The Role of Community Development in CP – A Personal Story

TB – June, 2018

*These are experiences and insights from myf husband’s professional experience where I had an indirect, supportive role as well as work we have done together.*

Practical definitions used for the context of this discussion:

**CP/CPM** is concerned with evangelism, discipleship, the formation of congregations of believers led by elders (Church Planting) and the exponential multiplication of believing communities (Church Planting Movements)

**CD** is the activities, projects and businesses carried out by believers that advance the well-being of people, often the poor and marginalized, in the context of the communities where they live. For this paper, community development is being used broadly including both non-profit and for-profit efforts and institutions.

Our involvement in **CP** in our Focus Country

1992-96

- ev and discipleship together with local fellow workers

- partnering with local church to develop Sunda outreach

- co-wrote discipleship material for local believers

1997-2010

- continued ev and discipleship with local fellow workers

- helped birth the first Sunda house church (2001) in our focus area of seven million which still exits today; two Sundanese congregations with Sundanese elders leading all aspects of the church and over the years approximately 30 – 40 baptized believers

- CP: locally led, local language, full expression of church life, mostly financially independent, slow addition growth

2011-2018

- continued personal ev and discipleship with local fellow workers

- receive CPM training and train others in CPM

- begin Luke 10 trips to new areas

- started L10 (three day gatherings every four months) for on-going sharpening, strengthening and encouragement of local field workers

- coaching and mentoring of local and expat field workers; shift from focus on CP and addition growth to CPM and multiplication

Our involvement in **CD** in our Focus Country

1991-1995

- started a local non-profit to support scattered Sundanese congregations to be more sustainable and increase outreach through CD; five full-time local staff

1996-2004

- started and directed a government sponsored CD project focused on community health and small scale agriculture in partnership with the national government

2004-2006

- started and directed (first six months of a three year project) a post-tsunami redevelopment project in Aceh focused on both CD and in parallel advancing CD

- consulted on a post-earthquake response by a believing organization in the Muslim Northeast Frontier Providence of Pakistan

- started a post-tsunami response involving local churches on the south coast of Java

2006-2018

- co-founder, former Farm Manager and consultant for the first certified organic fruit and vegetable company in our regency (population two million people)

- trained over 100 local field workers from across the country in the promotion of the chaya plant as a contributor to family nutrition and a tool for access in advancing CPM

- co-creator of the Mikro-agro small business model to assist local field workers to minister in UPG areas

- co-founder of the US based non-profit Salam Growers focused on the integration discipleship, church planting movements and market gardening as a means for developing CPM field workers

How has Community Development helped advance our CP/CPM work?

1. Oriented us as field workers to the real life experiences of our focus groups

- helped us advance in learning Sundanese language and daily living patterns, household dynamics, income earning patterns

- helped us better understand Sundanese culture as it relates to rural community organization and governance, leadership, corporate decision-making, integration of Islam within community life, perspectives on the poor and disabled, etc.

- adult learning principles and community decision making in the local context

2. Provides us access to the focus community

- provided visas for us over 22 years to live in an area of very limited expat access where on average the ratio of expat field workers to total population (not just from PI but from all organizations combined) has been about one unit / one million people (+99% Muslim people)

- we have had probably hundreds of chances to share the Gospel through our community development and business involvement

- our relationships are not limited to just the people in the rural communities where we work but to government officials, teachers, professors, tradesman, local religious leaders, business leaders, etc

3. Provided an effective training environment for equipping local field workers

- we have had a chance to train and host hundreds of local field workers, local believers considering being field workers, expat field workers and those considering long-term work as field workers

- we have a low cost environment for training which does not take people out of their local context nor draw people to the city and higher economic aspirations that are associated with more expensive training venues and living environments

- particularly the business has helped to model and encourage a more sustainable model of ministry based on income generation and producing some of your daily food consumption needs yourself

Important ways Community Development can create confusion and lack of focus and thus indirectly hinder CP/CPM

1. While CD principles and practice share some central values with Scripture such as the high value of all human beings, concerns for justice and the needs of the disadvantaged, there are many elements of the Biblical worldview missing such as the sinfulness of man, the authority of God’s word and the supremacy of Jesus. . Placing “Christian” in front of community development doesn’t alter these deficiencies. CD practitioners need to do the heavy lifting of developing a Biblical theology of well-being, how individuals and communities advance it and what both God and man’s parts are in it.

2. In an effort to develop an “integrated” mission strategy, we often hear Christians, even field workers, referring to their CD as “holistic”, suggesting that both “physical” concerns and “spiritual” concerns (or for this discussion CD and CP) are brought together. Interestingly, in practice we often observe that this means Christians are doing CD but not proactively and intentionally doing evangelism, discipleship CP/CPM. There is a “hole” in the “whole” and it is the CP that is missing not the CD.

3. CD efforts are often involved with the concerns Jesus spoke about with regard to the Kingdom of God. God as mankind’s creator and Lord is concerned about all matters related to the well-being of people. Pursuing the well-being of people aligns with God’s heart and His Kingdom. CP/CPM is part of the Kingdom of God, but the Kingdom of God is larger than CP/CPM. One can be doing Kingdom work and yet not in a concrete, intentional way (based on definition above) be doing CP/CPM. If the Kingdom of God and CP/CPM becomes blurred, as it often does, the result will frequently lead to ministry with the broader and much more inclusive focus of the Kingdom and a weakening of the more specific focus of CP/CPM.

How might others apply the principles of your story in CP?

1. Do the hard work of developing a theology that informs CD and CP/CPM practice based on Scripture and without blurring CP/CPM with the broader Kingdom of God concerns with human well-being and justice.

2. Engage with CD efforts and projects as a means to go deep in connection with your focus group and a opportunity to both demonstrate the Kingdom and identify People of Peace

3. Assist local believers to advance the Kingdom of God in the communities where they serve with particular attention to efforts that are locally sustainable and play a part in their intentional CP/CPM strategy

4. Clarify the distinct objectives of CD and CP/CPM and keep the institutional integrity in your implementation. Avoid trying to make your CD project/non-profit organization/business into a apostolic ministry team/church. Keep the leadership, structures and finances separate. Work in parallel and avoid conflicts of interest between the two such as choosing people for your CD work based on professed faith rather than competence or trying to make the beneficiaries of your CD activities into a church.