DISH
Digital Innovation and Skills Hub

Study Unit 3

Communication for Peace Building

Study Unit Outline

Communication for Peace Building

3.1 Definition of communication, historical development, how communication works and categories

3.2 Fundamental thoughts in peace communication

3.3 Communication and technologies for peace building

3.4 Communication barriers in peace building

3.5 Towards of participatory communication in peace building

Study Unit Duration

This Study Session requires a 2 hours of formal study time.

Introduction

Welcome to the third module – communication for peace building. This module is an essential, if not critical component of Peace Building diplomacy course. It is expected that by the end of the module, you would have gained solid understanding of the basic essentials of communication for peace building. The module opens with highlight of what communication is and moves sequentially to examine platforms and technologies for peace building, communication barriers in peace building and concludes with highlights of participatory communication in peace building.

Learning Outcomes of Study Unit 3

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

3.1 Use communication for peace building effectively.

3.2 Utilize traditional platforms and new media technology to promote peace building

3.3 Be aware of common communication barriers in peace building.

3.4 Know the importance of participatory communication in peace building

Module Description

This module introduces you to the various elements of communication for peace building that is necessary for successful outcome. It provides information on historical background, the role of technologies in facilitating communication, the roadblocks in communication for peace building as well as move towards participatory communication all of which will ground knowledge and skills in effective use of communication for peace building.

3.1   Overview **of Communication**

Learning Outcomes

When you complete this unit, you would have gained some knowledge that will enable you to:

- Explain what is meant by communication
- Give some background to the word "Communication"
- Describe how communication works
- Enumerate the ways through which communication happens

Definition

The word "communication" refers to the means by which information is exchanged between people. This exchange encompasses sending and receiving messages, verbally or formally by such means as the word of mouth, telephone, letter and message and so on. Richard Nordquist defines communication as "creation and exchange of meaning through transferring it from one place, person or group to the others" (Norquist 2019). This then means that communication is the method of transmitting information from the initiator of the communication as well as receiving of the message by the recipient. Communication may be carried out either by talking, writing, listening or reading. And this includes speech, writing or graphic representation.

Development of Communication can be traced to as far back as the beginning of human civilization. According to Truptimayee in "Economics discussions.net" forum, the word "communication" is derived from Latin word "communis", which means, common.   In the beginning, communication was in the forms of codes, indications, signals and expressions. However as civilization developed, so also did forms of communication. Language began to be developed to cope with new demands.

While it can be argued that every living things have some forms of communicating amongst themselves, human beings have distinguished themselves by their ability to use words that transmit definite meaning and this is what has set them apart from the animal kingdom.

How communication works

In any form of communication, there is the originator and receiver of the communication as well as the message itself. The receiver gives feedback to the sender of the message, either verbally or nonverbally, or may choose to reply by not replying.

For clear understanding and effective communication, the originator of the message must ensure clarity of the message. People who are articulate in communication often pay attention to hear other speakers. They respect the opinion of others and speak and write with clarity. In addition, it requires good communication skills for one to be able to communicate effectively, accurately and swiftly. For this reason, it is important to improve one's communication skills, and this can be done by:

I.   **Listening**: Being a good listener. Be critical in listening to what is being said and seek clarification when there is ambiguity.

II. **Brevity:** Speak clearly without necessarily using many words. Guard against lengthy talking that may only make it difficult for the listeners to understand.

III. **Nonverbal expressions**: Look at your listeners eyes, use hand signals and use the right tune

IV. **Confidence**: Be confident with what you say and maintain relaxed body stance.

V.   **Open mindedness**: Even when in disagreement with somebody's view, show sympathy with that view point. Respect the opinion of others and never try to demean those who hold contrary opinion.

VI. **Respect:** Respecting what others say and acknowledging them will make them feel appreciated.

How communication happens

Another aspect worth noting is the ways of communication. There are variety of ways through which communication happens. These include:

I. **Verbal communication**: This form of communication could take place verbally or through the various forms of media.

II. **Unwritten communication**: Includes bodily gestures, dress and tune of voice.

III. **Written communication**: This would cover such things as letters, interactions and print media.

IV. **Visualization**: Use of pictures, symbols, drawings and images.

3.2   Fundamental thoughts in peace communication

As you go through and when you finish this unit, you will be able to:

- Narrate fundamental thoughts in peace building
- Define what peace communication is
- Highlight the signification of communication in peace building

General perception of peace communication

Broadly, there is general perception that peace communication is all about promotion of some objectives or goals. Messages are packaged nicely and pre-approved messages are sent out. However, peace communication is not only about corporate communication, it is about engaging people in conversations and not just telling them what to do and what not to. This is particularly more critical now when conflicts have taken centre stage throughout the world.

With unrest and violence everywhere around the globe, people try struggle to keep tranquility and stable environment. In the midst of chaotic world, communication can play a significant role in promoting peace building. But what is Communication for peace building?

Definition of peace communication

From the onset, it is necessary to understand first of all what peace and peace building is in order to place any discussion on fundamental thoughts in peace building communication in context Although there are different perspectives on what peace is, peace is defined by some, as absence of war and oppression (Lawrence and Jovan 2014). Likewise, definition of peace building may

be varied, with some defining it as an intervention "that facilitates establishment of durable peace, and tries to prevent the reoccurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building and political as well as economic transformation" (Idris 2020). Broadly this may include prevention of conflict and post conflict restoration of peace. Still others add that peace is enjoyment of rights in each society.

Given the these various definition of peace and peace building, peace building communication may be deduced to mean that form of communication which promotes non-violence in endeavours to promote peace. In the midst of the chaotic world, communication can play a significant role in promoting peace building. Communicators therefore need to be aware of this fact, while all actors should design pro-peace building programmes if sustainable peace building across space and time is to be achieved.

Appropriate communication for promoting peace

In order to promote peace building, communicators should use non-violent way of communication. This is a form of communications that uses peace building words where communicators speak inter-personally with all parties to a dispute or conflict. Using non violent language would also go a long way to achieve positive goal of communication, which according to Mahatma Gandhi, is to provide messages between the sender and the recipient (Nandy 2018). This method of communication makes a sharp contrast from the traditional way of reporting developments during conflict. Under traditional or war reporting, focus is on the conflict arena, emphasizing the winners or losers and is often characterized by propaganda where some actors are projected as the problem, while the others are glorified. Such reporting would, for example, magnify untruths of one side to a conflict, while covering up the lies of the other (Lynch and McGoldrick n.d.). Commonly used languages under the traditional way of reporting during conflicts would include demonizing, victimizing and sensational languages, as in the use of such words as: thief, criminal, terrorists, helpless etc and this does not help in promoting peace building.

In order to find solution to any conflict, communicators need to understand arguments advanced by all sides to the conflict. And for effective communication, peace building messages need to be

developed with the cultural backgrounds of participants in a given conflict in mind. And cultures themselves may be grouped into individualistic culture where people value independent rights as well as desires and collectivist group culture that value group harmony, fitting in and interdependence.

3.3   Communication platforms and technologies for peace building

Upon completion of the unit, you will be able to:

- Identify traditional and new communication platforms and technologies
- Discuss the role new communication platforms and technologies play in bringing about change
- Highlight comparative advantage of new communication platforms and technologies over the traditional platforms and technologies

3.3.1 Traditional platforms and technologies

The use of communication platforms and technologies is central in peace building. In the past, communication was mainly used as a means of passing down information in a one way process from the source to the receiver. Communication was therefore externally driven process from the government to the people and thus denying the people their own decision base and knowledge (Yutainten 2013). Nevertheless, Traditional media platforms played significant role in disseminating contents that will enable people to make decisions on issues of concern. Over the years, it has been recognized as playing key role in mediating conflict.

There had been various ways of communication under what is referred to as traditional method of communication. These media used to involve verbal and nonverbal media using various platforms which include:

I.   **Radio:** used for broadcasting news and other information. In a situation where there were no modern social media platforms, radio broadcast was one of the key sources of information. However, many people may not be in position to receive radio information

either because they do not own a radio set, or they do not know the language through which the information was passed.

II.   **Television:** Was yet another traditional platform for transmitting news and other information. But this medium platform also suffers the limitation of radio broadcast. Its coverage is mostly limited to the urban towns, leaving out the bulk majority of the population in the country sides.

III.   **News papers**: Unlike radio and television platforms, Newspapers provided fairly wide coverage. And because it is in print, the newspaper editions kept by the consumers also provided reference.

IV.   **Market Square:** Serve as communication arena. In the market arena, information that were collected from different places would be spread around with the word of mouth.

V.   **Water collection points**: As women gather around water points and men in cattle camps, they would share and pass on information that they had gathered from different sources

VI.   **Social function**: In social function, information is passed around.

VII.   **Evening fires:** This was also another platform where elders would pass on information as they sit around the fire in the evening. In some societies, this has remained one of the reliable medium for passing on information from generation to generation.

VIII.   **Nonverbal media:**

-   **Idiophones**: This was also another medium for communication. It is used for passing information around through the high sound that the instrument produces. For example, the Yoruba talking drums. In some societies, drums are also used for sending out warning messages and mobilization against an impending threat,

-   **Artifacts**: Display of artifacts was also another traditional method of non-formal communication in the past.

3.3.2 New Communication platforms and technologies

Communications have often plaid role in enabling legislators make informed decisions as well as forming the necessary view on issues of conflicts and Peace. The various forms of

communication can help stabilise and rehabilitate conflict affected communities as well as facilitate peace building initiatives.

Advance in modern communication technologies have given rise to variety of means of communication. These communication developments have made it easier for messages to be amplified and increase the speed of transmitting information.
Because of these innovations, people are moving away from traditional means of communication to modern media platforms.

Modern communication platforms and technologies can influence attitudes and behaviors and have the capacity to mobiles people to take action. Through them, increased public awareness of key development issues is created.

New communication platforms and technologies can be used in peace building initiatives have significant advantages which include:-

1. **Provision of Information:** The internet and other media, like face book, whatsApp, amongst others, have made provision of needed information to different audiences very easy.
2. **Speed:** The new technologies have increased the amount and speed of information sharing.
3. **Connection:** These new platforms and technologies can connect different groups instantly and even allow them to conduct meetings discretely.

Thus the New communication platforms and technologies play significant role in bringing about peace. In Philippine, as in other parts of the world for example, large scale demonstration, organized and coordinated through the use mobile, and sms succeeded in bringing an end to repressive regime of President Joseph Astrada and brought change without large scale violence.

The advent of these new communication platforms and technologies have revolutionized the way people participate and engage with the world. These platforms and technologies have become handy tool that can transform peace building in the positive direction. They have radically transformed the speed of interaction and communication which combine to provide opportunities for peace building initiatives.

When new communication platforms and technologies are used in peace building activities, it turns out to be more successful particularly when used to enrich the existing processes of social transformation (KOFF 2019). They can enhance the scope and effectiveness of peace building activities.

Recognizing that peace building activities take place in conflict affected countries where Civil society organizations face authoritarian governments, modern technology can provide alternative avenue through which to organize and advocate. They enhance collective action with wide range of actors without the need for assembling them in one physical place. These developments have reduced the barriers for anyone to participate in meetings or events. Moreover, it reduces the fear of political repercussions since some statements in the social medial can be made anonymously. Furthermore, the new platforms and technologies provide spaces for debates and dialogue in situations where a government may not allow for such debates or any other factors, like violence in the streets. Thus, when used positively, the new communication platforms and technologies can be key drivers of peace in that, they can build bridges between groups of people separated by conflict, bring about good governance and provide early warning of conflicts and push for actions that promote peace.

However, Mass Media, as well as social media, when used negatively, can play destruction roles by fuelling conflicts as was the case in Rwanda where it urged the listeners to pick up machetes and do away with the people of the other tribe (KOFF 2019), amongst several other examples in different countries.

3.4. Communication barriers in peace building

This unit will equip you with knowledge that will enable you to:

- Enumerate general communication barriers

- Describe crucial communication barriers to peace building

3.4.1 General Communication barriers

There are quite a number of general communication barriers which a communicator need to keep under watch in order to be successful in conveying messages. While an attempt to list such barriers many not be exhaustive, the following are some of the most common:

First, use of industrial jargon or highly technical language can obstruct message making it difficult for people to understand it. Such use has to be avoided for a communication to be successful.

Another common communication barrier has to do with provision of too much information. Providing too much or excess information may obscure the message making it difficult for the audience to comprehend.

Thirdly, language: Language constitutes yet another communication barrier. Even people from the same language group could have difficulty in understanding one another due to different dialects, slang and meanings of words.

Another important barrier worth noting is mindset. **The way people react can also impede ability to be objective. Also as pointed out in Indeed Career Guide of 2022,** "being extremely nervous, having a personal agenda or needing to be right no matter what can make communications less than effective.

Finally, cultural noise: **At times** people make wrong generalizations about others and this can lead to communication breakdown.

3.4.2 Crucial communication barriers to peace building

There are quite a number of communication barriers that are crucial in peace building. A peace building entity, Pollack Peace building system, point out some of the communication barriers and their impact on peace building: -

1. **Making judgment:** Opposing somebody, labelling others, or even holding high esteem of someone can obscure communication. When you bring these forms of judgment to a discussion, the other person is most likely to take a defensive position

2. **Rushing to offer solution:** Offering solutions unilaterally to a stated dilemma may end up being a barrier. Because the other person may still want to be heard and offering immediate solution is like telling them to move on or that they are not competent to provide solution.

3. **Disregarding issues:** Avoiding concerns are diverting from the subject can be perceived to be an act of avoidance to someone. Such practice may inhibit somebody from participating effectively.

4. **Dominating:** Avoiding domineering and allow the other person opportunity to express their view and share their experience.

5. **Compelling:** Other people are not there simply to receive orders or get instructions. Commanding people will simply end any discussion or engagement

6. **Commenting:** Portraying self as all-knowing and using labeling in whichever way, can make resolution of conflict very difficult.

7. **Intimidating:** Threatening another person can impede your ability to communicate effectively.

8. **Prominence:** Belittling somebody's experience in preference of magnifying yours will make the other party to lose the interest.

9. **Humiliating:** Shaming others will simply shut them down and must be avoided.

10. **Explaining:** Although it is a common practice to make interpretations about another person, caution must be exercised in making those interpretations lest you are wrong. Avoid interpreting and explaining someone's actions to them.

11. **Probing:**   Reacting to even genuine statements with multiple questions aimed at dismissing the proposition can cause the other side to shut up and withdraw.

12. **Mocking**: Teasing someone can put off such a person and loose interest in the issue.

3.5   Towards participatory communication

When you complete this unit, you will be able to:
- Highlight evolution of commutation
- Define participatory communication
- Enumerate the benefits of participatory communication

Evolution of participatory communication

Before the embracement of participatory communication, communication was merely a one way process. It was taken to be a tool with which to transmit information from the source to the audience. It was characterized by a top-down approach from the government to the people, an approach which did not provide the people the opportunity to determine what was in their best interest.

But participatory communication began to be slowly introduced over the years and has continued to gain traction and has been used to support development and stimulating people to be active. Participatory communication also enables participants to participate and access information easily.

Participatory communication may be traced to as far back as the 1970s when importance of group dialogue began to be used as communication tool. Participatory communication also enables participants to participate and access information. The approach accommodates all participants in every initiative and is a bottom up approach. It emphasizes understanding of different kinds of opinion in order to overcome stereo type thinking.   An authority in participatory communication, Paolo Freire, asserts that "participatory communication is an arranged activity that is based on participatory process on media and interpersonal communication to facilitate dialogue about development issues and initiatives among

stakeholders" (Yutainten 2013). Over the years, participatory communication has gained traction and has been used to support development.

Benefits of participatory communication

The advantage of participatory communication lies in the equality between communicating partners. Everybody can share something of interest with all parties involved. The participatory form of communication then creates the spirit of collaboration and thus putting people to be at the centre of bringing about development change. Above all, participatory communication creates a climate of mutual understanding amongst all actors.

Participatory communication in peace building requires listening to people. This form of communication facilitates both vertical and horizontal communication. It enables vertical communication to come from the participants upwards as well as horizontally amongst the participants themselves.

Participatory communication acknowledges traditional knowledge as a part of development that enhances the local community to sustain development. It also serves to bridge the gaps between the different actors and creates an atmosphere of understanding.

 Another benefit of participatory communication is that it increases peoples' consciousness in the community. As people become conscious, they would evaluate carefully the events that took place in the past or is ongoing. In this way, people are accorded the opportunity of contributing positively to resolution of the issues that affect them.

Summary of Study Unit 3

Given the multifaceted conflicts throughout the world, embracing using the type of communication that promotes peace building is one that all actors should aspire for. Mastery of the both traditional and new communication platforms and technologies is essential, if not a prerequisite for successful Peace building and promotion of peace in our localities, countries and the regions. The multiple media platforms have to be used to advance peace and development. And most importantly, communication should and must not be a one sided top-down phenomenon, but participatory where everyone has the chance of involvement and being heard. Embracing participatory form of communication is important as it enables participants to participate and access information, while promoting equality between communicating partners at the same time. And with every communications, communicators need to keep communication barriers under check in order to be successful in conveying messages.

Assessments

1. **Quiz covering all the units**
2. **Individual assignment**
3. **Group work**

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