Session: Communication Skills

AGENDA:
Day: 1
Time: 13:00 – 14:30

DURATION:
1 hour 30 minutes

OBJECTIVES:
✔ Describe the different ways in which we communicate with each other
✔ Map the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that are essential to communicate effectively
✔ Manage verbal and non-verbal communication in a results-based manner by applying different active listening techniques to different situations
✔ Understand cultural differences related to communication and manage them effectively
✔ Deal with emotions in a multicultural environment in a way that strengthens the group as whole

MATERIALS:
• Flipchart paper and markers
• Large A3 Paper each with an active listening tool (see Handout in file)
• Post its with A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, C1 and so on (number of groups of letters as number of participants divided by three)
• Groups of Slips with each active listening tool (one Group of Slip per Group of letters identified (see above)
• German Coastguard ‘what are you thinking?
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zkZ3f8DnKs
• HSBC ‘Personal Space
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUCODUvKbzE

PREPARATION:
(before the session)
• Pre-prepare 3 flipcharts with the following headings: “verbal”, “tone” and “body language”
• Print handouts in two sets
• Cued up videos from you tube
• Test sound for videos before session
Session Outline

The following should be read as a supplement to the PowerPoint Presentation, attached in this file called ‘Communication Skills’.

The notes section of the PowerPoint can be used by the facilitator as a guide to explain each slide.

The following is an overview of the session, and a suggestion of how it might be structured, including activities, with references to the relevant slides.

1. Introduction to the Communications Session

Communication is at the heart of all soft skills. It is the basis for creating relationships and getting things done. Making oneself heard and understood is not an easy task; nor is hearing/capturing messages from other people an easy task. This holds particularly true in a multi-cultural environment.

Example for context related contingency: if in a meeting of the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) the cluster coordinator starts shouting instructions at the other members, the group may perceive the autocratic communication behavior as arrogant and/or aggressive. The communication message may thus not be accepted/retained by the receivers. Conversely, such as if a fire alarm started to go off during a GPC meeting, the group would be more inclined to accept a directive communication style, since the entire group has to act quickly.

We are going to look at different communication styles and how we can use them to make coordination more effective.
2. **Activity**: Chain of communication  
(see also slide ‘The Chain of Communication)  

Ask for 5 volunteers and give them numbers 1 to 5 in front of the other participants. You explain that volunteer #1 will get a verbal message that he/she will then transmit to volunteer #2, who then has to pass it to volunteer #3 and so and so forth till it reaches volunteer #5.

Before hand, ask one of the participants playing the exercise to dramatize his/her facial expression or body language when mentioning that “it is going to rain “ or any other part of the message.

- The participants should be distracted by other facilitators in the room, to block out the noise until it is their turn to listen
- Participants should sit in chairs at the front of the room or around their tables, all except participant #1
- Participant #1 hears the message from the facilitator while the other participants #2 - #5 are being distracted
- Once the facilitator has communicated verbally the message to him/her, participant #1 tells participant #2 the message
- participants go one by one, repeat until the chain of communication has reached volunteer #5
- Volunteer 5 should then write the message on a flip-chart.

**IN PLENARY DISCUSS HOW THE MESSAGE HAS CHANGED, WHY IT HAS CHANGED.**

3. **Return to presentation**

Refer to notes contained in PowerPoint
4. **Activity**: Active listening skills and tools

4.1 **Theatre played by two facilitators**

Following the slides explaining different active listening skills and tools, introduce the following Role play

- A facilitator [A] and a participant [B] will do a role play
- [A] plays role of Cluster Coordinator and [B]. Plays role of new member of the Cluster
- [A] is explaining the Cluster’s strategy
- [B] has a set of questions/statements in order to illustrate the 5 active listening tools
- Discuss in plenary different non-verbal active listening techniques

4.2 **“Listen to Me!!”**

Ask the two actors/actresses to play now the following activity so it can serve as example for what the participants should do next. (see below Option B for details)

5. **Activity “Listen to ME!!”**: Active listening, putting theory into practice

**Option A:**

- Split participants into 2 groups
- There are 2 sets of large papers with a each Active Listening Tool written clearly.
- Each participant takes a turn (in pairs, with others observing) to do this activity
- Facilitator is positioned so those observing cannot see the facilitator
- Participant A has to explain to Participant B their role within their own organization
- The facilitator holds up paper with an active listening tool, the participants then have to act out that tool and the observers have to guess which tool is being acted out.
- Repeat, until all participants have taken part in the activity – it is ok to repeat the active listening tools.
- Depending on the size of the group, make sure you have a maximum of 10 per group.
Option B:

- Divide participants using the Birthday line. Assign post-its to each of them with Letters and Numbers. The first person in the line received the post it A1, the second A2 and the third A3. These are the members of Group A. The fourth person in the lines receives the post it B1, the fifth B2 and the sixth B3. These are the members of Group B. and so on.

- A1 picks randomly a slip with one of the Active Listening tools. He or she will ask a question related to Protection Cluster in Mindanao to A2. Then, A2 will answer. To demonstrate active listening, A1 will apply the active listening tool. A3 is observing the situation and guesses which is the tool, used. A3 can ask to continue the conversation if he/she is not sure yet of the tool used.

- After the first round the bell rings and, clockwise, the group members rotate the roles. This is repeated one more time so everyone has the opportunity to practice.

6. Debrief

Either use blank slide *If we do not listen actively we…* or create a flip chart.

Have a volunteer participant or co-facilitator write either directly onto the PowerPoint or onto the flip chart comments from group based on what happens if we do not listen actively listen.

- Remind the participants that communication is a two ways process. It is not only the receiver who has to make efforts to understand the message of the sender. It is first and foremost the sender who has to communicate in a results oriented manner.

- Remind participants to customize the approach depending on the objective of the message.

- Consider location, room set up, (use examples, coffee break, round table discussions)

- Discuss why you would choose one option over an other.

7. Wrap up by discussing the following points

Communication is important:

- As a **member** of a cluster group – it important to get your message across in a way that you are properly understood, to use communication to support the good running and collaboration of the meeting

- As a **cluster coordinator or meeting chair** to ensure you give clear signals that you are listening and respecting different speakers, to observe when there are communication challenges which are leading to misunderstandings and thus potentially conflict in the group, to understand how to better manage relationships between the different actors in the group

- Communication is at the core of soft skills, tomorrow’s sessions will build on this foundation.

Distribute Handouts 1 and 2. Make sure you clarify that they are personal handouts and they are for participants to keep as their own.