

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN PUBLIC RELATIONS
(A CASE STUDY OF THE AMHARA REGION BUREAU OF INFORMATION)

**BY
ERMIYAS TSEGAYE**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF
THE ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION**

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ABSTRACT

The study attempts to explore the application of social responsibility in the Bureau of Information in the Amhara region and factors affecting it. The study explores the perception and experiences of the PR practitioners towards their social responsibility roles. The data was collected through in-depth interview, focus group discussions, observation and documentary analysis.

The data collected from different sources shows that research is not part of their public relations function. The flow of information is one-sided from the government to their strategic publics`. Its practice is focused on controlling than adjusting and adapting to its environment. Publics` interest is not the primary consideration of their public relations function. There is no organized system of receiving feedback from their publics`. The organization suffers from credibility and image (reputation) problem. The organization does not incorporate the interests and concerns of their publics` well into the research, planning, communication and evaluation phases of public relations. The image psychology affects the practitioners and supervisors not to report unsuccessful attempts (failures, problems) because they think of its “Image spoiling effect”. The practice is guided by the wrong assumptions that what is transmitted will be received by the intended publics`. The organization tries to persuade without understanding its surrounding environment, publics` interests and practitioners concerns. The organization does not accomplish its social responsibility role as it is not a responsible advocate for what it represents.

The research also identifies the internal and external factors affecting their social responsibility role. The paper argues that two-way communication, dialogue and interaction with strategic publics` is important in discharging social responsibility role. Listening and responding to the publics` interest is the cornerstone for effective public relations. The research identifies possible solutions that narrow the gap between what is practiced and what should be practiced.

DEDICATION

To my mother, *Yetemegn Ayenew Getahun*, who has paid bitter and untold sacrifice for my success in life.

ABBREVIATIONS

AMMAJ=The Amhara Mass Media Agency Journalists
ANRSBOI=The Amhara National Regional State Bureau of Information
APRS=The Arab Public Relations Society
FAPRA=Federation of African Public Relations Associations
FGD=Focus group discussions
IABC=The International Association of Business Communicators
IPRA= The International Public Relations Associations
NIPR= The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations
P=Publics
PR= Public Relations
PRP=Public Relations Practitioners
PRPD=Public Relations Practitioners in Different Bureaus
PRSA=Public Relations Society of America
PRSK=The Public Relations Society of Kenya
ZIPR= The Zimbabwe Institute of Public Relations

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to explore the application of social responsibility in the public relations process and factors (trends) affecting it. In doing so, it analyzes the attitude of practitioners by using in-depth interview, focus group discussions, observation and documentary analysis. The introductory chapter introduces the research problem and the need for studying the topic. It gives background for the public relations practice especially the publics` of public relations, social responsibility and other related issues of the practice. The focus is on the Bureau of Information in the Amhara region which is a governmental branch.

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Public relations is all about good will and building positive attitudes across the audiences that an organization depends upon for success. One accepted definition was adopted in 1978 in Mexico City during the First World Assembly of Public Relations Associations and the First World Forum of Public Relations:

Public relations practice is the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of actions which will serve both the organization's and the public interest (Newsom and Carrel 2001: 4).

Public relations must be a two-way activity: listening to what the public thinks, as well as projecting the organizations messages. It follows that public relations efforts can only be effective where the aims of the organization are compatible with the aims of the public (Haywood 2002:15-16). The good will of the public is the greatest asset any organization can have. A public that is well informed and holds a positive attitude toward the organization is critical to its survival (Wells et al.1998:560). It is just that public relations is widely known for trying to persuade publics to a particular point of view (Newsom & Haynes 2005:12-13). Simply put, this is the battle to win public opinion and gain public support (Caywood 1997: 456).

Public relations people who think they can be only image-makers or spokespersons for whatever management wants to say are borrowing trouble and abducting their role as institutional strategist. Since the public relations practitioner must go to the public to seek support for programs and policies, public interest is the central criterion by which he or she should select these programs and policies (PR practitioners must have the guts to say no to the client or to refuse a deceptive program) (Newsom, Turk & Cruckeberg 2004:3). An organization with effective public relations will attain positive public relationships. *If all public relations does is maintain the statusquo, it is being used ineffectively* (Center and Jackson 2003:1-2).

James Grunig and colleagues in *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* wrote that, in a normative sense, public relations should serve the public interest, develop mutual understanding between organizations and their publics, contribute to informed debate about issues in society, and facilitate dialogue between organizations and their publics (Newsom and Carrel 1996:102-103). Not surprisingly, development communication scholars have taken the same tack in arguing against the top-down, persuasive nature of nation building campaigns. Typical is Melkote's (1991) critique that nation building campaigns are pro-persuasive, pro-one-way communication, pro-mass media, and pro-literacy. In Short, nation building campaigns are not relationship building processes as much as they are one-way, top-down, linear programs. Publicity has often been the bench mark for evaluating the effectiveness of Third World public relations. Public relations efforts geared toward communicating the wishes of the powers-that-be-reflect the asymmetrical two-way communication model. That is goals are established largely to achieve the self-interest of government development agencies, which are usually subservient to the government and not necessarily to their strategic publics (Ibid.100).

Third world public relations tends to adhere to the press agency, publicity, and the public information models (Bhimani, 1986; Pratt, 1985; Pratt & Ugboajah, 1985; Sriramesh, 1992). In essence, practitioners in the developing nations are "less inclined to seek information from their publics because they do not intend to shape organizational activities to the needs of their

environment” (Sriramesh, 1992:204). In developing nations, public relations employees work largely as receptionists and/or communication agents (Culbertson and Chen 1996: 249). Al-Enad (1990) described public relations in the Third world as driven by a living rule of *public be damned*, as geared toward propaganda, and as exploited by government and private institutions both to react to and to trigger positive changes in society (Ibid.391). Public relations is an important element in implementing government policy. Publics are affected by government decisions and vice versa, and those who support government or grant its legitimacy must grasp these relationships (Culbertson and Chen 1996:246).

Selecting key publics and addressing their wants, interests and needs is important in public relations (Smith 2003:63-64). Acceptable performance, dialogue and interaction with the publics affected by that performance is the heart of public relations (Haberman and Dolphin 1988:10). This means that the task of PR people is not simply to communicate management’s views to the public. The task also involves communicating the views of the public to management. The objectives of an institution and its public relations program must be designed with the needs and desires of the public clearly in mind (Newsom & Haynes 2005:5). Public relations involves research and analysis, policy formation, programming, communication and feedback from a variety of publics (Oliver 2004:146).

I assumed that public relations practice is dominated by the presupposition that the purpose of public relations is to *manipulate* the behavior of publics for the assumed, if not actual, benefit of the manipulated publics as well as the organization. The world view holding that presupposition and the alternatives to it can be described by four models of public relations. The four models of public relations are representations of the values, goals and behaviors held or used by organizations when they practice public relations. I have called these models “Press Agency/ publicity”, “Public Information”, “Two-way asymmetric” and “Two-way symmetric”. In their recent work on the models, however, J.E. Grunig and L.A.Grunig (1992) followed Hellweg’s (1989) suggestion and redesigned the four models in terms of two continua: One of *craft* and one of *professional public relations*. In other words “practitioners of craft public relations seem to believe that their job consists solely of the application of communication as an end in itself. To them the purpose of public relations is simply to get

publicity or information into the media or other channels of communication. Practitioners of professional public relations in contrast rely on a body of knowledge as well as technique and see public relations as having a strategic purpose for an organization: To manage conflict and build relationships with strategic publics that limit the autonomy of the organization.” (Newsom, Turk & Cruckeberg 2004:148).

I would like to end by arguing not only that the two-way symmetrical model is a more moral and ethical approach to public relations than the other models but that is also a more effective model in practice (Ibid.40). One reason for the two-way symmetrical model for public relations is seen as desirable is that it allows for input from all affected publics and for negotiations about policy decisions (Ibid:148). Best practices in public relations suggest that a symmetrical system for communication is desirable in an organization (Ibid.118). As Melkote’s (1991) has suggested shifting the posture of development support communication programs from a one-way asymmetrical stance to two-way symmetrical communication. Further political leaders do not disagree in the abstract that dialogue and two-way communication contribute to mutual understanding between the organizations and their publics (Newsom and Carrel 1996:102-103).

There is a movement throughout the world from one-way to two-way communication and more emphasis on knowledge and persuasion as part of relation building (Ibid.354). Public relations is valued for its strategic contributions (Hendrix 1988:216). Understanding all publics is vital to issue management (Culbertson et al., 1993:24). The backbone of successful public relations efforts is understanding organizations publics. *The difficulty that organizations have in dealing with publics is the fact that they have conflicting interests.* Increasingly, an organizations long term relationships with its various publics are seen as being responsible for its image, its reputation (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:67). An organization’s policies and actions determine its reputation-in other words, reputation is built on practices, not press releases or corporate image ads (Wells 1998:571).

Public relations must create constant awareness in management of the institution’s responsibility to all its publics (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:149-151). Think of

WIN (wants, interests and needs): you will win your publics support by addressing their wants, interests and needs rather than your own. *Practitioners should be responsible primarily to their strategic publics, and not just to their organization's managers* (Newsom and Carrel 1996:101-102). Public relations has been called the conscience of the management, which underscores PR's role in reminding an organization of its social responsibility to all of its publics (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:146). Insensitivity to the composition of publics, their interrelationships, their relationships with members of other publics (as well as to your organization), their ideals and their attitudes may lead an organization to waste much time, effort and money on public relations programs that bore or offend the intended recipients or have a negative effect on unintended recipients. When listening and responding effectively go together, the conscience of management takes on a new perspective (Ibid.104). Feedback is vitally important to check how well *your messages* are accepted by the audiences you are trying to influence (Ibid.22).

The public relations process is a method of solving problems. It has four phases: Research, objectives, programming and evaluation (Hendrix 2004: 4). As a leading text points out (Baskin, Aronoff, & Latimore 1997:107); *Research is a vital function in the process of public relations*. Management demands hard facts, not intuition or guess work. All sound public relations begins with research and ends with evaluation. Building public relationships has no room for *winners and losers* (Kitchen 1997:375-376).

When I looked back over my long work experience in the Amhara Region from senior public relations expert to the head of Press and Information department in the Bureau of Information, many things comes to my mind as a practitioner. I questioned my mind if we were doing public relations in the real sense of the term. Whether our activities are ethically responsible or where our practice fit into the globally desirable practices. I couldn't find a course in the post-graduate program to give reply to my sensitive and questioning mind. This triggers me to read more on the subject and identify the gap to be filled, step to be taken and a concern arising that should be addressed. My readings enlightened me to dig deep into knowing why things happen as they are. I observed that the Bureau of Information do not give much attention in listening the concerns of their strategic publics`.

This paper tries to explore the practitioners' application of social responsibility in the public relations process. Factors (trends) affecting the social responsibility role will be assessed and analyzed. Major internal and external factors affecting their social responsibility roles will be identified. It is important to clarify the deeper causes behind this problem and its impact and consequences on the government, publics' and their relationships. The relationship of the Bureau of Information to their strategic publics will also be investigated. Relationship gaps and problems will be identified. This is important factor in discharging the social responsibility of the organization because it has impact on the nation-building activity, getting public support and in promoting the organization's image and of the region. It tries to identify the gaps between what is practiced and what should be practiced from the point of view of the publics' interest. Possible solutions that narrow the gap will be identified.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the United States and perhaps everywhere, public relations has come to be defined as a relationship building process but in most developing parts of the world, the term public relations is synonymous with public communication campaigns or persuasion programs for national development. If we define public relations as relationship building process, the emphasis goes to dialogue, negotiation, compromise and two-way or symmetric communication. As a result these programs become something more than persuasion campaigns seeking short-term attitudinal and cognitive change and adjustment (Culbertson and Chen 1996:100).

It behooves Third world practitioners, most of whom are government staffers, to contribute to development by using strategies that are sensitive to the public interest. In doing this, practitioners will necessarily be applying the ideals of social responsibility within the public relations process. Practitioners' responsibility is largely to the limited interest of the government. Often times the practitioners' responsibility is defined in terms suggestive of mandated, unified national development roles. Thus, *practitioners are considered socially responsible only when they contribute directly to national development*. Governments usually

assume responsibility for national development plans, and expect loyalty and compliance from communication practitioners.

Because it focuses on giving information, public relations in Third world play largely a functionary role-informing and persuading people. This focus makes communication more of a conduit for communicating “programmed” development news than for nurturing development-oriented norms among audiences. Practitioners’ responsibility is largely to the limited interest of their government (Ibid: 101-102). Public relations officers seek a flow of information from the public to those who must make informed choices in the policy decision process. *This is the most misunderstood strategic task of government public relations staffs* (Caywood 1997: 457-458).

The modern practice of Public relations is a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia. There is no clear evidence showing when public relations started in Ethiopia. But it has roots back in ancient times when local rulers or kings try to persuade people for certain causes. They gather information and respond to the people through their speakers (called Afe-Nigus or herald) especially in times of war and assessing the impact of implementing new policies and laws on the people. They use this information for the purpose of revising their policies and laws. Almost every Bureau in the Amhara region has at least public relations experts or officers. The Bureau of Information is the mandated government public relations organ and coordinator of the public relations activity in the region. The organizational structure has huge manpower from the regional to the local level. The public relations communication has a positive impact on the social, economic and political development of the region if it is appropriately managed. It has severe and unintended consequences if it is managed inappropriately.

What motivates me to study is that public relations practitioners do not conduct research to identify their performance gaps and problems that surround their environment. Formal research is not part of the public relations process. There is no organized system of feedback to listen their publics. Sometimes they receive few and irregular complaints but these are not representative of the publics’. The concerns of their key and strategic publics are not

incorporated well in the planning, objectives, communication and evaluation phases of the public relations process. I want to explore how and why they design their policy and action from the point of view of the publics' interest and analyze the gap from the globally desirable practices.

Serving publics' interest in the public relations function is not given attention. The practitioners and leaders do not have a theoretical body of knowledge of public relations especially on their social responsibility role. Publicity is their main concern. The Bureau has problems in serving the mutual interests of the government and the publics'. The treatment of publics' interest in the research, planning, communication and evaluation phases of the public relations process is not their primary concern. The flow of information is from the government to their strategic publics. The paper tries to argue that two-way communication, dialogue and interaction with publics is important for the effectiveness of the public relations performance and in meeting the positive expectation of their strategic publics.

The practitioners and the management should aware their social responsibility role. Insensibility to the interests and concerns of publics' has severe and unintended consequences on the consensus and nation-building activities. The current practice of mere publicity and information role of the Bureau without understanding its surrounding environment and publics' interest affects the relationship of the government with its strategic publics negatively. The paper tries to identify the gap between what should be practiced and what is practiced.

In the preceding points I have mentioned and made clear on the purpose I want to achieve in the study. Accordingly the major objective of the study is to explore the application of social responsibility in the public relations process. The relationship with major publics will be assessed. Major challenges and trends that affect the practitioners will be analyzed and possible solutions that narrow the gaps will be identified.

Grunig and Hunt's four models of Public relations, the public relations process model and the ideals of social responsibility constitute an interesting framework for my study. Attempts will be made to see the possible alternatives for the betterment of the public relations function.

1.2.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study tries to explore the following research questions:

- 1. How do the practitioners apply social responsibility in the public relations process?**
- 2. How do the practitioners manage relationship with strategic publics?**
- 3. What are the factors (trends) that affect the practitioners in being socially responsible?**

1.2.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the application of social responsibility in the public relations process and factors affecting it. The relationship of the Bureau of Information with its strategic publics` will also be assessed. The overall aim of the study is assess the attitude and experiences of the PR practitioners towards their social responsibility role. The data in the study comes from in-depth interview, focus group discussion, observation and documentary analysis.

1.3. METHOD OF THE STUDY

To answer the research questions in-depth face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), documentary analysis and observation triangulation method is employed. The basis is to understand fully the beliefs, views, values, attitudes, opinions of the practitioners and publics towards the treatment of publics and their application of social responsibility in the public relations process. So, data collection methods can most appropriately provide a wealth of information and answer to my specific research topic. Purposive sampling technique is

used in the study. In the research, open ended questions are used. My purpose of using triangulation is to increase the richness of the data collected and thereby increasing the chances of knowing the research problem. The weakness of one method is covered by the strengths of the other methods. My research questions will be best addressed by qualitative research methods.

The research uses both primary and secondary data. The literature review is based on secondary data. The primary sources of data are used for analysis. In-depth interview and Focus group discussion will be used for the public relations officers in the Bureau of Information, in different Bureaus and Mass Media Agency journalists. Heads of the Information Bureau, Mass Media Agency, the public's and possibly the head (representative) of the regional administration will participate in the in-depth interview. All available supporting documents will be assessed and analyzed. Data is also collected by observation technique.

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

My motivation in conducting research on this particular area seems to the significance it has for the improvement of government public relations practice. The study serves as a base for other studies in the future. It assesses challenges to be solved for meaningful and better practice. This will have an input for the government's commitment to change the practice. The practitioners and others who have interest in the field will find interesting insight on concepts, theories and practices from the global perspective. This will help them to identify and perform their activities with a better knowledge and full understanding. The study has wider policy implications. The other most significance is to the people being served. Because the public relations practice is a recent phenomenon and almost no research is done in the field, particularly on this topic, this paper will help to see the practice and take some useful recommendations. So, the public relations practitioners, the people, the government and others will find it useful and be beneficiaries of this. The study will help for the ethical and acceptable performance of public relations.

1.5. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main reason I choose the Bureau of Information is that it is the mandated government spokesperson and a public relations organization which supports, organizes and controls the information management and all the public relations activities in the region. It is the center of the processes for information collection and dissemination in the region. The Bureau will find major issues, problems and possible solutions which lay the cornerstone for future change. Due to time, financial and other constraints the study focuses on the application of social responsibility in the public relations process in the Amhara Region Bureau of Information in Bahir Dar.

1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The study has five chapters. The first chapter deals with introductory concepts such as background of the study, the research problem, objectives of the study and significance of the study. The theoretical part of the thesis is dealt in chapter two. Discussions on concepts about public relations and particularly the four-step public relations process models, Grunig and Hunt's models of public relations, historical backgrounds of the field have been made. Chapter three is entirely dedicated to the discussion of methods of data collection and analysis. Data presentation and analysis follows in chapter four. The last chapter, chapter five, is for the summary and conclusion of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I have discussed the historical backgrounds of public relations, basic concepts in public relations, Grunig and Hunt's PR models, the public relations process models and ethics and social responsibility. All these issues are selected for its direct relevance to explore the research problem. The first section of the chapter discusses the historical backgrounds of public relations and gives ideas about the history and challenges of public relations practice globally and in Africa. The second section deals with basic concepts in public relations-definitions, public relations in the public sector (government), identifying, describing, and analysis of strategic publics. The third section discusses about Grunig and Hunt's four theoretical models of public relations. Basic characteristics of each model and the presuppositions are identified. The four-step public relations process model discusses concepts and issues of paramount importance to the study. And lastly, it is summarized and concluded by the discussion of ethics and social responsibility which emphasizes the public interest and social responsibility role of public relations for the ethical and effective performance.

2.1. HISTORY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

2.1.1. GENERAL HISTORY

Some public relations scholars argue that public relations is really a quite ancient field, dating back to Plato's Republic. Much of public discourse and public rhetoric from ancient times to the present was done for public relations reasons (DeFleur and Dennis 1991:354). Public relations as a concept has no central, identifying founder, national origin or founding date because it focuses on efforts to influence-not only opinions but behavior. Since the efforts to persuade underlie all public relations activity, we can say that the general endeavor of public relations is as old as civilization itself (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg

2004:22).The history of this complex field can be divided in to four stages: early public relations, the propaganda-publicity stage, early two-way communication and advanced two-way communication.

In early public relations: people and organizations were using communications to inform, to build an image, and to influence public opinion.

During the propaganda-publicity stage: public relations began to acquire its deceitful, huckster image. A disregard for the public and the willingness of public relations experts to serve the powerful fueled this view, but public relations began to establish itself as a profession during this time. Public relations in this stage was typically one-way, from organization to the public (Baran 2002:310).

Jowett and O'Donnell (1999:6) define propaganda as “the deliberate systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist”. The connotations of the term have generally been negative. It differs in some respects from simple persuasion attempts. It can be coercive and aggressive in manner; it is not objective and it has little regard for truth, even if it is not necessarily false, since sometimes the truth can be good propaganda. It comes in a range of types from “black” (deceptive, frightening and unscrupulous) to “white” (soft and with a selective use of truth) (McQuail 2005:529-530).

Early two-way communication: About this time public relations pioneer Edward Bernays began emphasizing the value of assessing the public’s feelings toward an organization. Together with the Creel’s Committee, Bernays’s work was the beginning of two-way communication in public relations-that is, public relations talking to people and, in return, listening to them, when they talked back. Public relations professionals began representing their various publics to their clients, just as they represented their clients to those publics (Baran 2002:310).

Advanced two-way communication: It became increasingly important for organizations to know what their clients were thinking, what they liked and disliked, and what concerned and satisfied them. As a result, public relations turned even more decidedly toward integrated two-way communication, emphasizing research, advertising and promotion (Baran 2002:315).

Activities traditionally referred to as propaganda today may further be labeled as public relations efforts, image consulting, the news and information sharing by organizational spin doctors (Kamalipour 2007: 233).

2.1.2. PUBLIC RELATIONS IN AFRICA AND ITS CONTEXT

The public relations in Africa achieved momentum only the last two decades. As in other parts of the world, many practitioners enter the profession through journalism, often being trained abroad since few facilities exist locally. In the Third world, public relations practices are designed to be consistent with the political ideologies, levels of development and sociopolitical controls. African public relations practitioners are thus expected to be team players on the side of the government. The development of public relations on the African continent has been influenced by the availability of mass media.

The Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) was established in 1963, and after the oil boom, public relations exploded. By 1993 the NIPR had 2000 members as well as a constitution and a code of ethics. The “god father” of public relations profession in Egypt, Prof. DR. Mahamoud El Gohary, founded the Arab Public Relations Society (APRS) in 1966, first in Egypt, then in other Arab and African countries. The Zimbabwe Institute of Public Relations (ZIPR) was founded in 1957 and has made enormous progress. By 1993 ZIPR had 207 members, most worked in the capital city, Harare. The Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) was established in 1991. The Sudan Public Relations Association was founded in 1973, and the Public Relations of Uganda originated in 1976. By 1981, nine out of 56 national public relations association in the world were in Africa. The Public

Relations Association of Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Cameroon, Swaziland and Zimbabwe are registered with IPRA. Federation of African Public Relations Associations (FAPRA) was founded in Nairobi in 1975 with the aim of uniting the francophone and Anglophone parts of Africa (<http://books.google.com.et> pp.15-16).

The first public relations course in East Africa was instituted by public relations counsel firm in Nairobi, Kenya in 1966 for representatives of business firms (Moore and Kalupa 2002:545). The African public relations association is the successor organization to the Federation of African Public Relations Associations (FAPRA) which was inaugurated in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1975, as umbrella body of all national public relations associations. It is a non-governmental, non-political and non-profit-making professional association, established to foster unity and integration amongst public relations practitioners in Africa as a whole. One continent wide agency whose interest is development is the 20-year-old Federation of African Public Relations Associations (FAPRA) (Newsom and Carrel 1996:94-95).

Development issues are particularly significant for Africans (Culbertson and Chen 1996:93-94). *In African governments in which one party or one leader determines public policy, there can be no true role for public relations as we define it.* The party or leader may use communication techniques as a form of propaganda or manipulation to keep the people in line; but there would be no room for professional practitioners to practice on behalf of those who wanted to challenge or criticize the statuesque or propose different ideas, policies and procedures. Clearly these communication practices would be labeled subversive, unlawful and undemocratic (Rice and Atkin 2001:153).

2.1.3. PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ETHIOPIA

The mass media in Ethiopia have a long and prominent history. There has been a steady line of development from the Geez books written by hand centuries ago; from the Psalter and New Testament printed in Geez in Europe in the 16th century; from the broadcasting of news and decrees by the “Awaj Negari” (the Herald) in the tower; to the modern era of well

equipped printing presses, daily newspapers illustrated magazines and scholarly reviews, powerful radio transmitters and the beginnings of the television system. In earlier times news in Ethiopia was made public from a tower in the capital, Addis Ababa. Gradually the boom of the drum and the cry of “Awaj-Awaj-Awaj” would echo and reecho throughout the country. Thus the “Awaj Negari”, the herald on the tower, could be described as the first medium of mass communication in Ethiopia. Slowly the drum and drum like voice (the herald) were replaced by other media.

As modern mass media started in Ethiopia during the reign of Emperor Minilik II, it was during this time that the first two magazines and the first Amharic weekly newspaper, “Aemro” was first published in 1888, but its publication was soon interrupted to resume only in 1900-1902. Some other newspapers which were published before the introduction of “Addis Zemen” (New-Era) were “Banderachine” (banner), Sendek Alamachin” (our flag) and “Berhanenna Selam” (light and peace) and many others in fact.

The daily newspapers “Addis Zemen” (New Times) and the “Ethiopian Herald” started publication in 1941 and 1943 respectively. Even though radio started in 1935, programs employing modern radio technology which started under the auspices of the Ministry of Information only in the late 1940`s. Television program started in 1964. The Ministry of Information should serve as the bridge between the government, the people and the rest of the world. (Lisane Mastawekia, Voice of the Ministry of Information 2003: 31-35).

The Ministry of Information was established in 1942 around Abune Petros statue erected area in Addis Ababa. It was named the Ethiopian Information organization under Yetsefhete Ministry. Its mandate was to disseminate information, controlling the printing press of the government and newspapers, publishing laws, regulations by Negarett Gazette. After a year it was organized as Information and Newspaper office. In 1964 it was named the Ministry of Information. In 1966 it was named as the ministry of information and culture. In 1976 it was named Ministry of Information and Merha Behere. From 1988-1995 it changed its name as Ministry of Information. In 2008 it is organized under the name of government communication affairs office (Ministry of Information in the New Millennium Magazine

2008:7). The regional states follow similar organizational structure as the Ministry of information.

2.2. BASIC CONCEPTS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

To clearly understand the practice of public relations it is important to know basic concepts in the field. Some of the core concepts and issues are mentioned in the pages that follow.

2.2.1. PUBLIC RELATIONS DEFINED

One accepted definition was adopted in 1978 in Mexico City during the world assembly of public relations associations and the first world forum of public relations:

Public relations practice is the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization's and public interest (Newsom and Carrel 2001: 4).

The central part of this definition of public relations outlines the main roles of the *professional public relations person*: “analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders.” These roles fall into the management context, in which personnel help to frame, implement, adjust and communicate the policies that govern how an institution interacts with its publics. Doing this job well requires a broad educational background, expertise in many areas and, most of all, good judgment. The last part of the Mexico City definition of PR speaks of serving “both the organizations and the public interest”. The objectives of an institution and its public relations program must be designed with the needs and desires of the public clearly in mind (Newsom and Haynes 2005:5).

Public relations must be a two-way activity: listening to what the public thinks, as well as projecting the organizations messages. It follows that public relations efforts can only be effective where the aims of the organization are compatible with the aims of the public (Haywood 2002:15-16). Public relations is a specialized occupation where persuasive

communication techniques are utilized in order to try and influence what are dubbed “target publics” (Campbell 2004:97). An organization with effective public relations will attain positive public relationships. If all public relations does is maintain the status quo, it is being used ineffectively (Center and Jackson 2003:1-2). More than anything, what public relations activities communicate is the values and visions of the organization—for better or worse. These may be socially positive, acceptable values or questionable ones. But whatever the explicit message sent forth, with it goes an implicit message of whether the organization really cares about people, the community, and the future; or instead is self-centered and concerned only with its immediate profits or success—or possibly even anti-social. As a management function, public relation involves responsibility and responsiveness in policy and information to the best interests of the organization and its publics. As a practical matter, good public relations involves confronting a problem openly and honestly and then solving it (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:2).

Many people wrongly assume that public relations is preoccupied with image-making in the sense of creating a false front or cover-up. Unfortunately, this misperception of public relations is reinforced by the periodic reports of just such behavior on the part of individuals identified as public relations specialists (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:16-17). The good will of the public is the greatest asset any organization can have. A public that is well informed and holds a positive attitude toward the organization is critical to its survival (Wells et al. 1998:560).

2.2.2. PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

(GOVERNMENT)

Government touches every aspect of society, and virtually every facet of government relies on, or is closely tied to, public affairs. The overall goals for government public affairs, regardless of the level, and to some extent, type of government, have at least seven purposes in common:

1. Informing constituents about the activities of the government agency.
2. Ensuring active cooperation in government programs.

3. Fostering citizen support for established policies and programs
4. Serving as public's advocate to government administrators.
5. Managing information internally
6. Facilitating media relations
7. Building community and nation (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:411).

Public relations is used to make government more meaningful and more useful in the lives of our citizens. But they need closer scrutiny of the news media and scholars if the public interest is to be protected (Hiebert 1988:53-54). Moss (2001) suggests that in many parts of the world public relations remains wedded to its publicity origins. But Krishnamurthy and Dejan (2001) suggest that, in political systems that do not value public opinion, PR tends to be propagandist (although) Al-Enad (1990) questions whether government institutions in authoritative societies care about public opinion (Oliver 2004:439). *Public relations is an important element in implementing government policy*. As the relations between the different sectors of the government and the various publics becomes more complex, it is necessary to create a good climate for communication. Publics are affected by government decisions and vice versa, and those who support government or grant its legitimacy must grasp these relationships. Good information is a critical input factor (Culbertson and Chen 1996:246).

Al-Enad concluded that the function of public relations serves two goals: "to educate the public on the subject related to the client and to publicize achievements of the client". (Ibid.249). Al-Enad (1990) described public relations in the Third world as driven by a living rule of public be damned, as geared toward propaganda, and as exploited by government and private institutions both to react to and to trigger positive changes in society (Ibid.391). *Public relations officers seek a flow of information from the public to those who must make informed choices in the policy decision process*. This is the most misunderstood strategic task of government public relations staffs. In a large government bureaucracy, leaders can become isolated from those people who may be most affected by their policy decisions (Caywood 1997: 457-458).

By reviewing the public sector environment literature, Liu and Horsley identify 8 attributes (under review) that affect the government public relations: politics, focus on serving the public, legal constraints, extreme media and public scrutiny, lack of managerial support for public relations practitioners, poor public perception of government communication, lagging professional development, and federalism (Liu and Horsley 2007:378).

2.2.3. IDENTIFYING, DESCRIBING AND ANALYSIS OF KEY

PUBLICS

PR pioneers Arthur W. Page and Edward Bernays both emphasized that organizations in democratic societies exist with the consent of their publics. Public relations must create constant awareness by management of the institutions responsibility to all its publics (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:149-151). *The objective of an institution and its public relations program must be designed with the needs and desires of the public clearly in mind* (Newsom and Carrel 2001:6).

In public relations, the most important role we play is in policy formulation. The basis for our participation is our understanding of what the public is thinking or feeling management (Broom and Dozier 1990:9). Public relations involves research and analysis, policy formation, programming, communication and feedback from a variety of publics (Oliver 2004:146). In traditional public relations literature, publics are divided into two categories: external and internal. External publics exist outside an institution. Internal publics share the institutional identity (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:90). An important public for any public relations practitioner is the media (Yopp and McAdams 2003:322). The key to identifying and rank-ordering (that is “prioritizing”) target publics accurately is research-finding out who these publics really are and what they actually think. Alert public relations practitioners consider not only the collective or majority opinion of each public, but also the opinion of dissenters (Ibid.93).

On any project it is impossible to direct attention equally to all publics (Newsom and Haynes 2005:9). One way to select priority audiences is to divide the whole public into primary, intervening and special publics, and then to select a priority public from these groups (Center and Jackson 2003:19). First of all, practitioners of public relations must discard the notions about “the general public”. Rather, effective programs communicate and build relationships with specifically defined “target publics” or “strategic publics”. After testing his “situational theory of publics”, Grunig consistently finds four types of publics:

1. *All issue publics* are active on all issues.
2. *Apathetic publics* are inattentive and inactive on all issues.
3. *Single issue publics* are active on one or a limited number of related issues.
4. *Hot issue publics* are active after media expose almost everyone and the issue becomes the topic of widespread social conversation.

As suggested by Grunig’s situational theory of publics, messages must be individually tailored to fit the information needs of different publics, based on how active or passive their communication behavior is and what are issues of importance to them. Specific issues and situations determine each public’s composition, size and range of responses (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006: 210).

After you have selected your key publics, begin to analyze them. The more you can emphasize with your audience, the more effective your writing will be. Think of WIN (wants, interests and needs): *you will win your publics support by addressing their wants, interests and needs rather than your own*. This stage may require some surveys, focus groups or other formal research but it begins with common sense. Tailoring public relations programs to fit various priority publics requires careful and specific identification of the publics’ and their characteristics (through both formal and informal research methods), translation of this information into a sensitive understanding of each public’s needs, and knowledge of how to communicate with each.

Insensibility to the composition of publics, their interrelationships, their relationships with members of other publics (as well as to your organization), their ideals and their attitudes may lead an organization to waste much time, effort and money on public relations programs that bore or offend the intended recipients or have a negative effect on unintended recipients. Public relations can help develop the proper management philosophy by in an institution whose policies are inconsistent and whose management lacks integrity no public relations effort can be effective. When listening and responding effectively go together, the conscience of management takes on a new perspective (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:104). *Management must be responsible and responsive to its publics; otherwise, it will have to combat a hostile environment* (Ibid.13-14).

2.2.4. PUBLIC OPINION

The public opinion process is one phase of the influencing of collective decisions, and its investigation involves knowledge of channels of communication, of the power structure of society, of the character of mass media, of the relation between elites, factions, and masses, of the role of formal and informal leaders, of institutionalized access to officials. The nature of the organization of attitudes within the personality and the processes which account for attitude change are thus critical areas for understanding of the collective product known as public opinion (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:107).

Public relations practitioners measure outcomes, changes in opinion, attitudes and behaviors to determine the effectiveness of persuasive efforts. *Public relations people who think they can be only image-makers or spokespersons for whatever management wants to say are borrowing trouble and addicting their role as institutional strategist.* The PR practitioners' job is to help their organization and clients deal with the impact of public opinion (Ibid.113). The attitude and opinions of publics greatly interest the PR practitioner, but even more important is what these publics are doing (Ibid.118). Harwood Childs concluded "public opinion is not the name of a something, but the classification of a number of something's" (Hiebert 1988:86-88). One of the some things which affect opinion is communication (Ibid:

89-91). You will recall that Bernays argued that the function of public relations was to “crystallize” public opinion, to bring together as a unified force the latent attitudes of individuals. There’s not much hope of crystallization if you can’t be heard above the noise (Ibid.92).

Public opinion is not necessarily logical; it is amorphous, ambivalent, contradictory, and volatile. Consequently, those of us who would hope to influence public opinion can only expect that our efforts, over time, may nudge the consensus toward some reasonable perceptions of the issues (Ibid.98). In almost all programs to win public opinion there are seven factors of persuasion that must be accounted for: Acceptability, compatibility, intensity, visibility, pervasiveness, a variety of impressions and persuasiveness (Ibid.105-106). Because democratic societies govern by consensus, government officials pay close attention to public opinion. Public opinion is a process of constant change. It starts when an issue enters the social environment (Guth and Marsh 2005:268). From the late nineteenth century onwards public opinion was increasingly important in the calculations of politicians seeking to avoid resistance to legislation or policy. The public relations strategist researches the answers to two primary questions about public opinion. First, which publics are most important to the organization, now and in the future? Second, what do these publics think? Determining what these publics think however is often quite challenging (Burgh 2000:67).

The opinions, attitudes, and actions of people are all affected by family, friends, informal work groups and formal groups such as clubs and organizations. Group influence and pressure become particularly apparent during controversy, according to research evidence (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:140).

2.3. GRUNIG AND HUNT’S FOUR THEORETICAL MODELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

A review of current public relations texts indicate that the field of public relations continues to look to other disciplines for its theory base. However, except for Grunig and Hunt (1984)

offer an excellent description of the four historic models of public relations practice (Botan and Hazleton 1989:23).

Grunig and Hunt (1984) offer four theoretical models of public relations that are based on the direction of the flow of communication between an organization and its publics and the nature of and the potential for influence (Botan and Hazleton 1989:299). The Grunig and Hunt evolutionary model specifies two developments in public relations. First, two-way communication (*listening and speaking to publics*) has at least begun to replace one-way (speaking only). And second, PR goals have extended beyond enhancing awareness and information level to persuasion and, ideally, to relationship building. Progress toward two-way communication has been somewhat more rapid on the whole, and more universal, than progress toward a relationship building approach (Culbertson and Chen 1996:19). Researchers Todd Hunt and James Grunig have written that the practice of public relations typically falls into one of the four models (Guth and Marsh 2005:7).

2.3.1. PRESS AGENCY/PUBLICITY MODEL

The first model, press agency/ publicity, finds its roots in the work of press agents or publicists prior to the 1900's. Press agency publicity is theological in that it was "the necessary starting point" of the discipline and that it relied on fictitious or imaginary means in influencing behavior (Botan and Hazleton 1989:23). The press agency/publicity and the public information models both stress information via outgoing information from the organization to the public and the relative absence of feedback. They are distinguished from one another primarily based on the former's willingness to advocate a position at the expense of compute truth and objectivity (Ibid.299). Some managers act as a one-way communications value, constantly transmitting but never receiving; they are all mouths and no ears (Haywood 2002:139).

In this role, practitioners focus on media relations. They tend to be tacticians-as opposed to strategist-interested in short-term gains. Often, their focus is on promoting the organization,

and they believe that the generation of publicity is their primary purpose (Guth and Marsh 2005:7). Little attention is paid to insuring either accuracy or a favorable reputation (Culbertson and Chen 1996:4). Press agency model applies when a public relations program strives only for favorable publicity in the mass media, often in a deceptive way (Ibid.38-39).

Propaganda is not about communication between an organization and their publics; it is about dis communication. Its first aim is to dissolve communication between people in order to disable their ability to form publics. If propaganda does not succeed in disabling publics, then it does not attempt to communicate with them but to discourage them from pursuing their cause. *Propaganda, therefore, cannot be accepted as a form of public relations.* The major tool of propaganda is not communication, which is by definition something two-sided, but information that helps to create constraints to communication or one-sided information flow described in the classical communication theories as *sender-receiver model* (Culbertson and Chen 1996:42-43).

2.3.2. PUBLIC INFORMATION MODEL

The second model, public information, developed about 1900. Feedback is not an essential element in this public relations model (Botan and Hazleton 1989:23). In this role, practitioners act like reporters within their own organizations. Their focus is on the dissemination of objective and accurate information. These individuals tend to be more tacticians than they are counselors (Guth and Marsh 2005:7). The public-information model uses “Journalism-in-residence” to disseminate *relatively* objective information through the mass media and controlled media such as newspapers, brochures and direct mail (Culbertson and Chen 1996:38-39). The public information model does not volunteer negative information (Ibid.162).

2.3.3. TWO-WAY ASYMMETRICAL MODEL

The third level in the development of public relations is the two-way asymmetric model that emerged in the 1920's. The communication obtained from the receivers is used to tell

management what their publics will accept. Grunig and Hunt (1984) noted: “the organization does not change as a result of public relations; it attempts to change public attitudes and behavior.” In the case of two-way asymmetric, Grunig and Hunt, has suggested the purpose is still persuasive, but in the case it is scientific persuasion. That is, the two-way asymmetric uses available social science knowledge and audience research to construct a persuasive campaign. *The feedback is primarily to help construct a better message* (Botan and Hazleton 1989:23). In this role practitioners actively engage in persuasion. Their goal is to bring target publics around to a certain way of thinking through advocacy (Guth and Marsh 2005:7).

Expertise or knowledge in your communication department to perform these tasks: Persuade a public that your organization is right on an issue, get publics to behave as your organization wants, manipulates publics scientifically, use attitudes theory in a campaign the dominant coalition in this organization believes public relations should be practiced: in public relations, the broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organization wants them to behave before beginning a public relations program, one should examine attitude surveys to ensure the organization and its policies are described in ways its publics would be most likely to accept, after completing a public relations program, research should be done to determine how effective this program has been in changing people’s attitudes (Rice and Atkin 2001: 239-240). *The two-way asymmetric model uses research to develop messages that are likely to persuade strategic publics to behave as the organization wants* (Culbertson and Chen 1996:38-39).

In an asymmetrical worldview, power in decision-making tends to remain on the side of the organization and is not shared with publics. An authoritative organizational culture arises from an asymmetrical worldview (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:228-230).

2.3.4. TWO-WAY SYMMETRICAL PR MODEL

Best practices in public relations suggest that a symmetrical system for communication is desirable in an organization. Two-way symmetrical model allows for more input from

publics that can provide innovative solutions and corrective discourse, both essential for sound strategic PR management. An impediment to the symmetric model is imbalance in power among the publics` and in their relationship to management. Nevertheless the symmetrical model is offered here as one to which an organization can aspire (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:118). There is a movement throughout the world from one-way to two-way communication and more emphasis on knowledge and persuasion as a part of relationship building (Ibid: 354). One reason the two-way symmetrical model for public relations is seen as desirable is that it allows for input from all affected publics and for negotiations about policy decisions (Ibid.48). Only two-way symmetrical model (Bernays argued) represented a break from the predominant world view *that public relations is a way of manipulating publics for the sake of the organization* (Grunig and Dozier:290). Public relation philosophy puts much emphasis on the need for two-way communication (Black 2004:4-6).

The two-way symmetric model is marked by its interactive characteristic. No longer are communications with publics asymmetrical: instead, they are truly two-sided (Botan and Hazleton 1989:285-286). In the two-way symmetric model both the flow of communication and influence between the organization and its publics is more balanced. Grunig and Hunt refer to a desired state of mutual understanding that is quite similar to what other authors (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1985; Simon 1984) have referred to as social responsibility. Essentially the publics` have as much potential for influence over the organization as the later has over the publics`. The role of public relations practitioners is therefore to act as the agent for creation of the mutual understanding (Botan and Hazleton 1989:300).

Communication must be a two-way process-otherwise strictly speaking, it is not communications. Feedback is vitally important to check how well your messages are accepted by the audiences you are trying to influence (Haywood 2002:22). In this role, practitioners serve as the catalyst for conflict resolution and consensus. Their goal is to encourage two-way communication that leads to mutual understanding and cooperation (Guth and Marsh 2005:7). The heart of professional approach to PR concerns openness between the organization and its publics (Folkerts and Lacy: 387).

The open system model uses “two-way symmetric” approaches, meaning that communication is two-way and that information exchange causes changes on both sides of the organization-public relationships. Thus organizations employing open systems public relations maintain their relationships by adjusting and adapting themselves and their publics to ever changing social, political and economic environments (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:190).

The dominant coalition in this organization believes : the purpose of public relations is to change the attitude and behavior of the management as well as it is to change the attitude and behavior of publics, public relations should provide mediation for the organization-to help management and publics negotiate conflicts, the purpose of public relations is to develop a mutual understanding between the management of the organization and the publics` that the organization affects, before starting a public relations program, survey or informal research should be done to determine how much management and publics understand each other (Rice and Atkin 2001: 239-240).

Here the practitioner and client listen carefully to key publics, but not primarily to enhance persuasion. Relationship building, not persuasion, is the primary goal. Research suggests that all four types of public relations are alive and well in various places. All play a role in specific situations. However, Grunig (1992) reported substantial evidence that truly excellent public relations emphasizes the two-way models, particularly the symmetric version (Culbertson and Chen 1996:5).

A symmetrical worldview incorporates the ideas of negotiation, conflict resolution, and compromise in an organization’s operating procedures. The organization is not only self-oriented, but also oriented on satisfying the interests of strategic publics. Therefore, desires and goals are set in a shared fashion by incorporating some of what the publics` want. Participative organizational cultures are based on a symmetrical worldview that values dialogue and two-sided input (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:229-230). Excellent public relations departments have practitioners who have learned a theoretical body of knowledge in public relations (Ibid.39).

The two-way symmetrical model conceptualizes both the persuasive and relationship-building goals of public relations (L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Other scholars have tested the two-way symmetrical model in both Western and non-Western countries with mixed results (e.g., Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; Rhee, 2002; Roper, 2005; Wakefield, 2000) (Liu and Horsley 2007:383). In their recent work on the models, however, J.E. Grunig and L.A. Grunig (1992) followed Hellweg's (1989) suggestion and redesigned the four models in terms of two continua: One of *Craft* and one of *Professional public relations*. In other words "practitioners of craft public relations seem to believe that their job consists solely of the application of communication as an end in itself. To them the purpose of public relations is simply to get publicity or information into the media or other channels of communication. Practitioners of professional public relations in contrast rely on a body of knowledge as well as technique and see public relations as having a strategic purpose for an organization: to manage conflict and build relationships with strategic publics that limit the autonomy of the organization"(Ibid.41).

2.4. THE FOUR-STEP PUBLIC RELATIONS PROCESS

MODEL

The public relations process is a method of solving problems. It has four phases: Research, objectives, programming and evaluation (Hendrix 2004:4). Part of the public relations process is the monitoring of the environment in which the organization operates. This continual attention to how the organization is affected by social, legal, professional and economic trends-and the public opinion surrounding them-is known as issues management. The public relations practitioner will identify issues that may affect the organization, suggesting ways in which it might address these issues (Smith 2003:229).

The Four-Step Public Relations Process provides a proven approach for effectively communicating organizational commitment to ethics. This popular "problem-solving" process can be used for routine communication as well as for special communication campaigns. The process is based on the premise that all successful communication programs are information-driven and knowledge-based. Ethical public relations programs-just like

ethical organizations-are about good works, not good words. The purpose of public relations is not to create false impressions or to “sugar coat” bad acts, but too effectively and honestly communicate. This four-step public relations process offers a sound approach for facilitating organizational change through strategic communication

([Http://www.ethics.org/resources/articles-organizational-ethics.asp?Aid=951](http://www.ethics.org/resources/articles-organizational-ethics.asp?Aid=951)).

Hazelton and Long (1988) proposed the public relations process model, which provides an open systems theory approach to understanding public relations.

A leading public relations textbook (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994) presents a four-step model of the public relations process:

1. Defining public relations problems
2. Planning public relations program
3. Implementing public relations programs through action and communications
4. Evaluating the program (Wimmer and Dominick 2006:397).

2.4.1. RESEARCH

As a leading text points out (Baskin, Aronoff, & Latimore, 1997.p.107), research is a vital function in the process of public relations. It provides the initial information necessary to plan public relations action and to evaluate its effectiveness. Management demands hard facts, not intuition or guess work. Pavlik (1987) defined three major types of public relations research: *applied, basic and introspective*. Applied research examines specific practical issues; in many instances, it is conducted to solve a specific problem. A branch of applied research, strategic research, is used to develop public relations campaigns and programs. According to Broom and Dozier (1990) strategic research is “deciding where you want to be in the future...and how to get there.” A second branch, evaluation research, is conducted to assess the effectiveness of a public relations program.

Basic research in public relations creates knowledge that cuts across public relations situations it is most interested in examining the underlying processes and in constructing

theories that explain the public relations process. The third major type of public relations research is introspective research, which examines the field of public relations (Wimmer and Dominick 2006:396). The key to research is knowing precisely what you want to find out and how you plan to use it. Most public relations research is done to find out about issues, publics, media contents, media audiences and to evaluate public relations results. You will be using research for problem identification and analysis and for program development, implementation and assessment (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:64).

The backbone of successful public relations efforts is understanding organizations publics. *The difficulty that organizations have in dealing with publics is the fact that they have conflicting interests.* Surveys to examine attitudes and beliefs often surprise closed systems managers because they have isolated themselves from their publics. Increasingly, an organizations long term relationships with its various publics are seen as being responsible for its image, its reputation. No public is static. That is why publics must be monitored in an ongoing way. Messages have to be designed for them and media must be chosen to convey those messages (Ibid: 67). Since public relations is problem prevention and problem solving, a lot of research is exploration to find out if there are problems and what these might be (Ibid.81).

Otto Lerbinger suggests four different areas of continuing research for public relations: environmental monitoring, the public relations audit, the communications audit and the social audit (Hiebert 1988:109). The most interesting research in public relations today may well be the research performed at the beginning and end of the programs (Ibid.112). *Public relations practitioners who ignore research will soon discover that they are ignored* (Ibid.118). Research is becoming a vital tool for public relations because the days of intuition and gut feelings are over (Ibid.132). We do not contend that research solves all problems or replaces experience, judgment or even less likely, power in decision making. The assumption underlying, however, is that research makes the practice of public relations more responsive, useful and professional. Our thesis is that scientific research is fundamental to effective public relations practice and management (Broom and Dozier 1990:3-4). In short, research is

essential to the rational management of the organizational adjustments, adaptations and responses to changing environments (Ibid.11-12).

Based on the role of research in public relations practice, *we see five major approaches to program management: No research approach, informal approach, media-event approach, evaluation-only approach, and scientific approach* (Ibid.16-18). Strategic planning uses research to define and redefine the perceived problem. The meaning of “problem” here is a condition in which someone thinks there is a gap between what is perceived and what is desired. Without research, you are left with your own and others unsystematic observations, views and assertions and a collection of intuitions and “gut feelings” about what is happening. Without ongoing research you cannot update your understanding of the problem as conditions change-sometimes as a result of your own problem (Ibid.24). Use research to determine current perceptions. Informal evaluations are better than nothing but use a professional researcher to guide such studies (Haywood 2002:91).

The research phase of the process involves identifying and learning about three key elements (1) a client or institution that has (2) a problem or potential problem to be solved, which involves (3) one or more of its audiences, or publics (Hendrix 2004:4). This is the information gathering phase. Through formal and informal research methods, practitioners gather data on the client, the environment in which operates, and its stakeholders, the people who can affect or are affected by the organization’s ability to achieve desired results. Practitioners identify the problems and opportunities facing the client and determine what, if any, action is appropriate (Guth and Mash 2005:3). *In the absence of research and evaluation, public relations effectiveness is compromised and the practitioners’ credibility and accountability suffer.*

In basic terms research is a form of listening. Before any PR program can be undertaken information must be gathered, data collected and interpretation done. Then, the organization can begin to map out policy decisions and strategies for effective communication (Oliver 2004:154).

2.4.2. PLANNING

The second phase of public relations process involves the *setting of objectives for a program to solve the problem*. The objectives may include the kind of influence the client hopes to exert with audiences, such as informing them or modifying their attitudes or behaviors. The objectives may also include statements about the program itself, such as its composition or how it will operate (Hendrix 2004:4). In the planning process practitioners decide on a future course of action. They may create ad-hoc, or limited purpose, plans to address a short-term situation, or standing and contingency plans that have a longer shelf-life. Whatever path they follow, these should all be value driven, when they are, consensus is reached not only on a desired goals, but also on objectives that will be followed to achieve those goals and the specific tactics needed to execute those objectives (Guth and Marsh 2005:3).

2.4.3. COMMUNICATION

The third phase of the process consists of planning and executing a program to accomplish the objectives. The program comprises a central theme, messages and various forms of communication aimed at reaching the audience (Hendrix 2004:4). In the communication phase, the plan is transformed into action. The availability of key resources, such as budget staffing and time will influence the process. Under ideal circumstances, practitioners send their messages to individual publics using media (channels of communication) that those publics prefer.

2.4.4. EVALUATION

Can public relations work be proven truly effective? That unanswered question has been one of the professions biggest problems. Edward L. Bernays believed strongly that public relations should be practiced as an applied social science and that like all sciences, it could be defined and its results evaluated with precision. *If public attitudes are properly understood, if the problem is carefully researched, if the objectives are carefully planned, if the communication is properly devised and implemented, then the results can be precisely*

evaluated. The best way to determine the effectiveness of public relations campaign is to test attitudes and opinions before the campaign and retest them afterward to see if any change has taken place, if so, the direction of that change (Hiebert 1988:265-266).

Formal research of substantial sample audience into perceptions of reputation, awareness, opinion and attitude, remains the best measure of true effect of the public relations program (Haywood 2002:100). Management by objectives may be defined formally as the total management system that focuses on results rather than activities for performance evaluation (Ibid.203). All sound public relations begins with research and ends with evaluation. *Building public relationships has no room for winners and losers* (Kitchen 1997:375-376).

Finally evaluation as defined in this process consists of two parts. First it includes an ongoing procedure of program monitoring and adjustment. Second, evaluation refers back specifically to the objectives that were set in the second phase of the process and examines the practitioner's degree of success in achieving them (Hendrix 2004:4). Public relation's measurement may be divided into two categories: *Process evaluation (what goes out) and Outcome evaluation (effect on audience)*. Process evaluation examines the success of public relations program in getting the message out to target audiences. There are several difficulties in evaluating the outcome of public relations efforts (Wells et al., 1998: 582-583).

2.5. PUBLIC RELATIONS CODE OF ETHICS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ethics are the values that guide the ways we think and act. Without values, we have no ethics. Ethics are about integrity. In its fullest sense; integrity means an integration of ideas and actions. Good ethics and responsibility lead to trustworthiness and respect, two valuable assets in public relations and in life (Guth and Marsh 2005: 241-242). Social responsibility and ethics are inextricably tied to an organization's reputation. Credibility is critical (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:61).

Public relations has been called the conscience of the management, which underscores PR's role in reminding an organization of its social responsibility to all of its publics. The challenge for internal and external public relations people is to guide those who hire them to responsible actions that are founded on integrity. To maintain standards of practice for public relations that don't allow representation of unethical behavior means having the courage to stand up for ethical codes as well as having a strong set of personal values. It also means having the courage of one's convictions and refusing to do what is unethical (Ibid.146-148).

Actually, public relations must create constant awareness by management of the institutions responsibility to all its publics (Ibid.151). *The PR person who loses the public's perspective has foregone public responsibility and become the persuaded instead of the persuader.* Responsibility in publicity means being honest and faithful as a source of information, as a supplier of illustrations and as the funder of information and space or other considerations (Ibid.165-167). When the advent of a crisis catches an organization unaware, this may bring criticism of public relations people. It is often seen as the PR person's responsibility to forewarn and prepare management (Ibid.333). Public relations must be practiced with a commitment to social responsibility and ethics (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:121).

Public relations is the practice of social responsibility. Every major practitioner since Ivy Lee, however, has claimed responsibility to publics to be an important premise of public relations. Public, or social, responsibility has become a major reason for an organization to have a public relation function (Grunig and Hunt 1984: 47-48). Public responsibility is a basic tenet of public relations. If the organization does not need to be responsible to its publics, it also does not need a public relations function. Public responsibility results from communication, negotiation and compromise between interpenetrating systems. It does not result from complete subservience to outside systems or from complete control of those other systems (Ibid.52-53). It is the task of the public relations manager to stress the need for public responsibility and to ask management to prepare regular *social reports* (Ibid.59).

The code of ethics first presents a set of core professional values that should guide all professional practitioners of public relations. The commitment to ethical practices on the

parts of the PRSA is intended to counter the image of public relations practitioners as “*hired guns*” who will say or do whatever it takes to accomplish the goals of their clients (Hendrix 2004:6). This statement presents the core values of PRSA members and, more broadly, of the public relations profession. These values provide the foundation for the member code of ethics and set the industry standard for the professional practice of public relations. These values are the fundamental beliefs that guide our behaviors and decision-making process. We believe our professional values are vital to the integrity of the profession as a whole. The ethics code of the public relations society of America begins with a statement of six core values:

Advocacy: We serve the public interest by acting as a responsible advocate for those we represent. We provide a voice in the market place of ideas, facts and viewpoints to aid informed public debate.

Honesty: We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public.

Expertise: We acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience. We advance the profession through continued professional development research and education. We build mutual understanding, credibility and relationships among a wide variety of institutions and audiences.

Independence: We provide objective counsel to those we represent. We are accountable for our actions.

Loyalty: We are faithful for those we represent, while honoring our obligation to serve the public interest.

Fairness: We deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, vendors, the media and the general public. We respect all opinions and support the right of free expression (Guth and Marsh 2005:245).

Two guidelines come before all others and the first one is this: In public relations, always tell the truth. If you are to succeed in the management and practice of public relations, you must tell the truth. The second quality is equally uncompromising: Whatever the pressures and temptations, *never deceive yourself* (Stone 1995: xxiv).

2.5.1. DISCHARGING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ORGANIZATIONS

David's Iron Law of responsibility states that "Those who do not take responsibility for their power ultimately shall lose it." (Davis and Blomstorm, 1996, 174 quoted in Kitchen 1997:135). Once convinced of the need to discharge their responsibilities organizations have to make decisions about how they are going to do so. They need first to do two things: balance interests and set criteria. A major function of public relations professional is to advise organizations on how to balance the interests of the varied publics whom they wish to address, and to remind them of the importance of the public interest (Kitchen 1997:136).

In societal and international ethics codes, the concept of social responsibility clearly enters the profession of public relations. In public relations, ethics codes insist that we recognize that our actions have social consequences. Ethics codes ask that our organizations and clients function with social responsibility (Guth and Marsh 2005: 246). Professions must also fulfill expectations and moral obligations at the level of society. Commitment to serve society applies to both individual practitioners and the profession collectively. It means that right conduct takes into account the welfare of the larger society as the professional helps clients solve problems. *The potential good inherent in ethical, effective public relations is limitless. So, is the potential for dysfunction* (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:124).

2.5.2. PUBLIC INTEREST AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

This term is used specifically in legal contexts and in a wider sense in media contexts of ethics, communications policy and social responsibility (Franklin et al.2005:211). It is clearly in the public interest that the media do not cause social problems or extreme offence. But the idea of a public interest also involves positive expectations.

The difficulties of handling the public interest concept are inextricably connected with its high significance. In this respect, Blumler (1998:54-55) makes three key points. First, as in

the case of government, there are questions of authority as well as of power: “in communications the media are similarly placed. The justification for their freedoms, their wide ranging roles in society, politics and culture, and their place in regulatory orders depends ultimately on the public interests presumed to be served thereby”. In short, the power of the media, like that of government, has to be used in a legitimate way, which is not far removed from the notion of responsibility. Secondly, Blumler argues that “a certain transcendent quality attaches to the notion of public interest. It is different from and, in policy terms, superior to particular interests. This entails a longer-term, in which the claims of successor generations and the future of society are included as well as people’s immediate needs.” Thirdly, “notions of public interest must work in an imperfect perspective and impure world.” This means inevitable tension, compromise and improvisation according to circumstances.

2.5.3. THE IMAGE PSYCHOLOGY

There is no nation or organization or individual that does not need a good public image. However, the effective projection of a corporate or national image requires the finesse and professionalism of a well-trained public relations practitioner. Public relations is an act of projecting a good image of an organization to the public. It includes the formation of policies and management of issues within the organization (Eribo and Tanjong 2002: 51-52). *Too many practitioners are still infected with the idea that public relations is essentially image-building.* This is reflected in their concern that only positive messages come from their offices, that favorable impressions are to be made at almost any cost, no matter what the reality.

The result of this kind of *Image psychology* can be seen in many situations. It has in some cases led to a sort of management paranoia, unrealistic expectation that “since we have always worked so hard to project a positive image, it is unfair to spoil things for us now.” Some public relations practitioners react this way themselves. But the paranoia is often more acute among non-public relations management people who feel strongly that negative news is

“what we pay our PR people to prevent”. Often enough a bit of “*kill the messenger*” (because the message is unpleasant) *psychology* enters in to (Haberman and Dolphin 1988:395). *This image building and image protection psychology was never appropriate for sound, ethical public relations*. The best practitioners have always been above it, recognizing how it condemns them to the narrow often demeaning role of *mere publicity agents*. There is the principle we have to hammer through: ***public relations is action-good deeds-before anything else***. If a business, organization or institution wants a good image; the best and only way to achieve it is to perform acceptably (Ibid.396-397).

Instead of negative image psychology, the psychology for public relations today and in the years ahead must be one that is built upon *candor, receptivity and diligence*. Candor, encompass more than telling the truth and admitting mistakes. It implies telling the whole truth and telling it straight. A public relations staff or program not only has to be candid but has to be perceived as candid by its publics. The way the people on the staff or in the program find out how they are perceived is *by listening to their publics, by being receptive*. We have tried to join serious scholars as well as practitioners in encompassing the need for *feedback* and *two-way communication* in successful public relations (Ibid.398-399). Practitioners must encourage their employers and clients to be willing to listen to, not just hear, feedback, especially the feedback that comes in the form of complaints, objections, protests and even law-suits. The purpose is not to make trouble but to avoid or resolve it. This is where diligence comes in (Ibid.402).

CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter illustrates the kind of research methods and procedures that the researcher followed to answer the research questions and attain the research objectives. As indicated in chapter one, the research is based on qualitative research methods because the study focuses on exploring the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, opinion, feelings, behavior and action of the practitioners towards the application of social responsibility in the public relations process. Qualitative research method will help to explore the rich experiences from the practitioners perspective. So, my research problem or question will be best addressed by qualitative research method.

3.1. RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

The qualitative technique has seen growing popularity in public relations research. Daymon and Holloway (2002) suggest that one reason behind this trend is that public relations practitioners have shifted their focus from one-way communication and control to dialogue and collaboration so that now organizations must hear, appreciate, understand and identify with those with whom they are talking-tasks that are best addressed by qualitative methods. Qualitative methods are becoming more common in public relations research (Wimmer and Dominick 2006: 405-408). Qualitative research methods are particularly important if one intends to study people, groups, organization and societies (VanAken, Berends & Bij 2007:129). In qualitative study, research is carried out in “real life settings” building an understanding of people’s behavior, thoughts and action to illuminate their social meanings (Henn, Weinstein & Foard 2006:150). We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored (Creswell 2007:39). Qualitative methods can be used to explore substantive areas about which little is known or about which much is known to gain novel understandings (Stern 1980 quoted in Strauss and Corbin 1998:11). The qualitative approach

involves theory construction rather than theory testing (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2006:150).

The research question guides the choice of research method (Rubin, Rubin & Piele 2005:206). When doing an explanatory research; we look for underlying causes and explanations of events. Explanatory research encompasses what is referred to as “interpretive research”, as a way of making sense of events. We would conduct explanatory research if we were asking “why have these events happened in the manner that they did?” Or, “what are the implications of these events occurring as they did?”

In case studies, the case is the situation, individual, group, organization or whatever it is that we are interested in (Robson 1993:177). Case study is not easily summarized as a single, coherent form of research. Case studies seek to engage with and report the complexity of social activity in order to represent the meanings that individual social actors bring to those settings and manufacture in them. Case study assumes that “social reality” is created through social interaction, albeit situated in particular contexts and histories, and seeks to identify and describe before trying to analyze and theorize. The strength of case study is that it can take an example of an activity-“an instance in action” (Walker 1974)-and use multiple methods and data sources to explore it and interrogate it. Thus it can achieve a “rich description” (Geertz, 1973) of a phenomenon in order to represent it from the participants perspective. Case study thus is particular, descriptive, inductive and ultimately heuristic-it seeks to “illuminate” the readers understanding of an issue (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972 quoted in Somekh and Lewin 2005:33).

Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its life context using multiple sources of evidence (Robson 1993:178). The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena (Yin 2003:2). The case study method is most valuable when the researcher wants to obtain a wealth of information about the research topic. Case studies provide tremendous detail. The case study technique can suggest why something has occurred. Ideally, case studies should be used in combination with theory to achieve

maximum understanding (Wimmer and Dominick 2006:137). Case studies are undertaken to make the case understandable (Stake 1995:85). Researchers are encouraged to include their own personal perspectives in the interpretation. Thus a personal valuing of the work is expected (Ibid.135).

Thus, *case study* research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., setting, a context). Although Stake(2005) states that case study research is not a methodology but a choice of what is to be studied (i.e., a case with in a *bounded system*), others present it as a strategy of inquiry, a methodology, or a comprehensive research strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). I choose to view it as a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, or an object of study, as well as a product of inquiry. Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system(a case) or multiple bounded systems(cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell 2007:73).

Triangulation can mean combining several qualitative methods, but it can also mean combining qualitative and quantitative methods (Flick 2002:265). Qualitative triangulation research method is applied in the study that helps the researcher to identify different realities so as to understand the nature of the case. Triangulation in social research is the combination of different methods, methodological perspectives or theoretical viewpoints (Miller and Brewer 2003: 326). In the study qualitative (that is, inductive and interpretive) triangulation research method is employed.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In the study both primary and secondary sources are used. It uses secondary sources for the literature review and framework of the study. The primary sources are used for data analysis Purposes. Primary data is collected by in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The participants are the practitioners in the Bureau of Information, the public relations

practitioners in different Bureaus and the Mass Media Agency journalists in the regional level. Documentary analysis and observation methods are also employed in the study.

3.2.1. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

KVale (1996) regard the “InterView” as a way of bringing together the multiple views of people (Somekh and Lewin 2005:35). In-depth interviews are used to get participants to provide an account of their experiences, of how they view their own world and the meanings they ascribe to it (Limb and Dwyer 2001:44). Interviews are most useful when you need to know about people’s experiences or views in some depth, the issue is sensitive, and people may not be able to speak freely in groups (Laws, Harper & Marcus 2003:286). Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. The interview is the main road to multiple realities (Stake 1995:64).

The aim of this study is to explore the application of social responsibility in the public relations process. Interviewing the public relations practitioners in the Bureau of Information and in different Bureaus, members of the management and the regional Mass Media Agency journalists is the best way to achieve the desired objective. All these are interviewed to get their feelings, attitudes, beliefs, experiences and identify trends by asking follow up questions independently. Extensive in-depth interviews helped me to know deeply how and why the practitioners answer specific and sensitive issues. In this study the sampling size is increased to get a depth understanding of the issue under investigation and to see the broader picture.

3.2.2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus groups are always used to collect qualitative data. This is one strength of focus groups- their production of rich data in the participants own words (Burton 2000:215). Focus group studies generally employ either convenience or purposive sampling, neither of which produces a representative sample (Somekh and Lewin 2005:43). The advantage of focus

groups is that they provide more insight in differences and similarities among opinions of group members (Van Aken, Berends & Bij 2007:135).

The central purpose of both is to collect data that accurately reflects the thoughts, feelings, and opinion of respondents; however in focus groups the intention is to stimulate discussion among people and bring to the surface responses that otherwise might lay dominant. Such discussions may enable participants to clarify their views and opinion positions or, on the basis of engaging with others, to articulate more clearly than they otherwise might. The interactive dynamic is therefore considered to be a crucial element of the focus group approach. The interviewer (or moderator) has used a variety of techniques to encourage respondents to debate topics and issues, to challenge opinions expressed by others, to identify areas of consensus and disagreement, and to collect examples with which to illuminate concepts. The membership of focus groups is usually determined by some shared attribute among participants. This might be an experience, a known opinion-position, a socio-demographic characteristic, or some other variable (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2006:164-165). A focus group is a group interview, where 6 to 12 people are brought together for a discussion (Laws, Harper & Marcus 2003:298).

In this study two focus groups will be formed. The first one is the practitioners in the Bureau of Information. The second focus group is the public relations practitioners in the different Bureaus and the regional Mass Media Agency Journalists. In each focus group six to twelve participants will be involved. The purpose of these focus groups is to test the difference in what the practitioners tell individually and in groups and to identify areas of consensus and disagreement.

3.2.3. OBSERVATION

Observation is one of the most important methods of data collection. It entails being present in a situation and making a record of one's impressions of what takes place. In the observation, the primary research instrument is the self, consciously gathering sensory data through sight, hearing taste, smell and touch. By various means of record keeping, traces of

those impressions are stored for careful scrutiny and analysis after the event (Somekh and Lewin 2005:138).

In the study the researcher observed what the practitioners behave and act in their natural settings. The researcher identifies himself to the informants that he is observing and uses participant observation. I observed the emotions and feelings of the practitioners and leaders while conducting the interview. I observed that the organizational leaders' front tables are crowded by only governmental publications. This shows the practice they are entirely bounded in.

3.2.4. DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS (REVIEW)

Documents can be examined for immediate content, changing content over time and the values that such changing content manifests (Somekh and Lewin 2005:35). An important advantage of documentation is that it may provide information that organization members have partly or completely forgotten (VanAken, Berends & Bij 2007:136).

The aim of this document analysis is to understand what is written in the regional constitution, editorial policy, guidelines, manuals, ethical standards, strategic and yearly plans, performance reports, business process reengineering study of the Bureau of Information. This helps the researcher to compare to their practice and analyze the issue from different perspectives to get the full picture of the issue under investigation. Any documentary material that adds value in answering the research questions will be assessed and analyzed.

3.3. SAMPLE SELECTION AND SIZE

The principle of selection in purposive sampling is the researchers' judgment as to typicality or interest. A sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy her specific needs in a project (Robson 1993:265). According to Morse (1994:228) purposive sampling helps to find those interviewees (informants) who have available knowledge and experience that the

researchers / investigators need, are capable of reflection, are articulate, have time to be interviewed and are willing to take part in the research / investigation.

The key difference is that within the qualitative tradition, samples tend to be seen as illustrative of the broader social and cultural processes, rather than strictly and generally representative (Deacon et al., 1999: 45). In qualitative research, “the researchers’ primary goal is an understanding of social processes rather than obtaining a representative sample” (Arber 1993, p.73 quoted in Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2006:157).

The researcher chooses the Bureau of Information because it is the regional government’s spokesperson and the organization which is responsible to coordinate all the public relations activities in the region. The Bureau produces its own magazines, newspapers, writes press releases, conducts meetings with people and has its own website to accomplish its organizational objectives and goals. Although the Bureau of Information has its organizational structure in the zonal and Woreda levels, interviewees were selected in the regional office only. This is mainly due to time and financial constraints and thinking that it will never create much influence on the collected data.

The sample size is twelve practitioners from the Bureau of Information, six practitioners from different Bureaus and six practitioners from the Mass Media Agency and some interviewees from the public’s. Among the different Bureaus are the Bureau of Education, Trade and Industry, Justice, Regional Council, administration, Health, Agriculture and Rural Development and other government Bureaus, Commissions, Agencies. These Bureaus are selected because of their impact in society and rich experience in their public relations activities. Head(s) of the Bureau of Information and Mass Media Agency will be interviewed.

From the twelve practitioners in the Bureau of Information four will participate in the in-depth interview. From the six public relation practitioners in different Bureaus and the regional Mass Media Agency journalists in each two of them will participate in the in-depth interview and the other remaining four in each are involved in the focus group discussion.

The participants are purposefully selected for the study i.e. purposive sampling is used in the study.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Qualitative researchers use an inductive method: Data are collected relevant to some topic and are grouped into appropriate and meaningful categories; explanations emerge from the data themselves (Wimmer and Dominick 2003:111). The most fundamental characteristics of qualitative research is its express commitment to viewing events , actions, values etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied (Bryman 1988:61). Denzin (1970:310), for example, treats triangulation as an approach in which “multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data, and methodologies are combined” (Ibid: 174).

The first major thematic category concerns the application of social responsibility in the public relations process. The practitioners’ treatment of the publics’ is one of the three major thematic categories that the study would discuss. The third one is the challenges or trends that affect the practitioners both internally and externally. Assessment of the image (reputation) of the organization by publics, the consequences of applying social responsibility and treating publics and possible solutions will be discussed. The findings will be presented by direct quotations from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions from the public relations practitioners in the Bureau of Information and in different Bureaus, heads of the Information Bureau and Mass Media Agency journalists. The interpretation and discussion will be guided by the objectives of the study. Data obtained by observation and document analysis will be analyzed.

CHAPTER FOUR - DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

“Public relations is the practice of social responsibility.”(Grunig and Hunt 1984).

“Public relations practitioners who ignore research will soon discover that they are ignored” (Newson, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004).

“Too many practitioners are still infected with the idea that public relations is essentially image-building” (Haberman and Dolphin 1988).

The aim of this section of data presentation and analysis is to outline the application of social responsibility in the public relations process and factors affecting it. The relationship of the Bureau of Information with strategic publics will also be assessed. In doing so, sixteen in-depth interviewees from the regional Bureau of Information, Mass Media Agency, public relations practitioners in different Bureaus and the publics` have participated. Two focus group discussions have been conducted. The Amhara National Regional State Bureau of Information`s (ANRSBOI) 2008/9 Physical and PR plan, the Five Years` Strategic Plan, the Business Process Reengineering Study and Press, News and Programs Work Process Operational Manual and Editorials are explored. The interviewees are selected because of their experience, knowledge, quality of expressing themselves and exposure to the public relations works of the Bureau of Information. The focus group discussants are selected from the practitioners in the Bureau of Information, the Mass Media Agency journalists and PR practitioners in different Bureaus.

Amhara (*Amharic:አማራ*) is one of the nine *ethnic divisions (kililoch)* of Ethiopia, containing the homeland of the *Amhara people*. Previously known as Region 3, its capital is *Bahir Dar*. Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the *Central Statistical Agency* of Ethiopia (CSA), the Amhara Region has a population of 17,214,056 of whom 8,636,875 were men and 8,577,181 women; urban inhabitants number 2,112,220 or 12.27% of the population. With an estimated area of 159,173.66 square kilometers, this region has an estimated density of

108.15 people per square kilometer. The majority of the population is Amhara, which is estimated to be 91.48%; other groups include the *Agaw/Awi* (3.46%), *Oromo* (2.62%), *Agaw/Kamyr* (1.39%), and *Argobba* (0.41%). Of the total population of the Region, 82.5% were Orthodox Christians, 17.2% *Muslim*, 0.2% *Protestants* and 0.1% all others. The current president of the region is Ayalew Gobeze (Wikipedia, encyclopedia).

The Bureau of Information has 1722 manpower in its structure from the regional to the woreda level. It has 1051 line staff and 74 supporting staffs. Now the structure is filled with 1125 manpower (ARBOI 2008/9 physical and public relations plan August 2008: Bahir Dar). Under the Proclamation No.120/2006, the revised Amhara National Regional State executive organs reestablishment, organization and determination of their powers and duties proclamation, Bureau of information shall have the following detailed powers and duties:

1. Promote policies and programs of the Regional state to the public; disseminate current information of the regional state; devise the necessary strategy there to and direct same thereof;
2. Cause media programs enabling to bring about national consensus and promote positive image of the region be prepared and get disseminated thereof ;
3. Facilitate conditions for the public to obtain any information of vital importance timely and accurately;
4. Prepare forums on various issues that are essential for the eradication of backwardness and development obstructive tales, and thereby bring about the enhancement of democratic culture in the Region;
5. Devise a strategy in which news and information networks are installed and expanded in the Region;
6. Carry out such activities as are necessary with regard to the overall coordination of news; information and programs exchanges that are under taken as from the Regional to federal states and the vice versa; facilitate conditions for the under taking of experience sharing with corresponding institutions of other regional states and with similar concerned bodies;

7. Issue license to and supervise over the activities of private persons and organizations engaged in the publication of news papers, magazines and newsletters intended for profit, if and when ever the circulation of such print media is solely confined to the territorial limit of the Regional state (The Amhara National Regional State Zikre Hig Proclamation No.2, 2006).

Vision: To be precursor and proficient Information source in the struggle against poverty and augmentation of democratic culture in the region.

Mission: Facilitate Conditions for the public to obtain any information of vital importance timely and accurately; prepare forums on various issues that are essential for the eradication of backwardness and development obstructive tales and thereby bring about the enhancement of democratic culture in the region, promote policies and programs and disseminate current information of the regional state, devise a strategy in which news and information net works are installed and expanded in the region and cause media programs enabling to bring about national consensus

([Http://www.amharainfo.gov.et/en/aboutUs.aspx](http://www.amharainfo.gov.et/en/aboutUs.aspx)).

All forms of data from different sources are categorized and analyzed according to the research questions (interrelated themes). Robson states that codes are typically related to research questions, concepts and themes (Robson 1993:477). Data analysis and interpretation requires asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by participants (Cresswell 2003:190). Inductive reasoning is used in the analysis and interpretation. The data from different sources are categorized thematically as follows:

4.1. THE BUREAU OF INFORMATION IS NOT SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

4.1.1. NO RESEARCH APPROACH TO PR FUNCTION

The PR practitioners in the Bureau of Information (PRPIB) all agree that research is not part of the management of their public relations function. There is lack of capacity, readiness and understanding in conducting research. The practitioners do not consider research as their task. They consider publicity as their main concern. Their work is not based on research,

theoretical body of knowledge of public relations and information from key publics'. They have also financial and material constraints in conducting research.

PRPIB₁: "In principle, a public relations function which doesn't base its activity on research has no value. There is lack of capacity and understanding in conducting research on organizational leaders and practitioners. There is no trend and readiness in conducting research. We do not consider research as our task. We have also financial and material constraints. We get information indirectly from the panel discussion forums" (Personal interview with PR practitioner 1, April 2009).

PRPIB₂: "We don't have research work process in the organizational structure. No research has been carried out to identify the information needs of our publics. Research is not part of our PR function. This has affected our performance. Publicity is only our main concern. We didn't study even the readability of our publications." (Personal interview with PR practitioner 2, April 2009).

PRPIB₃: "The Bureau's commitment in listening and responding publics begins with conducting research on the information needs of our publics. But nothing has been done on organizational level. Our communication effort is just like dropping water on a stone or moving blindly. Our work is not participatory, research and knowledge based." (Personal interview with PR practitioner 3, April 2009).

PRPIB₄: "Since we follow developmental journalism model, our PR activity is not based on research rather on the yearly regional council decisions." (Personal interview with PR practitioner 4, April 2009).

From this we can understand that the organization does not conduct research to identify its communication problems, image (reputation), trust and credibility and also the public's needs and satisfaction. They assume publicity as an end in itself. The practitioners are bounded by the craft public relations practice. The practitioners do not conduct applied, basic or introspective research.

Research is a vital function in the process of public relations (Wimmer and Dominick 2006:396). But this strategic task is not part of the public relations function of the Bureau of Information. Due to this the perceived problems of the organization are not identified. It is a closed system management.

Public relations officers seek a flow of information from the public to those who must make informed choices in the policy decision process. This is the most misunderstood strategic task

of government public relations staffs (Caywood 1997:457-458). Many government practitioners, public employees, do not measure up to their responsibility to inform the public they are hired to serve (Heibert 1998:38). In the Bureau of Information the practitioners do not measure up their social responsibility role. This is the forgotten part of their overall activity. The flow of information is from the government to the public's. There is no organized system of the flow of information from their strategic public's to the government.

In the focus group discussion that is conducted in the Bureau of Information, the practitioners reach a consensus that the PR function is not based on research. The information needs of their public's and their satisfaction unidentified.

4.1.2. PR IS NOT A PROBLEM SOLVING ACTIVITY

Strategic planning uses research to define and redefine the perceived problem (Haywood 2002:91). In planning, the practitioners in the Bureau don't base their activity on research findings and try to solve it. The practitioners do not criticize the plan critically because of fear. The external public's is not participatory of the planning. They base their planning from the regional council decisions, five years' strategic plan and their last year's performance reports.

Instead of participating their strategic public's in the planning and decision-making process "we know what the public's wants" thinking dominate the planning phase. This is how their yearly planning is based as explained by the practitioners:

PRPIB₁: "The planning is done by the spirit "we know the public's". The organizational leaders produce the plan and discuss with us. I have never seen any plan changed as the result of our interaction. We do not participate wholly and criticize the plan critically because of fear. We have no the trend to listen and respond for public's interests and concerns by research and use the information for planning our PR activities." (Personal interview with PR practitioner 1, April 2009).

PRPIB₂: "We base our work on decisions reached by the regional administration. The external public's do not participate in the organizational PR planning." (Personal interview with PR practitioner 2, April 2009).

PRPIB₃: “The plan is based on the five years strategic plan, other sectors plan and from public opinion found in forums. Our zonal and Woreda structures discusses on the plan with limitations.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 3, April 2009).

PRPIB₄: “Our last year`s performance report also serves as a base for our plan.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 4, April 2009).

From their reply it is clear that the public relations function is not a problem solving activity. In the planning phase there is little participation of their internal publics. Their Zonal and Woreda level structures and the PR practitioners in different Bureaus discuss on the finalized plan but there is no room for basic amendments. Their external publics do not participate in the planning phase of the public relations process.

In the focus group discussion that is conducted in the Bureau of Information, the practitioners reach a consensus that the planning phase is based on the vision and mission of the Bureau, five years strategic plan, last year`s performance report, and other Bureaus` plans. The plan is first made by the heads of the Bureau. The Bureau of Information has no its own separate strategic and yearly plan but base its work wholly on other Bureaus` plan.

4.1.3. THE ALIENATION EFFECT OF THE GOVERNMENT WITH PUBLICS`

In the communication phase, the nature of their communication is overtly partisan and self-serving on the side of the government. The PR practitioners believe that they are expected to serve both government and publics` interests. But in practice they are serving not as a bridge but as tube passing information from one side to the other. There is fear on the organizational leaders, practitioners and the publics`. No political party participation unless it is a nation-wide voting time. Their sources of information are dominantly government offices and authorities in power.

The practitioners will be severely and venomously criticized in the GIM GEMA in their attempt to report publics` interests` and concerns. Their nature of communication is biased

and one-sided on the side of the government. Unsuccessful attempts (failures) will not be reported because of the unrestricted fear of the practitioners and organizational leaders. The practitioners believe that their communication content creates complains, hatred and rejection between the government and the publics`. Some of the practitioners are in personal conflict with what they think (believe) and with what they actually perform. The organizational leaders have a different view from this and say that their communication meets the interests of both the publics` and the government:

PRPIB₁: “We are expected to serve as a bridge between the government and the publics`. In our reporting we publish what we get. There is no way to prove its accuracy and crosscheck its objectivity. Balancing the two interests is possible only if the practitioner is given full responsibility. The PR practitioners do not serve as a bridge but tube passing information from one side to the other. In our communication we don`t incorporate the needs, interests and concerns of our publics. We work on the side of the government and communicate best practices. “We know the publics` interest” attitude dominated our thinking and practice. I personally believe there is no bridge. The publics also don`t tell us the reality because of fear of harm. We don`t publish the view of informants if we think is “bad” for our image and consensus building because of fear and lack of self-confidence. I believe the publics` don`t have the trust and satisfaction on our works. The publics` don`t read and listen us because the Bureau has lied something somewhere to the publics`. Whatever is published or broadcasted will not be believed by publics. It is like “the Shepherd and the Wolf`s” story. We are expected to counter reply on the negative reporting of government performances by other media. There is absolutely no political party`s participation in our publications unless it is a nation-wide voting time.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 1, April 2009).

PRPIB₂: “As it is a government organization, it mainly reports government activities. In our reporting, as much as possible, we fairly report using sources close to the government. Even if it doesn`t fulfill the publics` interest we have no way to go further to prove it. One time I was criticized in the GIM GEMA (criticism and self-criticism session of the management and workers) as “aggravator of the publics` cry” for the mere reason in trying to report an issue many people gathered and cried for reply. Later it was reported by the direction given by the top authorities in the regional administration. We don`t participate political parties in any publication as we are partisan. But the editorial policy allows us to do so. The government wants to do balance reporting on the success and failure of performances. We don`t report the unsuccessful (failure) attempts, political parties and critical issues of the publics` because of unrestricted fear.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 2, April 2009).

PRPIB₃: “I don’t think our communication content is fair and balanced. We dominantly report the positive activity of the government not its failures, unsuccessful attempts or problems. To do so needs committed and visionary organizational leaders which we lack. The one sided and biased information and generally our communication problems create complaint, hatred and rejection on the side of the publics’. This has multiplying effect for destructive hands as manifested in the 2005 election crisis as manifested in the 2005 election.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 3, April 2009).

A different view on the nature of their communication is expressed by one of the top organizational leaders:

PRPIB₄: “I don’t believe there is a balance problem in our reporting. Our reporting meets the interests of the publics’ and the government. We believe our communication activities, which is public interest centered, helped us to have a positive image (reputation) on publics’. The elites (intellectuals) may consider us as a cadre (working for one party’s legitimacy and supremacy). What entertains these enlightened groups may be liberal thinking (crisis, sensationalism). We have different belief and perspective from these groups. But we don’t conduct research or discuss our communication problems with our publics. We don’t have public relations code of conduct which incorporates the social responsibility role. Being balanced is determined by where you stand. What the government actually does is the publics’ interest. The 2005 election crisis is the manifestation of the lack of the PR organization to communicate effectively what is done by the government. Before ,our reporting was biased and positive on the side of the government but now our communication is based on the modern theory and practice of public relations ” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 4, April 2009).

From the above information it is clear that the organization has problems in addressing the interests of their publics to the decision making bodies of the government. There is no way to prove the accuracy of the information from different interest groups. The publics don’t have the trust and satisfaction of their press products. Different opinions (views) will not be published unless it conforms positively to the image building mentality. Negative reporting is not allowed at all. The practitioners dominantly use sources close to the government and authorities in power. Why the some of the good articles in the editorial policy is put but not used as a guideline for their performances need further investigation. In this context, Gim Gema retards creativity, democratic culture of openness, a questioning mind and change. This is a way of hammering to conform to the dominant line of thinking and practice which has a self-serving effect for organizational leaders.

But what we observe from the view of one of the organizational leader is that organizational leaders alienated themselves from the publics` interest and practitioners` concern. The image psychology has affected the leaders to the extent of telling what is not in objective reality and on actual ground. A single news reporting issue that should be decided by the practitioners` level passes the organizational leaders and reaches the top regional authorities. This shows the organization`s tight control of information which has a negative effect on its overall performance and augmentation of democratic culture in the region. There is a trend of being satisfied by little achievements on organizational leaders.

The organizational leader proudly assures that their communication is based on the modern theory and practice of public relations in a situation where little is known but not practiced from the modern theory and practice of public relations in the organization. This shows us that the theoretical body of knowledge of public relations gap is wider and resistance stance stronger on organizational leaders. This will have a negative effect in implementing government policies and getting support from the people because what the leader tells us from his gut feelings and intuitions and the actual reality differs. The leaders should aware that to change what others think, feel, believe and do they have to change their minds first. The leader is the persuaded persuader who loses publics` perspective and responsibility.

Public relations serves the public interest by making all points of view articulate in the public forum (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:124). Public relations is an important element in implementing government policy (Culbertson and Chen 1996:246). Public relations must be practiced with a commitment to social responsibility and ethics (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:121). The PR person who loses public`s perspective has forgone public responsibility and become the persuaded instead of the persuader (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg 2004:165).

Public relations practice is the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization`s and public interest (Newsom and Carrel

2001: 4). From the above definition of PR we can understand that PR is the practice of serving both publics and organization`s interests.

Besides this some of the practitioners have lost job satisfaction because of their personal conflict in what they think (believe) and what is actually performed. PRPIB₁ expressed it:”I don`t have job satisfaction at all. I am in personal conflict with what I believe (think) and what I actually perform. It is just like “A cow gets birth a fire” story. I don`t leave because it is my job. I don`t report because it burns me. I personally believe that there are conflicting values between the government and the publics`.

The Amhara Mass Media Agency journalists (AMMAJ) also hold similar attitude on problems related to the social responsibility role of the Bureau of Information. Their main concerns are the negative and unintended effects of not covering failures on publics and government, misunderstanding on what is meant by image and consensus building and ways of achieving it:

AMMAJ₁: “The Bureau of Information has no clear and defined roles and functions. It is not balanced in serving the interests of the publics` and the government. It focuses on the achievements of the government - its failures and problems totally untouched.” (Personal interview with Mass Media Agency journalist 1, April 2009).

AMMAJ₂: “The Bureau of Information has no role than doing the reporting the achievements of the government and its authorities in power. The work is not research based and the practitioners are not public spirited. On critical issues like politics, conflict, explosion, hunger, corruption etc. it is not a matter of being fair and balance but not covered in the reporting at all. This trend of hiding and not reporting failures and individual mal-practitioners has created anti-government stand on the side of the publics`. The suppression of such news has unintended negative effect for the government.” (Personal interview with Mass Media Agency journalist 2, April 2009).

AMMAJ₄: “There is balance problem in their reporting. The failure or committed problems by individual mal practitioners at different levels of the regional structure should be reported. The government should not be criticized and hated by these individuals. It is this biased reporting that separates the government from the publics`. There is misunderstanding on what is meant by image-building and national consensus and ways of achieving it on the organization`s practitioners

and leaders” (Personal interview with Mass Media Agency journalist 1, April 2009).

One of the respondent journalists in the Amhara Mass Media Agency was irritated not to tell anything about the Bureau of information (especially on the decision in taking the regional Mass Media Agency journalists to the Information Bureau) except their relationship problems on news-making process. I agree on this and continue but in the mean time he told me that he was dissatisfied by the un-participatory measure and their relationships.

The PR practitioners in different Bureaus (PRPDB) evaluate the social responsibility role of the Bureau of Information and its activities as lacking balance, having credibility and trust problem and irresponsible on the side of the publics’ interest. Some of the practitioners are pessimistic about serving both interests mutually unless the practitioners are free from pressures and influences inside and outside the organization. Public dissatisfaction, the lack of balance and credibility problem of their reporting is another concern:

PRPDB₁: “The Bureau of Information doesn’t do much to serve as a bridge between the government and the publics’. There is the assumption that the people are told, heard, know and change has come. But its reporting has alienated the government from publics’. It’s communication content is boring and expected and focused on certain issues. Problems and complaints on the side of the publics’ are not reported or responded well. In the prevailing situation, it is difficult for the practitioners to serve both the publics’ and government interests mutually. To be socially responsible the PR activity should be free from any pressure and influence inside and outside the organization.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner in different Bureaus 1, April 2009).

PRPDB₂: “In a country where there are too much problems it is hard to say that the Bureau of Information is socially responsible. There are too much uncovered issues. The Bureau of Information has no obligation to tell the truth. As we follow developmental journalism, in developmental reporting you fight corruption and perform your social responsibility role at the same time. If the problem is reported it has to be reported till the end (measures taken). If not it should not be reported at all. Being only publics’ question is not the criteria to be covered because these publics may be agitated by persons with skillful minds.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner in different Bureaus 2, April 2009).

PRPDB₃: “Currently I don’t believe that the Bureau of Information performs its activities well. We accept that there is publics’ dissatisfaction. I think there is a gap in addressing the publics’ interest to the decision making bodies and make known to the publics’ timely and efficiently, especially in electronics media. The Bureau is expected to do both success and failure stories. But usually it focuses on success stories. We give direction (guideline) to do both.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner in different Bureaus 3, April 2009).

PRPDB₄: “People say that the Bureau of Information is one-sided and self-serving. This may be correct or not. Personally I don’t clearly understand the difference between Mass Media Agency and the Bureau of Information. But in general I can guess that their reporting lacks balance and credibility. The publications doesn’t attract you to read. The accuracy of the information should also be confirmed.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner in different Bureaus 4, April 2009).

What is expressed by the view of practitioner 2 ” the Bureau of Information has no obligation to tell the truth” conflicts with the basic principle of public relations and of the civil service reform which both adheres responsiveness, serving publics’ interest, accountability, transparency etc. He also wants to burry public questions by simply thinking the publics’ as if they are objects for manipulation by whatever minds. This shows a disregard for publics question which is a notion above from insensitivity to publics’ interest and concerns. It would be better for the practitioner to think the other way round to confront publics’ questions and respond instead of externalizing the problem (question). Some of the PR practitioners do not know the clear demarcation and difference between the regional Bureau of Information and the Mass Media Agency.

In the focus group discussion that is conducted in the Bureau of Information, the practitioners reach a consensus that in the communication phase the reporting is biased and one-sided on the side of the government. Failures are not reported. We are expected to give reply for the negative (bad) reporting`s about government performances in other media. The focus group discussants in group two (that is the Mass Media Agency journalists and the PR practitioners in different Bureaus) reached a consensus that their reporting is not based on publics’ interest. It is like “fired bullets without targets”. It is centered on government’s interest. Problems on the side of the government and individual mal practitioners should not be buried under the cover of creating problems on “image building.” Reporting only the achievements of the government has the effect of totally turning the publics’ face back to other information

sources. The forum discussions, especially in the Woreda level, are not intended to listen and respond positively to the interests and concerns of the publics'. In the discussion forums the chairpersons who are lucky will persuade people but others return only telling the message (stand of the government). "Swallow what I give you" approach dominates the forum discussions. There is political pressure in reporting problems and failures. We see insensitivity to the publics' interest and concerns. There is no organized feedback system in the organization.

Some residents of the town in Bahir Dar say there is over-generalization, sourcing, balance, trust and credibility problem, misconception about developmental journalism, lack of understanding on what is meant by PR and journalism. The nature of their communication is not publics' centered. The publics are a head of the practitioners in thinking and change mentality. The Bureau creates enmity between the government and the people. It is not responsive and participatory. One of the publics' (P), who is a lecturer at Bahir Dar University, expresses his view:

P₁: "Being a government institution doesn't mean that it serves only the government. If it doesn't serve the government and the publics', we think no communication has occurred. In technical term, we call propaganda if the organization is one-sided and self-serving. In the Bureau we see communication problem in addressing the mutual interests of the government and the publics'. Their nature of communication is more related to propaganda than communication activity. The role of the Mass Media and serving only government affairs are quite different. Adhering to developmental journalism doesn't prevent from reporting failures and problems. Personally, I don't take the Bureau of Information as honest and faithful source of information. It doesn't meet my positive expectation and information needs. A government who admits mistakes (failures) will be heard when it reports its success. The PR organization who thinks what I report will be transmitted and believed by publics will encounter a harsh environment when a problem reaches at climax and turns everything upside down. What is practiced in the Bureau of Information doesn't follow the basic principles of developmental journalism. The Bureau of Information should free itself from being simple mouthpiece (spokesperson) activity. The source of information should not be only government offices and authorities." (Personal interview with publics 1, April 2009).

P₂: "I believe that the Bureau of Information understands the side pains of the government than publics. If there were publics centered PR activities, it would serve the balance

interests of the government and the publics`. The nature of their communication is agitation and one-sided indoctrination. Some of its reporting seems like what is written when a person dies-only the good ones (Yemekabir Tsuhuf) and some of it has cloud snatching (Gum Aschebit) behavior. The publics are a head of the PR practitioners in thinking and change mentality.” (Personal interview with publics 2, April 2009).

P₃: “I don’t believe that the Bureau of Information follows publics’ interest. It is full of deception and manipulation. It doesn’t tell you the reality. The Bureau of Information doesn’t concern about publics’ interest at all. The Bureau currently creates a gap and hostility between the government and the publics`. The Bureau will not change this trend in the future because it has firm stand on information control. The Bureau does not participate other political parties as it protects the government’s (one party’s) supremacy and legitimacy.” (Personal interview with publics 3, April 2009).

P₄: “The Bureau of Information doesn’t have an established system of addressing publics’ interest. Publics’ interest is not addressed unless they are told to do so by the authorities. In my view there is no responsiveness or has become narrow. They don’t participate publics in the PR activity. It is one-sided information. I believe the image of the organization is totally negative and is not trusted as a source of information by the people.” (Personal interview with publics 4, April 2009).

From the documents we see the Bureau of Information admits that it is a weakness not to study the readability of its press products (p.19). The narrow scope and vision of their publications should be changed and measure be taken to see a different effect. They believe that PR work requires attitudinal struggle with different people. Promoting best practices will be the central role of their activity. Reporting based on the government’s line of thinking will maintain relationships between the government and the publics`. They discover that the narrow scope and vision and the traditional way of practicing PR will not bring a new and different effect from their previous performances (p.33). (The Amhara National Regional State Bureau of Information (ANRSBOI) Physical and Public Relations Plan. August 2008: Bahir Dar). The social responsibility role of PR is mentioned in any part of the plan. There is no trend of social report (how they perform their social responsibility role) in their performance reports.

In the five year’s strategic plan of the Bureau of Information it is stated that the plan is based on the regional council’s development and good governance goals (ANRSBOI Five Year’s Strategic Plan 2005-2009: 2006 Bahir Dar: 7). In the organization’s values and operational

principles part, it is stated that the PR activities will be based on both the successful and unsuccessful attempts. The civil service programs will be the main guideline tool for their activities (Ibid.12-13). In the Organizations Five Year's Strategic Plan Performance Direction it is stated that all PR activities will be centered on changing the thinking and behavior of their publics (Ibid. 54).

Though the strategic plan clearly states that the PR activity will be based on both successful and unsuccessful (failure) attempts (p.12-13), it is only the success stories that are dominantly (almost all) reported in practice. In the civil service program some of the core principles are serving the public's interest, responsiveness, fairness, honesty etc. but in the Bureau of Information these core values are not well incorporated in to their public relations communication and function. The research, planning, communication and evaluation phases of the public relations process are not participatory of their strategic publics.

The Business Process Reengineering (BPR) study was designed to serve publics' interest (question). Each work activity begins with publics' information needs and ends with its satisfaction (p.2-6). But the BPR hasn't changed its being a spokesperson for the government and the dominant thinking that publicity will bring the desired outcome. The BPR hasn't changed the organizational structure, role and function in serving the publics' interest. The BPR was designed also to base their activity on public's information needs and its satisfaction. But in the end this has not come true in practice. They want also to stop the Amhara region's newspaper "Bekur" from being published and only the Information Bureau's newspaper "Lisan" to appear as regional newspaper. The assumption is to avoid work duplication and resource in which the Bureau of Information newspaper "Lisan" and Mass Media Agency newspaper "Bekur" have almost similar contents (p.9). The reason for taking the Amhara Region Mass Media Agency news center is not stated (Amhara region Bureau of Information BPR study paper February 2008 Bahir Dar).

As stated above the Bureau of Information's adapted BPR from the Ministry of Information has changed nothing in discharging social responsibility role and meeting the positive expectation of their strategic publics'. The Ministry of Information's BPR has affected it

negatively because this issue is not incorporated. Discharging social responsibility role and its reflections are seen neither in the study paper nor in practice. It has no change from the previous orientation and practice especially in discharging their social responsibility role.

In the Bureau Press, News and Programs Work Process Operational Manual and Editorial policy some of the guiding principles about developmental journalism are stated: the purpose of developmental journalism is to initiate people for development, reporting what is told by the government authorities and what is actually performed to the people, reporting performance gaps, failures and problems, showing the full picture of occurrences, events and actions in balanced and fair way, reporting government activities, the focus of activity and end of reporting will be on building a nation and meeting public's interest, presenting both sides when reporting two conflicting issues and finally it states to avoid practitioners from adding their love or hate, opinion or judgment in their reporting(p.35-36). The editorial works will support the image and consensus building activity. Views and articles having contents which hinder the image and consensus building of the region and of the country will not be reported at all. Reporting coverage will be given for political parties following the regional and federal laws and regulation (p.8-12). In the code of conduct and practice it is stated that practitioners will base their activities in meeting the government, people's and country's interest and advantage. The news should be accurate, objective and truthful (p.21). (The Amhara National Regional State Bureau of Information Press, News and Programs Work Process Operational Manual and Editorial Policy .November 2008: Bahir Dar).

Though the developmental journalism basic principles are stated as such this is not known by the practitioners and is not used as a guideline for their work. What is in the operational manuals and editorial policy and what is practiced is quite different. What is actually done is reporting the activities of the government for image, consensus and nation-building. Other stated core principles are not practiced.

On the tables of the waiting place of guests and the Bureau of information process owners I observed only governmental publications. This shows the reality their work is entirely bounded in. This is also mentioned in the guest's opinion book of the Bureau on 16 February

2009 to put other private press publications on the tables of the guests waiting place. The other point mentioned is lack of responsiveness in checking and reporting complaints in the location they are told by farmer complainers.

I observed that the organizational leaders are basically guided by Image Psychology. One of the organizational leaders tells us “now we believe that we are serving both the publics` and the government interests” in a situation where they don`t study the information needs of their strategic publics, no dialogue and interaction on the activities of the Bureau and no concern of their publics` participation in the research, planning, communication and evaluation phases of the public relations process. This practice of telling what is not in objective reality and inability to see the gaps of their performances makes it difficult to change their social responsibility role in the future. The image psychology has affected the leaders to the extent of telling what is not in real situation and practice. The organizational leaders should open their eyes wide and measure performances from the perspective of the publics` interest.

The other thing I observed is the lack of courage on organizational leaders and practitioners in coming out of the box thinking from the traditional PR practice. After long years of restructuring and BPR study they are where they were some years back in their role of mere publicity and communication technician. Social responsibility is not the concern.

4.1.4. THE PROCESS EVALUATION ONLY APPROACHES

In the evaluation phase of the public relations process the practitioners evaluate on what they produce (process evaluation) not the effectiveness of their communication on the attitude and behavior of their publics (outcome). The information needs and satisfaction of their publics` is not assessed and known. The effectiveness of their PR activities is not measured from the perspective of the publics` interest. They only evaluate how much Newspapers, Magazines, Panel discussions etc., they produce and conduct not its effectiveness on publics and meeting government`s policies, missions and actions. Here are excerpts from the practitioners own words:

PRPIB₁: “In evaluation, we don’t answer the satisfaction of our publics and the effectiveness of our programs on research. We measure what we are expected to produce and disseminate. We don’t measure the impact of our communication activities on publics and government.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 1, April 2009).

PRPIB₂: “Till now we only evaluate how much magazines, newspapers, press releases etc. we produce not its effectiveness.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 1, April 2009).

PRPIB₃: “In the management we evaluate only performances not achieving our stretched goals or satisfying the needs, interests and concerns of our publics.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 1, April 2009).

PRPIB₄: “We have problems especially in achieving quality. We don’t gather information from publics and do not discuss with publics about our overall activities.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 1, April 2009).

From the above explanations by the PR practitioners we can deduce that there is almost no treatment of different publics’ interest (perspective) in the research, planning, communication and evaluation phases of the public relations process. The PR function is not evaluated from the perspective of the publics’ interests and concerns. The practitioners consider publicity as their main role and as an end in itself.

Activities traditionally referred to as propaganda today may further be labeled as public relations efforts, image consulting, the news and information sharing by organizational spin doctors (Kamalipour 2007: 233). Public relations must be a two-way activity: listening to what the public thinks, as well as projecting the organizations messages. It follows that public relations efforts can only be effective where the aims of the organization are compatible with the aims of the public (Haywood 2002:15-16).

The Bureau of Information has problems in issue identification, monitoring and management both conceptually and practically. The publics’ interest is not the primary consideration in their public relations function. The practitioners serve as communication technician than management roles. The four broad public relations functions, the intelligence (issue management), counseling organization’s management, action and evaluation, are not well known and done. The Bureau dominantly follows the press agency/publicity and the public

information models where feedback is not an essential element and negative reporting (information) is not volunteered. They use also the two-way asymmetric model. Grunig and Hunt (1984) noted: “the organization does not change as a result of public relations; it attempts to change public attitudes and behavior.” *The feedback is primarily to help construct a better message* (Botan and Hazleton 1989:23). Their goal is to bring target publics around to a certain way of thinking through advocacy (Guth and Marsh 2005:7). Instead of the negative image psychology, the psychology for public relations today and in the years ahead must be one that is built upon *candor, receptivity and diligence* (Haberman and Dolphin 1988:396).

In the focus group discussion that is conducted in the Bureau of Information, the practitioners reach a consensus that in evaluation phase, they don't measure the effectiveness of their performance on publics and the satisfaction of their publics. They evaluate processes not outcomes. Being all this, the government complains that achievements are not well communicated or properly addressed to the people. Information on the publics' is collected on the good and bad performances of the regional government. But information or public opinion on the communication problems or other related issues of the Bureau of Information is not collected and analyzed at all. It is also agreed that good work atmosphere and freedom should be given for the practitioners to be socially responsible.

4.2. POOR RELATIONSHIP WITH STRATEGIC PUBLICS

An important public for any public relations practitioner is the media (Yopp and McAdams 2003:322). Sustainable relationships with key and strategic publics are important for the effectiveness of PR activities and for discharging the social responsibility role.

4.2.1. UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REGIONAL MASS

MEDIA AGENCY

For public relations media is one of the most important publics. Without media it is difficult for PR firms to achieve their goals. Their relationship is analyzed from the views expressed by key publics and data gathered from documentary materials.

There is a love-hate relationship between the PR practitioners and the Mass Media Agency journalists. They encounter a problem while they implement the decision in merging zonal reporters of the Mass Media Agency journalists to the Bureau of Information. This is quite unique experience in the relationship of the PR organization and the Mass Media Agency from the international trend as expressed by the practitioners in the Bureau of Information.

PRPIB₁: “The Bureau of Information PR practitioners and the Mass Media Agency journalists disregard one another. Their relationship is full of misunderstanding. The Mass Media Agency journalists say “we know the profession”. On the other side, the Bureau of Information says “Publish what I give you”. As the head of the Bureau of Information is the chairperson of the board of the Mass Media Agency, there may be influence. The Mass Media Agency journalists tell us to balance the news story. We say one source is enough because mostly the regional PR practitioners don’t actually do the news. The Zonal and Woreda PR practitioners do it. Now a forum is established to solve these problems.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 1, April 2009).

PRPIB₃: “The measure taken by the Bureau of Information to take the Mass Media Agency news and programs center (all Zonal reporters) creates much complain on the side of the Mass Media Agency journalists and organizational leaders. They don’t accept this decision.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 1, April 2009).

PRPIB₄: “There was relationship problem on news making process because of our lack of capacity. But now a forum is established which serves as a stage for struggle and to solve problems.” (Personal interview with PR practitioner 1, April 2009).

As explained by the practitioners the decision creates complain and misunderstanding on the side of the regional Mass Media Agency. This needs close attention and professional reconciliation between them before it totally affects their relationship and in turn the social responsibility role of the Bureau of Information.

The Mass Media Agency journalists complain the Bureau of Information’s decision in controlling information. According to the decision, every government information has to pass through the Bureau of Information. They are confused by this decision. The Mass Media Agency checks the information coming from the Bureau of Information to conform to the journalistic standard of news and programs. They believe it is their journalistic responsibility

to do so. Their relationship is full of friction, distrust, suspicion and hatred. Their relationship is not symbiotic. Here follows the excerpts from the journalists:

AMMAJ₁: “Before some time, when the Bureau of Information sends news they tell us to broadcast without any editing. This creates rough relationships. The Bureau of Information’s decision in preventing Zone and Woreda PR practitioners’ from sending news directly to the Mass Media Agency is bureaucratic and time-taking. I don’t know the real intention (motive) behind. The Bureau is really confusing us. They should do balance and fair reporting. You see hatred on the people for the Bureau of Information. Many people think it is the mouthpiece of the government not public’s. Their publications do not reach the intended public. It has become a gorge not a bridge. There is no feedback system and contact with public.” (Personal interview with Mass Media Agency journalist 1, April 2009).

AMMAJ₂: “From the very beginning of the establishment of the Bureau, its roles, responsibilities, function and relevance is not well studied. Instead of looking for its true role and function, it is challenging the Mass Media Agency. I see a clear loss of defined direction. There is duplication of work (efforts) between us. I observe the spirit and mentality of controlling and governing the Mass Media Agency.” (Personal interview with Mass Media Agency journalist 2, April 2009).

AMMAJ₃: “The news coming from the Bureau of Information has sub-standard news value, unbalanced, low in quality and quantity, fair zonal coverage problem, not done with relevant supporting background for news according to each medium. The Bureau of Information creates problems and pressure on our work. Now we do news only to fill the gap for their inability to provide the required news. We can’t find actual reporters if we want to edit or check the information in the news they sent us. The decision (political) of taking the Mass Media Agency journalists to the Bureau of Information is not discussed by the workers on both sides. This has affected our relationship and performance. Some of our zonal reporters leave their job when they are told to go to the Bureau of Information. The technical, legal and professional contexts of this decision are questionable. It is a wrong and unjust decision made. Though we try to solve problems on forums, it becomes a headache and is boring till what time we continue like this. This will not bring a sustainable solution.” (Personal interview with Mass Media Agency journalist 3, April 2009).

AMMAJ₄: “The political decision made in line with the re-union of Ethiopia news agency to the Ministry of Information is wrong because the two have different structures and prevailing situations. The Mass Media Agency news becomes public relation-ized news. This has affected the trust and credibility of the Mass Media Agency. All this happen due to the Bureau’s inability to practice its true role and function. We fear we may lose our audience. The Bureau of Information should only be used as one source of information not the sole provider of news.”(Personal interview with Mass Media Agency journalist 4, April 2009).

As we see this dictatorship of the Bureau of Information has a paralyzing effect on the performance of the Mass Media Agency. It has constitutional and policy issues that need to be solved.

The first focus group discussants agree that there is relationship problem in the news-making process. One belittles the other. The Bureau of information does not conduct research to assess the gap and the need of its strategic publics. The second group discussants agreed that the relationship with the Mass Media Agency creates conflict of interest. There seems a trend of controlling and swallowing the regional Mass Media Agency by the Bureau of Information.

Another concern raised is the duplication of efforts by the Mass Media Agency and the Bureau of Information as it is exemplified by one of the interviewees from the people:

P₁: First of all I want to clearly define the role and function of the Bureau of Information and the Mass Media Agency to be clearly defined. I believe the Mass Media Agency should not work only taking public relations news (Personal interview with publics, April 2009).

In the Bureau's 2008 physical and public relations plan it is stated that the forum established between the Bureau of Information and practitioners in different Bureaus and Mass Media Agency journalists will help in assuring common understanding, application and similar information flow in the region (The Amhara Bureau of Information 2008 physical and public relations plan. 2008 : Bahir Dar).

What is questionable is that the Mass Media Agency journalists have a different role, structure and function. How could the Mass Media Agency journalists follow (adhere) to similar information flow with the Bureau of Information? This interference of the Bureau of Information in the institutional affairs and performances of the Media Agency affects the independence of the Agency.

From the Mass Media Agency leaders and journalists I observed the trend of simply accepting directions (submissiveness) that is given by the top authorities though it affects their performance badly. They don't challenge and understand their view strongly on decisions and directions that has severe consequences in their practice till the end. Instead they accept and face consequences that affect the independence, credibility and trust of the Agency.

4.2.2. LACK OF COORDINATION AND SUPORT WITH THE REGIONAL PR PRACTITIONERS

The relationship between the Information Bureau with the regional Bureaus is expressed by the PR practitioners in different Bureaus, the PR practitioners in the Information Bureau, the focus group discussants and the publics' (people). Observation data is also included. Lack of coordination and proper management of the PR activities in different Bureaus of the region, capacity building, problems related in passing information through the Bureau of Information and of solving problems are the major concerns.

The PR practitioners (officers) in different Bureaus have different concerns on their relationship. Problems on managing the different PR activities and solving their problems, capacity buildings are among the major concerns. Another concern is problems related in passing information of the regional Bureaus only through the Bureau of Information.

PRPDB₁: Establishing PR structures in different Bureaus is the positive and exemplary achievement of the Bureau. But managing PR activities and solving problems on the area is very low. The Bureau of Information doesn't hear our problems but the PR work done. There is misunderstanding between us. We criticize the Bureaus decision in passing every regional Bureau's news through it. This is time taking, bureaucratic and out of the basic concept of BPR. (Personal interview with PR practitioner in different Bureaus1, April 2009).

PRPDB₃: There is complain that the Bureau of Information doesn't do its roles and functions on the side of the Mass Media Agency. But I don't have full information. The two organizations push one another due to lack of understanding of their clear-cut

mission. (Personal interview with PR practitioner in different Bureaus 3, April 2009).

PRPDB₄: The Bureau of Information has added nothing to accomplish my job effectively. They don't build our capacity on the theory and practice of public relations (Personal interview with PR practitioner in different Bureaus 4, April 2009).

The practitioners in the Information Bureau agree that their relationship with the regional Bureaus' PR officers is not strong and there is a gap in efficiently coordinating and supporting on a continuing basis.

The first focus group discussants agree that the Bureau of information does not conduct research to assess the gap and the need of its strategic publics. The second group discussants agreed that there is lack of capacity building and maintaining relationships with practitioners in different Bureaus. The relationship is not managed by defined plan. Putting the leaders of public relations practitioners by assignment affects the PR practice negatively and to be hated by others.

4.2.3. NO RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE

The PR practitioners in the Information Bureau believe that there is no dialogue, interaction and direct relationship with the people .The Bureau has not collected public opinion and information about its activities .They haven't participated the people in their public relations function. People do not have satisfaction and trust on the contents of their communication. They have started to collect public opinion informally about any developmental and good governance issues but not their PR communication activities and problems (gaps). The publics also complain about the un-participatory and one-sided nature of their PR communication activities.

4.3. FACTORS (TRENDS) AFFECTING THEIR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ROLE

The following are identified as factors (trends) affecting the social responsibility role of Bureau of Information.

4.3.1. INTERNAL FACTORS

The following are identified by the informants as internal factors affecting the public relations social responsibility role of the Bureau of Information.

3.3.1.1. LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM AND TRAINING

Lack of professionalism and training is mentioned as one factor in discharging the social responsibility role. The PR activity should be based on professionalism. Lack of training on government policies, basic theories and models of public relations is essential for the full functioning of the social responsibility roles. The major capacity problem is due to the Unprofessionalism and training. We usually do our practice traditionally. It will create problems unless it is not directed towards serving the publics` interest. Professionalism and training that helps to serve only the government will lead us nowhere. To base its PR activity on research needs professionalism and training. The Bureau of Information is not organized by led by professionals in the field. This has affected in accomplishing its social responsibility role. The practitioners and the leaders are optimistic about public relations professionalism in influencing their social responsibility role positively. Excellent public relations departments have practitioners who have learned a theoretical body of knowledge of public relations (Cutlip,Center abd Broom 2006: 229-230).

4.3.1.2. LACK OF LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT

What the organizational leaders say and do affect the practitioners and the publics` perception and understanding which in return have consequences in meeting the positive

expectation of the publics` and discharging social responsibility. Organizational leaders` bad treatment of the practitioners in trying to balance government and publics` interests affect the practitioners` in discharging social responsibility role negatively.

Organizational system in the PR organization needs proper leadership and management. The management of the Bureau of Information alienated itself from their strategic publics`. The other point is lack of effective utilization of the organization`s human resources and experiences in discharging social responsibility role. The assignment(not by merit) of the work process owners by the willingness of the organizational leaders affects the social responsibility role in that the process owners serve the interests of their leaders not government or publics`.

4.3.1.3. UNRESTRICTED FEAR

The unrestricted Fear on the side of the practitioners, leaders and publics affect the social responsibility role of PR to be effectively implemented. The practitioners and leaders fear of harassment, condemnation, demotion and dismissal from work and the publics` fear of harm prevents the practitioners from addressing the interests of the publics` well in the research, planning, communication and evaluation phases of the public relations process.

4.3.1.4. LEGAL FRAMEWORKS (WRITTEN AND UNWRITTEN

LAWS)

The legal frameworks in the organization affect the social responsibility role. Sometimes the organization`s editorial policy and governing laws states to do it but the prevailing unwritten organizational law restricts them from doing it. They will be criticized in the GIM GEMA (criticism and self-criticism session of the management and workers) if they try to balance and report publics complaints as explained by one practitioner. This is one way of hammering practitioners to conform to the dominant line of thinking and practice. The written laws sometimes do not clearly state the way to do it. The organizational leader may

interpret the written laws on his own way to hurt somebody. This creates frustration on the side of the practitioners. The unwritten laws are more common in practice than the clearly stated written laws as exemplified in the case of covering failure stories and coverage of political parties as mentioned above.

4.3.1.5. SELF-CENSORSHIP

The public relations practitioners self-censored themselves thinking that they are of special trust to the government is mentioned by one practitioner as affecting their social responsibility role.

4.3.1.6. LACK OF ACTORS INVOLVEMENT IN STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

Lack of public relations actors' participation (especially their strategic publics) in strategic decision-making process in the research, planning, communication and evaluation phases of the public relations process affects the discharging of social responsibility role negatively.

4.3.1.7. CLOSED ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND SYSTEM

The organizational culture of openness, dialogue and interaction affects in discharging the social responsibility role. This is the derivation and reflection of the dominant culture of openness, dialogue and interaction we live in. The open system of organizational culture for dialogue, negotiation and interaction helps to achieve better social responsibility role. On the contrary, closed organizational culture for dialogue, negotiation and interaction restricts the discharging of their social responsibility role.

The Bureau of Information is expressed by many as closed system organization where there is no dialogue and interaction with the publics' on its activities.

4.3.1.8. PARTISANSHIP

It is believed that being a member of a political party affects the practitioners' social responsibility role in that they become biased and self-serving to what they support. This affects the practitioners' sensitivity and responsiveness to the interests and concerns of the publics'. The practitioners simply become the agent of propagating their own party's programs and dominant line of group think. The practitioners expressed their view that it would be better for the practitioners free from being a member of a political party to truly serve both interests. It is also mentioned that partisanship has a negative impact on the fairness and balance of the news and programs.

4.3.1.9. LACK OF ORGANIZED FEED BACK SYSTEM

There is no organized system of feedback about the information needs of the publics', the image of the organization and the effectiveness of its PR activity. So, lack of organized feedback system affects the discharging of their social responsibility role negatively because the practitioners don't know their problems and performance gaps for improvement.

4.3.2. EXTERNAL FACTORS

The following are identified as external factors affecting the social responsibility role of public relations:

4.3.2.1. LACK OF COORDINATION WITH STRATEGIC PUBLICS

As it explained by different practitioners', low level of integration and relationship with strategic publics' affects social responsibility role. Good interaction improves their relationships and social responsibility role. On the contrary, bad relationships affect the social responsibility role negatively. Good relationship with strategic publics builds the trust

which helps the coordinated effort of improving the image and reputation of the organization and of the region. The Bureau of Information's lack of coordination with strategic publics affects its discharging social responsibility role negatively.

4.3.2.2. LACK OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, SOCIETIES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

The absence of professional associations, societies and code of conduct negatively affects the social responsibility role of PR. The establishment of professional associations and societies helps in improving the public relations practice to its true role. This serves as a means of promoting professional standards of conduct which helps the practitioners play their role what they are hired to serve mutually. The country as a whole is not the member of the professional PR associations and societies either globally or regionally. There is no professional PR association and professional code of conduct. There is no defined and agreed PR policy in the Bureau of Information. These have negative effects in discharging social responsibility roles.

4.3.2.3. FRIENDS AND RELATIVES INTEREST

Friends and relatives interest affects the public relations practitioners in discharging their social responsibility role as exemplified by one practitioner in deciding not to publish complaints due to friends influence. They tell the practitioners to leave the story because they think it will create harm on him. The practitioner then decided not to publish it.

4.3.2.4. LOW LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Low level of economic development and poverty affects in discharging their public relations role. Since the practitioners are in low economic living standard they simply follow what they are supposed to do. Poverty affects the practitioners' not to report and expose sensitive political and social issues because their actions affect themselves and their families. In a country where there are too much problems it will be hard for the practitioners to report critical issues. It is hard for the government to be sensitive and responsive.

CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSION

The study has tried to explore the application of social responsibility and factors affecting it. The relationship of the Bureau of Information with strategic publics has also been investigated. The in-depth interviewees and focus group discussants all agree that social responsibility is hardly practiced in the Bureau of Information. The data in the documentary analysis and observation shows the one-sided and biased nature of reporting of the Bureau of Information. The research question is answered by collecting data from the in-depth interview, focus group discussion, observation and documentary analysis. These are categorized into themes. All the collected data confirmed that social responsibility is not the concern.

5.1.1. THE PRACTICE OF PR NOT BEING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

The in-depth interviewees and focus group discussants also confirmed that publics' interest is not the primary concern in the research, planning, communication and evaluation phases of the public relations process. Research is not part of the public relation function. The planning is not based on research findings and tries to solve it. In theory (principle) all the practitioners believe that they should serve the publics' and the government interests mutually. But in practice they are one-sided and self-serving on the side of the government. As explained by different respondents it has become a gulf that separates the publics' with the government. The Bureau of Information has began collecting public opinion (though informally) about any activity of development and good governance issues on both good and bad side performances of the government. But the Bureau of Information does not study or collect any information from its strategic publics' on its performance gaps and problems. The practice is dominantly guided by the image building, consensus creating, promoting best practices and developmental reporting. During the interview and focus group discussions I

observed the strong need of change in the PR practice on both the practitioners in the Bureau of Information, the PR practitioners in different Bureaus and on publics (people). But the organizational leader's belief in currently serving both the government and the publics' interest makes future change difficult. The lack of thorough understanding, insensitivity to the publics' interest and, the narrow scope thinking and vision has a limiting effect on the strong change needs and in discharging social responsibility role.

In the documentary analysis it is clear that what is written in the documents is not transformed into actual practice. The leaders of the organization and the practitioners do not detach their practice from the former ways of doing business as usual. The unrestricted fear on the side of the organizational leaders, practitioners and the publics' (people) has limiting effect in discharging their social responsibility role.

The practitioners strongly believe that they can contribute a lot if they use strategies that are sensitive to the publics' interest. Serving only the limited interest of the government has created many unintended effects on the side of the publics' from considering trivial to hostility and multiplying destructive hands as mentioned in the 2005 election. They believe that transferring government messages should also be supplemented by listening and responding their publics' interest. They believe that they should serve as institutional strategist instead of being mere spokespersons or mouthpiece characters. They should adhere to strategic management function of PR than publicity and informational function to truly serve both interests.

5.1.1.1. RESEARCH IS NOT PART OF THE PR FUNCTION

The PR practitioners mention that research is not part of their PR function because there is lack of capacity and understanding in conducting research. This has affected their performance in discharging their social responsibility role. The Bureau's commitment in listening and responding to publics' interest is weak. Their work is not participatory, research and knowledge based. Due to this activity the organization suffers image and credibility

problems. They publicize without studying and identifying the information needs the satisfaction of their strategic publics` and their surrounding environment.

5.1.1.2. THE UNPARTICIPATORY PLANNING

In the planning phase “we know the publics”` sentiment dominates the practice. From the very beginning the plan is not participatory of their strategic publics`. The organizational leaders plan and then discuss with internal publics` within their structures. There is no established system of participating strategic publics` on planning. Basically the plan is based on the decisions reached by the regional council, five years` strategic plan, other Bureaus` plan, public opinion collected from discussion forums and their last year`s performances. In discussions with the internal publics it is mentioned that there is no room for basic amendments.

5.1.1.3. THE ALIENATION EFFECT OF THE GOVERNMENT WITH PUBLICS

In the communication phase, the nature of their communication is partisan, self-serving and one-sided on the side of the government. There is also over-generalization problem in reporting. As explained by publics` some of its reporting seems like what is written when a person dies (Yemekabir Tsuhuf) and some of the reporting has cloud snatching (Gum Aschebit) behavior. This creates a gap of hostility between the government and the publics`. The PR organization serves as a tube in passing information from one side to the other not as a bridge. The needs, wants, desires, interests and concerns of their strategic publics are not incorporated well in their communication contents. Their communication suffers trust and credibility problem on the side of their publics. There is absolutely no political parties` participation unless it is a nation-wide voting time. This is due to their partisanship. The practitioners will be criticized in the Gim Gema (criticism and self-criticism session of the management and workers) venomously and bad names labeled on them in their attempts to report the publics` interests and concerns. This has a negative effect in discharging social

responsibility role. It is the government's success stories not failures (problems) that is dominantly (almost all) reported. Critical issues like corruption, poverty, and conflict will not be touched at all. Their communication content lacks fairness and balance. There are also problems in balancing the public's and government interests in that all points of views are not articulated in their reporting.

As explained by one practitioner "the organization which doesn't base its activity on public's interest is just like moving blindly or dropping water on a stone". The Bureau of Information has lost public's perspective that is why the organization encounters a hostile environment. The organization refrain itself from acting social responsibility. In the prevailing situation the practitioners and leaders become the first enemy of their own organization. The PR practitioners do not counsel their organization leaders rather the organizational leaders give direction and guidelines for their performance. For the practitioners to truly serve both interests this trend has to be changed.

The basic principles and core values of the civil service program (serving the public's interest, responsiveness, fairness, honesty etc.,) are not incorporated well in their public relations communication and function. Some practitioners lost job satisfaction and face personal conflict on what they think (believe) and what they actually perform. Some respondents believe there is conflicting values between the government and the public's which makes discharging social responsibility role difficult.

5.1.1.4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PERFORMANCES

UNIDENTIFIED

In the evaluation phase, there is a continuing trend of evaluating process (what goes out) not outcomes (effect on public's). They don't evaluate the satisfaction of their public's. They neither measure the effectiveness of their communication nor analyze the gaps of their communication activities. The PR activity is not measured from the perspective of their strategic public's. There is no trend of social report (how they perform their social responsibility role) in their performance reports. The PR activity is not two-way and public's

interest is not their primary concern. The four broad functions of PR, intelligence (issues management), counseling organization's management, action and evaluation are not well known and practiced in the Bureau of Information. The Bureau dominantly uses the press agency/publicity, the public information and two-way asymmetric models of public relations. The organizational leaders and practitioners are tied up with the image psychology not by the psychology of candor, receptivity and diligence.

There is misunderstanding and knowledge gap on what is meant by PR and journalism, developmental journalism, being a spokesperson, image building, consensus creating and ways of achieving it on the leaders and practitioners. The prevailing wrong assumptions by the practitioners and leaders alienated the Bureau (regional government) from publics'. The Bureau believes that "reporting based in line with the government thinking maintains relationships between the government and the publics'." This in practice is hard to achieve because relationships cannot be built only thinking and practicing one-sidedly but meeting both publics' and government interests mutually.

In general, their strategic publics' are not treated well in the research, planning, communication and evaluation phases of the public relations process. The Business Process Reengineering study of the Bureau of Information has not treated their social responsibility role. Many practitioners understand accuracy, objectivity and truthfulness in its narrow sense of putting correctly what they get from their news sources (dominantly government offices and authorities).

5.1.2. POOR RELATIONSHIP WITH STRATEGIC PUBLICS

One of the most important factors contributing in discharging the social responsibility role is the organization's relationship with strategic publics'. There is love-hate relationship between the Bureau of Information and the regional Mass Media Agency. The PR practitioners and the journalists disregard one another. Their relationship is full of misunderstanding, distrust, friction, confusion, suspicion and hatred. They have no symbiotic

relationship. The journalists in the Mass Media Agency believe that instead of looking for its true role the Bureau of Information is challenging the Mass Media Agency. They believe there is clear loss of direction and the spirit and mentality of governing the Mass Media Agency. The news coming from the Bureau of Information is of sub-standard quality, unbalanced, low in quality and quantity, fair zonal coverage problems, not done with relevant supporting background according to each medium. The journalists face problems in finding reporters in case they need to edit or check the information in the news.

5.1.2.1. AFFECTING THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE REGIONAL MASS MEDIA AGENCY

The relationship between the Bureau of Information and the Mass Media Agency is full of distrust, hatred, tension and misunderstanding. The political decision (direction) made without the participation of the two organizations' workers affects their relationship dominantly. This decision affects the independence and performance of the Mass Media Agency journalists. The un-participatory decision made to separate the news provider (the Bureau of Information) and news broadcaster (the Mass Media Agency) is not based on research. Its legal, technical and professional contexts and questions still remain questionable. This creates problem on their relationship and performances. The journalists fear of the loss of their audience; trust and credibility problems because the Mass Media Agency news becomes public relation-ized news.

This dictatorship of the Bureau of Information has a paralyzing effect on the activities of the Mass Media Agency. It has constitutional, legal and policy issues in it that needs close scrutiny and solution. This is quite unique experience and trend from the international practice of the relationship between the PR organization's and the Mass Media Agency. The decision which creates relationship problem in the news-making process is understood by the Mass Media Agency journalists as an attempt to control and swallow the Mass Media Agency and as a survival mechanism and strategy to save the Bureau of Information from being dissolved. The publics' (people) also expressed their view that the Mass Media Agency

should not work properly by receiving only public relations news. The two should have separate and clearly defined roles and functions.

It is observed that the Mass Media Agency is not courageous (submissive) in challenging decisions which affect its independence and performance badly. There is also lack of understanding of their clear-cut missions between the Mass Media Agency and the Bureau of Information. The lack of professionalism and capacity of the Bureau of Information practitioners and the speedy measure taken without considering the prevailing situations on both sides complicates and creates confusion and misunderstanding.

5.1.2.2. LIMITATIONS IN SUPPORTING AND COORDINATING THE REGIONAL PR PRACTITIONERS

The relationship between the Bureau of Information and the PR practitioners in different Bureaus is weak and not based on agreed plan. Coordinating and managing PR activities in the region, lack of capacity building, the decision in passing regional Bureaus news through the information Bureau and lack of solving PR problems are mentioned as their major relationship limitations (problems).

The relationship of the Bureau of Information with the regional PR practitioners in different Bureaus is relatively better. But the PR practitioners in different Bureaus expressed the lack of coordination and proper management of the PR activities of the region, solving problems in the field and capacity building concerns. The decision by the Bureau of Information in passing all government news through it is challenged by the PR practitioners in different Bureaus as bureaucratic, time-taking and out of the concept of BPR. The decision is not accepted by the PR practitioners in different Bureaus.

5.1.2.3. NO FORMAL AND PERIODIC CONTACT WITH PEOPLE

There is no dialogue, interaction and direct relationship of the Bureau of Information with the people on its overall activity and performance. All the respondents from the public's`

expressed their view that they have no trust and satisfaction on the Bureau of Information. The organization's image (reputation) is perceived as negative and lacking public's perspective. The public complain the un-participatory and biased nature of their reporting which alienates the government from the public's.

5.1.3. FACTORS (TRENDS) AFFECTING THEIR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The factors (trends) affecting the social responsibility role of the Bureau of Information are identified as internal and external factors.

5.1.3.1. INTERNAL FACTORS

Lack of professionalism and training, leadership commitment and support, unrestricted fear (on the leaders, practitioners and public/people), legal frameworks (written and unwritten laws), self-censorship, lack of actor's involvement in strategic decision-making, the closed organizational culture and system, partisanship, lack of organized feedback system are the internal factors.

5.1.3.2. EXTERNAL FACTORS

Lack of coordination with strategic public's, lack of professional associations, societies and code of conduct, friends and relatives' interest and low level of economic development are the external factors affecting their social responsibility role.

5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Discharging social responsibility roles is an important function in implementing government policies and actions. To narrow the gap possible solutions are identified by the informants:

5.2.1. DEVELOP PUBLICS' SENSITIVITY AND RESPONSIVENESS

The first measure that should be taken is to build the capacity of the practitioners. Due emphasis should be given for the practitioners' freedom with good working atmosphere. The

PR activity should be knowledge based and information driven. The Bureau of Information should be sensitive and responsive to the public's interests and concerns in each phase of the public relations process. The Bureau's structure, role and function should be restructured in meeting the public's interest and its positive expectations. The Bureau's PR activity should be based on research. The intent of research is to listen and respond to their strategic public's. Public's interest should be the primary concern in the research planning, communication and evaluation phases of the public relations process. Their PR function should also be two-way and participatory. The PR practitioners should advise the management about the sensitivity and responsiveness of public interest in the strategic decision-making process. Awareness should be created that public relations is the practice of social responsibility.

5.2.2. STRUCTURAL, FUNCTIONAL AND ROLE TRANSFORMATION

The public relations activity should come out of its mere publicity and spokesperson (mouthpiece) role and transform itself into the institutional strategist function. The Bureau of Information should have its own plan that is aimed at fulfilling its mission and vision. The plan should be focused and free from unwanted duplication in other Bureaus' PR activities. The Bureau should deeply understand the strong change needs of the public's and practitioners and try to adjust and adapt itself to the changing environment. The structure, role and function of the Bureau of information should be designed to meet these critical issues and concerns. The Bureau should come out of the craft public relations and strive to upgrade itself to its true role of PR professionally.

5.2.3. COMING OUT OF THE BOX THINKING AND UNRESTRICTED FEAR

The unrestricted fear on the side of the organizational leaders, practitioners and the public's should be removed for the effectiveness of their PR function and for discharging their social responsibility role. Strong commitment is needed to improve and make the written laws as

the governing guidelines of their public relations practice. Paradigm and fundamental shift is needed from the organizational leaders and practitioners to come out of the box thinking and serve the mutual interests of the government and the publics`. Sound strategies should be designed to come out of the vicious circles of unrestricted fear on practitioners, leaders and publics`.

Research should be conducted on the image (reputation) of the organization, the readability of their press products, the trust and credibility of their PR communications etc. and try to fill gaps and solve problems based on research findings with possible solutions. The organization should establish a system of improving and giving credit for the public spirited mentality and action of the practitioners rather demoralizing and venomously criticizing in the GIM GEMA and other tactic fully designed paralyzing and silencing methods. Organized work systems should be established to build the relationship of the Bureau of Information with its strategic publics which has a role in effectively implementing the organization`s social responsibility role.

5.2.4. PROFESSIONAL RECONCILIATION

The journalists and the PR practitioners should think in line with what is professionally desirable not organizationally desirable or advantageous. There should be a professional reconciliation between the PR practitioners and the Mass Media Agency journalists. The Bureau of Information should study its communication problems and try to solve it before their strategic publics` totally turn their face to other sources of information. As explained by many practitioners and publics the wrong PR communication strategy and orientation of the Bureau of Information (from the regional to the local level) has contributed its role for the 2005 election crisis. The implications of the decision which creates problems especially on the Mass Media Agency journalists should be deeply investigated and corrective measures should be taken by the regional and federal responsible bodies. The regional administration should take a lesson from the un-participatory, top-down and one-sided decision-making

process. Trainings should be given for the journalists and PR practitioners to know one another's profession.

The Bureau of Information's decision in passing all governmental information through it has constitutional, legal and technical implications that needs close attention and solution. The BPR study should also incorporate the social responsibility role of PR and ways of balancing government and publics' interests. The adapted BPR from the Ministry of Information has limitations because social responsibility is not the concern.

5.2.5. URGENT NEED OF BALANCE REPORTING AND SOCIAL REPORT

Measures should be taken for the publics' to accept the Bureau of Information as their own organization. The hide and seek game between the government and the publics' should be avoided by transmitting fair, balanced, accurate and objective reporting and developing the sensitivity and responsiveness of the publics' interest. There should not be political intervention and pressure in reporting failure stories and balanced reporting as long as it is professionally done in supporting development and nation-building. Discussion forums should be designed not only as a form of transmitting messages but also as a form of listening and responding honestly and faithfully. The written laws in the Bureau of Information should be revised in achieving their social responsibility role. The Bureau should also design ways of measuring its social responsibility role (social report) in their performance reports.

In the communication phase, both the success and failure stories should be reported. Their source of information should not only be government offices and authorities. It has to balance the information by adding the different interest groups and perspectives (views) to be accepted as honest and faithful source of information. One-sided and biased reporting will neither help the government nor the publics'. The Bureau of Information should have a research work process in the organizational structure for the effectiveness of its PR activity

and in discharging its social responsibility role. Serving publics' interests and commitment to the core principles of the civil service reform should be the guideline for their practice. This should be clearly interpreted in each phase of the public relations process.

5.3. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research explores the social responsibility role of the Bureau of Information and factors affecting it. It also investigates relationship gaps and limitations with their strategic publics'. It would be wise if research is done on the impact of PR news on the trust and credibility of the Mass Media Agency, the image (reputation) of the Bureau of Information, job satisfaction of the PR practitioners and factors affecting it. This needs thorough investigation and further detailed inquiry.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX I - GUIDELINE IQUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

(A CASE STUDY OF THE AMHARA REGION BUREAU OF INFORMATION)

The purpose of this interview is to gather information about the treatment of publics and application of social responsibility in the public relations process. A list of key questions and follow-up questions (or probes) will be asked. Can I first of all assure you that you will remain completely anonymous and no records of the interview will be kept with your name on them. It is the researcher's belief that the study will solve a problem or advance social well-being.

Social responsibility is serving public's interest and meeting its positive expectations. The PR organization does not create problems or extreme offence. It has obligation to society and be truthful, accurate, objective, fair and relevant. It has to be honest and faithful as a source of information.

The general and specific guideline questions for the study are classified in to the following Categorical themes on which data is collected: The application of social responsibility in the public relations process, managing relationship with publics, factors affecting social responsibility, and what should be done to narrow the gap?

GENERAL GUIDELINE QUESTIONS

- I- How do the practitioners apply social responsibility in the public relations process?
- II- How do the practitioners manage relationship with publics?
- III- What are the factors that affect the practitioners in being socially responsible?
- IV- What should be done to narrow the gap?

GENERAL AND *SPECIFIC* GUIDLINE QUESTIONS

1- HOW DO THE PRACTITIONERS APPLY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROCESS?

- What does social responsibility mean to you?
- What do you think is the organization's responsibility to all its publics?
- How do the practitioners apply social responsibility in the research phase of the public relations process in your organization?
- How do you get feedback from your publics?
- How do the practitioners apply social responsibility in the planning (programming) phase of the public relations process?
- How do the practitioners apply social responsibility in the communication (action) phase of the public relations process?
- How do you participate opposition political parties in your public relations communication?
- How do the practitioners apply social responsibility in the evaluation phase of the public relations process?
- How are you treated by your organization leaders in balancing the institutional and social interests?
- How do the written and unwritten laws in your organization state positively/negatively about discharging your social responsibility role?
- What do you think is the image (reputation) of your organization by publics?
- Do you believe that your organization has shared or conflicting values with key publics?
- How do you measure your social responsibility role that you are hired to serve?
- Do you think that your organization is honest and faithful as a source of information?
- What are the consequences of applying/not applying social responsibility publics in your organization?

II - HOW DO THE PRACTITIONERS MANAGE RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS STRATEGIC PUBLICS?

- How does your organization build and manage relationships with strategic publics?
- What are the good and bad sides of your organization's relationship to the regional Mass Media Agency?

III - WHAT ARE THE FACTORS (TRENDS) AFFECTING THEIR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ROLE?

- What are the factors (trends) that affect the practitioners in being socially responsible?

IV- WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO NARROW THE GAP?

- What should be done for the social responsibility role of public relations to be effectively implemented in your organization?
- What should be done for the publics' interest to be best served in your organization?