Community Development Partnerships

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Abstract

For as long as people have been living in community, community development has existed. Over time, it has evolved from a practice of life to a subject in academia to a profession. One thing has remained constant in that community development is based around the relationships between people. This paper will focus on the shapes community development has taken past, present, and future. It will stress the importance of it, as a field, remaining in line with its origins and focus on the relational aspect through building partnerships. Through partnership NGO's will be more equipped to work together to provide the best service they can to a community.

Introduction

Today we use the word community to emphasize geography, socio-politics, spirituality, ethnicity, and profession, such as the LGBTQ community, the Hispanic community, the faith community, an impoverished community etc. Mattessich and Monsey, of The Wilder Foundation, defined community with many terms such as "people who live within a geographically defined area, who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place where they live" as well as "a combination of social units and systems which perform the major social functions" (as cited in Phillips & Pittman, 2009, p. 5). For the purpose of this discussion, the definition of community is "a grouping of people who live close to one another and are united by common interests and mutual aid" (Mattessich & Monsey, as cited in Phillips & Pittman, 2009, p. 5). With the word "community" beginning the term "community development" it is important for developers and change makers to remember these definitions.

The need to live in community is not a new concept, people having lived among each other for thousands of years. Community is found cross cultures and religions. It has been a practice of life for thousands of years. Geographically people have chosen to reside in areas close to others. Cities were formed not just to provide relational opportunity but also to provide safety and economic opportunity (Conn & Ortiz, 2001). Historically cities were often formed at the base of the castles with walls surrounding the city and the castle. This created a safe place for the people to live, for attacks would be few and the outer wall would provide the protection needed. Also, through living in an area where people were in close proximity, selling, trading, and buying of goods was easier. The same remains true today. In cities we find nearly every convenience needed. While living in rural areas may lack the conveniences found in cities, there too is a sense of community. In rural areas homes are not often isolated but found within pockets

of smaller communities, where there is opportunity to obtain food, shelter, clothing, and other articles needed for living.

For some cultures, living in community has helped establish personal identity, values, and belonging. To understand the impact of community it is important to first understand how each culture views community. In a collectivist society the opinion is that the group or community's interests are more important than that of the self while individualist societies begin forming self- interest over that of others (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Mikov, 2010). Those societies that place emphasis on the group believe that the community should be in harmony and share all resources. Community for collectivist societies takes on more of a personal connection and alignment of common interests while individual societies emphasize ownership and self-actualization, where community is often just the geographic proximity to others (Hofstede et al, 2010).

With community taking different shapes and influence amongst different cultures, community development has also taken many shapes. At the core of community development there is a desire to rectify dismal conditions within poverty-stricken rural areas, leading community development on a path to elicit change in social, economic, political, and environmental aspects (Phillips & Pittman, 2009). Phillips and Pittman (2009) reasoned, "development implies a structural change and improvements within community systems encompassing both economic change and the functioning of institutions and organizations" (p. 9). Therefore, when looking at community development work, it is assumed the role of different organizations and governments is to transform the systems within the community that cause poverty and disease. Creating communities where people are capable of improving their own lives and rising out of poverty.

With numerous non-profit organizations across the globe community development has come to encompass a variety of practices. As a Christian it is difficult to not look at community through the perspective of faith. Throughout the Bible there are verses that emphasize the need for relationship and community, such as Hebrews 10:24-25 "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Lets us not give up meeting together . . . but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day" and Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend will help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up" (New International Version). Christianity and the teachings of Jesus Christ put an emphasis on building relationship and loving others. Through the building of relationships partnerships are formed, and people begin to trust and rely on each other.

From the teachings of Jesus Christ this paper was formed to explore the practices of community development organizations in terms of building community and relationship. Today, many community development organizations are practicing methods of community partnership and relationship building within the communities being served. This paper will argue that community development needs to expand in relationship building through a different kind of partnership, a partnership that will bring together the non-profits and community development organizations with one another. It is suggested that through partnership both community and organization will benefit significantly.

Presented here are observations and findings related to community development work in Nicaragua along with the benefits to serving community through organizational partnership. Organizational partnership is the coming together of non-profits and development agencies to serve communities together. I will begin with personal observations of the community

development field and the time I spent in Nicaragua and Latin America and incorporate a review

of the literature. Finally, I will also present methods of how to have strategic and sustainable

partnerships. Latin America is focused on because I had the opportunity to intern with Bridges to

Community an international community development organization, in August of 2011 located in

Nicaragua. It is my hope that I will show the benefit of cross-cultural and organizational

partnerships. The goal is to provide current non-profit leaders and workers, as well as hopeful

non-profit founders, a different way to approach social justice and advocacy aside from the

creation of something new. Instead they can begin to think about partnership.

Community Development and Latin America

According to Phillips and Pittman (2009) community development has evolved from

social activism and housing to encompass a broad spectrum of processes and activities dealing

with multiple dimensions of community including physical, environmental, social, and

economic systems (p. 4). With that, non-profit organizations have taken a closer look at how

they can provide holistic changes to communities. For many organization founders the mission

and purpose of their organization was to provide transformational development in alleviating

poverty and creating economic changes. Holistic community development works within a broad

spectrum of practices across multiple cultures and disciplines, which has created nearly 1.5

million non-profit organizations within the United States of America (National Center for

Charitable Statistics, 2010).

With an overwhelmingly large number of community development organizations I found

it personally difficult to identify with the development field. As I began to narrow the focus of

community development organizations to those that focused their efforts in Latin America, the

options still seemed never ending. At first I questioned whether it was the lack of me having

one specific area to concentrate on such as water sanitation or education. I thought that perhaps I needed to pick one aspect of community development and look for an organization that focused on that issue. However, I began to think of how similar I must be to thousands of other people who want to get involved in changing the world but do not know where to start.

Eventually, I was able to connect with Bridges to Community through a personal contact. Bridges to Community is based in Managua, Nicaragua and utilizes multiple approaches to providing holistic care. By connecting to Bridges to Community I was able to travel down to Nicaragua and work alongside the staff and volunteers of the organization. At the start of my trip I held one question in my mind "What is the significant difference between this organization [Bridges to Community] and the other organizations?" In the community of Siuna, where I resided for nearly two weeks, the number of non-profits and community development organizations was overwhelming and I began to question the impact each could have on such a small community.

After learning more about Nicaragua, Bridges to Community and the many other organizations in the area, I began to realize how reliant Nicaraguans and Latin Americans have become on development workers and organizations. Nicaragua is a country that has been plagued decade after decade with political and cultural turmoil. The 1900's have seen more conflict than any one century. Most of the violence was guerilla warfare and anti-government activity. Throughout much of the conflict the National Guard repressed serious political opposition and anti-government demonstrations creating even more animosity towards the government. The National Guard grew strength and power through government owned enterprises, by controlling the national radio, telegraph networks, the postal and immigration services, health services, the internal revenue service, and the national railroads (Close, 1988).

As a result of the political and cultural turmoil, much of the country has been left in dismal conditions. Over 50 percent of the country today lives in poverty, with no access to clean water, safe living conditions, health care or education. The focus of the country has not been on improving the quality of live, but on survival for so many years. Although the conflict within Nicaragua is not as prevalent today, the likelihood that an adult has received an education is low, which lowers the chance of their children having access to an education. Today there are still thousands of villagers that lack education and resources to improve their living conditions.

The continued instability and lack of education in Latin America has left many in poor health and living in unsafe conditions. A study by H.A. Raikes found that the development of children in Nicaragua is below average expectancies due to living in impoverished homes (Raikes, 2005). Although the government has attempted to implement education campaigns, the militaristic practices have been ineffective and created more harm than good (Cardnal & Miller, 2009). Collier (2007) noted that "good governance and policy help a country to realize its opportunities, but they cannot generate opportunities where none exists" (p. 64). With the faith having been lost in government leaders, the economy has suffered and created easy access for community development organizations like Bridges to Community to enter and provide care. Bridges to Community, along with the other development agencies, believe that they have the programs needed to help make holistic changes (Hugo Gonzalez Diaz, personal communication, August 15, 2011).

Case Study

Development agencies are tackling poverty through many different avenues. Community development, as a practice, is an approach to get the people involved in making changes for their community and children. It is multidisciplinary in nature, and draws from fields such as

psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, religion and many others (Phillips & Pittman, 2010). Community building utilizes the social relationships that are embedded within individual communities. It is intended to build capacity, encourage, and teach community members how to have dreams and uphold them. Community development relies upon solidarity of community developers and the community members.

In Siuna Nicaragua I had the opportunity to speak with multiple organizations about how they practice community development. When visiting these organizations a few things stood out. First, the majority of them were centrally located with the same 5 acres of the city sharing the same entrance and exit known to the locals as NGO village. Secondly, getting in touch with or meeting with a staff member was extremely difficult. The staff were either all on vacation or out visiting another site or just unheard from. What I came to learn was that for many of the organizations community development focused on the specific service that they were able to provide. Some of the organizations that I spoke with were Health Unlimited, World Vision International, Save the Children, Oxfam, Casa de Maternidad (House of Motherhood) and a few others. Through a series of short interviews with at least one staff member from most of those organizations I was able to gain some key insights into community development work, specific to Siuna and Latin America.

Located in the NGO village, International Health Unlimited (now called Health Poverty Action) was my first organization to sit down and speak with. I was accompanied by Hugo, an employee of Bridges to Community, who was assisting me by taking me to each of the organizations and translating when I was unable to understand. Had it not been for Hugo I probably would have walked right past the Health Poverty Action office, although located in the NGO village the signage was unnoticeable. Not to mention the building looked just like any

other house within the village and the city of Siuna. After knocking on the door and shouting hello into the building there was no response. Hugo and I waited for nearly ten minutes for someone to come to us. Instantly upon entering the building I was able to see how the help is limited as the office was staffed with less than 5 individuals. The office was small with high walls and a window near the top of the ceiling along with a tiny fan blowing down in the immensely hot room.

Barely having enough room to fit two chairs next to the desk, I sat across from Juan the Coordinator of Nicaraguan Projects who shared with me an overview of the organization and how they operated in the Siuna field. I learned that the organization implemented projects that focused on the sexual health of youth and young adults in the community. Through providing healthcare services and workshops to the adolescents and adults of the community they hoped to reduce the risk of premature births, fatalities during birthing, and the spread of communicable diseases. They approached their work through relationship and friendship building with the teenagers (Juan Herrera, personal communication, August 15, 2011). Health Poverty Action expects their employees and volunteers to become friends and mentors to the youth. Unlike many community development organizations, Health Poverty Action does not operate through the use of international volunteers. The only foreign group comes from the Medical School of Duke University where students have been traveling to Siuna since the organization first entered Siuna, Nicaragua. They primarily look for people in their community to initiate projects. However, when asked about looking to other organizations for aid with projects Juan replied that they really do not partner with other organizations. But there have been on a few occasions where certain projects needed the expertise of another organization so help was sought in those cases (Juan Herrera, personal communication, August 15, 2011).

Situated in the same area as Health Poverty Action, Save the Children also offered services to the Siuna community. The Save the Children complex was directly across from the Health Poverty Action building. Comprised of 4 separate buildings all painted bright colors such as magenta, fuchsia, coral, turquoise, and purple. When I entered the area it was just a little after eleven in the morning and no staff members were to be found. The buildings were actually empty and it appeared as though the area had been abandoned. I was extremely surprised to see the lack of staff or even people in the buildings because it is such a wide known organization. I assumed Save the Children facilities would be really busy with people needing aid since their projects focused on many community needs such as water sanitation, general health services, and children's education.

After walking around the small area Hugo and I were able to find a woman to ask a couple questions about the organization. I do not recall if she ever gave her name, but she was kind and showed us around a few of the buildings and explained the some of the activities of the organization. She did not have many details about the organization itself for she was not a staff member. However, she did give her time to the organization and seemed knowledgeable about many of the ongoing projects. When questioned about projects of other organizations or whether Save the Children ever worked with other organizations the woman could not recall any specifics. She knew the organization assisted in some cases, but there was not a large connection between it and any other community development organization in Siuna.

Casa de Maternidad, not located in the NGO village but a littler further up the hill, is a home for rural women to travel to during the last weeks of pregnancy. During those weeks the women are able to receive much needed help for any potential complications as well as a safe place to deliver. They are also able to stay after birth in order to receive a couple weeks of

aftercare. The home provided programs that went beyond meeting the physical needs of labor and birth, such as cooking and sewing. They regularly give workshops on reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases.

Casa de Maternidad severely lacked space and funds. To get to the home you had to climb a steep set of stairs after walking up a large hill. There were only two sleeping rooms that were crammed with 15-20 beds each, one kitchen connected to the main living area. In the kitchen there were two ovens but quickly it was pointed out that only one of them was actually functional. While the living conditions for many of the people in Nicaragua are unsafe and potentially harmful, it would be expected from a medical facility to be above that. Although I can say Casa de Maternidad did provide extremely needed services to the women of Siuna, the cramped living/sleeping quarters, lack of multiple sanitary latrines, and a safe bathing area, made me question the benefits for the women receiving care. Perhaps the funds the organization did have should be spent on training midwives out in the far countrysides instead of having the women travel so far to be in a potentially harmful place.

Although World Vision International was not located in NGO Village, it also had a large presence within the Siuna community. World Vision has a bright white building with orange accents (the colors of World Vision) located off the main road of town. Upon entering the building I was able to see how small it was, yet was packed with wall-to-wall people. There were two cubicles in the entry off to the left and a line of chairs to the right. Nearly all the chairs were occupied and the cubicles were filled with more than designed for. To the far wall there was a door, upon approaching I discovered it was the one and only office. We took our turn waiting in the line until one of the staff members could become available to speak with. I was immediately given the impression that I was inconveniencing Lucila, so I kept my questions short. I asked

Luclia to describe the work World Vision does in the Siuna region and whether or not they considered partnering with other organizations in the area.

The focus of World Vision, much like Health Poverty Action is on the sexual health of the community. The city of Siuna World Vision programs are within nine rural communities of the region where they provide healthcare services and workshops on reproductive health issues. Utilizing the World Vision philosophy of coming alongside communities, the organization partners with local churches to teach church leaders how to recognize and prevent sexual violence and disease in the rural communities (Lucila Rodriguez, personal communication, August 15, 2011). Lucila informed me that World Vision does not partner with the other organizations for more than one project at a time and that depends on the project itself. To her World Vision was more about getting community members involved than connecting with other organizations.

Working with Bridges to Community (Bridges) for nearly a month gave me an interesting perspective on development work as well as the work conducted by Bridges. The Bridges to Community office is probably the most remote of all the organizations. It is not in the NGO village, or even up the hill. Instead the office is located in one of the poorest neighborhoods of Siuna about five minutes by car from the center of town. The building was nicely painted white with dark green accents. It was fairly small however there were three normal sized offices, a large main room and a full kitchen.

The model by which Bridges to Community operated was focused on partnering with the communities. Bridges to Community believes in empowering the community members to make the decisions for themselves as they provide the tools and necessary resources to begin the change process. Bridges to Community is not focused on one development cause but provides

multiple programs for communities to implement. One of the differences I noticed between

Bridges to Community and the other organizations is that they required community members to

come to them from which they would establish a community leadership team who would make

the decisions for the community, not the Bridges staff. However, when questioned about looking

to other organizations for partnership the staff were unreceptive and said that would not be

possible for them. Bridges is a small organization and has a dedicated involved group of

supporters and to partner with another organization large or small could impact their supporters

negatively.

Not only was there an abundance of non-profit projects and organizations in Siuna I also

learned the number of countries invested in that area. Countries ranging from England, Ireland,

Brazil, Venezuela, the United States of America were all financially invested in different projects

and organizations. The foreign investment was not just specific to non-profit organizations but

also projects sponsored by the Nicaraguan government. I found it confounding that none of the

community development projects originated from the community members themselves, but were

projects designed by foreign entities. The foreign investment in the city did not seem to be an

issue for many of the community workers or the people of the city. Instead they were grateful for

the aid that was being provided to, for, and with them.

Although there were a large number of organizations in the Siuna region, many of the

projects were similar between organizations. For example both Health Poverty Action and World

Vision provided sexual health care to the community and how Save the Children and Bridges to

Community both had water sanitation projects within the same boundaries. The repetition of

projects and lack of desire to work with each other made me question the effectiveness of the

development work in Siuna Nicaragua.

It is the investment in the community, not the assistance of a community that truly has the potential to impact lives for the better. As more organizations are setting out to change the lives of the poor, it will be extremely important that they are considering how to invest. Most organizations are now realizing the difference between giving a hand out and a hand up. Organizations like World Vision International believe in coming alongside the people of the community, and working with them not for them. There is a huge turn to building and sustaining relationships through the development process. Just as there is a need to live in community with others, there is a need to build relationships. Development workers and community members are recognizing the need to be more than giver and receivers. There is a desire for cohesion and relationship. I argue that the development organizations are all a part of the community and therefore should be treated like community members amongst the development organizations themselves.

Defining Partnership

As non-profit work has grown drastically over the past few decades improving the way to serve is a large factor to development work itself. As organizations have begun to look at the relational aspect of development partnership has become instrumental to building those relationships with communities. I define partnership as the coming together of people to make beneficial and everlasting changes within the community. While in Nicaragua I began to see the impact community development organizations have on their communities. Through each project and initiative lives were being transformed. However, I also saw the repetition of programs and competition between organizations. It appeared as though each organization was out to serve the community alone and neglected the relationship with ALL community members. If community development exists to make everlasting changes in the lives of the poor then each organization

should be concerned with fellow organizations by being knowledgeable in the projects of the other as well as offer their services or expertise when necessary.

While organizations are changing their practices and methods for development work by incorporating relationship building with the people of the community they still create walls and barriers when it comes to other organizations. The interactions and general attitude between the Siuna development organizations is not specific to Siuna or Nicaragua. No, the competition that non-profits have transcends across the globe. Organizations take the time and energy to be the best, to gain more supporters than another, and to serve more people than the next. It can be argued that there is potential for poor communities to see more change if non-profits would put aside the need to be better and focus on the need to be in community.

Creating a partnership is not just about the relationship between the organization and the people from the community, it is also about the people living in the community. The definition of community was provided earlier but to state it once again "Community is a grouping of people who live close to one another and are united by common interests and mutual aid" (Mattessich & Monsey, as cited in Phillips & Pittman, 2009, p. 5). Most community development organizations employ and utilize people who live in the community, so by that definition they too are a part of the community.

Organizational partnership is not just about getting two or more organizations to work together at one site or on one project. The idea behind partnership is expanding the development work in one area so that the community is benefiting more. Looking again at the organizations in Siuna Nicaragua there were three of them that had latrine projects inside and outside of the city limits. Perhaps if the three organizations joined together and pooled their resources instead of

building multiple latrines, they could have worked on getting plumbing installed at the hospital and clinics.

As community development organizations choose to enter certain communities, assessments should be conducted to determine the impact they could make, especially if there are existing non-profits working within that community (Lederleitner, 2010). Asset-based and community assessments are beneficial for organizations to know what to do by determining what a community has. By focusing on the haves of a community organizations can determine if their services would benefit the community or if they should offer aid to other organizations in the area. While conducting the assessments organizations should also be asking questions such as how are they different from what is already in the community and if there is something not being met could they realistic provide that service.

So far partnership has been looked at in terms of already established organizations but as more people are beginning to get involved in social justice, partnership is just as important to those looking to invest in communities and create a new organization. With the million plus organizations that are currently operating it is difficult to rationalize starting something new. Of the million organizations in existence there must surely be one that meets the personal desired mission and goals. As new practitioners begin to plan steps into founding new organizations they should be challenged to research and look across the globe for potential partners.

Partnership brings community development back to the idea of living in community. Organizational partnership diminishes competition and creates an establishment of inclusiveness. Although the global world is primarily made up of individualistic societies, living in community and trying to do the best for it and not for the self is not an unattainable goal for community development organizations. As humans we desire to be in community and relationship with

others. Community development organizations have the word community within their name and

should therefore want to be inclusive of community as much as possible.

Benefits of Partnership

When it comes to partnership between organizations there are many benefits. It is not just

the community who benefits but organizations and supporters benefit as well. There are many

different ways organizations can benefit from working together and how they can benefit the

communities they work in.

Firstly, working with others who complement your strengths expands your potential and

horizons of ministry and impact (Butler, 2005). Meaning through partnership there is the ability

to reach places that may not have been seen if working on your own. For example if the

organizations that provided reproductive health to the women of Siuna Nicaragua combined their

resources, perhaps instead of having 3 maternal homes in the city there could be one in the city

and two out in the rural villages. This would create more opportunity for people to be served and

relationship to be created.

Through partnering achievement of goals accelerates with more people working on one

project the faster it can be completed. Not to mention the costs decrease to supporters of one

organization because money is also brought in by the partnering organization. Effective

partnerships allow people or organizations to do what they do best, to maximize their

contribution rather than spreading themselves too thin by doing many different things-often

poorly (Butler, 2005). Examples of this can be seen through Bridges to Community and how

they have a program in nearly every area of development, but as they cannot be effective in

every area, if they partnered with organizations that did agriculture work or home building,

perhaps they could put more effort into providing healthcare to the community. Butler (2005)

also noted that this gives more opportunity to spend more time working with a given people or

on a given project, devoting more available resources, and the ability to concentrate on what they

do best (p. 17).

Through sharing the community and working together to meet the needs being able to

devote themselves to different areas without having to encompass all development areas reduces

risks that can arise from trying to complete projects quickly and cheaply. Having multiple

sources to draw from financially and physically reduces the pressure that can be placed on

donors and volunteers. The pool to get resources from is larger and therefore creates more

opportunity to engage others.

Partnership also creates a psychological connection between organizations. By partnering

with someone else proves that whatever the vision, in community or elsewhere in the world, the

knowledge that others share our vision refreshes our spirits and sustains our hope (Butler, 2005).

It establishes the community feeling and sense of being in relationship. Allowing the burden to

be lifted of being the one and only one responsible for changing the community. It creates

awareness and alliance in that whatever happens in the community does not rest solely in one

person's hands but in the many that have come together to be the change agent needed.

The Christian Perspective

As Christians there is a need to practice as community and build lives around each other.

The ultimate way to practice Christianity is to be a part of a community and live within that

community. Living a life of community is not a typical lifestyle for those of us in the Global

North. For so long now, many of the countries that have dominated the world have been

Christian nations and according to Geert Hofestede also Individualistic societies. As

individualistic nations we separate ourselves from others and look for the ways in which we can

individually prosper. The Bible has other directions for us, telling stories of community. The greatest example comes from Jesus himself. If you look at Jesus you see a man who works through community, he does not travel around alone preaching the gospel no he has a community of twelve disciples who travel with him. They share a life of preaching the gospel and living that life.

Because our communities are set up to maintain individualism and privacy and terminate lasting relationships, those seeking to build community have many barriers to overcome. We must begin to change how we live out our lives and "adopt a new way of looking at the world, living out a different narrative in one's personal and communal life, and ultimately learning to love as God loves" (Groody, 2009, p. 35). Groody believed that the only way we can begin to make changes is to fully adhere to the life of Christianity. Being a Christian is about establishing a relationship with Jesus and following the example that He has provided for us in caring for our neighbors (McLaren, 2007).

Christian community development workers have failed living out the life that Jesus teaches us (Clairborne, 2006). In the field of development many Christian organizations take a stance in spreading the gospel and getting others to follow Christ. Yet even as Christians we have been willing to let others suffer as the individual prospers because it is easy for the individual prosper which is far from the message that Jesus taught.

As we begin to learn to love, to accept other's differences, and to share our lives with others we really will be living lives in community. Christ calls us to discern our purpose and fulfill our mission and as Christians we need to remember Christ in it all. As more people develop a passion for community, change will be inevitable. Communities will be concerned for the well being of others and the earth. Our focus will be on living a life that follows Christ and

protects the resources that have been provided for our survival. Community will be shaped not just on what is convenient and easy but on true desire to be in relationship with others. Through living in community and caring for neighbors partnerships will be created. Partnerships will require people to work together, live together and make changes together for the betterment of the community not the self.

Community Asset Based Approach

In order for the community development organizations to provide hands up not hands out it is important that they are able to recognize the needs of the community. Recognizing the needs of a community is more than just identifying the issues and problems, but also requires the ability to see the assets of a community. Through an asset-based survey, community development organizations will be able to recognize the capacity a community will have for development (Phillips & Pittman, 2010).

Asset-based research surveys locals to find out what skills and talents are being under utilized within a community. Although Frank (1996) argued that "we need to begin to find the root causes, and find out what keeps people and nations from being underdeveloped and how can we change things at a systemic level so that all nations can develop and grow" (para. 4). Asset-based community development work has the capacity to go beyond looking at what a community does not have or why it is underdeveloped. Instead it will focus on how to benefit a community through what it does have.

Assessments of a community provide many benefits. Assessments allow communities and agencies to take a good look at what truly needs to be done with a community. While as an organization there may be a mission and focus, that mission may not be needed in a specific community or area. Assessments are aimed at supporting initiatives and programs to benefit a

community and creating goals and objectives for the community to reach. They create maps and plans of how to approach a development project. An assessment will provide for the strategic approach and have the potential of being the first step in building a relationship with a community.

As community development work facilitates growth and influences the kind and amount of growth a community experiences it becomes even more important that aid agencies know what kind of growth to bring a community. Just as there are different techniques to development work there are different ways to perform a community assessment. Assessments can take the form of research of other's materials, observing, documentation through camera (video or still), interviews with community members individually and in groups, meetings or questionnaires and surveys (Phillips & Pittman, 2010). Each approach will require that as a community development practitioner there is a basic understanding of the community itself.

As stated previously the most important step to community development work is the understanding of Who a community is. Each community is different and each will respond differently to any initiative or program that is developed. By knowing how the community defines itself and operates will extremely beneficial to any agency or person wishing to aid in the fight against poverty and injustice. Assessments are also needed prior to creating or implementing projects to take into account for cultural differences. What might have been beneficial to one culture may not be beneficial to another. Globalization has done a great disservice in the fact that through implementing standards of living, development organizations assume that all practices are helpful and change worthy. Assessments not only find out who the community members are, what they have to offer, but they also open up the opportunity to determine what kinds of services will be most beneficial to a community.

Creating A Partnership

Butler (2005) noted "partnership for partnership's sake is a sure recipe for failure" (p.16). Organizations have to go beyond fellowship and welcoming new organizations into their area. There must be an investment in getting to know the other organization to understand them and appreciate the work and assets they have to provide to a community. The reason you invest in getting to know potential partners is because you want to ensure that you are working alongside people who want to reach the same goals, and have the same values as your organization. There will not always be 100% alignment between any two organizations, but building the relationship and dialoguing about issues and assets will show one-another what can be done together.

The partnership must demonstrate patience, tenacity, vision and the spirit of a servant. The goals of the community cannot come from only one organization. Both must be a part of the conversation and the commitment to the community, both asserting goals and programs to work on. Partnerships must not attempt to do too much too soon. They must first work on making sure the relationship is strong, that there is open communication (Butler, 2005).

Partnership is not about creating as many relationships as possible but bringing people into the process through building communication channels (Rickett, 2003). Communication is based on trust and high levels of interaction. It relies on more than dialoguing and listening but on the intentional interactions between partners. The relationship must be more than occasional contact between two people, but must encompass a "deep sense of kinship" (Rickett, 2003, p. 17). This kinship should approach the communication through multiple levels including trust. Relationships cannot be formed unless there is a high level of trust.

To be in partnership there must be full understanding that one organization will not become dependent upon the other. This should not be confused with being reliant upon, because

there is dependence when expectations are had and goals are outlined. An unhealthy dependence is when one organization fails to take responsibility when it is capable (Rickett, 2003). Dependence can be created if the relationship is one-sided and only one organization is making the decisions and especially if the money is only coming in from one organization's supporters. It is essential that in creating a healthy partnership all expectations are given from both sides and that both agree upon how much each will contribute.

There must be extensive questioning and dialogue between the leadership of individual organizations over whether a partnership is needed and whether the organization is a compatible partner for others. Each organization must have a clear sense of identity and purpose before attempting to partner with another. Organizations must come to the table with clear vision of who they are and what they want to accomplish.

Utilizing the asset-based research and assessments will be key in providing a strong partnership. Through looking at what can be done for the community by each organization will create a facilitation of who can do what. Priorities must be gauged and information between organizations must be passed along effectively. Butler (2005) wrote "keeping the vision alive, the focus clear, communication active and outcomes fulfilling takes awareness, concentration, and long-term commitment by the facilitator or facilitation team (p. 18). To have a partnership does not mean that one organization must give up individual mission or purpose. Instead the organizations must find a way to work with another's mission and values. Just because there is a partnership does not mean everything will run smoothly and as planned. Partners must make sure that they create opportunity to deal with changes, exceptions, disappointments unfulfilled commitments, and simply the unexpected.

Conclusion

As the world becomes more interconnected it is important that community development and social justice organizations recognize the purpose their existence. Each should be responsible for is laying their own foundational groundwork that will enable future generations to have access to all the basic human rights. At this point in time we have the ability to look back and choose not to act the same as our ancestors and to leave a legacy that our future children will be proud of. Attacking poverty and social injustice is not a simple task, nor is it one that only few can take on. The role of the community development practitioner is crucial to seeing much needed change. However just as working with community members it is vital to the success of an organization to learn to work with other organizations. Development work is not a competition to see who can reach the most people. It is about providing the most effective and lasting tools that will empower the poor.

If organizations wanting to be in partnership are able to follow the different steps outlined throughout this paper there will be opportunity to have positive and lasting relationships between organizations. Partnerships are not for every organization and are not the answer to community development. Partnership is simply another practice of community development that allows for relationships to be built and communities to be empowered. It is not just about combining efforts, but it is about being in relationship and community with others, just as humans were intended to live.

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