

The impact of organisational structures



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This section discusses the influence and the impact that organizational and departmental structure and culture has generally and with special reference on the team working in the Haiti. The discussion covers first the overall structure of the Oxfam which is followed by the organization of the Oxfam team at Haiti for carrying out charitable work. The Oxfam has the Council as the governing body that meets seven times a year (International, 2010). It is made up of between 10 and 12 unpaid Trustees and is ultimately accountable for the overall management of Oxfam. Then there is the post of Director who is the Chief Executive and is responsible to the Trustees for the management of Oxfam. Then there are six Deputy Directors each is responsible for a Division. The Deputy Director of the Marketing Division is responsible for fundraising, communications and campaigns. The deputy Director International is responsible for developing and implementing Oxfam's programmes in over 70 countries. The Deputy Director Trading is responsible for shops and recycling in Britain and the Fair Trade operations. The Deputy Director Finance and Information Systems is responsible for finance and IS throughout the organization. The deputy Director Corporate Human Resources is responsible for advising other divisions on Human Resource matters. The deputy Director Campaigns and Policy is responsible for advocating policies to promoting lasting change. Then each division has HR and Finance teams responsible for those matters.

Oxfam is a charitable organization whose aim is to work with others to overcome poverty and suffering throughout the world. Its mission is to work directly for humanitarian relief to those hit by war, natural disasters or poverty. It also campaigns on behalf of poor people around the world who

face issues such as debt, trade and the right to education. Its presence in the United Kingdom (UK) is visible through its charity shops run by volunteers, Page 5/17 selling donated items and handicrafts from overseas. Since it is a charitable organization, it has about 22, 000 volunteer workers in over 800 Oxfam shops. The managers at these shops are given more authority to look into the needs of the local people where they are operating. The operations of these shops mostly include selling of books and music (International, 2010).

Performances

Dividing work

-Vertical structure

-Horizontal structure

Structure

Coordinating work

Elements of Components

Organisation

Culture

Types

Figure showing structural and cultural elements of organization

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Planning the work activities of the team, to ensure their commitment is gained.

The biggest challenge for the team working in the Haiti was race with time to save the lives of the people. It is stated that it was a situation in which thousands of people were covered by the debris of the building; another thousands of people were dead which the figure has confirmed now to be more than two hundred thousands of people were killed; and millions of people became homeless (International, 2010). On top of that the communication system was substantially destroyed by the earthquake.

Under such circumstances the planning activities of the Oxfam team demanded high challenge for those who carried out the humanitarian work with full devotion. The team was drawn upon the volunteers who were ready to sacrifice their comfortable life in order to carry out the charitable work in the harsh and challenging circumstances. One of the challenges of the team was to co-ordinate with the other governmental and non-governmental organization so that proper contribution was to be made in the area. Then the other challenge was for the operational team which had to distribute the food and drinking water in the area where there were no communication. It is stated that the planning work element of the team ensures that the task of the team is carried out in a coherent manner. It discusses the tasks are divided, supervised and coordinated. The object of structure is to give clear idea what the people are going to do as forming part of the organization.

This is often they know it when they join the organization. They know what is

expected of them and the skills which are to be used by them for contributing the overall aim of the organization but the team working at Haiti had unprecedented challenges. The Oxfam team has effectively responded to the earthquake at Haiti. This is the biggest earthquake in the last 200 years at the Haiti. The Oxfam has responded quickly and effectively to help the victims of the earthquake. It has provided so far 60 tons of emergency supplies and equipment. This includes clean water, buckets, water treatment kits, and shelter and sanitation tools in the area. We have successfully operated in seven sites. Page 7/17 This means we have approached with our help and support to almost 85, 000 people. It is planning to expand our network to 110, 000 people (International, 2010).

There were number of challenging tasks which were assigned to the operational team at the Haiti. One of the tasks has been to provide clean and safe water. The problem arises when water gets contaminated because of the virus in the atmosphere which has spread due to large number of deaths of people whose bodies were decomposed on the ground. Moreover, there were no infra structures for people to keep the water safe. The Oxfam has also launched a programme called cash for work so as to get hand of local people with the overall object of providing facilities to the people. The main task of this operation is to build our capacity so that we can help three millions of people who are in desperate need of assistance. The Oxfam is working to provide for the basic needs of these people. These include provision of clean water and latrines. The Oxfam team is also working on the long term projects of the disaster hit people. Its marketing team is campaigning for the cancellation of international debts on Haiti. The Haiti

owes \$891 million in debts (International, 2010). These amounts include those loans which were taken by the Government prior to the earthquake for its developmental projects. Since almost everything is destroyed in the city, we are trying to persuade donors to cancel the debts. To this end, the Team contacting to the Head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Dominique Straus-Kahn to exert pressure so that the loans should be cancelled. It is stated that the IMF has offered £100m loan to the Haiti for building infrastructure and other developmental activities. Our analysis reveal that owing to the huge destruction of the area combined with the fact that Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world; it will be sending tens of millions of dollars to the IMF and other international donors for paying off loan instalments. This will be huge burden on the poor country (International, 2010). Page 8/17

Providing opportunities to meet the identified developmental needs of the team and individuals working within the team.

This section of the report discusses about the provision of opportunities to meet the identified developmental needs of the team and individuals working within the team. The report covers the overall developmental needs of the team in terms of the control and the individual developments in terms of his skills and progression in the company. It is stated that when the operations of an organization grow then it needs to divide the work vertically (Boddy, 2005). This means there needs to be more and more delegation to allow for those who are working at lower level to cater for the needs of their specific circumstances (Templar, 2004). It is also pointed out that with the growth of the business the hierarchy becomes more complex but even then

there are three levels that always exist. These levels are corporate divisional and operating (International, 2010). The corporate activities in the Oxfam are the Board of Trustees. This is the most senior group which is responsible for managing the overall direction of the organization. This includes not only guiding and monitoring the performance of subordinate levels of the organization but also maintain links with significant external institutions such as banks and political bodies. The other level of the Oxfam is the divisional. There are broadly six divisions which are responsible to the Director who is also the chief executive. These divisions are headed by deputy Director. This is responsible for implementing broad areas of policy and for securing and allocating budgets and other resources. The Finance department which is headed by the deputy Director in the Oxfam is responsible for working on fund raising and collecting donations (see appendix about how to donate for Haiti earthquake victims). Then there comes an operational level. This level is responsible for doing the technical work of the organization. This includes in case of the Oxfam implementing the policy in practice such as supplying food, water and sanitary services to the earthquake victims in the Haiti. Page 9/17 So, the key issue that arises in establishing what decisions should be taken at each level of the organization. It will be considered to be centralization when those at the top make most of the decisions. In such circumstances the management at the divisional level ensures that the decisions of the Trustees are implemented by those working at the operational levels. On the other hand, if the system is based upon decentralized organization then there is clear demarcation of the span of authority for making decisions according to their specific needs. However, these decisions are taken in consonance with the broad policy of the

organization. The operational work at the Haiti was carried out by the team which was given more power to decide the operational aspect of the relief services. It set units in the Haiti in co-ordination with other governmental and non-governmental organizations so that it can carry out overall co-ordinated work with all charitable work carried out in the area. This enabled the team to focus on those areas where it undertook its responsibility to look after the particular section of the people. It operated at eleven units initially which covered almost 86, 000 people. Then the relief operations were extended towards more people the figure which was raised up to 110, 000 (International, 2010).

It is stated that the Oxfam motivated local people at Haiti to work either voluntarily or to work for money (Templar, The Rules of Work – A Definitive Guide to Personal Success , 2002). The members of the Oxfam team provided short training to the local people regarding their motivation to work. The motivation was either to appeal their humanitarian mind or to provide them money so that the aid can be provided to all the people. The team members consulted with the local workers regarding how the humanitarian aid could be distributed effectively. The rewards for this work were both psychological as well as financial (Owen, 2009). It was psychological because the nature of work appealed humanity which is part of value structure of our human beings. It also produced monetary benefits for the team. The team members were also taken on board by asking them to make proposals for Page 10/17 carrying out these services effectively. It was according to the flat tall and flat charts of the organizational developments. The figure below describes how individuals can develop itself in an

organization which either follows the tall structure of the organization or the flat structure (Owen, 2009).

A tall structure, with narrow spans of supervision

A flat structure, with wide spans of supervision

Figure showing Tall and flat organization structures

The structure of the organization is key indicator of the development of the members of the team.

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Involving the Team in fairly and objectively assessing work activity progress against task performance objectives and individual developmental objectives.

The managements use teams as a way of organizing work for the purposes of more flexibility, lower costs and faster response (Cole, 2009). This technique is applied by the Oxfam in its operations at Haiti. This is because the task at Haiti needs more powers to make decisions on the ground. There is also involvement of humanitarian issue involved in the operations which needs decisions to be made on the spot. This technique is also applied by other organizations such as Johnsons or Philips with the same object of getting flexible and lower costs and faster responses. In such structure the team is drawn from various divisions which are given authority to decide the view of their individual division (Owen, How to Manage: The Art of Making Things Happen , 2009). The members of the team are mutually accountable for results. They are sometimes called ‘ self-managing teams’ to emphasise

the relative absence of hierarchical relationships. But there are also many potential disadvantages such as tendency to take on their own purpose and to spend time in debate rather than action. It is stated that the Oxfam has joined hands with fourteen other organization in its common cause of helping out the sufferings of the people of Haiti (International, 2010).

It is stated that this is also growing practice of the organizations to remain independent but agree to work together to deliver product or services (Bacal, 2004). It happens when managers of the organizations arrange for other companies to undertake certain activities on their behalf, usually those that they do not use as being core to the business. The remaining organization concentrates on setting strategy direction and managing the core units.

There has also practice in the business world in which the managers sell one of their services to another company, but still deliver the service to customers under their own name (Stettinius, 2007). The humanitarian work at Haiti needs to be coordinated to achieve the intended results without it wills there be confusion and poor performance. The direct supervision is provided where a manager ensures coordination by directly supervising his Page 12/17 or her staff to ensure they work together in line with company policy. The differences in this situation lie in the idea of the span of control and the number of people whom a manager can effectively supervise directly. It is also stated that the rules of business provide hierarchy of command if the problem arises in terms of any kind of dispute between the members of the team. In such circumstances, the dispute is taken to the common boss in the hierarchy. It is the boss's responsibility to reach a solution (Maginn, 2004). The Oxfam team also make sure that what goes into

the system and what managers expect it to produce are standardised. So, if the operational cost of one unit Haiti can be minimized by involving people by requesting them to become volunteers can be obtained then those savings can be used for obtaining more aid in terms of water and other things can be obtained. The team makes sure that the suppliers meet the specification and coordination between those who use the parts will be easier. The other method applied for ensuring effective team work is the rules and procedures are prepared or guidelines are published on how to perform the work (Burns, 1978). As discussed above this technique at Haiti is hardly applied where lot of local workers are volunteers and the demand of the supply of humanitarian aid is really high. Finally, the technique of keeping up-to-date information systems help to co-ordinate effectively from team level management to the top level management and vice versa. Information systems help to ensure that people who need to work in a consistent way have common information about what is happening (Edwards, 2006). The communication between the management of the Oxfam is carried out by telephonic system as much of communication systems are already damaged. There is also personal contact methods applied to communicate between the team members operating at Haiti (Edwards, 2006).

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Modify plans to ensure that performance objectives are met.

This section of the report discusses the circumstances in which the plans may be modified in order to achieve the performance objectives (Egerton, 2007). The performance objectives of the operation at Haiti were to carry out

relief services in co-ordination with other governmental and non-governmental organizations. It was observed that there was challenge of race with the time to save the lives of the people. There was need of trained people who could provide health facilities to the people. There were needs of not only food but also shelter and medicines. Some of the organizations were carrying out the relief activities by providing tents. Some of them carried out medical and health services to the affected people (International, 2010). In such circumstances the Oxfam team needed to work on those areas in which either the relief operations were not reached or there were inadequate provision of the services in such areas. By analysing the ground realities the plans were modified and the operations of the Oxfam were focused on providing safe water and sanitary services. The Oxfam identified that the inadequate provision of relief services to address sanitary issues resulted in spread of viral diseases. So, the Oxfam team set 11 units initially which provided safe drinking water and sanitary services spread in the area which benefited population of about 86, 000 people. The network of the services was then further spread to cover more than hundred thousand people in the area. So, the plans were modified after observing the ground realities. But this didn't mean that the overall objective of the Oxfam was sacrificed. Another feature of the operations was to build pressures on the international donors to provide non-returnable loan rather than giving Haiti loan for restructuring which will be paid by it over the years. This aspect was carried out by taking into account the factual position that Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its economy is not developed enough to pay back loan which will be used for saving life of people or providing them basic

necessities of the life such as food and shelter (International, 2010). Page 14/17

Conclusion

The report has taken into account the operational and organizational work of the Oxfam which is charitable organization. The report has focussed upon the current operations of the Oxfam at Haiti. The report discusses the practical aspects of the charitable operation at Haiti by linking it with the theory. It is revealed that organizational activities of the Oxfam were team based work that allowed convenience to carry out the relief operations. It discussed the motivational factors of the team and the influence of organizational culture on its workers. It was found that the Oxfam being itself a charitable organization with thousands of people working as volunteers the motivation of its workers was to carry out the relief work with high motivation. The Oxfam has culture of helping people as the motivating factor itself. Every member of the team is focussed upon high standard of providing humanitarian services to the people suffering from poverty, war or natural calamities. The discussion also covered the relief activities carried out by the team by employing local workers. It also covered the circumstances in which the plans were modified in order to cope up with the practical aspects faced by the team operating at Haiti. The report with its main focus on highlighting the organization plan and management of the Oxfam at Haiti also sensitizes the humanitarian work carried out by the Oxfam for Haiti earthquake victims.

Recommendations

The report recommends that when charitable organizations perform relief operations they need more autonomy to operate in the area. This is because as discussion revealed that they know the ground realities because they are operating on the ground under circumstances which involve not only financial aspect but also humanitarian aspect. Although there is successful operation carried out by the Oxfam team at Haiti yet the organizational structure of the Oxfam which is mix of functional and hierarchical needs more decentralization of authority. This will not only serve as an effective motivation for the workers operating in the field but also achieve the overall objective of the charitable organization such as the Oxfam. Page 15/17

Appendices

The information about how to donate for Haiti earthquake victims is available at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/haitidonate>.