UNIT 19 MITIGATION MANAGEMENT-II

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19.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- Appreciate the significance of conflict resolution especially in the context of disaster mitigation
- Explain some conflict resolution techniques; and
- Highlight the management of media in disaster situations.

19.1 INTRODUCTION

Management of disasters, be it in the context of preparedness, mitigation, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction is a complex activity. It involves not just mobilisation of personnel, finances and other resources, but handling human relationships, inter-personnel behaviour and so on. With the involvement of a number of organisations and different categories of personnel, in a crisis situation, there can be duplication of efforts and lack of responsibility demonstrated by any segment of the group. Also it is the community as the receiver of services which is hard hit by the tragedy. Community members being in shock and trauma are usually placed in a fragile situation. The relationship between them and the disaster organisation is also important. These situations can, at times, result in tensions and conflicts. These need to be properly resolved. The media has an important role in promoting effective disaster mitigation through proper factual and ethical reporting. In this Unit, we shall discuss the probable situations when conflicts arise among individuals and agencies and techniques of resolving them. The role of media in disaster mitigation shall also be dealt with.

19.2 CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTER MITIGATION

We have discussed in the Unit dealing with team management in disaster mitigation that managing disasters in several phases is a team activity and involves coordination and an
inter-disciplinary approach. When humans function as a team, conflicts are bound to arise. Especially, in disaster management with a plethora of agencies, departments, and personnel involved, some of the activities require cooperation from other organisations which could result in conflicts. Conflict resolution, hence, assumes significance, as important operations are bound to get affected. Conflicts can arise between providers of relief and the community members who are the recipients of the services. According to Ferraro and Adams, “Although conflict management is complex and sometimes hard to achieve, a greater understanding of the behavioural skills associated with it can have a bottom-line impact on organisational productivity and preference.”

Administration and management have to put in efforts to achieve productivity and effectiveness. Effectiveness could be defined as the degree to which a disaster organisation realises its goals. It can be judged in terms of survival of the disaster organisation. Organisational effectiveness is the extent to which an organisation, given certain resources and means, achieves its objectives without placing undue strain on its members. It is the ability of a disaster organisation to mobilise its centres of power for action in crises.

However, the effectiveness of disaster organisations is often marred by conflict, which slowly damages the performance. Conflict may be defined as a disagreement between two or more members or groups within an organisation emanating from formal and informal relationships. Such disagreements take place in every organisation and thus conflict is an inevitable dimension of disaster organisational climate. Most of the executives spend a great deal of their time in resolving conflict, whether the conflict may be between individuals, individual and a group, between groups, or between organisations. According to Newman (1979) “Life is not a grand harmony, conflict exists”. Scholars have viewed conflict differently at different times. We can classify them into traditional, behavioural and interactions view.

Traditional View: The traditional view prevalent in 1930s and 1940s believed that conflict is an organisational abnormality and thus mainly induces negative results. It disrupts and destroys the smooth process existing in the organisation. Conflict was generally associated with the malfunctioning of the organisation. Researches of Mayo (1945), and Fox (1972) have considered conflict as damaging to organisational growth. However, the recent thinking in organisational psychology does not view conflict as dangerous but rather a normal process in an organisation.

Behavioural View: This approach prevalent from the late 1940s through the 1970s emphasises that conflict is the logical inevitable outcome in any organisation but being harmful it should be avoided. The main cause of conflict is the wrong policies of the management resulting in their breakdown. Therefore, the management should try to restore understanding, trust and openness to resolve conflict.

Interactions View: Those who subscribe to this view not only accept conflict but also encourage it in a regulated way. This approach believes that a minimum level of conflict needs to be maintained to shake the group out of its complacency and make them innovative and creative. A large number of social scientists like Robins (1973, 1978), Boulding (1971), Dalton (1950), Katz (1974), McGregor (1967), Schmidt (1974) Pareek (1982) and others opine that conflict generates a climate wherein stagnant disaster organisations are rejuvenated.

While the behavioural approach accepted conflict, the interactionist view encourages conflict on the ground that a harmonious, peaceful, tranquil and cooperative group is
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prone to becoming static, apathetic and non-responsive to need for change and innovation (Newman and Warren, 1979). Thus, groups require disharmony as well as harmony, dissociation as well as association, and conflicts within them are by no means altogether disruptive factors (Robbins, 1983).

Mary Parker Follett, an administrative theorist views that it is possible to conceive conflict as not necessarily a wasteful outbreak of incompatibilities, but a normal process by which socially valuable differences register themselves for the enrichment of all concerned. She suggests three methods to deal with conflict – Dominance, Compromise and Integration. According to her, integration is the best method to solve the conflict. By domination only one side gets what it wants, by compromise, neither side gets what it wants; by integration we find a way which both sides may get what they wish.

Rensis Likert in his book, “New Patterns of Management”, has rightly said that conflict and differences of opinion always exist in a healthy, virile organisation. For it is usually from such differences that new and better objectives and methods emerge. Differences are essential for progress, but unresolved differences can immobilise an organisation. The central problem, consequently, becomes, not how to reduce or eliminate conflict, but how to deal with it constructively. Effective organisation has extraordinary capacity to handle conflict.

Conflict can have a positive impact on the progress of the disaster organisation. Conflicts can at times create new solutions to problems. Robbins (1978) suggests the following as indicators where conflict can be provoked:

1) The organisation is surrounded by yes men.
2) Subordinates are afraid to admit ignorance and uncertainties.
3) Emphasis on compromise in decision-making rather than adhering to values, long-term objectives or organisations’ welfare.
4) Managers put great emphasis on cooperation, harmony and peace.
5) Managers are not ready to hurt the feelings of their colleagues.
6) Popularity is generally derived from compliance while taking actions.
7) Managers are unduly enamoured with obtaining consensus for their decisions.
8) People show great resistance to change.
9) There is dearth of new ideas.
10) There is usually low rate of employee turnover.

The presence of one or more of these is indicative of the need for conflict provocation. We may adopt the following techniques for conflict stimulation.

a) Communication

Managers can design messages in such a language as to stimulate conflict. Intentional threatening messages may provoke the members. Sometimes, managers can also repress information or bypass traditional channels to encourage potential conflicts.

b) Restructuring the Disaster Organisation

This involves redesigning the disaster organisation, i.e. transfer of disaster organisation members, creating new units, bringing personnel from outside personnel, withdrawing
Bargaining can lead to the resolution of a conflict, but usually without much openness on the part of the groups involved and without much real problem solving. Typically, while bargaining each side begins by demanding more than it really expects to get. For bargaining, to be practical as a conflict resolution strategy, both parties must be possessing relatively equal power. Otherwise, one group simply will force its will on the other, and the weaker group will have no means of obtaining concessions from the stronger one. Bargaining also is more likely to work if there are several acceptable alternatives that both groups are willing to consider. Otherwise, bargaining is likely to end in a deadlock.

4) Conflict Confrontation Strategies

i) Problem Solving/Win: A win strategy of conflict resolution is probably the most desirable from a human and organisational standpoint. Energies and creativity are aimed at solving the problems. It is advantageous from the point of view of the functional aspects of win/lose and eliminates many of the dysfunctional aspects. The needs of both parties in the conflict situation are met and both parties receive rewarding outcomes. After a review of relevant literature, Filley, House and Kerr concluded that "win – win decision strategies are associated with better judgments, favourable organisation experience, and more favourable bargains" (Burke, 1997). Although it is often difficult to accomplish a win outcome of an interpersonal conflict, this should be a major goal of the management of conflict.

Alderfer (1977) summarises the most critical ingredients in successful problem solving:

1) Definition of the problem should be a joint effort based on shared fact finding rather than on the biased perceptions of the individual groups.
2) Points of initial agreement and differences in the goals and beliefs of both groups should be identified.
3) Problems should be stated in terms of specific principles.
4) Discussions between the groups should consist of specific and non evaluative comments.
5) The groups should work together in developing alternative solutions.
6) Solutions should be evaluated objectively in terms of quality and acceptability to the two groups.
7) All arrangements about separate issues should be considered tentative until every issue is dealt with, because issues that are interrelated cannot be settled independently in an optional manner.
8) Issues are looked at objectively.
9) Conflict is viewed as non-zero sum game.
10) Honest and open sharing of information.
11) Tries to solve the conflict in a way that will benefit both the parties.

ii) Disaster Organisational Changes: If there are problems emanating from the structure of the disaster organisation, it is better to change the structure so that...
Individuals in organisations, with rare exception, recognise and accept the authority of their superiors as an acceptable way of resolving conflicts (Coser, 1956). Conflicting parties are asked to maintain a calm composure and get on with the job. However, such solutions are short lived as the management has avoided the occurrence of conflict but it can erupt with greater force. The conflict can appear in one form or the other as the management has tackled the symptom and not the problem.

2) Conflict Diffusion Strategies

i) Goal Congruency: The conflict can be diffused by appealing to the common goal that is acceptable to all and cannot be accomplished by any single party or individual. This would automatically foster goodwill and cohesion. This makes the immediate conflict futile in view of larger issues. However, it is difficult to find such superordinate goals except when the entire organisation is at stake.

ii) Smoothening (Accommodating): Smoothening means decreasing the intensity of conflict. The accommodative style is low in assertiveness and high on cooperation. The concerned parties will be generous and self-sacrificing. "In a conflict issue that is associated with the expression of intense and aggressive feelings, the accommodative style may be very beneficial as a starting point" (Robbins, op.cit.). Smoothening is a more sensitive approach than the withdrawal approach. Smoothening sometimes serves as a temporary measure to let people cool down and later on, there is a fear that people may make statements that may flare up the conflict. Smoothening, can, however, help to diffuse the tension so that conflicts do not spill over into central work issues (Hellriegel and Slocum, 1992).

3) Conflict Containment Strategies

i) Liaison groups! representatives: The representatives can help the conflicting parties to resolve the conflict by using expertise and persuasion. The representatives must understand each group's problems and be able to rally both the groups towards a mutually agreeable solution. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) found that many organisations have reduced inter-departmental conflicts by setting up special liaison between the conflicting departments. One advantage of the liaison person is that he/she is perceived as not having a vested interest in either group or department. Resolving conflict through representatives is more effective provided the representatives are impartial, trustworthy, knowledgeable and have training in the art and science of human relations.

ii) Structuring the Interaction: There are many ways to structure the interaction between groups to deal with conflict. Some of the most effective strategies include: (a) lessening direct interaction between the groups in the early stages of conflict resolution; (b) decreasing the time between problem solving meetings; (c) limiting the recitation of historic events and precedents and focusing instead on current issues and goals; and (e) using third party mediators.

iii) Bargaining / Compromising: This is a traditional method of resolving conflicts. There is no distinct winner or loser because each party is expected to give up something of value for a concession. It is based on a simple give and take process and typically involves negotiation and a series of sacrifices. The amount given up by each party in conflict, however, will be in direct relation to its strength.
delegated powers, and so on. This process would generate conflict but slowly lead to improved methods of operation as members try to adjust to new situation.

b) Encouraging Competition

Managers can use policies such as payment of bonuses, incentive pay and awards for excellent performance. This will generate competition and may be productive as one group will struggle hard to outdo the other.

There are many other techniques which can be designed to provoke conflict depending upon the situation. If conflicts can be channelised or sublimated rightly, it can pay rich dividends to the disaster organisation. Thus a personnel manager should be available for giving counseling to affected parties in such a way that desirable changes in the disaster organisation could be introduced.

19.3 CONFLICT RESOLUTION TECHNIQUES

There is no dearth of literature on this subject. Different authors have come forward with different techniques in reviewing possible conflict resolution strategy. Blake, Shepherd and Mouton (1964) have outlined five possible mechanisms of resolving conflict. These are: (a) withdrawal (b) smoothing (c) forcing (d) win and lose in power struggle and (e) confrontation. Likert and Likert (1976), Thomas (1976, 1978) and Filley (1978) favour the participatory and collaborative styles of conflict management. Derr (1978), Philip and Cheston (1979) Stimac (1982) believe that conflict resolution depends on the situation. They, thus advocate 'contingency' approach.

Derr (1978) suggests three main strategies of conflict management – power play, bargaining and collaboration. Power play is the best technique for resolving ideological disputes, bargaining usually works among the competing people or groups and collaboration, when interdependent work relationships are likely to be damaged by conflicts.

We may discuss the strategies under four heads:

1) Conflict avoidance
2) Conflict diffusion
3) Conflict containment
4) Conflict confrontation.

1) Conflict avoidance Strategies

i) Ignoring the Conflict (Withdrawal): In this technique, the manager does not give weightage to conflict and tries to become indifferent, evasive, and apathetic and leaves the conflict on fate or chance. It is a method of avoiding conflict. It is based on the principle that many conflicts die in course of time and if given undue importance may flare up and become a problem for the disaster organisation. It will also divert the attention of the managers from essential to non essential and thus work against the "Management by Exception". However, care should be taken to ensure that avoidance of conflict resolution may not take a serious turn in future and hence timely action is necessary.

ii) Imposing a Solution through Dominance: In this strategy, the solution devised by a senior person in the organisation is binding on the parties in conflict.
potential dangers for conflict can be avoided. We may reduce interdependence where conflict is likely to occur.

Understanding human behaviour in its diversity has become imperative for human resource development and organisations. Today the knowledge of the workstyles is essential for effective leadership. Without this knowledge, a leader or a manager may not understand his or her followers. The dynamics of the conflict plays a vital role in the modern analysis of organisational behaviour. Conflict can lead to innovation and change, it can energise people to activity, develop protection for something else in the organisation (in the divide and conquer sense), and be an important element in systems analysis of the disaster organisation (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967).

Traditionally, the management of disaster organisational conflict was based on simplistic assumptions. Formal authority and classical restricting were used in an attempt to eliminate it. A more modern approach is to assume the inevitability of conflict, recognise that it is not always bad for the disaster organisation, and try to manage it effectively rather than merely try to eliminate it. Even we may promote conflict for temporary purposes to ensure disaster organisational efficiency but care must be taken so that conflicts may not become suicidal to the existence of disaster organisation. In brief, we can say that absence of conflict leads to stagnation, but unending conflict is responsible for chaos. Therefore, the conflict must be managed as it is not the conflict itself that is problematic but its mismanagement which is detrimental to the effectiveness of an organisation. Conflict resolution is necessary for mitigation management. Constructive conflicts enables an organisation bring about improved relationships, enhance self-confidence and evolve creative ways of resolving conflicts.

**19.4 MEDIA MANAGEMENT**

Disasters seem to be happening frequently all over the world. Population growth, urbanisation and increasing poverty imply more people becoming vulnerable, allowing more disasters to occur. The frequency of disasters is also related with the type of development. There are conflicting views on whether "development can reduce disaster vulnerability" and "development can increase disaster vulnerability". Media have a very important role in disaster management. They can be a very important educational tool, which can create public awareness and generate public opinion on disaster reduction in vulnerable areas. They may also perform a suggestive role and provide possible options in a particular situation as well as serve as analytical tool, through which various mitigation options can be critically analysed and one can find a most acceptable solution of a problem.

Communication is one of the most critical requirements of disaster management. Communication of information about the hazards and risks to the public has a key role in the prevention and mitigation of disasters. To date great emphasis has been placed on the scientific assessment of hazards with focus on the technological needs of data gathering, analysis and information transmission required for warning systems. Such emphasis on accuracy and efficiency of information is no doubt understandable, but it needs to be balanced against the effectiveness of its dissemination that gets measured by public behaviour and response.

Disasters are unusual, and sudden events which cause enormous loss of lives and property. It brings many dramatic and traumatic stories, and it depends on how the news is delivered by the media. Most of the time, media try to find fault in with regard to the
provision of relief to the victims by highlighting the impact on affected community. Sometimes such news encourages international fund raising and creates more public sympathy for the affected people. The amount, depth and period of coverage will depend on the scale and frequency of the disaster, the speed with which the information can be obtained, and the interest amongst the public on the subject. The media have a strong impact on the perception and response of people to disasters. In many developing countries like India, still there is a sense of fatalism prevalent amongst people about disasters which acts as a deterrent many a times in evolving effective disaster preparedness and mitigation. Thus the role of media in a disaster is multipurpose. It can be broadly classified in three categories:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Informative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Suggestive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>Analytical</td>
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Informative

Media can play an informative role in all three situations:

- **Pre-disaster**
- **During-disaster,** and
- **Post-disaster.**

In pre-disaster situation, knowledge of disaster vulnerability to the community is very important. For instance, in monsoon season, information pertaining to rainfall predictions, water level in different rivers, water flow rate, possible breach of embankments etc., is extremely useful for the people living in the highly vulnerable areas. Media can highlight some of the important mitigation measures, which community should take up in the vulnerable zones of a natural disaster. Similarly, some of the success stories of watershed management in drought mitigation can be useful in other drought-affected areas of the country. The Himalayan region is highly vulnerable to a number of natural disasters (viz. Earthquake, Landslides, Flash Floods, Avalanches etc.).

A concept of environmental protection, ecological balance and sustainable development in this region will certainly help in disaster reduction in the region. Awareness in this regard can be generated by media only through information reporting. At the time of disaster, accurate information should be the first demand of a journalist. Media have to establish cooperation between local officials and media. Most of the time the local officials are unable or unwilling to give information, because of sensitivity or security reasons or the news is still unconfirmed. In such cases, media should depend on reliable sources/agencies working in relief/for unbiased local community so that right information may reach the people and other national and international agencies. However, the media have to ensure balanced reporting so as to avoid unnecessary panic created due to rumours.

Over the last decade, the new discipline of risk communication has emerged in the West that requires the public to be informed about specific risks they are exposed to. In USA, this has led to the passage of the Community Right to Know Act. Media have ample opportunities for disseminating risk communication to reduce the vulnerability of community to disasters.
In post-disaster situation, informative role of the media is to provide correct information about the continuing impact of the disaster and the actual needs of the affected people so that the rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes can be tailored accordingly. The media have to help to monitor the activities of various agencies which undertake rehabilitation programmes.

Suggestive

As stated earlier, there are many mitigation measures and sometimes it is difficult to determine the most suitable option for the specific disaster. For example, flood is a very common natural disaster. There are many states which are prone to this disaster such as Assam, U.P. Bihar and West Bengal etc. As we have discussed in the earlier Units, there are two approaches for disaster mitigation. The structural approach involves construction of dams, embankments, etc., whereas non-structural measures encompass public awareness, education, maintaining ecological balance etc. In this context, media have a significant role in providing suitable suggestions for political attention and public understanding for most acceptable options. Similarly, media have a role in checking activities which might aggravate the adverse impacts of disaster.

In the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction, media can be used to provide expert opinion pertaining to:
- Models of houses
- Suitable building material
- Appropriate topography for building new houses
- Technological options
- Community perception
- Dos and Don'ts in the construction work.

Similar suggestions can be provided in the retrofitting of weaker structures in the earthquake vulnerable areas.

Analytical

The most critical role of media is analytical. This approach can be applied in the analysis of:
- Disaster preparedness
- Disaster mitigation
- Disaster relief
- Disaster rehabilitation.

There are preparedness plans for each disaster. After the disaster, analysis of plan and lessons learnt from the disaster should be examined in a constructive way. Media can also highlight some of the best practices. It will certainly improve the plan for future use. Similarly, if there are different mitigation approaches used by government and non-governmental organisations, the media can highlight both and strive to evolve a balanced approach. This type of the success stories can be replicated in other parts of the country in similar situations.

The analytical role of media is especially helpful in rehabilitation and reconstruction work
after landslide or earthquake disaster. The media can report about the efforts of various role players, the success or failure of their programme so that it can be a lesson for the authorities and the mistakes committed once are not repeated in such circumstances. Sincere journalists try to give accurate facts and figures. They report in the disaster area and people and follow all norms and ethics of faithful reporting without fear or favour. Others might be interested in "news", "stories", and might concentrate on failures only. Such reportage might produce a saleable copy but most of the time it does not reveal the real picture of the situation. Newspapers' reporting of a disaster is very interesting. Suppose, there is an earthquake which has killed a few hundred or few thousand people, initially it will be a front page news; a cyclone affecting thousands of people will get front page coverage. The second day news will be on third or fourth page, about the rehabilitation work and response from various sections of the society. After that generally there is no follow up. For instance presently, we find very few reports about relief and rehabilitation work in post-tsunami phase. Media have a great responsibility particularly in the disaster situations, especially, in keeping issues "alive" and calling everyone's attention. The ethical aspect pertaining to reporting of a disaster is equally significant. In a riot situation or community violence, it is important to give correct news in such a way that it does not hurt the sentiments of any section of the society.

19.5 CONCLUSION

Disaster mitigation involves different individuals and agencies with different viewpoints. There is a need to resolve conflict before action starts so that it does not hinder any ongoing activity. Conflicts are inevitable; however, these need to be addressed strategically for effective performance of organisations. This Unit has outlined a number of approaches and strategies for the purpose. In addition, media can play an important role through its informative, suggestive and analytical role. Media have a multifarious role to perform encompassing awareness, appreciation and application in the event of a disaster. Regional media also have to play a key role. Formulation of regional mitigation plans, interaction of the community with the local media and coverage of disasters, follow up reporting in the regional newspapers as a regular basis are considered as viable solutions to broad base media coverage of disasters. Appropriate steps need to be taken to enhance the credibility of the media.

19.6 KEY CONCEPTS

Management by Exception: The philosophy of managing which involves monitoring the operating results of implemented plans and comparing the expected results with the actual results. This feedback allows management to isolate significant variations for further investigation and possible remedial action.

(www.crifonline.org/arc/glossary/m.html)

Systems Analysis: It involves study of a system and its components to analyse their way of functioning to achieve the objectives. It aims at determining the ends and the most efficient ways of achieving them.
19.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


19.8 ACTIVITIES

1) Write a brief note on the media's role in mitigation of any disaster.

2) Select one newspaper and find out and report how it has covered a particular disaster (for example any air or rail accident, earthquake etc.) Analyse the contents of its news coverage against time period and prepare the following matrix:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Disaster/Contents</th>
<th>Immediate Report</th>
<th>2 Days later</th>
<th>One week later</th>
<th>One month later</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Damage detail</td>
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<td>Loss of lives</td>
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<td>Government response</td>
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<td>Response by NGOs</td>
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<td>Funds needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funds made available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special needs</td>
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