

A suggested process for Community Development & Empowerment

(in 10 Steps)

1. Build deep relationships with people in the village or slum

Why: The people with whom we develop the deepest & best relationships may be those who become the change agents in the community and eventually form a Community Group which can be responsible for the slum's development. Additionally, through good relationships we get the 'real' story on the village/slum - its problems & its assets, rather than what people *want* to tell you.

With whom: Deliberately focus on some key people with the right 'heart' (honest, hard working, self sacrificing, courageous, self confident) who can take the community forward after we leave in several years.



How:

- By spending lots of **time**, chatting, drinking tea and visiting each others' families.
- By **adjusting** your clothes, language, housing, etc to get closer to his/her way of life.
- By **listening** to her/him (i.e. not telling your own story, not giving solutions, but just listening).
- By **living** there in the village or slum for a period (or even better for the length of the project).
- By finding ways to '**receive**' from residents as well, so as to increase the mutuality in the relationship

Evidence & Documentation of what you do (if you need to prove to your donors/supporters the value of what you're doing): A list of friends you've made & introduction to their families.

2. Learn more about the village/slum

Why: We are not experts about this particular village or slum, because we haven't lived there. Therefore before starting to work, we need to learn about it. Taking a deliberate learner role, rather than an expert role, is more humble and helps us make more genuine relationships with people.

How:

- **Live** in the village/slum for a period.
- **Observe:** Spend time just walking around the community and hanging out. You'll be able to observe lots of things, such as housing, power supply, water supply, community rhythms & traditions, livelihoods, different people groups, who are the most marginalised.
- **Enquire** about things you can't observe like:-
 - The **history** of the place; when did it start & why did people come?
 - What people perceive are the **positives** about the village/slum. Use **appreciative enquiry** & ask open questions (ones which don't have a yes/no answer).
 - The **difficulties/problems** people face (which we'll analyse in Step 3 below).
 - How people have **solved their problems** in the past (which we may be able to use later in the process).

Evidence & Documentation: A map of the village/slum showing various facilities and areas. A profile of the slum's history, positives, problems & problem solving history.

3. Analyse the community problems yourself & with your colleagues.

Why: To have a sense yourself of the most pressing problems & those with a reasonable chance of being solved. This analysis isn't done in order to impose those findings on residents, but rather to have thought through the issues ourselves before going into the community meetings (in Step 4).

How: Analyse the problems with respect to:

- The **number of people** affected (especially how the most marginalised are affected)
- The **energy** within the community for resolving the problem .
- The likely **opposition** to any action for change (eg from local power brokers).

- The likelihood of success.
- The time & money it's likely to take to solve.

Evidence & Documentation: A table showing the analysis of each problem by each factor

4. Hold community meetings to prioritise the problems.

Why: So that people set their own agenda for change. If they have that agenda imposed on them by an NGO or a project proposal, they're not likely to put much effort into the process or 'own' it.

Who: Need to have some representative from all affected groups, especially the marginalised groups (women, children, persons with disabilities, low caste, minority religions), not just the political or religious leaders.

How: Facilitate the meeting yourself (assuming you've had some training in facilitation), but also start training some of the 'good hearted' people to facilitate meetings.

- Listen carefully & paraphrase whatever they say & thank them for their contribution;
- Calm the 'loud' people by paraphrasing even more what they say, so they feel heard.
- Deliberately draw out opinions of the quieter people by asking their opinion.
- Gently introduce your thoughts (from the analysis in Step 3), but don't impose them;
- Come to a consensus decision as to which problem to tackle first.

Evidence & Documentation: Minutes of the meeting, including attendance & decisions made.

5. Learn about the resources that could be used to solve the problems.

Why: So you have some ideas of resources that could be used to solve the problem prioritised in Step 4 above during the planning process in Step 6.

Who: You may have access to information that ordinary residents don't, but you can mentor the 'good hearted people' in how to find that information.

What: These resources are likely to be government schemes and facilities, but could be within the community itself (the positives identified in Step 2) or in another NGO.

How:

- Find out what's available, how to access it, helpful officers' names, phone numbers, bus routes etc.
- Phone or meet any contact you know.

Evidence & Documentation: A list of resources which may help in solving this problem

6. Plan action to solve the problem.

Why: Together with the community make a concrete plan on how to act.

Who: Anyone (especially the 'good hearted' ones) who's interested in seeing this community problem solved.

What: The plan should include: Who will do what; When she/he will do it; & Who will pay for any expenses?

NB This may be the point to write a project proposal, if you need external financial assistance.

How: Hold a community meeting. Facilitate the meeting yourself assuming you've had some training in facilitation, but keep training your 'good hearted' people to facilitate.

- Calm the dominant people, bring out the quieter ones & include the marginalised.
- Primarily use community members' ideas on who can do what & when.
- Bring the meeting to consensus on who will do what, when.
- You can help by taking some of the actions but only with a community member, so she/he learns.
- You could introduce God as a willing participant in this process at this point. Ideally everyone would agree to ask God in their own way according to their own faith?

Evidence & Documentation: Minutes of the meeting, including decisions made on who will do what by when.

7. Take the actions planned

Why: If the community doesn't actually take the action, nothing will change! Up till now there's been little cost to community members in terms of time & money. We need signs from people that they're willing to act with you. Avoid going on if there's no willingness to act or else we create dependency!

Who: Anyone (especially the 'good hearted' ones) who's interested in seeing this community problem solved.

What: Take the steps agreed on in the planning meeting (Step 6). Often this involves going to government offices to present applications.

How:

- Prepare well by knowing that department's rules; having the documentation ready in duplicate; making an appointment & having decided beforehand who will speak and what you want to say.
- This is an opportunity to involve God by praying together before taking the action.
- During the meeting: only one person speak; don't show annoyance or be rude; summarise everything the officer says to give him a chance to soften; fix any future date (because 'later' means never).

Evidence & Documentation: Whatever happened in the action; meeting date, who you met, what was said, what promises were made, copies of any documents submitted. You could use the reporting format attached.

8. Reflect on the action taken.

Why: If we've succeeded, celebrate! (& thank God for His help). If we haven't succeeded, then reflection is a chance to learn from our mistakes and make a new plan.

Who: All those involved in planning (step 6) and carrying out the plan (step 7).

What: Discuss learnings and make a new plan of action

How: In a meeting. By now one of the community members may try to facilitate it!

Evidence & Documentation: The minutes of the meeting & the new plan of action resulting from the reflection

(Cycle through Steps 6-8 until the problem is solved or becomes unsolvable)

9. Do it all (from step 4) again with less involvement from the NGO & more from the residents

Why: So that the community can solve another problem! Less involvement from us so that gradually the residents, especially the 'good-hearted' people you've been mentoring through the whole process, gradually learn the skills of: Facilitating meetings (steps 4 & 6); Learning about resources (step 5); Planning (step 6) & dealing with government officers (step 7) etc, so eventually they can run the process themselves.

Who: Anyone (especially 'good hearted' ones) who's interested in seeing another community problem solved.

How: Hold a new community meeting to prioritise the next problem (step 4). This time possibly facilitated by one of the community members who've learnt facilitation skills from you.

Evidence & Documentation: As for steps 4- 8 above.

10. Form a Community Based Organisation

Why: To gather the 'good hearted' people who've been trained through this whole process into a group which has a formal identity. Hopefully this group will carry on the community's development after we leave.

Who: People with good hearts who you've been mentoring & have learnt some skills through this process.

How: Facilitate them forming into a group that meets regularly to discuss the community. They will need:

- A system of accountability to the wider community.
- A rotating leadership in order to protect against one leader being corrupted by his/her power.
- A way of raising any funds necessary.

- A network of advisors / encouragers.
- Possibly formal registrations after some time.

Evidence & Documentation: Minutes of meetings. Formal registration papers of the CBO.