group that was deemed critical in the fight against gender-based violence, but all activities were set up to complement each other systematically as one respondent, a former AWOJA staff member noted: 'It was a more systematic approach because Sistren's was trying to reach everybody through theatre ... Women's Media Watch was given the media to work with ... Woman Inc was given the police ... Women's Bureau was given the Judges to work with from a policy point of view ... Teens in Action were given the schools ... and Fathers Inc was brought in because we wanted to reach the males at the inner city communities. The churches were brought in because we realized that women were in the church ...'

Mass media activities included a series of radio and television public service announcements, supplemented by print material like bumper stickers, posters, pamphlets and bookmarks produced through Women's Media Watch. By having a centralised location for production and distribution, it enabled consistency of the message across the campaign that carried the same theme – '*breaking free of violence*' against women and girls.

Media relations activities included involvement of media personnel in the campaign planning and implementation. Women's Media Watch engaged several media professionals, including owners and editors of main media houses, in a variety of dialogues in the campaign. As a result of their involvement, some radio and television channels also contributed airtime for the campaign messages. Respondents associated this media involvement with the increased coverage of gender issues that was observed during the campaign.

Interpersonal communication strategies included a series of workshops designed to achieve awareness and gender sensitivity objectives and formal training sessions among those considered as key stakeholders. The workshops targeted key stakeholders, such as media professionals, the police force and other law makers, health care workers, men and women in the communities, and girls and boys (ages 11-18) who needed to build their self-esteem and decision-making abilities in relation to life choices they make (Muturi & Donald 2005).

Several strategies were used at the workshops based on the agencies' specialisation and the target audience. For instance, Sistren and Teens in Action used entertainment education strategy through drama while Women's Media Watch and Woman Inc used educational and brainstorming approaches. Woman Inc used a training of trainers approach with the police constabulary force and others with some leadership roles where those who received training were able to reach others in the communities. Explaining how the approach worked, one police officer noted:

Well, based on our training, we were trained in 2000 at the University and our mandate really was to go and disseminate information to, not necessarily police officers, but to

the wider community. We find that we had a wide mix of community people who came to be trained in that we had people from the churches, we had the NGOs, we had social groups, we had the guidance counselors, we had teachers, you name it, just about everybody. (Police inspector, male)

Though the campaign had limited time, this training of trainers approach ensured that more people who were not directly targeted were reached. Local organisations such as churches, schools and community organisations were used as channels of information dissemination at an interpersonal communication level.

#### EVALUATING THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

The goal of this study was to examine the application of the participatory approach as applied in the campaign with the leadership of UNDP. One key theme that emerged from the evaluation was effectiveness of the project at the initial planning stages. UNDP effectively mobilised both funding and implementing agencies, thus pulling human and financial resources for the same goal – eliminate violence against women. In spite of criticisms of many development projects for lack of planning, the project spent adequate time on planning and development of the participatory framework involving various stakeholders in the planning process, identifying roles and responsibilities of each agency based on their specialisation.

##### *Problem with inclusion*

In spite of campaign efforts to include all stakeholders, there were concerns that several key stakeholders were left out who could have contributed financially and in the campaign implementation and to ensure campaign sustainability. Those mentioned in the interviews included the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNESCO, the Ministry of Health, agencies dealing with children such as UNICEF and the Caribbean Early Childhood Association, and the Caribbean Child Development Centre (CCDC). Others left out included local private agencies through the private sector of Jamaica (PSOJ), those in the public sector like the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica, as well as community based organisations (CBOs) such as churches and other faith-based organisations that work directly with those affected by violence at the community levels.

With gender-based violence now being recognised as a public health issue (PAHO 2003; Population Council 2001), it was imperative to involve the public health community as a critical partner in the project either as a resource or implementation agency. Based on the interviews, there was an attempt to involve health professionals at the campaign planning stage but this did not materialise. A respondent noted:

I think more involvement of the health sector would have been ideal in the project. I know that the Nurses Association, they came to an advisory meeting and I don't see their involvement coming. I am always concerned about health because we want to know what the costs are related to health issues. (Former staff member, AWOJA)

The inclusion of men in the campaign was also problematic. In spite of the recognised role of men in addressing gender-based violence, Fathers Inc played a minimal role at the planning meetings and was completely excluded in the second phase of the project under BWA coordination. Respondents from the agency pointed to gender imbalance where women dominated the campaign, ideological differences and the lack of capacity within Fathers Inc to make meaningful contributions. Several respondents noted that men's perspective sought to reinforce masculinity and that they lacked apathy for the victims of gender-based violence. They pointed to a lack of a better understanding of the issue and inadequate professional capacity to carry out their roles as key challenges that prevented compatibility of Father's Inc with women's organisations. Overall, however, respondents indicated the need to include men as a key partner in fighting gender-based violence.

##### *Lack of capacity among NGOs*

Capacity building is a critical component in the participatory approach to enable those involved to carry out their role in the project. Though campaign activities were discussed and laid out in the participatory framework, some agencies lacked the capacity to carry them out adequately as outlined in the participatory framework due to lack of human resources. One respondent noted:

The capacity of the participating members has to be taken into consideration. You cannot know how strong the umbrella organization is in coordinating; you also have to ask what the capacity of the individual member agencies is, particularly their project implementation skills which tends to be the center of the overall project. So you must know that those who have been working on it for a while and therefore have the capacity to get the work done and there are those that need more time to work on their part.

Some agencies lacked the capacity to carry out the activities within the deadlines laid out by funding agencies because they relied on volunteers. Referring to Fathers Inc, one respondent from Sistren noted that 'They sent in several people but the persons they kept sending could not get work done and yet time was a key factor on the campaign, so they could not be at the sessions with us.'

Time was a crucial challenge to NGOs that rely on a small pool of volunteers and no permanent secretariat. As a respondent from Sistren noted: 'If we had the money, many of us [implementing agencies] could have hired someone to get things done on time, but they said that was our contribution to the campaign'. This lack of human resources made the agencies feel rushed by AWOJA or UNDP to complete their activities with little support, which ultimately contributed to the conflicts that emerged at the project implementation stage.

##### *Project coordination challenges*

A participatory process involving several stakeholders requires proper planning and coordination, particularly in the communication process, ensuring uniformity of infor-

mation is disseminated across campaign participants. This uniformity was lacking in the campaign, which was associated with communication breakdown between coordinating and implementing agencies, particularly on the financial reporting process. One key problem emerged when UNDP approached the local agencies directly for project reports due to the pressure from other funding agencies and when AWOJA could not deliver them.

Programmatic challenges within AWOJA were exacerbated by power imbalances between NGOs and funding agencies and among members of various agencies. Some agencies were composed of women who are powerful in society, such as lawyers, police officers and businesswomen and others with high income and social status, while others were made of people of middle and low status. Sistrin is composed of women who used to work as household helpers, and are thus with low social-economic status. Father's Inc and TIN fell in this category, with limited influence in the decision-making process, as opposed to Woman Inc, whose members hold high social status. The societal imbalance was reflected in the committee within AWOJA, where some agencies or individual members had more influence on the internal operations than others. This influence included the hiring process of project staff, reporting and disbursement of funds, and the overall control of the project coordination. As such, tensions between coordinating and implementing agencies emerged, some of which was taken to a personal level among participants.

As a result of conflicts that emerged within the campaign at personal, agency and programmatic levels, the campaign was terminated after one year of implementation to give all participants time to reflect on the process and the project as a whole. Many respondents associated this termination with inadequate coordination. As noted in one interview:

So the challenge is that they needed to have a strong, but strong is not the word, you know, cohesive coordinator whether it is an individual or an agency you have to have somebody with that kind of understanding vision, the person would have to have a vision understand how to facilitate and to breakdown the turf in which we still have, to break down the turf and help to make the thing cohesive and good.

#### *Problems with government involvement*

The campaign resumed after three months of re-planning, with the Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA), a government agency on gender, replacing AWOJA in the coordination role. It was clear from the interviews that, based on the conflicts among participating NGOs, UNPD needed a non-partisan agency that would ensure implementation of activities. The UNDP coordination also changed in the second phase, requiring them to take a more active role in the campaign coordination, working closely with BWA in implementing all remaining campaign activities. This change was proven to be successful.

In spite of the perceived success, NGOs were concerned about BWA's inability to understand the operations of the non-profit field, specifically the challenges faced in implementing assigned activities without human resources, and the replacement of the participatory approach with a bureaucratic one. Though they worked on a volunteer basis, many participants felt policed to complete their assigned roles. Respondents noted that this new approach not only demotivated the volunteers, but also led to the departure of some of them from the campaign, leaving fewer people to carry out the activities. One of the respondents who had left the campaign in the second phase noted:

The second phase was very mediocre to me, didn't have the hype as the first phase did, certainly not, because with the Bureau they disseminate the cash for you to do the work. In the first phase of the campaign we had meetings, periodical meetings to get an update through AWOJA what was happening with other groups and what they were doing, so I don't know in the second phase whether or not the Bureau was meeting with the stakeholders and say how are things going, are you meeting your time line? I don't know. Many of us had lost interest by then and had left the project.

The bureaucratic approach of BWA was strongly criticised by NGOs for failure to understand the meaning of NGOs, specifically for women to connect with each other at the meetings and during campaign implementation. For them, NGOs are for connection, networking and building relationships at a personal level with others and among members who come together for a common good, which motivated them to participate in the campaign. Emphasising this relationship building disappeared in the second campaign phase, one respondent noted:

If you are at the meeting others who are there embrace you and they make you feel good and when you leave you know, you are feeling good about what your project is doing. You feel empowered also to see what others are doing. It's a different thing, not exactly what was happening with the Bureau. We did not have that connection.

Speaking of the BWA approach, another respondent noted:

The new coordinator was what you call 'task oriented', making sure you do what you were supposed to do and get it done. So when you call to say, I need to get such and such done, and she also had an approach where the NGOs were capable of doing the work ... her report and she needs them by X time and if she doesn't get them by X time she will call to find out why it is not on her desk ... she wasn't on your face or overlooking your shoulder or anything, she just wanted to make sure the job was done. But this doesn't sit very well with NGOs. They are used to taking their time.

NGOs were also concerned about the approach funding agencies took, which again was associated with their lack of understanding of the wider gender-based violence problem that the campaign addressed. One respondent for instance noted that:

They come with their own agenda but my hope would be that they would and see this problem on violence against women in context. They expect us to address it as an



isolated issue with certain activities, but we cannot separate it from the general violence in society. Any attempt to separate it by targeting men or women for some specialized treatment that is not going to produce much result.

Having been involved in the planning process and therefore understanding the project goals and objectives, BWA was however sceptical about the achievement of the campaign objectives. Assessing their participation in the second campaign phase, a respondent from BWA who had worked closely with the NGOs noted:

Some of the workshops were very poorly implemented like the seminars. While the quality and content of the seminar was good, I do not think the desired objectives were met due to the very poor attendance at each session. I think everything was hurriedly done because the project was approaching its close and the UNDP had retrenchment exercises at that time. So many agencies hurried to get things done without much focus or interest.

However, from a funding agency perspective, BWA's coordination enabled the project's completion as planned in the second phase, which was a measure of success. As noted in the interviews, by the bureau stepping in, it brought about the coordination and stability that was required since they had money and other resources, including office staff, to coordinate the project.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Several lessons can be learned from this case study which can inform both the theory and application of the participatory approach to development and social change experiments. Like many developing societies, the small Caribbean islands are faced with scarcity of financial and human resources. Hence the need for collaboration in addressing critical issues that face the countries. The Jamaican Inter-Agency campaign against gender-based violence was an example of a collaborative effort. As a leading advocate of the participatory approach in social, health and development programs, the UNDP had an ideal vision for the campaign that would pool together human and financial resources to address a problem that requires a multisectoral and inter-agency cooperation. This article has examined the process of designing and implementing the program and more importantly the challenges that participating agencies faced at the planning and implementation phase of the campaign.

As indicated in the literature, studies have continued to emphasise equal participatory opportunities for all stakeholders to participate in project design and implementation. The Jamaican campaign demonstrates the need for a framework that would pinpoint the role of each participant in the overall project. Such a framework not only ensures equal opportunities among stakeholders but also provides a framework for documenting project activities. This study clearly demonstrated a need for capacity building, even though it took into account the speciality of each participating group so as to ensure that participating agencies continued with their established roles,

given the magnitude of the project and the nature of NGOs, many of them relying on volunteers.

The problems emerging at the implementation level are, however, all too familiar and are a good lesson for future reference. As the literature indicates, the problem with the participatory approach is in the translation of what is known in theory into practice. In this project, the planning meetings discussed all the project activities based on the ideal participatory model. However, what actually happened in project implementation was determined by a variety of factors. Leadership problems starting from the top, lack of NGO capacity, particularly to keep up with the demands and requirements of the UNDP and other funding agencies, personal issues within the local organisations, and failure to foresee possible problems and address them proactively contributed to the problems faced by this project. This means that in approaches that combine participating agencies with different working cultures, governance structures, capacities and ethics, there is a need to include a harmonisation effort either through a secretariat or training programs throughout the life of the project.

Capacity building is a critical component in a sustainable participatory project. Based on the experiences of NGOs in the Jamaican project, it was clear that this lack of understanding of the reporting process contributed to the challenges they faced throughout the campaign. Other agencies that had capacity and had worked with the international community prior to the campaign had fewer challenges. There were also others who did not understand the participatory framework as a whole. This demonstrates the need for communication and training to ensure understanding and uniformity of information and skills among participating agencies.

The Jamaican experience leads us to conclude that even with the emphasis on equal opportunities in the participatory approach, issues related to power and influence of stakeholders need to be taken into consideration both in the theoretical and practical application of the approach. The campaign involved people with various social-economic statuses, some with much influence in Jamaican society. This influence was to some extent reflected in the project, where some personalities and agencies became more influential in the decision-making process than others, which eventually led to conflicts that terminated the campaign in the first phase. This means that in societies where status and influence might stand in the way of a level playing field for equal participation in decision making, a paradigm shift to address such inconsistencies might be needed. One possible shift is to incorporate in the participatory approach an alternative value system that emphasises individual and democratic rights over other traditional symbols that confer power and status. This finding also points to a bigger theoretical issue of whether the participatory approach is better suited to societies with a history of democratic culture than to traditional societies. This is worth investigating in future studies.

It is critical to consider the role of the funding agencies in a participatory approach. Given their mandate and control, which is associated with their role as financial resources, do they have the same role as the implementing agencies? Also, should they participate in the project or stay outside as observers to oversee the process? Several questions remain in regard to the role of UNDP in the Jamaican project. As an initiator of the project and coordinator of the funding agencies, it was still unclear about the ideal role of UNDP in the participatory process. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in future participatory projects that rely on donor funding or involve funding agencies in the participatory process. In the Jamaican project the funding agencies only supported certain activities based on which agency was implementing them.

Whereas the universal meaning of the ideal participatory approach has been documented, this study demonstrates that the meaning of the concept is different from the Jamaican NGO perspective, which saw an opportunity for networking, brainstorming and supporting each others' activities. This was a different meaning from the funding agencies, which used a task-oriented approach to ensure that all participating agencies implemented their activities and submitted their reports within deadlines. As this study demonstrates, without the shared meanings, conflicts are likely to occur. Therefore, by identifying and adding another layer of understanding to what the participatory approach means, this study has made a theoretical contribution. We will call this layer the 'motivations and gratifications layer'. From the views of the NGO participants in the second phase of the project, we can conclude that the participatory approach is more than a process through which stakeholders leverage their resources towards a shared vision. The process must cultivate a culture and environment for networking and support that energises and renews participants and reinforces a sense of ownership and empowerment. A lack of that energy and space seems to have turned the Jamaican project into another task-oriented undertaking along the way. Future studies might consider motivations and gratifications among participants in the participatory approach as predictors of the failure or success of development projects. Creating an environment that satisfies those needs might in future be as important as the project itself.

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