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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

CHAPTER NINE

EVALUATING AND IMPROVING POLICY AND PRACTICE

By Jo Ferrie & Paul Lachapelle

Abstract

This chapter looks at the eighth competency area for community development practice, how to evaluate in order to improve policy and practice. Project and program evaluation in community development is vital to learning, to knowing where the project is going, to making decisions about work planning and resource allocation, and as the basis for reporting back on progress to the community, to your employing agency and to other key stakeholders, such as funders. In community development practice, evaluation is not something just undertaken by the professional practitioner or some outside research consultant. Community development practice lays great emphasis upon participative action research. In other words, in engaging and supporting the engagement of the community in the project/program evaluation process. Action research also highlights that evaluation is not an exercise done at the end of the project, but periodically during it. In other words, it is undertaken to inform and shape progress, as well as at the completion of the project. This chapter looks at participatory action research in more detail and, by way of five case studies at how evaluation has been used to improve policy and practice.

Introduction

Community development is about change[1]. This chapter aims to capture how community development practitioners and community groups produce inclusive and participatory methods that are in turn, considered robust enough to produce evidence that triggers impact beyond delivering an individual project goal. This has been captured well by a significant voice in the formation of the United Nations and human rights frameworks, Eleanor Roosevelt[2] 'We make our own history. The course of history is directed by the choices we make and our choices grow out of the ideas, the beliefs, the values, the dreams of the people. It is not so much the powerful leaders that determine our destiny as the much more powerful influence of the combined voice of the people themselves.'

Earlier chapters in this volume allow you to learn about engaging fully with a community to ensure all members are represented: see Chapter 4 and the definition of 'grass roots' as well as Chapter 5 regarding the various methods of change and why they are important. Indeed much of this book has focused on the local community, for this is where development must start. This chapter begins with the skills required to monitor and evaluate progress towards a community goal. It then moves from this local perspective, to consider how evaluation can inform strategic and operational practice, and in turn lead to wider regional and global impact. The focus moves from activities that centre on 'having a voice' to mediating with those in power to ensure voices are 'heard' and acted upon.

This chapter focuses on methods, and considers specifically participatory action research (PAR), as a toolkit for not only reaching hidden voices, but as a systematic framework by which community voices can be captured, and accessed by stakeholders. Stakeholders have been defined in Chapter 4 as those who can affect or are affected by a decision, particularly those who are separate from the community because of the power, status, geography or education that they hold. For example, how can success in one community, delivering clean drinking water, supporting a local school, or ensuring adequate housing: help other communities deliver their activities and goals? Fundamentally, a change of policy should trigger impact for many communities. The best way for policies to work, is if they are thoroughly informed by the communities who experience the problem. It is not just the problem, but also the solution that should emerge from the grass root level[3]. This provides a vital role for community development agencies and practitioners and points once again to the two-way nature of practice. It is about supporting the local community, but also encouraging wider systemic and structural changes by other stakeholders such as local or federal/national authorities, and shared learning through programme evaluation with other vulnerable communities seeking to address similar challenges.

Community development practitioners often have a mediation role. Community action is required because those in power (politicians, policy makers, dominant media) often perpetuate, if not increase, inequalities, and simultaneously delegitimize groups who experience exclusion and marginalization[4]. To better support communities, it takes economic investment and in turn, a political commitment to the redistribution of wealth[5]. Redistribution is something that leaders on the left of politics tend to support and those on the political right tend to resist. Even those that support redistribution, may struggle to affect change as they can be constrained by tax law and available revenue, a welfare system that is in crisis management (which is expensive and leaves no resources for investment), or they work in a country without a welfare system (no resource at all).

Community development practitioners then, should develop an understanding of the local and regional governance, and the freedoms and potential to influence positive change. The term ownership in both process and outcome has been presented as one way to frame and promote empowerment in community development efforts[6]. Applying the concept of ownership can determine how the strategic interests and actions of individuals or organizations contribute to community development efforts. It can help evaluate whose voice is heard, who has influence over decisions, and who is affected by the process and outcome.

Evaluating Progress

Two core areas of competence required of all community development practitioners are 1.the ability to evaluate progress within the community development programs they support, and 2. the ability to then present the findings back to project stakeholders, including funders, to the community and to public policy makers.

Program evaluation is simply about trying to measure any changes that have come about as a result of your agency's work with the community. For example, if the focus is about community economic development you could measure the number of jobs and local enterprises created each year or over five years. If the focus is upon an adult literacy or a public health campaign you could measure the number of adults now literate or the reduction in child mortality rates. This type of evaluation is quantitative. It is about measuring 'hard' numbers. But in community development practice we are also concerned with

qualitative evaluation. For example, the extent to which people involved in a community action campaign feel more empowered. Or the extent to which a minority group feel more included within the wider community. This 'softer' information can be collected through individual and group interviews, or anonymously through questionnaire.

Evaluation as a tool is most helpful to a community development program when it is both formative i.e. ongoing, where you are measuring progress and feeding that back to all involved in order to improve the success of project or activity; and summative i.e. undertaken at the end of the project or activity, where you require both quantitative data and qualitative information as part of a report to present to funders or government for example.

A community development approach to evaluation lays emphasis upon engaging the community groups you are working with in the evaluation process. The term used here is participatory action research and models of this are explored below. The question to ask here is why would disadvantaged and vulnerable people be interested in getting involved in project evaluation when they are so busy either getting on with their lives or focusing upon getting things done? The reason is that they then 'own' the evaluation. In order to engage them to participate in this process, you must be minded as to what support needs they may have in order to spare the time. This is particularly the case when trying to involve those who may not be community leaders and activists within the project, but who are impacted by the issues it is trying to address. Here you will need to address access issues for women in some traditional communities, or for those with disabilities, or low levels of literacy.

All community development programs are required to produce annual reports of their activities for their management committees of funders. Quantitative and qualitative evaluation information generally are at the heart of such reports. This is also a way of reporting back to the community information as to how the project/activity/campaign is going, not least to demonstrate that it has been worth their involvement. Such information can then be used to inform work plans and the setting of new goals for the year ahead.

Evaluation for large programs may require the contracting of external consultants to help with the process. This has the advantage of giving an additional sense of independence over the findings. But when appointing outside consultants it is important that they have experience of working with communities in a participative way. Consultants can be an expensive cost for any community development agency and the community being supported need to have confidence that this money is well spent. External consultants, if they have a recognized brand name can also help open the door to external policy makers. Such consultancy companies or academic institutes may also have public affairs expertise that can advise the community and the development agency on how best to get their evaluation report noticed in the media and that it lands on the right government or corporate desks. Public affairs expertise may already lie within your agency for example if you are part of a well-resourced NGO such as Oxfam or a Community Development Corporation.

By getting this right, those with power are more likely to hear what is coming out of the project and its achievements. This may in turn convince them to give further financial support or to make some policy change as a result of the findings. Presentation of findings is important. Few community members, journalists, grant makers or policy advisers can be bothered to read long turgid reports. Here journalistic type skills can be powerful in engaging the reader: presenting a strong storyline that contains key quantitative facts and qualitative stories. Evaluation reports should always contain images such as graphs that simply show the figures, and photos of the people involved and the problems being addressed. All community development projects should collect visual images throughout the project journey, to include

in the report and subsequent presentation. These may be of polluted water supply or the fact that there is only one well in the refugee camp for hundreds of families. If you can get the media to pick up on your story, politicians, funders and others will be more likely to be briefed on the project evaluation.

Hearing Voices of Communities through Participatory Action Research

As most community development practitioners know, terms like 'hidden' or 'silent' voices are a misnomer. Community activists call out the inequalities and injustices they face. The failure in communication is most often played out at a privileged level, by voters who champion individual rights and freedoms; policy makers prioritizing issues 'popular with voters' to retain power; and private corporate entities who focus on regional targets dominated by economic growth and capital accumulation[7].

Community development practitioners are required, in part, because community groups who are challenging an injustice and/or long-term inequality also face stigma. This is the institutional marginalizing of their community. This form of discrimination may be intentional, or not. In either case, those in power may have rehearsed, even to the point of believing in, a range of assumptions that delegitimize the community's voice, and by extension their cause. It is harder for policy makers to resist hearing and recognizing community voices, if the voice is a collective one. Many of the chapters in this book will help community development practitioners work with communities to produce this collective voice, and Chapter 7 on diversity and inclusion is a useful resource in particular.

Participatory action research (PAR) is a range of tools used to hear and represent communities. It aims to deliver a high standard of robust data analysis and can be used with different kinds of data collection to optimize usefulness for each community. At its foundation, PAR encourages changing practices with an emphasis on democratic involvement, challenging hierarchies and power imbalances, and critically addressing real-life community-level problems. A PAR orientation places an emphasis on collaboration with the local community.

For marginalized groups, even a fully accessible process may be difficult to engage with, as they have not 'practiced' what they wish to say. This is due to the stigma they may have experienced[8] and the extent to which they have internalized this stigma, and feel that change is not possible. Community development practitioners then have a role in ensuring that there is diverse and inclusive participation. The time spent in and with communities is a key investment in order to build trust, skills and ownership.
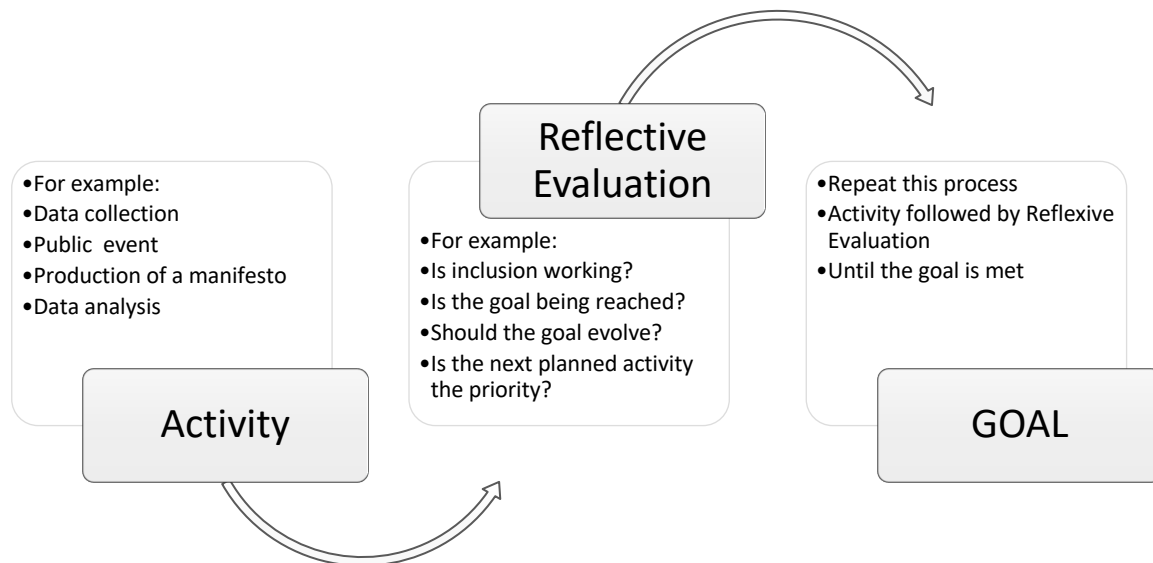
Data is understood here as evidence of the life experienced by the community (simply put: identifying barriers) and what they want to change (solution). As well as traditional interviews or focus groups, using photographs, making documentaries, or art and craft projects[9] can be used as a way to engage all members of a community regardless of age, communication ease, confidence or education. A single PAR project may use more than one method of data collection in order to allow different parts of the community to engage optimally. Often, the kind of data collection selected, is chosen with the community[10], and thus all decisions are made collectively. This approach will aid a community development practitioner to make engagement accessible and hear the broadest range of voices. Transparency in process and outcome is also imperative to ensure trust and positive relationships moving

forward. In practice, this means that PAR works at two levels: repeated actions; and repeated periods of reflexivity, also known, as critical evaluation.

After each action, a period of reflection allows the community with the development practitioner to consider: what was gained; what should be achieved next; whether the goal can still be reached; or if planned activities need to evolve. This phase may also consider if the data collection used should still be applied to hear more people, or whether it should be modified to hear different groups of people. The next agreed action is performed, and then another period of reflective working happens and so the pattern continues until the goal is reached (see Figure 1): this process could take weeks or years depending on the size of the community and the ambition of the project. It is vital, that the community are as involved in this phase, as with the action-work to produce inclusive and organic development of activities[11].

Community development practitioners have a key role in monitoring both these types of progress. It is not just the action that should be recorded and monitored to help gauge progress towards the goal, but the reflective work to evaluate how cohesively the community is working together, and how well members are represented.

Figure 1: The Dynamic Flow of Activity and Reflexivity towards Community Goals

Activity
•For example:
•Data collection
•Public event
•Production of a manifesto
•Data analysis

Reflective Evaluation
•For example:
•Is inclusion working?
•Is the goal being reached?
•Should the goal evolve?
•Is the next planned activity the priority?

GOAL
•Repeat this process
•Activity followed by Reflexive Evaluation
•Until the goal is met

If successful, PAR is a toolkit that can synthesize the concerns of a community into a collective voice and 'findings' or outputs that are recognized as 'legitimate' to policy makers. Findings should not be passed over to those in power, however but trigger opportunities for those in positions of power to work directly

and in collaboration with community activists and community development practitioners on what happens next.

Thinking Globally: Sustainable Development Goals as an Impetus for Change

Community groups that have faced stigma, inequality and injustice will arguably need more support to adjust their messages and community development practitioners must work with this difficult tension of retaining authenticity, and producing an argument that policy makers will engage with. It is not just the community or grass roots that must re-skill for impact to occur, those in power must also learn new ways of working and there are many open to this.

There is increasing pressure on policy makers to work with communities. As outlined in Chapter 1, the climate crisis and increasing gaps between the richest and poorest have led to the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a global initiative, this strategy was distinct in how it collaborated with community groups as well as engaging with those in power (economic and political) to agree the goals. The SDGs have been adopted by most nations, at least partially and in addition to meeting the goals themselves, these nations have also committed to embracing inclusive practices[12] as they develop new policies generally. In this way, there is a 'top-down' force upon policy makers who need to engage meaningfully with community groups in order to demonstrate their commitment to the SDGs. There is opportunity here, and community development practitioners who can demonstrate the link between fairly generic-termed SDGs and the specific goals[13] as set out by a community group, will be well-placed to harness it.

In moving to activities that can have impact beyond the community (for example, create regional policy), community development practitioners must recognize their role in reminding those in power, that to deliver against global progress targets such as SDGs, then policy must be informed by communities (bottom-up pressure). Thus, while the framework exists for communities to impact on policy, those in power must be held to account for this to be delivered in practice.

Collective Impact: A Potential Framework for Engaging Those in Power

Inclusive working, and dismantling of traditional, hierarchical ways or working, requires a commitment from policy makers to engage in new ways moving from a management role, to an ally role, and one framework that could help is Collective Impact (CI) [14]. This framework is useful if community activists remain central to all activities, and progress towards their goal is monitored. CI requires five conditions to be met:

1. a common agenda;
2. a shared measurement system;
3. mutually reinforcing activities;
4. continuous communication and
5. a backbone of support organization.

To impact towards policy, the conditions should co-exist and be mutually beneficial, rather than be seen as distinct and individual achievements on the pathway to impact. The final condition 'a backbone' may be understood as the role played by community development practitioners, who are dedicated professionals working with the other actors towards a defined goal, and thus acting as a resource that all others can utilize.

For this 'structure of practice' to work in community development may require practitioners to not only mediate, but translate, apply method (such as PAR to deliver measurement, the second condition) and draw links between community-level local goals and activities, and global level goals and activities, for example the SDGs. Thus, the community development practitioner translates (communication, the fourth condition in the list above) bottom up pressure from communities, and top-down influence of SDGs (reinforcing activities, the third condition) to help those in power produce new, useful, and inclusive policies (a common agenda, the first condition)[15].

It is important to establish that all allies (from the community to those in power) are enthusiastic about the common agenda[16]. This may seem common sense, but for the community activists their goal will feel essential, and so the community development practitioner could have a role in helping the community choose their allies as they move their activities towards wider impact. That is, to work with those in professional and leadership positions, who are committed to reforming policy.

Even if the five conditions are met, impact on policy is not guaranteed[17]. To imagine the role of a policy maker with relative status and power: they need do little to join the table created by the CI structure of practice. Rather a great deal of re-skilling and learning terminology is required of the activist, and similarly the community development practitioner is given responsibility for the labour and success becoming the 'catalyst' (though potentially with others) of any action. In this way 'risk' lies with the community activist and practitioner, but not with the policy maker. One argument to help policy makers invest their time, is that by generating the solution at the local level using community experts, then any investment is likely to be successful, and cheaper in the long run (versus long-term investment which does not really solve the problem). In one of the first academic reviews of this approach, Mayan, Pauchulo et al conclude that where it has worked, CI has been used to develop a 'common language'[18] around the goal, and commitment to the series of activities required to deliver the goal. For community practitioners then, CI is a framework in the sense that it can help deliver the building blocks towards social change, but requires other tools, such as PAR to ensure that the goal and work towards the goal are driven by activists.

To explore these themes usefully, a series of case studies follow. Derived from real-life projects, the case studies focus on six key areas towards impacting beyond a community-goal:

a. Review and evaluate community development activities and practice using participatory methods.

b. Support community groups to use monitoring and evaluation to reflect on progress, learn from experience, evidence impact and inform future action.

c. Assess the evidence from evaluations of community development activities and analysis of the wider social, political, economic and environmental context to inform the development of policy and practice.

d. Incorporate critical reflection processes into our work, in order to identify and apply learnings, and continually improve our practice.

e. Prepare accountability and evaluation reports for one's agency, funders and other stakeholders, including impact measures.

f. Work alongside community groups as engagement with policy makers increases to ensure activists are central to decisions

The first of five case studies focuses upon the establishment of the community development learning and evaluation framework within Scotland by which community development practitioners can evaluate their own practice and the success they can build with community groups. This case study champions the significance of transparency around community engagement, and strong evaluation of how inclusion, participation and democracy were achieved within any activity. The second case study, located in Montana, USA illuminates the 'catalyst' elements and considers the significance of funding and status in protecting and legitimizing the activities of practitioners. Further the study emphasizes the need for critical evaluation of practices and full and careful inclusion of the community. The third case study takes us to Canada, and demonstrates with a focus on poverty alleviation, the value of evaluation and the resulting evidence-base to influence decision making across several cities. The fourth, re-centralizes activities of communities by introducing a case-study from Cameroon that covers environmental progress, combats lived poverty and harnesses the power of inclusive conferencing to aid reflection and trigger new action. The final case study reflects on an ongoing project in Hong Kong, as it focuses on multi-dimensional barriers that are facing disadvantaged communities as they optimize health during the covid-19 pandemic. This allows us to see the importance of grounding action in community concerns and realities, and also highlights the significance of delivering change even where there is not time to manage lasting policy shifts.

CASE STUDY ONE - SCOTLAND

Supporting best practice in community development

By Alan Barr and Stuart Hashagen

The 1970s saw a fast-growing interest in community work as a strategy in social and public policy in the west of Scotland with a cohort of over 400 community workers and portfolio of community projects established in virtually all disadvantaged neighbourhoods. By 1990, it might have appeared that the existing high level of investment in community development and the emergent trend towards more participatory and accountable public services would not be fertile ground for another new initiative.

However, research into the social work department of Strathclyde region[19], had identified many examples of positive work but overall a lack of clarity about the role of community development practitioners, systematic performance measurement and clearly defined outcomes, and means to share learning and apply lessons. Literature offering critical analysis was also largely absent. Strathclyde's own assessment of the broader community development approach that they hoped would be adopted by all staff showed

a lack of understanding of what this might mean in practice. This general uncertainty about more accountable public service provision was echoed elsewhere in Scotland notably in health and community education. Some form of initiative was needed to address these concerns. The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) was established in 1994 as a partnership between the University of Glasgow and the Community Development Foundation, adopting the strap-line to represent its core purpose – 'Supporting Best Practice in Community Development'.

But what is best practice and how can it be promoted? The SCDC sought to define this and to develop strategies to cement it across practitioners, employers (especially in the public sector) and in communities. Here we set out the SCDC understanding of what best practice entails and how this was supported and encouraged.

The starting point for SCDC resources and programmes was always rigorous research, grounded in participatory action research, into the need or issue of concern. The first commissioned study[20] of the contribution of community education to community development in Scotland reinforced the need for clarity about the purposes of community development and more rigorous planning and evaluation. Early work therefore focused on these issues. The core elements of community development practice were later codified in the Achieving Better Community Development (ABCD) model (see Figure 2).

SCDC also took the view that communities would be much better able to argue their case if they were able to provide sound evidence from participatory action research into local experience of key issues, and to use this evidence constructively in negotiations with responsible bodies. SCDC supported a large number of community organisations in this way through the SCARF (Scottish Community Action Research Fund) programme and successors up to the present day with the Knowledge is Power programme.

Working out what 'best practice' signifies requires a framework that identifies the core components of community development (and also what it isn't). The ABCD model emerged from extensive discussions with experienced practitioners (funded by Government agencies across all nations of the UK and Ireland) which led to a model that proposed that the highest-level purpose of community development (CD) was to enable communities to be 'sustainable, livable and equitable'. Pursuing this outcome, the model proposed that communities whether of place, interest or identity; development needs to pay equal attention to:

- Learning – personal development of confidence, skills and understanding
- Social justice – positive action on prejudice, discrimination, disadvantage and powerlessness.
- Organisation – supporting and sustaining independent service providing and campaigning community-led organisations
- Influence – seeking to change the policies and actions of governmental and any other interest detrimental to the interest of the community

All four would need to be evident for any agency to describe its role as community development. Specialist and non-CD agencies would be encouraged to adopt these principles.

The model (see figure 2) then set out the various domains where the aspects of organisation and influence would have a positive impact in communities. These included community economic development (a working community), community health and care (a caring community), community environmental action (a safe and healthy community), community arts and recreation (a creative community) and engagement with governance (a citizens' community). With significant progress in these five domains the overall goal of livability, sustainability and equitability could be attained.

The ABCD Handbook was the first key resource published by the SCDC. It was shortly followed up with the initial LEAP (Learning Evaluation and Planning) [21]. This took the essence of the ABCD model and incorporated it into an outcome-led planning and evaluation framework.
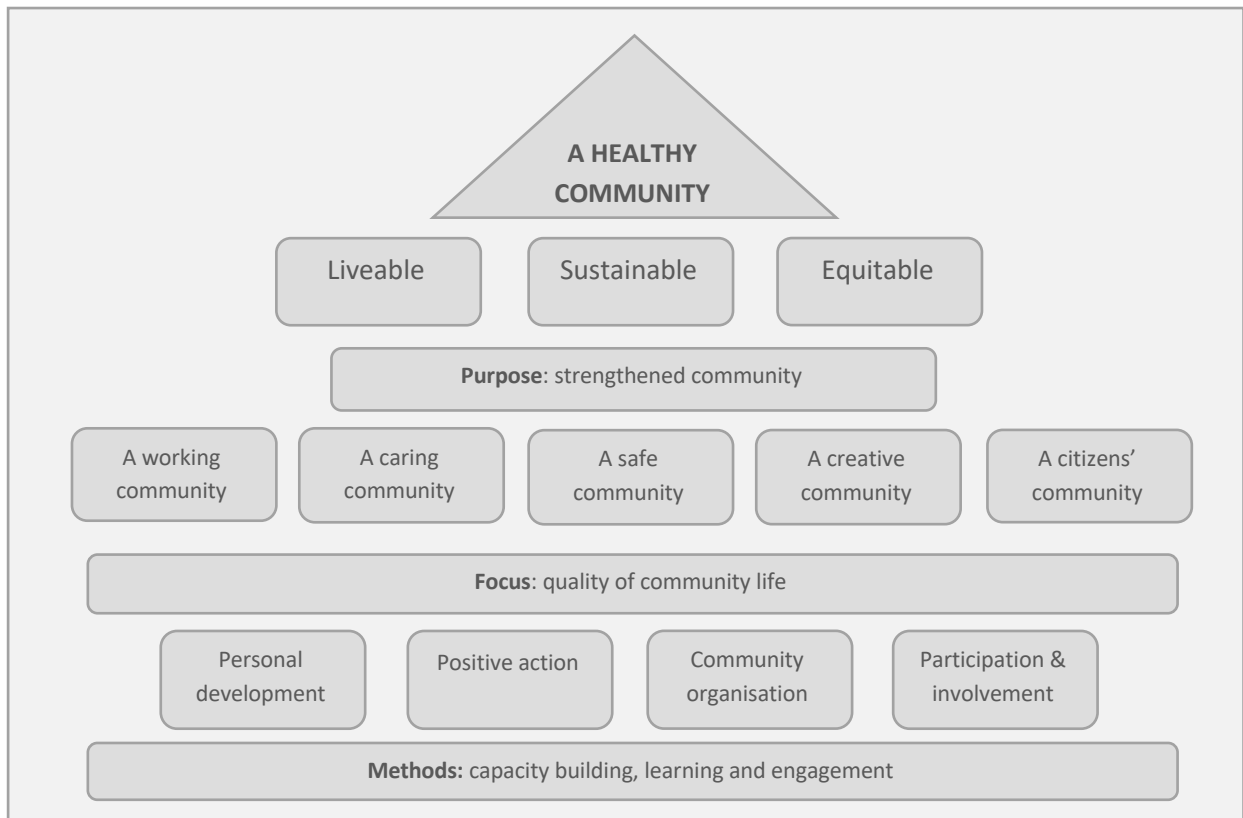

Figure 2. The ABCD Model: A Framework Towards a Healthy Community[22]

SCDC had always argued that clear purpose and thoughtful planning were the core of good practice. The LEAP framework provided an integrated planning and evaluation cycle that started with evidence of need and the definition of the desired outcomes - how things would be if the need was addressed. The next step was agreeing on outcome indicators - the ways in which the initiative would be able to understand whether the outcome was being achieved. All stages of the process would be discussed and agreed among

the key interests in the project or programme. Attention would then turn to the resources that would be needed (inputs), the methods that would be used (processes) and what would actually be done, by whom and when (outputs). Consideration would also be given to the motivation, opportunity and capacity of each participant to assist or hinder the process. This would form the action plan; progress would be reviewed at regular intervals (monitoring), and, using the evidence gathered, periodically work would be evaluated against the outcomes. If the needs had not been fully addressed the cycle would re-start, with revised or refined outcomes in place.

The third element in the practice development suite was the National Standards for Community Engagement, commissioned following a Ministerial Review of community empowerment. As with ABCD and LEAP, this was designed through extensive engagement with practitioners and their employers in local government, health, police and a number of third sector organisations. The Standards set out ten areas in which the relationship between community organisations and their members or constituency, and the relationship between public bodies and community bodies could be assessed, and where the characteristics of a 'good' relationship could be understood and worked towards. The standards sought to ensure; equalities, respectful dialogue, effective planning, and many other areas. Again, as with ABCD and LEAP extensive training and support was built into the dissemination strategy, and the Standards benefited from being endorsed by a wide range of government and service agencies and community and third sector bodies.

The SCDC subsequently published further practice development resources building on the ideas in the three key elements described. These included:

- VOiCE (Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement) which combined LEAP and the National Standards in a digital form
- LEAP online, which like VOiCE could be used across projects and programmes digitally
- LEAP for Health, which adopted a social model of health improvement and linked it to the LEAP model
- Building Stronger Communities, which drilled down into ABCD to provide a resource for strengthening community organisations.

The SCDC always gave priority to enabling organisations and staff to support and learn from each other by hosting networks of common interest. The first of these was CHEX, the Community Health Exchange which supports community led health initiatives across Scotland. More recently similar networks on co-production and participatory budgeting are in place.

As already indicated, ongoing training and support for best practice was central. Several programmes were designed to include a funded programme of training, planning and learning events. Aside from those already discussed, the CHEX, for example, runs a Health Issues in the Community programme, designed to give local activists a basic grounding in community work, delivered by practitioners who have been through the training.

Both before and after Scottish devolution, the SCDC has been fortunate to work in a political and policy environment broadly supportive of community participation. The programmes discussed above were all

funded directly or indirectly by government in Scotland (and more widely in the case of ABCD). Since 1994, the level of direct funding to community work in local authorities has reduced but government policy retains a high level of commitment to community participation in public services. Community development is now predominantly delivered by a wide range of local or national organisations primarily in the community / voluntary sector: health, housing, environment, economic development and equalities among many others. This has led to some dilution of the capacity building elements of community development and suggests a need to encourage more coherence and collective endeavour across this wider, but potentially more influential sector.

CASE STUDY TWO - USA

Critical Reflection of community philanthropy

By Paul Lachapelle

Critical reflection of the role of community philanthropy can provide insights into persistent community development problems. Evaluating community philanthropy is often initiated with metrics and measures of how much capital is raised and where the funds are allocated. However, there are other measures of community success and the potential to advance community policy and practice. Community foundations are one way that communities can reflect on and act in a way that is inclusive, participatory and that builds not only community capital but also community capacity. Evaluating this capacity building potential is critical to ensuring that current policy initiatives are successful, and that future actions will be planned and implemented. This case study outlines the importance of measuring community philanthropy impacts through community capacity building of leadership, trust and relationships in one small community, Bozeman, Montana in the western United States.

With a dry continental climate and 300 days of annual sunshine, proximity to natural amenities (100 miles from Yellowstone National Park), low crime rate, and technology and healthcare industry boom, the town often makes Top 10 lists; for example, Outside Magazine named Bozeman a top 10 finalist in its "Best Towns Ever" competition[23]. Bozeman was listed on Bloomberg Businessweek 's list of "The Best Places to Raise Your Kids 2012"[24]. In short, the secret is out and many are flocking to this community that locals refer to as "that university town with a ski problem."

The area has long been recognized as a unique destination. In the mid-1800's, Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, a civil war veteran and accomplished attorney was cresting Bozeman Pass in southwest Montana, in the United States and noticed the brilliant lush fields of green and gold below. He turned to the stagecoach driver to ask the location; "that sir, is the Gallatin Valley" by which Ingersoll replied, "Ah, it is a dimple on the fair cheek of nature"[25]. Bozeman, Montana has become a popular destination for residents and visitors alike since settlers first came to the area generations ago. With approximately

40,000 permanent residents, the area is now the fastest growing city in Montana; population in the area is expected to grow by an additional 30,000 residents by 2050[26].

Rapid growth presents unique challenges for those concerned with equity, vitality and prosperity. Among the relevant questions for a community experiencing this type of growth are: what are the best methods for policy planning and implementation of community and economic development projects?   How are housing and cost of living issues best addressed? In what ways can the public and private sector address growth issues? What is the role of philanthropy in promoting community development? How can community philanthropy play a role in community development policy implementation?

Defined as community savings banks, community foundations are emerging as an important and effective method of promoting community dialogue about present needs and future priorities. Community foundations are non-profit public charities that manage endowed funds for individuals, families, corporations, and non-profit organizations and grant money back to a community or region. These foundations are run by a board of directors who are typically volunteers from the community serving the role of providing collective oversight of the investment and distribution of community funds. In this spirit, the community foundation is in essence, the *community's* foundation. Perhaps more importantly, community foundations allow for community members to engage in critical conversations and reflections about the present and future vision of the community, determine leadership capacities, strengthen relationships and build trust, and work to prioritize the needs and aspirations of the community. In short, community foundations hold great potential as spaces for citizens to engage in the development of their community to advance from survival to prosperity.

Serving an estimated 86% of the U.S. population, there are over 700 community foundations in the US with over $50 billion in permanently-endowed funds; they provide almost $4 billion in grants to communities each year[27]. Yet, the potential for community foundations to influence not only fund raising for local non-profits as well as their endowments is great. Perhaps just as significant is their ability to galvanize support for community policy change. Since 1999, the One Valley Community Foundation has served the Bozeman area and grown its assets to nearly $1 million and distributed more than $300,000 in grants to more than 100 local nonprofit organizations. In 2014, the Foundation nearly doubled its giving from 2013 by distributing $20,000 through a competitive grants cycle to 25 local nonprofit organizations.   The mission of the foundation is to enhance the present and future quality of living in our community through innovative charitable activities that provide leadership, identify charitable needs, and galvanize resources.

The current board of directors are made up local volunteers from the area who set policy, determine strategic direction, and oversee operations. In 2013, the foundation hired their first Executive Director, Bridget Wilkinson. The board evaluates its success by being open to all citizens in the area with active recruitment of a diverse and representative membership while at the same time recognizing the necessity to provide the public an opportunity to participate and be directly engaged in activities and decision making.

The board also measures success by ensuring the grant making process is open to the community who can actively participate and contribute to decision making regarding how funds are distributed. Community members are actively recruited and invited to participate in the process of selecting projects and amounts. In this way, the foundation espouses a participatory approach to decision-making about community issues. The many grantee stories detail narratives of active community participation; where the donor interacts with local nonprofit organizations through community members and volunteers and the foundation serves as a catalyst for community participation, relationship building and decision making. In addition, community foundations are becoming credible organizations for engaging a community in critical conversations about the future direction of development in a community as well as a method of raising significant capital for community projects.

The foundation also measures success by actively promoting leadership development particularly focusing on a younger generation of leaders. Wilkinson argues that community foundations serve to provide and develop leadership in a community; "we can function at that catalytic level, by providing the space and the opportunity for leadership in the community to be developed. The foundation provides opportunities in the nonprofit sector. We can help inspire leadership and provide opportunities to act. For example, members of nonprofits can present at the monthly forums we host to share information, network, and better coordinate work of mutual interest." The foundation also develops youth leadership through events. Wilkinson adds, "we can develop leadership through our youth giving project which creates goals for youth in terms of learning budgeting and public speaking." She adds that her personal leadership skills have evolved as a result of her position in the foundation; "what I've realized is that my leadership style is leading from behind – by empowering others to lead and step up. I've learned the value of listening as a leader. When people feel listened to they feel trusted and work gets done."

The foundation also measures success by serving as a catalyst for cooperative community spirit and trust building. Currently, the foundation is exploring partnerships with the local university and school districts. Ideas include developing opportunities for students to learn about board governance, investment options, and financial planning. Through these partnerships come new relationships, increased trust and a renewed sense of cooperation and collective spirit. For Wilkinson, "trust is our greatest growth opportunity. Two years ago, people were skeptical of the foundation because they didn't know us. My first few months, my goal was to build that trust and for the community to know that we are providing a value-added service to community. We need the community to know that we are going to invest in this place and you can trust us to be an ally." Wilkinson has been busy meeting with stakeholders, nonprofits, and city and county officials talking about the role the foundation can play in the community, adding "it took time, but we are starting to see the fruits of those relationships. People think of us now when they think of philanthropy." Yet, she further explains, "part of the work we do is stewarding community assets for today and tomorrow, and those assets are critical in terms of our future. But the role of community foundations is to impact the community in a variety of ways, not just financially."

In Bozeman, this sector of community philanthropy is providing a critical response to the issue of growth and planning. The community is better informed of the potential growth of the transfer of wealth sector

and in turn is better engaged in conversations of community investment. Perhaps more importantly, community foundations are illustrations of a community's capacity to promote leadership in youth and adults, to strengthen relationships and built trust, and to work to prioritize the needs and aspirations of the community to transition from survival to success.   For this community foundation, measuring how and where funds are distributed is just as critical as assessing the development of community capacity around leadership, trust and relationships.

CASE STUDY THREE - CANADA

Vibrant Communities (VC)

Alison Homer[28]

In April 2002, leaders from the non-profit sector, people with first-hand experience of poverty, civil servants, and private sector representatives from 13 Canadian cities met in Guelph, Ontario. They gathered because they were 'relentlessly dissatisfied' with existing efforts to reduce poverty and were eager to explore new ways of tackling the problem. During these sessions, they developed the Vibrant Communities (VC) initiative, a pan-Canadian network committed to substantially reducing poverty through cross-sector collaboration and comprehensive local action. Tamarack – an Institute for Community Engagement, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation provided matching grants, policy and research support, cross-community learning opportunities, and coaching in exchange for the communities' commitment to rigorously document and share their learnings so others in the network could benefit from their experience.

Rather than a model to be replicated throughout the country, VC was developed as a set of core principles adapted to various local settings, plus a set of national supports to facilitate these efforts. To generate significant reductions in poverty, sponsors and participating communities developed five core principles:

- Poverty reduction
- Comprehensive thinking and action
- Multisectoral collaboration
- Community asset building
- Community learning and change.

The underlying theory was that, guided by these five principles, and assisted by extra programme supports provided by national sponsors, local organisations and leaders could revitalise poverty reduction efforts in their communities and generate significantly improved outcomes.[29]

The Vibrant Communities project targeted people from the 13 trail builder communities who were experiencing poverty first-hand. The outcomes and findings of the VC initiative have been documented in a number of ways over the nine years. Trail builder community staff prepared statistical reports of the initiative every six months. VC staff and communities prepared a series of mid-term assessments between 2004-2007. C.A.C International completed two interim evaluations on the impact of national supports to the project. The Caledon Institute wrote several reflective reports. VC completed a two-phase evaluation report at the end of the nine-year Vibrant Communities experiment. The conclusions presented in the report were developed and refined through a user-oriented process. Priority questions were identified in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. Key representatives from the

participating communities and national sponsors participated in a process of analysis and interpretation facilitated and supported by an external, independent evaluator. As a formal research project, Vibrant Communities was completed at the end of 2011.[30]

The table details of the evaluation work undertaken over the course of the Vibrant Communities project.

Evaluation Activity	What Is Measured
In 2004, VC staff completed Reflections on Vibrant Communities, which reports on The Face-to-Face forum held in September 2003. The forum provided participant communities with an opportunity to reflect on some of the key lessons and observations from the first 18 months of the program in order to refine their strategies.[31]	- What is the added value of these initiatives? - Is the primary target household level outcomes or community level change?
In 2005, C.A.C. International was externally commissioned to complete *Mid-Term Assessment of the Vibrant Communities Initiative*, which focused on VC's learning initiatives (Pan-Canadian Learning Community) and involved detailed questionnaires and follow-up interviews with representative of each of the participating communities.[32]	Measure effectiveness of the PCLC initiatives and put forward recommendations for change.
In 2006, VC staff completed *Understanding the Potential and Practice of Multisectoral, Comprehensive Efforts to Reduce Poverty: The Preliminary Experiences of the Vibrant Communities Trail Builders*.[33]	Explores how the VC principles have been applied by the communities.
In 2006, VC staff completed *In from the Field: Exploring the First Poverty Reduction Strategies Undertaken by Trail Builder in the Vibrant Communities Initiative*.[34]	Describes specific strategies implemented by communities. Identifies unifying themes and patterns.
In 2007, VC staff completed *Reflecting on Vibrant Communities 2002-2006*.[35]	What is VC? How did it come to be? What difference is it making?
In 2007, the learning and evaluation process for Trail Builder communities was upgraded to incorporate The Sustainable Livelihoods framework, which was adapted from a model developed by the UK's Department for International Development, and adjusted for use in Canada. It is a holistic, asset-based framework for understanding poverty and the work of poverty reduction. It can be applied to various levels of detail – as a broad conceptual framework or as a practical tool for designing programmes and evaluation strategies.[36]	The individual and household outcomes achieved by each project and community.
In 2010, Imprint Consulting was commissioned to work with VC staff to produce phase one of	What constitutes the VC model?

the end-of-campaign evaluation Evaluating Vibrant Communities (2002-2010).[37]	• What is the performance of the VC approach with respect to poverty reduction? • What is the experience of applying the VC approach in different communities?

The outcomes based evaluation and planning methodology that was examined in the literature review on community development evaluation commissioned by Community Waitakere, are evident across much of the VC evaluation work, including participant community reporting, mid-term assessments and end-of-evaluation reports.

The philosophy of Appreciative Enquiry and Asset-Based Community Development are also evident in the VC evaluation work, where the strengths and assets of communities are the core focus and starting point for programme development. Aspects of this kind of thinking is evident in the adoption of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.

Across the evaluation projects, a range of qualitative evaluation tools are being used, such as focus groups and interviews with evaluation stakeholders, which were used to generate questions to guide evaluation work.

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework is an evaluation method and tool in its own right, applicable to various levels of details and utilised in both programme planning and evaluation.

Through a process of continuous evaluation, VC were able to set targets and measure outcomes throughout the project. Some of the key numbers reported by the 13 communities over nine years include:

- 322,698 poverty reducing benefits to 170,903 households in Canada
- 164 poverty reducing initiatives completed or in progress by local Trail Builders
- $19.5 million invested in local Trail Builder activity
- 1690 organizations partnering in Trail Builder communities
- An additional 1080 individuals serving as partners, including 573 people living in poverty.
- 35 substantive government policy changes[38]

The Vibrant Communities (2002 - 2010) Evaluation Report was published and distributed on the completion of the project. A more comprehensive summary of findings was published in a book edited by Paul Born.[39]

The primary audience of Vibrant Communities evaluation is the staff and board members of sponsoring organisations, the key volunteers, staff, and organisational partners and the funders and institutional partners that have made significant contributions. The secondary audience for the evaluation is composed of other people and organisations that might be usefully informed by the experience of Vibrant Communities.

Throughout the project, the 13 participating communities provided feedback on their outcomes and learnings with national sponsors and their peer communities. Every six months, they provided an update on key statistics related to their local work; annually they also provided a report that explored their progress, challenges and learning in more depth.

CASE STUDY FOUR - CAMEROONS

Empowering partnerships and supporting communities in Francophone Africa

By Moussa Bongoyok

The abject poverty in which many African citizens live calls for policy action. Higher education institutions can play a critical role. This case study focuses on African French Speaking nations as they occupy a strategic place in Africa with over thirty countries having French as one of their official languages or widely using French in the educational system and business.

Although most universities in the French-speaking context focus on the education of the elite of the society, the *Institut Universitaire de Développement International* (IUDI), based in Cameroon, and serving all the French-speaking nations, has opted for a different approach. It educates students up to the Ph.D. level while at the same time connecting them with the members of the society who were not fortunate enough to pursue studies at college, high school and primary school levels. Since 2012, a strategy at the IUDI is to connect students and faculty to communities so they can collectively pursue policy actions to achieve sustainable holistic development.

One method used to advance policy goals is the use of community development conferences that bring together community leaders from various French-speaking nations for up to two weeks in Cameroon. During these interactions, university professors and practitioners present papers on different facets of the central theme through the lenses of an interdisciplinary policy approach. Adequate time is set aside for workshops, small group discussions, and visits to relevant communities or projects. Before the end of the conference, participants write and submit an action plan so that the training yields results in communities. A follow-up system is put into place to maintain communication with all participants reviewing progress on the action plans.

Another method of policy action is the initiation of model community projects with the active participation of members of the most impoverished villages. One such project is the Moringa Project initiated in several villages of the Mayo-Tsanaga division in northern Cameroon. This project was conceived after careful field research using interviews, participant observation, and focus groups. According to Cameroon's ministry of public health, 42.7 % of children under five are malnourished in this part of the country, while 8.6 % suffer from acute malnutrition. One of the identified causes of this child malnourishment is the low quality and quantity of food intake and lack of knowledge about and access to nutritious crops. The climate in this area is of a Sudano-Sahelian type, with temperatures ranging from 20°C to 40°C during the dry season. In addition, this area as well as other localities in northern Cameroon face severe land degradation due to the harmful use of chemical fertilizer, overuse of farmland, and deforestation due to the uncontrollable destruction of trees for firewood. This IUDI project consists of working with local villages to determine policy actions. One approach has been the planting of several moringa (moringa oleifera) species of trees in farms. Each farm has an average of one thousand trees. Due to its tropical climate, the area can produce abundant moringa trees since it is a fast-growing, drought-resistant, and low soil-tolerant tree. These qualities of the plant will adapt to the local climate with its low soil quality. Moringa has been named a "miracle tree" by some because of its nutrient-dense food source. Local villagers use leaves as a food source, but

very few people are aware that it is a high-quality food supplement, being rich in minerals, protein, amino acids, and some vitamins, as well as the leaves and seeds having pharmaceutical value. Through this interaction and learning, local villagers have come to understand the value of the leaves, seeds, and other products derived from the moringa trees, while earning additional income in the process.

In this endeavor, IUDI pays special attention to orphans, widows, and the society's poorest members. The idea is that if the condition of people who hurt the most changes in a society because of positive policies, it will inspire the rest of the community members. The model consists of involving local villagers of every aspect of the project including identification of needs and objectives, constitution of a leadership team, planting a model farm, training community members, and technical support so that they can start and manage their farms. Consultants from the university are always available for technical support and regular evaluation. For the long-term sustainability of the project, IUDI has also started to train community development practitioners, so that villagers will have people within their communities to collaborate with to enhance their living conditions. The only thing IUDI requires from a village is to adopt another village, share the knowledge and skills acquired with its leaders, and help them to start a moringa farm or any other sustainable project that is relevant in their context.

The IUDI's commitment to turn education into community development practice through policy changes benefits students, professors and local villagers alike. This type of community development work can address policy change at the village level while enhancing learning and building relationships. This way, education contributes to launch a movement of positive transformation in the world, one village at a time.

An essential element of this case study was the interaction between communities, as one village is charged with sharing their knowledge with the next to be involved in planting moringa trees. It also usefully demonstrates the 'backbone' and 'catalyst' roles of the community development practitioner as they facilitate bottom-up community work with top down professional activities. The final case study also champions the expert role of the community in producing impact and change. Based in Hong Kong, this case study examines the need for community development practitioners to communicate effectively and inclusively with each community in order to understand the multiple and intersectional barriers faced. In this example, the pursuit of health, challenged particularly by covid-19, requires attention not just to health care, but also to digital access. This case study also champions the frameworks set out in the first 2 case studies.

CASE STUDY FIVE – HONG KONG, CHINA

Evaluating community work amid COVID-19:

By Fung Kwok-kin, Hung Suet-lin, Wong King-lai, Chan Yu-cheung, Feng Juxiong

Evaluating community development work is a prerequisite for positive learning, information sharing, and further program refinement. The sharing and evaluating of methods and outcomes among community development practitioners was seen as critical to support disadvantaged communities from the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic in Hong Kong. Collective wisdom of community development practitioners in Hong Kong in response to COVID-19 was shared in a formal Conference titled 'Community Work amid Covid-19 Pandemic in Hong Kong' that was conducted in the spring of 2020. It was co-organized by the International Association for Community Development; Community

Development Initiatives, Social Work Practice and Mental Health Centre, Department of Social Work; and Faculty Niche Research Areas (Population), Faculty of Social Sciences. The Conference involved community workers from 13 NGOs as speakers and more than 160 participants.

Among the many topics discussed were the regulations and infrastructure overseen by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China's (SAR) government to protect the public from the contagious disease. Specifically, discussion were centered on the social distancing regulations, the lack of health protection facilities, the inflation of consumption goods (particularly health-related products), and the continual rise of unemployment of disadvantaged groups. It was recognized that the impact is particularly severe for communities in poverty in Hong Kong. In addition, the requirement of social distancing severely affected the ability of many NGOs to provide social services to disadvantaged groups. Nevertheless, different NGOs, civil and philanthropic associations of various kinds have been initiating support measures to deal with the challenges. Community workers have had a strong desire to learn from this experience and share among themselves their different approaches of reaching out to the disadvantaged groups.

During the conference, the following key themes were raised because of the deep discussions and introspection of the situation that are summarized as follows:

Innovative measures were initiated by different NGOs to balance the need of social distancing but still reaching out to disadvantaged groups. The techniques involved continuing face-to-face contacts between community development practitioners and disadvantaged populations, for example by arranging meeting points at the entrance of buildings where the disadvantaged populations reside, distributing resources of health protection facilities at the building entrance, setting up meeting spots outside in the streets where the users live, inviting disadvantaged populations to use on-line platforms at community centres for small group meetings, setting up physical activities in community centres, and the active re-arrangement of service hours and physical settings to suit the social distancing requirement while offering service delivery. These kinds of special arrangements were highly appreciated by disadvantaged populations during lockdown particularly in Hong Kong communities with a concentration of subdivided flats that are tiny in space and with poor ventilation.

Active use of **information and communication technologies** in particular digital devices to reach out to disadvantaged populations and delivery services including individual counselling, group meetings, training and tutorial sessions for children and adults, and designing games and activities for users of different backgrounds. In addition, telephone applications were used to arrange for face-to-face meetings. There were cases reporting how community workers have actively explored the different resources via Google searches to develop training materials for easy consumption of the disadvantaged populations.

Mobilization of community resources to cater to the needs of disadvantaged groups. Different community development practitioners highlighted their experience of linking resources from philanthropic/charity associations to their disadvantaged populations. There were NGOs actively utilizing social capital within the community by bridging with disadvantaged groups; and circulating health related information among the disadvantaged populations through community networks. In addition, there were NGOs lending digital devices and distributing SIM cards to disadvantaged populations to mitigate the impact of digital divide. This is particular critical in view of the widespread adoption of digital devices for maintaining community contacts.

Linking the disadvantaged populations with different consulting professionals. This was found to be critical, as the knowledge relating to Covid-19 has not been well understood by the public and

particularly by disadvantaged groups. Difficulties in accessing health protection facilities, knowledge relating to appropriate use of facilities, rumor and myths around the local strategies for healing those infected were among the controversies that stirred up panic. The high density of living among disadvantaged groups has aggravated tensions among disadvantaged populations living nearby. Different NGOs have been active in attempts to bridge disadvantaged populations with professionals including medical doctors, mental health professionals, and nurses of different specialties and were found to be effective in easing the tension of disadvantaged populations.

Development of collective capacity and empowerment of disadvantaged populations in different ways. There were community development practitioners who facilitated disadvantaged populations to form groups for negotiating with suppliers for affordable prices when purchasing daily necessities that were often price-inflated. In addition, community development practitioners facilitated disadvantaged populations to utilize their knowledge and skills when visiting health protection facilities to acquire items such as hand-made face masks. Further, there was assistance provided in organizing cleaning campaigns, distributing health items to needy families, and volunteering to take care of young children at the centres. All these moves were found to be empowering during the time when disadvantaged groups experienced stress and isolation.

In addition to evaluating programs, exchanging experiences and offering innovative measures of service delivery, there were different challenges identified that were encountered by the community development practitioners who themselves are in need of support. They include:

1. Problems relating to **communicating with disadvantaged groups**. As there is often, insufficient possession/ownership of digital devices by the disadvantaged groups, and community development practitioners noticed that there is seldom even one digital device per family member. Community development practitioners noted that resources are lacking beyond digital devices: also for digital learning. Utilization of online classes for students have generated problems relating to supervising children. In addition, there was inadequate infrastructure, like Wi-Fi within high-density residential communities, supporting the digital devices. The sudden halt of nearly all public services by the government due to the lockdown has aggravated this problem further. Disadvantaged populations did not possess adequate knowledge of digital platforms.
2. **Community development practitioners were often overwhelmed** with the various challenges among disadvantaged populations, including unemployment, difficulties in accessing social services, and family conflicts at home. In addition, because of the SAR government refusal to provide unemployment benefits and the low social assistance support, community workers felt overpowered to address these compounding problems.
3. **Sustainability of ad hoc support** to the disadvantaged communities was another issue identified by community development practitioners. Even though there were different kinds of resource support mobilized through the efforts of NGOs, philanthropic associations and civic groups, the resources are still not enough for the disadvantaged groups as a whole, and cannot be sustained in the long run. Advocating for support from government was an action that was greatly advocated.
4. **Struggling to fulfill different 'key performance indicators'** (KPIs) requested by funders. Since the ongoing services of NGOs have KPIs to be met, the additional increase of workload in response to short term support to the disadvantaged communities has generated different problems to these active NGOs. Struggling with the limited resources to meet the original KPIs is a concern.

Evaluation is the key to learning from any past experience or situation. The conference environment allowed participants the opportunity to evaluate past performance and share lessons learned. Most importantly, the results show both improved service delivery and better networking and practice from the community development practitioners.

The final case study demonstrates the vital role community development practitioners have in ensuring that policies made, in this case, a response to the covid-19 pandemic, were useful and responding both for the community and for policy makers to impact towards positive change. As well as solving digital access, the practitioner here uses KPIs, to demonstrate how policy makers need reform if they are to meet their own targets. This case study also points to a key issue yet to be discussed: the risk of burn-out. Earlier in the chapter when discussing Collective Impact, the community development practitioner was described as a 'backbone', a resource and/or catalyst that cohesively binds a project and the multiple actors. This can place an enormous stress on individuals. Professional frameworks, like those unpacked in the first two case studies can help practitioners place parameters around what they do, and what they are responsible for which could help them employ self-care strategies that reduce the risk of burn-out.

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