Community Development

Kurunna Mwarre "Make My Spirit Inside Me Good"

This summary of a Community Development Handbook by Flo Frank is very useful for the community development process around violence and trauma and also for leading into pilot projects.

What is community development?

Community development is the planned evolution of all aspects of community well-being (economic, social and environmental, cultural and emotional).

It is a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and to generate solutions to common problems. Community development should be:

- A longterm project;
- Well planned;
- Inclusive and equitable;
- Holistic and integrated into bigger picture;
- Initiated and supported by community members;
- Of benefit to the community;
- Grounded in experience.

Successful community development has the following outcomes:

- Improved quality of life;
- Shared responsibility;
- Mutual benefit;
- Sustainable outcomes.

Community development LEADS TO CHANGE and is a grassroots process where community members become:

- More responsible;
- Organize and plan together;
- Develop healthy options;
- Empower themselves;
- Reduce ignorance, poverty and suffering.

Community development requires a conscious and conscientious effort by community members. It is NOT :

- A quick fix;

- An excluding process;
- An initiative that occurs in isolation.

What is community capacity building?

The heart of community capacity building is PEOPLE.

Healthy communities are made up of healthy families and healthy people. The creation of healthy environments will encourage healthy economies, healthy emotional worlds and sustainable development. It takes capacity, good leadership, motivation, the support of the whole community and a viable plan.

Capacity:
- People who are willing to be involved;
- Skills, knowledge and abilities;
- Wellness and community health;
- Ability to identify and access opportunities;
- Motivation;
- Leadership and structures needed for participation;
- Infrastructure, supportive institutions and resources;
- Enabling political systems;
- Places emphasis on existing strengths and abilities rather than being overwhelmed by powerlessness;
- People may be questioning, debating, challenging-but about what should be done and not complaining that nothing will change.

Outcomes:
- Increased interest from young people to be involved and to become future leaders
- An increased ability to handle disappointments, threats and hazards
- An enhanced respect for limited resources
- Stronger community relationships
- Increased competency in setting and realizing common goals

When does community development happen?

- A crisis that faces the community and community members perceive that action must be taken;
- Community members are aware of their power to act;
- Community members want to build on strengths.

Community awareness and the power to act:
- Community members believe in their own ability to take action;

- The desire to build on diversity and find common ground.

Inclusive processes:
- Are open and participatory;
- Respect differences and value all contributions;
- Ask questions rather than impose answers;
- Look for solutions and points of agreement;
- Breakdown barriers to communication;
- Provide a variety of opportunities for participation.

Ways:
- Focus groups;
- Planning groups;
- Community members;
- Workshops;
- Talking key leaders and stakeholders;
- Talking ordinary community members.

Community catalyst:
People who hold community development positions who have a mandate and can create a vision of what is possible, have the ability to motivate, a belief in the community to act, to communicate, to lead etc.

Developing a Process

1. Build support
   - Create awareness;
   - Who are the key people and organizations;
   - Network;
   - Identify;
   - Learn from past efforts;
   - Be responsive and flexible;
   - Think through and plan process;
   - Evaluate process;
   - Communicate clearly;
   - Develop common vision and goals.

2. Make a plan
   - Where are you now;
   - Where do you want to be;
   - The general direction you want to take to close the gap;
   - The specific directions required to close the gap;
   - What success will look like.

   The plan should be:

- Integrated;
- Inclusive;
- Realistic;
- Appropriate;
- Community based;
- Easy to understand.

Seven steps in a community planning process:
- Create the vision-what is hoped for and valued by the community;
- Assess the current situation-identify strengths and weaknesses;
- Set goals-broad directions to close the gap;
- Establish objectives-how goals will be reached;
- Develop action plans-the who, what, when and how of the plan;
- Implement the plan-implement;
- Evaluate progress and results-are you on track and reaching goals;
- Planning is a tool an outside facilitators can be helpful.

3. Implement and adjust plan
- Integrate tasks;
- Be a good steward of resources;
- Keep focused on the big picture;
- Remain positive;
- Identify and build on community capacity;
- Make hard decisions when resources are limited;
- Time actions so they build upon and not compete;
- Keep community members connected and motivated;
- Ensure community ownership remains strong;
- Communicate and celebrate results;
- Have a solid structure;
- The plan is a guide not a detailed blueprint.

4. Maintain momentum
- Leadership;
- Partnerships;
- Building on community capacity;
- Funding;
- Reviewing and adapting community plan;
- Communication;
- Using technical support and expertise;

Leadership:
- Effectively communicates the vision of the community;
- Focuses energy on results and inclusion;
- Motivates individuals and organizations to act together;
- Develops effective processes to work through issues of conflict and concern;

- Acknowledge successes;
- Discuss what works and what doesn't.

Poor leadership:
- Burnout;
- Lack of abilities and skills;
- Lack of support;
- Changing circumstances of the leader and community;
- Lack of clarity re the vision and goals;
- Lack of continuity;
- Fostering favoritism and factionalism.

Partnerships
Are a good vehicle for building effective community development processes and structures:
- Share authority;
- Share resources;
- Share responsibility and accountability.

Benefits of partnerships:
- Means to find solutions to complex problems;
- Combine efforts to share opportunities;
- Enable groups to do more with less;
- Integrate ideas and knowledge and expertise sharing.

Develop:
- Training workshops;
- Mentor and coach;
- Access opportunities and training within community;
- Self-directed learning;
- Training on the job.

Review of Plan
- What has been achieved in last year;
- Are we closing the gap?;
- What changes have occurred?;
- What are the strengths we should continue to build upon;
- What are the challenges we need to respond?;
- Are the goals still meaningful?

How to motivate communities and people:
- Involve them as much as possible;
- Acknowledge contributions;
- Celebrate success;
- Encourage new organizations to become involved;

- Share the load;
- Create opportunities for individuals to participate and lead.

How to communicate effectively?
- Listen;
- Be aware of non-verbal communication;
- Speak and write clearly;
- Facilitate conversation and discussion;
- Be open and respond to feedback.

Whom do you wish to communicate?
- Why are you communicating?
- What do you want to communicate?
- How will you create an open process?

Attitude, knowledge and skills

Attitude of community development initiative:
- Respect for community;
- Strong sense of responsibility and commitment;
- Empathy;
- Openness;
- Trust;
- Patience and perseverance;
- Creativity;
- Self-confidence.

Knowledge
- The community;
- Partnerships;
- Group process;
- Teambuilding;
- Problem solving and decision making;
- Project management;
- Training.

Problem solving skills
- Identify the issue or problem;
- Look at options and alternatives;
- Help individuals understand the views of others;
- Break the impasse if discussion gets bogged down;
- Manage conflict if it occurs;
- Help find common ground;
- Assist members to recognize agreement when it happens;

- Ensure everyone understands the agreement.

Common Problems and solutions

Most common problems:
- Getting from planning to action;
- Failure to evaluate results;
- Lack of resources;
- Role confusion and power struggles;
- Unresolved conflict;
- Not applying tools effectively;
- Not understanding the community.

How to minimize these issues:
- Be upfront;
- Promote two-way communication'
- Develop trust;
- Develop open dialogue;
- Promote the vision to obtain a common purpose;
- Identify the cause of the problem;
- Understand the problem;
- Separate the person from the problem;
- Identify options and pick one and act upon it;
- Ask for feedback.

Conclusion

Community development is a community based and owned development which is living, continuous and on-going and involves all the community to work towards well-being and a life free of trauma and violence.

This resource and further information about Creating A Safe Supportive Environment is available to download at **www.casse.org.au/resources**.