

Rethinking Community Development

Emmanuel M. Luna

A Reason for Reflection

Retracing one's roots or origin could be disturbing and fearsome especially if the past left some marks that continue to create odd influence to the present. But one just has to face realities and learn from the past to be able to move on. Going through a "review of development work" in the Philippines points to some uncomfortable but acceptable "assessment" of how community development has been practiced. In the past, community development was viewed primarily as an instrument of the government bureaucracy in exercising control and in soliciting support from the people. The following accounts at-test to this:

- a. "Community development was originally conceived by the European colonial powers ... to involve the rural and urban communities in programs of the national government ... in support of the government objectives."

- b. "In the 1950s, several private organizations came to prominence by espousing the 'community development' approach Under neo-colonial conditions, the approach was modified to suit the objectives of the national government: facilitate control of depressed or remote areas; persuade the masses to conform to government policies and goals; and institutionalize a system of patronage anchored to the government bureaucracy."
- c. As practiced by government organizations and the Magsaysay government, "community development was used as a counter-insurgency measure ... and emphasized the involvement of target groups only in the implementation stage of the program/project primarily through contribution of labor."
- d. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, a modified community development approach was practiced by private organizations that were formed based on NGO initiatives. They stressed entrepreneurship as a basic element "that would emancipate the poor from conditions of poverty" (NCPD 1988).

One of the institutions that was historically linked to community development in the Philippines includes the Presidential Assistance on Community Development (PACD) established in 1956 "to organize the barrios throughout the country and coordinate the delivery of basic services from government and private organizations.... The principal sources of PACD funding were the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and USAID" (NCPD 1988). In 1972, the PACD was abolished and the Department of Local Government and Community Development (DLGCD) was established. The community development function was transferred to the Ministry of Human Settlements in 1980, which was later on abolished after Marcos was overthrown in 1986.

With the popularity of community development in the 1960s, a Department of Community Development was established when the UP Institute of Social Work and Community Development was created in 1967. Community development, then, became the youngest academic program among the applied social sciences.

After almost three decades of having community development as an applied field of study, it is imperative to reflect and to draw some insights on how community development practice has been for the past years. How did CD promote changes in the lives of the people and the communities? How did the practice contribute in the development of concepts in community development? While it is recognized that there should be a praxis: actions guided by theories and theories enhanced by practice, there seems to be an imbalance on this. The rich experiences in community development require a synthesis. As University professor and sociologist, Dr. Delia T. Castillo noted, applied fields of study such as community development, social work, social development and community organization "are relatively young and their identities need continuing validation" (Castillo, 1994:22).

One of the recurring questions concerning community development is its relation or distinction with community organizing. In the 1950s, the term "community development" was defined as "a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance upon the community's initiative" (UNBSA 1955:6). Both CD and CO, or the "combined form 'community organization and development' (COD) refer to similar concepts of progress through local action" (Ibid).

Community development is also equated to locality development and is considered as one of the three types of CO, together with social action and social planning. Until today there are different perspectives on this. Others say that CO is the same as CD. Others think that CO is the process and CD is the goal. There are also notions that CO is more political and CD more socio-economic and physical. It is still possible that there could be those who think that, and practice CD as a counter-insurgency measure.

Some Initial Thoughts: Concepts and Processes

What then is community development? This brief paper does not attempt to provide a comprehensive reflection on community development, but merely expresses one's initial thoughts. The following concepts and processes are not meant to synthesize nor provide a sole answer to the question. Rather, these concepts are put forward to stimulate further reflections and exchanges among CD practitioners and the academe towards a better appreciation, understanding and redefinition of community development. Or at least, to create an issue for discussion.

Community development is an applied social science concerned with the study and practice of people's collective action in ensuring the wholistic and corporate well-being of the people. This concept entails the following elements:

an applied social science - Community development is rooted to the basic social sciences in initiating social change for the betterment of the people in the community. As a science, it employs the scientific processes in problem solving, from the analysis of the situation, problem identification, planning, implementation and evaluation of the processes employed and their outcome.

a study and a practice - It is concerned with both the enhancement of the theory and the improvement of the practice. Community development praxis entails the reflection-action-reflection process.

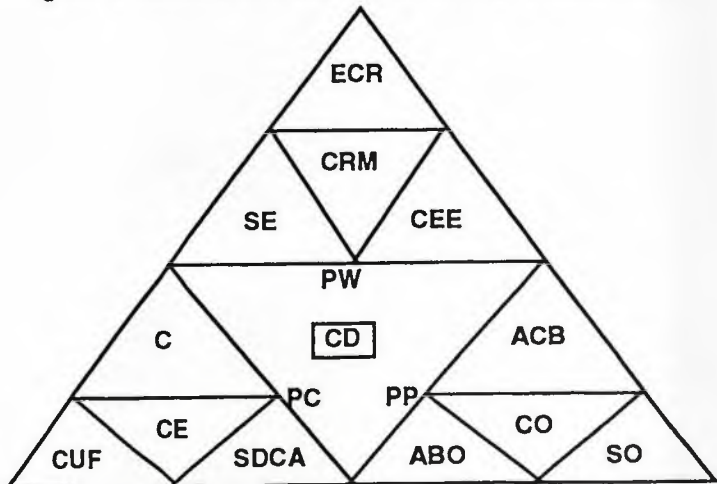
of people's collective action - The initiative and the involvement of the community people in the various phases of problem solving and reflection-action-reflection is the basic element of community development.

wholistic and corporate well-being of the people - Community development is concerned with the socio-economic-political, cultural spiritual and physical well-being of the people; not only of an individual person, but for the corporate welfare of the community.

Unlike the traditional concept and understanding of community development which have been considered obsolete (TWSC, 1990: 5), the current concept and practice of community development presupposes the heterogeneity and stratification in the communities and in the larger society. Poverty is a result of inequality and unjust relationships. The collective action of the people is necessary to transform the oppressive situations, the practices and the relationships prevailing in the communities. Goals such as structural changes in society are not end by themselves but should redound to the object of development — the people and their well-being.

As such, community development has three main goals that are people-oriented. These are the enhancement of people's welfare, people's capability and people's participation. Corollary, there are three interrelated fields of community development that correspond to the goals, namely:

Figure 1. Goals and Areas of Community Development



* *Triangle Paradigm* modified from Elmer M. Ferrer. *Learning and Working Together: Towards a Community-Based Coastal Resources Management*. Quezon City: REDO, CSWCD, UP, 1992.

Community Education - Developing the capability of the people entails the formation of community values such as cooperativism, collective concern, a sense of nationalism, and similar concerns. It involves the enhancement of the people's skills necessary for them to act and respond to their situation. Most importantly community education includes conscientization which is "earning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire 1970).



Community Organization - Enhancing people's participation in community development can only be done effectively if the people are organized. They can be organized into different forms: area-based mass organizations, sectoral organizations and networks, alliances and coalitions. These organizations are the people's instruments in expressing their will and effecting changes in their communities.



Community Resource Management - Ensuring the people's welfare is possible if the community resources are properly managed. The management of the community resources includes the establishment of social enterprises that will provide the basic social services such as housing, education, health, recreation, transportation, etc. Community economic enterprises are needed to transform the existing economic practices and to enable the people to have alternative sources of income. Similarly, environmental protection and rehabilitation are imperative to ensure a wholesome, livable, sustainable and ecologically-balanced habitat.



Figure 1 shows the interrelatedness of these three major fields of community development. They are mutually supportive and builds upon each other's accomplishments. In each of these fields — community education, community organizing and community resource management employ the scientific problem processes. (Table 1)

Table 1. Community Development Processes

PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS	COMMUNITY ORGANIZING	COMMUNITY EDUCATION	COMMUNITY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Assessment of the Situation and Problem Identification	Community Integration Community Diagnosis Social Analysis Identification of Leaders	Training Needs Analysis	Community Diagnosis Resource Inventory and Analysis
Planning and Implementation	Organization Building Community Mobilization Networking and Alliance Building	Training Design Development Curriculum Development Course Implementation Experiential - on-the-job Learning Processes	Resource Use Planning Project Development Resource Utilization, Replenishment or Rehabilitation
Evaluation	CO Evaluation	Training Evaluation	Project Evaluation Environmental Monitoring and Evaluation

Table 2. Different Approaches in Working With Communities

APPROACHES	FOCUS OF THE APPROACHES EDUCATION ORGANIZING RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	DESCRIPTION/OUTCOME
Dole-out Service delivery and Top-Down Development Planning	Acceptance of the program Aims to facilitate program implemen- tation Management by outsider and/or for the benefit of the people outside the community	Traditional and dole-out approach in the provision and utilization of community resources without involving the people, leading to dependency, economism and destruction of the people's culture and environment. <i>Example:</i> Provisions of western medicines and feeding programs to upland communi- ties; construction of dam in communities of indigenous people.
Traditional Organizing	Acceptance of charismatic personalities Political party or civic organizations supportive of charismatic leaders Usually not engaged in com- munity resource management	Produces community organizations that are individualistic and not responsive to the overall needs of the people in the community; the organizations merely serve the interests of the outside organi- zers. <i>Example:</i> POs organized by traditional politicians for electoral support or by community elites for their social functions.

APPROACHES	FOCUS OF THE APPROACHES	DESCRIPTION/OUTCOME
	EDUCATION ORGANIZING RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	

Traditional Informational Campaigns	Acceptance of charismatic leaders and programs Not interested in organizing CRM	Informational and politically oriented campaigns among the people by traditional politicians and the bureaucracy without any organizational or material benefits accruing to the people. The main purpose is to popularize personalities or a program and draw support from the people. <i>Examples:</i> Training program to promote Bagong Lipunan (Marcos time) or Philippines 2000.
Entrepreneur Development	Skills development for the economic development of the members Group formation to manage the enterprise Management based on capitalistic mode - from the production, marketing and distribution of benefits.	A traditional approach of organizing the people merely for resource utilization and management without clear political vision of where the organizing would lead to. <i>Example:</i> Community livelihood projects organized by or co-opted by private enterprises to do sub-contracted works.
Community Extension	Technology Transfer Formation of groups to participate and implement the program Externally driven; management dependent on the outside	Introduction of new system of utilizing community resources through education and training; Community education can eventually motivate people to organize. <i>Example:</i> Appropriate technology programs among "kaingeros."

APPROACHES	FOCUS OF THE APPROACHES	DESCRIPTION/OUTCOME
	EDUCATION ORGANIZING RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Solid Mass Organizing	Social Analysis and Conscientization Mass organization for political actions	Produces highly conscientized and organized people's organizations but lacks interest and capability in undertaking socio-economic or environmental endeavors. <i>Example:</i> Political organizing done by cause-oriented groups during the Martial Law period.
Community Development	Social Analysis Community values development Skills development Conscientization People's organization for socio-economic and political change and for the management of community resources	Integrates the education, organization and resource management concerns of the community. The outcome is a conscientized and organized PO involved in various community affairs, including both the political concerns and the management of their resources.

To distinguish community development approach to other approaches involving the communities, one has to look at the goals, processes and principles of the approach. At present, there are a lot of development initiatives taking place in and for the communities. While they may be engaged in one or all of the fields of community development, the basic premises and processes are not in consonance with CD. The outcome of these approaches are usually not favorable to the people. Table 2 shows some of these approaches, together with the community development approach to provide some contrasts.

While the specific methods and techniques of current community development practice are continually being developed and improved, these innovations have to be anchored to the basic principles to enhance growth. An acronym SEEDLING is used to describe these processes.

S - sustainable

E - empowering

E - efficient and effective

D - democratic and participative

L - localized and equitably distributed benefits

I - inter-intra linked

N - non-threatening to people's culture

G - gender sensitive

Conclusion

The concepts and processes of community development described in this brief reflection veer away from the traditional views of Community Development. It also negates the idea of community development as a mere "social preparatory phase" necessary to facilitate the implementation of development programs coming from above. The extensive Philippine experiences in community organizing, community education, community resource management and community development in general are very valuable resources Filipino practitioners have in their hands. Similarly, conceptual frameworks and paradigms that synthesize experiences or guide the practice are equally important. A continuing dialogue to thresh out issues and refinements in community development is necessary for equipping as the challenges of the new century comes closer to our doorstep.

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