

CHAPTER FOUR

CAM RELATED COMMUNICATIONS

4.1 Creating Awareness and Mutual Appreciation

Communication is very important to maintain the interest of sponsors. Some sponsors also want interaction with a community ambassador through correspondence. They want to read how the child/family is doing and want to develop a relationship.

Apart from a personal link between the sponsor and child/ family ambassador in their village, there is a need for more information about the development programs and the context in which the children live. This need is not only felt at the REK's office. Sponsors have also indicated that they would like to learn more about the culture and geographical area in which the children grow up and what is happening to improve their lives. At the same time, we would like sponsors to know how our child ambassador approaches the works. This can be done in different ways, including the provision of program newsletters.



However, because REK is a child-focused organization that is committed to transparency towards our sponsors, we want to involve children in sharing important information: what is the community doing (together with other stakeholders) to make a change in the lives of the most vulnerable? Therefore, in some of the programs, youth will be trained to write stories about their community and the programs. To support these stories, photos and even films will be added just like real life reporters prepare their stories. This way we want to contribute towards a greater awareness of development needs and successes, as well as mutual appreciation between people in the north and south.

Child Interest and Participation

As child-centered organizations, it's important to take the interest of the child into account during the correspondence process. To do this, it is necessary to ensure full participation of children and ask ourselves whether the children are able to freely express their feelings and opinions. Are they treated with respect and dignity in the communication process? Children will be the main actors in the correspondence and have the opportunity to report what is of interest to them in the community and how the program impacts their lives. They will need to be supported by facilitators that have received thorough training on the principles of child participation and protection and on how to guide children in the communication process.

Writing a letter is not part of everyday life of most of the children in the south. Literacy rates differ a lot per region, but often it is only at the age of 13 or 14 that children learn how to write a letter. This means that younger children do not always have the skills to write a letter, although they are often the sponsor's contact person. Therefore, we might need to look at the possibility of assisting children to communicate in an age appropriate manner. Children at a younger age can communicate meaningfully through drawings and photographs. This will have to happen in a safe and caring environment where preparing a means of communication is fun, in a way that is appropriate for (the skills of) the child and which provides information that is of interest to the sponsor.

- To make it fun, easy, enjoyable and entertaining -



Keeping It Up

We like to look at the communication between child and sponsor as a game in which two people a ball off the ground together by throwing it to each other. First of all, it takes two to play this game and it's fun. The players are not competing with each other, but have the same goal: to keep the ball off the ground. Therefore, it's important for both players to stay actively involved in the game, helping and challenging each other. Meanwhile, the players learn a lot about each other, which makes the game even more fun. To us, this image of keeping the ball off the ground even evokes more elevated ideas like: keeping up each other, keeping up the world and keeping up God's honor.

So we want people to relate to each other, learn more about each other and we believe in correspondence as a means to this goal. But it has to be real 'two-way communication' in which both correspondents help and challenge each other. What can we, as REK, do to make that happen? We have to make it fun: easy, enjoyable and entertaining.

Test All Things and Hold Firmly That Which Is Good

New means of communication are planned to let the voice of the children be heard more clearly, both in their correspondence as well as in the stories they tell about the community. The correspondence will be of better quality through the use of clear formats, the training of facilitators and the monitoring of contents. More attention will be given to allow younger children to communicate through drawings, photographs and - in the long run - films. And because communication is achieved digitally more often, sponsors will receive more information by e-mail or on their web-based site.

REK still has a large number of sponsors that might not have an internet connection. This means that for the time being, a lot of correspondence will continue to take place by mail, but this is expected to be reduced gradually.

REK will also make a clearer distinction between sponsors that want to be involved in correspondence with children and those who don't want this. We will ensure that those who do not feel like writing cards and letters still receive the necessary information.

4.2 Frequency, Facilitation and Process of the Communications

We feel we need to stick to the communication between sponsor and child (community ambassador) that takes place three times per year. This is the minimum to keep the sponsor involved. At the same time, the majority of sponsors have indicated this is sufficient to keep them informed.

The timing of the communication should coincide with the education system of the country where the children live. This will ensure that they can be involved in the correspondence, as they often migrate during the holidays. At the same time, it is the most logical time to report on the wellbeing of the child towards the end of the year or at the beginning of a new school year, when the child knows whether he or she has moved to the next grade.

The content of the communication basically consists of three elements:

1. Information on the wellbeing of the child and his or her family (through letters and progress reports supported with drawings),
2. Information on what happens in the community (stories with photos provided by the community reporters),
3. Information on the program as a whole (written by the program managers, illustrated with photos).

May/June

*1. Child letter/
drawing &
progress
report (Africa)*

August/ September

*2. Program
Newsletter*

November / December

*3. Card & photo
of child or family
(&progress
report
India/Ethiopia)*

Organizing and Facilitating the Correspondence Process

In the communication process, a number of issues need to be considered. First of all: the interest of the child, which includes their participation in a child-friendly manner. This means that the correspondence should be enjoyable and shouldn't interfere too much with their daily schedule.

Although partner organizations are committed towards facilitating the communication process, REK wants to minimize the workload of its partners as much as possible. This is best achieved by integrating communication activities into the program, for example by making the writing of the letters a part of the school curriculum. Story writing can also be integrated as an activity of the school or the children's self-help groups.

To ensure good quality communication, it is important that children receive guidance from thoroughly trained facilitators. These facilitators should be skilled in applying child and age sensitive participatory approaches to encourage children to express their own ideas and feelings.

A great advantage of integrating the communication into the development program is that it contributes towards the skills of the children in a natural way. At the same time, the products of the communication contribute towards community development. The stories that the children write could be used to make the general population of the community aware of certain topics, such as water and sanitation. They could also be used in lobby activities to clarify identified needs or problems in the community.

Sponsor Correspondence Toolkit

A toolkit has been put together to assist CAM staff to help children write meaningful and quality correspondence. This toolkit can include:

1. Pictures of families in the Netherlands
2. Sponsor passport
3. Other materials

Process and Timeframe Communications

May - Letter writing process and progress report for kids with sponsor

From who	To who	What	Final date
HACI/HACA	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview list kids name with sponsor name(from Pluriform) (address labels will be printed through Pluriform)	First week of March (HACA) First week of February (HACI)
Partner	HACA/ HACI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter of the child Annual progress report of the child (Africa) Processed overview kids with sponsor list (same Pluriform list) 	31 March HACI 30 April HACA
HACI/HACA	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send reminder to partners for letters not received 	
HACA / HACI	Sponsors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> letter of the child annual progress report of the child (HACA) 	Before end May HACI Before 15 th June HACA
	REK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check processed overview kids with sponsor. 	30 th of June

NB: Children under the age of 6: There is a special format for the children under 6 years. Please use this form to give the sponsor an update about the child. Children older then 3 years can add a drawing.

November - Christmas Card and Recent Photo for Kids with Sponsor

From who	To who	What	Final date
HACI/HACA	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview list kids name with sponsor name(from Pluriform) (address labels will be printed through Pluriform)	First week of October (HACA/ HACI)
Partner	HACA/ HACI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Card/ photo/ progress report of the child (HACI) Card/ photo (HACA) Processed overview kids with sponsor list (same Pluriform list) 	15 th November HACI/ HACA
HACI/HACA	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send reminder to partners for non received cards/photo 	
HACA / HACI	Sponsors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Card/ photo/ progress report of the child Card/ photo (HACA) 	Before 15 th of December HACI/ HACA
	REK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check processed overview kids with sponsor. 	15 th January

SRD List of All Sponsored Kids

Two times a year, you will receive a CAM list from HACI/HACA. This SRD list will inform you about the sponsored children in the program that need to write a letter or Christmas card.

When sending back the letters and/or Christmas cards to HACI/HACA, you need to send the processed CAM list along.

Note: You cannot send the letters back to the office without a processed list!

4.3 Guidelines Context Letter

The reason why a context letter will be sent is to give a sponsor at the beginning of a CAM a good insight in the community where the child or family lives. We familiarize the sponsors with the country and the environment and describe cultural aspects, customs and habits. This will make communication easier and much more fun to understand each other. It would be great if the reader of the context letter can imagine himself walking around in the village and meeting other villagers. The challenge is to write in a lively way as if you first visit your village. Please interview the children and family ambassadors with the questions below to let them participate in the process. The answers will help you to write the context story.

Questions to the community ambassadors:

- Description of the villages where families come from.
- Where is the village located? How does the natural environment look like?
- How big is the village?
- What binds the people together, for example a certain place or areas?
- Where are they proud of?
- What language do they speak?
- What are the means of subsistence?
- What products are produced?
- Education: is there a school?
- What are common occupations?
- Is there a medical post or clinic nearby?
- Is there electricity, a water pump or water?
- To which ethnic group / tribe do the villagers belong?
- What are the opportunities for children in the village to play?
- What do the adults / children do in their spare time?
- What are their dreams for the future?

What are the stories that come about in a natural way? Stories that are told around the water well, on the field or the market?

Pictures

Please send 6 pictures attached in high resolution to illustrate the context story.

When will the context letter be sent?

A context letter will be sent when a new program starts or when a batch of new children or families will become part of the program.

Support in the preparation of a context letter will be provided by HACI/HACA. Context letters are to be submitted to HACI/HACA.

The REK office in the Netherlands will prepare and send one letter per program to the sponsors. They will receive a letter that is personalized with the name of the sponsored child or family.

See appendix 10 & 11 for a format for the context letter and an example

4.4 Writing Letters to the Sponsor

Writing a letter to the sponsor can be very enjoyable. Can you imagine getting to know somebody from the other part of the world? Ambassadors can ask questions to get to know the other person and his or her family. Ambassadors can get to know another culture, things about the country and there is much more to discover.

To make writing enjoyable, questions can help the child ambassadors to get to know the other person. If children describe what they personally like, what's going on in their family's life, it makes it easier to communicate.

Sponsors can get to discover their culture, behavior and the child as unique person or family. Please find appendix 12 letter writing format and guidelines

Introduction

The children always write to another person or family and it is good to be aware what name the child writes down in the letter.

Sometimes, a company sponsors a family or child and then the child can't write: Dear VOF or Dear Kruitbos BV. This means "Dear Company". We prefer to make it personal and use the surname or the first name of the sponsor. The child can use the name that the sponsor uses underneath their letter.

If the sponsor gives two names, it is possible to address the sponsor with the first name.

General information

The ambassador can tell more about him/herself, the family and things the ambassador does.

- What kind of animals do you have?
- What do you eat and how is it prepared?
- How far do you have to walk to fetch water?
- Where are you dreaming of?
- What do you or your parents do for living?
- What is your favorite place to be or to play?
- With whom do you like to play and what kind of games do you play?
- How are the kids/you doing at school?
- What's your favorite subject at school and why?
- Tell something about your favorite game.
- Where do you like to play?
- Are there any difficulties in your family?
- What are the struggles in the community?

Answering Questions from the Sponsor

What did your sponsor write about before? It is good to answer the questions because the sponsor really likes to know more about you and your family.

Are there personal things of the sponsor you can pray for?

Closing

Your name

Translation to English:

When letters are written in local language, the program staff has to translate the letters for the sponsors to English. Please translate the letter literally and don't polish the story.

Letters may not contain:

- Any request for money, gifts or favors.
- Any contact details of the child

The sponsor letter is very important. Please be very accurate in the information you provide. If the child received a letter of the sponsor which contained questions to the child, make sure the questions are answered!

What to write?

Be creative! Give, for example, information about; my family, animals around the home, day at school, food, country, culture etc.

Give attention to:

- Education of children (have they been promoted to the next grade? Where do they go to school? What do they like?)
- How the family situation is improving because of the program. Is there a good harvest this year?
- Special activities that the child participated in
- The questions asked in the letter received from the sponsor.
- Ask for prayer by sponsor

What if the child cannot write?

All ages:

Let the child dictate a letter to the childcare staff who will write for them. The child should still sign his/her name. The childcare staff must add a note explaining why the child cannot yet write and that the letter was dictated and written by the child care staff. The childcare staff must also sign the letter.

Example: "Rosa is 7 years old and still cannot write well, so she dictated this letter to me and I wrote for her. Signed, Victor Mbuvu, manager."

Ages 6 - 10:

For the children ages 6-10 who cannot write, let them draw or color a picture.

If the sponsored child is older (11 + years) and does not yet know how to write, the child care staff should also explain why and explain how the program is helping the child learn how to read and write.

What if the child is too young to write?

CAM starts at the age of 6. This means that a large number of community ambassadors (in the age group of 6-10) will have difficulty expressing themselves in writing. Therefore, younger children will be given the opportunity to communicate in their own way. This can mean making a drawing or telling a story.

Drawing

Younger children will not be able to write a letter. The sponsor will understand this. However, most children will not be able to write a letter. It is most valuable to the sponsor to receive a meaningful drawing. This will require guidance from the facilitator. It is important that plans are made to ensure that the picture drawn one year is different from the drawing in the next year.

Some guidelines:

- Make sure the child to be comfortable (through the use of start-ups, games and songs)
- Explain clearly what the assignment is
- Possible assignments are expressions of emotions, feelings. For example, what makes the child happy in the community? What makes the child glad or angry?
- The child could also make a drawing that supports what is written in the letter. For example, when it is about agriculture activities done by the family.
- You could also ask the child to draw what it likes to do most outside school hours or what amazes the child about the community.
- Please add a few sentences in which the facilitator explains what and why the child has drawn this.
- Make sure the child can use good drawing materials.

Storytelling

Another possibility is to let the children tell the childcare staff about themselves. This could end up in a short story or a letter that will be dictated by the child and written by the staff. It's very important to ask the child questions and let them come up with their own story. Please do not polish the story and do not make an adult like story of it.

The child can still sign his/her name under it. The childcare staff must add a note explaining why the child cannot yet write and that the letter was dictated and written by the childcare staff. The childcare staff must also sign the letter.

For the children aged 6-10 who cannot write, let them draw or color a picture.

If the sponsored child is older (11 + years) and does not yet know how to write, the child care staff should also explain why and explain how the program is helping the child learn how to read and write.

4.5 Program Newsletter

Sponsors also receive a program newsletter in the month of September. This newsletter will be written by the headquarter and translated by REK. The newsletter will give information about what has happened in the program in the period April to March.

This is a general report and newsletter to the sponsor from the program manager, in which the past year (period July - April) is being described. It is a unique opportunity to communicate directly with the sponsors to increase their knowledge and understanding of the work - to help them become a knowledgeable, praying sponsor.

The primary purpose is to inform the sponsor about the key program activities that have served the children, family and community in the past year and what changes have occurred in the lives of the sponsored children as a result.

Please make sure that you write the newsletter in a comprehensible way. Don't use any difficult words without explaining. Please see appendix 14, 15 & 16 for format, guidelines & example Newsletter

Content:

- Describe the key activities of the program and discuss significant impact or changes that occurred as a result. There is no need to list and describe every activity. Just give the highlights.
- Include one or more short success stories about sponsor children.
- Include any special information you wish to share with all the sponsors about your program, the culture, how the children view life, etc.

- Include photos of activities and staff.
- Do not address the children by mentioning the child codes; always mention the names of the children.
- Thank sponsors for their support.

Take note:

- Remember REK is a child-centered organization. Make sure enough attention will be given to children in the program.
- To minimize the reporting burden, it is recommended that the manager writes one report that covers the entire program.
- Please do not use professional language that the sponsor will not understand. Write as if you were telling a friend about your work.
- Size or length: 2 pages.

Who	To whom	What	Final date
Partner	HACI/HACA/PSC	Draft program newsletter	First week of May
HACI/HACA PSC	REK	Checked program newsletter	First week of June
REK		Translations/ editing	June-August
REK	Sponsor	Send newsletter to sponsor	First week of September
REK	HACI/HACA/ PSC	Final version and feedback on the quality of the letter	End of September

4.6 Community Ambassador Annual Progress Report

Many sponsors pay close attention to their child's annual report and compare it to last year's report or to other information they have received about the child. Explain if there are significant changes in status that the sponsor may wonder about. The annual report must be accurate and consistent with the last report (or child introduction sheet if the child was recently sponsored).

- Name and child number
- Grade - child should be in the next grade from the last annual report. If not, explain why.
- Health status - should be the same or better than previous year. If worse, please explain or attach sick report.

There are three formats for progress reports;

- A progress report for children below 6 years of age
- A progress report for primary & secondary school [see appendix 13](#)
- A progress report for families

Partner organizations in India and Ethiopia send the progress report & photo together with the Christmas card in December.

The rest of Africa sends the progress report together with the CR letter in May/ June.

Illness report

If the health status of the child / family has been seriously affected during the past year, attach the illness report to the progress report.

4.7 Christmas Card

The program designs or selects a Christmas card. The sponsor would be happy to receive a handmade card, made by the child. Each ambassador writes a short personal message or response to any letter received. Answer questions asked by the sponsors. Otherwise, keep the message short. It's just a greeting card.

Recent Picture of Child/ Family

The sponsors want to know how the child/ family are doing. A recent photo is one indicator. Therefore, during the quarter before Christmas, the quality of the child photo is extremely important. Poor quality photos cannot be used. Use the following guidelines when taking pictures of the child.

Pictures have to be redone if they do not meet these guidelines:

- Always use color pictures.
- Pictures should be of good quality with regard to lightening and positioning.
- The child should be entirely visible, from the top of the head to the feet.
- The background can be interesting but it should not distract (natural environment)
- Always use maxi size pictures
- Picture size needs to be printed 10 * 15 cm digital pictures.
- It is not allowed to adjust an old photo to make it look like a new one. So don't change the background etc. (STRICTLY NO PHOTO MANIPULATION)
- Be sure that you add an updated (new) photo to the child progress report (India and Ethiopia). We often see child introduction photos which are being used again. This is not allowed!
- Write name and number of the child on the back of the picture.
- Make sure the child in the picture is dressed in a proper way. The photo shouldn't provoke and should present the child with dignity.

Note:

Please make sure that you store the photos in a proper way. A photo should be in the child folder or be stored as a digital picture.

4.8 Storytelling

Subject

To write a good story, you have to come up with a subject which you want to write about. To receive information, you can interview another person. Use questions to receive the information you need to write a story of one or two pages. Please find an example of a story in appendix 17.

Question yourself:

- What happened?
- Where did it happen?
- How did something happen?
- Why did it happen?
- When did it happen?

Heading

Describe in a few words what your story is about. This heading is also a teaser for people to read the story.

Intro

Write an introduction of a few sentences on the subject. Make these first few lines interesting and make the reader curious to read the whole story.

Body

Write about the subject in the body. Share information or background information and try to write the text actively.

Summary

You give a summary of the story in a few sentences and add a conclusion or a statement.

Picture

Illustrate your story with a picture. Show on the picture what the subject is about. Show, for example, the well you are talking about or the person you interviewed.