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Part One: Communication

1. The Complexity and Richness of Communication

Human communication is based on the individual’s own character: the human being “by nature, is a social creature who can neither live nor develop his qualities without being in contact with others” (Vaticano II, Gaudium et Spes, n12) Furthermore “the individual’s social nature makes it clear that his progress and the development of society itself are mutually dependent” (Vaticano II, Gaudium et Spes, n25) So, the human being is one who inter-relates with others. He is, by nature, communicative.

Communication is not something that comes from outside, but part of the individual’s essence. It is everything that is felt, noticed or elaborated through the sensations and perceptions, through sounds and movements. Communication is part of the individual from before birth through the relationship between mother and child. It follows the individual in his or her contact with the world, in the first years of socialization and throughout his or her whole life.

The individual relates to himself, with others, with the community, and with God. The contribution we make to the community must be complete, i.e., the contributions must be material as well as spiritual. We can use the teaching of Saint Paul when he says that the strongest members of human society should take care of those with more difficulties (I Cor, 12:12-26). We can also evoke the spirit that reigned in the first Christian communities: among them there was perfect communion and nobody selfishly reserved something for himself; everyone was thoughtful in sharing.
Today, “Our century is characterized by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation, catechesis or the further deepening of faith cannot do without these means. When they are put at the service of the Gospel, they are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims “from the housetops” (cf. Mt 10:27; Lk 12:3) the message of which she is the depositary. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes.” (CELAM, Apercida Document, n485).

1.1. Encouraging Vincentian Communication

What we just affirmed about all the individuals in society is highly applicable to all AIC volunteers. We are members of a group, not isolated individuals and we are not indifferent to the spiritual and apostolic path of the group to which we belong.

This close relationship works through communication. We are all responsible for the creation and re-creation of our Association. Thus, our aim must be to improve communication, especially the need to broaden exchanges among the members of the Association, to enrich them and favor the growth of each and every member of the association and those we serve: the Poor.

The mutual relationships and communicability that are nourished by the spirit of faith and charity help improve us as people and at the same time the whole of the Association that has only one objective: to evangelize and serve the Poor. So, nobody can shut themselves off without harming themselves and the community of which they are a part.
Saint Vincent de Paul always asked his partners for frequent communication. He did it in a direct and simple manner: “I would like to receive a letter from you every month” (SV, Coste IV, 563), he said to one of his partners. He understood that the quality of the dialogue and of the communion of life and work depended on communication. It is through this communication that a communion of faith and charity is established, as well as a sense of trust and charitableness and, consequently, a clearer vision of God’s wish and the better fulfillment of his aims.

1.2. How can we Establish Communication among ourselves, Volunteers of Charity?

The communication among the members of the International Association of Charities must be open and include everyone:

- A kind of communication that favors the development of the Vincentian Spirituality at all levels, be that at the center of the organization or in other branches of the Association. The exchange of experiences of Vincentian charisma is a healthy and necessary way to help other members in their improvement as human beings or as members of a group that works to help the Poor to overcome their state of poverty;

- A kind of communication that is simple, transparent and respectful, in order to facilitate the relationship with the Poor, respecting their journey in life, their personal and family history, their culture and anxieties;

- A kind of communication that is authentically Christian and Vincentian and that can be a link for the improvement of relationships with others and with God;
- A kind of communication that can favor and nurture enthusiasm and passion regarding AIC’s objectives and purposes;
- A kind of communication that is exclusively dedicated to the transmission of Christian and Vincentian values and that can help in the elaboration and propagation of strategies to help the Poor overcome their state of poverty;
- A kind of communication that promotes the inclusion of our members and other people to whom we relate, showing our enthusiasm for the work of helping the Poor;
- A kind of communication that allows us to spread concrete attitudes of acceptance, announces God’s Word and answers to the claims of the Poor;
- A kind of communication that involves the public – encouraging them to fight for and get involved in the great cause of the Poor;
- A kind of communication that promotes and spreads the projects and actions that the International Association of Charities undertakes at a national and international level;
- A kind of communication that allows for the exchange of experiences among the members of AIC, and of the anxieties and hopes of the Poor whom we serve as Saint Vincent de Paul did.
2. What is Communication?

It is a process of social interaction between an “I” and an “other”. Communication is a process that aims to inform and manifest ideas, emotions and feelings, promoting in this way an action where the main focus is the person to whom the communication is destined.

The word “to communicate” comes from the Latin word “communicare” which means “to put in common”. In order for the communication to be effective, it is necessary that besides an addressee, there also is a message with a common meaning for both parties involved in the process of communication.

Fundamental aspects for effective human communication. The process of communication:
**Who speaks?** *(The issuer)*

Consider what the issuer’s intention is, whom he represents in the social structure, his social role. For example: The president? The coordinator? The Spiritual Advisor?

**To whom?** *(The receiver)*

Consider the culture, the story, the expectations and the level of training of the receiver. The way we express ourselves is determined by the receiver. The issuer’s speech contains the image that he has created of his recipients. For example: Is the target public formed of volunteers from many countries? Of distinct cultures?

**What is said?** *(The message)*

Consider the mutual knowledge of the code being used. Consider the clearness and the objectivity with which ideas are expressed and the organization of the ideas. For example: Is the meaning of the message captured?

**Through which means?** *(The channel of communication)*

Consider the various possibilities for spreading the information and of adapting it to the means available, such as radio, TV, Internet, newspapers, magazines, etc.

Consider the strengths of speech over the written form, the impact of visual communication, of the colors, etc. For example: Does an oral communication have the same features as a written presentation?

**To what end?** *(The objective)*

Consider the power of persuasion and argument in communication, where the purpose is to promote a transformation in the individual, socially and psychologically. Even the most objective message still carries traces of the subjectivity of the person who produced it, which manifests itself as intention. No text is innocent, neutral, without a
purpose. For example, what is the purpose of this text about communication in AIC?

**At which moment, when?**

The historical moment and the time that the communication takes place determine the characteristics of the message. The time at which communication is established contributes to the understanding of the meaning of the message. For example: Twenty years ago, were the texts developed in the same way they are today? Do we still say the same things in the same way?

**Where does the communication take place?**

Consider the place, the physical space conditions, what is said and how. For example: Is communication in a small place going to be the same as if it were in an auditorium? These aspects are going to, in certain way, contribute to building the meaning of the message. The words have meanings, but they are impregnated by other values that determine the complete meaning of the message.

### 3. The Importance of Communication

#### 3.1. In the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church started valuing mass social communication in the time of Pope Paul VI; The Decree Inter Mirifica on “The Media of Social Communications” of December 4th, 1966, produced after the Vatican II Council, is one of the examples of the Church’s endeavors in this area. Nowadays, without the help of social communication media, such as the radio, TV, cinema, the press, the Church would not be able to fulfill the mission that it was given by Christ: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation...” (Mark 16:15).
3.2. In AIC - International Association of Charities

In 1985, in Chantilly, France, one of the resolutions passed at the International Assembly of Delegates was “Communication inside and outside of AIC”. In Assis, Italy, 1990, one of the Operational Guidelines approved was “Communication internally and externally (ad intra and ad extra)”. In 1994, in Antigua, Guatemala, “Communication – partnerships, media and information”. So, since the 1980s, AIC has been emphasizing the power of internal and external communication for the development of the Association’s projects and actions. Now, after the International Assembly of Delegates in Escorial, Spain, 2011, communication has once more been highlighted by those present as a fundamental instrument for training volunteers, for exchanging experiences and knowledge among volunteers and for spreading the Association’s messages and image internally and externally.

According to communication scholars, the importance of volunteering nowadays is unquestionable, but many organizations have only limited power to act and their survival is precarious because they have not yet discovered the need for communication as a strategy for action.
Yes of course, in order to strengthen and continue with its Christian and social mission, AIC needs to attract new members and also get the support of several segments of society; so AIC needs its name to be first and foremost associated with the idea of credibility.

This image is built through the work that the association undertakes, through its role of healing social wounds from a Christian perspective and this image needs to be reinforced constantly, so it leads to greater ease in attracting donations and new volunteers.

Credibility is only demonstrated by constant promotion of what is done in the Association, of the projects that have been developed, showing with transparency the actions that have been implemented and where the donations from the society are being used for the benefit of the community. This is communication.

Secondly, many companies search on the Internet for institutions that can help them and here once more, communication is made necessary. Not having a page on the Internet or having one that is not updated and/or designed without the help of a professional in the area of communication, may mean many losses for the organization.

Thirdly, the relationship with the media: According to Kay (1999), the institution cannot wait for
the media to come and find them – it is important for the institution to understand the role that the mass media can have in social movements. Even more importantly, not-for-profit organizations must be aware of the importance of the media in the process of communication with society. It is necessary to establish a more professional relationship with the media, i.e., give the media what it needs, in an adequate form and at the right time, according to the specificities of each means of mass communication (newspapers, magazines, TV, Internet, etc.).

Fourthly, there is internal communication, a fundamental element for strengthening bonds between members and for keeping them updated on the life of the association. The exchange of information, reports, ideas and experiences brings members closer together and makes them feel more engaged and happier in their voluntary work. The broader and more profound the knowledge of the basic principles to which the Association is committed (training), the greater the motivation to work for it; dedication and loyalty to the Association are consolidated and the bond is strengthened. It is through smooth and efficient work in the area of internal communication that the volunteers are going to feel as if they are active and constituent parts of the institution (belonging) and become advocates (marketing by word of mouth) of the Association’s work and image.

Each institution develops communication with its people according to its characteristics, needs and competences. There are organizations that are famous because of the way they communicate their work. “Well-known organizations such as Greenpeace (...) aim to agitate things in the media in order to achieve high visibility, which maintains their credibility and helps generate financial assistance from their supporters” (Corrado, 1994, p.209).
4. Types of Communication

- **Verbal** – orality, written form.
- **Non verbal** – gestures, sounds, mimicry, images, etc.
- **Digital** – on-line communication.

The Internet makes it possible and/or faster to disseminate information all around the world, using only a computer and the click of a mouse. This information can be accessed by anyone. The benefits of this cybernetic commodity are reflected in the wide range of personal needs it can meet; people may use the Internet for leisure, for work, to be updated, informed, or even for illicit activity, evil. The virtual network is made up of many kinds of people and unimaginable situations can arise because this means of communication can be used for both good and evil.

Pope Benedict XVI gave a message about the sense of communications in the digital era, on June 5th, 2011 for the 45th Worldwide Communications Day, titled “Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age”. According to Pope Benedict XVI “Just as the Industrial Revolution in its day brought about a profound transformation in society by the modifications it introduced into the cycle of production and the lives of workers, so today the radical changes taking place in communications are guiding significant cultural and social developments. The new technologies are not only changing the way we communicate but communication itself, so much that it could be said that we are living through a period of vast cultural transformation”.

The Pontiff invites all Christians to join the social networks, responsibly and creatively, and highlights what the digital era has made possible when it affirms that “To proclaim the Gospel through the new media means not only to insert
expressly religious content into different media platforms, but also to witness consistently, in one’s own digital profile and in the way one communicates choices, preferences and judgments that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically.”.

According to the Pope, these networks have become an integral part of human life, and these new technologies have made it possible for people to meet each other “beyond the confines of space and of their own culture, creating in this way an entirely new world of potential friendships”.

5. Communication Techniques

When communication takes place, what is the expected result?

a. That the information is ignored?

b. That positive feedback is given?

c. That your performance is praised?

d. That the information is questioned?

e. That you and your project become famous?

f. That people change their ideas and behavior?

Efficient communication is that which encourages a transformational action, causes a change in people’s attitudes. Communication that is able to change peoples’ ideas, but
does not cause a change in attitudes, has not achieved its objective. It was not efficient.

The market demands an ever more individual approach to captivate the attention of the human being, and the way in which communication is undertaken is the most important tool in the process of expanding organizations all around the world. To communicate is something simple, it is to share information. The difficulty in this process is to be efficient in communication. The art of communication is an instinct that has been with us since the beginning of history, but it needs to be renewed. Processes are changed and new tools are created all the time.

5.1. Tools that can help in Evaluating Communication (according to Philip Walser):

“Framing” – Defining the topic to be approached, at the beginning of the communication process. If necessary, redefine the topic during development. Avoid distraction with topics that have nothing to do with the subject.

“Advocating” – Explaining and justifying your point of view in a clear and objective way, use arguments that support the topic that is being approached.

“Inquiring” – Putting yourself in the other person’s – the receiver’s – place. It is important to presuppose the receiver’s point of view and expectations. This is done through questions where the objective is not to come up with an answer, but to introduce another question.
“Illustrating” - Searching for common points, being more flexible, reducing complexities in order to focus on the central point of communication.

It is important to emphasize that communication starts with the senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. A practical way to identify how a person is thinking is to pay attention to the words they use, because our language is full of signs, gestures, implications and words that are based on the senses. Observing, listening and giving importance to the other are determining factors in the effectiveness of communication.

5.2. How to Open Channels of Communication with Companies and People that are willing to Participate:

- Invest in marketing and communication;
- Communicate your logo, have a brand that is recognized outside your circle of personal contacts;
- Present yourself well, communicate, let others know who you are, demonstrate enthusiasm;
- Make it clear what the Association does;
- Make it clear where the Association is located;
- Invest in the publicizing of projects or social actions;
- Recognize that though we might say “donating is an act of love”, for companies it is an act of trust. They only donate to those whom they know very well;
- Make rational claims; a company has neither “a heart nor emotions”;
- Be well known and have credibility;
- Be transparent in all your actions;
- Conduct evaluations;
- Present and publicize results.

In order to get the audience on board, to attract more volunteers and donors, it is essential that the Association demonstrates the seriousness of its actions, the fulfillment of its proposals and good results – all this information being spread through an effort of communication. Finally there must be a strategic marketing plan which integrates communication and presupposes: media, publicity, advertising and public relations.

For third sector bodies to survive, they must not only act but also use strategies of communication, in a way that is adapted to their needs. These organizations need to have a strategic plan for communication and also make use of marketing techniques – in this case, social marketing techniques.

The presence of a professional in communications in third sector organizations is of extreme importance; once the strategic plan has been implemented, unnecessary expenses can be avoided, new supporters can be contacted, and the organization will have more credibility, among other positive results.
5.3. Potential Mass Communication Tools:

Advertisement

The Association’s characteristics of volunteering and spontaneity already encourage a big and positive impact near the target audience by themselves, because of the implicit sense of solidarity. They give the Association a strong appeal and power of penetration in society. Because of the high cost of advertising, we usually have institutional campaigns.

Public Relations and Media Advisors

They promote and protect the image of the Association. They can help build the institution’s positive image, formulate internal and external communication strategies, create bonds among the volunteers, promote the Association, create and administrate projects, among other activities. They also ensure that the institution is recognized in society and that there is a good relationship both internally among their volunteers and with the media.

Direct Marketing

The use of telemarketing or the Internet. The former is a method that works in many institutions but it is more expensive than marketing through the Internet.

Events and Experiences

These put the potential donor in direct contact with the cause in question. The personal contact promotes more interaction among the interlocutors, because they are physically present together. It is a very efficient tool because it is possible to personalize the argument immediately, by observing the answers and reactions of the interlocutors. Body language and all the elements that are part of a response cannot be ignored. This tool builds credibility and breaks down obstacles between the donor and the organization.
5.4. More Commonly Used Communication Materials:

Leaflets or folders; activity reports (use persuasive language and information that is not tiring to read – a digital file can be created and made available on the Internet); institutional videos; a website; printed and electronic bulletins; marketing via e-mails; t-shirts; bands; signs; handkerchiefs; business cards; alternative media in general.

The use of the materials mentioned above must be the responsibility of professionals who are well-prepared to create these resources in a way that fulfills the aim of communicating well as an institution.

The institution as a whole should make an annual communication plan, aiming to use the right tools, precise messages, at the right time and for the correct audience.

Planning the communication is essential, to see how best to meet the aims and objectives. In order to plan well it is necessary to be very familiar with the institution so as to achieve the desired results. According to KOTLER and KELLER (2006, p.539), there are eight (08) steps to be followed in order to have efficient communication:

1. Identify the target audience;
2. Determine the objectives;
3. Develop the message;
4. Select the communication channels;
5. Establish the budget;
6. Decide on what mixture of communication tools are going to be used;

7. Measure the results of the communication;

8. Manage the process of integrating communication into marketing.

Just because a charitable association is made up of volunteers and donors, does not mean that its management and administration has to depend on the good will and availability of volunteers, who may or may not have the right competencies and preparation for the task concerned, which would normally be done by specific professionals who are qualified in the field. It is important to ingrain a sense of professionalism in the Association, which does not lose its Christian fundamentals or its Vincentian characteristics when it views itself and acts like a company in terms of its organization and working structure.
Part Two: Visibility

1. Meaning
What is or can be visible, what can be seen.

2. Objective
Improve visibility to promote the Association, its values, its scope and activities.

3. Visibility at AIC comes from:

3.1. Sense of Belonging
- Be proud to belong to AIC;
- Identify yourself with the symbol (what it represents);
- Be willing to show that you are a member of the Association through the use of the symbol;
- Change your personal identity by the group’s identity.

3.2. Spreading the Logo
Placing the logo in all AIC communication:
- Promotes visual communication internally and externally (ad intra and ad extra);
- Promotes institutional marketing and promotes the institution;
- Gives identity;
- Has strong visual appeal, the image is recorded in the visual memory;
- Encourages the association of the image with the institution;
- Gives unity to the institution.

3.3. **Be aware of poverty and current and local catastrophes:**

- Create efficient projects in areas of poverty, where the volunteers live and act;
- Show competence in running these projects;
- Promote our current projects on social networks and websites;
- Have a website for each national Association with links to projects;
- Follow AIC International’s profile.

3.4. **Enterprising Charity: Projects that create systemic change:**

- Projects that benefit and transform lives in poor communities.

3.5. **Highlight AIC’s particular characteristic: this is an essentially feminine movement:**

AIC is an essentially feminine movement: Why? It is important because of:

**Tradition:** St Vincent’s will was to give a visible role to women in society, which is still necessary today.

**Actual facts:** 70% of the poorest people in the world are women, and our objective is to fight poverty in the most
effective way; being women should allow us to better empathize and come closer to needy women to help them stand up on their own two feet.

**Future**: seeking equal rights between men and women is part of the solution to combating poverty. Women need to be encouraged to take more and more public responsibility in society. In this sense, an important AIC policy is to encourage national associations, whilst not excluding men, to support female volunteers to take the positions of leadership and responsibility. Male AIC volunteers should embrace this objective and support this policy. And this is a way of showing our coherence with the change we promote in society.

3.6. *Visibility that comes from AIC’s representations in national and international organizations:*
- Near the non-religious movements of each region;
- Near the parishes in each region;
- Near the UN, UNESCO, CORUNUM, ECOSOC, Council of Human Rights and European Union.
4. Importance and Results of Visibility:

- Making ourselves known > makes us stronger > builds credibility;
- Creates empathy in society;
- Brings us more followers (volunteers);
- Expands the ONG;
- Creates partnerships;
- Helps raise funds.

5. General Objective:

*Improve visibility to better serve the poor.*

Questions for Reflection and Action:

- Do we as a local AIC group, region or national association have a communication plan? What about a visibility plan?
- How can we create one or improve the existing one having read this booklet?
**International Association of Charities**

**AIC aisbl**

An essentially feminine association, operating on a global level with 200,000 volunteers in 52 countries.

Founded by Saint Vincent de Paul in 1617 to fight against all forms of poverty and injustice and to give women an active and recognised social role, in a spirit of solidarity.

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