

OFFICE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR  
Kenya-Tanzania Province

## AN EVALUATIVE REPORT

### The Four Ps: Perspective, Parameter, Production, and Purpose

As with everything else, reporting on something--be it an event, activity, situation, or responsibility--requires a certain parameter that is based on a particular perspective. By and large, this perspective mitigates an assessment or evaluation so that the report becomes worth its dime, valuable and somehow transformative.

A report is not just a matter of taking stock of what had taken place and what not. Beyond cataloguing achievements and failures, or presenting a record of the past and present, what could be marked out as of great importance is the commitment to take progressive steps, no matter how small, toward achieving a goal. An evaluative report is a dynamic tool for such enterprise.

#### I. A Perspective: Locating the Office of the Communications Coordinator in the Province

When reflecting on any of our particular responsibilities in the Society, our congregation's constitutions is a good place to start. Paragraph 115 explains that "communication at its most profound level is the giving of self in love and consequently a basic attitude necessary for us Divine Word Missionaries." This is a very important statement, which must be expounded and discussed with greater clarity and astuteness. However, our constitutions stop midway. With half-baked thoughts on who and how a communicator should be, the document then starts talking in much greater length about the *means* of communication. Rightly or wrongly, the impression is that we need to pay more attention to and put greater emphasis on the means or medium when communicating. No wonder many of us confreres "expect" the communications coordinator to be a 'wizard' in communication media. No wonder, too, we limit our understanding of communication to activities that are *mediated* by print or electronic media. The practical consequence of this should be obvious. Because communication for us is fundamentally *technology-mediated*, it is therefore better left to the experts and the initiatives of the Communications Coordinator. This is disappointing, to say the least.

It is said that before the advent of cell phone there was already mobile phone. At that time, cordless telephone, which only offered telephone service within limited range as it was using fixed line, was actually considered mobile phone. Eventually, mobility is what caught the fancy of many, and from there a need was felt to have phones be carried everywhere. And so it happened that mobile phones became cell phones.

Nowadays, the ubiquitous presence of cell phones and, later on, the internet in the life of almost every *Kamau*, *Njoroge*, and *Ochieng* is a social statement: everyone wants to get connected. The desire to belong is deeply embedded in our personal psyche, in much the way as the need of each of us to be always in the loop and in the know is very real.

Our founder St Arnold Janssen understood this need. But he also knew that communication cannot be reduced to mass media (cf. *In the Dialogue with the Word*, Nr 3, pa. 19). He must have discerned, quite appropriately, that there is much to communication other than focusing on the electronic medium. More than anything else, our communication must be about "a giving of self in love" (SVD Cons., pa. 115). This declaration alone should give us plenty of reasons to engage ourselves in communication activities, participate in communication initiatives, and support communication projects.

**II. A Parameter:  
Functions of the  
Provincial  
Communications  
Coordinator**

The *Handbook for Superiors SVD* lays down somewhat distinctly the duties and responsibilities of the Communications Coordinator. The first two of the eight stipulated functions of the coordinator contain formative and educative agenda ---“the promotion of a basic communication education program for all confreres in the province” (pa. 7.4.1) --- including those still in formation. Such directive calls for a broader participation among members of the province as it could have wide-ranging implications. This is an area that seeks the understanding of many, implying as it is that communication is not just the responsibility of the coordinator, but rather a concerted effort of the whole province.

The third function of the Communications Coordinator is the “promotion and coordination of communication activities in the province.” The underlined words could not be emphasized enough. As the coordinator promotes, he also coordinates. The assumption here is that confreres pick up the initiatives, enthusiastically join the bandwagon of communication activities, which the coordinator then coordinates. Naturally, it is difficult to coordinate activities that are not happening, just as it is absurd to expect the coordinator to do his job when nobody is contributing or taking action in the area of concern.

The remaining five functions of the communications coordinator simply instruct the assigned confrere to plan with other provinces (pa. 7.4.4), write evaluation and recommendation to the province (pa. 7.4.5), send triennial report to the generalate (pa. 7.4.6), furnish report or information to the communications coordinator at the generalate (pa. 7.4.7), and participate in communication meetings and congresses on the national and international level (pa.7.4.8). These five functions could easily turn something like a bloated balloon which does not have much content, if the demands of the first three functions are not met.

**III. The  
Production:  
Ventures and  
Undertakings**

The office of the Communications Coordinator in the province was created in 2002, when Fr. James Mailady assumed the provincial leadership. The office is now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year, and there is nothing much it could show to manifest the legitimacy of its existence. Even then, the Communications Coordinator should be the last person to justify the continuing presence of his office. As the office was created by the Society and established locally by the province, and that confreres comprise the province, it is therefore incumbent on confreres and their duty to validate, defend, and support the office’s existence.

***Jambo***

Over the years, the province’s newsletter has become the banner of the Communication Coordinator. It does not have to be; but it is what it is.

Further, as you might have observed, *Jambo* has gone digital and has evolved from print newsletter into an e-newsletter. The decision to take this direction was based on three considerations, namely: postage cost, speed, and the easy availability of the latest technology called Internet. Of course, there are compromises. Print publication is still the favored choice of many as it proves more “real” and pleasant to read. However, although an e-newsletter, *Jambo* could still be printed at the reader’s end. In fact, it should be printed, especially in communities where its hard copy could be read by three or more confreres. Question is: Do we make printouts of *Jambo* in our communities?

The assertion that everyone in the community receives it electronically, must have read it already online, hence no need to have it printed is a valid excuse but a flimsy argument. To hit the nail on its head, we could remind ourselves about the importance of keeping in our library and archive copies of our SVD and province documents. And then, there is the issue of sharing our newsletter to our guests and friends, who could read copies of *Jambo* during their visits in our communities if we have them printed.

*Jambo* used to be published quarterly. Last year, however, three issues only were produced. The shortfall was mainly the fault of the communication coordinator who found it increasingly difficult to juggle one responsibility with another.

#### **Partnership with Mission Animation Coordinator**

Mission Animation is an office full of possibilities. It is also an area that entails lots of communication activities. For a start, a mission video about the province is one thing that can help the animation and can promote the “cause” of our work here and abroad. This is one possibility. Reality however has already embraced other possibilities, aided and partnered by the office of Communications Coordinator. This partnership resulted to the production of 2010 province calendar, Jubilee streamer/banner, and bookmarks.

#### **Province Blog on [kentanprov.wordpress.com](http://kentanprov.wordpress.com)**

Ken-Tan province officially started traversing the online information superhighway last year, with the setting up of a blog site. Of course, online communication had already been pretty much of use in the province, with almost all confreres here now having email accounts.

The establishment of a blog has enabled the province to share brief and timely information with friends and confreres here and abroad. As the administrator of the blog account, the communication coordinator tries his level best ---and in consonance to his heavy workload --- to keep up with new entries.

Judging from the feedback and comments received online, the blog has been successful in linking up the province with friends, especially the Kenyan confreres abroad who are eager to hear news from us.

A plan is already in the pipeline to put up a website for the province, a project which, hopefully, will see the light of day this year.

#### **Directorship of Social Communication in Tangaza: Setting a Trend**

The province’s decision to commit a confrere to Tangaza to head the Institute of Social Community (ISC) has created a new chapter of missionary engagement in the province. Both as a specialized ministry and as an apostolate that falls under one of the Society’s characteristic dimensions, the taking up of ISC directorship could serve as a pivotal point for other confreres in the province who are discerning on new modes of doing mission in a country now saturated with missionary congregations, both foreign and local.

#### **Equipments and Media**

In 2002, communications equipments, such as camcorder, video projector, DVD player, VHS player and recorder, and sound system were purchased with the money raised from the “Cycling for Cause” organized by two confreres who cycled from Kenya to Tanzania, and then a reverse route the following year. Part of the money used in the acquisition of the photocopying machine in the provincial office also came from the cycling event.

This year a digital SLR (Single Lens Reflex) professional camera has been bought, together with some accessories. It is hoped that in the latter part of this year a professional video camera can also be acquired.

A new desk top computer equipped with video editing software and hardware has been installed in our provincial house.

#### **IV. The Purpose: Evaluation and Conclusion**

It is claimed that the four characteristic dimensions of our Society is neither a spur-of-the-moment inspiration nor a creation of the delegates to the 2000 General Chapter. What seemed to be the consensus was that these dimensions had been growing in the grassroots of confreres for a considerable number of years.

In the province of Kenya-Tanzania, the grassroots must be growing towards another orientation, if the dimension like communication is anything to go by, as it has failed to make its mark in the hearts and minds of confreres.

It is therefore essential to re-examine our purpose for doing mission. If we accept the premise that evangelization is an important component of mission, and that evangelization is primarily the proclamation of the Gospel which *a priori* requires communication, then mission contains a communicative character.

Thus, we can say that a missionary cannot but communicate and that an SVD cannot but engage in communication apostolate in its varied forms and diverse aspects. If we pursue this, it could make the office of the Communications Coordinator a truly significant player and active part of the province. Cultivating a culture of communication is a must for all of us.

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Report prepared by: Narciso Cellan, SVD  
Communications Coordinator  
Kenya-Tanzania Province  
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