**PGD003 - Post Graduate Diploma in Project Planning and Management**

**MODULE 8 – Community Development**

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**1. In your own opinion, is it important to involve the community in project management? Substantiate your answer**

The philosophy of community development is to help people become subjects instead of objects, acting on their situation instead of simply reacting to it. Community development is concerned with types of actions that not only affect people but also can be affected by people (Christenson and Robinson, 1989). Community Participation can take place during any of the following activities:

* Needs Assessment: Expressing opinions about desirable improvements, prioritizing goals and negotiating with agencies.
* Planning: formulating objectives, setting goals, criticizing plans.
* Mobilizing: raising awareness in a community about needs, establishing and supporting organizational structures within the community.
* Training: Participation informal or formal training activities to enhance communication, construction, maintenance and financial management skills.
* Implementation: engaging in management activities, contributing directly to construction, operation, and maintenance with labor and materials; contributing cash towards costs, paying of services or membership fees of community organizations.
* Monitoring and evaluation: Participating in the appraisal of work done, recognizing improvement that can be made and refining needs.

Evidence suggests that community-based and -driven development projects are best undertaken in a context-specific manner, with a longtime horizon and with careful and well-designed monitoring and evaluation systems. Thus, there are some critical success factors to community development projects

Community participation/involvement is regarded as one of the cornerstone for successful Programs, Project and activities implementation. It helps to enhance accountability, transparency and ensure sustainability of development initiatives. Community participation/involvement in development activities is defined as the process by which individuals, families or communities assume responsibility for their own welfare and develop a capacity to contribute to their own and the community development; it is an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development (Oakley&Marsden,1987). Marsland (2005), community participation in international development discourse is commonly used to refer to the involvement of local people in decision making process and evaluation of development projects, and is associated with empowerment and the respect for also the use of local knowledge as projects do not happen in a vacuum; they happen around people and impact their lives in positive and negative ways. Therefore, the community should be involved for two main reasons:

Acceptability and understanding - Projects are designed to influence or impact a certain environment that is characterized by the existence of people who share common beliefs, systems or attitudes and upon whom the effects of the project would be felt. Communities can be people using a common software for instance, people living in proximity to each other and thus share a common environment or space, share land and have certain opinions about how a project could impact their own values and systems. Projects, therefore, rely on the goodwill of the people within the environment or space in which a project is being implemented. Therefore, any project will seek first to understand what values are held dear by the community, and second, how the project team would go about influencing the community to accept the project, making it possible to carry it out. Projects are designed to make things better whether it is health, education, climate change – there is a supposition that lives should get better in terms of health, livelihoods, production or education but they must meet the needs and aspirations of the communities in which they are being implemented.

To build support for a project, project teams need to organize consultations with community members to identify major challenges in their communities and in implementing the project. According to Ancrenaz, Dabek, and O'Neil (2007), with the community’s input, a project team can implement an integrated and multidisciplinary strategy, combining scientific research, community engagement, capacity building, education, and policy formulation. This process could involve in-depth training sessions in field research, community participation techniques, sustainable development, environmental education, computer skills, and other skills that would be important for the community during the project. These efforts produce an effective network of partners in government agencies, NGOs, and research institutions. Involving private stakeholders also increases the chances that a community will be accepting of a project where it has been involved from the start and input taken on board.

Sustainability – According to Shaffer (1995), sustainable community economic development is about changing perceptions and choices regarding community resources, markets, rules, and decision-making capacity. Policies, programs or projects which do not involve community participation in formulation through planning and budgeting do not guarantee the sustainability of programs, projects and activities. It is not enough to label a project “community based” while not actively involving the communities in all stages of the project. The communities are the ones closest to the resources and should not be treated as passive recipients of technocratic and bureaucratic solutions from the top (Chirenje, Giliba, Musamba, 2012). Thus, the intentions are largely good. However, how a project is undertaken or introduced into a community is just as important if it is to succeed. Too much dependence on donor resources while ignoring the potential of the local communities to provide and sustain their own projects, makes failure inevitable. Thus, the participatory role of communities in planning and budgeting would enable stakeholders to identify resources among communities which can be used in programs, projects and activities reducing their dependence on donors. Empowering the local communities through sustainable allocation, management and exploitation of resources are key elements of poverty alleviation (Chirenje, Giliba, Musamba 2012).

Sustainability is also dependent on the local authorities and the peripheral environment of a community. Several qualitative studies indicate that the sustainability of community-based initiatives depends crucially on an enabling institutional environment, which requires government commitment, and on accountability of leaders to their community to avoid “supply driven demand-driven” development (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). By conducting interviews and analyzing formal and informal processes different motivations, fears, problems and benefits the participants in the communities perceived during the process can be identified (Hess, Offenberg, & Pipek, 2008). Advocates for participation note that policy and development which adopt a bottom-up framework where local communities are actively involved in decision-making, better facilitate the achievement of target objectives (Chirenje, Giliba, Musamba 2012). Community involvement is therefore crucial in project management if a project is to succeed.

Individuals in a community have a basic role in the process of development. The role of individuals in the process of community development as actors is active. We can observe successes of community development, when the stages of development are fulfilled perfectly. In other words, people must not only be interested and involved in the process of development but they must also be bounded by strong ties, and collective sharing to facilitate the welfare of the community

**2. Is development synonymous to growth**

Growth and development are two concepts that are often used interchangeably but each means something different. Technically, as Daly (1987) puts it, growth is a quantitative increase in physical dimensions of an economy; development is qualitative improvement in non-physical characteristics. There can therefore be development without growth and growth without development.

Development has been defined as enlarging people's choices in a way that enables them to lead longer, healthier and fuller lives (Ranis, Stewart & Ramirez, 2000). Development brings with it new options, diversifies skills and livelihoods that brings about change in how people think about various issues and how they manage their lives. Development involves change, improvement and vitality – a directed attempt to improve participation, flexibility, equity, attitudes, the function of institutions and the quality of life. It is the creation of a type of change in the things people value, not money. There is an addition to community assets, avoiding the situation where a job created in one instance while another is lost within the same locality. Development can also sometimes mean “less”, fewer people in a community, or the loss of a manufacturing plant for example could improve the circumstances of what people value in the community.

Growth - Growth means more jobs and more investment without having to necessarily change the wellbeing of people; it does not mean increase in the living standards of all or most citizens in a society. It does not necessarily increase choices, networks or ability to manage change. According to Acemoglu (2007), while economic growth is generally good for welfare, it creates the dichotomy of “winners” and “losers” and productive relationships, firms and sometimes individual livelihoods are often destroyed by the process of economic growth. This creates a natural tension in society even when it is growing. Often times, the main marker for growth is measured as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which is the margin by which a country’s economy has expanded. This growth, naturally, is assumed to bring with it an expansion in jobs, better access to healthcare, education, and infrastructure. However, there is always a dissonance between this growth and development; it sometimes is phrased as ‘jobless growth’ where a key driver to better health and wellbeing and aspirations of the population in terms of jobs, is not realized. Thus, life expectancy reduces as populations have less resources to access quality healthcare, education and skills, aspects that would lead to development. So, whereas GDP can grow every year, development can happen very slowly and outside of the measures of the often used measure for growth.

**3. Explain the key elements/ingredients for successful projects in community development**

Community-based and -driven development projects are an important form of development assistance, with the World Bank's portfolio alone approximating $7 billion in 1994. The World Bank currently supports approximately 400 community development projects in 94 countries valued at almost $30 billion which, according to Wong (2012), represents between 5 and 10 percent of the overall World Bank lending portfolio. Conducting a review of the projects, the World Bank arrived at the conclusion that, based on their conceptual foundations and evidence on their effectiveness, projects that relied on community participation had not been particularly effective at targeting the poor. While some may have created effective community infrastructure, not a single study established a causal relationship between any outcome and participatory elements of a community-based development project.

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A slight level of dissatisfaction – Every community has aspirations for itself and its future generations whether it be better education, healthcare, less drudgery in agriculture, and better livelihoods. Thus, a level that gets the community thinking that things are getting better or will get better provides the drive to undertake projects that would help the community arrive at the betterment of the society, no matter how incremental the steps are.

Belief and expectation of self-help – A successful project will treat the community as active rather than docile in the project management process (Yalegama, Chileshe, Ma, 2016). Every community has a belief in a better future and with the skills they possess or a little boosting of the skills the community can band together to make a better future for itself rather than have project teams assume that community members are poor materially and in skills and need everything done for the them.

Local Leadership – Success of local development depends largely on the quality of local leadership. Successful community-based programs require an individual “champion” to motivate members of the community, provide information, and serve as a bridge between the community and external actors. For example, a headman with little authority or respect would find it difficult to work with external actors in ways that benefit the community (Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen & Duangsaeng, 2014). A community member who enjoys a good working relationship with many external actors, from academics researching or bringing students on study tours, to activists working for NGOs, to officials at all levels of government have great influence over the community’s acceptance and can champion a project to its successful completion.

Collaboration – collaboration can be used effectively to resolve conflict or advance shared visions, where stakeholders recognize the potential advantages of working together. Collaboration can be defined as "a process of joint decision making among key stakeholders of a problem about the future of that problem or challenge" (Jamal & Getz, 1995). There are five key characteristics of the collaboration process: the stakeholders are independent; solutions emerge by dealing constructively with differences; joint ownership of decisions; stakeholders assume collective responsibility for the ongoing direction; and collaboration is understood as arrangements through which organizations collectively cope with the growing complexity of their environments. Projects by nature require strong cooperation and participation of various stakeholders. The community is therefore a key stakeholder and cooperation is invaluable for projects to succeed and be sustainable in a community.

Willingness to experiment and take advantage of opportunities – communities can sometimes be very conservative and hold on to their values and way of doing things. In an era of constant technological change, global movements and tourism, opportunities do arise that communities can take advantage to better their livelihoods. However, the leaders and community members in general must approach these challenges and opportunities with an open mind, a willingness to learn and adapt. This can be brought about by the approach a team takes in developing and managing a project. By engaging the community, people would be more willing to take on new opportunities rather than in instances where changes are brought upon them from a top-down perspective.

Cultivate Allies – Leveraging networks or partnerships can increase the outreach of a project. A project team intending to undertake a community development project should seek out which other organizations or donors have previously worked in that certain community and whether their interests are aligned and can support the project. Networks can provide important insights from their own work in terms of what could be the most effective way to implement certain projects, the pitfalls, challenges and the opportunities. It could also be the basis for building even broader networks and capabilities and capacities for the community and develop other champions of the project that could help maneuver the political and social landscape.

Work hard and stay with the process, especially when there is a setback – Projects come with certain risks and one is the possibility of failure if setbacks, hurdles are not managed, and risks not anticipated or dealt with. It is important to keep channels of communication open when there are set backs that allow stakeholder to collaborate and discuss various options, select appropriate solutions, arrive at shared vision or plan/strategy through consensus (Jamal & Getz, 1995). The end goal must be at the forefront to help to bring people together to find solutions to overcome the challenge rather than discard a project over a disagreement or misunderstanding or delay of a project.

Focus on specific actions without losing sight of the “weird and wonderful” – many things happen during a project; people discover traditions, cultures, practices, landscapes that are unusual and provide a learning environment and develops a better understanding of the community in which a project is being implemented. Keeping the mind open to new experiences could enrich not just the community but the project team and make the project more grounded in its appreciation of what is not ‘common’ and to the ‘unusual.’

**4. With aid of a diagram, explain the community development process**

According to Cavaye (2006), community development is a process that happens in stages in funnel type process from the base of community preparedness to a top end of reinvestment as illustrated by the diagram below:



Figure 1: Cavaye (2006)

Each of the steps is important to the successful delivery of a community development project and to its sustainability in the following ways:

1. Community Preparedness

Communities should see the need for community development: it provides the drive to organize and makes it relevant to them and they can find a sense of ownership of the project rather than the project being an imposition on the community.

2. “Bubbling” Concerns

A community needs to acknowledge that there is a challenge or concern that needs to be addressed and things that concern several people in the community: drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, high school dropout rate, lack of water, health concerns or cattle rustling and conflict that are affecting the greater community. There needs to be a compelling issue that drives the community to think there could be a better approach to their livelihood.

3. Stimulus

A community is often jolted to action by a varying degree of severity of a collective issue that has a negative impact. This enables members to band together to find solutions to a challenge. This can be facilitated by local leaders or community groups.

4. Initial Organization and Involvement

This takes a grass root approach and often to get the conversation or action going, some members in the community consult other members and pick their representatives, provide information and input as to how they see the problem can be addressed and some may need to negotiate a solution to the issue at hand in a way that will be of benefit to the community. Others may just want change but not sure what kind of change and in what manner to bring it about. All these views are important and those who represent communities should take them onboard to avoid a situation where some members will feel neglected and end up stalling a good project because of lack of consultation.

5. Engagement and Issues Identification Community members know their community better than external parties would and their views are therefore important, insightful and useful to any project. It is therefore prudent to involve them early in the process. Key ingredients in this step include: understanding the existing concerns of community members - what people have passion for, what they feel community issues are, and their interest in being involved; understanding how they would like to participate, how prepared the community is to conduct a development effort, and how people would like to plan the process that would generates trust, involvement and identify local “champions”; allow people to get started on acting on the idea even though not everyone may agree or it may not seem to be a priority. There are various techniques to undertake this including one on one discussion, surveys, focus groups, public meetings, community “conversations” among other techniques.

6. Initial Considerations

As a community begins to organize, some questions are crucial for the community to answer: Where are we at? How do we want our community to be? How do we get there? Who can help us? These are important questions as they help map out a plan for the project, the scope of it, helps to understand who needs to be involved, which other stakeholders can be brought on board and helps to understand the dynamics of the community.

7. Purpose and Goals

Every project is formulated with a purpose and goal in mind. This sets the parameters of the project and helps to confine a project to its core objective. Without these, a project can go anywhere and do anything without achieving much for a community. It is therefore important to articulate the purpose and goal of a community project right from the outset in a way that the benefit to the community can be measured. For instance, if the community feels water is the main handicap to achieving its goals, it could decide that wells can solve that problem. One can therefore measure how much time it takes to fetch water before and after, how time use in the community changes with the wells, how health and education are impacted by the availability of water, and what other benefits accrue to the community with the availability of water. The community can then understand whether or not their aspirations for a better living standard are being met.

8. Self-Examination

Evaluation of projects is crucial; it determines whether what was set out at the beginning of a project is being realized, whether there are changes needed or whether the project is achieving its goals and objectives. But more than evaluation, self-examination is a time where the community gets to reflect on what is important, what skills it has and can employ, how to solve its issues, the threats it faces and how they can be overcome, the development of future generations, how to change the course of the livelihood of its people and to appreciate their own knowledge and efforts towards being a better community. This a community can do through trusted representatives or seek external help whether from local authorities or other organizations.

9. Exploration

Once a community has gone through self-examination and identified what areas need some work, a community gets into an exploratory stage where it can gather new ideas or advance already existing ideas for its benefit. The community could brainstorm on matters environment, changes in its main economic niche and livelihood, norms governing the community, visits or exchange visits to other communities or develop an interest in what others have done that could benefit their own community. This could help the community derive a blueprint of ideas of things they would want done and how they would wish to live and the extent to which changes can be accommodated.

10. Interpretation and Prioritization

Not all things can be achieved at the same time with the same resources. Some ideas need a longer-term strategy while others can be shorter-term but looking to contribute to the longer-term output. Thus, there needs to be a phase where all the information and ideas and probabilities gathered are analyzed to derive a concrete plan of action that sets up the priorities based on what is most important for the community at any one time. Prioritization takes two forms; “rational” prioritization involves a relatively reasoned process weighing up pros and cons and importance; and “prioritization by motivation” involves people expressing personal motivation and passion for an issue, regardless of its perceived importance by the community at large. They are keen on something and want to act with people nominate themselves to take action rather than leave it to other people to execute. The community must consider the feasibility of the ideas - politically, financially, logistically and whether the idea has the capacity to be implemented. Jumping onto ideas without these considerations can lead to disappointment as the project would not deliver what the community expects.

11. Planning and Action on Priorities

Once the priorities are considered, the feasibility is undertaken and a decision on what to implement is taken, a plan of action needs to be developed. A project that is undertaken without a plan soon becomes unmanageable. Resources need to be called up and decisions made on where they would be pulled from, how they would be spent, who would control the spending, how members would benefit, how the community would be informed on progress, how to work around risks and challenges during the projects to achieve a desired outcome. Without a plan, the timelines, scope and budget cannot be controlled and would make a project difficult to execute.

12. Reinvestment

Development, never ends; there are always things to learn, new things to incorporate, ideas to refine. It is a cyclical process; a process of organization, rethinking, decision-making and enhancing community capitals. Communities must think strategically about the longer-term goals and how those impact on the future outlook. This means ongoing reinvestment of time and effort in the community and the fostering of new leaders and community motivation to drive development forward and foster continued benefit to the community.

**5. In your own view, what are the challenges faced by project development officials in emergency situations.**

An emergency is a situation or state characterized by a clear and marked reduction in the abilities of people to sustain their normal living conditions, with resulting damage or risks to health, life and livelihoods. These emergencies happen suddenly or because of a progression of events that then cause an emergency. Even where a project has considered all possible risks and uncertainties, emergencies present a set of challenges for project development and the teams involved.

Time – emergencies have many activities moving at the same time very fast and time is always of the essence in an emergency. For a project team, there are timelines to every project and during an emergency, this gets disrupted as the team considers first developing a stability around the situation before a project can continue. A team has to make quick decisions on how best to approach the project in the case of an emergency; the safety of the team is paramount as is the community or the people involved in the team. For instance, if a project is being undertaken to build a bridge or a road and suddenly there are floods or earthquakes that render it impossible to continue for a time, the team must re-assess the project timeline to accommodate the time it takes to recover from the emergency and continue to the project.

Resources – A delay in a project comes with costs; human, financial and material. A flood can destroy a bridge or road under construction, the machinery and cause perhaps death. The sponsor or owner of the project must call up reserves to compensate the loss, reconstruct what has been destroyed and complete the project when the emergency subsides. In a sense, the scope of the project changes to include repairs that increase the cost of the project, a replacement of the machinery, replacement of human resources, engagement of a different set of machinery to clean up the area under construction for instance move debris and fallen trees. Thus, project development can stall while resources are reconfigured to fit the situation and a project can become more expensive than previously envisaged.

Uncertainties – An emergency sometimes puts a project out of the hands of the project team as local authorities and governments try to assess and respond to the emergency. The uncertainties around stability of the environment or cessation of conflict can impede project development as it is less clear how to proceed with a project. These uncertainties cause delays to projects and project schedules, available of resources at a particular time and the dependency on other actors to re-start or continue a project. These uncertainties could also alter the trajectory of a project if for instance an earthquake causes the land to degrade or sink and develop a different type of geography in the area affected. Project development then becomes very difficult and these uncertainties could alter the objectives and goals of the project to respond to the emergency.

Stress – Emergencies tend to put a strain on people given the uncertainties, the change of activities, the not knowing how to cope when the emergency occurs or because people need to take up more tasks that are outside of their expertise or knowledge areas to deal with the situation. There could be scenarios where some project teams lose members of the team or some go missing and this creates points of stress on the project team that then affects project development, especially for the staff on the ground who may be scoping out or are on field visits to assess the project’s viability. Stress then puts a strain on the capacities and abilities of the project development team and can take a project out of its schedule depending on the severity of the stress.

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