COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:
VIEW, CONCEPT, AND PRINCIPLES

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INTRODUCTION

Developing nations cannot afford to neglect the human resources that can be awakened through community development. By community development is meant the “process through which the human being is assisted in his growth and development within the scope of his potential”. It concerns itself with the development of attitudes, understandings and skills which are often difficult to measure. The true measure is discovered only in a change in attitude, which inspires or results in changed outward actions of the people, such as cooperativeness, social responsibilities, to name of view.

In another vein, Gales viewed community development as a “planned and organized effort to assist individuals to acquire the attitudes, skills and concepts required for their democratic participation in the effective solution of as wide a range of community improvement problems as possible in an order of priority determined by their increasing levels of competence. The two essential elements of community development. These were: the participation of people themselves to improve their level of living with as much reliance on their own initiative; and the provision of technical and other services in ways which encourage initiative, self-help and mutual help and make these more effective.

Community development is an evolutionary process, whereby a group of people, with common needs and aspirations, improve their social, economic and political environment by working together. The end-result is for the individual and the community of which he is a part, to become eventually better off materially and spiritually. Its overall objective is to raise the economic standard and social level of the people.

The function of community development is to develop first an intellectual and emotional readiness for economic development. However, the latter will be only a means for social development – the development of an enlightened group, free from ignorance, poverty and diseases. In addition, there must be a practical day to day opportunity for broadening the base of leadership – a need to do things together at the local level. This is where politicalization comes in.

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For community development to function in the solution of economic, social and political problems certain considerations are basic.

1) Developing the person in each community — each individual, considering his potential, should be able to contribute in his own unique way his ideas, opinions and conclusions for the common betterment of all.

2) Strengthening the small community — If the objective of community development is to build a stable, strong and permanent economy and citizenry then the work should have its small beginnings in isolated spots and on small scale. The small community should be provided with the necessary amenities and infrastructures for social and economic betterment in order not to tear down the basic foundations of a stable society through the process of migration to the urban sectors.

3) Emphasizing human growth — A country’s lasting development should be concerned with each greatest resource, the human being. It must be ready not only to accept, but also to manipulate all the mechanisms of the technical achievement. Individuals must be stimulated to do things which will open the door to limitless future; they must develop a willingness to work for their betterment. In short, the creative process of human beings must be developed since they are the ultimate producers of real wealth. This is however, a slow, but sure process. From this it can be inferred that community development is an educative process.

Community development as described above is rooted in the concept of the worth of man as a responsible, participating member of society. It is concerned with human organization and the political process, as well. It is designed to encourage self-help efforts to raise the standards of living and to create stable, self-reliant; communities with an assured sense of free world objectives. Community development as seen as dealing with the total community using a flexible and dynamic approach adapted to local conditions.

The term community development has come into international usage to mean the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, and social and cultural conditions of these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. These complex process is, therefore, made up of two essential elements, namely:

1) the participation of the people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living, with as much reliance as possible on their own initiative, and;

2) the provision of technical and other services in ways which encourage initiative, self-help and make these more effective. It is expressed in programs designed to achieve a wide variety of specific improvements.

Community development has assumed other names in other countries, such as extension, mass education, fundamental education, rural reconstruction, rural development,
and social development. In this regard, community development has been the varied community development programs. These are:

MAJOR CONCEPT AND PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development has evolved as a gamut to help solve the social, economic and political crises in different parts of the world, but finds its special application to the less developed countries. Community development aims to bring about improvement in the quality of life and attainment of equity. Specifically community development has been addressing poverty alleviation, reduction of inequality in income and employment and access to public goods and services.

Community development applies the holistic approach to development, but emphasis is given to the development of the human aspect. It works on the premise that development goal can be best attained through the conscious efforts of people to help themselves. Man is viewed as the greatest resource of the country/society which can effect development.

In consonance to this view, man is seen as rational – has the ability to think and act, and has the capacity to learn anything for his improvement; man is also viewed as responsible, one who makes effective use of technology and material assistance provided to him; lastly, man is believed to be a participating member of society working on a community basis, and is therefore concerned with human organization and political processes.

Community development by focusing on human development, also subscribe to democratic processes in identification of problems and solution for the development of the community. In the process, it also necessitates the transfer and use of technology as a tool to effectively solve their problems. The latter has emphasized the role of education in community development.

Community development has universal application. However, strategies would vary and should be fitted to specific circumstances/situation e.g. location, time. It should also be flexible and at the same time dynamic.

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The principles are not independent, and relate to each other in a variety of ways. Taken together, they represent a coherent approach to community development that is consistent with the previous analysis. The order in which they are discussed does not necessarily reflect an order of priority or importance, rather, each must be considered as critically importance for a successful community development approach.
The 22 principles:

1. Integrated development
   Social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and personal/spiritual development all represent essential aspects of any community's life. A programme of community development, therefore, must take all six into account. This does not necessarily mean that all six will be part of every community development strategy, it is likely that a community will be stronger in some of these six areas than in others, and that as a result certain areas will require more concentration. The important point, however, is that all six must be considered, so that a decision to concentrate on, say, economic and social development rather than the other four is made consciously, and preferably by the community itself, rather than simply being assumed as a result of the interests of a community worker or the mandate of a government agency. Such a decision must be taken in the full understanding of the critical importance of all six areas, not assuming that any one is 'fundamental' and basic to change in the others.

2. Confronting structural disadvantage
   Community development – if it is to be consistent with the social justice perspective. At the very least, community development projects must ensure that they do not reinforce these forms of structural oppression, and preferably community development should seek to confront and counter them in whatever way or ways are appropriate within the specific context. This requires a community worker to be aware of the complex, subtle and pervasive ways in which class, gender and race/ethnicity oppression operate, through the media, the education system, organizational structures, the welfare state, language, the economy, the market, advertising, and so on. It also requires community workers to be critically aware of their own backgrounds, their own (often unconscious) racist, sexist and class based attitudes, and their own participation in the structures of oppression.

3. Human rights
   An understanding of, and a commitment to, fundamental human rights is an important principle of community development. Australia does not have its own Bill of Rights, and for the most part human rights are not defined and protected in the Constitution. However, Australia is a party to various international human rights agreements, and these can be used as a basic reference. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides a powerful definition of basic human rights. Other agreements, such as the UN covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights spell out these commitments in more detail. It is well worthwhile for a community worker to become familiar with these documents, as well as others which maybe particularly important in specific community circumstances (e.g., the UN Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees).

4. Sustainability
   The principle of sustainability is an essential component of the ecological approach. It is essential that any community development activity occurs within a framework of sustainability, otherwise it will simply reinforce the existing unsustainable order, and will
not be viable in the long term. If community development is to be part of the establishment of a new social, economic and political order, its structures and processes must be sustainable.

The sustainability requires that the use of non-renewable resources be minimized, and if possible eliminated. This has implications for local communities in terms of land use, lifestyle, conservation, transport, and so on. Community development should aim to minimize dependence on non-renewable resources, and to substitute these with renewable resources. Projects and strategies which might be encouraged include the promotion of bicycles as an alternative to motor vehicles. Choosing economic development projects that do not plunder natural resources, and not using old-growth forest timbers as building materials.

5. Empowerment
Empowerment should be an aim of all community development. The word has been much over-used in recent years. Empowerment means providing people with the resources, opportunities, knowledge and skills to increase their capacity to determine their own future, and to participate in and affect the life of their community.

6. The personal and the political
The links between the personal and the political, the individual and the structural, or private troubles and public issues, are essential components of community development. It is only when this link is made that individual needs, problem, aspirations, sufferings and achievements can be translated into effective community level action.

7. Community ownership
Basic to community development is the concepts of community ownership, and a key principle is to expand community ownership; and to seek to establish it in-communities where it does not exist. This can be understood at two levels, the ownership of material things, and the ownership of structures and processes.

8. Self-reliance
The community should seek to utilize its own resources wherever possible rather than relying on external support. This applies to all forms of resources: financial, technical, natural and human. Community development will seek to identify and utilize these resources within the community itself to the maximum extent possible (though particularly in the case of natural resources, the constraints of sustainability must be observed).

9. Independence from the state
The principle of self-reliance raises the related issue of the relationship with the state. State sponsored community development has had a long tradition, and the natural response of a government to a perceived need for community development is to establish a state-supported community development programme of some kind. The principle of self-reliance, however, warns that this is not necessarily an appropriate direction, and suggests that government sponsorship of community development is likely to weaken rather than strengthen the basis of community. For this reason, communities and community workers
together, and helping them to communicate with each other in a way that can lead to
genuine dialogue, understanding and social action. Loss of community has resulted in
fragmentation, isolation and individualisation, and community building is necessary if the
establishment of viable and sustainable community-level structures and processes are to be
achieved.

15. Process and outcome
The tension between process and outcome has been a major issue in community work. A
pragmatic approach tends to emphasize outcome; what is seen as most important is the
result that is actually achieved, and how it is achieved is relatively unimportant. For
Alinsky (1971) it is the ends that are critically important, and the only reason for thinking
about means relates to their effectiveness in reaching the desired end; ethical issues, and
other specifically process-oriented concerns, become irrelevant. Means can become ends
in themselves, and an end is usually also a means to a further end.

16. The integrity of process
The process used in community development is just as important as the outcome, and in a
very real sense it is the outcome: the aim, after all, is to establish viable community
processes. Hence, the process used to achieve this must conform with the expectations of
the outcome in terms of such issues as sustainability, social justice, and so on. If
community development can use processes which themselves express these ideals, then it
is much more likely to be able to achieve its more long-term objectives.

17. Non-violence
In order to bring about a society based on principles of non-violence, non-violent
processes need to be used; from the point of view of proceeding sections, non-violent ends
cannot be met using violent means.
In this context, non-violence implies more than simply the absence of physical violence
between people. The notion of structural violence implies that social structures and
institutions can themselves be seen as violent. A coercive society, or a society which
oppresses people, even though it may not use overt violence, is seen as violent in these
terms. Hence, gross inequality in the distribution of wealth and opportunity, sexism,
racism, and other forms of structural disadvantage represent a form of violence. Similarly,
the legal system, the education system and the social security system, because of the
elements of coercion involved, and because of the way they perpetuate social control,
reflect a violent society. The family can be a violent environment, even if physical
violence itself is never used.

18. Inclusiveness
Applying the principle of inclusiveness to community development requires that processes
should always seek to include rather than to exclude, all people should be intrinsically
valued even if they hold opposing views, and people should be allowed space to change
their position on an issue without ‘losing face’.
19. Consensus
The consensus approach works towards agreement, and aim at reaching a solution which the whole group or community will ‘own’ as theirs. It is an inevitable consequence of non-violence and inclusiveness. Consensus means more than simply agreeing to accept the will of majority, which can leave up to 49% of the community dissatisfied. It is also means more than simply compromise, which can leave everyone dissatisfied. Rather, it implies that the group or community commits itself to a process which seeks to find a solution or course of action everyone can accept and own, and where people agree that what has been decided is in the best interests of all.

20. Co-operation
The ecological perspective and the non-violent approach both emphasize the need for co-operative structures rather than competitive structures. Many of the structures, processes and institutions of modern society are built on the assumption of the virtue of competition; these include the education system, the economy, business, employment, the media, the arts, recreation and health care. Thus ecological and non-violent community development challenges a core assumption of many basic institutions.

21. Participation
Community development must always seek to maximise participation, with the aim being for everyone in the community to be actively involved in community process and activities. The more people who are active participants, the more the ideals of community ownership and inclusive process will be realised.
This does not imply that everyone will participate in the same way. Different people have different skills, interests and capacities. Good community work will provide the broadest possible range of participatory activity, and will legitimise equally all people who are actively involved.

22. Defining need
There are two critical community work principles relating to need, which have to be identified here. The first is that community development should seek to bring about agreement between the various need definers, namely the population as a whole, consumers, service providers and researchers. Where there are different perceptions between these need definers, there is less likelihood that people’s needs will be effectively met, and the various actors will be working at cross purposes. The second principle is that despite the importance of various other need definers, it is the need definition of the people themselves (i.e., community members) that should take precedence, as long as ecological and social justice principles are not thereby compromised.
Community development, indeed, can be defined as helping communities to articulate their needs and then to act so they can be met.
VIEWS ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The concept of community development may be considered possessed of both form and orientation. The way in which each is exercised affects both the philosophy and the implementation of action program for community betterment. Thus, community development has been conceptualized as a process, as a method, as a program, and as a movement.

1. As a Process
Community development as a process moves by stages from one condition or state to the next. It involves a progression of things in terms of specified criteria. A neutral, scientific term, subject to fairly precise definition and measurement; expressed chiefly in social relations; e.g., change from condition where one or two people or a small elite within or without local community make decisions about matters of common concern; from state of minimum to one of maximum cooperation; from condition where a few participate to one where many participate; from condition where all resources and specialists come from outside to one where local people make use of their own resources, etc. Emphasis is upon what happens to people—socially and psychologically.

2. As a Method (Process and Objective)
Community development is a means to an end; a way of working so that goal is attained. Other methods (such as change by education) may be supplementary to the community development method which seeks to carry through the stages suggested under process in order that the will of those using this method may be carried out. The process is guided for particular purpose which may prove "harmful or helpful" to the local community, depending upon the goal in view and the criteria of the one passing through judgment. Emphasis is upon some end.

3. As a Program (Method and Content)
The method as stated is a set of procedures and the content is a list of activities. By carrying out the procedures, the activities are supposedly accomplished. When the program is highly formalized, as many five-year plans, the focus tends to be upon what is happening to the people involved in the program. It is a program that community development comes into contact with subject-matter specialties such as health, welfare, agriculture, industry, and recreation. Emphasis is upon activities.

4. As a Movement (Program and Emotional Dynamic)
Community development is a crusade, a cause, to which people become committed. Not neutral (like process), but carries an emotional charge; one is either for it or against it. It is dedicated to progress, a philosophic and not a scientific concept, since progress must be viewed with reference to values and goals which differ under different political and social systems. Community development as a movement tends to become institutionalized, building up its own organizational structure, promotes the idea of community development.
CONCEPTUAL MODELS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In many respects the Community development programmes were frequently ill designed and provided simplistic solutions to complex issues. Furthermore, most of these development programmes have suffered because of short-term funding, lack of commitment and changes in political and economic circumstances. Nevertheless, interest in community development has been manifested in various federal and provincial government sponsored projects.

It is observed the community development approach is not an integral part of an overall development policy, and government and agencies rarely specify the objectives of such programmes in operational terms. Therefore, planners should formulate and make explicit the goals of community development, and indicate how such programmes fit into a government’s overall policy.

Furthermore, it is advocated that if a government pursues and policy of community development, reform in public administration is essential. The formal acceptance, nature and outcome of a social policy commitment to community development depends in large part on leadership, technical expertise and citizen participation. As regards citizen participation is a “partnership model” to a “consultation” model and advances the thesis that if governments wish to promote genuine, meaningful involvement of the people they should encourage autonomous centres of power enabling people to participate on their own terms.

It is rightly pointed out that the problem of community development is not the obsolescence of the idea but rather how to adapt its particular philosophy to a large of social phenomena in a transforming society and to governmental priorities. Despite community development’s versatility and adaptive nature in some instances it has been inappropriately applied and lacked as sound, well thought out policy strategy for implementation which results from conceptual confusion. The analytical models not only attempt to refine community development concepts but also tend to have implications for policy-planning, and programme implementation.
REFERENCES

