LESSON 3.2 – UNDERSTANDING THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT.

Interactive Activity: information environment simulation

Objective: To apply the concepts learned in the lesson on Information Environment Analysis in a simulated real-world scenario. Participants will engage in a mapping and analysis exercise that simulates a peacekeeping mission's response to misinformation in a conflict-affected area.

Materials Needed:
- Scenario description
- Note-taking materials for participants.

Activity Setup:

1. Divide participants into small groups: Each group represents a unit planning team deployed in a fictional peacekeeping environment.

2. Assign roles within each group: Roles include intelligence, operations, plans, CIMIC, public information / communications officer and Platoon Commander. Directing Staff can play roles as community members like the Mayor, Radio Station manager, Police Chief, Religious Leader, etc.

3. Distribute Scenario Descriptions: Each group receives a scenario detailing that a form of MDMH is spreading through a community.

4. Task for Groups: Using the information from the lesson, each group must identify the type of MDMH, channel, information needs, context of the message, perception, network, stakeholders, socio-political considerations, etc. They should consider:
  - How they intend to map the information sources and channels in the scenario.
  - What information they can use to analyse the potential impact of the misinformation.
  - Who they need to engage to get the information they need to map and analyse the issue.
  - What risks could arise in the course of this mapping and analysis process, and how would you mitigate them?

Debriefing:
- Discuss the strategies employed, challenges faced and lessons learned.
- Encourage participants to reflect on how the exercise relates to real-world peacekeeping scenarios.

Learning outcomes:
- Participants will gain practical experience in applying information environment analysis in a complex scenario.
- The activity fosters teamwork and critical thinking, essential for IE analysis.
- It highlights the importance of understanding and adapting to cultural and contextual nuances in conflict zones.

Briefing Document: Information Environment Challenge in Peacekeeping

Background context

Location: Fictional region known as, "Veronia"
Situation: Veronia has been experiencing civil unrest due to political and ethnic tensions between the Greenslade and Llyod people: Recently, there has been a surge in MDMH, exacerbating the conflict.

Scenario description

Challenge: A rumour has been spreading through Veronia that the peacekeeping forces are biased and supporting one ethnic group, the Greenslades. There was an incident two weeks ago where a Lloyd teenager was struck and killed by a passing UN vehicle. Information has been spread through a recent news interview on the radio station WKRP with a local Lloyd religious leader that they believe the UN may have struck the youth on purpose. The information has been disseminated through other regional local radio stations and word of mouth in community gatherings, leading to increased tensions and distrust towards peacekeepers.

Objective for teams: The teams will discuss how they would approach mapping the information sources and channels that would likely be present in this type of scenario. They will determine what information they can use to analyse the potential impact of the misinformation. They will need identify who they will engage to get the information they need to map and analyse the issue. They should consider what risks could arise in the course of this mapping and analysis process, and how would you mitigate them?

Time frame: The simulation will take place over a period representing two weeks of operations in Veronia.

Instructions for Participants:
- Choose your role within the team and understand your responsibilities.
- Work with your team to develop a plan on how you will map the AO identifying possible key infrastructure, networks, channels, influencers, etc.
- Participate in the debriefing session, sharing insights and reflections. The intelligence officer, within your team, is responsible for collating and delivering the plan.

Veronia key influencers bios

1. Nia Kassimi, Radio Station Manager at WKRP
   Background: A seasoned journalist in her late 40s, Nia has been managing WKRP for over a decade. Known for her balanced reporting, she has recently been under pressure to take sides in the ethnic conflict.
   Influence: Controls one of the most listened-to radio stations in Veronia. Her editorial decisions significantly impact public opinion.
   Motivation: Committed to journalistic integrity but faces threats and bribes to sway her station's reporting.
   Role in information environment: Nia's control over a major radio station makes her a key player in shaping public narratives.
   Influence on information landscape: As a manager with editorial control, Nia has the

power to amplify certain voices or stories, thus influencing public perception and the broader information environment in Veronia.

2. Elijah Mwang, Llyod Religious Leader
   Background: In his early 60s, Elijah is a respected figure among the Llyod community. He is known for his passionate sermons and advocacy for Llyod rights.
   Influence: Holds considerable sway over the Llyod community. His words are often taken as directives by his followers.
   Motivation: Seeks justice for the Llyod community but is wary of outside intervention, including peacekeepers.
   Role in information environment: Elijah's influence as a religious leader demonstrates the power of trusted community figures in shaping opinions and spreading information.
   Influence on information landscape: His sermons and public statements can significantly impact the attitudes of the Llyod community towards peacekeeping efforts and other ethnic groups.

3. Toban Deng, Greenslade Government Official
   Background: A 50-year-old career politician, Toban has risen through the ranks due to his loyalty to the ruling party. He is seen as a potential future leader.
   Influence: Has the ear of the central government and access to state resources. Can influence policy decisions affecting peacekeeping operations.
   Motivation: Aims to maintain the status quo and strengthen the Greenslades' hold on power.
   Role in information environment: Toban's position in government highlights the role of political figures in controlling or disseminating information, especially in state-controlled media.
   Influence on information landscape: He can influence official narratives and government responses to crises, which is critical to understand government's role in information management.

4. Manyay Singh, Head of Local NGO 'Veronia Aid'
   Background: A humanitarian worker in her late 30s, Manyay has dedicated her life to conflict resolution and aid delivery. She is of Indian descent and grew up in Veronia.
   Influence: Respected by both local communities and international agencies for her dedication and neutrality.
   Motivation: Committed to ensuring aid reaches those in need, advocating for peace and reconciliation.
   Role in information environment: Manyay's work with an NGO shows the role of humanitarian organisations in providing ground-level insights and counter-narratives to prevailing misinformation.
   Influence on information landscape: Her organisation can be a source of unbiased information, crucial for peacekeepers in understanding the needs and sentiments of local populations.

5. Ang Loman, Civil Affairs Officer with the mission
   Background: A 40-year-old long-time peacekeeping staff member from Singapore. Ang has been working with the mission for the last five years and is based in the mission’s nearby field sub-office.

Influence: Ang speaks the local language and has established strong relationships with local leaders over the last several years. Her office reports on developments in the area to mission Headquarters daily.
Motivation: Strongly interested in the long-term relationship between the local community and the mission, and in advancing the mission's country-wide communications objectives.
Role in information environment: Ang is in regular contact with a variety of mission actors, such as strategic communications and gender affairs, and has contacts across the humanitarian and development communities, such as health services.
Influence on information landscape: And has longstanding, productive relationships with many local leaders and is a trusted representative of the mission.

5. So Lopez, International Journalist
   Background: A 35-year-old investigative journalist from Spain. So has been covering African conflicts for various international media outlets.
   Influence: Her reports reach an international audience and can influence the perception of the conflict outside Veronia.
   Motivation: Dedicated to uncovering the truth and bringing international attention to the plight of the people in conflict zones.
   Role in information environment: So's work illustrates the impact of international media on shaping global understanding and perceptions of local conflicts.
   Influence on information landscape: Her reporting can bring international attention to issues in Veronia, influencing how external stakeholders perceive and respond to the conflict.

6. General Bang Okonkwo, Veronian Armed Forces Chief
   Background: A seasoned military leader in his late 50s, General Okonkwo rose through the ranks of the Veronian Armed Forces, known for his strategic acumen and strong leadership during the civil conflicts.
   Influence: Commands the national military, holds significant sway in national security matters and is a key figure in the government's decision-making process.
   Motivation: Loyal to the government, primarily the Greenslade faction, but has shown interest in national stability and a unified Veronia.
   Role in information environment: General Okonkwo's position demonstrates the military's role in information operations, both in terms of security and propaganda.
   Influence on information landscape: His statements and actions as a military leader can significantly shape the national and international narrative regarding security and stability in Veronia.

7. Tony Al-Fayed, Leader of the Llyod Liberation Front (LLF)
   Background: In his early 40s, Al-Fayed became the face of the LLF after leading several successful demonstrations against government oppression. Known for his charismatic leadership and commitment to the Llyod cause.
   Influence: Revered among the Llyod population, he has substantial control over LLF's strategies and political stance.
   Motivation: Seeks autonomy or significant political power for the Llyods, willing to engage in talks but remains skeptical of the government's intentions.
   Role in information environment: Al-Fayed's leadership of a rebellious faction highlights

the role of non-state actors in crafting and disseminating information to further their causes.
Influence on information landscape: His public communications can mobilise support, spread propaganda and influence the perception of the Llyod community's struggle.

8. 8. Chief Samuel Ekundayo, Veronian National Police Chief
   Background: In his early 50s, Chief Ekundayo has gained a reputation for his tactical intelligence and ability to maintain order during tense situations.
   Influence: As the head of the national police force, he plays a crucial role in domestic security and law enforcement. His decisions and actions significantly affect public safety and perceptions of the police force, especially in ethnically charged environments.
   Motivation: A Greenslade by ethnicity, his actions are often viewed as favoring the Greenslades. Faced with the challenge of policing in a divided society.
   Role in information environment: Chief Ekundayo's role illustrates the impact of law enforcement on public perception and community relations, especially in conflict-affected areas.
   Influence on information landscape: His actions and public statements as police chief can either build trust or exacerbate tensions, influencing the local information environment significantly.

Information Infrastructure in Veronia

9. Media outlets:
   Radio Stations: The primary source of news for many in Veronia, especially in rural areas. Stations like WKRP have a wide reach and influence. Some stations are ethnically aligned or politically influenced. The UN mission funds a radio station that has coverage across the country and is used for strategic communication pruposes.
   Television: Limited to urban areas, with a few national channels controlled by the government and a few private channels, which are often subject to political pressures.
10. Digital and Social Media:
    Internet Access: Limited mostly to urban centers. Internet penetration is growing, but connectivity remains a challenge in rural areas.
    Social Media: Platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are popular among the urban population. They are often used for news consumption and sharing, but also for spreading rumours and misinformation.
11. Print media:
    Newspapers and magazines: Their reach is limited due to low literacy rates and distribution challenges. They are more influential among the educated elite.
12. Mobile communication:
    Cell phones: Widely used across Veronia, including in rural areas. Text messaging and voice calls are common, with increasing use of smartphones for accessing social media.
    Community phone centres: In remote areas, shared phone services are available, acting as communication hubs for villages.
13. Traditional and Community Networks:
    Word of mouth: A significant mode of information dissemination, especially in areas with limited access to modern media.
    Community Leaders: Tribal and religious leaders often act as key information sources and influencers within communities.

14. Public information campaigns:
    UN and NGOs: Conduct public information campaigns, including flyers, posters and community meetings, to disseminate information and counter misinformation.
15. Infrastructure challenges:
    Electricity: Irregular power supply affects media consumption and communication, especially in rural areas.
16. Geographical barriers: Difficult terrain and lack of infrastructure can hinder information dissemination and connectivity.
17. Information Control and Censorship:
    Government Control: The government may exert control over national media outlets and attempt to censor information.
    Ethnic and Political Bias: Some media outlets may be biased towards certain ethnic groups or political agendas, influencing the portrayal of news and information.

Political Tensions in Veronia

1. Ethnic Divisions:
    Major Groups: The region is primarily divided between the Greenslades and the Llyods. The Greenslades are predominant in the government and control key political positions, while the Llyods are a historically marginalised group.
    Tensions: These ethnic divisions have led to political tensions, with accusations of discrimination and unequal distribution of resources.
2. Government and Opposition Dynamics:
    Ruling Party: Dominated by the Greenslades, the ruling party has been accused of authoritarian tendencies, corruption, and suppressing opposition voices.
    Opposition Parties: Largely representing the Llyod community, they struggle to gain political foothold due to alleged electoral malpractices and government control over media.
3. History of Civil Conflict:
    Past Wars: Veronia has a history of civil wars, primarily driven by ethnic rivalries and struggles over resources.
    Peace Agreements: There have been multiple attempts at peace agreements, but they have often failed due to lack of trust and political will.
4. External Influence:
    Neighboring Countries: Some neighboring countries have been accused of supporting rebel groups or the government for their geopolitical interests.
    International Community: International actors, including the UN, are involved in peacekeeping and mediation efforts but face accusations of bias or ineffectiveness.
5. Economic Disparities:
    Resource Allocation: Wealth and resources are unevenly distributed, often along ethnic lines, leading to grievances and social unrest.
    Unemployment and Poverty: High levels of unemployment and poverty, especially among youth, contribute to social instability and susceptibility to joining rebel groups.
6. Propaganda and Information Warfare:
    Media Manipulation: Both the government and opposition use media to propagate their narratives and discredit each other.

Misinformation: Spread of misinformation about ethnic groups or political actions fuels hatred and violence.

7. Security Forces and Human Rights:
   Military and Police: Accused of human rights abuses and bias towards the ruling ethnic group.
   Rebel Groups: Various armed groups, aligned with different ethnicities or political causes, contribute to instability and violence.
8. Civil Society and Activism:
   NGOs and Activists: There are efforts by civil society groups to promote peace, democracy, and human rights, often facing government suppression.
   Grassroots Movements: Emerging movements, particularly among younger populations, advocating for social change and ethnic harmony.