THE PLACE OF PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION IN HERDER/FARMER CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A STUDY OF BARKIN-LADI LGA IN PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the place of participatory communication in resolving herders/farmers conflict in Barkin-Ladi local government area of Plateau State. The study sought to find out the extent to which participatory communication was used to resolve conflict among the farmers and herders, as well as determine the extent to which the participatory communication method/strategy adopted was effective and responsive in resolving herders/farmers' conflict in Barkin-Ladi. Participatory communication is a process that involves stakeholders' engagement and empowerment in owning and driving social change through participation. A survey method was employed in executing this study. Diffusion of Innovation, Intercultural and Face-negotiation theories were used to further explain the topic under discourse. The study concluded that participatory communication was not effectively used to involve people in the curbing of herders/farmers conflict, this is largely due to external factors, such as the government's regulation. The study therefore recommends that when applying participatory communication in herders/farmers conflict, it is important to address the root cause of the issue, the culture of the community, the relevant key stakeholders and their respective roles, the aim of the exercise, timelines, as well as monitoring and evaluation approach required. This study was an extension of the discourse on participatory communication, particularly on how it can be used as a viable tool in resolving conflict between herders and farmers.

Introduction

The concept of participatory communication came into existence more than 5 decades ago. Since then, its principles and practices have grown rapidly helping the work of development communicators. The practices of participatory communication in development communication can be traced to the 1970s when a large number of people in the development communities began to question the top-down approach of development which was dominant in the 1950s and 1960s, which targeted the economic growth of countries as its main priority. During this period, the success of the developed countries had become an example that the developing countries looked up to. (Egbuta, 2018),

Participatory communication has to do with a practice that enables community members with knowledge and technical creativity to produce visual, audio, theatrical, musical and textual images of social, political, economic and cultural issues affecting them, with the sole aim of arousing dialogues, experiential learning and social change. According to Sengupta (2007), Participatory communication is closely related to Participatory Action Research, whose main aim is community empowerment for social change. Participatory Action Research goes beyond understanding social problems to seeking solutions to them. (Friere, 1997) notes that this is mostly important in rural areas, where literacy barriers have remained a huge problem. Thus, participatory communication offers an alternative for oppressed communities to join in the development discourse.

Participatory communication is a communication approach that has to do with the engagement of the people whom development is meant for in the development processes.

Participatory communication provides ample opportunities to challenge the elitist model of communication and also create space for interactive sessions. (Mufalopulos, 2003) opines that, participatory communication attempts to reverse the elitist model of communication, building a new one where meanings, interpretations and decisions are the result of collaboration and consensus among all stakeholders. This does not mean that it is a revolutionary approach as it is still in many ways within the parameters of modernity. Nevertheless, it constitutes a step towards giving grassroots communities a gradually increasing role in the decision-making process of development efforts. It is a role that should be achieved through an awareness-raising process if empowerment has to occur.

Participatory communication has to do with usage of the mass media such as television, radio, print and social media and also, the application of interpersonal communication to establish projects and find answers to certain problems. (Tom and Tong, 2011) explains that the strength of participatory communication lies in the power to share perceptions, ideas, views, knowledge and a common purpose within and across communities. (Termikulov, 2014) points out that complete, effective participatory communication has to do with the realization of the societal issues, engagement of the stakeholder groups and follow through during pre-implementation and post-implementation of the social change initiatives. (Mutanda, 2014) study as cited by (Benoliel and Somech, 2010) throw more light on what stakeholder mean in this context. Stakeholders' engagement is usually by way of empowerment, consultation, and collaboration. Stakeholders in this regard mean individuals, groups and institutions who are involved in the social change process. These stakeholder groups create and share information and ideas, they also identify issues that affect them or the

community at large, they try possible solutions, come up with an action plan, implement the plan, own the outcomes of the process and continue to monitor its effectiveness in addressing the societal issues on the long run. (Mulae, 2016)

(Mulae, 2014) in her work, asserts that participatory communication was able to solve land conflicts in Kenya, Mukueni County to be precise, through the participation of the populace, there was mutual understanding, and therefore, agreement was made.

Previous studies on participatory communication have attested to the magnitude of participatory communication in the development practice of a certain group of people or community at large. The following are therefore key questions to consider when embarking on the participatory communication process:

What is the development problem to be addressed? Different communities have a myriad of problems confronting them. Some communities could be faced with the challenge of potable water, good roads and security. Non-Governmental Organizations workers look into those situations and thereby draw a map on how to bring development to such communities. Theatre for Development and also the media can play a useful catalyst role here.

What notion of culture is inherent in the community? It is of utmost importance to research and know about the socio-cultural background of the community. Knowing the history and make-up of the people will give a better understanding of how to map out conflict resolution, and not to escalate the conflict.

Is the catalyst or change agent understood? This has to do with identifying the agents saddled with the participatory development in the community. In the past, most Non-Governmental Organizations were generalists, quite a number of them now work on specialized issues, such as water, income generation, agriculture, security and gender. The people of the community need to understand the roles of the NGO and work hand in hand with them.

Are there active stakeholders or audiences to sensitize? This has to do with members of the community whom the development is meant for. This has to do with the common people. The active engagement and participation of the people in the development process; from pre-implementation to post-implementation, is crucial to the success of a project.

What are their roles respectively in the communication process? This has to do with traditional rulers, religious leaders and teachers. These opinion leaders possess elegance and passion for communication and relations with people. They are the first contact of a development project. They form a formidable institution whereby the whole community listen and obeys. They are part of the community, they understand the problems facing the people. Hence, they can communicate freely with the people.

How will outcomes be monitored and evaluated? Evaluation is very important in the participatory development process. The level of success or failure needs to be examined to form a basis for strategizing. Follow through during pre-implementation and post-implementation of the social change initiatives is paramount if development is to take place.

What is the time perspective to achieve the desired changes? Participatory projects take time to actualize. Funding cycles which usually govern the execution of sponsored development projects are usually too short for real participatory communication processes to take root in communities. Programmes should preferably be designed to deliver sufficient short-term benefits to motivate people to maintain their commitment towards reaching long-term goals.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict can be defined as a situation where two or more inter-reliant parties either individuals or groups have interests, outcomes, and/or goals that are opposing each other in some way (Deutsch, 1973). If the people are completely autonomous or if their goals, interests and results, are similar, then no conflict can occur because there is nothing to fight about. Conflict can occur in both mutual and non-mutual situations (Deutsch, 1973), as well as in situations that are marked by a combination of mutual and non-mutual instances. When the parties' benefits are generally attuned or completely interrelated, then resolving the conflict requires coordination (Kelley et al., 2003; Schelling, 1980).

However, it is not all conflicts that are provoked by the clash of interests. Some occur naturally. Destructive conflicts mostly happen when interests and outcomes are either not compatible or related. An efficient and effective way of resolving conflict of this sort is to restructure the circumstances that are characterized by a clash of interests into well-matched interests.

A typical conflict resolution is between Egypt and Israel, which was centred on who would control the Sinai Peninsula in 1978. The conflict was finally resolved through a skilful solution that brought the two parties together by aligning their interests. Israel's fundamental interest was safety; they did not want any sort of threat close to their borders. On the other hand, Egypt's fundamental interest was sovereignty, they wanted to uphold the uprightness of borders for centuries long. Eventually, the peace accord permitted Egypt to have control of the Sinai but mandated them to demilitarize it. This conflict resolution has to do with using the situation from one characterized by a competitive conflict of interests in which only one side could win to a situation characterized by compatible interests in which both sides could obtain mutually beneficial outcomes. (Fisher & Ury, 1981)

Conflict can be constructive; although more often than not, it is destructive. Resolving conflicts effectively has to do with putting in place strategies that encourage cooperation. Cooperatively restructuring conflicts, encouraging future-oriented thinking, encouraging empathy for the opposing side, and giving group leaders a measure of independence in their decision-making are some of the strategies that can be used to promote cooperation and peace.

Conflict resolution is an all-inclusive term which has to do with the deep-rooted sources of conflict being addressed. This has to appeal to the behaviour, ensuring it is no longer violent, attitudes are no longer aggressive, and the makeup of the conflict has been changed. It is difficult to avoid uncertainty, this is because the term is used to refer to both the process and the completion of the process. (Orifa, 2016)

As illustrated by the Sinai Peninsula example, reframing a conflict such that cooperation is seen as more attractive than

competition is one possible conflict resolution strategy. The difficulty with this strategy is conceptualizing how to transform the situation into one in which cooperation is valued. Making parties aware of their similarities and shared goals is one method for enacting a cooperative transformation (Cohen & Insko, 2008). Once Israel and Egypt realized that they both shared the overarching goal of a peaceful coexistence, they could focus on developing a solution to their mutual problem of deciding who should control the Sinai.

Cohen & Insko (2008) further narrate three additional conflict resolution strategies that are predominantly effective at promoting cooperation between groups. They are future-oriented thinking, empathy and independent leadership.

Encouraging two conflicting groups to consider future consequences of competitive behaviour increases intergroup cooperation. A simple strategy to stir up future-oriented thinking is to ask each side to reflect on how their competitive actions will affect the other side's future actions. Future-oriented thinking can also be encouraged by using a tit-for-tat strategy to interrelate with opponents and making it most important that there will be various interactions with the other side, as opposed to just one. Future-oriented thinking is effective at reducing conflict because it makes group members realize that the long-term costs of conflict are far greater than any short-term benefits. The realization tends to reduce distrust of the other side, and cooperation is promoted by reductions in distrust. (Cohen & Insko, 2008)

Fostering feelings of empathy is another potential conflict-resolution strategy. Individuals who feel empathy for other individuals are likely to behave aggressively toward them and are more likely to behave prosaically and cooperatively.

Although empathy for opposing groups is sometimes difficult to generate, it can help reduce conflict. One way to promote empathy for opposing groups is through intergroup contact. Studies of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland and the Tamils and the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka have shown that empathy generated by intergroup contact can help promote positive relations between groups with long histories of conflict.

Research has shown that leaders can foster peace between two conflicting groups. Opinion leaders, such as traditional leaders, and religious leaders have a high level of influence on the people. This is because they are generally respected and revered. However, leaders who want to promote cooperation and peace must be allowed some autonomy from their community members so that they cannot be under the influence of any sort.

In the Significance of Sport as a Medium for Inter-community Participatory Communication in Peace Building, sports acquire exceptional skills that make possible peace and conflict resolution process, in the same vein, a publication by the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDPIWG, 2012) "Exploiting the Potentials of Sport", spots further advantages of sport which include:

It can connect, motivate and inspire people, it reduces violence and it is effective in conflict resolution. Sport, games and physical activity generally are activities present in nearly every society across the world. The popularity of sport rises above political, national and ideological frontiers and it is a practice enjoyed by viewers and participants alike. One of the most vital attributes of sport is its capability to unite peoples and communities in a tremendously effective manner. These communities, when they are all-encompassing, turn into important sources of social networking, nurturing community

capacity to work cooperatively. Furthermore, sport has evolved as a worldwide mass entertainment and has become one of the most far-reaching communication stages in the world today. By shining a light on what people can do, sport inspires and motivates individuals. In addition, sport promotes self-esteem, and physical and mental health and foster positive connections with others. (Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, 2008).

In Kenya, community participants were trained in basic photography and given cameras to go into the community and capture images that depicted their experiences of conflict. The post-election violence of 2007-2008 in Kenya left several damages to the communities affected. Apart from the loss of lives and displacement of about 300,000 people Calas & Bernard (2007) agree that violence fractured social relations between the belligerent tribes. There were widespread feelings of distrust, fear, anger and hatred in the communities. Driven by the need to re-establish communication between the opposing sides. Lenses of Conflict and Peace, a participatory project was implemented in Eldoret, Rift Valley to engage members of different ethnic groups in dialogic processes that complemented reconciliatory efforts in the area. (Valentina, 2015)

Some community members were selected to participate in the programme; the selection was done heterogeneously, as the participants were drawn from all the tribes in the area. The participants were trained in basic photography, after which they were paired, given cameras and asked to go into the community to capture images that depicted their experiences of the conflict. The major aim was to use the images to create individual narratives of the 2007-2008 election violence and to engage them in a discussion that focused on conflict and peace-building.

Once the photographs were taken, it generated interactive sessions, with each participant sharing the stories of their pictures and how they related to the conflict. The storytelling sessions were filled with memories, emotions and reflections from all the participants, and eventually culminated experiential learning process. The evolution of the project, though limited, revealed that the interactive sessions played a significant role in the development of a collective understanding of participants' conflict experiences. It also showed that the dialogues and socialization stimulated a reversal of antagonistic ethnic labels with some of the participants, (Bau, 2015)

Several cities in northern Nigeria have been the scene of violent ethno-religious conflicts. These conflicts are normally precipitated by socio-political factors but escalate along the lines of ethnicity and religion. In effect, the conflict has fractured social relations between ethnic and religious groups in some areas. To change the attitude of the groups in conflict, the Theatre for Development Centre (TFDC) initiated a series of participatory dramas in some of the worst-affected cities in Kaduna, Kano and Plateau States. (Abah, 2009)

Participatory drama was strategically used to overcome the barrier posed by language and illiteracy. The major purpose of the plays was to investigate and interrogate conflict narratives, establish commonality and project the need for sustainable peace. The dramas featured the Theatre for Development Centre drama team and some selected members of the communities. The themes of the dramas were developed from data collected on conflict experiences in the area. The dramas were performed in public and were followed by interactive sessions during which other community members were allowed to re-enact certain characters and aspects of the play to aid discussions and provide a deeper understanding of

the themes of the plays. At the end of the project, the evaluation showed that the project went beyond promoting interaction and socialization between opposing sides, to stimulating experiential learning and the cultivation of collective narratives on the causes and experiences of the conflict. The project gave insights into the dynamics of the conflict at the local level, which is an essential element of conflict transformation. The attainment of social change in any conflict situation must be informed by a deep understanding of the conflict, the core issues and how the conflict affects the lives of ordinary citizens. (Valentina, 2015)

The period that preceded the 1994 elections in South Africa was characterized by high levels of political violence that led to unwanted loss of lives in different parts of the country. As typical of most violent conflicts, the post-conflict phase was filled with destructive narratives that made reconciliation a difficult task. Most communities affected by the violence were divided and had feelings of fear, resentment and suspicion. The communities of Kathlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus in south-east Johannesburg were also affected by these crises. Between 1990 and 1994, over 2,000 people lost their lives to political violence in these communities. (Stauffer, 1998)

Due to the need to strengthen communal bonds in these areas, a video dialogue project was introduced to the communities by the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre in collaboration with the Media Peace Centre and Simunye community organization. The major goal was to promote reconciliation and cohesion through a community-led video production. In effect, video cameras were given to leaders of two political groups, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), to document the conflict experiences of their communities. After separate recording

exercises, a mutual process of editing and collating the stories was conducted to produce a new joint story that was acceptable to all. The joint story was a 90-minute video clip that analyzed the conflict and solicit solutions from the community. The video was screened publicly to different segments of the community, and spaces for dialogue on the themes depicted in the videos were created.

The project created interactive sessions that strengthened social bonds in the community and facilitated the development of a common understanding, thereby promoting reconciliation. It also helped to break deconstructive perceptions and stereotypes that were fueling animosities between both sides. The video went beyond strengthening community bonds to coordinating cooperative efforts for addressing some of the economic and development needs in the community. (Calas, 2007)

Participatory Communication in Conflict Resolution

The enclosure of community members in the plan and production of local media content has paved the way for social change, which has been used by development experts to inspire social transformation in different parts of the world. The strength of the participatory model of communication has been reinforced by recent information technologies, which have shoved the traditional horizontal model of communication to favor the participation of people; in the creation and transmission of media content. This, in turn, expresses voices and stories that have been long overlooked by the conventional media. By projecting the voices of those affected by structural and social irregularities. Participatory communication practices are gaining recognition for shaping social, economic, political and cultural processes and institutions. This transformative competence emphasized the

place of community-driven media initiatives in driving socio-political transformations in modern times and which must at length be used for dialogue and reconciliation in communities that have been affected by conflicts. (Pettit, 2009)

Constructive media practices for conflict resolution are expected to create spaces for dialogue in conflict contexts. In this light, participatory media practices have been credited with providing cross-sectional forums for discussing issues like tolerance, conflict experiences, human rights, forgiveness and trust, which are crucial for transforming social structures and attitudes in conflict societies. The interaction and socialization that come with the planning and production of media content can provide individual healing that could have spill-over effects in the community. (Pettit, 2009).

The practice of participatory communication in conflict resolutions is not trendy; however, the integration of participatory communication in some post-conflict communities in Africa and the world at large has elicited significant changes that must be surveyed. Characteristically, participatory communication processes feature collaboration between change agents and the members of the community, who become the participants. The two-way and dialogical nature of participatory communication processes have been known to light up social change processes that have had effects on behaviours, attitudes, policy and perception change in communities. (Blazek, 2012)

The need to engage participatory communication in conflict communities is correlated to the recent demonstration of conflicts on the continent. Most intergroup conflicts are knotted in polarized social institutions and relations that have ominous implications for conflict relations, as most communities affected by violence usually feature high levels of intergroup tensions.

Participatory communication conference is generally characterized by dialogical group settings. Tremblay (2015) opines that participatory communication can provide an occasion to change social structures or power dynamics. The interface between the representational of human experiences and open-minded participatory communication processes excites reactions that promote the attainment of commonalities. This can be seen during the "Never Again" campaign in Sierra Leone, where participatory communication approaches such as theatre, songs, proverbs, riddles and skits were used to employ victims and perpetrators of conflict in storytelling processes that led to the development of shared understandings of the conflict. (Bau, 2014). These understandings incarcerate the victims' pain as well as the perpetrators' impetus for committing the carnage.

Participatory communication is associated with one of the major canons of peace journalism, which is ingrained in exciting change processes in conflict situations by presenting issues in a manner that draws out productive dialogues, counters stereotypes and improves conflict resolution. Through participatory communication processes, marginalized parties are strengthened to tell their stories build images or sounds that oppose negative stereotypes and confirm their commitment to peace, as was observed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. A community affected with high levels of drug violence, as such, members of the community were trained to create videos that projected positive aspects of the community, to counter the conflict stereotype dominated by the conventional media. (Wheeler, 2009)

The creation of skilful forms of engagement for conflicting parties in conflict communities is also a way to constructive conflict resolution because it tells the similarities between conflicting parties, thereby giving them chances to

redefine their relations. In some cases, monuments are mutually erected as a sign of reconciliation and as a reminder of the resolve for peace. The inclusion of storytelling, dancing and healing rituals in the production processes of participatory communication has made them media for healing and reconciliation in conflict communities. (Calas, 2007)

Overview of Herders-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria

Fulani is a tribe that comprises a large population in the northern part of Nigeria. Predominantly, the rural and urban settlers are Muslims. The Fulanis and the Hausas have a lot of things in common and that accounts for why they are mostly addressed as Hausa/Fulani. Stereotypes thrived about the Fulani herdsmen, as issues related to their livelihood were explicitly attributed to political and religious reasons (Olayoku, 2014).

The groups entangled in the conflict may be of different religious identities. A plain disagreement between a farmer and a herdsman from a community that is principally over land use may take a faction crisis; this is because 99.9 % of Fulani herdsmen a Muslim while 99.9% of farmers are Christians. (Nchi, 2013). This is not good for the peaceful co-existence of Muslim and Christian faithful. In another aspect, some states of Nigeria have observed throng killings in many occasions that can be traced to land clashes between migrant Fulani herders and indignant local agriculturalists (Dosu, 2011). The conflict has taken a lot of inconspicuous aspects which call for studies to establish some hidden facts about it. The conflict between herders and farmers falls within the purview of what is known in similar literature as the conservation reserve conflict. This has been a major concern in the minds of analysts and scholars

over the years. (Suhrke 1996; Baechler, 1998 & Gleditsch, 2001).

The scarcity of land for grazing in the semi-arid zones has caused a major migration of farmers southwards, both seasonally and permanently. Many uncultivated areas in river floodplains are now farmed by migrants, leading to disputes with their traditional 'owners' (Blench, 2004). The shrinking of ecological space and resorts creates an atmosphere of eco-scarcity which raises the stakes and premium on the available resources. What usually results from this is fierce competition and a desperate struggle for subsistence. In this context, therefore, conflict does not only become inevitable; it simply becomes a matter of survival (Al Chukwuma & Atelhe, 2014). It might be instructive to note that economically feasible land has been a main reason for conflict between communities in Nigeria particularly in the Benue Valley region of Nigeria (Areola 1992; Gbehe, 2007).

A significant aspect of the occurrence of eco-resource conflict in Nigeria is the reoccurring of herder-farmer altercation. This seems to be most common and all-encompassing in the north-central region of Nigeria, which has seen the worst rate of herders/farmers conflict. The nature and dynamics of this conflict, account for its incidence and prevalence. The global trend of climate change correlates with the conflict, the effects and implications of the conflict are all issues of concern (Al Chukwuma and Atelhe 2014). However, the repercussions are many-sided and need immediate action by the government and non-governmental Organisations with the help of peace-related approaches from the side of the media to address the issue.

Travelling in search of a greener pasture and a good place for survival and sustenance of one's occupation is not

new to Nigerians or the Fulani herdsmen in particular. However, it is important that in our actions to bring this to fruition, we should desist from encroaching upon the freedom of others. It is equally important that we desist from sowing discord in the country, however tempting it may be. Seeds when sown tend to germinate in due time. It is however "life-threatening" and perilous for such seeds to be sown in the country at this time when questions of ethnicity, true federalism, secession, good governance and democratization remain unanswered. It is therefore imperious that the Fulani attacks be dissuaded and ultimately halted (Akinyetun 2016). However, the clashes between the herders and farmers will amount to already difficult condition of getting pasture. This will affect the herders and the farmers who buy dairy and beef for their food.

To the Fulanis, lives can be sacrificed if their cattle lives are in jeopardy. In the same vein, farmers cannot fold their hands and allow their farm produce be eaten up by the herders' cattle. This has been concurred by scholarly argument that the implication of the preceding citation is that a typical Fulani pastoralist would care less to live if the survival and sustenance of his herd come under serious threats. This explains the magnitude of aggression and vindictive violence that the Fulani herders often manifest in their disputes with settled farming communities. (Young & Sing'Oei, 2011).

Herders-farmers conflict has lingered as the most reserve-use conflict in Nigeria. Ajuwon (2004); (Fasona & Omojola, 2005). The need to provide food for humans and animals, as well as raw materials for industry and also export to meet ever-growing demands, has led to increasing land use (Nyong & Fiki, 2005). The struggle between these two

agriculturalists, however, has frequently turned into severe apparent and concealed turn of phrase of belligerence and social friction in many parts of Nigeria. The conflicts have established a high possibility of aggravating the food crisis and insecurity, particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts take place, with deep costs nationwide (Adisa, 2016).

Conclusion

The study investigated the Place of Participatory Communication in Herder/Farmer Conflict in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State. A survey method was employed as a means of gathering data. A total of 300 copies of questionnaires were administered, 291 making up 97% of the total copies distributed were retrieved from the respondents for subsequent analysis. The data gathered from the field were analyzed using simple descriptive statistical tools in line with frequency and percentage.

Investigating the root cause of conflict in the community, (24.74%) of the respondents said that religion is the root cause of conflict in communities, (30.58%) of the respondents said it is a political reason, (35.05%) said the root cause is economic while, (9.62%) said it is for a selfish reason. This shows that herder/farmer conflict in communities can be traced to economic factors. This response is in alignment with (Areola, 1992 & Gbehe, 2007), that, economically viable land has been a major cause of conflict between communities. Investigating the extent to which dialogue has been used as an alternative conflict resolution mechanism. A large percentage of respondents, (42.61%) said the dialogue has not been used to resolve conflict, in that dialogue alone has not brought lasting peace, but that the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations need to put in place and enforce into law, the

practice of grazing reserves for cattle, (37.11%) of the respondents said dialogue to a large extent has been used as an alternative conflict resolution mechanism, were the two conflicting groups come together and air their views, thereby fostering mutual understanding which could lead to lasting peace, while (20.27%) of the respondents said dialogue is out of the resolution process. Examining the effect of participatory communication in the community, 68.38% responded that, participatory communication affected their community positively, which means participatory communication is capable of affecting society, shaping people's behaviour and so on. While 31.61% of respondents believe that participatory communication affects the community negatively by causing unnecessary tensions and disaffection to their well-being. Examining the most effective participatory communication method/strategy, 35.05% of the respondents said participation in benefit is the most effective participatory communication method/strategy, 42.26% said participation in decision-making is the most effective participatory communication strategy, 13.74% said participation by implementation is the most participatory communication strategy while 8.93%. This study concludes that participatory communication is capable of solving herder/farmer conflict in Barkin-Ladi through dialogue, sensitization, education and entertainment. Positive change and values for peaceful co-existence among the herders and farmers in Barkin-Ladi.

Recommendations

- When applying the participatory approach to communication in herder/farmer conflict resolution, it is important to first identify the root cause of the issue

being addressed, the culture of the community, the appropriate change agent, the relevant key stakeholders and their respective roles, the aim of the exercise, timelines as well as monitoring and evaluation approaches required.

- Media practitioners should choose words that de-escalate tension when reporting herders/farmers conflict. They should also look out for early warning signs and report them to relevant authorities.

- Media practitioners are encouraged to do knowledge-based reporting which in turn initiates dialogue between farmers and herders that will foster mutual trust and good communication.

- Media practitioners should be peace facilitators. They should endeavour to make peace between the warring factions rather than be eager to break news.

- Education is very important, especially on the part of the herders. The herders should be educated on the importance and the need to embrace the ranching system of cattle rearing as against open grazing. There is a need for the Government to make grazing land available and easily accessible to as many farmers across the country.

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