

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS: THE ROLE OF THE CREATIVE ARTS

CORRUPTION: A GROWING CONCERN

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INTRODUCTION

The presentation is based on a training video produced for the Zimbabwe Institute of Public Administration and Management (ZIPAM). It will serve as an illustration of how the creative arts can be used to raise public awareness on issues relating to corruption. The challenge in developing a video or film is, like all works of art, the selection and organisation of elements that give a deeper meaning. With corruption, the challenge is how to make the problem be understood in all its dimensions particularly the social, political and cultural contexts.

JUSTIFICATION

Films and video have come to be important media for education, information and entertainment. Increasingly, film and video and new information technologies are being used for development support communication. Studies have shown that audio-visual media, like other art, are good when they make reference to the particular context of their audiences by drawing on shared socio-historical background. In this way, the audio-visual media may serve as a vehicle for binding people together by representing the common memory of the past, how people understand and interpret their ordinary lives and a common representation of what people would collectively wish to become. Specifically, film and video respond to, and indirectly represent, the social, cultural and political changes and the concerns these arouse in people and how they behave as they go about their daily lives.

PROBLEM

ZIPAM is the apex training institution of Public Administration in Zimbabwe (ZIPAM). In response to training needs in the public service, they introduced a course on governance and ethics including corruption as one of the topics. They found out that the only available teaching materials were from outside Zimbabwe. They came to us to assist them to develop teaching materials based on the local social, political and cultural contexts.

PREMISE

The problem of corruption has a long history in the experience of nations. Its nature and extent as a problem varies as a function of the prevailing values of a society. There has to be recognition that institutions, legal systems, disincentives and public opinion are the many measures that must be in place and continuously applied and adapted to prevent or minimise corruption.

APPROACH

We set up an advisory group consisting of people drawn from public service organisations, private sector organisations and non-governmental organisations. The advisory group assisted the creative team to analyze and interpret the findings of the formative research. They also commented on the first draft script.

We organised and conducted focus group discussions among public service employees at three levels. These included non-supervisory staff, supervisory staff and senior managers. We also organised and conducted focus group discussions among members of the public recruited from exit points of several public service buildings such as National Registry Office, Department of Motor Vehicles and so on.

We classified the major conclusions and recommendations into four areas:

1. Causes of corruption
2. Effects of corruption
3. Personal responses to corruption
4. Public sector measures

We had two senior police officers among our advisory group. They helped us to make a distinction between fraud and corruption.

CREATIVE PROCESS

The conclusions and recommendations and comments of the advisory group sharply focused our understanding of the nature and extent of the problem of corruption in Zimbabwe. We developed a specification of the desired video. It included knowledge, attitudes and skills combining to make the new behaviours to be advocated. With the specification, the writer developed the script.

APPLICATION

The video can be used in two ways. It can be screened in one sitting. This format is useful for public broadcasting, screenings at conferences and advocacy meetings. The video can also be screened in segments, this format is useful for training situations. The trainer screens individual segments stopping to compliment the content through group work, role-plays or group discussions. In this way, the segments serve as triggers.

EVALUTATION

It is very difficult to evaluate the impact of a video because it works in combination with other actions to bring about behaviour change. However, there are some indicators that suggest that the video has made a positive contribution. One, at the time of developing the video, corruption was not publicly acknowledged as a national issue. Two, when we released the video, our broadcasting corporation classified the video under the educational category resulting in the video being narrow-casted on an educational channel. A year later, the broadcasting corporation reclassified the video

and bought rights for general transmission. Three, over the years, many public service institutions, particularly the local government ones, have bought copies for in-house training. Four, a number of regional countries and organisations have bought copies for their programmes.

CONCLUSIONS

Corruption is a multifaceted and multidimensional problem. There may be general agreement that it is socially undesirable. However, the real challenge is how to transform the general agreement into particular measures at the national, regional and international levels. The measures must not be a set of prescriptions. They must be a set of institutions, policies, programmes and activities that work in combination to promote values to develop critical masses of people in different countries, who take actions against corruption every time it occurs. In this way, corruption will be kept at a minimum or eliminated.