Exploring NPOs in community service: A communication management approach

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"For I know the plans I have for you … plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" Jeremia 29:11.

Abstract

South Africa's developmental social welfare policy relies largely on NPOs to deliver social welfare services to poor and vulnerable people and populations who are at risk (Patel, 2012:603). In South Africa, neither Government nor the business sector, are able to deliver on these needs. This factor highlights the important role that NPOs fulfil in solving social problems and responding to the needs in their communities (Department of Social Development, 2001; Grønbjerg & Paarlberg, 2001: 684). In addition, NPOs are purpose driven and therefore aim to make the maximum impact in their communities. In this case 'impact' refers to the societal intervention in addressing the main causes of social problems and bringing about lasting positive change in people's lives (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010:3). In order for non-profits to exert significant impact, they must be willing to work outside the limitations of their organisations and not merely be confined to managing their internal operations (Grunt & Crutchfield, 2007:35). It is thus crucial that NPOs achieve their organisational goals and serve the public purpose, and thereby strengthen their impact in their communities.

The purpose of the present study was to explore how strategic communication management can help NPOs make a stronger impact in society. In the field of communication management, the systems theory is used as meta-theory on which to base the strategic communication management and two-way symmetrical theory as theoretical framework for the present study. The study is placed within the phenomenological paradigm, seeing that the impact of the NPOs is understood in terms of the lived experiences of participants from the NPOs themselves, as well as from the selected community members. The study investigated whether the NPOs "… help bring about mutually beneficial changes in the attitudes and behaviours of both the publics and the organisation" (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:188). As the case is with most profit organisations, theories such as stakeholder management theory can also be applied to the non-profit sector to help ensure the success and sustainability of such organisations.

The present study utilised semi-structured interviews targeting four NPOs as well as eight community members, who are connected with the particular NPOs. The data was analysed thematically according to the constructs identified in the relevant literature. Furthermore, this study utilised the qualitative research method to explore the experiences and feelings of the participants.

The study found that participating NPOs did not manage communication strategically. This was mainly due to a lack of funding for communication practitioners; therefore also a lack of

capacity to take care of strategic communication management. NPOs tended to over-emphasise their dependence on funders, which to a large extend negates their interrelatedness to the community. It is suggested that, although funding for an NPO is crucial, such an organisation should also focus on partnering with the community to strengthen their impact. According to the principles of corporate rights and effects, managers must act in the interests of stakeholders and involve stakeholders in decision-making related to the organisation's objectives. NPOs should create value by serving the interests of, and working with all their stakeholders, which implies active participation and input from all parties concerned. In this regard, the strategic communication management function is key for the success of NPOs as service providers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Orientation

1.1. Introduction

> *Non-profit organisations begin when individuals in the community agree to act together for common purpose. Their early financial support comes mainly from the founders who dig deep into their own pockets, followed by appeals to donors for their voluntary response. Resources also come from government subsidies or grants or contracts, and self-generated income.* (Department of Social Development, 2001:6).

The definition above was presented in the Codes of Good Practice, which has been issued by the Department of Social Development (2001:6). The Companies Act of 2008 defines a non-profit organisation (hereafter abbreviated as NPO) as a company incorporated for a *public benefit* or other object as required by item 1(1) of Schedule 1. This definition is consistent with the one found in the Non-profit Organisations Act of 1997 which defines a NPO as a "trust, company or other association of persons established for a public purpose*". The underlying factor in all these definitions is that NPOs exist for a public purpose. Furthermore, these organisations depend on other role-players to fulfil this purpose.

It can therefore be argued that this purpose drives NPOs to have an influence or make a difference in their communities through the services they offer. In order to ensure that they meet their organisational goals and serve the public purpose, they should aim to make a maximum impact in their communities.

In an attempt to provide services to the community, NPOs are inherently accountable to a wide range of stakeholders. Lloyd (2005:3) points out that non-profits are: "upwardly accountable to their donors (those who provide financial support); downwardly to their beneficiaries (those on whose behalf they speak), inwardly to themselves and horizontally to their peers". This situation needs to be managed by the NPOs, in order for them to provide efficient service to the community.

To investigate how such services can be rendered an understanding of NPO's are needed. The following section will describe the characteristics of NPOs in South Africa in more detail.

1.2. Description of NPOs

South Africa's developmental social welfare policy relies largely on NPOs to deliver social welfare services to poor and vulnerable people and populations at risk (Patel, 2012:603). The Department of Social Development (2001:3) states that the purpose of the Codes of Good Practice is to develop the abilities of NPOs to become effective partners with government and the private sectors in the upliftment and care for South Africa's communities and environments." Patel (2012:605) supports this view by pointing out that:

> *"while the state in South Africa may be conceived of as playing a leading role in social development as both a financier, regulator and direct service provider, it also works in partnership with other actors in society who are not simply delivery vehicles but also contribute to development in many other ways through providing additional resource flows, knowledge of local contexts, giving a voice to poor and marginalised groups providing greater flexibility in service delivery and responsiveness and enhancing state capability".*

Therefore NPOs play an important role in solving social problems and responding to the needs in the community (Grønbjerg & Paarlberg, 2001:685). It is thus of national importance for NPOs to ensure that they make their contribution to the community.

NPO's also face challenges in their work. Research on the transformation of welfare services in the NPO sector suggests that while previously excluded groups in society have increased access to services, past historical patterns continue. The reason is that services remain largely urbanised and remedial in their approach, with limited focus on the 'developmental' aspects of the policy (Patel *et al.*, 2008:1). In addition, the effectiveness of NPOs in a community depends largely on the resources that these organisations share among themselves and among other sectors (Paarlberg & Varda, 2009:597).

1.2.1. The NPO sector in South Africa

The size and scope of the NPO sector in South Africa has grown significantly since the 1990s, and it is estimated that there were approximately 85 248 NPOs by 2012 (Swilling & Russell, 2002:7; Policy Framework, 2012:10). The Policy Framework (2012:10) states that "in terms of its contribution to the fiscal [health] of the country, in 2007 the total income of the NPOs was estimated to be R12, 5 billion". Here the South African government contributed a substantial amount in the form of subsidies and other forms of grants, followed by the private sector through its corporate social investment programmes (Bonochis, 2007). Other forms of funding

sources were derived from investments, membership fees and sales for services and goods as well as other forms of philanthropic giving.

In 1998 NPOs already contributed 1.2% to gross domestic product (Patel *et al.,* 2007). Besides the delivery of social services, NPOs were engaged in culture and recreation (20.8%), development and housing (20.6%), advocacy and politics (6.9%), and health (6.6%).

According to Patel (2012:609), "other than the above data, an accurate assessment of the number of NPOs that are actually engaged in the delivery of welfare and development services is not available". Survey data from a national study of affiliates of the National Council of Social Services (Nacoss), which are formally registered NPOs, indicated that the majority of Nacoss affiliates deliver care and support services to children, youth and families, and older persons (Patel *et al.,* 2008:10). This was followed by services to people living with HIV/Aids and, to a lesser extent, poverty reduction and social relief. Other target groups such as people living with disabilities as well as rehabilitation programmes are provided for, however, to a lesser extent than the former types of services. Half of the affiliates also delivered statutory services that are mandated by legislation and include mainly child protection services (Patel *et al.* 2008:10).

1.2.2. Types of NPOs in South Africa

Patel (2009) reports that there are four types of NPOs that deliver social services. These types are distinguished by the nature of their primary source of funding, which in turn shapes the nature of their relationship with the state (Patel, 2009).

- **Type 1** are formal, registered welfare organisations such as the Nacoss affiliates described above. These organisations have an extended history of service delivery and a sound service delivery infrastructure. They may also be referred to as public service contractors that provide services and facilities, including professional services for various target groups. These organisations rely heavily on the state for funding and operate within strict bureaucratic procedures and accountability systems. Of the different types of NPOs, they also have the least autonomy to set their own priorities and have limited flexibility in developing and implementing programmes because these are based on predetermined national norms and standards (Patel, 2009:35).

- **Type 2** are donor-funded NPOs and are also formally registered by government. These organisations enjoy greater flexibility to set their own agendas in terms of what they deliver, where they deliver services and which methods and practices they employ in

service delivery. They may be constrained, however, by the priorities and focus of donors and may have to realign their programmes with those of their donors. However, in some instances there appears to be scope for bargaining and for mutual influence about programme priorities and the direction of donors (Patel, 2009:36).

- **Type 3** are faith-based organisations (FBOs) which are funded by religious bodies. These organisations are estimated to constitute 11% of the total number of NPOs. FBOs' character and their approach to service delivery are informed and shaped by a religious ethos. The number of NPOs that are exclusively donor-funded is unknown (Patel, 2009:36).

- **Type 4** are community-based organisations (CBOs). These type of NPOs are engaged in welfare service delivery. CBOs are estimated to make up the largest number of service providers (Patel, 2009:36).

Swilling and Russell (2002:7) estimated that between a third and half of all NPOs in the country are CBOs. NPOs such as these are generally unregistered, informally organised, utilise mainly volunteers and are small locally-based organisations with limited access to skills or funding. "They are perceived as the service delivery or implementing agencies for government, public service contractors, donor-funded NPOs and FBOs" (Swilling & Russell, 2002:7). Generally speaking, CBOs rely on funding from various other organisations in order to develop and implement projects that will benefit the communities. This reflects the power differentials between CBOs and other intermediary NPOs that are reliant on CBOs because of their direct access to grassroots communities.

How to maximise the rich development potential of CBOs and their comparative advantage remains a key challenge for policymakers and donors. On the one hand, policy and legislation could protect CBOs and their volunteers from exploitation and lead to increased recognition and the strengthening of CBOs. On the other hand, this may require a level of institutionalisation and formalisation of CBOs that could compromise their authenticity (Patel, 2012).

1.2.3. NPOs' role development

Previous NPO involvement had focus mostly on a more cost-effective service delivery that targets poverty. This form of service delivery was often a trivial aspect when it came to development projects. However, the roles of NPOs have both broadened and deepened in recent years.

This diversification of NPOs' roles was described first in 1989 in the World Bank's Operational Directive on NPOs (World Bank, 1989). This Directive recognised the potential of NPOs to render the following services: reach poor communities and remote areas at low cost, identify local needs, promote participation, build on local resources, and introduce new technologies. The Directive also recognised potential weaknesses of NPOs. These include: limited managerial and technical capacities, uncertain sustainability, localised operations, limited replicability and weak accountability. Hence, the World Bank regards the judicious involvement of "such organisations, properly coordinated with the activities of public agencies, as facilitating pursuit of equitable and sustainable development" (World Bank, 1989).

In order for business and governments to work effectively with NPOs in any given society, and to benefit from the potential contributions to effective development, certain conditions need to be met: NPOs should be established freely and operate without excessive constraints; they should be independent of both business and government, and be both transparent and accountable. When these conditions are met the NPO sector will be able to reveal the full scope of viewpoints and expertise relevant to a wide variety of development projects. Similarly, NPOs need to have both the full scopes of powers, privileges, and immunities that are enjoyed by other juridical persons in the society. There exist unequal power relations between NPOs and Government, particularly where NPOs rely on the state for developmental funding. These state interventions could sacrifice NPOs' freedom and autonomy to operate and at the same time to engage critically with government (Howell & Pearce, 2001; Patel, 2003). These criteria may seem unrealistic, but should form the normative ideal to which an NPO strives.

1.2.4. Objectives of NPOs

When NPOs operate transparently and have well-developed structures for accountability (to their beneficiaries as well as their funders), the integrity of each NPO and of the sector itself is ensured. This can then increase the likelihood that the NPOs accurately represent the views of the poor in the society.

Especially in South Africa, an objective of the Non-Profit Organisation's Act of 1997 as stated in the Codes of Good Practice (Department of Social Development, 2001:3) is to encourage and support NPOs in their contribution towards meeting the many needs of the Republic of South Africa's diverse population by the following actions:
- Create an environment in which non-profit organisations can be productive and effective.

- Develop the abilities of NPOs to become effective partners with government sectors and the private sector on behalf of the upliftment and care for South Africa's communities and environments.
- Encourage NPOs to accept the responsibility of responding to and maintaining high standards of practice in: good governance, effective management, optimisation of resources, successful fundraising, productive relationships with government, beneficiary communities, donors, sponsors, the general publics, careful administration of their organisations, and ethical behaviour. (Department of Social Development, 2001:3)

The NPO's thus have a crucial role to play in the country. Although they are already conducting a valuable service to their communities, there is still room for improvement and their impact needs to be felt wider.

1.2.5. The impact of NPOs

The current discourse on NPOs centres on these organisations showing their worth in addressing social problems. In this regard the discussion focuses on the NPOs' 'impact', although there are still considerations on how to evaluate the impact of the NPO (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010:1, 15). In turn, NPOs are under growing pressure to demonstrate their impact (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010:14).

The question arises: What is meant when referring to the impact of NPOs in the community their serve? 'Impact' refers to the societal intervention in addressing the main cause of social problems. Impact can be defined as the "... significant or lasting changes in people's lives, brought about by a given action or series of actions" (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010:3).

For the purposes of this study 'impact' refers to the degree of services delivered by an NPO, how these services can be extended to more receivers, or more services offered, or how to make a greater difference on social issues. As stated by Patel (2012:615), the NPO should not only deliver a service but be able to focus on developmental aspects, which show its impact.

Grunt and Crutchfield (2007:35) explained they "had assumed that there was something inherent in these organisations that helped them have great impact – and that their success was directly tied to their growth or management approach". These scholars learnt that becoming a high-impact 'non-profit' does not only entail building an effective organisation and then expanding it to reach more people. The focus should rather be on working with and through organisations and individuals *outside themselves* to create more impact than they

could have achieved in isolation (Grunt & Crutchfield, 2007:35). "The secret to their success lies in how high-impact non-profits mobilize every sector of society – government, business, non-profits, and the public – to be a force for good" (Grunt & Crutchfield, 2007:35). In other words for non-profits to have a significant impact, they must be willing to work outside the limitations of their organisations and not just be confined to manage their internal operations. These organisations should spend as much time managing external relationships and influencing other groups as they put in efforts in building their own organisations (Grunt & Crutchfield, 2007:35).

1.3. Application of the communication management theory to the described scenario

This specific study is placed within the domain of communication management as it attempts to understand from this particular view, how an NPO can have a stronger impact in the community. In particular the participatory approach or developmental approaches were not used in the study or selected as theoretical framework for the study. The reason being, that NPOs also operate within changing, competitive environments and have expanded significantly, similar to the development of profit organisations (Garcia, 2012:1; Kong, 2007:282) and are under pressure to show their influence in society as explained above in section 1.2.5. Therefore authors such as Garcia (2012:1), and Knox and Gruar (2006:115) argue that theories used for profit organisations, such as stakeholder management theory, can also be applied to the NPO sector.

Therefore communication management theories that are usually applied to the profit sector, are just as valid in the non-profit sector to ensure the success and sustainability of NPOs. Unfortunately, as Wiggill (2009:1) points out, most NPOs do not practise strategic communication management to build strong, lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. Naudé (2001:265) concurs that a large number of NPOs do not realise the importance of managing strategic communication and the necessity of building lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. If communication and stakeholder relationship management are not planned strategically, it will be difficult for NPOs to achieve the desired results they aim to deliver in society.

In the present study phenomenology is used as the guiding paradigm. Phenomenology is concerned with understanding the social and psychological experiences from the perspectives of the people involved. The researcher studied experience from the perspective of the individual. Therefore the present study aims to explore how organisations function as systems

and how their contribution to society is influenced by other factors (Lester, 1999). In order to understand the experiences of the people in society, it is important that all systems involved in the relationship should be investigated.

The systems theory will be used as meta-theory, followed by the stakeholder relationship management theory, strategic communication management theory and two-way symmetrical communication theory.

Following Singh and Bodhanya (2014:349) "it must be realised that the effectiveness or lack thereof of the non-profit organisation's functioning will depend on the energy that is created via the collaboration of various stakeholders." Especially significant for organisational communication, the systems theory explains how and why people form groups. Each of these groups can be considered a system and form part of a larger system. A system is thus made up of internal and external factors that play a role in determining and influencing the sustainability of a phenomenon, in this case, NPOs. "A system is a set of two or more elements where: the behaviour of each element has an effect on the behaviour of the whole; the behaviour of the elements and their effects on the whole are interdependent; and while subgroups of the elements all have an effect on the behaviour of the whole, none has an independent effect on it" (Skyttner, 1996: 7). In this sense a system can be divided into smaller subsystems or incorporated with other systems to create larger systems, referred to as supra-systems or environments.

There are two dominant systems according to the systems theory, namely closed and open systems. Closed systems operate within a limit of set goals whilst trying to maintain balance. These systems do not factor in change; therefore they focus on managing a unit without full consideration of relationships with the external environment. Being a closed system is thus not a viable option for a NPO that wishes to strengthen their impact in the community they serve.

Open systems, on the other hand are open to environmental change, and therefore adapt to change in order to maintain balance and remain sustainable. Adaptation is necessary for the open systems, and progress feedback from the external environment is pivotal as it will enable an organisation to meet the publics' needs and to achieve their intended goals. Open systems "continually take in new information, transform that information and give information back to the environment" (Shockley-Zalabak, 1999:43). In contrast, 'closed' systems are characterised by a lack of input communication, making it difficult to make good decisions and stay abreast

with the needs of the environment (Shockley-Zalabak, 1999:43). For NPOs wishing to make a difference to society, it is thus crucial to act as open systems.

From the above it can be deduced that for an organisation such as an NPO aiming to strengthen their impact in the community they serve, the parties within the relationship should maintain an open system. This should take place through effective, strategic communication with the external environment, to ensure the successful management of both the organisation and its stakeholders.

The relationship between the subsystems are described and defined in the stakeholder relationship management theory. This theory clarifies aspects such as (1) the notion of "paying attention to key stakeholder relationships" (Freeman, 1999:235), (2) selecting the important stakeholder groups and (3) managing the stakeholder relations. Ledingham (2003:190) explains the theory of stakeholder relationship management as: "Effectively managing organisational-public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organisations and publics." In essence it states that all stakeholders should mutually benefit from an organisation.

Stakeholder relationships are built on interactive communication between the organisation and its publics, where both parties are involved in sharing ideas and shaping the nature of the relationship. Communication helps organisations understand and also negotiate expectations with its publics, therefore the organisation's success or impact depends on how well it understands and satisfies the demands of its publics in this regard (Coombs, 2001:112). The communication between the organisation and stakeholders are explained by literature on communication management.

Van Tonder and Van Rheede van Oudtshoorn (2006:149) add that corporate communication management is "… a powerful strategic management function that sustains dialogue between the organisation and its environment and ensures that the organisation adapts to change and stays relevant and viable". Steyn (2000:75), in line with this statement above, mentions that the key focus of corporate management of communication is managing relationships with stakeholders by means of two-way symmetrical communication, creating a mutually beneficial relationship between the two parties. This clearly shows the importance of two-way symmetrical communication; it especially creates a ground for mutual understanding and participation in the relationship. Van Ruler and Verčič (2005:263) add that corporate communication management can enable the organisation to develop and enhance their impact.

Many NPOs do not realise the importance of strategic communication management and the necessity of building lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders (Naudé, 2001:265). Even though applicable to profit organisations, corporate communication can also be applied to the mentioned NPOs. Most of these organisations do not practise strategic communication management in their continuous interaction with stakeholders. It is therefore difficult for many NPOs to achieve their mission and goals, because the communication and managing of stakeholder relationship are not planned strategically, and clear relationship objectives for particular stakeholders are not set. Limited funds as well as a lack of knowledge about the benefits of strategic communication management contribute to this debilitating situation. Although some NPOs recognise that communication and relationship management is essential for the existence of the organisation, communication mostly occurs unplanned and without specific objectives for an effective and long-lasting relationship with a particular stakeholder (Bowers, 2000:13). Without planned communication and relationship management, many NPOs find it difficult to achieve its mission and goals within their environment.

The notion of "paying attention to key stakeholder relationships" (Freeman, 1999:235) is and has been a major theme in the literature on strategic management. The stakeholder relationship management theory does not prioritise a certain stakeholder group, thus the onus rest with management to find a mutual balance (or equilibrium). Such a balance, in turn, will improve the chance of long-lasting relationships. According to Grunig *et al.* (2002:10), communication is essential to the practice of excellence in communication management. Thus, a relationship is built on interactive communication between the organisation and its publics. Both parties are involved in sharing ideas and shaping the nature of the relationship. Communication helps the organisation understand and also negotiate expectations with its publics. The organisation's success depends on how well it satisfies the demands of its publics or stakeholders (Coombs, 2001:111).

Communication thus serves as a tool to help an organisation maintain relations with its stakeholders. The relationship between NPOs and their stakeholders is strengthened by ongoing, effective communication. When the parties in the relationship have an open communication system, they help each other bridge the relational gap; which helps lead the relationship to another level instead of ending it. Grunig *et al.* (2002:95) states that the true value of the communication function lies in the effective development and maintenance of stakeholder relationships, because relationships help the organisation to manage its interdependence with its environment.

1.4. Problem statement

The Department of Social Development (2001:6) states that, "Because neither the government nor the business world are able to deal with all of a democratic society's needs, communities have to take care of many local and national problems and issues themselves, particularly at a grassroots level." NPOs play a vital role in delivering services that the government do not have the capacity to render to individuals who might be in need of them. These services range from food, to health care and other types of needs identified in the various communities. NPOs therefore act as mediators between the government and the citizens by attempting to fill the gaps of poor service delivery from the local government functions (Mzini, 2011:276). NPOs play important roles in solving social problems and responding to the needs in the community (Grønbjerg & Paarlberg, 2001:706).

In order for NPOs to carry out their public purposes effectively, the NPOs need to build sustainable relations with donors, Government and their peers; as they are fully dependent on these role-players. Hannum *et al.* (2011:18) concur that "considering that this sector takes on the responsibility of confronting complex social issues without a steady flow of resources and infrastructure, the issue of the sustainability of the non-profit sector becomes an important issue to examine".

As pointed out in the disucssion above, communication management literature guidelines could prove to be crucial in the process where NPOs aim to impact their environment. The reason is that effective and focused communication is a strategy to obtain, nurture and maintain stakeholder relationships between the NPOs, the community and their funders. Furthermore, strategic communication theory adds that when the mentioned communication is approached strategically, it will assist their interdependence and yield benefits to the organisation and stakeholders (Grunig *et al.,* 2002:95). Ultimately this will help the organisation to make a stronger impact in society, to the soceity's benefit.

The stated problem leads to the research questions that will be explicated below.

1.5. Research questions

The general research question can be formulated as follows:

How can non-profit organisations have a greater impact in the communities they serve, as viewed from a communication management perspective?

From the general research question above the following specific research questions can be deduced:

1. According to communication management literature, how can NPOs strengthen their impact in the communities they serve?
2. According to purposefully selected NPOs, what are their views on their current impact in the communities they serve and on possible measures to improve this impact?
3. According to the purposefully selected community members serviced by the mentioned NPOs, what are their views on the NPOs current impact in the communities they serve and on possible measures to improve this impact?
4. How does the views as expressed by the NPOs and community members compare to each other and to the information found in the literature study?

1.6. Research aims

The general research aim can be formulated as follows:

To determine how non-profit organisations can have a greater impact in the communities they serve, as viewed from a communication management perspective.

The aims of the present research can be posited as follows:

1. Determine how, according to literature on communication management, can NPOs strengthen their impact in the communities they serve.
2. Establish by semi-structured interviews with five selected NPOs, how NPOs can improve their impact in the communities they serve, and which possible measures could be taken to improve this impact.
3. Establich by semi-structured interviews with selected community members who were serviced by the mentioned NPOs, the current impact in the communities they serve and possible measures to improve this impact.
4. Ascertain how the views as expressed by the NPOs and community members compare to each other and to the information found in the literature study.

1.7. Main theoretical argument

Within the domain of communication management, a systems approach explains how systems, in this case NPOs, adapt to their environments (Heath & Bryant, 2000). The relationship between systems is informed by the stakeholder relationship management theory. In this process of managing relationships to ensure the adaptation of the systems for utlimate

survival, communication is crucial. According to Wiggill (2009:3), "in order to maintain quality relationships between organisations and its stakeholders, it is essential to manage communication strategically". Strategic communication management therefore establishes relationship building with stakeholders.

Grunig *et al.* (1992; 2002:10), and Steyn (2000:75), argue that the strategic application of communication management through practices of two-way symmetrical communication enhances the development and maintenance of mutually beneficial, long-term relationships. This is because this form of communication creates a conversation and mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders.

In light of the above it also becomes crucial in the described communication environment, to understand the perspective of the other party regarding their life experience and the impact of the NPO that renders services to them (Lester, 1999). Therefore the study is grounded in the phenomenologic paradigm, which investigates experiences as lived by individuals. This is explained further in the next section.

1.8. Methodology

The methodology used was aimed at systematically solving the research problems and guiding the researcher to address the objectives of the present study. The chosen methodology also helped focus on the research process and on the type of analytical tools implemented in the study.

1.8.1. Methodological orientation

The orientation used for the research, in line with the theoretical framework for the study, is the phenomenological approach. According to Welman and Kruger (1999:189) "the phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved". Husserl's philosophical phenomenology provided a point of departure for Alfred Schultz who turned it "toward the ways in which ordinary members of society attend to their everyday lives" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000:488-489). Phenomenology is therefore the study of phenomena and the phenomena being aspects of the "human experience".

Furthermore, this study utilised the qualitative research method to explore the experiences and feelings of the participants. The choice for an exploratory research design implied the use of qualitative research methods. Qualitative research focuses on investigating meanings

derived from experiences and feelings of respondents expressed in their own words (Chisnall, 2001:107). Jankowicz (2000:127) states that "qualitative research is about the nature and content of what is being said – its meaning – rather than the number of people saying it, or the frequency with which it is being said". Interpretation of the research also relies on the theories used as well as the insight of the researcher into the context of the research problem under investigation. Thus, participants' experiences and feelings are paramount in the analysis and interpreting the findings to the research. This also entails an inductive approach, which means that the point of departure is the experiences and feelings of the individuals in their particular context. This approach is contrary to the deductive approach whose point of departure is based on generalised theory (Soiferman, 2010:3). The study will be based on the experiences of individual participants and using their views to "broaden themes" (Soiferman, 2010:3). In essence the inductive approach generate theories based on a view of social reality that emphasises the ways in which individuals interpret their social world and views the social world as constantly changing and evolving (Bryman & Bell, 2003:47).

In the present study, the life-world of NPOs is investigated in order to explore their experiences of the impact they make to their society, from a communication management view. Therefore, the researcher's aim is to understand how NPOs and selected community members view the impact of these NPOs from a phenomenological point of view following the inductive approach.

1.9. Research design

Maree (2011:70) defines a research design as follows "… a plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done". The present study will employ a literature study and semi-structured interviews as will be explicated below.

1.9.1. Literature study

The literature study made use of books, articles, scholary journals, internet resources and newspaper articles. A search was conducted on the following databases: Nexus, Ferdinand Postma Catalogue, EBSCOHost, Google Scholar, Sabinet Online, Emerald and Science Direct, to ensure sufficient material to support this study and to ascertain whether a similar study had been undertaken on the topic. Sufficient research materials were found, and it was found that this specific study had not been conducted before.

A similar study in communication management was done, but the focus was on the non-profit sector of adult literacy. This study conducted by Wiggill (2009) aimed to analyse South African

NPOs in the adult literacy sector's current communication practices against the normative, theoretical model for strategic communication management. The present study, however, was conducted primarily by focusing on exploring NPOs in community service from an inductive approach to communication management.

As mentioned, Wiggill (2009) analysed South African NPOs in the adult literacy sector. The scholar focused on current communication practices against the normative, theoretical model for strategic communication management. Wiggill's (2009) research differs from the present study by focusing only on the adult literacy section, and by investigating only the correlation of theory to the practical situation. The present study took account of various NPOs and attempted to uncover how the contribution of literature on communication management could help influence these NPOs' community service.

A further study was conducted at Harvard by Ebrahim and Rangan (2010) on the limits on non-profit impact. Their study offers a critical view of the debates on impact and its implication for performance management in nonprofit organisations. As indicated previsouly, the present study, however, will focus on a specific context – exploring NPO's in community service from a communication management approach and specifically within the South African context – a study, which to date, has not been undertaken.

Holtzhausen (2008:458) posits that "a good relationship with donors is essential, since they have the power to positively or negatively influence the organisation's goal attainment". In a similar study on managing the corporate identities of non-profit organisations, Holtzhausen (2013:88) maintains that NPOs should be able to create and establish relationships with various stakeholders, particularly donors, by means of managing their corporate identities. These relationships, in turn, provide a tool that enables the NPOs to position themselves as organisations enabled to address, alleviate and influence positively the many societal problems that are characteristic to South Africa (Holtzhausen, 2013). In a study conducted by Singh and Bodhanya (2014:366) on the sustainability of non-profit organisations, they add, "Non-profit organisational effectiveness can be interpreted as the emergent property of all interactions with, and between, the various stakeholders and that this 'energy' is greater than the energy that can be generated by any of the stakeholders alone."

Whether qualitative or quantitative, each method has its own distinct method to collect data, in order to answer each research question. The present study utilised the literature review as well as analysis of the semi-structured interviews to interpret the information that was gathered.

1.9.2. Semi-structured Interviews

An interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer poses questions to the participant. The aim is to collect data and to learn about the beliefs, ideas, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant. According to Maree (2011:87), "the aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participant, and they can be a valuable source of information, provided they are used correctly". Qualitative research thus provides rich descriptive data that will help the researcher understand the participant's view and knowledge on societal aspects. Semi-structured interviews have "adaptable questions, and affords the respondents time to explain their experiences reality". In his description of semi-structured interviews, Neuman (2000:364) explains that the structure of semi-structured interviews is loose and made up of open-ended questions.

Interviews have the disadvantage that it is a time-consuming method of which the effectiveness is sometimes questioned because of the many possible answers. The researcher was, however, aware of this limitation and managed the process throughout. For the analysis each individual response and comment was categorised, similarities were seeked and irrelevant information discarded. To support the analysis direct quotes from the interviews will be used in the presentation of the interviews.

1.9.2.1. Sampling

May (2001:87), refers to a sample as a subgroup of the population selected for participation in the study that is undertaken. Sampling and selection refer to the means by which a researcher identifies, selects and gains access to the appropriate subjects (Mason, 2004:54). Sampling allows researchers to reduce the amount of participants and data by examining only a subgroup (sample) of the total population.

There are two types of sampling techniques, namely probability and non-probability sampling (Maree, 2011:172). For the present study data will be collected in the form of non-probability sampling, which means that research was done firstly on four NPOs who were questioned, and secondly on selected community members related to each NPO, who had a choice to answer the questions and participate in the research. Non-probability sampling implies that not every NPO from the target population will have an equal opportunity to be selected for the research. The reason could be that they were not available during the time of the field research or even declined to participate (Maree, 2011:172). The sample consisted of four purposefully selected NPOs that work across different sectors, which are located in the North-West Province. Two community members of each NPO, who are well informed about the function

and operation of NPOs, will also be purposefully selected for the research. Since the study was qualitative, a convenience sample and the NPOs and community members were selected in the assumption that they would provide relevant information on the topic of the research (Struwig & Stead, 2001:109).

1.9.2.2. Data-analysis method

Maree (2011:297) describes data analysis as "the process of observing patterns in the data". This involves asking questions about the mentioned patterns, and then constructing conjectures. It entails the deliberate gathering of data from particularly selected individuals on targeted topics, confirming or refuting those conjectures. Thereafter the researcher analyse the information. However, the researher is free to ask additional questions and seek further data (Maree, 2011:297).

The researcher considered the collected data, including notes and interview transcripts from the recording of the interviews, for a clearer understanding of the information. Thematic content analysis was conducted according to, but not limited to, themes identified in the literature. This was done by focusing on the meaning of what was spoken and the experience as understood by the individual. Please see section 3.4.2.3. for a detailed description of the thematic analysis.

1.9.2.3. Reliability and validity

It is important that results remain similar (consistent), even when they are obtained on different occasions or by different forms of the same assessment. In other words, the research data needed to be verified to assure the quality.

When referring to the reliability of an instrument the assumption is: if the same instrument is used at different times or administered to different subjects from the same population, the findings should be the same (Maree, 2011:215). According to Maree (2011:215) reliability is the degree to which a measuring instrument is repeatable and consistent. To this aim, the theories that are used provide a theoretical background to the context of the study and also give the qualitative researcher a means by which to interpret the text within its social context.

The validity of an instrument refers to the extent to which it measures what it is supposed to measure (Maree, 2011:216). According to Sarantakos (2005:83) validity measures the quality and value of the study, so that the study is accepted by researchers as well as the users of research.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the present research the interviews were recorded, and transcribed accurately. The reseacher also categorised the information that was obtained into themes that were identified in the literature, with the option of adding more themes that could emerge from the interviews.

1.10. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are of major concern in research as it entails the participation of people; in this case the NPOs and community members took part in the research. Du Plooy (2009:53) states that the respondents' right to privacy should be respected, and participating in the research should not pose any harm to them in any way.

The study was conducted according to the ethical standards of the NWU and was vetted by the ethical committee of the Faculty of Arts and NWU. The ethics approval number is: NWU-00129-15-A7. For this process the researcher had to explain the ethical implications for the study and clarify how it would be managed for this study.

1.11. Structure of the study

The present study followed the structure as outlined in terms of chapters below.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Orientation
The chapter started by providing an overview of the research. The researcher provided the the background to the study, the aims of the research approach as well as a general view of the ethical aspects to consider.

Chapter 2: Literature Review
This chapter includes the collection of previously published information relevant to the research question, as well as theoretical contributions to the research topic. The aim is to position the study within the body of existing literature.

Chapter 3: Research Method
The methodology section will include information on how data was collected was analysed.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

In this chapter the importance of the study is argued. The researcher develop solutions to the research problem based on the findings, and formulate a deeper understanding of the research problem.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion summarises the content and purpose of the research and discuss the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter the researcher presented an overall plan and objectives for the study, as well as an overview of the content of the following chapters. In this chapter entails an in-depth investigation of the literature, obtaining information to answer the first specific research question: *According to communication management literature, how can NPOs strengthen their impact in the communities they serve?*

Table 2.1 below summarises the theoretical conceptualisation for the study.

Table 2.1: Theoretical conceptualisation

Specific research question 1	*According to communication management literature, how can NPOs strengthen their impact in the communities they serve*?			
Domain	Communication management			
Paradigm	Phenomenology			
Meta-theory	Systems theory • Openness • Exchange of information • Interdependence			
Theories	Stakeholder relationship management theory	Strategic communication management theory	Two-way symmetrical communication theory	Policy framework for NPO's in South Africa
Concepts/Themes	• Corporate effects principle • Corporate rights principle • Mutually beneficial relationships • Reach the goals of both stakeholders and organisation	• Interactionism and reciprocity • Transparency • Strategic planned and proactive management • Identification of stakeholder issues and environmental scanning • Taking stakeholders' view into the organisation's strategic planning process • Practitioner role	• Mutual understan-ding • Conversation and reciprocity • Power sharing • Parties' views may change • Mixed-motive model	• Civil society organisa-tions • Public purpose

		• Mutually beneficial relationships • Stakeholders Included in decision-making		

First a discussion will follow on the different levels of theory. Thereafter the paradigm will be discussed, followed by the meta-theory and closer examination of each specific theory.

2.2. Levels of theory

Before examining the basic approaches and theorems that were employed in the present study, a cursory view of the various levels of theory that contribute to this theory will follow.

2.2.1. Paradigms

Paradigms play a fundamental role in scientific inquiry as they do in everyday life (Babbie, 2007:33). Paradigms consist of various theories, models and assumptions. A paradigm forms the framework that facilitates understanding of the observations or findings of a study. In the present study phenomenology was used as paragidm. According to Huitt (2011) a paradigm may be thought of as pattern or model of how something is structured and how the parts function in interrelation.

2.2.2. Meta-theory

Following Overton (2007:155) meta-theorems can be defined as "the context in which the theories are made, and refer to the theories, themselves". He goes on to add that a meta-theory is a set of interlocking principles that describe what is acceptable and unacceptable for theory (Overton, 2007:155). From this can be inferred that a meta-theory is a theory about a theory; meaning that meta-theory focuses on the analysis of other theories. Wallis (2010:78) concurs that "meta-theory is primarily the study of theory, including the development of overarching combinations of theory". Systems theory is the meta-theory that is employed in the present study.

2.2.3. Theory

Theories are used within the paradigms and the meta-theory suggested by the researcher, and seek to provide logical explanations to the phenomenon under investigation (Babbie,

2007:33). According to Holberg, *et al.* (2007:427), "Theories imply a systematic ordering of ideas about the phenomena of our field of inquiry and are usually of two kinds. One is concerned with understanding, the other with explanation and prediction." Gelso (2006) adds that theories describe and explain phenomena and that they should furthermore "place a limit on what might be examined, and be highly generative to heuristically stimulate further investigation" (Gelso, 2006:465). In the present study stakeholder relationship management theory, strategic communication management theory, and two-way symmetrical theory were the theories used.

2.3. Phenomenology

Luckman (1978:121) states that, "phenomenological philosophy claims to be a philosophy of man in his life-world in a rigorously scientific manner. Its theme is concerned with the demonstration and explanation of the activities of consciousness". The statement is reiterated by Thevenaz (1962:19) who describes phenomenology as a "science of experience". From the descriptions above phenomenology can, therefore, be circumscribed as a study of an individual's life and how he/she interprets his/her surroundings and activities.

Phenomenology is concerned with understanding the social and psychological occurrences from the perspectives of the people involved. For a better understanding of what phenomenology entails, it can be explained as getting a better understanding of how people attend to their everyday lives according to how they view the society they live in (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000:488). Phenomenology is, therefore, the study of phenomena, namely 'human experience'.

Van Manen (1997:8) confirms this view by explaining that: Phenomenology is essentially the study of "lived experience". This approach focuses primarily on how individuals experience the world around them, not the world or reality as something separate from the person. The focus is to understand meanings of human experience as it is lived. The 'life world' is understood as the phenomena that people experience individually, without being categorised (Husserl, 1970). The study of these phenomena aims to review lived experiences and find meaning in them. In the study, the life-world of NPOs is examined, in order to explore their impact on communities by understanding the experience of both those who render and those who receive services.

Phenomenology was originally developed by Edmund Husserl to explain how individuals give meaning to social phenomena in their everyday lives (Heidegger, 2005:50). The role of

phenomenology was therefore to explore "the essence of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view" (Giorgi, 2007:64). According to Giorgi (2007:64) Husserl's goal was to establish theoretical and scientific knowledge, but he could only accomplish that by delving into the perceptions of individuals as a way of understanding how each person makes sense of his/her surroundings.

Studies that draw upon this theoretical perspective concentrate on exploring how individuals make sense of the world in terms of the meanings and classifications they employ. As such, phenomenology aims to provide accounts that offer an insight into the subjective lived experience of individuals. In the present study, phenomenology as approach will help uncover the impact of NPOs and their view on how these roles can be broadened through communication.

The systems theory as meta-theory will be discussed subsequently, followed by the theories used to frame the study.

2.4. Systems theory

As was established previously, a system can be defined as "an organised whole made up of components that interact in a way distinct from their interaction with other entities and which endures over some period of time" (Anderson *et al.*, 1999:4). Ackoff (1981:15-16) defines a system as a set of two or more interrelated elements that have the following properties:

- Each element has an effect on the functioning of the whole.
- Each element is affected by at least one other element in the system.
- All possible subgroups of elements also present the first two properties.

In this regard the NPO should thus be viewed as a system that needs to operate within its environment with various subsystems constituting the NPO system.

The systems theory does not specify particular theoretical frameworks for understanding problems. This theory rather serves as an organising conceptual framework or meta-theory for understanding (Meyer, 1983) – applied to the present study, in particular understanding the NPO's within their environment. According to Meyer (1983) systems theory also enables researchers to understand the components and dynamics of systems. This helps them to interpret problems and develop balanced intervention strategies, with the goal of enhancing the "goodness of fit" between individuals and their environments.

The present study will thus examine the "live world", the organisation's way of adapting to the environment. Therefore it is vital to consider that various systems are involved in shaping the organisation. Organisations cannot survive in isolation. Swann (2010:18) asserts that "they are interdependent on others and must interact to some degree with various constituencies in the political, economic and social realms to survive and thrive." Systems theory explains how organisations are affected by the environment and how they in turn affect the environment (Anderson *et al.*, 1999).

In this regard, every organisation has stakeholders, such as employees, customers and government regulators, on whom they depend. Communication management helps to identify, build and monitor these crucial relationships (Swann, 2010:18). Therefore, communication entails an essential process for social systems. "Communication and information constitute an input into a system, a process occurring within the system, and an output in interactions with other systems" (Brandell, 2010:7). Communication regulates and either stabilises, or disrupts a system.

Von Bertalanffy (1968:39) differentiated between open and closed systems, observing that "living organisms are essentially *open systems*". An open system, unlike a closed system, exchanges matter with its environment; *closed systems* "are isolated from their environment". An example of a closed system that may serve adaptive purposes could be an ethnic minority community that has limited access to the majority of cultural institutions due to active discrimination against its members (Von Bertalanffy, 1968:39).

A non-profit organisation as such is a system in which people get to interact. How stakeholders respond to the organisation will have an effect on the performance of the organisation, thus the entire system, which is the organisation, will be affected (Anderson *et al*, 1999). For instance, a balloon can be regarded as a system. If someone presses a finger into the balloon, it gets affected in such a way that its shape will change entirely. The same applies to NPOs as dealt with in this study. Any positive or negative feedback from stakeholders, an exchange of information, will alter the shape of the organisation in some way. The aim, however, is for the organisation to impact positively on society. For such a result, the interrelated components of the system should work towards the same goal and therefore understand and accept their interdependence. In the NPO sector this would entail interdependence between the NPO, the community, Government and other stakeholders. These parties should have their values aligned with that of the organisation and *vice versa*. As a result, such an organisation stands to thrive in reaching masses and having a greater impact in society (Swann, 2010:18).

Systems theory emphasises the importance of interdependence between subsystems. According to Le Roux (2005:6) this "equates to the environmental scanning and boundary-spanning roles of the practitioner". An organisation is unable to survive on its own; it depends on various factors to be sustainable. These factors can therefore be seen as interdependent. As NPOs are dependent on funding to operate, they need people whom they can serve in order to exist. These individuals, in turn, are in need of the NPO's services. The different parties that make up a system are interconnected and unable to function effectively in isolation. Therefore, no single part of the organisational system can be allowed to work independently, or benefit more than others; each part must operate jointly with the rest of the parts.

The relationship between the organisation and its internal and external environment depends on the organisational decision-makers as they interpret specific situations and determine the resulting actions and solutions (Stroh & Jaatinen, 2001:159). An organisation as a system should exchange information with its internal and external environments. By implication this exchange of information can impact the system as a whole. If one subsystem is not satisfied with the information received, this affects the entire system. In other words, an issue that affects one part of the system influences the other parts as well.

Should all components that comprise a system work together, the outcomes for the whole system will be positive. In this instance, once the organisation manages stakeholders and communication effectively, the subsystems – as stakeholders– will be able to give feedback on the organisation. This gives the organisation's management an idea on how effective it is run and what can be done to strengthen the impact. The main points derived from this theory are the notion of openness between an organisation and its stakeholders as well as the exchange of information that provide the platform for feedback and interdependence as NPOs depend on other organisations and its publics to be sustainable. The application of this theory to the NPO sector will be discussed in more detail in section 2.7, after an overview of the specific theories.

2.5. Specific theories

The specific theories used in this study are the stakeholder relationship management-, strategic communication management- and two-way symmetrical theories. Each theory will be discussed in more detail.

2.5.1. Stakeholder relationship management theory

As stated previously, the systems theory in NPOs encompasses the organisation itself together with its stakeholders. The interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders will determine the outcome of the system. It is thus crucial that the organisation manages its relationships with stakeholders effectively. Cornelissen (2004: 27) makes the following remark:

> *A breaking point for the stakeholder concept is that organisations have increasingly become aware of the need for an 'inclusive' and 'balanced' stakeholder management approach that involves actively communicating with and being involved with all stakeholder groups upon which the organisation is dependent* (Cornelissen, 2004: 27).

Organisations from the various sectors, irrespective of their size, should establish and nurture relationships with their stakeholders as they depend economically and socially on these stakeholders.

The appeal of a theory on the managing of stakeholder relationships is both empirical and normative. Firstly, "empirically, stakeholder management theory rests on an observation or what we might call a fact" (Cragg, 2002:115). Organisations engage with stakeholders that have the potential to influence them positively or negatively. Likewise, the activities of organisations impact on individuals and collectives whose interests may be affected either favourably or adversely by the organisation's actions. According to Freeman (1999) stakeholder relationship management is a fundamentally realistic concept. This implies that the theory of stakeholder relationship management can be applied to organisations with a view to building good relations with their stakeholders. These relationships require outcomes that are of the best interests to both the organisation and stakeholders. Secondly, the theory of stakeholder relationship management may also be considered to be normative, if it conveys the notion that fundamental principles may influence corporate activities (Cragg, 2002:115).

Bourne (2010) shares this view and adds that stakeholders are more likely to support activities they think will succeed; and are more likely to withdraw support from activities that they perceive as not succeeding. Therefore, it is essential to communicate relevant information to important stakeholders to give the perception the activity is being well managed. This can be achieved through targeted communication that is aligned with the stakeholders' expectations and the information they need (Bourne, 2010).

The theory of stakeholder relationship management is based on two principles that balance the rights of the organisation's claimants with the results of their involvement with the organisation. The first principle, corporate effects, implies that "the corporation and its managers are responsible for the effects of their actions on others" (Evan & Freeman, 2004:79). The second principle, corporate rights, means that "the corporation and its managers may not violate the legitimate rights of others to determine their own future" (Evan & Freeman, 2004:79).

The mentioned theory thus assumes that stakeholders are distinct groups with their own valid needs and interests with regard to the organisation. The stakeholder theory does not give primacy to one stakeholder over another, although it is acknowledged that at times one group may benefit at the expense of another. The role of management is to balance multiple claims of conflicting stakeholders. Thus, a guiding principle for stakeholder management is to understand that, as the corporation is managed for the benefits of its stakeholders, the "rights of stakeholders must be ensured through their participation in decisions that substantially affect their welfare" (Evan & Freeman, 2004:82).

A second principle is based on the fact that the managers bear a fiduciary duty to the stakeholders as well as the corporation and therefore "management must act in the interests of the stakeholders as their agents" (Evan & Freeman, 2004:82). In short, managers must act in the interests of stakeholders and engage stakeholders in decision making with regard to the organisation.

Bourne (2010:139) adds that stakeholders are an essential part of successful organisational activities and its outcomes. "Building and maintaining robust relationships and maintaining an appropriate level of communication to stakeholders will ensure that:

- they receive information they require;
- they are consulted;
- their needs and requirements are 'heard', and where possible, actioned" (Bourne, 2010:139).

For an organisation to be effective, according to the theory of stakeholder relationship management, it must behave in ways that solve the problems and satisfy the goals of both the stakeholders and management. According to this theory, organisations need to build mutually beneficial relationships with their key stakeholders, which have an impact on the organisation's licence to operate (Jahansoozi, 2007:398). If organisations fail to do so, stakeholders will either pressure the organisation to change, or oppose it in ways that add cost and risk to

organisation's policies and decisions. From the perspective of relationship management, the negative consequences of an organisation's activities need to be addressed in order for the relationship between the organisation and stakeholders to continue (Jahansoozi, 2007:399).

De Beer (2014:136) explains that "new perspectives acknowledge stakeholders as co-producers of organisational value and stress the importance of co-inventing combinations and connectivity among the various actors". The International Integrated Reporting Council's (IIRC) International <IR> Framework (2013:12) states that an organisation can create value by serving the interests of, and working with all its stakeholders. Value created in this way manifests in financial returns for providers of financial capital. Literature on value creation refers to numerous kinds of capitals. In relation to the present study, the social and relational capital is particularly relevant to the communication profession. Wiggill (2014:284) builds on this notion by adding that it is crucial for NPOs to communicate its vision, mission and goals to key stakeholders, especially government to obtain organisational legitimacy to fulfil its goals. An NPO's legitimacy as organisation depends on two-way communication and strong, mutually beneficial relationships between the NPO and its stakeholders (Hudson, 1999).

Massie and Anderson (2003:223) argue that it has become imperative for organisations to communicate effectively because of the intense and competitive nature of business in a modern society. As such, communication is a fundamental part of managing any organisation. Hamrefors (2010:141) in his research adds that "the purpose of communication is to establish and develop the communicative ability of the whole organisation rather than to deal only with traditional communication activities." The ability to communicate strengthens the conceptual foundation of the organisation and stimulates a variety of activities.

2.5.1.1. Corporate communication in stakeholder relationship management

Scholes and Clutterbuck (1998) state that most of what qualifies as stakeholder communication involves outgoing messages from the organisation to various stakeholders. They argue that if communication is to be taken seriously in stakeholder relationships, there should be an equal emphasis on listening to stakeholders, which means opportunities for feedback and genuine response on the part of various stakeholders. Additionally, a focus on communication in stakeholder relationships also involves investigating how various stakeholders participate in the decision-making process. One of the main issues is to pay attention to stakeholders as they will act to protect or enhance their interests and exert influence to achieve them (Frooman, 1999:191).

Ledingham and Bruning (2000:57) stress the fact that "the quality of organisation-public relationships might be measured through the dimensions of reciprocity, trust, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction and mutual understanding". Wilson (1994:136) in agreement with Ledingham and Bruning (2000:57) states that the role of public relations[1] (hereafter abbreviated as PR) is to "facilitate positive communication between an organisation and its publics and that requires building relationships".

This notion of PR as relationship management has sparked the interest of practitioners as well as scholars (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Ledingham and Bruning (2000) also explore stakeholder relationships created by communication management. Their research "underscores the value for organisations and for publics alike of a two-way symmetrical approach to PR – an approach that emphasises building and maintaining relationships that benefit not only the organisation but also public members" (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000:58) .

Both parties involved in this relationship stand to benefit mutually as publics benefit through organisational support for the community's activities and the organisation wins increased loyalty from its publics.

Within this above-mentioned process the role of communication in relationship building becomes evident. "The organisation must engage in behaviours that benefit its publics as well as serving the interests of the organisation. Communication should thus be utilised to inform key publics about the organisation's behaviours" (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000:58).

Organisations that practise relationship management within a model of strategically planned two-way symmetry both generate and receive benefits. In the process, their initiatives help build the community, while providing social and economic return on their investment. In this way, the relational approach represents opportunities to help NPOs extend their impact for the benefit of both organisation and the publics.

2.5.2. Strategic communication management theory

Cornelissen (2004:34) describes communication management as "any type of communication activity undertaken by an organisation to inform, persuade or otherwise relate to individuals and groups in its outside environment". Efficient and effective communication helps organisations to interact more with their stakeholders. External stakeholders such as donors/sponsors are adamant to know how their contributions are utilised and what difference

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[1] The terms PR and corporate communication are used in correlation with the source used and equate to one another according to Steyn and Puth (2000:6)

it is making. Therefore it is important that the line of communication remains open and direct between the organisation and its stakeholders.

Strategic communication management theory describes an organisation that is effectively managing its communication and creating reciprocity in the communication process. With strategic communication management, a process of thinking about the organisation's mission, its current environment and stakeholder needs, resulting in communication that is systematic and planned, is implied (Steyn & Puth, 2000:17). Steyn and Puth's model (2000) for strategic communication management is informed by the excellence theory (Steyn, 2007:138), as well as the relationship management theory, seeing that it advocates the use of two-way symmetrical communication to establish mutually beneficial relationships "with strategic stakeholders, in order to manage organisational risks and stakeholders' issues" in order to also achieve the organisation's goals. This implies the need for a high degree of interactivity between an organisation and its stakeholders, which provides opportunities for feedback and genuine responses from the stakeholders. Moreover, this should be a planned process. The theory of strategic communication management therefore identifies ways through which an organisation can constantly keep open this line of communication by keeping the interaction transparent.

Strategic communication is much more than the transmission of information, rather a complete and effective process of conversation maintained through interaction (O' Sullivan *et al.*, 1994:94; Waisbord, 2011:18; Roberts, 2010:9). Rahim (1994:20) argues that there can be no familiarity without conversational communication. This implies that there has to be mutual communication that produces a positive change of circumstances amongst (between) the applicable parties in the communication process in order for development to take place. Mefalopulos (2005:254) and Kamboura (2008:3) concurs by stating that effective and efficient communication yields positive outcomes for the parties involved in the communication process.

Through a strategic management process communication is used to create, sustain, and manage meaning through interaction (Conrad & Poole, 1998). As such, communication both reflects the world and simultaneously helps create it. Organisations work on the same principles where NPOs rely on donors/sponsors for their sustainability. In order for the organisation to retain existing donors and acquire new ones, it is important that the organisation practises strategic communication management with them.

Stakeholders' involvement in the organisation's decision-making process is a factor that signifies strategic management of communication. This is where an organisation should

practise transparency. Bordia *et al.* (2004) explains in this regard that participation is positively associated with perceptions of fairness during organisational change; having a say in changes that affect them gives employees the resiliency to cope with the uncertainly during the change process. Participation becomes an important factor in the management of communication between an organisation and its stakeholders.

The effective strategic management of the mentioned communication should involve active participation from all parties. Organisations should actively solicit input on what can be done to improve the relationship. Likewise, stakeholders and publics should provide feedback on which aspects they believe are effective in the relationship, and also which aspects are ineffective, and what could be done to improve the relationship. In this sense, the management of such strategic communication is thus the key.

According to the theory on corporate communication roles, practitioners perform different roles in the organisation related to the tasks they perform the most. Roles "… describe daily behaviour patterns of individual communication practitioners" (Grunig, 1992a:19), which yield predictable outcomes (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:196). A role can therefore be seen as the range of tasks or a standard set of behaviours that the practitioner needs to follow in order to produce excellent communication, which will contribute to an organisation's performance (Steyn & Puth, 2000:14). To manage strategic communication, practitioners need to fulfil three roles, as identified by Steyn (2003:32) for the South African context. These three roles combine to ensure the success of an organisation and that communication can be practiced strategically in the organisation. For a comprehensive overview, each role will be mentioned briefly, although the focus of the study is not on the roles performed by communication practitioners.

Steyn (2003:32) provides further detail on the Strategic role that is performed at the top management/societal/environmental level. This is referred to as the macro or strategic level. The practitioner has the responsibility for strategic PR management. By means of environmental scanning, the *public relation strategist* gathers information on stakeholder concerns and expectations, and identifies societal issues and the publics that establish themselves around the issues. Then the strategist interprets the information focusing on the consequences it holds for organisational strategies, and feeds this intelligence into the enterprise initiative and/or other strategies of the organisation (Steyn, 2003:32). The strategist also performs environmental scanning to gather strategic information on stakeholders and issues from the external environment, which can be fed back to the organisation's management to formulate a corporate communication strategy. This role is performed at the top management level of the organisation (Steyn, 2000b:33; Steyn & Puth, 2000:17-18).

The role of the *public relations manager* can be outlined as follows: "A role performed at the organisational or meso level. This is referred to as the function or middle management level" (Steyn, 2003:32). At middle (macro) management, the manager identifies the organisation's key strategic issues, considers their implications for strategic stakeholders and develops a corporate communication strategy by determining what should be communicated to solve the problem and to capitalise on the opportunity that is presented (Steyn, 2000b:34; Steyn & Puth, 2000:16). The manager constructs the communication strategy according to the needs of both the organisation and the stakeholders. This practitioner's role performs the duties that are normally associated with any middle management position – for example, planning, organising, leading, controlling, staffing, and budgeting (Steyn, 2003).

This role is implemented at the micro or program level of the organisation. It is referred to as the operational level (Steyn, 2003). The *technician* carries out tasks at the micro level of the organisation. The main tasks of the technician entails the following: produce audio-visual material for presentations, generate publicity, write media releases articles for the organisation's publications, keep a media clipping service, edit corporate communication materials such as speeches or the annual report, and organise special events (Steyn, 2000a:6; Steyn, 2000b:35; Steyn & Puth, 2000:10). The technician therefore implements the tasks executed in PR.

An NPO will need communication personnel fulfilling each of the roles, although all the roles can also be performed by a single person. Most important to note is that the communication practitioner should be aware of the strategic role that he/she plays in order to act strategically in the organisation.

2.5.3. Two-way symmetrical theory

Grunig (1993) advocates a two-way symmetrical model of corporate communication in which the organisation and its key publics engage in a reciprocal exchange to build a mutually beneficial relationship. Grunig argues that by engaging in this type of exchange, practitioners will be able to develop long-term behavioural relationships between the organisation and its key publics, rather than simply symbolic ones that may not impact the long-term behaviour of these publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000).

The original definition of the two-way symmetrical model is: "communication that aims to achieve mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders" (Ruck, 2011).

This definition suggests the need for power sharing between an organisation and its stakeholders. The power sharing would entail that the parties involved mutually benefit from the relationship and that no party dominates the relationship. This, in turn, leads to changes in both the organisation and the stakeholders.

According to the strategic communication theory an organisation is able to monitor the perceptions of their stakeholders with regard to the organisation's activities. The organisation should thus be knowledgeable of the stakeholders they wish to reach. In order for an organisation to encourage a positive response from stakeholders, it is important that the organisation utilise two-way symmetrical communication that encourages reciprocity within the organisation. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) 'Four Models of Public Relations' suggest that the 'model' that an organisation buy into will reflect their ability to change and manage stakeholder perceptions. The two-way symmetrical model allows the parties to make decisions and even change those decisions in order for all the parties to mutually benefit from the relationship. The four models are be explicated below.

2.5.3.1. Press agentry model

Firstly, the *press agentry model*, where information moves in one direction – from the organisation to its publics. It is perhaps the oldest form of communication management and is synonymous with advertising promotions and publicity. Communication management practitioners operating under this model are continuously seeking opportunities to get their organisation's name mentioned favourably in the media. These practitioners do not conduct any further research on their publics beyond "counting the house". This model includes propaganda tactics such as the use of celebrity names, and attention-gaining devices for example as giveaways, parades, and grand openings (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Should NPOs operate under this model, these organisations would cease to exist. Stakeholders such as donors do not have the desire to sponsor an organisation that is only seeking its own advancement rather than fulfilling its social purpose.

2.5.3.2. Public information model

The second example is the *public information model,* which differs from the press agentry focus because the intent is to inform rather than to press for promotion and publicity. However, the communication is still essentially one-way. Currently this model represents PR practices in government, educational institutions, non-profit organisations, and even in some corporations. Practitioners operating under this model undertake limited research about their audiences beyond testing the clarity of their messages to their audience. The practitioners can

be typified as "journalists-in-residence," who value accuracy but decide what information is best to communicate to their publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). If NPOs have such a limited and even lack of knowledge about their audiences then they would not be able to cater to the needs of their community's members; their social purpose would be defeated under this model.

2.5.3.3. Two-way asymmetrical model

The third example, and first of the two-way communication models, is the *two-way asymmetrical model.* This model considers PR in the same vein as scientific persuasion. This model employs research methods from the social sciences to increase the persuasiveness of their messages. Public relations practitioners use surveys, interviews, and focus groups to measure public relationships in order for the organisation to design public relations programmes that will gain the support of key publics. Although feedback is built into the process, the organisation is mostly interested in having the publics adjust to the organisation than vice versa (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). This model tends to be relatively one-sided as it does not encourage feedback from the publics. It would therefore not be ideal for NPOs since it is important that NPOs maintain reciprocity with their stakeholders.

2.3.5.4. The two-way symmetrical model

The fourth example is the *two-way symmetrical model* of communication. The model depicts PR orientation in which organisations and their publics adjust to each other. It focuses on the use of research methods from the social sciences to achieve mutual understanding and two-way communication rather than one-way persuasion (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The two-way symmetrical model has been described as the ideal model in managing public perception by encouraging a genuine conversation between an organisation and its stakeholders. Windahl *et al.* (1992:36) also maintain that, "Communication in this model is fully reciprocal and power relationships are balanced. The terms 'sender' and 'receiver' are not applicable in such communication process, where the goal is mutual understanding".

The two-way symmetrical theory therefore reflects the idea: for an organisation to reach its goals it is important that the needs and opinions of its stakeholders are addressed. Evan and Freeman (2004:93) support this theory by elaborating:

> *Stakeholders are those groups who have a stake in or claim on the firm. Practicing two-way communication can be mutually beneficial for both the organisation and the stakeholder as the stakeholders are listened to and thus get more of what they*

desire/deserve. On the other hand an organisation in a non-profit sector thus retains its sponsors and also has a good chance of obtaining prospective sponsors.

This theory is supported by Cutlip *et al.* (2008:62) who suggests that: "public relations can have an impact in shaping mutually beneficial relationships necessary for organisational survival and success, and two-way symmetrical communication is a key foundation in achieving this."

Through open and transparent communication systems, NPOs are able to focus on the needs of their stakeholders. This means that the relationship will be mutually beneficial to all parties involved; and not be a one-sided relationship. In turn, NPOs stand a better chance of retaining their publics and stakeholders, and an even more significant opportunity to gain prospects, which will lead to the success of the organisation as a whole.

2.5.3.5. Mixed motive model

The problem is that the two-way symmetrical model is seen as a normative design which is difficult to apply to reality. Therefore the *mixed-motive model* was developed. This model includes both symmetrical and asymmetrical elements and assumes that excellent PR are based on the following inputs: research, environmental scanning and two-way communication programmes. In contrast to the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model, the mixed motive model contains a "win-win" zone where an organisation and its publics can engage in both negotiation and persuasion (Plowman *et al.,* 2001).

Le Roux (2009:38) posits that "excellent corporate communication can contribute to organisational performance when it is practised through two-way symmetrical communication". The two-way symmetrical model ensures that an organisation builds mutually beneficial relationships with its stakeholders and aligns organisational goals with the goals of these stakeholders (Le Roux, 2009). Grunig (1989:40) argues that the two-way symmetrical paradigm is effective in practice. Nevertheless, various scholars, whilst acknowledging the effectiveness and ethics of the paradigm, criticised it as an unrealistic achievement (Grunig & White, 1992:45-46; Valin, 2004). This led to the development of the mixed-motive model *within* the two-way symmetrical paradigm (Grunig & White, 1992:48).

The mixed-motive model is a more practical application of the two-way symmetrical model. The aim of this model is to conduct open or transparent two-way symmetrical communication even when practising incidences of asymmetrical communication, such as persuasion (Grunig

& White, 1992:48). In this model research is used to "… help bring about mutually beneficial changes in the attitudes and behaviours of both the publics and the organisation" (Grunig *et al.*, 2001:188).

According to the mixed-motive model, there is a win-win zone in which the organisation and stakeholders can persuade and influence one another to find common ground indicating the shared power in the communication process. This zone is particularly useful when the organisation and its stakeholders have conflicting interests (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:356). A communication manager would have to be mutually loyal to both the organisation and the stakeholders when applying this approach within the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & White, 1992:46). As Grunig and White (1992:48) states, "The concept of reciprocity allows us to accommodate mixed motives into the symmetrical worldview."

Grunig *et al*, (2002) explains that because organisations and publics are often engaged in separate and sometimes conflicting interests, through this model, negotiation and collaboration make it possible for the parties to find common ground in the "win-win" zone.

2.6. Non-profit organisations in South Africa

NPOs play an important role in society; the following section will therefore provide an overview of the nature of the NPOs as well as their size and scope in South Africa.

2.6.1. The nature of NPOs in South Africa

The Policy Framework of non-profit organisations in South Africa (2012:7) states:

> *The South African non-profit sector is characterised by a wide variety of organisations of different structures and sizes across the socio-political and economic spectra of society. These organisations range from faith and community based organisations, charities (welfare), to traditional organisations like social and sport clubs and a host of other development and social forms of organisations working tirelessly on the social fabric of society.*

The Policy Framework (2012:7) furthermore refers to these types of organisations as civil society organisation (CSO), non-governmental organisation (NGO), community-based organisation (CBO) and faith-based organisations (FBO) (*see* section 1.2). The diversity of

the non-profit sector reflects the complexities of present-day South African society (Policy Framework, 2012:7).

According to the Code of Good Practice, as issued by the Department of Social Development (2001:6) an NPO is a collection of people who assemble for common purpose, and agree to formalise a programme to fulfil this purpose. They conduct their activities towards this purpose, and any excess income after expenditure ("profit") is made available to the benefit of the purpose. Similarly, the Policy Framework on non-profit organisations (2012:4) defines NPOs as a "trust, a company or other association of persons established for a public purpose". The income and property of NPOs are not distributable to its management except as reasonable compensation for services rendered. From the above-mentioned descriptions of non-profit organisations it can be deduced that these types of organisations are established with a purpose at hand, which is to 'give back' to society (*see* section 1.1).

According to The Policy Framework (2012:5) South Africa is a highly unequal society which has gross disparities of income and wealth. In an attempt to address these disparities NPOs represent an important mechanism for encouraging philanthropy, promoting equity and implementing empowerment programmes. NPOs therefore act as 'helping hands' in the general attempt to deliver services to the South African communities. One of their most significant contributions is to eliminate poverty and heighten the rate of literacy. By doing so, they help alleviate the disparities of income and wealth. In recognising this important role of NPOs, the South African government implemented the Non-profit Organisations Act 71 of 1997 (hereafter abbreviated as the NPO Act), as part of the legal framework to create an enabling environment for the non-profit sector. This legislation was conceived as part of the project to transform society and was a result of a lengthy process of legislative reform initiated by civil society and negotiated with government. The NPO Act mandates the Department of Social Development to create an administrative and regulatory framework within which NPOs can conduct their affairs by providing a voluntary registration facility.

Numerous challenges have since emerged during the implementation process of the NPO Act. Various stakeholders have been discussing a number of pertinent issues that relate to the legal framework of NPOs. These discussions and the issues that were raised made it necessary to review the NPO Act (1997) in its current form. The new regulatory framework will attempt to promote transparency and accountability within the non-profit sector without placing onerous requirements on organisations. A risk-based approach in managing the requirements to which organisations must comply will be implemented without compromising the required

standards of governance for NPOs. The current 'one-size fit all' approach is inappropriate for the diverse nature of the South African non-profit sector.

The Policy Framework on NPOs (2012:7) states that "non-profit organisations in South African contribute significantly to the socio-political and economic development of the country as they often play an intermediary role within society and have the ability to provide particular goods and services where markets have failed or where government falls short." The policy further elucidates that these services and activities range from providing direct services to poor individuals and communities, advocacy, research and policy analysis to support work such as capacity building, technical assistance and funding to communities (The Policy Framework, 2012:7).

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) White Paper (1994:75) acknowledges the important role played by NPOs and articulates the keystone of the current policy debates on the role of NPOs, namely:

> *… These social movements and CBOs are a major asset in the effort to democratise and develop our society. Attention must be given to enhancing the capacity of such formations to adapt to partially changed roles. Attention must also be given to extending social movement and CBO structure into areas and sectors where they are weak or non-existent ...* White Paper (1994:75).

Several NPOs are developing in South Africa as more people feel the need to provide assistance wherever possible, and many of these NPOs can help build capacity in CBOs as well as the development process. Non-profit organisations have important roles to fulfil in the future of South Africa seeing that they are already engaged in roles assigned to both private and public sectors; roles that contribute to the economic development of the country. The RDP programme further stipulates that NPOs also adopt transparent processes, and operate in manners that respond, with accountability and democracy, to the communities which they serve (White Paper, 1994: 75).

Non-profit organisations play an important role in society, however, only a few organisations actually are cognisant of the impact this role has or can have. For the present study, it is imperative that NPOs are made aware of how much they should invest in managing their relationships with stakeholders in order to thrive in society. If they aim to reach the desired impact in society, NPOs need to function as profit-organisations as they too have a stakeholder and public group to which they are accountable.

2.6.2. Size and scope of NPOs in South Africa

During the past few years, South Africa has witnessed an increasing number of organisations that sought registration under the NPO Act. The number of registered NPOs has grown from 76 757 by the end of March 2011 to almost 85 248 by end of March 2012, representing a growth of more than 11% per annum. Research indicates that NPOs operate both in the formal and informal sector of the country's economy (The Policy framework, 2012:8).

More than 80% of the total number of registered NPOs can be classified as voluntary associations.

2.7. Application of the theory to NPOs in South Africa

The South African government does envisage a strong role for NPOs and regards them as partners in socio-economic development, which is evident from various policy statements (ANC, 1994). Despite this approach, NPOs in South Africa, as elsewhere, rely on private and Government donations to fulfil their championed role to assist in poverty alleviation and act as critical watchdogs (Lotteries Act, 1997). The majority are non-profit oriented, and mainly depend on donated funds from government agencies, business and other donors. As a result, NPOs' independence remains vulnerable to conditions and demands by the funder and there is a real danger that this dependency may affect the NPO's efficient functioning.

Drawing on systems theory, the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders relies on interactivity between the two parties. Transparency in communication is essential for the effective monitoring of the actions of NPOs. Burger and Owens (2008:2) from a sample of 300 organisations found that NPOs avoid transparency. According to their findings, there is no correspondence between the actions of the NPOs and the communication of those actions. The researchers also found that a large proportion of NPOs misrepresent themselves (Burger & Owens, 2008:2). It is therefore difficult for many NPOs to achieve their mission and goals, because the organisations do not plan communication and stakeholder relationship management strategically, nor do they set clear relationship objectives for particular stakeholders.

Naudé (2001:265) and Dyer *et al.* (2002:15) state that the main short coming of many NPOs is that they do not realise the importance of strategic communication management and the necessity of building lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. Although some NPOs recognise that communication and relationship management is essential for the

existence of their organisation, communication mostly occurs unplanned and without clear relationship objectives directed to a particular stakeholder (Bowers, 2000:13; Dyer *et al.,* 2002:15). Without planned communication and relationship management, many NPOs find it difficult to achieve its mission and goals (Brennan & Brady, 1999:327-337; Sargeant, 2001:177; Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005:136; MacMillan *et al.*, 2005:806; Polonsky & Sargeant, 2007:461-462).

Unfortunately few NPOs appoint trained communication practitioners to manage communication strategically and build relationships with stakeholders. This is mainly due to a scarcity of funds as well as insufficient knowledge about the benefits of strategic communication management. As a result, several NPOs opt for closure as they are no longer able to sustain themselves. The reason for such closures is mostly that stakeholders cease to fund the organisations as they tend to lose credibility. Thus, in short: limited funds as well as a lack of knowledge on managing communication strategically, contribute to this debilitating situation (Wiggill, 2009:6).

2.8. Conclusion

NPOs can be viewed as systems seeing that they are influenced by various constituencies that determine their survival. If these organisations practise an open communication system, they are more likely to thrive in society and will therefore have an even stronger impact. NPOs should therefore strategically plan their communication if they are to remain sustainable. Such a strategy would ensure reciprocity and mutual understanding between the parties in this relationship. Such an understanding will yield mutually beneficial relationships that would be guided by power sharing amongst the parties. For NPOs to strengthen their impact in society, effective and efficient communication has to take place, which can be done by encouraging feedback from the organisation's stakeholders. Two-way symmetrical communication ensures that the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders remain relevant and sustainable.

In order to confirm this presupposition, the systems theory were used as meta-theory for the study, together with the stakeholder relationship management, strategic communication, two-way symmetrical communication theories. Various concepts were identified, as defined in Table 2.1. These concepts were used to create the semi-structured interview questions and guide the analysis of the interviews.

The following chapter (Chapter 3) will explain the research method used to gather data in order to answer the research questions.

Chapter 3: Research Method

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter the literature overview of this study was presented and discussed. The theoretical framework for the study was laid out as a guide to answering the research question.

The research method is a system of inquiry, which moves from the underlying assumptions to research design and data-collection methods (Myers, 2009:89). This section reviews the methods chosen to gather data in order to answer the research questions. This chapter firstly discusses the methodological orientation and strategy and then the research design. Thereafter the focus is on the specific data-collection methods employed to answer the specific research questions, as is explicated in the section below.

The collected data will be interpreted in the following chapter (Chapter 4).

3.2. Methodological orientation

The present study uses phenomenology as a research orientation for a better understanding of the social and psychological occurrences from the perspectives of the respondents.

According to Husserl, "the 'life world' is understood as what we experience pre-reflectively, without resorting to categorisation or conceptualisation, and quite often includes what is taken for granted or those things that are common sense" (Husserl, 1970:30). Welman and Kruger (1999:189) concur with this view and explain the focus of phenomenologists: "understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved". Phenomenology attempts to study the everyday life and experiences of different groups of people and communities in their natural setting. This involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter; it attempts to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people ascribe to it (Dezin & Lincoln, 2003:122).

In other words, phenomenology can be understood as interpretative method to acquire a better understanding of how people attend to their everyday lives in accordance with their own view of the society in which they live (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000:488).

Studies that draw upon phenomenology concentrate on exploring how individuals make sense of the world in terms of the meanings and classifications they employ. As such, phenomenology aims to provide accounts that offer insight into the subjective lived experience of individuals. In the present study, phenomenology help to uncover how NPOs and selected

members connected with such organisations view the impact of the NPOs in the community concerned.

3.2.1. Research strategy

The research question follows a qualitative method of informative analysis. Qualitative research is useful when examining the properties, values, needs or characteristics that distinguish individuals, groups, communities, events, settings or messages (Du Plooy, 2009:83). According to Domegan and Fleming (2007:125), qualitative research aims to explore issues relating to a subject of which little is known.

According to Myers (2009:93), qualitative research is designed to help researchers understand people, and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. The present study examined the life-world of non-profit organisations, in order to explore their impact within society by understanding their view of their lived experience. For this aim different knowledge claims, enquiry strategies, as well as methods for data collection and analysis are employed (Creswell, 2003:125). Qualitative data sources comprise mostly observation and participant interviews (Myers, 2009:93). Written descriptions of people, events, opinions, attitudes and environments, or combinations of these can also be sources of data for qualitative research.

3.3. Research design

Phenomenology, as research orientation, aims to put into perspective the 'life-world' of people while qualitative research, as the research strategy, supports this objective by interpreting perspectives of management and stakeholders alike. The present study used the research orientation in conjunction with the research strategy to determine the research answer. Both the strategy and orientation of the study guided the researcher in the data- collection process. This helped the researcher to formulate the interview questions, interpret the answers given by the participants and to draw findings from the research.

Rajasekar *et al.* (2013:22) state that the research design should indicate the various approaches to be used in solving the research problem, sources and information related to the problem as well as the time-frame and the costs' budget (Rajasekar *et al.*, 2013:22). Research can be thought of as the logic or master plan of a research that indicates how the study is to be conducted. This entails the major parts of the research study – such as the samples or groups, measures, or treatment of programmes – combined to address the research questions. Rajasekar *et al.* (2013:22) explains it this way, "the research design

creates the foundation of the entire research work. The design will help perform the chosen task easily and in a systematic way". Once the research design is completed the study can be carried out.

The present research followed a cross-sectional design, which means that the research was conducted at a single point in time, such as one day or during one or few weeks (Du Plooy, 2009:41). As mentioned, this study collected data once off over a short period of time.

Table 3.1 below presents a summary of the features that best apply to the present research's orientation, strategy and design.

Table 3.1: Features and descriptions of the research design

Feature	Description
Phenomenological	Offer an insight into the subjective lived experience of individuals
Qualitative	Based in meanings derived from experiences and feelings of respondents in their own words
Literature study	Theoretical contributions to a particular study/topic
Cross-sectional	Conducted at single point in time, such as one day or during one or few weeks
Semi-structured interviews	Two-way conversation with a flexible and fluid structure, unlike structured interviews

According to Myers (2009:175) a research design has the following function: "plan, structure and execute" the research to optimise the validity of the findings. The underlying philosophical assumptions thus inform the design and direct the research and collection of the data.

The data collection was guided by specific research questions as well as research aims helping the researcher answer the main research question. Table 3.2 below indicates the data collection methods employed in the present study to answer each research question.

Table 3.2: Data-collection methods per research question

Research question	Data collection method
Specific research question 1: According to communication management literature, how can NPOs strengthen their impact in the communities they serve?	Literature study
Specific research question 2: According to purposefully selected NPOs, what are their views on their current impact in the communities they serve and on possible measures to improve this impact?	Semi-structured interviews with NPOs
Specific research question 3: According to the purposefully selected community members serviced by the mentioned NPOs, what are their views on the NPOs current impact in the communities they serve and on possible measures to improve this impact?	Semi-structured interviews with selected community members
Specific research question 4: How do the views as expressed by the NPOs and community members compare to each other and to the information found in the literature study?	Comparison of literature study and semi-structured interview findings
General research question: How can non-profit organisations have a greater impact in the communities they serve, as viewed from a communication management perspective?	Comparison, analysis and deduction from all the gathered data

The following section will demonstrate the structured process the researcher followed in achieving the research aims, beginning with a description of each data collection method that was employed.

3.4. The research method and data collection

The research method is the way in which data is collected to answer a research question. Data-collection techniques include the following: selecting participants, posing questions, the role of the researcher in research and in the respondents' lives, and the methods to analyse the data. The research method is a system of inquiry which moves from the underlying assumptions to the research design and methods for data collection (Myers, 2009:90). The researcher made use of inductive reasoning as a basis to evaluate the data.

For the purpose of the present research a literature study and semi-structured interviews were utilised.

3.4.1. Literature study

The literature study consisted of books, articles, scholary journals, internet resources and newspaper articles. A search was conducted on the following databases: Nexus, Ferdinand Postma Catalogue, EBSCOHost, Google Scholar, Sabinet Online, Emerald and Science Direct. The aim was to ensure sufficient material to support this study and ascertaining that a similar study has not been undertaken on the topic. Sufficient research materials were found to support this study, and it was established that to date this specific study was not conducted.

It was found that a similar study in communication management had been conducted, but the focus was on the non-profit adult literacy sector. This study conducted by Wiggill (2009) aimed to analyse South African NPOs within the adult literacy sector's current communication practices compared to the normative, theoretical model for strategic communication management. The present study, however, primarily explored the impact of NPOs in community service from the approach of communication management.

Another study was conducted at Harvard by Ebrahim and Rangan (2010) on the limits on non-profit impact. Their study examined critically the debates concerning impact and its implication for performance management in NPOs. The present study, however, focused on a specific context – exploring NPO's in community service from a communication management approach and specifically within the South African context – a study that to date has not been undertaken.

Holtzhausen (2008) explains that it is essential for organisations to enjoy a sound relationship with donors, since these stakeholders have the power influence whether the organisation reaches its goal in the long run. In a similar study Holtzhausen (2013:88) maintains that these organisations should be able to create and establish relationships with various stakeholders, particularly donors, by means of managing their corporate identities. Such relationships provide a tool that enables NPOs to position themselves as organisations that are able to address, alleviate and influence positively the many societal problems characteristic to South African society (Holtzhausen, 2013). In a study conducted by Singh and Bodhanya (2014:349) on the sustainability of NPOs, they add that "Non-profit organisational effectiveness can through different interviews be interpreted as the emergent property of all interactions with,

and between, the various stakeholders and that this 'energy' is greater than the energy that can be generated by any of the stakeholders alone" (Singh & Bodhanya, 2014).

3.4.2. Semi-structured interviews

In his description of semi-structured interviews, Neuman (2000:364) posits that "these are conducted on the basis of a loose structure made up of open-ended questions defining the area to be explored". Semi-structured interviewing is an overarching term used to describe a range of different forms of interviewing most commonly associated with qualitative research. The key aspect of semi-structured interviews is their flexible and open structure, unlike structured interviews, which contain a structured sequence of close-ended questions that are to be posed in the same way in all interviews. The aim of semi-structured interviews is to ensure the following outcomes: flexibility in the use of the questions and in what sequence they are posed; also whether and how particular areas under investigation might be followed up and developed through different interviews.

Regarding semi-structured interviews, Harrel and Bradley (2009:27) point out that this type of research method collects detailed information in a conversational style. "Semi-structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided" (Harell & Bradley, 2009:27). Through a semi-structured interview, the researcher gains an understanding of the participants' points of view. The interview questions in the present study, as based on a qualitative method, were open-ended and were used to answer the research question.

The objective of employing semi-structured interviews is that it provides a better understanding of each respondent's point of view rather than generalising the entire sample. Semi-structured interviews use open-ended questions that allow respondents to express themselves without limitation; they are able to talk in detail and depth. Another consideration to use semi-interviews for the present study is that they are easy to record and thereafter transcribes in order to draw the findings.

While semi-structured interviews have their strengths, there are also limitations. Such interviews tend to be difficult to analyse. There often is a challenge for the researcher to sort out the information relevant to the research questions. The researcher also has no way of determining whether the participant is providing the truth. For the present study the researcher is aware of these challenges and will attempt to mitigate their influence on the study.

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 below provide an outline of the interview questions posed as part of the data-collection methods, as well as of the themes identified in the literature. First Table 3.3 presents the outline of semi-structured questions and identified themes from the interviews with representatives of NPOs.

Table 3.3. Semi-structured interviews with NPOs

Interview Questions	Theory themes (and their related concepts as identified in table 2.1)
1. Please describe the goals of your organisation.	Introductory question
2. Who are your most important stakeholders? • Please describe the "community" (stakeholder) that receives your products/services in more detail. • Please describe the donors you have on board in more detail.	Systems theory • Stakeholder relationship management theory
3. How do you think can your organisation have a greater impact on the community (this stakeholder)? Please explain.	General question (could speak to all the theoretical themes identified)
4. Do you view the community that you described above, and your organisation as dependent on each other? Please explain. • Do you expect the community to adjust to your organisation? Please explain. • Does your organisation adjust to the community's needs? Please explain.	Systems theory • Stakeholder relationship management theory
5. Do you think your organisation and your communities' goals are aligned? Please explain.	• Stakeholder relationship management theory Strategic communication management theory
6. How do you engage with the community? • How and how often do you communicate the organisation's activities to them? • Which mediums or platforms do you use to communicate with your stakeholders? Why? • How and how often do they communicate back to you?	Strategic communicaiton management theory Two-way symmetrical communication •
7. How do you plan and manage the communication with the community? • Are the community satisfied with the communication they receive from you and how they can communicate with you? Please explain. • Have you done any research on your communication to the community? Please elaborate. • Is there a specific person responsbile for communication to the community?	Strategic communication management Two-way symmetrical communication theory

• How do you ensure that the community's views are taken into account when making decisions?	
8. Do you think you have strong relationships with the community? Please motivate your answer. • Are the following concepts evident in your relationship with the community: openness, trust, involvement, investment and perceptions of satisfaction? Please motivate or give examples. • Does the community view your organisation's activities as successful? Please explain. • Have you ever had conflict with the community? Please explain what happened and how it was managed. • Have you had any stakeholders withdrawing from the organisation? How many stakeholders have withdrawn? What are the reasons for their withdrawal?	Stakeholder relationship management theory • Strategic communication management theory Two-way symmetrical communication theory
Is there anything else you would like to add?	Conclusion

Secondly, Table 3.4 below provides the semi-structured questions and identified themes from the interviews with selected community members.

Table 3.4: Semi-structured interviews with selected community members

Interview Questions	Theory themes (and their related concepts as identified in table 2.1)
1. Please describe your experience and interaction with [NPO name]. • How long have you been involved with them? • How did your connection with them develop? • Are you happy with your interaction with [NPO name]? • How dependent are you on [NPO name]? • What do you think is this organisation's goals that they want to achieve?	Introductory question Systems theory •
2. How do you think this organisation can have a greater impact on the community (this stakeholder)? Please explain.	General question (could speak to all the theoretical themes identified)
3. Does the organisation adjust and adapt to your views and needs? Please explain. • Do you think the organisation and your communities' goals are aligned? Please explain.	Systems theory Stakeholder relationship management theory Strategic communication management theory
4. How does the NPO engage with you? • How and how often do they communicate with you? • Which mediums or platforms do they use? • How and how often can you communicate back to them?	Two-way symmetrical communication Strategic communication management theory

5. Do you think you have strong relationships with [NPO name]? Please motivate your answer. • Are the following concepts evident in your relationship with [NPO name]: openness, trust, involvement, investment and perceptions of satisfaction? Please motivate or give examples. • Do you view the organisation's activities as successful? Please explain. • Have you ever had conflict with the organisation? Please explain what happened and how it was managed.	Stakeholder relationship management theory • Strategic communication management theory Two-way symmetrical communication theory
Is there anything else you would like to add?	Conclusion

3.4.2.1. Sampling for the semi-structured interviews

In research there are to major classes for sampling, namely probability and non-probability methods. Probability methods are based on the principles of randomness and the probability theory. Consequently, probability samples satisfy the requirements of probability theory to accurately generalise to the population, while this is not the case with non-probability samples (Maree, 2011:172). Non-probability samples are usually selected on the basis of their accessibility or by the purposive personal judgment of the researcher and are mostly used in qualitative research (Maree, 2011:172).

Non-probability sampling means that not every NPO representative or community member in the target population will have an equal opportunity to be selected for the research. There are various reasons, for example the individual may not be available during the time of the field research or may decline to participate.

According to McNeill and Chapman (2005:79) non-probability sampling is often used where no sampling frame exists or when it is not vital to have accurate statistical representation of the population. For the present study purposive sampling was used. This method entails making a selection of those to be researched based on a known shared characteristic (McNeill & Chapman, 2005:79). In the case of this research the shared characteristic is that the sample consists of NPOs in the surrounding areas of Potchefstroom as well as selected community members that make use of the NPOs' services.

The NPO sample consisted of four NPOs that work across different sectors within the mentioned focus area. Seeing that the study is qualitative, a convenience sample of the NPOs and have been selected based on the fact they had credible information on the topic of the research. The interview respondents from each organisation included a main respondent and one or two secondary interview per NPO representative. The following are brief descriptions of the NPOs were interviewed for the research:

- **FAMSA** (Families South Africa)

  FAMSA was established in 1954 in Johannesburg and has since expanded to a movement with 30 offices countrywide. The Potchefstroom office has been rendering services to the Potchefstroom community since 1986. The organisation's mission is to empower people to build, reconstruct and maintain sound relationships in the family, in marriage and in communities (Oelofse, 2015)

- **MosaicSA**

  The NPO MosaicSA presents orphaned children with bright and hopeful futures by building and implementing a sustainable orphan care model that includes housing, educating, and employing families caring for orphans in the townships of South Africa (Niemack, 2015).

- **ChildWelfareSA**

  CWSA is an umbrella body representing 151 child welfare affiliates, 30 developing organisations, 25 outreach projects and 206 communities. The organisation has a child protection response in every community. It is the largest non-profit, non-governmental organisation in the country, in the fields of child protection, as well as child and family care and development (Khan, 2015).

- **NG Welsyn**

  NG Welfare is a welfare organisation with the aim of bringing some token of God's love to people in need. The organisation renders family and child care services, care for older persons and conduct community work. NG Welfare deals with intra-familial issues such as child abuse and neglect, family conflict, poverty, HIV/Aids, alcohol and drug abuse; and also provides residential care to children and older persons (Degenaar, 2015).

The community members who were selected for interviews all had to have a relationship with the NPO organisations. For each organisation, two community members were selected to be part of the data-collection process. The members were selected by means of a snowball sampling technique. According to this method information from the organisation was used to source a first respondent, from there on a second respondent, and so forth. The community members had to receive services from the organisations in order to be part of the research.

3.4.2.2. Data collection

The data was collected based on a phenomenological and qualitative approach, in which the meanings are derived from experiences and feelings of the respondents, expressed in their own words. The researcher sent emails with an attached consent letter, requesting NPOs to participate in the research. Once the organisations all agreed to participate, the researcher

sent follow-up emails to schedule interviews. The selected NPOs and community members were interviewed individually, at the organisations' offices, to gather the data for the study. However, a number of community members were interviewed at arranged locations. The length of the interviews varied according to the availability of the respondents. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

The interviewees from each organisation and the selected community members included a main participant and one or two secondary participants. The interviews were recorded and after completion the researcher transcribed it verbatim to capture the finer details outlined by each participant. The interview questions were developed to identify potential participants. The responses given by the participants provided the researcher with insight into the way NPOs manage their communication and how it can be improved.

Managers of selected NPOs, as well as the community members that receive services from the NPOs, were interviewed for the present study. The participants were able to share their experiences and opinions on the organisation's management of communication with the stakeholders. The managers shared how they manage the organisations and engage with their various stakeholder groups. In turn, the community members shared their experiences since having been involved with the organisations. The researcher's aim was to get different views on these organisations, and therefore interviewed the people affected by the NPOs, not only these organisations' managers. This approach helped eliminate bias in the research.

The interviews were recorded by means of a cell phone. The researcher first asked the participant's permission to record the interviews, and it was granted. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim. During each interview, the researcher wrote down notes that would help assure accuracy during the transcription. The note taking was, however, limited to avoid losing focus on the participants and their answers. The transcriptions were analysed by thematic analysis.

3.4.2.3. Data analysis

Data analysis forms an integral part of the research. By analysing the data that were gathered, the researcher was able to interpret the data, make conclusions and thereby provide recommendations. Maree (2011:102) explains "discourse refers to expressing oneself using words and to the variety and flexibility of language in the way language is actually used in ordinary interaction".

Thematic analysis (Silverman, 2005) was done to find recurring themes from the data. This type of analysis is seen as an applicable qualitative method by which the researcher can identify, analyse and report themes that can be found within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:77). This meant obtaining an overview of the material and identifying patterns and major ideas emerging from the interviews. A theme captures an important aspect about the data in relation to the research question, and represents a certain patterned response or level of meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher thus used the collected data, including notes and interview transcripts, to gain clearer understanding of the information. The information that were gathered from the NPOs was structured according to themes identified in the literature. This type of analysis allows the researcher to capture only data that are linked closely to the research question; the themes therefore guide the researcher during the interviews.

As was discussed, thematic analysis minimally organises and describes the data set in rich detail, in terms of applicable labels. However, this approach also often goes further, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). Braun and Clark (2006:77) explain this gain: "Thematic analysis is not wed to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and so it can be used within different theoretical frameworks (although not all), and can be used to do different things within them." In this study several steps were taken to identify and construct themes (Flick, 2002). Some themes were immediately apparent and others were discovered after further analysis. Each theme was given a label describing its content and these labels were reviewed repeatedly in an effort to reduce the researchers own interpretations of the findings. The labels described the following themes: *exploring NPO's in community service: a communication management approach*, the analysed data revealed several key themes that were identifiable, namely *systems theory, two-way symmetrical communication, strategic communication management and the stakeholder relationship theory, as well as the concepts identified (as shown in table 2.1) within each theoretical theme.*

The thematic analysis method reports occurrences, meanings and the reality of participants' lived experience, and can also examine the ways in which these aspects are the effects of a range of discourses taking place within society (Boyatzis, 1998). Therefore, thematic analysis can be a method which works both to reflect on reality and unravel the surface of reality. Braun and Clark (2006:77) explain the alternative use of thematic analysis, namely "to provide a more detailed and nuanced account of one particular theme, or group of themes, within the data". An effective and relevant thematic analysis will clearly break down assumptions about the nature of the data and how the data represents the participants' perceived reality.

3.7. Reliability and validity

Even though reliability and validity are treated separately in quantitative studies, these terms are not viewed separately in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Instead, terminology that include both concepts are used, such as credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). Winter (2000) explains that reliability and validity are utilised as tools within a positivist epistemology (Winter, 2000). This means that only information gathered from scientific methods can make legitimate knowledge claims. It also assumes that the researcher's views are separate and do not affect the outcomes of research.

Subsequently each aspect, reliability and validity will be elaborated on.

3.7.1. Reliability

Reliability entails the consistency of observing the same finding under similar circumstances. The concept refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated with similar subjects in a similar context. This emphasises the importance of the researcher accounting for or describing the changing context and circumstances fundamental to the consistency of the research's outcome (Neuendorf, 2002:105).

When referring to the reliability of an instrument the implication is: if the same instrument is used at different times or administered to different subjects from the same population, the findings should be the same (Maree, 2011:215). Maree aptly summarises this notion (2011:215): reliability is the extent to which a measuring instrument is repeatable and consistent.

The purpose of reliability testing is to ensure that the instruments in question are robust and not sensitive to changes of the researcher, the respondent or the condition of the research. This demonstrates that reliability is concerned with variables such as objectivity, accuracy, precision, consistency and stability (Sarantakos, 2005:88).

A possible weakness to the reliability of the research is that researchers could introduce their own subjective views to the study because of their preceding knowledge and presuppositions about the content that are being examined. To ensure reliability of the analysis, the researcher will need to maintain meticulous records of the interviews and document in detail the process of analysis he/she went through.

3.7.2. Validity

"Validity is the property of a research instrument that measures its relevance, precision and accuracy", and Sarantakos (2005:83) explains this property further as: "It is the measure of the quality of the process of measurement, and one that reflects the essential value of a study." Struwig and Stead (2001:143) describe validity as "the degree to which we can rely on the concepts, methods, and inferences of a study or tradition of inquiry, as the basis for our own theorising and empirical research".

In phenomenological studies, validity is particularly concerned with the accuracy of the data. The influence of the interviewer can be countered and accurate transcription of data improved by using multiple sources, respondents and a literature study, to cross-reference the findings (Valle & Halling, 1989:57). To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. According to Joppe (2000) validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow the researcher to hit "the bull's eye" of the research object? (Joppe, 2000).

It is important that a researcher remains objective throughout the research process, especially when the validity of the research is at stake. However, it is highly impossible for a researcher to undertake research without the inclusion of his/her reasoning to the findings and interpretation of the data. In order to support the validity of the research, researchers need to apply certain theories and methods. In the present study, the approach of content analysis was used together with the discussed selected theories to reduce possible bias by the researcher and to improve the desired outcome of the research aims.

During the interview process, the researcher interviewed a main respondent followed by one or two secondary respondents from each NPO. This strategy ensured that the responses from the interviews could be considered valid and were not only subjected to the main respondent. Another way to ensure validity was to employ what is called 'member checking'. This means the researcher sent findings of the analysis back to the participants, and the latter assessed how far, according to their opinion, these findings reflect the issues from their perspective (Green & Thorogood, 2004:191).

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter discussed data-collection methods that are best to fit the interpretation of the research questions. The nature of the present research was qualitative. Qualitative research is based on meanings that are derived from experiences and feelings of respondents, expressed in their own words. The research was conducted by employing a non-probability sample, which means that research was done with individuals who were volunteers. The researcher also collected data that included notes and interview transcripts to form a clearer understanding of the information to establish findings that could lead to conclusions.

By describing and following the methods discussed in this chapter, the researcher adhered to ethical standards of research practice, as the rights and consent of the interviewees were taken into account. As Du Plooy (2009:53) states "the respondents' right to privacy should be respected, and participating in the research should not pose any harm to them in any way possible". As described in this chapter, care was also taken to ensure the data was captured and reported as objectively as possible. The ethical procedures, as prescribed by the NWU, were also followed in this study (*see* section 1.10.).

The following chapters will continue with a discussion on the data captured.

Chapter 4: Results and discussion

4.1. Introduction

The methodology described and discussed in the previous chapter provided the point of departure for the present study's data-gathering. In this chapter, the results of the interviews are discussed. The conclusions are drawn based on the objectives of this study as described in Chapter 1, which places Chapters 4 and 5 (to follow) in perspective.

The research methodology employed a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interviews as the primary method for data collection. The questions for the semi-structured interviews were linked directly to the research questions and objectives as presented in Chapter 1. The collected results are the viewpoints of the participants, and not that of the researcher, unless stated otherwise. Four organisations were selected to be part of the research. The requirements of the interview process for each organisation were that the researcher had to interview the manager as well as two community members who are assisted by the organisation. Therefore, a total of 12 interviews were conducted during the data-collection process. The organisations and their descriptions are listed in Chapter 3. The results are arranged in this chapter according to the themes identified in Chapter 2.

4.2. Theme 1: Systems theory

In discussing the systems theory (*see* section 2.4) the main concepts were pointed out that apply to the present study. These concepts are: openness, the exchange of information, and interdependence. Each of these themes is subsequently discussed according to the explanation of the participants.

4.2.1. Organisation 1

The participants of Organisation 1 stated that the organisation depends to a high degree on funding from donors. As an organisation that renders child protection services throughout the Potchefstroom area, they receive a major part of their funding from the Department of Social Services. The government could, therefore, be considered as one of their most important stakeholders. The interviewee added that they are fully dependent on the funding, if this funding was suspended or withdrawn, the organisation would not be able to function. According to the participant, financial capital is vital to ensure the sustainability of the organisation. More funds would enable them to launch further projects that would contribute

to changes in the communities through their services. She stressed that funding would also help make them more 'visible' in the communities.

From the response it is evident that the organisation is well aware of the fact that it functions as an open system that can be influenced by other systems, and are dependent on others. The participant made various references to the Promosa area, more than any other community in the whole of Potchefstroom. Therefore it can be deduced that the targeted audience for Organisation 1 is the Promosa community. The organisation therefore engages more with the Promosa schools and community at large, with the Mohadin area being their second priority. The management of Organisation 1 choose to interact more with one particular system.

However, the interviewees did not refer to their interdependence with the community. It could be argued that they focus more on their dependency. Considering interdependence they would acknowledge the need to fulfil a stronger role to play in the interactions. The sharing of information was not part of how they understood an open system, which would ensure more interaction, as argued by Brandell (2010:7). The organisation thus needs to exchange information to ensure that they maintain their balance with other systems such as the community members. This exchange of information helps the organisation to be relevant, maintain its impact on the community and not to stray from its objectives/goals.

4.2.2. Community members 1

One participant indicated that she was part of the organisation for five years, and is very satisfied with the management of the organisation as well as the services rendered. It was also established that another participant has been with the organisation for only a few months. Both the participants indicated that they are content with the manner in which the organisation takes care of the orphaned children, as well as the organisation's interest in guiding foster parents in their parenting. The first interviewee, however, expressed the need for the organisation to extend the system by involving more foster parents, seeing that she believes the support of the organisation is highly beneficial to foster children as well as parents. The second participant concurred by stating that, although the organisation is making a significant contribution to society, the organisation could even enhance its impact by focussing on the exchange of information. This will help raise awareness in the surrounding schools and extend the system to include other areas besides Promosa.

From the responses it is clear that the community members experience the organisation as an open system, which is interdependent on their environment. This confirms the view of Swann (2010:18) that organisations should be interdependent on others and must interact to

some degree with various constituencies to survive and thrive. The interviewees agreed that the organisation could capitalise more on their interaction with other systems, such as other foster parents. The organisation could also benefit from a more focused sharing of information with other schools and directing their services to new areas.

The participants indicated that they are satisfied with the operations and services rendered by the organisation. They confirmed that the organisation engages with them on a regular basis through weekly sessions with the social workers, an arrangement that they evaluate positively. In this sense it can be deduced that the organisation is exchanging information to create a positive interdependence of systems.

It can, however, be argued that this organisation can benefit more from realising their interdependence, rather than establishing their dependence on other systems such as the Department of Social Service. The organisation uses the exchange of information effectively in cementing their interdependence with the community. This communication strategy could also be extended to include stakeholders on which the organisation depends for their sustainability, such as the Department of Social Services. It is clear that the organisation understands and embraces the need for openness with its stakeholders, particularly with regard to the community, which results in the positive feedback from the community members.

4.2.3. Organisation 2

The second organisation interviewed offers therapeutic services to anyone in need of their assistance. Unlike other organisations with a specific target group, Organisation 2 targets each individual community member, as a family-based strategy focusing on relationship problems. The participant explained that they are funded mostly by the Department of Social Development. Other sources of funding are the Lottery, Beeld Kinderhuis, AngloAshanti Gold and the Foundation for Human Rights. The organisation depends almost entirely on the funding they receive; they also need finance to remunerate the social workers in the organisation. The Lottery is the one organisation that does sponsor income for the Social Workers. The other organisations only fund projects that are run by the organisation, and at times demand that their financial contribution should be used for a specific purpose. It is clear that in such instances the organisation focuses more on their dependence than maintaining interdependence with funders.

With regard to the community, the participant believes that the organisation should move closer to the people in Ikageng. They currently have two offices in Potchefstroom: one in Ikageng and the other office in the city centre. There is need for a central contact point in

Ikageng, where they would be accessible to the surrounding areas of Ikageng. This response indicates that representatives of Organisation 2 understand their interdependence status as an open system and strive to integrate with the community. However, on the other hand, they also realise that this goal is financially driven as funding determines the extent of their service.

The participant added that they would also strengthen their impact if they were enabled to conduct more awareness campaigns and train new staff. In other words, they would be able to lay the basis for improving the exchange of information. This can be deduced from the fact that awareness campaigns and training can be seen as two methods of ensuring enhanced exchange of information. The interviewees pointed out the problem that all of these needs are driven by the availability of financing. The organisation views the exchange of information and even the extent of their interdependence as driven by such financial contributions. In this sense the interviewee demonstrates that their organisation have a clearer view on their dependence than on their interdependence.

4.2.4. Community members 2

The participants gave a clear understanding of the organisation's goals. The one asserted: "The organisation's main goal is to build long-lasting relationships," and the other explained, "to create better communities by building good families". One participant has been involved with the organisation for two years after experiencing marital problems, and was referred to the organisation by a friend. The other participant's relationship with the organisation started after conflict at home, and she has been involved with the organisation for four years since then. The fact that they were first assisted by the organisation and then got involved with its operations is a clear example of interdependence. Both the organisation and participants in this case had to consider themselves as open systems in order to connect and create synergy by maintaining their interdependence. The interviewees therefore confirmed that they are satisfied with the assistance they receive, which indicates positive interdependence. One participant asserted her new status: "I can now stand on my own, and my relationship with my family is stronger than ever."

When asked how the organisation can increase its impact in society, one participant suggested that the organisation should pay regular visits to schools and churches in the community, seeing that there still is ignorance about this NPO as well as the services they render. This is another way to attain the exchange of information.

The participants expressed their belief that the organisation's goals are aligned to those of the community. One participant stated that the organisation's efforts in building healthy family

relations help reduce the possible crimes committed by community members. In other words, when the organisation steps in to assist a troubled family, the children and other members of the family would be helped to function as responsible community members, which would have a positive impact on the community as a whole. The interviewees therefore attribute their positive lifestyles to the organisation since it has helped them become "better" individuals. In such scenarios people's openness, the exchange of information and interdependence help create successful outcomes.

From the responses it is clear that the organisation focuses primarily on being depended on their donors for sustainability, and pay less attention to their interdependence with the donors. In contrast, the community members experience the interdependence more on their side but it is less articulated by the organisation. The attitude of openness keeps the relationship with the community members intact; the community members' lives are transformed through an open communication system and an exchange of information.

4.2.5. Organisation 3

Unlike other organisations, the interviewed Organisation 3 focuses on lending support. Their aim is to empower the community to be self-sustainable. The organisation encourages the community members to act independently, and not to rely fully on hand-outs. They accomplish these objectives by empowering parents of foster children who take part in their programme. The organisation therefore creates employment for the unemployed parents within the organisation. The most important stakeholders for the organisation are the 'Friends of Mosaic', which includes everyone associated with the organisation and other organisations that donate to Mosaic.

As a way of reaching stakeholders and giving back to the community, through the programme, the organisation holds meetings, sessions, and sends out newsletters that facilitate engagement with all their stakeholders. The organisation is set on receiving feedback from the stakeholders on their impact as organisation in the communities and on suggestions to improve their services. The participant stated that their major donors are from churches and independent organisations in the USA. These donors were approached and 'bought into' the vision of the organisation. Since then they are involved actively with the organisation, fund the various programmes in the organisation and take part in the management ensuring that the organisation is well-equipped and has the necessary resources.

In this regard Organisation 3 clearly indicated a particular focus on interdependence with donors by engaging them in a programme. This gave some indication of what the organisation

also can offer in return to the stakeholders, including a relationship of interdependence between the organisation and the donors. This reflects a move toward interdependence rather than just dependency, although the organisation still strongly recognise their dependence on funds as the one way in which they can make a stronger impact in their societies.

Presently, Organisation 3 only works with/assists families that are part of the Mosaic Sustainability Programme; they do not service the community at large. According to the participant, their 'community' consist of all the communities involved in the Mosaic Sustainability Programme, as the participant emphasised: "They are dependent on us for support. With support I'm talking about programmes which will enable them to deal with life." Furthermore, it is noticeable that this organisation considers itself an open system, while also focusing its services on a specific group of people. The organisation can therefore be considered an open system to this particular group of people. The participant stated that they encourage the community members to voice their concerns to them, and this is usually done through the meetings with community members as well as individual contact sessions. This platform for exchanging information creates synergy between the organisation and the community. However, as much as the organisation attempts to assist the community at large, there is no platform for the exchange of information. This fact limits cooperation and impedes synergy between the organisation and community.

4.2.6. Community members 3

One participant has been involved with the organisation for about five years to date. She was the first parent to be part of the organisation's sustainability programme, and is satisfied with her involvement in the organisation. The other participant has also been involved with the organisation for almost five years. According to both interviewees, the goals of the organisation are well aligned with those of community members who have foster children. The reason is that these parents are the main targets of the organisation and therefore actively involved in the organisation's programmes. The organisation "has the communities' interests at heart", according to one participant. This indicates existing interdependence and the acknowledgement that the parties involved are open systems. Both the participants are highly dependent on the organisation since the organisation provides housing and employment to those who are part of their sustainability programme. However, the participants also feel that they can 'give back' to the organisation by working for the organisation in reaching out to other parents with foster children. There are numerous other families with foster children but they fall outside the reach of the organisation.

The results also reflect conflicting views from the participants. One participant attested to be content with the relationship she has with the organisation. She also believes that the goals of the organisation are aligned with the views of the community members. However, the other participant expressed a measure of scepticism about the relationship. According to her the goals are not aligned due to cultural differences. She states that the organisation's goals will not be aligned because management of the organisation includes individuals from a different racial and cultural background: *"They won't be able to understand us,"* as she points out. This may be an indication that the participant views her own culture as closed or that the organisation views (perhaps unknowingly) their approach as the only way it should be done – which reflects a closed system. Such an approach from either party limits interdependence between the organisation and its stakeholders.

Evidently this case reflects less openness. If there was to be an improved exchange of information it would help to overcome the mentioned challenge. A clearer view on how open systems can also create synergy would benefit this situation. Judging from the mentioned challenges, every person involved with an organisation creates their own perceptions derived from their experience with the organisation. This highlights an important point, namely that different people may feel differently towards an organisation. In other words, different systems may be more aligned with other systems. This is another matter for NPOs to consider: How satisfied or dissatisfied their members are with their services, and not just assuming that all are content.

4.2.7. Organisation 4

The fourth organisation that was investigated renders social work services on a generic field that includes individual work, group counselling and community-based work. The organisation targets communities in and around Potchefstroom. Most of their clients reside in Ikageng, and/or belong to religious organisations such as the Dutch Reformed and the Reformed church. The participant reported that they have regular contact with the Department of Social Development, the mentioned churches and the congregations in the communities. The organisation also enjoys sound relationships with other NPOs in the Potchefstroom area such as Child Welfare, because they inter-refer clients according to their needs. In this regard the organisation follows an open systems approach and capitalises on its interdependence with other organisations (i.e. systems).

However, the responses show that Organisation 4 is also strongly focused on their dependence from donors. It is evident that in reality they do not perceive themselves as interdependent with their community members. In terms of being an open system, they do

exchange information with the community members but only up to a certain level. The organisation only shares what they 'feel' is relevant to the community members, which could imply any matter specifically related to the services these members receive from the organisation. They, however, do not exchange information about the management of the organisation, seeing that this specific organisation is only a branch fulfilling tasks on behalf of the National office. The organisation therefore only renders services to the community members, but seemingly do not perceive themselves as enjoying interdependency with the community.

4.2.8. Community members 4

From the community members, one participant has been involved with Organisation 4 for three years to date, after adopting her sister's children. The other participant has been part of the organisation for a year, after needing assistance from them. Both participants stated that they are content with their relationship with the organisation. The participants attested to be highly dependent on the organisation; one participant stressed that she would not have been able to deal with the adoption issues without the organisation's assistance.

When asked for suggestions on how the organisation could have a stronger impact in society, the participants suggest that the organisation should get more people involved in its programmes. They mentioned that a large number of people are still unfamiliar with the organisation and its services. Therefore, the organisation should put in more effort to raise awareness. The community members pointed out the need for the organisation to improve their open systems coupled with their exchange of information, as a way to strengthen their impact in the society.

The four investigated organisations' goals are, however, clearly set as the participants have pointed out. These organisations clearly are making a positive difference in the lives of those who come into contact with them, but not the community as a whole, as prescribed by the NPOs' own objectives. This contact with the target groups shows the drive towards interdependency with the community and openness.

4.2.9. Summary of systems theory

Organisations seem to realise and act as open systems, especially towards the community they serve. From the responses it became clear that some of the NPOs only target specific members of the communities instead of the community in general. It is understandable that some NPOs would operate in this way, because it would be almost impossible for such an

organisation based on non-profit services to cater to all the needs of the community members. Limiting the programmes run by NPOs makes it more practical for these organisations to deliver services and reach their objectives. The situation is that various NPOs stand for diverse causes.

The interviewed organisations seem to focus more on their dependence on donors, without realising that they are also positioned to offer something back to the donor, which creates a more interdependent relationship. Only one organisation indicated that they benefitted from this approach. The researcher got the impression that these organisations feel powerless due to their dependence on funding. As a result, they wait on the donors and are not aware of the fact that they have negotiating power (through interdependence). On the other hand, the withdrawal of donors would affect the whole system, as that would impede the services rendered to communities.

Regarding the communities, the interviewees indicated sound interdependence, however almost all the cases asked for more awareness – which translates into improved exchange of information in order to expand the reach of the organisation. Even though the organisations have specific targets, they should still be open to the groups that fall outside their objectives. Such an approach could be beneficial to the organisation seeing that more people would know about the organisation and may become interested in funding it. Being open to the whole community could also mean that organisation would be able to reach the people who are in need of their services, but are not aware that the organisation exists. The interviewed organisations also seemed to focus on *providing* information, rather than *exchanging* information. This shortcoming can be explored in depth when considering the notion of two-way symmetrical communication.

4.3. Theme 2: Stakeholder relationship management theory

In the discussion of the theory on stakeholder relationship management (*see* section 2.4) the following main concepts were applied to the present study: the principles of corporate effects, corporate rights, and mutually beneficial relationships. Each of these themes is discussed below in terms of the participants' explanations.

4.3.1. Organisation 1

It was reported that Organisation 1 maintains a healthy relationship with both the donors and the community through monthly monitoring and evaluation, as well as meetings and contact sessions. In line with the principle of corporate effects, the participant mentioned that they find

it easy to communicate with the community on particular issues that affect the organisation. Even though the NPOs operate within the non-profit sector, these organisations still have a public to answer to, and this factor should not be disregarded in any way. This means that the individuals affected by the organisations should to be kept updated on the operations of the organisations. The participant explained: "The thing is with social work, you have to be honest with everyone from the beginning. You have to build that relationship with trust, and there has to be confidentiality. At times there are clients who don't get satisfied, in terms of our services."

In such a case the relationship is paramount: The organisation has to maintain a reciprocal understanding in order to build mutually beneficial relationships. This is particularly necessary since sound relationships with funders enable the organisation to survive. Regarding the funders, the participant acknowledged that the organisation did not encounter problems with their funders since she has been a director at the organisation. To date, to her knowledge, no stakeholder has withdrawn funding for the organisation. The funders are partially involved in the decision-making of the organisation seeing that they do require the organisation to update them on the progress of the programmes. The organisation therefore ensures that it consistently interacts with the funders in order to keep their goals aligned. Such interaction creates a mutually beneficial relationship.

4.3.2. Community members 1

The interviewed community members attested that their relationship with the organisation thus far has been satisfactory. The participants reported a limited number of disagreements with the organisation, but added that these issues have been resolved each time. As the organisation strives to keep in contact with the community members, engagement with them occurs often. This helps build mutual understanding with the community members. The mentioned engagement has kept the relationship open at all times. Although the participants were well satisfied with the services rendered by the organisation, one mentioned several times how the organisation can have an improved impact in Potchefstroom area as a whole. She suggested that the organisation should build a centralised community hall where more people could report for assistance. According to her, a large number of people are still ignorant about the organisation or the services they render. This would have a negative effect on the other members of the community; they would feel left out in getting the help they need. The organisations thus have to take into account the effects they have on community members. One participant proposed that, for the organisation to increase its impact, it should consider such views when it comes to decision-making. The community members are the ones who

have a better understanding of the communities in general and could therefore pose credible solutions to reach the goals of both parties.

If community members are regularly left out and do not receive frequent communication they would not be able to understand the problems hindering organisations from meeting their demands. The lack of communication in this regard is contrary to the principle of corporate rights, seeing that the community has the right to be informed of the organisation's operations to deliver services. Should an organisation experience a lack of funding and did not communicate this fact to the communities, the community members may perceive the organisation as incompetent, which would impact negatively on both parties. An open relationship ensures mutual understanding.

4.3.3. Organisation 2

A major problem that was identified is that a large number of people are still unfamiliar with the organisation, its mission or the services it renders. In other words, the relationship is only strong with those who are knowledgeable about the organisations and receive its services, but not with the community at large. Regarding the relationship with funders, the organisation strives to involve these stakeholders whenever possible. One participant reiterated: "We try to keep them in the loop of what we busy with and try to give them constant feedback about what we doing." The organisation also receives extensive positive feedback from the schools they visit. This is gathered either through evaluation forms they hand out, or through word of mouth where community members recommend the organisation to fellow members.

It was also reported that, after eight years, AngloGold Ashanti has withdrawn from funding the organisation. Their reason was that they do not provide funding for training anymore. It seems as though AngloGold Ashanti on a regular basis change the personnel who manage their funding, with the result that the NPO are unable to develop a sound relationship with the organisation through its contact staff.

The responses of the interviewees indicate to a certain extent that the organisation does provide a platform for feedback. There have been occurrences where individuals experienced that their needs were not catered to, which is contrary to the principles of corporate effects and rights. The stakeholders were not informed of the objectives of the organisation, and therefore had the perception that the social workers were not doing their work properly. When there is lack of communication between the parties, then miscommunication ensues, which holds negative implications for the relationship.

Organisations need to take more responsibility for the relationship with their community members, and the onus has been on the employees of the organisation to resolve the matter in a professional manner with the parties involved. The community members they serve should be considered important actors in the relationship and not only viewed as receivers of the services. It is important these stakeholders are included in the decision-making process of the organisation, as those decisions are bound to affect them one way or the other. When an organisation operates in 'the best interest of the community' as they see it, without consulting the members first, this has a negative effect on the relationship. Therefore, in order to reach the goals of both parties, the views of the community members should be considered equally important to those of the organisation; their goals have to be aligned.

4.3.4. Community members 2

From the community members one participant explains the relationship in terms of mutual benefit: she and the organisation stand together to ensure that her family structure is solid. Such a relationship has strong ties, and holds benefits for the parties involved. The participant continued: Confidentiality of the client has to be maintained at all times, therefore she questions the level of confidentiality practised by the organisation. This participant does, however, believe that the organisation is open and trustworthy in catering to the community's needs. She confirmed that she is satisfied with her experience of this organisation's services and communication thus far, seeing that she did not encounter confidentiality-related issues with the organisation to date.

The other participant points out the importance of the relationship by stating: "if it wasn't for the organisation my life would be a mess." She also reported that the relationship between the community and the organisation is strong and mutually beneficial since the goals of both parties are met. The fact that the organisation keeps community members updated on the developments of the organisation, make these members feel part of the success of the organisation and not merely clients. The organisation is thus aware and considers their effect on others, as per the corporate effects principle. This then indicates that the corporate rights of the community members are not violated in any way.

The interviewees attested to an open line of communication as well in the relationship and stated that the community members are highly satisfied with the operations of the organisation. Both interviewees did not encounter any conflict with the organisation thus far. They add that if they are dissatisfied with any matter, they make a point to have it resolved in a professional manner. The community members do feel that they are included in the decision-making of the

organisation. This positive relationship will help the organisation to survive by satisfying the stakeholders.

4.3.5. Organisation 3

The participant emphasised that the organisation focuses on transparency. Organisation 3 believes that this is achieved by making their annual reports available to the public and their community members, as part of building a relationship with their community members and stakeholders. This approach to openness and sharing of communication is one way of demonstrating power sharing and corporate rights: where all the parties in the relationship have their say in the operations of the organisation. Regarding joint participation by community members and stakeholders in the decision-making of the organisation, they hold meetings and contact sessions in which they share new developments in the organisation, and thereby encourage the sharing of ideas that will have mutually beneficial outcomes. In this regard the organisation has a strong relationship with its community members, which built through contact sessions, where they encourage feedback. Should any conflict arise, it is dealt with professionally.

Both participants reported that this organisation has not encountered any withdrawals from their donors; they profess close and strong relationships with each of their donors. This organisation acknowledges the importance having all role-players 'on the same page', which reflects a close-knit relationship with their stakeholders and the community members. Clearly this is not a relationship that solely favours the organisation. The interviewees are fully aware of the fact that both the organisation and stakeholders' goals need to be met to achieve a mutually beneficial relationship.

4.3.6. Community members 3

According to one participant from the community, there is an open communication line between the community members and the organisation, while the other participant stated that she does not feel connected to the organisation but rather somewhat distanced. She mentioned that she does not engage much with the organisation due to her personal problems, and therefore feels distant, which is clearly her perception of the situation. The interviewees have different perceptions of the organisation's relationship with each of them; however both do agree that the organisation is performing well in reaching the goals that they set for themselves. Both attested to having experienced minor disagreements with the organisation, but have always dealt with these professionally.

However, both participants consider the relationship to be mutually beneficial to them and the organisation: their needs are catered to and they have built sound relations with the organisation. Therefore, they regard the organisation as successful in reaching its goals. In addition they mentioned the importance of having access to the organisation's annual reports, stating that this makes them feel part of the organisation, which also falls within their corporate rights. Having access to information as well as being allowed to give feedback on the services of the organisation gives the stakeholders the perception that they are involved.

As the case is in a relationship, some will not always be satisfied. However, when the relationship is built on mutual understanding, favourable settling of conflicts or disagreements would most likely be of mutual benefit to all parties involved, and not only the organisation. Involving stakeholders and community members in the decision making of the organisation builds long-lasting relationships, and help curb abuse of power. As much as the community members feel involved with the organisation, they are only encouraged to give feedback on the services rendered and are provided the opportunity to raise their concerns but are still not part of the decision-making as such. The organisation continually strives to align their goals with those off the community members, but they are not prepared to share power with them.

4.3.7. Organisation 4

The organisation's interaction with its main sponsor has been based on a productive working relationship. The participant mentioned that these donors are involved with the organisation for a long time. She added that they are continually ready to build new relationships with potential donors. According to the participant it is important to be transparent, otherwise possible sponsors will be reluctant to invest in the organisation. The organisation therefore makes its financial and annual reports available to those that are interested to join the organisation. From the responses it is clear that the organisation does not actually perceive community members as equally important as the donors. The reason is that they regard the community members as mere receivers of their services and do not see the need to involve them in decision-making. This situation is contrary to the principle of corporate rights. The participant stated: "The relationships with donors are built on transparency and trust." The participant only mentioned the importance of a transparent relationship with donors, but did not consider the relationship with the community members. It is clear that Organisation 4 does not advocate power sharing in its relationship with community members – a state of affairs which differs starkly from the other organisations.

However, the same principles of transparency and trust should apply to the relationship with community members. Community members form an integral part of NPOs, and this fact has

to be acknowledged. Should an organisation fail to build sound relationships with the people they serve, there are bound to be cases of dissatisfaction among the community members, which will impact negatively on the relationship. Involvement in decision-making paves a way for both parties to benefit mutually from the relationship and the outcomes of the decisions made.

4.3.8. Community members 4

Participants from the community maintain that they have a healthy relationship with the organisation. One participant regards the relationship as open and trustworthy; she also does not doubt the way in which the organisation operates. The other participant, however, is of the opinion that the organisation can do more to ensure "better" communication and relationships with the community members. She confirms that, to date, she has not experienced conflict with the organisation, and adds that she is content to be a member of the organisation.

Both interviewees, however, confirm that they do not have access to decision making in the organisation even though they are encouraged to give feedback on the services they receive. Thus the management of the organisation does not adhere to the principles of corporate rights and effects. The organisation acts according to what they perceive as best for the communities without taking the views of the community members into account. The community members, therefore, are not informed of how the organisation operates; they merely wait to receive services and information on their end of the line. According to the participants, the activities that the organisation carries out are indeed successful, as they are able to impact people's lives positively.

It can thus be deduced from the above-mentioned results that the relationships with community members are not considered equally as important as those with the donors. Non-profit organisations focus more on nurturing the relationships with funders, than with community members. In this regard they negate the fact that the community members form an integral part of the organisations.

4.3.9. Summary of stakeholder relationship management

From the responses of interviewees numerous contradictions have been found regarding the organisations and the community members' perception of the relationships. Most of the organisations focus more on building sound and productive relationships with their donors, but dedicate less time and effort on their relationships with the community members. This approach disregards the principle of corporate rights and effects, as it is evident that they don't

consider the effects that their decision-making would have on community members. One of the interviewed organisations regards community members as mere receivers of services and not stakeholders with whom they can share power. For instance, the organisation does what they perceive as best in communicating to their community members, without conducting environmental scanning. Another organisation does strive to keep the communication channels open, and encourages feedback from community members. However, this organisation does not involve the community members in the decision-making process. As was explained, this is a branch of the national office and therefore carries out activities according to the pattern of the national office. Other organisations do see the need to involve the community members in decision-making and acknowledge the importance of the roles played by these members. This aspect will also be touched on in the next section on strategic communication management.

When considering the NPO's impact on the community, it is important to note that these organisations immediately focus more on their funding and donor relations, than on the community. They also seem to be ignorant of the fact that their relationship with the community is equally important as a relationship with the donors.

The community members, however, were satisfied that their needs were met by these organisations, although they would appreciate more engagement with the organisations. The relationship between the organisations can be referred to as mutually beneficial to a certain extent: the community members are satisfied with the services they receive and the organisations are able to fulfil their public purpose. However, the responses indicated that the organisations do not make an effort to build strong relationships, although it would seem they understand the importance of such sound relationships to secure their future. The relationship with the donors is prioritised above the relationship with the community members.

Considering the organisations under investigation, it is apparent that they all differ in terms of the causes they serve in the communities, as well as in their style of management. One organisation differs from the rest, by only operating as directed by the national office. As a result they do not advocate involvement in decision-making or power-sharing with community members. Another organisation seemed totally ignorant about the benefits of involving the community members. Participants pointed out that this organisation considers it a waste of time to focus on communication management, as it would 'divert' them from their main purpose, which is to serve. While another organisation does engage with their community members, they do not involve them on matters related to management. The fourth organisation seems to be keen on involving their community members, and is thus far performing well in terms of transparency. The theory of stakeholder relationship management

also encourages the prioritisation of stakeholders in order to manage the relationships. Therefore, NPOs should understand that, to make an impact in the community, they also need to prioritise community relationships.

4.4. Theme 3: Strategic communication management

From the discussion on the strategic communication management theory (*see* section 2.5.2) the main concepts applied to the present study is as follows: (1) interactionism and reciprocity; (2) transparency; (3) approaching communication as planned and proactive; (4) environmental scanning and identification of stakeholder issues, (5) considering stakeholder views for the organisation's decision-making process, (6) the role of the practitioner, (7) the result of mutually beneficial relationships; and (8) the resulting inclusion of stakeholders in the decision-making process. Only the NPOs could confirm whether a strategy was in place, therefore, the discussion focuses mostly on the views of representatives from the NPOs. Each of the above-mentioned themes are discussed subsequently according to the explanation of the participants.

4.4.1. Organisation 1

According to the participant of Organisation 1, there is no specific communication plan in place. They mainly depend on word of mouth as a way of communicating the organisation's activities. She added, "The people know of the services we render here, and so they come and they call". The participant indicated that she has never heard any individual complaining about their communication with the communities, therefore, as far as she is concerned their communication is 'OK'. This indicates a lack of proactiveness and planning, and could result in decreased reciprocity and less mutual understanding in the relationship.

The organisation also did not allocate the task to a specific person to handle or manage their communication. The communication function of the organisation is shared amongst all the staff. Because of this situation not much environmental scanning is taking place or stakeholder views considered for the NPO's decision-making process. The comments by one participant confirmed this state of affairs by explaining that they are not prepared to consider the views of the community members, seeing that they cannot tell them how to do their work: "I can't go back to them and say, 'Do you think we did this right?'"

It is also evident that the organisation does not practice transparency since from the participant's view the organisation does not need an open approach to the community members. The organisation's interaction with the community members is solely based on the

services that need to be delivered. The only decisions they make jointly with community members are those on the well-being of the clients.

The participant indicated that she does not believe the organisation should have an open door communication plan in place. She also seemed reluctant to consider having such a plan implemented: "In this specific sector no it won't work." Reciprocity is not an important aspect of the organisation's policy, therefore, the relationships that are built in this case are not interactive at all. The organisation does not really take the perspectives of the community members into account, and are thus not aware of the community members' thoughts about the organisation. The organisation only acts in the way they perceives as best for the community members.

The participants from the community did not respond on the theme of strategic communication planning by the NPO. They did not confirm nor deny knowledge of any communication planning.

4.4.2. Organisation 2

The participant from Organisation 2 acknowledged that they did not have a communication strategy or plan in place. Previously they had a social worker who had knowledge in this field and used to manage their communication, but she has left to focus on social work. In the meantime, no other staff member has been appointed in that role. It was established that the organisation do encourage feedback, usually provided by the schools after visits. Even though the organisation does not have a communication plan in place, they do, however, interact with the community members as much as possible as part of environmental scanning.

The participant reported that they focused on selecting board members who reside in the communities in order for the organisation to stay relevant and to incorporate the views of the community into their decision-making process. Therefore, the board members are the ones who would usually maintain one-to-one, face-to-face communication with the communities. They also encourage the people to fill in assessment forms when visiting their offices, to assess how the people perceive their services and in which areas they should improve. The organisation's communication is thus planned and proactive to a degree. This indicates that the organisation does conduct environmental scans as a way to keep being relevant in the community.

From the participant's response it is clear that Organisation 2 acknowledges the importance of building mutually beneficial relationships with its stakeholders. Although they attempt to be more transparent, by making the annual reports available to the community and engage with

the community members, in reality they do not take the views of the communities into account with regard to the operations of the organisation. The community members are satisfied with their involvement with the organisation as they are encouraged to attend meetings and also get the opportunity to voice their views in the decision-making of the organisation.

4.4.3. Organisation 3

The manager of the organisation monitors and facilitates communication between the organisation and the stakeholders. In the process he/she strives to incorporate the views of the community in the decision-making process. In this regard there is a member who administers the organisation's Facebook page. The roles of the manager and technician are apparent in this regard. They work closely together to get feedback from the community. The participant also indicated that social media is used to communicate externally. This communication targets those who seek more information about the organisation; they also target potential donors. This indicates that the organisation maintains a certain level of communication with the community members. The participant emphasised the importance of knowing the community's opinion of the organisation, seeing that it helps them to keep track of what aspects they should improve on. This form of communication also shows that the organisation is proactive and plans its communication activities. The participant asserted that the organisation acknowledges the importance of mutual understanding and reciprocity. He also mentioned that thus far they are receiving positive feedback from their members. In other words, for them it is crucial that they take the views of the community members into consideration as a way of guiding their decisions.

When an organisation keeps the communication platform open for its stakeholders, it is bound to build strong and sustainable relationships with them. NPOs that interact more with their stakeholders tend to deliver more on their services, seeing that they gain a better understanding of their target group's needs. The community members stated that they appreciate it when the organisation interacts with them frequently and updates them on the developments of the organisation. This makes them feel part of the organisation's success.

4.4.4. Organisation 4

Seeing that there is no communication function in the organisation, the participant explained that communication "sort of just happens in a natural way". Communication is therefore not approached in a planned and proactive way. No specific person is handling the communication; all the members help out wherever they can. Most of the communication is taken care of by the secretary who, according to the view of public relations roles, can be

regarded as the 'technician'. The participant added that they do not have the budget to appoint a person that could handle their communication. As a result they take it upon themselves to ensure that their communication is managed accordingly. The participant deems the process as "so far, so good", but believes that more can be done if they want to achieve an even stronger impact in the community.

The organisation interacts frequently with the communities as a way of getting to know them. The participant made it clear that the community members' needs are not the same, and it would be counterproductive to assume as such. By highlighting this point, it is clear that the organisation actually conducts environmental scanning. Therefore, for an organisation, to build mutual and reciprocal relationships implies transparency and the efforts to understand the needs of the community members. The participants among the community members indicated their desire to feel they matter to the organisation, which would encourage them to build sound relations with this NPO. It is thus important that communication between the organisation and its community members remains reciprocal.

4.4.5. Summary on strategic communication management theory

The results indicate that NPOs do not have a communication function in place. This is mostly due to the lack of funding or because of the turnover of staff that previously fulfilled the function. The organisations take it upon themselves to communicating with community members and stakeholders in the way they perceive is best. However, it was found that none of the staff allocated to this function, was trained in communication. Thus they lack the skills as well as knowledge of the communication function. As a result the communication is not as effective as it should be.

Participants from the organisations indicated they are aware of the importance of this function. They admitted that it would enhance their performance if they were able to integrate strategic communication management within the organisations. Due to the absence of this function, there is insufficient interaction between the organisations and its stakeholders. The relationships also lack mutual understanding because there is no reciprocity. In other words, the organisations do not actually have communication plans in place or have appointed communication practitioners to manage their communication. Nevertheless, the organisations do have planned and proactive communication. Most of the participants from the NPOs asserted that they do encourage feedback from their community members, and thereby aim to incorporate the feedback into the decision-making.

The results show that two organisations do not take the views of the community into consideration. The one organisation fears that focusing on the communication management would steer them away from their purpose as an organisation, namely to serve. The other NPO do not view this consideration as vital even though they do focus on getting feedback from the community members. The other two organisations are truly open to reciprocity. The one does strive to engage with community members to guide their decision-making. The other NPO practices transparency and does engage with its community members. The organisation also seems keen to improve the communication management.

In light of the information above organisations should focus on their objectives, but also need to manage their processes and programmes in such a way that it builds credibility. This becomes possible when stakeholders' views are incorporated into decision-making. It was also found that none of the organisations have communication professionals to assist in communication management. As a result the practitioner roles are seen to be taken over by secretaries and social workers within the organisations. If the communication is not strategically planned, this creates a huge communication gap between an organisation and its community members seeing that mutual understanding is impeded. As a result, the relationship becomes one-sided as the organisations feeds information to the publics without proper feedback mechanisms in place. Participants from the community members expressed their wish to communicate frequently with an NPO and to feel a sense of involvement in the success of the organisation. Transparency is also paramount, seeing that the community members want to be informed of developments in the organisations – whatever happens in the organisations ultimately affects the community members as well.

4.5. Theme 4: Two-way symmetrical communication

In the discussion of the two-way symmetrical theory (see section 2.4) the main concepts applied to the present study were as follows: (1) mutual understanding; (2) conversation and reciprocity; (3) advocating power sharing; (4) stakeholders may change their view during the communication process; and (5) preference for the mixed-motive model. Each of these themes is discussed below in accordance with the explanation of the participants.

4.5.1. Organisation 1

It was found that Organisation 1 conducts weekly home visits in the Promosa area. It has been noted that the participant referred more to the Promosa area than any other area in the Potchefstroom region. Therefore, it can be deduced that the targeted audience for this organisation is the Promosa community. The organisation, as a result, engages more with the

Promosa schools and the community at large, with Mohadin its second priority. This indicates that, even though Organisation 1 strives to maintain two-way communication with certain communities, this strategy is not sufficient since other communities do not receive the necessary communication. In other words, there are certain disparities in the communication as practiced by the organisation.

The participant indicated that the organisation communicates with its stakeholders through community newspapers to engage them in the process. They have also used the local radio station, but this only happened once. However, the communication through the radio is not as proactive and not much planning takes place before their communication. The participant made the assumption that "people by now know about the existence of the organisation". Such assumptions clearly indicate a lack of interaction between the organisation and its community members. Merely providing information does not ensure a conversation and mutual understanding. The organisation has to take the initiative by finding out how people perceive the information. In this way the organisation can ascertain whether they facilitate mutual understanding through reciprocal communication, which thus eliminates the one-sidedness of the communication.

Wiggill (2009:32) posits that two-way symmetrical communication builds strong relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders. In the case of Organisation 1, the building of sound relations has not been set as a priority, which results in a one-sided relationship. A way to counter such one-sidedness is by implementing the mixed-motive model, in their stakeholder relationship management. This model implies that all the parties involved do mutually benefit by creating a 'win-win zone'.

Furthermore, regarding feedback from the organisation, the participants indicated that they do not have a feedback loop through which the community members can communicate back to them. The participant emphasised their huge workload, which do not give them time to monitor the communication with the community members. In considering this case, the only communication that takes place in the organisation is that focused on service delivery. The organisation should not steer away from its purpose. On the other hand, building mutually beneficial relationships with the community members would help this NPO fulfil its public purpose. Another way of ensuring that the relationship is mutually beneficial is through power-sharing, where the parties concerned can provide input in the decision-making process and stakeholders are granted the freedom to change their views.

4.5.2. Community members 1

From the side of the community, the participants are not entirely satisfied with the communication they currently receive from the organisation. They expressed the hope that this condition improves with time, since they experience no solid engagement from the side of the organisation. One participant suggested that the organisation should use social- media platforms such as Facebook to interact with more people. This would encourage more community members to join and be part of the organisation. The communication from the organisation, therefore, requires more planning and a stronger proactive approach. This is one way to share power in the communication: taking the views of the community members in account helps to build long-lasting and trustworthy relationships. This does, however, not imply that all the views will be incorporated into decision-making. It would, on the other hand, mean that stakeholders can change their views according to the communication that took place as a way to practise mutual understanding.

From the results, it is clear that there is no reciprocity and conversation in the relationship with stakeholders, seeing that the organisation does not encourage feedback from its members. The organisation maintains a constant flow of information to its community members but does not extend its communication to engage its stakeholders and build further mutual understanding with them. Two social workers are appointed to meet with the members weekly, and this is their only engagement with the organisation; through these sessions the community members also get to participate in various other activities.

The communication is thus limited to the meetings with no other flexible means of communication between the organisation and the community members. The result is that the parties may not establish mutual understanding and not reach a point where they can share power. Telephone calls and office walk-ins as methods of keeping communication channels open are not sufficient to ensure strong relationships. Through environmental scanning, the organisation will be better informed how to structure their communicating and building long-lasting relationships with their stakeholders. This will also create a platform for reciprocity and mutual understanding, which would reflect the mixed-motive model. Reaching mutual understanding keeps the relationship ongoing since the parties gain mutual benefit.

4.5.3. Organisation 2

The participant indicated that Organisation 2 and the communities it serves are equally dependent on each other. The participant does acknowledge that the relationship with the community members is important. As their target group, families, encounter various societal

problems, the organisation thus offers its services in an attempt to help resolve the issues. The interviewee mentioned that they do an annual assessment of the work they do find ways to improve on it. This indicates that the organisation encourages conversation with the community members and thus expects feedback, which guides them in improving their services rendered to the community. The participant mentioned that they also conduct an environmental scan to establish the needs within the communities, and strive to incorporate these needs into their planning.

Knowing whom to serve and how to serve them is one way that organisations can build relationships characterised by mutual understanding with their stakeholders and community members. In such a case the goals of the organisation are aligned with those of the communities, particularly their needs. It was found that Organisation 2 is well aware of the needs in their community and thus renders services that are aligned to those needs. The participant confirmed this approach: "Because people want happy families, they want happy relationships. It's the core of our existence".

To communicate with their stakeholders, the organisation uses the local newspapers to explain the organisation's activities. They also visit various schools to raise the awareness of the organisation and its goals. The organisation also maintains sound relations with other NPOs in the area, making the organisation proactive in their communication. It is noticeable that there indeed is a high level of interaction between this organisation and its community members, seeing that the NPO maintains a continuous presence in the community as a strategy to stay relevant. This is achieved through engagement and reciprocal activities such as raising awareness, meetings and radio broadcasts. Through this process the organisation gains an understanding of the community members' views and thereby incorporates these views in their operations. As a result, the parties in the relationship benefit mutually, creating a 'win-win' zone for all.

Further communication tools employed by the organisation are the following. Firstly they schedule an annual general meeting, which they invite the community members to attend, and make joint decisions them as part of power sharing. Secondly, stakeholders are allowed to change their views according to the communication that took place and therefore propose new suggestions. Thirdly, they distribute pamphlets and use the local radio station to communicate their objectives. Most of this communication seems to be one-sided and initiated by the organisation. Thus more focus on a mixed-motive approach could benefit the organisation.

4.5.4. Community members 2

Participants from the community confirmed that Organisation 2 maintains an open communication system with its community members. Although the organisation does not have a set communication platform, participants mention that they usually visit the organisation if they have the need to do so. If unable to visit the organisation, they rely on telephone communication. The participants expressed their satisfaction with their communication and feedback to the organisation. Seeing that the office is located in Ikageng, this makes matters easy for them.

Reciprocity is clearly evident in the relationship between the organisation and its community members: the NPO continually communicates to the community members and encourages them to give feedback on how they view the organisation's activities. The community members also have the scope to change their point of view. This builds sound relations with the community members since they are made to feel an integral part of the organisation.

The organisation strives to function as integrated with the communities as possible and create power sharing in their communication. This allows the community members to benefit from the relationship as well. The organisation encourages feedback from the stakeholders who use their services and also get involved in projects in which the community ask them to act as partner. In this sense they foster a working relationship with the communities by aiming towards a mixed-motive communication model.

4.5.5. Organisation 3

The participant confirmed that the goals of Organisation 3 are aligned with those of their community members: "That is why our organisation is set up in this kind of community, so that we know about their cultural way of doing things and then we set up our plans and goals according to their cultural way of doing things." This indicates that the organisation was established to reflect and satisfy the needs of the community, which is achieved through mutual understanding. The organisation engages with the community members through various programmes, including home visits, Bible studies and contact sessions. By presenting these sessions, the organisation confirms the importance of maintaining its operations since it is vital that community members should benefit from the relationship as well.

The results thus show that Organisation 3 does not entirely incorporate the mixed-motive model into their communication. In other words, the stakeholders are not provided with the platform to participate in decision making and given the scope to change their views in

response to the communication. It is evident that the organisation does maintain its conversation with the community members but there is no form of power sharing in the communication seeing that the organisation makes the decisions one-sidedly.

The participants indicated that the organisation steers away from using social media or other technological platforms to interact with parents, seeing that the majority of the parents are illiterate. The organisation's engagement with their stakeholders takes place mostly through personal contact, to ensure that the messages they send out are effective, and thereby establishing reciprocity. This also reveals mutual understanding between the parties in the relationship because the communication is reciprocal, even though there is no form of power sharing in the relationship.

4.5.6. Community members 3

The organisation holds regular meetings with the community members to ensure that the relationship remains open and transparent throughout. This indicates that the stakeholders can change their mind or offer new suggestions during the communication process. One participant confirmed that she is satisfied with the relationship, seeing that they (parents) do not feel left out of any decisions by the organisation. The other participant, however, stated that the organisation's interaction with them is not agreeable since she feels left out. She adds that the organisation does not communicate regularly with them, but still confirms that she having strong relations with the organisation. The organisation's communication might not be as constant as its management perceives it. Therefore it is important that the NPO in question maintains mutual understanding with its community members through conversation. This would also help identify community members who are dissatisfied with the communication's services.

Due to the contrasting views of the participants, it can be deduced that participants from the communities experience the interaction differently, which reflects their perception of the situation. The widely differing responses can indicate on the one hand, that the organisation accommodates the changing views of its stakeholders or, on the other hand, that the organisation might not be as efficient in managing its communication function. It is clear that the organisation receives much feedback from community members through the various platforms they have established for communication, In addition, there seems to be a form of power-sharing as the organisation's management also set up their plans and goals according to the culture of their community members. This also implies a level of reciprocity as well as mutual understanding between the parties, which means that their communication is proactive. The organisation also aims to cater for the various cultures of their community

members, and thereby incorporates the mixed-motive model in their relationship management.

4.5.7. Organisation 4

To engage with their stakeholders, Organisation 4 holds an annual fundraising event, where they get to interact with their community members personally. The event is also used to promote the services of the organisation within the town. The participants mentioned that they prefer one-on-one interaction with their funders for meetings, but did not refer to interaction with community members. Another medium they use for communication is the local newspapers, whenever they need to inform the public in general. The use of such a medium does not encourage feedback or reciprocity because the approach is one-sided. The organisation, however, also makes use of Facebook to connect with the local community.

The participants mentioned that the organisation does not actually have a feedback loop available for the stakeholders, but they do receive positive comments from the community members. The community members, therefore, are not provided the platform to pose their views to the organisation, seeing that the NPO perceived these members merely as receivers of services, and thereby limiting their power-sharing potential. The organisation receives feedback during the events they hold and when the community members visit their offices. The participants admitted that they have not really done research on the effects of their communication. Such research could help establish mutual understanding with their community members. The organisation's communication is not proactively planned, which hinders the building of sound relationships with the community members. Once the researcher posed the question about environmental scanning the participants were keen to carry it out.

The results show that Organisation 4 does not advocate power sharing in the communication process. In addition, although they encourage feedback from the community members, they do not incorporate it as input into the decision-making. The relationship in this case is one-sided, which means that the organisation does not employ the mixed-motive model in their communication.

4.5.8. Community members 4

The communication to the community is mainly one-sided, seeing that most of the participants pointed out they are the ones who usually visit the organisations' offices for information. Nevertheless, the participants mentioned they are satisfied that they are encouraged to be open with the organisation and welcome to visit at any time, even though they cannot change

the organisation's view or make suggestions to improve the services. There are no communication media in place to incorporate the organisation's community members. As a result, the communication is limited and does not encourage reciprocity or eventually power-sharing. As a way of communicating to the organisation in return, the participants take it on themselves to visit the offices for various enquiries.

The results show that the communication is not proactive, and thus no established platforms to include the community. Therefore it becomes difficult to monitor and evaluate the feedback from community members. No feedback does not necessarily imply that all the stakeholders are satisfied, hence it is imperative that the organisation takes it upon itself to find out how community members really perceive their services and their impact in people's lives. Such knowledge would help ensure mutual understanding. By making use of the mixed-motive model the organisation would be able to draw credible feedback from the community members; thus further communication could be planned (proactively) in accordance with the needs of both parties.

4.5.9. Summary of the two-way symmetrical theory

The results show that some organisations acknowledge the importance of ensuring two-way symmetrical communication. On the other hand, Organisations 1 and 4 do not see the need for such a strategy in the non-profit sector. The latter organisations focus solely on services they render. According to them it would be a waste of time to implement communication management, as stated by the participant from one organisation. These NPOs seem satisfied with the type of engagement they have with their stakeholders/community members at this stage.

In the same vein, Organisation 4 focuses primarily on the services they render. The participant pointed out that they, as a branch, only carry out their tasks as directed by the national office. The community members however, are not satisfied with the engagement, and suggest that the organisations should put in more effort to communicate with them. It is commendable that these organisations are so committed to fulfil their public purpose. However, they would not be able to impact strongly if they did not maintain reciprocity and mutual understanding with their stakeholders.

Organisations 2 and 3 do acknowledge the importance of building sound relations with their community members. In this regard a participant stated that they strive to be part of the community by appointing board members who reside in those communities as part of their environmental scanning. They also draw extensive feedback from the communities and strive

to incorporate this input in their communication in order reach a mutual understanding. It was found that Organisation 3 also functions proactive by engaging and communicating with their community members, and strive to get feedback from them as much as possible. However, this NPO does not really advocate power sharing, even though it does consider the community members' views when making decisions. To impact strongly on society requires of organisations to delve deep into the needs of their community members. Such a relationship would be based on reciprocity, conversation and mutual understanding.

4.6. Conclusion

The analysis was done according to the following themes: systems theory, two-way symmetrical communication, strategic communication management and the theory of stakeholder relationship management. The themes identified offer possible answers to the research question.

In discussing the results of how NPOs can increase their impact in society, it is evident that organisations need more funding. This would enable them to appoint skilled communication practitioners who can manage their communication. At present not much is being done, therefore, the staff of the organisations takes it upon themselves to share the responsibilities of communication management. The practitioner roles are taken on by the social workers and the secretaries, who apply what they perceive to be the best for their communication. This is why the findings show that certain organisations do not realise the importance of planning their communication strategically.

From the four organisations that were interviewed, the two that are similar are both welfare organisations. Both of these NPOs (Organisations 1 and 4) mentioned that they cannot risk steering away from their public purpose by spending time in communication planning. The other two organisations, one in counselling services (Organisation 2), and another in skills development and foster care (Organisation 3), are proactive in their communication. Even though these other two organisations also do not have established communication plans, they do plan their communication activities beforehand in order to build relationships with the community members.

The results indicate that all of the organisations lack the experience/knowledge in communication management. As a result, none of the NPOs that were interviewed are engaging their community members effectively. The only communication that takes place is to deliver the necessary services to the community members. The organisation managers seem

to prioritise relations with the donors/funders above those with community members. As much as NPOs depend on these donors, the community members they serve should also be their concern.

Maintaining open and clear communication with the community members allows the organisation to gain knowledge and a better understanding of the community members' particular needs. When the NPOs are able to correct this shortcoming, they will be able to align their goals with those of the communities, as well as their existing funders and potential ones. The effective management of the communication between an organisation and its stakeholders and publics should involve active participation and input from all parties. In this regard, strategic communication management is the key.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study, with Chapter 2 investigating the literature relating to the research problem. Chapter 3 explained the research methods that were employed, followed by Chapter 4 that discussed the findings. This chapter aims to provide answers to the specific and the general research questions. The chapter will also address the limitations of the present study, and will propose recommendations for NPOs and for further research into this contemporary topic.

5.2. Background on NPOs in South Africa

To place the study in context it is important to understand the unique NPO environment within South Africa. According to the Policy Framework of Non-profit organisations in South Africa (2012:7), "The South African non-profit sector is characterised by a wide variety of organisations of different structures and sizes across the socio-political and economic spectra of society." The primary role of NPOs, as part of their public purpose, is to concentrate on any form of vulnerability that numerous citizens face in their respective communities. Holtzhausen (2013) posits that the social welfare provided by NPOs gives a voice to the poor. These organisations thus create relationships that are based on mutual trust with the communities they serve as well as with the organisations that fund them.

As civil society organisations, transparency in communication is important for the effective monitoring of the NPOs' actions. Burger and Owens (2008:2) established that there is little to none correspondence between the actions of the NPOs and their communication of those actions. It is therefore difficult for many NPOs to achieve their mission and goals, because communication and stakeholder relationship management are not planned strategically. The reason is that several NPOs do not realise how crucial the management of strategic communication is and why it is necessary to build lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders (Naudé, 2001:265). NPOs are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their impact (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010:14). In the present study 'impact' will refer to the extent of the services of an NPO, and how they can extend these to more people, offer more services, or impact stronger on social issues. As Patel (2012:615) states, the NPO should not only deliver a service, but be able to focus on developmental aspects, which shows its impact. Grunt and Crutchfield (2007) point out that becoming a high-impact non-profit is not just about building an impressive organisation and then expanding it to reach more people but rather

"working with and through organisations and individuals *outside themselves* to create more impact than they could have achieved alone" (Grunt & Crutchfield, 2007:35). For non-profits to make a significant impact, they must be willing to work outside the limitations of their organisations and not just be confined to managing their internal operations. Naudé (2001:265) concurs with this statement and adds that many NPOs do not realise the importance of strategic communication management and the need to build lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. NPOs are facing similar challenges as other organisations, therefore the communication management theory can also be applied to NPOs' strategy. Therefore the present study was grounded in the domain of communication management.

5.3. Phenomenology as guiding paradigm

Phenomenology focuses on understanding the social and psychological occurrences from the perspectives of the individuals involved. Stating it simpler, phenomenology implies the approach of getting a better understanding of how people attend to their everyday lives according to how they view the society they live in (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000:488). Phenomenology is therefore the study of phenomena, namely 'human experience'. The aim of the present was to uncover the experiences of NPOs as well as stakeholders in the non-profit sector.

The focus was to understand meanings of human experience as it is lived. The 'life world' is understood as that reality which people experience individually, without being categorised (Husserl, 1970). The study of these phenomena focuses on lived experiences and tries to find meaning in these occurrences. In the present research, the life-world of NPOs is examined, in order to explore their impact in communities by understanding their experience. The study used phenomenology as method to help uncover the impact of the mentioned NPOs and their view on how these roles can be broadened through effective communication.

5.4. Answering Specific research question 1: Theoretical framework

The following theories were employed to guide the study: systems theory, stakeholder relationship management theory, strategic communication management theory and the two-way symmetrical communication theory. Before moving on to the detailed interpretation of the results and its implications, it is vital to understand the theoretical framework for the present study.

The literature study was used to address Specific research question 1:

According to communication management literature, how can NPOs strengthen their impact in the communities they serve?

The literature review addressed the topic of managing communication strategically. It provided the researcher with background information on the importance of such management, its impact and how it can be practiced, particularly within the non-profit sector. The literature review also provided information on the landscape of the non-profit sector in South Africa, as well as on this sector's communication management.

Communication and information entails the following: "an input into a system, a process occurring within the system, and an output in interactions with other systems" (Brandell, 2010:7). This systematic relationship between the parties can only survive through effective and efficient communication. Communication regulates a system; it either stabilises, or disrupts this system.

The underlying factor of such a system is that it contains relationships that need to be nurtured so that the output is positive and beneficial to all parties involved. Stakeholders' response to the organisation will impact the performance of the organisation. In other words, the entire system, which is the organisation, will be affected (Anderson *et al.*, 1999). There are various theories that inform this relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders. These theories were investigated in the present study and are discussed briefly below.

Stakeholder relationship management theory is based on two principles that balance the rights of the claimants on the organisation, on the one side with the consequences of their involvement with the organisation, on the other side. The first principle, *corporate effects,* states that "the corporation and its managers are responsible for the effects of their actions on others" (Evan & Freeman, 2004:79). The second principle, *corporate rights,* maintains that "the corporation and its managers may not violate the legitimate rights of others to determine their own future" (Evan & Freeman, 2004:79). Stakeholder relationship management theory assumes that stakeholders are distinct groups with their own valid needs and interests with respect to the organisation. This theory does not give primacy to one stakeholder over another, although it is acknowledged that at times one group may benefit at the expense of another. The theory implies that the goals of both the organisation and its stakeholders have to be reached.

Strategic communication management theory depicts an organisation that is effectively managing its communication and creating reciprocity and interactionism in the communication process. Taking stakeholders' views into account during decision-making yields mutually

beneficial relationships between the parties. The findings have shown that NPOs need more financing in order to appoint a member for their communication management. Transparency by organisations as an integral component of strategic communication management, is another way of building sound relations with stakeholders.

Environmental scans are an important aspect of the mentioned theory. When organisations conduct environmental scans, this prepares them to plan their communication proactively. Several studies indicate that NPOs are limited by a lack of funding as well as insufficient knowledge of the value which strategic communication and relationship management holds for them (Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005; Wiggill, 2009). These limitations, due to a lack of funding, prevent NPOs from appointing trained practitioners to manage communication and relationships. This, in turn, has the result that such an NPO cannot obtain sufficient funding. Thus, ineffective communication can lead to donor withdrawal (Strong, 2008).

Two-way symmetrical communication: The model of Steyn and Puth (2000) for strategic communication management is informed by the excellence theory (Steyn, 2007:138), as well as the relationship management theory. In this sense, their theory advocates the use of *two-way symmetrical communication* to establish mutually beneficial relationships with strategic stakeholders. The aim is to manage simultaneously the organisation's risks and issues presented by stakeholders, and thereby achieve organisational goals through power sharing.

Communication is an important component in a relationship – professional or personal – and will determine the sustainability of that relationship. The original definition of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations (PR) was: "communication that aims to achieve mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders" (Ruck, 2011). In order for a relationship to be sustainable, both parties must learn to communicate effectively and also acknowledge that the other party's view may change.

As discussed in the literature review, for any form of enterprise or company to achieve its goals, communication has to be managed effectively and efficiently. Grunig (1993) advocates a mixed-motive model of public relations. According to this model, the organisation and its key publics engage in a reciprocal exchange to build a mutually beneficial relationship.

From the literature study the following concepts were identified that is relevant to the present study. These are listed in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Conceptualisation of the theoretical framework for the study

Meta-theory	Systems theory • Openness • Exchange of information • Interdependence			
Theories	Stakeholder relationship management theory	Strategic communication management theory	Two-way symmetrical communication theory	Policy framework for NPO's in South Africa
Concepts themes	• Corporate effects principle • Corporate rights principle • Mutualy beneficial relationships • Reach the goals of both stakeholders and organisation	• Interactionism and reciprocity • Transparency • Strategic planned and proactive management • Identification of stakeholder issues and environmental scanning • Taking stakeholders' view into the organisation's strategic planning process • Practitioner role • Mutually beneficial relationships • Stakeholders Included in decision-making	• Mutual understan-ding • Conversation and reciprocity • Power sharing • Parties' views may change • Mixed-motive model	• Civil society organisa-tions • Public purpose

The argument can thus be made that if NPOs consider the theories and concepts above in their communication management, they would be able to strengthen their impact in their societies.

5.5. Answering Specific research question 2

Specific research question 2 focused on the view from the NPO:

According to the purposefully selected NPOs, what are their views on their current impact in the communities they serve and possible measures to improve this impact?

The participants emphasised their dependence on other organisations as a way of sustaining themselves. They recognise that that they fall under a system and are not able to function in isolation, however they do not consider themselves as interdependent with the various constituencies that influence them. Once organisations acknowledge this situation, it would pave the way for them to plan their relations strategically. At this stage it was found that the NPOs in reality do not invest sufficient effort and time in their stakeholders and in communication management. Therefore extensive changes are needed in the non-profit sector to address this dilemma. Two participants from the NPOs mentioned they cannot risk steering away from their public purpose by spending that much time in communication planning, whereas the other two acknowledged the importance of investing time in communication planning. If organisations do not strategically plan the management of their communication and stakeholder relationships, it will be difficult to achieve the desired impact in their society.

During the course of the interviews with the four selected organisations, the participants discussed the major challenges they face in managing the NPOs. One challenge the NPOs have in common is their financial struggle and how it hinders their performance in the communities to which they render their services. All the organisations pointed out that limited funding is a serious challenge for them, as they depend fully on the funding they receive to ensure the sustainability of the organisation. The organisations all stated that more funding would enable them to strengthen their impact in the communities they serve. They also mentioned that more funds would make it viable for them to appoint communication practitioners, which would enhance their communication with stakeholders and heighten their impact in the communities. However, before scouting for funders, NPOs require serious introspection regarding their own management of stakeholder relationships and their strategic communication.

According to O'Neil (2007:99) NPOs need to develop communication programmes that build long-term relationships with donors in order to obtain continued financial support. Once these programmes have been implemented, it will surely guide the NPOs to develop and maintain a platform for two-way symmetrical communication. "Moving away from dominating in a relationship to a more reciprocal and mutually beneficial stance" would indeed get more donors on board (O'Neil, 2007:100). Waters (2009:474) adds that, when NPO-donor relationships are cultivated and managed properly, NPOs should experience less difficulty in obtaining and retaining funding.

5.6. Answering Specific research question 3

The following specific research question focused on the view from the communities on the impact of the NPO, and reads as follows:

According to the purposefully selected community members serviced by the mentioned NPOs, what are their views on the NPOs current impact in the communities they serve and possible measures to improve this impact?

Community members form a significant part of the system, and their views and interests should be taken into consideration. The interviewees considered themselves part of the organisations and thus felt that they should be involved in the decision-making of the processes since it does affect them. A number of the participants stated clearly that there is insufficient interaction from the organisations' side. As a result they often feel left out in the relationship since there is no platform for reciprocity. If NPOs only feed information to their members without encouraging feedback, this would defeat the notion of public purpose. NPOs have been established for public purposes, which implies that they need to know which purpose to serve and whom they must serve it to. Therefore without reciprocity from the community members the NPOs would not be able to serve these members because as service providers they would be unable to align their goals with the communities' needs/goals.

Although the organisations do maintain some form of communication with its stakeholders, the participants felt that there was still much to be done. Two interviewees from the same organisation had contrasting perceptions of their engagement with the organisation: one felt distant while the other stated that she is satisfied with the relationship. This is another area where organisations should attempt to fill the void and thereby foster mutually beneficial relationships with their community members.

Participants from the two welfare organisations stated that they wish to feel more part of the organisation, after mentioning that they do not engage as regularly with the organisation except through social services. Contrary to this scenario, the participants from the other two organisations stated that, even though the communication still needs to be worked on, they do feel involved with the organisations and are content with the engagement. One respondent referred to their organisation's social media activities and suggested that the organisation could heighten their impact by utilising social networks, seeing that a larger number of community members would be aware of the organisation and the services it renders.

NPOs should take note of the fact that funding does not only come from corporates and government, but also from the ordinary citizens in the communities looking to give assistance

from their side. The participants mentioned that the organisations do raise awareness of their services in the belief that, the more members they assist, the more funding they would generate. Therefore, maintaining transparency and an open communication platform means that the organisations would be able to form sound relations with other members of the communities as stakeholders and not just as their 'clients'. In this regard NPOs need to be flexible enough to adapt to individual relationships they build with their various stakeholders (Hung, 2001).

5.7. Answering Specific research question 4

The fourth specific research question compared the gathered data, and reads as follows:

How does the views as expressed by the NPOs and community members compare to each other and to the information found in the literature study?

Organisations cannot survive in isolation. The participants are fully aware of the fact that they cannot survive on their own and need all the assistance they can receive to stay in operation. Swann (2010:18) explains: "They are interdependent on others and must interact to some degree with various constituencies to survive and thrive."

One respondent stated that there is no need to raise more awareness on their organisation's services or its location because "people already know about us and know where to find us". An organisation, especially one in the non-profit sector, cannot afford such assumptions. As indicated in the literature review, the non-profit sector depends highly on donors and funders (Lotteries Act, 1997). All the participants of the organisations have in fact asserted that they depend on donors. Therefore an assumption that 'every one' knows about the organisation can be detrimental to the organisation's sustainability.

One community member who receives services from the organisation voiced her opinion that raising more awareness would help the organisation make a stronger impact in society. It is a fact that organisations differ in the type of services they render and their target audience to whom they render these services. Although a number of NPOs do recognise that the management of communication and relationships is essential for the existence of the organisation, their communication remains unplanned (Bowers, 2000:13; Dyer *et al.,* 2002:15). However, for the organisations to succeed in their work, they need to maintain effective communication and healthy relationships with their stakeholders. An open and transparent relationship ensures that the organisation and its stakeholders benefit mutually from the exchange that takes place.

Cornelissen (2004:34) states that through efficient and effective communication organisations are able to interact more with their stakeholders. Therefore, in order for an organisation to retain its existing funders as well as gain new ones, they need to have a strategic communication plan in place. Most of the organisations that participated in the study admitted that they did not have an established communication plan or an employee appointed to manage their communication. This could be another reason why they are struggling to elicit more funding. Despite the ignorance among NPOs about the value of formal strategic communication management, most NPOs have the insight that building and maintaining strong relationships with donors are important for their survival (Wiggill, 2014:283).

While some interviewees from the organisations acknowledged the importance of engaging with the communities, others felt that engagement should only be based on rendering services. One respondent asserted there is no need to communicate the organisation's activities to the community members – the members already know where their organisation is; if they require the services they know where to go. This clearly indicates that the relationship between the NPO and its stakeholders is one-sided. Building strong, lasting relationships goes beyond rendering a one-sided service or providing assistance when needed. Holtzhausen (2014:286) notes that "in order to be fully capable to address many social problems in SA and to indicate to those who support them (especially financially) that they are to be trusted, committed to make a difference".

NPOs also need to deliver on their promises and to ensure open communication channels with all their stakeholders. They also need to communicate to the community members as their stakeholders and should be able to give feedback, seeing that they too have a direct influence on the organisation and its operations. Funder/donors play an integral part in the survival of the organisation, but the same applies to the community members.

Table 5.2 below provides a brief summary of the comparison between the literature and the views of the organisations and the community.

Table 5.2: Summary of the literature, and views from the organisations and community

	Literature	Organisation's view	Community's view
Systems theory			
Openness	Communication should occur proactively planned and with clear relationship objectives for each stakeholder	Organisations raise sufficient awareness on their services	Organisations need to be more transparent

Exchange of information	There should be an exchange of information with all stakeholders	Communication and relationship management is essential for the existence of the organisation, however information exchange is hampered by various factors	Raising more awareness could assist the organisation in having a stronger impact in society
Interdependence	Organisations are interdependent with others and must interact with various stakeholders to survive and thrive	Organisations focus strongly on their dependence on donors and tend to almost forget about their interdependence on the community	Organisations and community members are interdependent on one another
Stakeholder relationship management theory			
Corporate effects principle	The corporation and its managers are responsible for the effects of their actions on others	Organisations do what they feel is best for their community members, with varying levels of input on this issue from the community	Community members wish to be actively involved in the organisations' decision-making about the organisation's work in the community
Corporate rights principle	The corporation and its managers may not violate the legitimate rights of others to determine their own future. Rights of stakeholders must be ensured through their participation in decisions that substantially affect their welfare	Organisations are highly dedicated to serve their public purpose and take their role very seriously	Community members want to feel part of the organisational decision-making on the organisation's work in the community

Table 5.2: Continued

	Literature	Organisation's view	Community's view
Mutualy beneficial relationships	Relationships between the organisation and stakeholders should serve both parties' best interest	Strive to maintain effective communication and sound relationships with their stakeholders. Their views on effective communication and a	Their views are not incorporated into decision-making

		sound relationship differ from each other and from the community's expectations	
Reach the goals of both stakeholders and organisation	Open and transparent relationship ensures that the organisation and its stakeholders mutually benefit from the exchange and relationship that takes place	Organisations believe that their goals are aligned with those of community members, and are to the community's best interest	Building strong, lasting relationships goes beyond rendering a service or providing the necessary help; the community would like to be part of deciding what is best for them
Strategic communication management theory			
Interactionism and reciprocity	Through efficient and effective communication organisations are able to interact more with their stakeholders	Engagement should only be based on rendering a service	They wish to engage with the organsation more, and not only through the services rendered to them
Transparency	Open and transparent relationship ensures that the organisation and its stakeholders mutually benefit from the exchange that takes place	No need to communicate the organisation's services to the community members because they already know of its existence	Organisation's services activities should be communicated to a wider public in order to raise awareness
Strategic planned and proactive management	Organisations need to realise the value of formal strategic communication management and need a strategic communication plan in place	There is no established communication plan or an appointed employee to manage their communication.	The communication is limited and does not reach other communities
Identification of stakeholder issues and environmental scanning	Prepares them to proactively plan their communication	They do not plan their communication, only attend to it when it is needed	More should be done to enhance the communication

Table 5.2: Continued

	Literature	Organisation's view	Community's view
Taking stakeholders' view into the organisation's	Building and maintaining strong relationships with donors are important	Communication mostly occurs unplanned and without clear relationship objectives	They enjoy healthy relationships with the organisations,

strategic planning process	for the company's survival	for a particular stakeholder	but communication could be improved
Practitioner role	In order for an organisation to retain its existing funders as well as gain new ones, they need to appoint a communication practitioner	Practitioner roles are taken over by secretaries and social workers	They believe that more can be done to improve the communication and organisation activities, they are not aware of who is responsible for communication in the organisation
Stakeholders Included in decision-making	Stakeholders must be incorporated through their participation in decisions that substantially affect their welfare	Organisations hardly incorporates the community members' views in decision-making	They want to be able to contribute to the success of the organisations
Two-way symmetrical communication theory			
Mutual understanding	Communication that aims to achieve mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders	Organisations do what they feel is best for their community members	There is a lack of mutual understanding
Conversation and reciprocity	Ensure open communication channels with all their stakeholders	The communication is mainly one-sided and driven and controlled by the NPO's management	Often feel left out in the relationship as there is no platform for reciprocity
Power sharing	Moving away from dominating in a relationship to a more reciprocal and mutually beneficial stance	Power cannot be shared, community members are only receivers of services	They want to be involved actively in decion-making
Parties' views may change	Learn to communicate effectively with each other and acknowledge that the parties' views may change	Orgnanisations do not incoporate community members' views in decision-making	Their views are not implemented in decion-making
Mixed-motive model	Organisation and its publics can engage in both negotiation and persuasion	Organisations do not negotiate with community members	Relationship is somewhat one-sided

5.8. Answering the general research question

The general research question focused on the following issue:

How can non-profit organisations have greater impact in the communities they serve, as viewed from a communication management perspective?

The results of the present study provided insights into various aspects of communication management. The findings also confirmed what is already known. While the interpretations of communication management that emerged from the study are aligned with those of prior research, the notion of *financing* as key factor in the sustainability of NPOs can be highlighted and examined as entity in its own right. Within every organisation, the communication function is handled jointly by the staff. In this case social workers and secretaries have taken over the practitioner roles. Most of the interviewees stated that if they could raise more awareness about the organisation they would be able to attract more funders as well as clients. The participants of the organisations and their community members are all in agreement on this matter.

The findings indicated that organisations need community members for their existence, and donors for their survival, whilst community members need the organisations for the services they render. In addition, the results of the themes that were identified are consistent with themes identified in literature, while new findings were also recognised. These findings suggest that community members who are affected by NPOs are not entirely satisfied with the way in which organisations communicate with them, seeing that they feel left out of the decision- making process of these organisations. The dissatisfaction is caused by the lack of mutual understanding.

Research is an important factor in getting to know one's audience. Therefore, NPOs, like other profit-driven organisations, need to conduct environmental scans to become fully aware of the needs of their community members. NPOs should not only focus on the social needs, but also the communication needs. The researcher found that the non-profit sector is making significant contributions to society, and thus needs more assistance from Government as well as corporates to strengthen their capacity in serving the communities. The findings also revealed that more work is needed in the management of communication; NPOs need to plan their communication strategically if they, as service providers, are to remain sustainable. NPOs should also spend more time on their communication management strategies. Rendering services is and should be a priority; however, they also need to invest in their communication

in order for to receive funding that would make it possible to render these and even better services.

The results also show that NPOs tend to generalise when they assess the response of the community members – whether the latter are satisfied with the services they receive. If an organisation does not have the mechanisms in place to monitor the level of satisfaction among its stakeholders, the management is likely to assume that people are content or satisfied. Organisations, especially NPOs, need to realise that when people receive 'free' services, they would not be the first to complain, fearing that they might be cut off from the assistance. However, these society members are more likely to complain somewhere else, which in the long term would hold negative returns for the organisation. Therefore it is imperative that NPOs manage their communication in such a way that their organisation will be the first place community members turn to when they experience any conflicts or difficulties. From the results it is clear that community members wish to be treated as members of the organisations and not as mere clients.

The results of the present study yielded informative and enlightening information about a sector that daily influences the lives of millions. The non-profit sector has taken on a number of responsibilities that even the government fails to carry out. NPOs were not established for profit purposes, but they impacted positively on their communities and alter the lives of numerous people in South Africa, and globally. These organisations have thus been established for public purposes, which make the community members they serve their key stakeholders. If the NPOs do not consider the views and interests of the members, this in turn reflects negatively on the organisations as such. NPOs should therefore create a platform for power sharing. This does not imply that the community members or funders should take over or be part of management; rather the parties involved in the system should have the platform to influence the organisation positively. Seeing that NPOs fulfil a public purpose, the 'public' ought to have a say if they are not satisfied with the activities of the organisation in their community. There should thus be mutual understanding between the parties involved.

In essence then – and in agreement with Grunt and Crutchfield (2007) who argued that NPOs should work together with those outside their organisation, and Lloyd (2005:4) that stated that NPOs should work together with donors and peers to achieve impact – the researcher suggests that NPOs should work within a three-tiered relationship to enhance their impact. Firstly there is the NPO that should remain true to their purpose, secondly the funders and peers that can support the NPO, and thirdly the community that are serviced by the NPO, but can also act as a support base for the NPO. To achieve maximum impact the NPO needs to

bring this three-tiered relationship into equilibrium and focused on their purpose, through the use of strategic two-way communication. The three-tiered relationship for strategic two-way communication is depicted in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1: The three-tiered relationship for strategic two-way communication
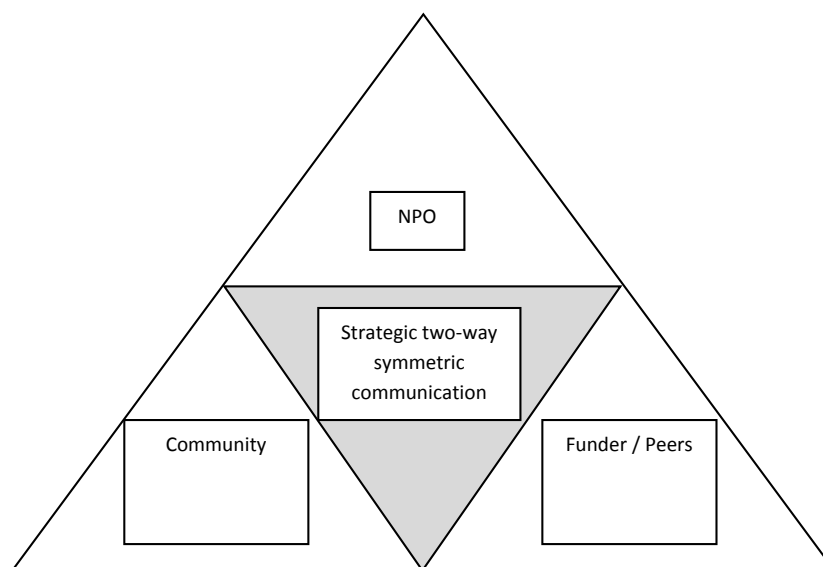
(Source: Researcher's own compilation**)**

To further provide some guidelines to NPOs in enhancing their impact some recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

5.9. Recommendations for NPOs

According to Mckinney *et al.* (2004:60), from 1992 to 1994, approximately 1 000 NPOs found themselves in a deep financial crisis due to cuts in donor funding, with 200 to 400 organisations eventually collapsing. In order to avoid such a large number of NPOs from closing down, these organisations needed to develop new strategies for their communication and relationship management. The following recommendations could be made based on the findings of the present study:

- **Capacity limitations:** The Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa, (2012) states that NPOs frequently suffer from lack of capacity. This makes it difficult to guarantee continued and sustained interventions due to a lack of financial security. The following recommendations are proposed:

- A skilled communication practitioner can help organisations understand the importance of communication management as for any organisation. The responsible person would be able to provide the organisation with strategies to retain and gain funders, as well as communicate to community members. Currently NPOs do not necessarily have such practitioners available. The organisations should therefore consider new ways to recruit them, for example, through internships, holiday work, or arranging with educational institutions to have students assist the NPO.

- Organisations can also familiarise themselves about the various platforms that can be used to engage with their stakeholders as well as prospects. Even though their targeted communities are in the Potchefstroom area, organisations can target funders from other regions; this is possible through social networking platforms, which connect globally. This would, in turn, improve NPOs' chances of involving more stakeholders in their ventures.

- **More engagement with the community:** More engagement with community members will ensure that organisations stay relevant in their communities. Community members should be viewed as partners and involved in the organisation's purpose. Recommendations can include the following:
  - Part of this process could involve raising more awareness of the NPO in the community.
  - For closer engagement with their communities, organisations should be open to power sharing with the community members on decisions that needs to be taken on these communities' wellbeing or future.

- **Practicing communication management principles:** NPOs should apply the mentioned principles for effective communication management, in order to achieve a stronger impact in the community. The following recommendations could be considered:
  - Planned and proactive as well as two-way symmetric communication ensures that the organisations keep a constant and effective flow of information to and from their communities.
  - Conducting environmental scanning will ensure that the organisations know who their audience is, how to communicate to them, and what information to transfer.

- o Non-profit organisations should develop communication strategies to create closer engagement with their communities and generate more financial assistance from funders.
- o When proper research is done, the organisations will know how and when to communicate with their stakeholders. Individual stakeholders should be communicated to differently, by using the appropriate communication channels for each stakeholder group.

Making use of resources in the NPOs' environment: Community members can play a major role in influencing how the funders perceive the success of the organisations' activities. Communication therefore plays a pivotal role in ensuring that this three-tiered relationship (NPOs – communities – funders) remains sustainable.

5.10. Limitations of the research

The present research study examined the perceptions of 12 participants. Four are managers of the NPOs and eight community members who receive services from the NPOs. While this number of semi-structured interviews provides a substantial data source, it does not authorise generalisation to the larger population of NPO's in South Africa. The targeted NPO managers with their community members do not represent lived experiences of the entire non-profit sector. Studies including a larger respondent base could be suggested to gain more generalisable information.

A further limitation to this study could be that the participants from the communities may have wanted to project themselves in particular ways to the interviewer or may have wanted to protect themselves, which may have led to overly positive feedback on the NPOs. Similarly, it is possible that certain participants on management level may have not been totally open in their reporting of the NPO's communication management. This may have been the case, although the researcher assured participants anonymity and explained the use of the information for academic purposes. For the purpose of the present study, the researcher was sensitive to this fact and paid particular attention to put participants at ease. However, future researchers should be weary of participants portraying information in a socially accepted way, which does not necessarily reflect the actual situation.

5.11. Recommendations for future research

According to The Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa (2012), NPOs play a crucial and often under-valued role. The Foundation further states that numerous NPOs are engaged in service delivery at various levels and in a range of sectors. As early as 1997, a survey of the voluntary sector identified CSOs and CBOs as having an important role to play in filling the gaps left by the government, especially in poor communities (The Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa, 2012). Future research could be undertaken for improved understanding and clearer description of the NPO landscape in South Africa.

Further research into the reasons why funders are likely to withdraw from NPOs would provide the NPOs with a roadmap. This would allow them to customise their operations and attitudes regarding strategic communication management. When NPOs conduct environmental scanning on their community members, it is important that they do the same with potential funders/donors. The goals of the three parties are involved, the relationships that are built will be mutually beneficial to all three (as depicted in Figure 5.1 above).

Studies that have been done on the communication of non-profit organisations, as mentioned previously, show some similarities and differences between the communication of NPOs in different contexts. Further research is also needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the current platforms that NPOs use to communicate with their donors and with the community. Before investigating the reasons why funders withdraw their financial assistance to NPOs or examining the reactions of the community, research needs to evaluate how effective or ineffective the current platforms of strategic communication are. Research on this matter should also indicate which platforms would provide the desired outcome, increasing financial assistance and lead to a stronger impact by the NPOs in communities.

Research can also investigate a model for the management of strategic stakeholder relationships by NPOs, in order to ensure their impact, growth and survival. Such a model could inform NPOs how to prioritise their stakeholders, to avoid focusing only on a single stakeholder, for example, their donors. The model will also help NPOs establish relationships that are beneficial to the organisation as well as the community. Although Wiggill (2009) attempted to develop a strategic communication model for NPOs, it was limited to NPOs that target education and not tested on various NPOs to determine its practical value.

The current study could also be enlarged by using a larger community base in a future study if interviews were used in conjunction with questionnaires to the community. However, in this

case specific issues such as language and literacy level will have to be taken into account, but data on more NPOs could be gathered.

5.12. Conclusion

NPOs can be considered as systems, seeing that they are influenced by various subsystems that will determine their survival. If these organisations practice open, two-way communication, they are more likely to thrive in society and will therefore heighten their impact. The effective management of the communication between an organisation and its stakeholders and publics should involve active participation from all parties concerned. The involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process of the organisation is a factor that has implications for its management of strategic communication. In this process the organisation should practice transparency.

The mixed-motive model advocates that organisations maintain a 'win-win' zone for all the parties involved in the relationship. This implies the need for mutual understanding, reciprocity and that the relationship should benefit the parties involved. NPOs, as much as they are not profit-oriented, need to understand and conduct themselves as profit organisations. "Many NPOs do not realise the importance of strategic communication management and the necessity of building lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders" (Naudé, 2001:265; Dyer *et al.,* 2002:15). Healthy and mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships are as important in the non-profit sector as it is in other sectors of a competitive service delivery industry.

The message to NPOs regarding their impact in society is thus: *The only limit to your impact is your imagination and commitment.*
– **Tony Robbins**

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ADDENDUM A: Solumn Declaration