Chapter 6
Process Documentation of Interfaith Peacebuilding Cycle: A Case Study From Nepal

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ABSTRACT

The concept of this study was to explicitly define the characteristics of Process Documentation (PD), a unique type of record keeping system. The PD is a process of lessons learned-centric piloting approach which is a neologism in Social Science research. The PD moves forward “anti-clock-wise” direction and generally applies to humanitarian agencies in support, care and emergency relief programs to deliver basic services to needy people. The PD was first used in the Philippines in 1978, but applied in Nepal after peace accord 2007 to unite, reconcile and integrate the society through interfaith peacebuilding (IP) initiatives. The objectives were to document the process of the IP and analyze change perceptions contributing to transforming the ongoing conflict. The method led to interviews, storytelling, FGDs, observation and participation. The PD of IP generally functions through End-to-End Lifecycle that is organically similar to an ecosystem. Interfaith is not a religion, but a glorious art of symphony that makes a passage for peace, harmony, co-existence and friendship.

INTRODUCTION

The fruit of silence is prayer; the fruit of prayer is faith; the fruit of love is service; and the fruit of service is peace. - Mother Teresa

Nepal is geographically sandwiched between two giants and long-term rival nations: disorderly under-governed Republic of India and orderly over-governed People’s Republic of China. Nepal is squeezed by way of contrasting politico-ideology (system), identity (socio-cultural), resource, demography and mosaic Shangri-La. India executes bourgeois (elected representatives) democracy whereas China continues to use proletarian (selected representatives) democracy. Furthermore, Nepal has been surrounded by two
economic mosaics. China controls the nation’s economy by political means whereas India’s politics are being controlled by business tycoons. It might not be a coincidence that the Free Tibet Movement was intensified in Kathmandu as long as the UNOHCHR and UNMIN were stationed in Nepal (Pathak, December 12, 2012, pp. 9-21). Both China and India apply self-centered ideology when having to look at Nepal. Strong, stable, progressive and developed Nepal makes close peace, peace dividend, co-existence and friendship relations with China, but weak, unstable, conflicting, and the least developed dependency with India’s power, politics and property. China, therefore, wishes to see stable, harmonious and prosperous Nepal that can control the Free-Tibet movement in its land, but India desires to keep Nepal unstable so India can easily control its politico-economy and natural resources in the name of insecurity and being escalated by extreme Muslim faith in Nepal.

Interfaith is not a religion, but makes a passage to reconcile peace, harmony and friendship among the religions. Interfaith is an involvement of persons of different religions for a societal noble cause. It creates a common platform to all who belong to different religious faiths. The religious faith begins within, between or among the set of personal beliefs. The liberal belief is that God is one, but his names are many; religion is one, but its traditional practices are many. Religion corresponds with spirituality and spirituality to humanity. There is one humanity, but humans are many. The paths of religion, spirituality and humanity emphasize the universal principles for empathy for the betterment of human beings. Thus, interfaith has a glorious symphony. It accepts, celebrates and delivers equal magnificence on faiths, colors, creeds, cultures and traditions of humankind. It morally understands the significant differences of persons and fulfills the quests of truth, justice and dignity. Thus, interfaith strengthens and respects reconciliation and friendship for peace-tranquility and harmony through peacebuilding initiatives. Interfaith can play a positive role in tackling intra-and-inter-religious conflict (Owen and King, 2013, p. 3) and enhance peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding is a comparatively new term (United Religious Initiative, October 2004, p. 10). Interfaith peacebuilding (IP) is a process that seeks to restore respect and mutual understanding between or among the people of different religions, e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism (Green, n.d., p. 16). IP has been an important tool to reconcile and make the divided society harmonious in post-conflict Nepal. It has played a significant role to restore retributive justice and restorative justice (Pathak, August 22, 2015). In post-conflict Nepal, the conduction of interfaith programs at grassroots levels is undertaken as problem solving and strategic intervention of peacebuilding at societal and community levels. In Nepal, the faith-based groups and religious actors have been contributing significantly for peacebuilding and development activities, particularly at grassroots levels (Owen and King, 2013, p. 3).

The aim of this study was to bring all religious and non-religious actors: peace and mediation practitioners, academics, journalists and social workers together to transform conflicting synergy to IP initiatives. Interfaith peacebuilding seeks greater understanding of ways to achieve effective, just and sustainable peace and harmony while rebuilding resilient societies after a period of conflict.

This study identified the Process Documentation (PD) used for documenting the process of learning adapted during IP initiatives that occurred throughout the project cycle (see Figure 1). Specific objectives were to document how interfaith networks and other beneficiary groups were formed; to gather information on how change perceptions contributed in knowledge, attitude and behavior of intended beneficiaries and different stakeholders; to document how challenges were mitigated and opportunities were utilized, and to identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies and lessons learnt from the project. Further, the approaches, strategies and policies of the process documentation were adapted to scaling up changes and relationship building.