

Transforming B'laan Communities through Communication: The Case of the UP Manila Community Health Development Program

Ena Marie O. Dizon

University of the Philippines Mindanao

ABSTRACT

Twenty four B'laan residents of Barangay Kalkam in Tupi, South Cotabato were surveyed to determine how UP Manila Community Health and Development Program (CHDP) attempted to transform them by exploring normative changes. Anchored on transformational communication framework inspired by Flor and Smith (1997), the study identified the communication approaches employed in transforming B'laan's responses to CHDP using Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) study; and elicit findings on normative changes through videography. Results showed that health communication interventions are limited to printed media and face-to-face communication; Health Development Education is moderately understandable, readable, and accessible (mean = 2.75); and social mobilization efforts involved little participation (mean = 2.4). It was also revealed that systems approach to communication is open and participatory, but not feedback-driven. Respondents believed that CHDP is not difficult to follow, convincing, ethical and can improve healthy lifestyle (mean = 3.24). Using video graphic codes, normative changes on issues pertaining to malnutrition, dengue campaign and teenage pregnancy were not evident. Although CHDP is currently not operationalizing the ideal development communication intervention which triggers societal transformation among B'laan entities, the rich use of interpersonal verbal messages, frequent personal interaction and the use of indigenous media can be improved to transform them.

Keywords: health communication, transformational communication, B'laan tribe