

Study Unit 2

Conflict Resolution, Reconciliation and Communication

Study Unit Outline

- I. Conflict resolution and reconciliation.
- II. Conflict resolution and reconciliation processes.
- III. Conflict resolution mechanisms.
- IV. Communication for Conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Study Unit Duration

This Study Session requires 2 hours of formal study time.

Introduction

You are welcome to your first unit of learning in this course by the end of the module, you will be able to understand the concepts of Conflict resolution and reconciliation, conflict resolution and reconciliation process as well as the conflict resolution mechanisms.

You will also have a new perspective on communication for conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Learning Outcomes of Study Unit 2

Upon completion of this study session, you should be able to:

- 1.1 Understand the concept of conflict resolution and reconciliation.
- 1.2 Understand conflict resolution and reconciliation processes.
- 1.3 Differentiate conflict resolution mechanisms.
- 1.4 Understand the notion of communication for conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Module Description

This module will help you explore and define different concepts of conflict, conflict resolution and reconciliation and conflict resolution process as well as able to develop a clear understanding on conflict resolution mechanisms and communication for conflict resolution.

2.1 Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation.

Conflict Resolution

There are two definitions of conflict resolutions. First definition is more general while the second one is specific. One important thing to remember is that both definitions denote to process or ways of resolving conflict. First definition of conflict resolution is generic one and it can be any efforts or processes aimed for resolving conflict (Waldman, 2009:6). The second definition of conflict resolution is more specific and can be referred to as (often) mediated process that conflict parties agree to resolve their deference(Waldman, 2009).

There are numerous approaches to conflict resolution. They can be formal or informal. Conflicts resolution process is formal when there are formal procedures to it. It can also be informal which is one conflict is resolved in unofficial ways. Consider here, local community's approach to resolving conflicts before international actor involve such process.

Conflict Reconciliation

Conflict reconciliation is another important process in peace-making efforts. This process can be referred to all the efforts that are stemmed from successful conflict resolution process. In other words, conflict reconciliation happens after successful conflict resolution(Kelman, 2010). The process of peace-making starts from all the efforts both locals and international community put to establish sustained peace in specific locality. Conflict reconciliation is important for sustained peace. Through this process, conflict parties agree to resolve their differences.

2.2 Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation Processes.

Conflict Prevention

Conflict Prevention has different conceptualizations. Each of these conceptualizations focus on different components of conflict prevention, but for this module conflict prevention can be defined

as any means that can ease tension or disputes between individuals or group of people. Aim of conflict prevention is minimize disputes before they escalate into violent conflict.

There are two main approaches to conflict prevention. First approach to conflict prevention is direct approach which is any short-term attempt to prevent conflict from happening while structural approach is long-term efforts that can make conflict not to happen again(SIDA, 2020). Both short-term and long-term conflict prevention aims to limit and perhaps prevent conflict escalating.

Conflict Transformation

Conflict Transformation could be “any process that involves finding durable solutions for a conflict that exist between parties”(Mitchell, 2002). This involves all the efforts taken to address root causes of conflict so that it can be transformed in way that can prevent future conflicts.

Some of the key approaches to conflict transformation aim to transform actors, issues, rule and structural issues around the conflict so that all these different structures can successfully contribute to the process of conflict transformation. It’s important to transform any disputes. This transformation takes time and happens between different spaces and timings with the goal of preventing further conflict escalations (Miall, 2004).

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is process of managing conflicts in way that alternative solutions are found for the conflict. This is to say that, any efforts that aim to transform conflicts. In conflict resolution process, solution is found for the conflict so that it can be prevented to happen in the future. This process involves both analytical and problem-solving strategies(Burton, 1980).

There are different approaches to conflict resolution. One of the most important approaches to conflict resolution includes identifying needs of conflict parties and the root causes. These will help when identifying alternatives or solutions to the conflict.

Conflict Management

Conflict management is the process in which conflicts are handled so that their negative impact or further escalations are limited. Conflict management involves different actors and stages that all work towards managing conflict. The management process involves identification of origin of the conflict so that effective mechanism for overcoming such conflicts are developed.

The goal of managing conflict is also to handle the conflict situation which has two dimensions. First dimension of the conflict focuses on beneficiaries while the second dimension is the time. For the beneficiaries, their interested are considered as part of the conflict management process (Thomas, 1992:270).

2.3 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Conflict resolution mechanism are important tools that's used when resolving conflicts. They have varieties that include both formal and informal. The following section discusses more about formal and informal conflict resolution mechanisms.

Formal Mechanism

Formal conflict resolutions are set of tools and principles that are legally used by government and international community. These mechanisms are legally binding and have more procedures to the conflict resolution process.

All parties that involve formal conflict resolution process respects set of principles and rules that are set in the beginning of conflict resolution process. failure to respect those legally-binding principles may make one to be held accountable and perhaps face negative consequences of not respecting formally agreed conflict resolution mechanisms.

Informal Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Informal conflict resolution mechanism are set of tools and principles of resolving conflicts using traditional and community-agreed procedures. This form of conflict resolution does not always involve legally bindings but it has set of principals that originated from community conflict resolution procedures. These procedures include resolving conflicts from community perspective.

Different community members take role in the process. For example, traditional elders can play role in this conflict resolution mechanism. This approach to conflict resolution has a lot of advantages. For example, since elders always take role, they [may] know what the good approaches are of resolving specific conflict in their community. This approach is also experience-rich because elders or any other actors that involve this use their previous experience to reflect when addressing specific community issues.

There are certain limitations to this approach as well. One of these is the duration. This approach usually involve very long consultation and resolving process. This can sometimes make resolution process to be longer thus making conflicts to still exist. Another limitation associated with this approach is lack legally-binding. Since it's [mostly] community led, this approach may not have strong legal bindings as formal conflict resolution mechanisms. Therefore, this can make some parties not to respect or sometimes disobey those involved in informal conflict resolution mechanism. Even though this approach has set of norms that everyone respects, there is so much to learn from it.

2.4 Communication for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation

Communication in Negotiation

Communication is very important and necessary part of negotiation process. It is very vital for successful negotiation process. Since negotiation involves people or groups of people that are negotiating about specific conflict issue, good communication is essential tool. Effective communication process can make negotiation process successful one for number of reasons. First,

if there is good communication system and tools, conflicting parties could clearly communicate to discuss and talk about their differences. Through this approach, one of the first steps of successful negotiation can be achieved. Second, as result of good communication that can promote better understanding among the conflict parties therefore making the negotiation process successful one. Some of the other function of communication during negotiation process include:

- It can coordinate outcomes
- Information is exchanged successfully
- Important points are mutually understood
- Can be used to shed light on behavioural patterns

Communication has so much to offer when it comes to conflict resolution and reconciliation as outlined in the previous units of this module, therefore, it's very important to have good communication during the negotiation process.

With effective communication skills, negotiation process that includes the following stages can be successful:

1. Preparation stage

Here important issues concerning the negotiation process are identified.

2. Information exchange

This stage different parts that would negotiate exchange their information.

3. Bargaining –

This is the third stage of negotiation process where different actors and parties negotiate. Each one aims to achieve what's best for them.

4. Closing and commitments

This is forth stage in negotiation process. different parties agree to respect any deal that they reached during their negotiation process.

Communication in Mediation

Mediation is any process or activities that involve bringing two or more parties together with the aim of establishing good communication between them so that they can discuss about their differences. This process of being 'in between' parties or groups needs good communication skills.

There should be good communication tools and practices so that any mediation efforts can be successful.

Effective communication is basic tool in the mediation process. each and every mediation process requires good communication skills. Good communication skills in the mediation process can serve many purposes but the basic and most important one remains to be establishing smooth and effective mediation skills among conflicting parties.

Communication in Arbitration

Communication is important component in arbitration process. before we discuss how important communication is for arbitration, let's highlight what arbitration mean. Arbitration could be any process that one wishes to submit disputed subject to external party that's usually trusted to be fair to both conflicting parties. That party or person is known as arbitrator.

Arbitrators play key role when transforming conflict situation. For any arbitrators to play good role in the process, there should be a good communication skill. Good communication skills are also necessary for both parties to clearly communication with the arbitrator. With good communication skills arbitrator(s) can easily understanding disputes which can help [arbitrator] to solve the dispute in justice-based manner. To sum up, communication is very important for any stage of conflict resolution. One should able to communicate effectively and clearly so that disputed-subjects' solutions can be identified.

Summary of Study Unit 2

In this study session, you have learnt that:

In general, the definition of conflict resolution and reconciliation, conflict resolution and reconciliation process, mechanisms of conflict resolution, as well as the communication in conflict resolution and reconciliation.

A Summative Test.

1. What conflict resolution?
2. Explain conflict reconciliation?
3. Explain conflict resolution and reconciliation processes?
4. Examine conflict resolution mechanisms?
5. Discuss communication for conflict resolution and reconciliation?

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