

TRAINING MODULE ONE

Can poverty be eradicated? Is God able to transform a community? The answer to both these questions is a resounding YES!!! The simple course outlined below has been taught to over 20,000 people in over 200 villages in 7 African countries over the past few years and the results have been outstanding. Poverty is becoming a thing of the past. OUR GOD IS ABLE!!

This teaching and principles can be applied to any village or slum area in any developing country. While it was developed first for use by Christian pastors, it can be used by any group, by any faith. It is free for all who want to take it.

Hand in hand with this teaching, a **Community Needs Assessment** must be completed. (This is covered in detail in Module Three). These Assessments are undertaken to ensure that it is the community, and not the worker, deciding the needs of their village. At the completion, a **Community Plan** is also to be developed, but there will be instruction on how to do both of these.

In the Bible, the author James tells us “to be doers of the word and not hearers only.” This course will remain just a theory unless the practical application is put into practice alongside the teaching. It will teach you how to outreach into your community, get outside the walls of your church, and show God’s love in practical ways.

Well, what is community development? This may be a concept with which you are unfamiliar, but community development is a way of reaching those in your village outside the church and showing God’s love in practical ways.

Community– Definition:

The definition of “community” is difficult.

In the 1970’s two researchers identified 98 definitions of community. They had very little in common. However, a useful distinction can be made by dividing communities into geographical and functional communities. The geographical community is based on locality and the functional community on some common idea providing a sense of identity. Thus, a village is a good example of a geographical community – people living in the same area whereas a church is a good example of a functional community – like minded people who love God and desire to serve Him.

It is extremely important to understand we are to work with the geographical community. (this will usually mean your village). This is not an internal program for a church, but it is a means for the church to outreach into the community, to show people God cares about their poverty as well as their spiritual needs.

Community has 4 related characteristics, so we will look at these in more detail.

Dimension:

Connectedness, and a real sense of knowing, interacting and relating with each other, is an important aspect in defining “community”. A city, or major town would not generally be considered a community. However, a suburb of a city could easily be considered a community. Most often though it will be your village.

Usually community is reflected in groupings that are small enough for its participants to exercise ownership, and have overall control of activities. This enables participants to have genuine empowerment through engagement and ownership.

Identity and Belonging:

To most people the word “community” would mean some sense of belonging or being accepted and valued within a group. Thus belonging to a community gives one a sense of identity.

Obligations:

Membership of an organisation or church carries both rights and responsibilities.

Being part of a community implies that there is a certain personal commitment to, at least some, of the activities of the group, and that the obligations and expectations of the group are willingly taken up by its members. There is much untapped potential in our communities. Our role is to act as a catalyst and encourage the development of that potential.

Culture:

Each community will have unique characteristics. We are to encourage what is positive in our community.

Development – Definition:

The word “*development*” can be even more of a problem than the word “*community*”. One reason is that some developed countries have taken advantage of developing countries, thus engendering a lack of trust.

Development can have a variety of meanings but the following are common characteristics:

- Independence from any external bureaucratic controls. It is important to know that God is the source of our supply, as He has promised “My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19 NIV)
- culturally relevant, local leadership
- Specific strategies deployed to avoid processes that disempower participants. Have people lost hope due to unemployment or hunger?
- Participants are highly engaged and involved. This is absolutely essential. One person on their own can achieve very little. Encourage as many people as possible to use and develop skills and participate.

Change Initiated By Local People

The community should be able to determine its own needs and how they should be met. People at the local level know best what they need and communities should be self-directing and self-reliant. This is most important. We do not want to make people dependent. We are giving them a hand-up not a hand-out. None of the 200 villages were initially given any financial help. Instead they joined together, started table banking and used this as a basis for setting up income generating businesses, which have been extremely successful in beginning to bring them out of poverty. Once this level of understanding is embedded, it lends itself to additional levels of business support. (eg Microlend Australia model)

It is important to examine in more detail the idea of changes started by people and what it involves. We will look at the idea of valuing local knowledge, valuing local culture, valuing local resources, valuing local skills and valuing local processes.

Valuing Local Knowledge:

The community knows best. After all, it is the members of the community who have experience of that community – of its needs and problems, its strengths and positives and its special characteristics. A Needs Assessment is a good place to start listening to your community and you will be shown how to do this simply later on.

Valuing Local Culture:

Local cultural values are very important in community development, and so it is essential for community workers to seek to understand and accept such local culture and, where possible, to confirm and work with it.

Valuing Local Capacity:

Anything that is developed should be done with a view to the long-term sustainability of the activity, as well as having the local resource capacity to generate and maintain the processes undertaken. This is done by minimising the extent to which they draw on and use outside means. It is important to start small with local resources. God will provide for extension when it is needed.

Foundational principles of community building should ensure that notions of determination and reliance are internally resourced. Reliance on outside sources can come at a price of the loss of freedom and independence. Funding bodies will often impose rules and regulations. There is usually a trade off.

Development should concentrate on finding and developing all the resources available within the community itself and seeking to maximise these local resources in the interests of the community.

The economic and financial aspects of community development are very important. While capacity can relate to many things (skills, people, expertise, property, premises) – there is absolutely no doubt that access to financial resources is ultimately a key element to securing successful community development outcomes. This is why our association with Microlend Australia is such a valued partnership.

All of the 200 villages have started community development in their village, suburb or slum by starting table banking (community banking). As they begin to save together, this funding was then used to set up income generating businesses. How to do this will be discussed in more detail later. God says “Don’t despise the day of small things.” (Zechariah 4:10 NIV)

Go one step at a time. Look to God. He will give the increase and remember He is the source of our supply.

Valuing Local skills:

The really important point about valuing local skills is that it acknowledges and recognises the contribution individuals can make and gives them a position of power and influence in the process. A community worker can value local skills by simply finding out the range of skills of people in the community. Often this will result in a surprisingly rich and wide ranging list of available skills gained by people at different stages of their life, perhaps through work, spare time interests or learned from family members. We will look at this further when we look at developing a Community Plan.

It is important not to put people in boxes. I first went to the mission field in my 70's and overheard someone in authority say "What can we do with this old lady?" They had not tried to find out my skills and experience, they just viewed me as a problem. Older people have a life time of experiences, which could be very helpful in; the development of your community. In the same way do not overlook the potential of young people. Paul tells Timothy "Let no man despise your youth." Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher, was preaching at 16. God sometimes calls people early in life. Everyone has something to contribute in your community.

Valuing Local Processes:

It is essential to understand the local community – how things are usually done and work within that tradition. This cannot be stressed enough, as it may cause many problems later down the track if it is not done.

Working in Solidarity:

An important aspect of the role of the community worker is to be acutely aware of the local capacities that are available, and to ensure they are effectively identified, noted, utilised and enhanced.

The process of good resource deployment involves encouraging and guiding through good questioning and cooperative facilitation, rather than being imposing and directive. The Needs Assessment is a good place to start to do this. Acknowledge that the people of the community know much more about the community and its problems, issues, needs and of doing things – and that any community development process must be theirs, not the workers.

It is also important that "setting the agenda" is undertaken by the participants themselves – with appropriate guidance, mentoring and support as necessary. But care should be taken to ensure this support does not come across as controlling or manipulative. At all times, the agenda should be controlled by the community itself. The Holy Spirit is our guide in this. He is called "the One drawn alongside to help."

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FACILITATORS NOTES AND FEEDBACK

<u>Concepts and Ideas</u>	<u>Notes & Questions</u>
1. How would you describe your own community ?	
2. Community has 4 related characteristics - can you recall and describe them ?	
3. What attributes should we value and encourage in our local community ?	
4. Who are the possible facilitators, leaders? Who will they be accountable to?	
5. Do you understand the concept of local culture, values, skills and resources?	
6. What issues do you think you might face in achieving "Solidarity" in your community ?	
7. What are any problems you may encounter ?. Who do you discuss this with?	