STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AT THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES: A CASE STUDY OF THE REGIONAL SUPPORT HUB

BY

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DECLARATION

I confidently proclaim that this research project is my original work and has not been presented for the award of any other degree in any other university.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my loving mother Gladys Kagendo and father Geoffrey Kiganka for their prayers and encouragement. My siblings Kim, Grace and Mercy for believing in me and my friend Valerie for always encouraging and being there for me.

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Thank you.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABOD	Administrative Budget Obligation Document
COP	Country Operations Plan
ExCom	Executive Committee
GA	General Assembly
GSP	Global Strategic Priorities
HOP	Hub Operations Plan
IDPs	Internally displaced Persons
MSRP	Management of Systems, Resources and People
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OIOS	The Office of Internal Oversight Services
PoC	People of Concern
RSC	Regional Service Centre
RSH	Regional Support Hub
SOP	Standard Operations Procedures
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the research was to find out the challenges by UNHCR Regional Support Hub in implementing a strategic plan. Organizations can argue that they have been making efforts in implementation of strategies. The research utilized a Case study design. Data was collected from 4 senior employees within the organization. Data was collected using an interview guide and content analysis was the qualitative research technique. The findings showed that UNHCR Regional Support Hub faced organizational challenges in strategic plan implementation. Among these are: inadequate resources, poor communication, wide organizational structure, lack of employee motivation and commitment, organizational culture, complex administrative systems. These are some of the issues that need to be tackled in strategic planning execution.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Organizations are open systems that interact with the ever changing environment for resources. The environmental changes are as a result of accelerated political, economic, social and technological changes and uncertainties. When a change occurs in the environment, the organization reacts by developing a strategic plan to adapt, retain or gain competitive advantage. A strategic plan is a process that defines a corporation's direction and how it will go in relation to achieving its mission (Sánchez Abril, 2012). It enables a company to evaluate resources and budgets, set priorities and objectives and to develop methods that will be used to accomplish the goals. This plan becomes part of an organization's functioning system. According to George Morrissey (1995) strategic plans provides an outline for of the strategic thinking, course and actions that lead to the accomplishment of the planned and consistent results. It is useful for the growth and survival of an organization, however implementing the plan to actionable outcomes becomes a challenge for managers.

The primary objectives end up being forgotten when strategy moves towards its implementation stage losing the momentum and eventual expected benefits for the organization. Attention should be given to the implementation of strategies to avoid common pitfalls by continuously improving strategy implementation activities.

Traditional implementation of strategy concepts emphasizes on the structural aspects thereby minimizing the effort put into the exercise. The execution effort does not focus

on only a single element, such as the company's configuration but requires the soft details too such as the human and cultural resources aspects. According to Raps (2004), taking into account both the soft and hard facts (such as operating profit, profitability and the turnover ratios) to make sure that the cultural facets and human capital get equal rank as organizational elements. On the whole, the integrative interpretation lets the organization to advance its implementation actions that would be realistic. However, implementing a strategic plan has a lot of challenges. Inappropriate strategies, resistance to change, ineffective leadership, lack of honest upward conversations or communication with management, inadequate resources, lack of control as some of the challenges, (Niklas, 2014). The theories that will be used to explain why managers experience difficulty in implementation of strategic plan include social learning and social cognitive theory, resource dependency theory and institutional theory.

1.1.1 Strategic Planning

Strategic management analyzes the major initiatives undertaken by an organization's executive through planning, implementing and evaluating resources and performance in external environments. It entails organizations mission, vision, objectives, decision making on plans and policies time and again in terms of programs and projects. Strategic management originated in the 1950's and was viewed as the best way to ensure productivity and profits with a focus on achieving organizations goals by analyzing the internal and external environment. In the strategic management process, implementation comes right after the planning process, but before evaluation and is considered the most

challenging phase because it is difficult to implement strategy in the entire organization (Hrebiniak, 2006).

Successful plan implementation needs a mixture of a range of aspects and not a linear and prescriptive type of implementation model because the plan execution is too complex to be analyzed by such a model. According to Okumus (2003), some of the most commonly used frameworks such as industry structure analysis, SWOT analysis, and generic strategies for practicing managers and researchers in strategic formulation and analysis in with regard to strategic management. However, there is no dominant or agreed-upon framework in strategic implementation.

Several implementation frameworks have been advanced in understanding and providing an explanation why an organization succeeds or experiences major challenges in implementing its strategic plan. According to Chetty (2010) six factors considered in successful implementation of strategic plans that must be aligned with firm's strategic choice include: commitment by executives, communication of strategic plans, increasing accountabilities, choosing the finest employees to manage vital initiatives, monitoring and tracking progress. Brenes, et al., (2007) pointed out five key factors for the execution of a strategy: the process of stratagem formulation, systematic implementation follow up and control, corporate governance, leadership and motivation of management and employees. Other implementation framework created by Waterman et al (1980) argued that efficient strategic discharge essentially attends to the connection between seven factors: strategy, systems, structure, style, subordinate, staff, and skills goals. An analysis

if these frameworks done by Okumus (2003) revealed important similarities on the implementation framework consisting of a summary of organizational structure, strategy formulation, organizational people, culture, communication , outcome and control. Okumus (2001) recognized several implementation aspects and created a conceptual approach by cataloguing the factors into four main groupings, namely, context, content, outcome and process. These studies found out that combination of various factors and not a standard of factors will make the implementation process successful. Managers should therefore make knowledgeable judgments regarding the strategy implementation process instead of relying on ready-made solutions. They should utilize a holistic strategy to perceiving the creation and implementation of plan and subsequently evaluate how the strategy execution issues interact among themselves and how these factors impact the process (Okumus, 2003). UNHCR continues to operate in a volatile environment requiring constant revision of its strategic plans. The strategic devices delineate the overall goals and key strategies regarding the UNHCR's mandate with respect to protection of IDPs (internally displaced persons), refugees, returnees, and other vulnerable individuals. It is important for UNHCR to ensure effective implementation of its strategies to ensure within its mandate that the needs of refugees are properly met.

This study looks at Behavioral theory which focuses on the human resource element in the organization, how motivation affects how they act and perform in accordance to the organizational strategy emerging the important resource for stakeholders to use in the implementation of organizational or business strategies (Lorange 1998). The Organizational structure looks at how poor communication can lead to poor

implementation of strategic plans. Management needs to ensure that the entire organization understands the mission, vision, objectives and the direction the organization. According to Noble (1999) poor vertical communication interferes and affects effective strategy implementation. Resource dependency theory discusses the challenges management faces in allocating scarce resources effectively and ensuring optimum use for maximum benefit.

1.1.2 Challenges of Strategy Implementation

Among the early contributors to strategy implementation, majority claimed that about50% and 80% of the effort that goals into the implementation of a strategy fail (Ashkenas & Francis, 2000; Beer & Nohria, 2000; Raps 2004; Atkinson, 2006). The failure means that either the fresh plan was invented but was not implemented or that it was put into practice but yield no results. Herbiniak (2006) suggests that whereas the strategy development is hard, to make the strategy work and execute it are more challenging. Cater and Pucko (2010) support this argument by arguing that concluded that even as 80% of businesses boast of the desired strategies, just only about 14% have succeeded to execute them well. A research done by Charan & Colvin (1999) shows that about 70% of 10 CEOs end up not succeeding not due to their bad strategies, but because of their bad implementation strategies. Various studies on factors that challenge strategy implementation support this view. These factors can be broadly classified into leadership style, uncertainty, information accuracy and availability, organizational culture, organizational structure, human capital, and the technological endowments.

Studies done by Alexander (1985) and Strabel (1996) established that the major hurdle to the realization of an organizational strategy include a discharge work taking longer time-frame than planned, lack of management support or coordination, poor communication, resistance from lower levels and poor planning of activities. It is the responsibility of the administrative officials to manage the challenges well to successfully implement the strategic plan of an organization. Successful managers understand the importance of clearly defining the purpose of an organization and establishing realistic goals. The formulation of organizational strategies is the function of executives whiles the implementation aspect the job of middle and lower-ranking managers.

Another challenge identified by most organization is the lack of skills by employees for the execution of strategic plans. Daft (2005) thinks that the implementing approaches need a proper detection skill gap and bringing those respective dexterities into the organization. Furthermore, Paterman (2008) suggests that a mixture of fresh recruits, introduction of proper training, development, and coaching can be useful for the implementation of strategic plans. In the recent years, organizations have put their resources into developing tactical planning skills but success rate is only 10% to 30%, (Raps, 2004).

Managers continually monitor and correct, if necessary, the results of the implemented strategy to guide the organization activities toward achievement of goals. Throughout the implementation process, managers must acquire information on both the environment and activities within the organization. Managers always keep in mind that the ultimate test of

a strategic planning rests with how well the organization is able to achieve its designated goals.

1.1.3 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNHCR was set up by the United Nations General Assembly after the WWII where a many Europeans ended up becoming the victims of displacement hence now being mandated to spearhead and provide global action for the safeguard of refugees and other Persons of Concern while addressing root causes of large scale forced displacement which is a violation of the human rights. UNHCR which is head-quartered in Geneva, is directly monitored by the UN General Assembly (GA), and it is controlled by the Member Countries that form its Executive Committee (ExCom) which is part of its organization structure. ExCom's main role is to approve the UN refugee agency's annual program priorities and budget. The latter is sourced from intergovernmental institutions, corporations, donations from Individuals and governments around the world. UNHCR's budget which in 2015 rose to $5,179.5 billion is based on four pillars namely; stateless people, refugees, IDPs, and reintegration programs. These pillars ensure the rights of PoC are safe guarded including protection of those who are forced to flee from their countries, right to seek asylum, meeting humanitarian basic wants such as food, shelter, food and safeguarding the plight of stateless people, (retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/4b03cd33128.pdf).

UNHCR just like other international organizations, formulate and implements their strategic plans. Strategy in the UNHCR context focuses on operations and activities at the macro level, and more specifically, on longer term problems or issues that will continue to be of concern if not addressed. (Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/partners /PARTNERS/3b9cc03b5.pdf).

UNHCR established Regional offices which are independent and having separate ABOD in their budgets are managed by bureau or functional units with an intended purpose of providing specialist support to benefit various UNHCR country operations in the world. Functional units are regional global posts which are out-posted from Headquarters. In 2003 UNHCR established RSH so that it could provide specialist operational support and technical advice within the Horn of Africa, the East Africa and Central Africa and Great Lake Region covering 13 countries. Its main goal was to support UNHCR operations that were pursing global strategic priorities. (Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/432193fd2.pdf)

RSH consists of 22 specialist units that provide coordination and support to field offices via out-posted functions from parent units at headquarters. This specialist units include, Supply Management, Water Sanitation and Hygiene, Registration, Geographic Information Systems, Resettlement, Women and children, Public health, HIV and Reproductive health, Nutrition Food and Security, Physical planning and Shelter, Health Information Systems, Public Information, Inspector General Office, Legal, Education, Financial Management, Innovation, Legal, Protection (SGBV, RSD, Child Protection,

Statelessness) Cash-based intervention, Mixed migration, Solutions and Development and Private Sector Fundraising. The Hub is headed by a Manager that reports to the Bureau and ensures that the operational needs and priorities of the region are aligned with the activities and work plans of the specialist units. This is important because it ensures that it achieves the global objectives of protection, operational support and advocacy.

1.2 Research Problem

A carefully crafted strategic plan may be less useful if it is not implemented carefully and exhaustively. According to Bayrami (2010) large organizations have difficulties in strategy implementation and have failed to execute strategic plans. According to Allio (2009) an Economic survey revealed that 57 percent of firms failed at the execution stage in the past three years. Implementation of a strategic plan well requires top down, bottom up collaboration within the organization. Quinn (1980), cites that if a business or organization intends to sustain its vibrant and flourishing outlook in the long run, then it should conduct an impact assessment of its external environment.

A lot of resources and efforts have been put into strategic planning by UNHCR Regional Support hub in producing its strategic directions of 2013-2015. Most organizations spend a lot on the formulation stage rather than the implementation stage. According to Raps and Kauffman (2005) organizations have unsatisfactorily low rate of success of only 10%-30% of planned strategies when not implemented well.

International studies that have been done on this subject include; Korskik (2013) who studied implementing sports in refugee camps. The study focused on practices rather than challenges of implementation; Odunola (2010) studied problems affecting the execution of universal basic education programs in Nigeria. The research did not look at the role of education strategic plans and challenges of implementing them.

Local studies that have been conducted on this subject include; Mutuvi (2013) studied factors influencing the accomplishment of tactical plans by non-governmental organizations. Macharia (2015) studied strategic planning practices at United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Mobisa (2007) studied Strategy formulation and implementation at United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Kenya. Muthuiya (2004) studied Strategy Implementation in Non – Profit Making Organizations in Kenya: The Case of African Medical Research Foundation (AMREF)-Kenya. It can be inferred that through the studies carried out above none focused on implementation challenges of a strategic plan. Addressing the challenges of implementation of strategic plans has been understudied also some of the studies that have been on strategy implementation in UNHCR and which relate to current topic of study, none concentrated on Regional Support Hub of UNHCR. This study intends to answer the question; what are some of the strategic plan implementation challenges for UNHCR – Regional Support hub?

1.3 Research Objective

The objective was to find out strategic plan implementation challenges at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Regional Support Hub.

1.4 Value of the Study

Although extraordinary advancement has been achieved in the strategic management area, the issue of strategy accomplishment and failure continues to affect organizations. This study is important to International organizations and current RSC managers as they can be able to use findings of this research to correct mistakes and practice ways of dealing with implementation challenges of a strategic plan.

The investigation will be helpful to policy makers in UNHCR in coming up with strategies that would be useful in dealing with implementation challenges for the goal of enhancing UNHCR's operational effectiveness as well as enhancing the UNHCR's ability to fulfill its duties in service of refugees and other needy people.

A well formulated strategic plan without its implementation hinders attainment of the vision of the organization hence this study will provide reference material for academicians, UNHCR staff (consultants, interns) to conduct further research to add to existing body of knowledge.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section discussed models related to the study. Relevant literature was also appraised to identify knowledge gaps. The text review informed the application and relevance of the research findings

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework is a collection of unified concepts, propositions and definitions that offers a systematic outlook of phenomena (Bull, 1991). The following theories provided the basic theoretical foundation of our research; Social learning and social cognitive theory, Resource dependency theory, Expectancy theory and Institutional theory.

2.2.1 Social Cognitive Theory

Schaap (2006) affirmed that the senior leadership and managerial behavior directly influence the success or failure of discharge of the strategy. When executives do not understand the organizations vision or mission this becomes a hindrance to the successful implementation of strategic plans. According to Bandura (1986) personal issues and the situation influences the behavior of employees. Within this perspective, four elements emerge that have a direct influence towards successful implementation of strategic plans. These are commitment, leadership and cultural context. According to MacMillan (1978), developing commitment among individuals of an business, plays a very important role during strategic management. The motivation directs behavior towards particular goals

especially employees who tend to be motivated by their own individual interest rather than the overall organizations goals. In a study carried out by Guth and MacMillan (1986) on middle level managements motivation towards implementation of particular strategies in an organization and found out that if their individual interest is being affected they tend to pass on, delay or allow the implementation process to fail. It was noted that managements increase in the involvement of lower level employees in participation in strategy formulation, this increases commitment Beer and Eisenstat (2000).

Leadership is another important element of behavior in relationship to strategy implementation. Leadership is the action of leading or influencing a group of people. Therefore during implementation process according to (Crittenden et al 2008) a leader should be competent and effective and can play a decisive role in influencing the performance of employees to achieve organizational goals. Lapiz (2010) Leaders are responsible for ensuring that scarce resources are allocated and device strategies of dealing with resistance to change. Managers should therefore possess a combination of technical and interpersonal skills (Noble, 1999).

Organizational culture refers to the system of common beliefs and values that govern how a group behaves in an organization (Crittenden et al. 2008). Each organization creates a unique culture and manner of doing things such as by history, experience, circumstances which foster strategy implementation to certain extent.

2.2.2 Resource Dependency Theory

Resource dependency theory looks at an organization from an external perspective. Organizations compete for scarce resources in the environment. These resources include labor, capital and raw materials and should be effectively utilized. Managers allocate these resources to priority plans. It is the responsibility of the management to allocate the resources to their most helpful tasks and integrating and coordinating actions of participating staff and function (Pryor et al. 2007). The dependency of an organization on external resources allows it to acquire resources that will enable it to implement a strategic plan for its own survival.

Since these resources are possessed by others, the organization must interact with external stake holders that control the resources consequently becoming more dependent on its external environment. The more interactions the organization undertakes with its external environment, the more assured it will become in response to its access to resources, hence being dependent on the stakeholders that own the resources (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). However, it may become independent off any influence if it does not rely on the stakeholders for its resources (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003).

2.2.3 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory, addresses the behavioral patterns of an organization and how its internal challenges affect strategy implementation. Institutional theory provides processes through which structures become authoritative guidelines for social behavior. This theory identifies and examines implications that support legitimacy and survival of organization's culture, including factors such as social environment, culture, regulation including, history tradition, economic motivations/incentives, and the legal environment, whilst recognizing the overall importance of resources (Baumol et al., 2009). According to institution theorists, Meyer and Rowan (1991) ; DiMaggio and Powell (1983) institutional settings can largely shape the advancement of formal constitutions in an business or organization, frequently more intensely than market dynamics and pressures.

Institutional theory often defines what is appropriate or legitimate (Scott, 2007), and leaves other discharge actions intolerable or still outside consideration (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). This affects how organizations make decisions especially on the implementation of strategy. The theory gives helpful framework for examining organizational relationship with its environment while emphasizing on the social norms, rules, values, and expectations, as the main sources of pressure on institutiond (Elwak 2013).

2.3 Strategic Plan Implementation Process

The strategic management process implies that management should focus on defining, conducting and evaluating applied strategy. Strategic management is classified into two

distinct categories, namely, "process" and "content" research (Elbanna, 2006). While content focuses on strategic position of a firm, process is concerned with the decision making. Strategic decision making process focuses exclusively on the formulation period of a decision (Papadakis, Thanos, and Barwise, 2010). Participation in strategic decision, enhances quality of decision implementation through building commitment and consensus hence leading to better decision outcomes. According to Papadakis (1998) the participation of many players in tactical decision-making, amplifies the degree of consensus on approach among the managers, creates a common understanding of the joint task, creates an atmosphere of shared collective and makes it easy to achieve a smooth implementation. Involving middle level managers in decision making ensures their views are taken into consideration before any resource allocation is done to ensure better decisions in creation of new ways and ideas of implementing (Andersen and Nielsen, 2009).

In order to identify intricacies in the implementation stage, it is imperative to comprehend the whole strategic management process. An organization's strategy passes four main stages: environmental scanning, formulation of the strategy, implementation of the strategy and evaluation of the strategy (Wheelen and Hunger, 2002).

Investigating why the best strategies fail, reveals the inconsistencies that exist between formulation and implementation, at first, and later inconsistencies between strategy the implementation and the performance evaluation or measurement. The formulation part focuses on mission, goals, objectives and plan determination while implementation

consists of activities, budgeting and other procedures. Understanding the key dimensions to implementation process can help executives control how strategy gets defined and implemented while adjusting to the competitive environment changes.

Practicing executives or managers do not have frameworks that guide their dealings during implementation phase that is why implementation fails. Without sufficient models, they implement the strategies without a superior perception of the numerous factors that should be addressed, simultaneously, to create a successful implementation atmosphere (Okumus, 2003).

2.4 Strategic Plan Implementation Challenges

The challenge of ensuring success of implementing organizational plans has long been documented in the literature. According to Alexander (1985), in a study of large and medium US firms when making strategic decisions, he found out that implementation took a lot of time than initially planned; key challenges that emerged had not been envisaged earlier on; Various crises channelled away the attention from the right course of executing the planned decisions; Unforeseen exogenous factors affected the implementation work; insufficient direction and leadership by various departments' managers; Inadequate definition of major executable duties and activities; lack of adequate information sources and systems used to guide the implementation work; ineffective co-ordination of the implementation work; Inadequate capabilities of staff partaking in the implementation work. Miller (1987), discovered that the inadequate instruction and training provided to the lower-level staff; top managers' insufficient

communication; The dormant function of strategy formulators in the implementation; Unclearly defined role changes and changes in responsibilities of key staff; Overall objective of the strategic decisions were not well understood by staff; Supporters of the corporate decisions having abandoned the business during execution time were among the challenges that affect the effective implementation of any strategic plan.

Through the contribution of the mentioned authors, the frequently mentioned problems include; organizational operations and structure, lack of effective communication, Lack of employees' commitments, poor coordination, a lack of motivation and poor reward system, complex administrative systems, ineffective leadership, lack of proper financial management, lack of strategy flexibility, clarity and purpose (Al-Ghamdi S, 1998). Moreover, Meld rum and Atkinson(1998) identified two problems of implementation; a flawed vision of what it means to be in a strategic position within an organization; and a myopic view of what it meant to be in a strategic position within an organization.

Studies by Okumus (2003) found that limitations to the execution of strategic plans include the lack of coordination, support and resistance from different management levels. Studies done by Freedman (2003) found that implementation challenges resulted from initiative fatigue, lack of stakeholder commitment, strategic inertia, strategic drift, strategic dilution failure to appreciate progress, impatience, and none celebration of success.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section describes the methodology that the researcher used to obtain data that identified the challenges of implementing strategic plans at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Regional Support Hub..

3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to a blue print of a research study and one that tries to provide answers to questions that have been asked. It provides guidelines for the procedure of collection, analysis, and interpretation of observations. Burns & Grove (1997) argue that the design of any research or study is the last part result of a chain of decisions that the researchers make relating to how he or she conducted the study. This study adopts a case study to identify strategic plan implementation challenges at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Regional Support Hub.

A case study can be defined is the empirical examination of a contemporary issue or phenomenon in its real-life environment particularly if the precincts between the context and phenomenon are not clear (Yin 1984). The case study approach has been preferred because it covers a depth investigation of a particular organization.

3.3 Data Collection

The researcher collected the primary data using the interview guide which is the instrument of data collection. The interview guide was particularly helpful for extracting the stories behind each correspondent's experience by pursuing exhaustively the information about the topic. Respondents considered to be key informants include 5 senior managers at the current RSC. These are; Senior Admin/Finance officer, Senior Regional Public Information Officer, Senior Regional Health Information Officer, Senior Regional Protection Officer, Senior Regional Innovation officer and Senior Regional Education officer. The questions asked were open ended to ensure answers which were relevant to the objective of the study. One on one interviews was carried out after permission was granted by the organization to proceed with the interview process. Secondary data was collected using previous documented audit report that was done by OIOS as well as data drawn from internal circulars, Journals, newsletters and articles written about UNHCR.

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of data refers to the processes of examining and interpreting the data obtained from the field or research. The process sought to establish the challenges facing implementation of strategic plan in UNHCR Regional Support Hub. The essential steps in this analysis consists of the identification of the issues, the determination of the existence of proper data or information, making decision on which methodology would be appropriate for providing to various research questions, and the applications the selected methods and the evaluation, summary and communication of the results.

The information or data obtained from the interview guide was analyzed qualitatively. Qualitative data are verbal description or measurements with nonstandard scales (Ngau & Kumssa, 2004). The analytical methodology applied in the analysis of the qualitative data was content analysis because it was found to be appropriate for the study.

Content analysis refers to the systematic and qualitative description of the content of the materials or objects of a study or research (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Content analysis involves making replicable as well as valid inferences by proper coding and interpretation of textual materials.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This section covers the data analysis, research results and discussions on the study results. The data collected from primary and secondary sources in this section will describe how UNHCR Regional Support Hub handles implementation of strategic plan, discusses the findings on challenges faced during implementation of strategies and actions undertaken by UNHCR to handle the implementation of the strategy. The primary data was gathered from the interviews of four chosen higher-ranking managers out of five units that represented experts. This units were Health Information Systems, Public Information, Education, Innovation and Administration. All the respondents provided full organizational data and which constituted 80 percent response rate. Secondary data was obtained from books, memos, UNHCR reports and journals.

The data was analyzed using qualitative data analysis mainly involving making inferences by identifying characteristics of the message and grouping them into themes. In addition, this section will aid in answering the research question what are some of the strategic plan implementation challenges for UNHCR – Regional Support?

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

The respondents were individuals who hold senior positions in the organization. According to the data findings, the respondents were Senior Regional Health Information

Systems officer, Senior Regional Public Information Officer, Senior Admin and Finance Officer and Senior Regional Education Officer.

Further, of the four respondents, two had more than 12 years working experience as senior officers in UNHCR. Of the remaining two, one had between 5 years and 12 years of working experience, while one respondent had less than 5 years of working experience as a senior officer.

Upon completion of the interviews, a coding framework was used to label, compile organize and sort the data. I transcribed the in-person interviews into electronic format for open coding. Marginal remarks were made on the interview guide. The codes were organized into similar categories and the following themes emerged: leadership, resource allocation, organizational change, organization structure, organization culture, motivation and communication.

4.3 Strategic Implementation of Strategic Plan

On the question regarding who within the organization should be responsible for the implementation of a strategic plan, majority of the interviewees indicated that UNHCR has a corporate strategic plan known as the Global Appeal that includes a set of Global Strategic Priorities (GSPs) which are used for planning in UNHCR's operations. In addition, they confirmed that everyone in the organization should participate in the implementation process to ensure the success of the organization in achieving its goals. The respondents alluded that everyone within the organization should play a role and be

accountable to a particular person. They mentioned that it is the role of management to determine who should participate in implementation of strategy. In addition, they highlighted that employee involvement, communication of change, follow up , innovation, culture, accountability of employees, empowerment are some of the factors that influence success of implementing a strategic plan within their departments.

4.4 Strategic Implementation Challenges of Strategic Plan

This section outlines the findings on strategic implementation challenges that were identified that is, organizational leadership, availability of resources, organizational culture and organizational structure.

4.4.1 Organizational Leadership

The interviewees were asked to explain their role in strategy execution within their departments. From the responses, the interviewees mentioned that leadership within the department was a key driving factor towards getting things done and converting work plans into actionable results. One respondent mentioned that he does not only supervise but also guide and instruct the subordinates on how to perform work effectively and efficiently.

The study found that there was adequate leadership from the senior officers within their units who encouraged staff to adopt the strategies as well as provide motivation to ensure strategy implementation has succeeded. However, it was noted that sometimes the senior officers lacked enough time to explain and communicate the strategies involved to staff.

The social cognitive model (theory) offers a viable explanation as to how individuals attain and sustain specific behavioural attributes and patterns as a result of the influence from environment, people and behavior. Leaders induce followers to their way of thinking enabling them be self-reliable. The theory emphasized on expectancies or outcomes of change that may result from a situation. From the collective shared views obtained from the corresponds, the researcher has identified four recurrent factors which determined strategic implementation challenges at the Regional support hub: No opportunity for growth; nature of short contracts; cutting of positions; strict administrative requirement to development. According to the study, employees are unable to meet their individual goals such as job security, make long term plans, improved motivation and job satisfaction as a result of mentioned factors. This affects strategy execution at RSH.

4.4.2 Availability of Resources

The interviewees were asked if budgets are a priority during implementation stage. All agreed that budgeting is important within UNHCR to enable the organization plan for funds that will support operations. The study found that UNHCR Headquarters review plans and the budgetary requirements in April and May of each year and in October each year, the UNHCR executive committee approves the budget. One manager mentioned that resource allocation allows for strategy execution and that the organization has strived to ensure it has adequate resources to meet operational expenses. Further, respondents were asked to explain the role of donors during implementation process of a strategic

plan. They said that donors monitor funded projects to enhance quality and accountability of funding received by UNHCR Regional Support Hub.

According to the findings, organizations must interact with external stake holders that control the resources consequently becoming more dependent on its external environment. It was noted that there were four factors that affect strategy implementation at Regional Support Hub: Inadequate funding amidst growing need; limited financial resources in planning for future emergencies; Donor fatigue and Earmarked funds. When urgent needs exceed regular budgets, humanitarian organizations rely upon emergency funding appeals to fill the gaps. This poses great challenge during strategy implementation process when the funds are inadequate. It was noted that some donors do not fulfill emergency pledges as a result donor fatigue or lack of accountability and oversight and while those who do, do not give relief efforts relative to the size of their economies. On the other hand some donors earmark funds available that meet their specific interest rather than UNHCR's interest. One respondent mentioned that the donors select the best projects to achieve the highest possible impact on the beneficiaries.

4.4.3 Organizational Culture

The study continued to determine how culture poses a challenge to the implementation of a strategic plan. According to the interviewees, employees fail to understand the culture of the organization resulting to a failure in the implementation process. One respondent said that a culture of team work, unity, commitment, cooperation and partnership among UNHCR employees has enabled them support the success of implementation of strategic

plans. It was noted that the culture of resistance to change interfered with implementation of a strategic plan when new technology was introduced to the organization. It was found that the organization procures and uses latest information systems that facilitate the monitoring and implementation of strategic plans. However, staff fails to embrace or adopt a culture of reading in order to gain skills that are required to handle the new technology such as how to use MSRP system or Focus that would ensure success of strategy implementation.

4.4.4 Organizational Structure

In determining how organizational structure contributes to success or failure of implementation of strategic plans. It was purported that UNHCR had successfully implemented strategic plans through the restructuring that was done to change Regional Support Hub to Regional Service Centre which has out posted units from headquarters that support the region and change of reporting lines by introducing global positions that do not report directly to the Head of Regional Service Centre. The interviewees stated that frequent memo's from headquarters on position cuts, reduction on salary schemes and benefits as well as reduction on length of contracts interfered with the implementation process of a strategic plan since it created fear among staff on uncertainty of their careers. They said that this interference came from poor creativity, lack of innovation and motivation from staff. In addition, there was poor communication from country, field and sub offices in requesting support of experts from RSC.

Further, respondents were asked how policies and procedures affected implementation. They mentioned that discussion on standard operating procedures regularly with staff during all staff meetings ensured that they remained relevant hence consistently applied during implementation of a strategic plan. The interviewees confirmed that developing of a training programme on policies was important to create awareness for employees to possess skills in implementing strategic plans.

In determining what mechanism RSH put in place to ensure smooth process of strategy operationalization, institutionalization and control. All interviewees confirmed that there are monitoring and evaluation mechanisms used to ensure that plans put in place are achieved. One interviewee said that the Regional Support hub makes use of indicators that map various conditions at the country level hence improving implementation of projects. The interviewees stated that annual objectives and resource allocation were the tools to accomplish plan operationalization. However, it was agreed that structure, leadership and culture provided long term means of institutionalizing strategy. One respondent said that detecting problems and making adjustments controlled strategy implementation process that ensured that strategy management processes are appropriate, compatible and functioning properly.

On the challenges that emerged which were not anticipated during strategy implementation, the interviewees stated that natural calamities such as floods and droughts, insecurity, poor infrastructure, donor fatigue, exchange rate loses, poor communication, uncontrollable factors in the external environment such as political

factors affected implementation of strategic plans. One interviewee gave a case in point of political interference where Government of Kenya disbanded the department of Refugees affairs with an intention of closing the Dadaab Refugee Camp. This poses threat in implementation of already established plans.

In response to the question on what measures should be put in place to deal with challenges of implementation of a strategic plan, interviewees proposed that UNHCR should promote aggressive fundraising, Raising awareness to have and think strategy, changing the mindset in terms of sustainability, invest more time in training and empowering people, have consistency in funding and ensuring that UNHCR plans for longer periods.

4.5 Comparison with other Studies

The analysis of the themes of the study assumed a more comparative nature, given that the interviewees were able to identify similar and differing dynamics in the different contexts observed by other studies on strategic plan implementation challenges. According to research by Rapa and Kauffman (2005) top managers demonstrate loyalty to the implementation process. The interviewee noted that changes in the organizational structure, reward systems, technology or tasks would modify certain aspects of the organization before they can get institutionalized successfully.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary of the researcher's findings based on the data results from the investigations on challenges of strategy implementation at Regional Support Hub. The conclusions and the recommendations are made subsequently. It will provide conclusions and recommendations for further research.

5.2 Summary of findings

From the research, the researcher noted that UNHCR has a corporate strategic plan known as the Global Appeal that includes a set of Global Strategic Priorities (GSPs) which are used for planning in UNHCR's operations. Operational GSP guide UNHCR and its partners in developing country level operational plans (COP). Regional Support Hub provides out-posted headquarters functions for the benefit of Country operations by providing operational support and advice to 13 UNHCR country offices, 22 sub-offices, 38 field offices and 37 field units in the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region, the East Africa, and Central Africa, with a primary objective of pursuing the Global Strategic Priorities since they are related to the twenty-two (22) specialist centers or units in Regional Support Hub.

From the study, inadequate resources were found to be a challenge to implementation of strategies at the organization. Donors fatigue was found to be one of the reasons for poor fundraising on UNHCR projects. Donor fatigue refers to a phenomenon where donors no

longer donate despite their history in donating. This is a result of overwhelming requests from humanitarian organizations for support in their high budgeted projects on a multi-year pledge basis. These incessant appeals discourage donors from meeting their pledges. In addition when, donors provide funding, these are normally earmarked funds that tend to satisfy donor interests leading to failure of implementing organizational led projects.

From the analysis communication was found to be a challenge to implementation of a strategic plan. In the study it was found that Sub offices and Field offices within the Eastern Africa and great lakes region, did not know the communication channels to use to request for support from technical experts at the regional support hub. This was because the latter did not share information regarding the type of support it provides, which countries and the procedures that should be followed while requesting for technical experts in their thematic areas.

On organizational culture the challenge that was found was employee's failure to understand the culture of the organization resulting to a failure in the implementation process. In additions, staff fails to embrace or adopt a culture of reading in order to gain skills that are required to handle the new technology such as how to use MSRP system or Focus that would ensure success of strategy implementation.

From the analysis, it was evident that organizational structure faced some challenges. It was found that frequent memo's from headquarters on position cuts, reduction on salary schemes and benefits as well as reduction on length of contracts interfered with the implementation process of a strategic plan since it created fear among staff on uncertainty of their careers.

On other challenges that were not anticipated it was found that natural calamities such as floods and droughts, insecurity, poor infrastructure, donor fatigue, exchange rate loses, poor communication, uncontrollable factors in the external environment such as political factors affected implementation of strategic plans

5.3 Recommendations

To address the issue of inadequate resources UNHCR should embrace donor relationship management by building trust and making the donor's part of the solution. This is key to donor retention leading to more funding. It was recommended that public sector fundraising should embrace aggressiveness while requesting for funding from donors.

On poor communication, it was recommended that the organization should ensure that their mission and goals are known to the region through circulation of information by word of mouth from the organizations employees while going on mission, providing and circulating brochures that highlight the purpose of the organization to the region it supports.

With regards to solutions to the challenges of implementing a strategic plan that were not anticipated, the following were recommended; Aggressive fundraising, creating awareness to have and think strategy by employees, promoting information exchange and constant monitoring and evaluation of projects, introduce risk mitigation strategies that would minimize currency volatility, ensure immediate emergency response when natural disaster strikes.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study reveals the presence of various strategy implementation challenges at the Regional Support hub. From the study, it is evident that organizational structure, culture, resource availability, inadequate communication, organizational strategies uncontrollable factors, resistance to change, inadequate resources, reward systems, policies and procedures and organizational strategies affect operations of most organizations. These factors need to be considered by organizations in order to prevent challenges during implementation process.

5.5 Limitation of the study

The study encountered several challenges and limitations in its course. This case study focused on regional support hub which does not have a country operations plan of its own but rather an office providing out-posted positions to support the region. Technical experts thus going through each unit's global strategy was cumbersome.

The Protection unit that plays a major role in UNHCR was not interviewed because the nature of its work is very confidential hence it cannot disclose classified information to the public. The number of respondents interviewed was a small number making the findings not be generalizable enough beyond RSH. In addition, the duration for carrying out the study was very limited affecting comprehensive research.

5.6 Areas for further research

The study hereby recommends that additional research ought to be conducted on strategic plan implementation challenges especially in the Sub Offices or field offices within other regions of the world to allow generalization of the findings. Further research could also be conducted to determine the effectiveness of collaboration between international organizations and donors in addressing implementation challenges of strategic plans. Lastly, a study on solutions that could be adopted on implementation challenges within international organizations would help the organizations improve on their performances and reduce failures or frustrations in the implementation of a strategic plan.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Cover Letter

Dennis N. M. Kiganka

University of Nairobi,

Nairobi.

Dear Respondent,

<u>RE: REQUEST FOR FILLING A QUESTIONNAIRE</u>

I am conducting research on the factors that affect the implementation of strategic plan by regional support hub in Nairobi, Kenya. This is in partial fulfillment or execution of the requirement of the Masters of Business Administration degree program at the University of Nairobi.

Confidentiality is highly emphasized on this research, being purely academic. Your name will therefore not appear anywhere in the report. Kindly spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire.

Regards

Student

Dennis N. M. Kiganka

Sign…………………

Date…………………

Supervisor

Dr. Joseph Odhiambo Owino

Sign………………….

Date…………………

Appendix 2: Interview guide

Section A: Demographic details

1. Name of respondent……………………………………………………………………..

2. Title of respondent…………………………………………………………………………

3. Years of experience in UNHCR…………………………………………………………...

4. Telephone extension…………………………………………………………………………

5. Email…………………………………………………………………………………………

Section B: Factors involved in implementation of strategic plan

1. Who should be involved in strategy implementation? What factors influence their actions towards success of implementing a strategic plan in your department?

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2. What is your role in strategy execution in your department? has leadership been a key factor in driving execution?

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3. How does the allocation of resources affect implementation of a strategy in your department? Are budgets a priority during implementation stage?

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4. What role is played by donors during implementation process of a strategic plan?

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5. Does the culture of Regional Support Hub pose a challenge to implementation of a strategy? How has it influenced your department or unit? Explain your answer

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6. How have the following factors affected implementation of strategic plan in RSH.

   a) Organizational Structure……………………………………………….

   b) Policies and Procedures………………………………………………..

   c) Reward systems and incentives……………………………………….

Section C: How to overcome challenges:

1. How does management manage change and policy implementation? Explain your

    answer…………………………………………………………………………….

    …………………………………………………………………………………….

2. How do you monitor the factors influencing the implementation of the strategic

    plans…………………………………………………………………………………

    …………………………………………………………………………………………

    ………………………………………………………………………………………….

3. What systems has RSH put in place to ensure smooth process of strategy

    operationalization, institutionalization and control? Explain your

    answer……………………………………………………………………………..

    …………………………………………………………………………………………

4. In your opinion, what measures should UNHCR take to deal with challenges of

    strategy implementation? Explain……………………………………………

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Thank you for your cooperation