

TRAINING MODULE THREE

Needs Assessment and the Open Door Principle

We are going to look now at how to do a simple Needs Assessment and how to analyse and prioritise the findings.

It is very important to identify what the community itself sees as its needs - and completing a Needs Assessment Survey Form will do this. It is not for us to impose upon any community “our” solutions.

30 Needs Assessment Survey Forms are to be done within your community with a variety of people. i.e. NOT all unemployed or NOT all widows, but a good cross section representing your village (and NOT all from your church.)

This Needs Assessment will help the community to identify future directions.

3 questions have been devised and they will be discussed in more detail later on.

- What is it like for you living in this community?
- What things would you like to see improved?
- If there were other people keen to do something, would you join in?

This assessment has been kept simple, because research has shown that often more complicated assessments never get acted upon and are put in the too hard basket. This Needs Assessment is going to form the basis for all action at local level.

These questions can be asked door to door, in the markets, churches and other local meeting places.

By doing this local people can be organised collectively and they can define the ways to address the issues identified. The good worker will seek to value and confirm and encourage local knowledge, will listen and learn and will not assume that their expertise can provide all (or even some) answers.

Step 1:

When doing a survey using the Needs Assessment Survey Form, the first thing you need to do is to introduce yourself and give a brief explanation of why this Needs Assessment is being conducted.

Step 2:

There are a number of categories listed i.e. Male, Female, Youth, widowed etc. Circle what is appropriate i.e. If you are interviewing a young, unemployed male you would circle MALE, YOUTH and UNEMPLOYED. Make sure you have a good cross section – not all youth or not all widows.

Step 3:

Ask the questions and make a note of the answers. These are people’s opinions. There is no right or wrong answer and DO NOT PROMPT by suggesting answers.

Question 1: asks “What is it like for you living in this community?” At a later date you will have opportunity to build on the positives and to reduce the impact of the negatives.

Question 2 asks “What things would you like to see improved?” this is the most important question. People will identify the issues that are concerning them here. They may make one comment only i.e. lack of clean water or they may identify 3 or 4 different issues. Make a note of them all. You will then analyse and prioritise these answers. How to do this will be shown later.

Question 3: asks “If there were any other people keen to do something, would you join in?” If so, please take their name and contact phone number. These people will form the basis of your action group, so it is essential to record details for future action. Do not force people to give details. Only take details of those who are genuinely interested in taking action.

Analysis:

When all 30 Needs Assessment Survey Forms are completed you are now in a position to analyse the results. This is done very simply.

Look at the answers to Question 2. Take a clean sheet of paper and draw up a number of columns on it. If someone identifies water as a problem, then write a column heading for water. Every time anyone says water is a problem put a tick in that column. At the end total up the number of times people have identified water as a problem. Do this with other issues i.e. you may need a column for health or education or employment etc. Some groups may end up with only 3 or 4 columns, others may identify 10 or 12.

Priorities:

When you have totalled each column, then arrange them in order of priority i.e. If you have 20 for water, 12 for employment, 8 for health and 6 for education then

- Priority 1 is water
- Priority 2 is employment
- Priority 3 is health
- Priority 4 is education.

In the identification of priorities, I will now outline the principle of God’s Open door, which will be discussed later at some length. Water may be the first priority, but perhaps it may be impossible to do anything about it, but you can see that something can be done about the issue of employment, so this is the issue you start to work on. Eventually, in time you will be in a position to deal with priority one successfully. Remember, start small. As the group sees success it will encourage them to address the next issue.

God’s Open Door:

I have found that the principle of “God’s Open Door” is very important when identifying needs in a community. What does this mean? Well, what may be identified as the highest priority may be too difficult at that time to address, but there are opportunities to work on something lower down the list. I take this to be God’s guidance and begin to work on that particular problem. Often only the first step can be taken, but as we move forward, step by step God will guide and open the way.

Provision of Structures to Meet Needs:

Much traditional community development activity involves the identification of need and the provision of structure to meet these needs.

The following provides guidelines to ensure the community development process is sound.

- The identification of a concern (this will be done through the Needs Assessment Survey Form)
- A more detailed study of the need or problem (possibly done by a Community Development student on placement from a nearby educational institution.)
- A public meeting, with all key people encouraged to attend to decide upon some course of action.
- Completion of the necessary formalities for the new initiative to be established (at this point there will need to be some record keeping and possibly the establishment of a self help group, which will entitle the group to make application for funding from Government at a later stage, if needed. Each group will need to research the equivalent to a self-help group in their country.
- The development and ongoing management of the new initiative. This includes encouraging people to become actively involved.
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the new initiative and its services.

Below are outlined a few models for community development

Self Help Group:

The primary action is taken by people who are directly affected by a particular problem i.e. poverty. This is the model that most of the original participants implemented. It enabled the groups to be more supportive and cohesive and to develop.

Social networks.

By setting up community banking projects they were able to establish rabbit farms, chicken farms, pig farms, goats, sheep and cows. They set up brick making businesses, dug wells and set up vegetable gardens, established a hairdressing salon, welding business, driving school for motor bike drivers, crafts and tailoring businesses.

Social Planning:

This is another model. It implies the process of people of a community defining their needs and working out appropriate strategies to meet them. It is planning and coordination at local level and the role of the worker is to facilitate this process to help people make their decisions on community priorities.

Lobbying and Advocacy:

What does this mean? In the course of the community development process you may come upon an issue or a group of people that you are unable to assist. Lobbying (or making representation) your local chief or local M.P. to deal with the problem can be very effective. Proverbs 31:9 tells us “speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up for and judge fairly – defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Conclusion:

Completing, analysing and prioritising the Needs Assessment Survey Forms is an absolutely essential step in the community development process. The community will support action on issues that they have identified as important. The decisions need to be theirs, otherwise they will never own them.

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IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

<u>Step</u>	<u>Notes</u>	<u>Done</u>
1. Identify Members who could be part of this community program. List		
2. Issue Survey Form to each potential community person		
3. Collect Survey Forms		
4. Identify Individual skill set of each member . List		
5. Prioritize issues		

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY FORM

Introduce yourself and give your name and a brief explanation of the survey process.

Circle one or more of the following categories to describe the person you are interviewing.

MALE FEMALE YOUTH WIDOWED MARRIED EMPLOYED UNEMPLOYED

Question 1. What is it like for you living in this community?

Positive:

Negative:

Question 2. What things would you like to see improved?

Question 3: If there were other people keen to do something, would you join in? Y N

If Yes, please give your name and contact details

Name:

Contact Phone Number:

email (if available):