Partnerships for Social Development

A Casebook

The Independent Task Force on Community Action for Social Development

The Process of Community-Based Social Development

Conclusions of the Independent Task Force on Community Action for Social Development

Our most important conclusion was that successful and sustained social development is possible. However, to do so requires fundamental changes in mindsets and constructive partnerships through an effective sharing of power and responsibilities between governments, communities, peoples' organizations, and the professional community. Numerous positive examples exist worldwide that show sustainable development is attainable and these successes chart a variety of approaches along a common path we all can follow.

Second, key insights were identified that demonstrate universal commonalities to successful social development—commonalities that span our planetary differences. These commonalities are:

- the centrality of community;
- the potentiality of partnerships; and
- that expansion is possible, demonstrations can go to scale.

Third, key values recur in successful social development, the most important of which is the primacy of equity. A community or a country for that matter does not advance unless it remembers and attends to its disenfranchised. Without their advancement, the community remains anchored in injustice, held back, despite other progresses achieved.

Wherever it succeeds, social development is complex and interdependent. It is more than economic growth and infrastructure

creation. Indeed, even with economic and infrastructure growth, social development will not necessarily happen as can be seen in many countries currently experiencing economic growth and deteriorating qualities of living simultaneously. This is often the result of gigantic world forces which are difficult to understand and control and seem to be accelerating.

More problematic than these giant forces are ancient, encrusted barriers, both bureaucratic and those rising from inept bungling, that social development must surmount. Our cases speak, with various voices, that if barriers exist—many times they exist in outsider perceptions rather than in peoples' realities—they can be overcome if certain common principles are applied.

The starting point of social development is respect. Social development is about people, and each person as a person deserves respect, no matter what. As the Maasai case makes clear, people's traditional values and indigenous knowledge and skills need first to be honored before sustainable development action can be begun.

In the same vein of respect, people need to be trusted; this means that power needs to be shared so that they build up strength. Communities that are deprived of authority are also deprived of the inner strengths that they can apply to their development. Once again, the Maasai Pastoralist example is illustrative. Social development needs to be grounded in their culture and priorities—not those of outside. An illustration of what happens when local capacities are not respected comes from Poland where the government of the past actively disempowered people by assuming tasks rather than nurturing their ability to provide them for themselves. Engaging the full diversity of a community is a necessary step for successful social development.

In any community there are those segments that are easy to reach and those that are ready to change. It is tempting to focus programs on these. Results will be dramatic as acceptance rates escalate. This is not sufficient. Those in greatest need must be engaged as well. The Jamkhed case shows how powerful this concern with equity can be beyond its moral validity. In Jamkhed, the outcastes and the widows became key players and provided a base that lifted up the whole community. The Zimbabwean case also shows similar effects of a consistent empowerment of disenfranchised groups.

In the cases as well as this discussion, many themes run parallel, supporting each other. The theme of people's priorities emerges, often calling for respect of traditional religious and cultural heritage, such as in the Qomolangma Nature Preserve in Tibet where people

want to restore ruined monasteries and practice religious ceremonies. Another example is the poor recyclers in Colombia who strive to have their work recognized and valued by powerful politicians that they have an important contribution in building a cleaner, healthier, and environmentally more secure society.

People's priorities are often specific and practical. They know what they want and this may not be what outsiders want to provide. Numerous stories scattered through the case of the Aga Khan University's programs in Pakistan repeatedly make this point of practicality. Jamkhed showed that the people felt water was more important than health care.

When it comes to action all these cases show how the community must be involved in differing ways. Development is not something that can be done to a community but is a process that must be engaged in with a community. The case of China's Model Counties Project illustrates how community engagement helped to expand MCH coverage to reach more than 120 million people, and did so because county by county, the local situation and structure were engaged to adapt and implement the program. Indeed, the centrality of community is so critical, as demonstrated by the case from Zimbabwe, that sometimes social development can be initiated by a community without any support and indeed sometimes against outside opposition.

Community-based action allows adaptations to be based on community specific data. The example of the Qomolangma Nature Preserve describes a methodology. The Self-Evaluation through Essential Data method (SEED) allows each community to understand its unique ecosystem, economic and cultural needs, and to base action on community-generated data. The case from Poland shows how a program can draw ideas from a world database of experience, in a subject area as sophisticated as banking, to adapt general principles to local circumstance.

The process of community empowerment requires policies that provide adequate space where communities can act. Admittedly a community itself can open that space (as in the instance of Zimbabwe or the urban recyclers in Colombia). When positive space for action is opened or broadened, empowerment processes and resulting social development can flourish. This is a central theme in the various phases of social development summarized in the Swedish case. The example from Thailand is a demonstration that when government formulated a vision and an enabling environment, then institutions of community and academia joined the process of low-

ering malnutrition of children from over 50% to under 20%, as well as achieving other important goals in health and family planning. The Model Counties case from China showed a similar process. In a larger process of governmental decentralization, the space was opened for health services to evolve community-specific expansion and funding.

At its core, the community empowerment process brings together the several themes mentioned earlier: respect, power sharing, engaging community diversity, responding to community priorities, generating data specific to that locale, and opening an enabling space for community action. The Jamkhed example includes all of these components. People have coping mechanisms, collective wisdom, and resilience. Advancement of well-being grows from recognizing what people already know and have; this can be combined with new ideas in training that allows them to acquire visions and knowledge that go much beyond the previous base for action.

Among the findings of our cases, few seem as important as partnerships. Partnerships must be developed on many levels. For too long, vast developmental resources were wasted by competing in unnecessary polarizations between "top-down," centrally planned and managed development and "bottom-up," grassroots, citizen-led development. Our cases demonstrate the fallacy of such polarization. The answer is not either-or but both, with each approach applied to different functions. Even when projects do not begin in partnership, most successful social development ultimately has included a three-way partnership: community, government, and facilitating organizations. The latter role can be assumed by NGOs, people's movements, or concerned professionals. Virtually all of the cases in this volume show this three-way sharing of resources and knowledge.

In the cases of Colombia's recyclers, Jamkhed, and Zimbabwe, the first partnership was between a local NGO and the community. With time a partnership with government also grew. In Sweden, people's movements penetrated the society to transform communities and ultimately to form the basis for government programs. In Pakistan, China's Model Counties, and Thailand, there was an active three-way partnership from the beginning between government, academics, and community. In the Polish and Tibetan examples, the partnerships began with international NGOs or agencies, which helped stimulate further partnerships.

Historically, polarizations between government and community have often blocked development, each claiming to have preeminence

over the other. When such a gap occurs, NGOs (as demonstrated by the case of the Aga Khan University in Pakistan) are particularly effective in bridging barriers between government and communities, as well as making vital contributions of knowledge and training and sometimes flexible financial resources.

The ultimate need is to go beyond a successful single locality and to address problems on a larger scale—and for this a systematic process of expansion is needed. The cases here, though they represent a great deal of diversity in approaches with each being unique to its circumstance, all point toward a common process where expansion can be stimulated. The process has been described in greater detail in the Qomolangma Nature Preserve case. It involves the following steps.

It starts with an effective program made of at least one component of social development in a group of communities. The key concept is that rather than starting with theoretical ideas and principles, actual communities are needed that demonstrate the process. The model community then initiates two processes: experimentation and learning through action. This requires applied research, combining both indigenous and science based knowledge.

In a second and parallel process, the demonstration program becomes a training center. The ideas and skills of social development are taught better by action-learning than through theory. People like to see something working in circumstances as near as possible to their own situation rather than just hearing about new practices that should work. During this phase, communities become hands-on centres that neighboring communities can learn from.

The next phase is one of extension with a systematic process for other communities to take principles and skills learned to apply them in their own communities. A key factor once again is the integration of indigenous knowledge (both of local needs and local resources) with scientific knowledge and skills.

When our cases are applied in the above framework, three patterns emerge showing how progression can occur.

The cases of Jamkhed and the Qomolangma Nature Preserve show how models can be developed and integrated with local realities, and then they can become centers for training on a much larger scale.

The Zimbabwe and Sweden cases represent people's movements. In both, dramatic expansion occurred through a whole population when small groups of like-minded people with a vision to communicate and a service to perform took action on their own. As they

formed, these groups became centers of inspiration and training for others.

The Christian Medical Commission and China Model Counties cases demonstrate how important a spontaneous evolutionary and expansion process can be in going to scale. Both these cases ultimately had enormous impact, but they did so by sequential steps building on past success. Both grew out of decades-old projects that evolved services as experience was gained and as times changed. The final programs were the culmination of experimentation with new methodologies that ultimately proved to be two of the seminal strands that inspired the modern world primary health care movement. They also show dramatically that after extensive experimentation in the early phases of an extension, the final stages could effectively center on training and creating enabling environments where communities could adapt and operate.

In sum, the examples presented here show that sustainable social development can be achieved—both on small scale as well as going to large scale—through community action if the process is given adequate and relevant support. The task is large, but it is not insurmountable. From the Pakistan experience we are reminded that "the mountain can disappear" when the huge task is dealt with piece by piece and actively engaged by many hands of the people rather than when illusions and fear discouraged efforts to remove massive social barriers.

Our review of these cases, which are only a handful of many thousands of similar experiences, is based on our own experiences as have practitioners of social development in many countries and for many years. All this cumulative experience has convinced us that the specific lessons outlined here are common and relevant in many situations. The parallel themes summarized here emerge repeatedly in all parts of the world. In the words of one of our task force members from Africa:

"I have long recognized that there was something wrong somewhere in the world. I used to think that the problems, though, were centered in Africa. Now, through this work together, I realize that the challenges of social development are common all over the world, in every community—and that there are solutions to these problems in every community. The communities who are not attempting to solve these are communities who need help in creating their partnerships, for the answers are really there."

Ziqoque: The Meaning of Development and The Development of Meaning

Philomena O'Dea
An Independent Observer

As a skeptic watching from the sidelines for some time now, I have been observing a workshop on social development. I came to learn what is new in social development, the new theories, concepts, and paradigms. I came to learn what makes some social programs successful. What I experienced was that before they could talk abut their programs, participants had to tell of their own journeys.

At this workshop a small group of community leaders and professionals from four continents were sharing their experiences while each was writing a chapter about their own programs for a casebook.

This is what I heard from some of the participants:

"We know where we have come from. We know where we are going to."

This line from a hymn taught to the Maasia community in Tanzania left Mr. Saruni Ole-Ngulay bewildered. He is now director of the Maasai Tribal Organization in Tanzania, and admits to being lost. He was "educated" in a Christian school. His friend Salaash was educated in a Muslim school in Guinea. The two Maasai, insidiously "divorced" from their tribe (his preferred term), stand apart with alienated emotions, estranged identities, and devalued values as they argue which religion is greater, Catholicism or Islam. "Alienation is the

price of education." According to Saruni, as a consequence of western models of development the Maasai have become the largest marginalized group in East Africa. "The Maasai are poor and lost, just following others, no longer masters of their own development," he mourns. "Development has produced a forest of academic information about the Maasai" and "Westerners know more about us then we know about ourselves," he laments. Nevertheless, it appears that the vast amount of literature produced by western scholars will not be the last word on the fate of the Maasai. Ironically, "modernity is forcing us to come together."

He has returned to his tribe and established a viable position. Without awareness of where development had taken him, he would simply perpetuate the illusions of change. What is the meaning of development if it causes disintegration of a culture and alienation of its members? What is the meaning of development if it treats dependency, then sets up programmes to break that dependency? What is the benefit of an education if it produces a loss wisdom?

"Know Thyself" is not only the advice from the ancient Greek oracle of Delphi, it is central to the philosophy of social development in Zimbabwe. Ms. Lucia Dube, the representative of the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP) in Zimbabwe, is quick to point out that their approach to social development is not a "modern" one. "We only develop problems that we then have to solve if we blindly follow the western model of development," she states. Progress for her people should be measured in terms of the growth of social relationships by the extent to which people come together in mutual respect. Lucia has learned that if you do not articulate your own needs, then alien developmental institutions will do it for you. Lessons from their struggle for political independence are incorporated into rural development. One approach to empowering people is to help them articulate who they are. Empowerment is synonymous with freedom; the freedom to name oneself. Thus the first stage of self-empowerment is to "organize yourself." The Ndebele term is Ziqoqe. Ziqoqe means to know yourself, that is, the total social self. It is an exercise in the archeology of the mind, an exercise in revising history in order to uncover the self, an act of renaming and reclaiming the self. It is their way back to the future.

In the Pakistan experience a key question that emerged out of search for the meaning of development is "Who Learns How?" For Kausar Khan, who comes to social development from an academic post in philosophy, this question should first be answered by the developers of development. Again the insight that "self-awareness is

key" to successful development work was reiterated. Social development today struggles against a global mindset of extreme cynicism. This extremism is in reaction against an intellectually monostaple diet of economic growth, with consequent stunting of insights into the human potential. The cynic's reactionary negation of economic development is carried over to social development. The complexity and the social significance of women's health is dying under the weight of technology and the tyranny of western biomedical models. How does one continue to work with children in slums owned by landlords who sit in luxury houses and ask their friends, "What colour do your tracer bullets give off when they are fired?" How does one continue a meaningful dialogue between government and ghetto with pervasive cynicism and caustic indifference on both sides? A profound sense of self-awareness and belief in goodness is essential if one is not to be psychologically defeated by decadence, cynicism, and bureaucratic inertia.

The triumph of The Recyclers in Bogota is not only a triumph of organizational skills and technology, not even of good will, but it is a permeation of a disenfranchised group with the wisdom of self-understanding. Innovation in this successful urban environmental programme comes from themselves as they become advocates of self-understanding as a fundamental tool for social leadership and empowering people. Señora Margarita Pacheco acknowledges her own introspective journey as she does research on the work of these people. She has strayed from the security and sterility of the university into the streets and garbage dumps of Bogota, and discovered new meanings for herself and her profession. The recyclers first arrived at awareness of themselves that "We are not part of the garbage. We are not disposable people." Then they could learn to articulate and present their plans to the powers that be.

In discussing Thailand's remarkable success in social development (accomplishing a 60% reduction in malnutrition of children in 5 years), Dr. Tontsirin is quick to point out that statistical indicators are not the endpoint of development; they are more part of the process. Malnutrition cannot be defined in medical terms, nor in economic terms; "it is social injustice." Malnutrition is an indicator of the unethical development of global society. Equity is the measure of success in any programme. "Let us not forget that the point of it all is the attainment of happiness," Dr. Tontsirin warns. However impossible it may be to define "happiness," it is clear that it is inextricably bound to the notion of freedom and self-determination. Social development is ethical development, a process of developing col-

laborative relationships that moves the society forward.

In a drought-prone area of Maharashtra India, notorious for its bandits, Jamkhed was known among administrators assigned there as the "punishment block." An example of the general approach that promoted social development is when they used traditional wisdom—not just modern technology—to help solve the water problem. People from various castes were brought together for a volleyball game, a novel activity in this village. The Arole's, having staged the event, used it to introduce a discussion on water. Eventually a respected water diviner was involved in placing water pumps in the lower caste section of each village in a way that helped break down caste barriers. Persistent effort over 17 years demonstrated the success of primary health care and comprehensive social development. It produced a dramatic reduction in the infant mortality rate, from 175 to 18 per 1000 births as the program spread spontaneously from 30 to 300 villages. The account given by Mabelle Arole of the steps taken to introduce health services in Jamkhed demonstrate that development in this context means developing human relationships and starting with people's priorities. It was the patient and sensitive nurturing of fragile human relationships that forged a crack in the barriers of the caste system, enabling people of various castes to come together and resolve fundamental social and economic differences. Part of the wisdom of the project staff was that they took the "passive" role of enabling people to articulate their own needs, and that led them to take leadership in the success of this project.

As the speakers first focussed on their personal journeys before giving descriptions of their programs, they elaborated on the social, economic, political, and professional compulsions that brought them to the philosophical positions they now hold. Their accounts of who and what they represent were personal biographies of the development of development workers.

The consensus on what development means to this group was that development is a process of empowering people in order to achieve equity. Each speaker addressed questions of ethics, and some alluded to deeper spiritual concerns that guided their work. The concept of "going to scale" carried as much meaning in balancing the scales of justice as it did in expanding the boundaries of project activities. Whatever else development means, its fundamental characteristic is the development of human relationships, the effort required to change adversaries into collaborators. This is the fulcrum of success in these programs.

In each of the programs there was a significant element of "cumulative learning," an accumulation and dissemination of successes to wider geographic areas. Similarly there was cumulative learning among the group during the time together. A discussion of a specific topic often led to questions of broader import. People repeatedly said, not as a complaint but with enthusiasm, that they were rewriting their reports because of the discussions and that they were going back to the programs with new conviction and different perceptions. Questions emerged that placed each relationship into broader social structures. Discussions of changing economic systems, emerging non-western models, and philosophies of social development came up. Questions regarding western science and non-western "tradition" and the genesis of health systems were put on hold. Many ethical issues needed to be resolved.

Regretfully, the pressure of time did not permit continuation of the free flow of experiences, thoughts, and ideas. Documents had to be written for the casebook for distribution at the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen. To satisfy the short attention span of harried government officials, this group had the impossible task of condensing years of their work in complex social situations into ten pages. In these cases the plot can be summarized, but the character development cannot be presented with full integrity.

So what's new in development? Probably the greatest change is in the developers. These individuals, representing a remarkable evolution in inner motivation, perception, and their own work, are changing the discourse of development. The new starting point is the self. The new end point is equity. And the process is ethics. From these reports of diverse activities in various cultures, there emerged an affirmation, a declaration, that development is fundamentally the development of collaborative human relationships, of caring for each other and this should begin with a long look into the mirror.

In Copenhagen, governments may want to ask themselves these same questions; the implications may be awareness of the reversal of fortunes. If all do not share in progress in Copenhagen, leaders may want to go back to the future of development. They may want to take time out of formal development discourse to listen to these new but old insights. They may want to be aware of new language by learning the meaning of one work: Ziqoqe.