

**Community Facilitation Programme  
Community Development  
Module 7. Strategy:  
Step 3: Formulate a Plan of Action;  
Step 4: Implement the plan of Action; Step 5: Evaluate**

## **1. Introduction**

### **What we have learned in the previous model.**

- That a community development project officially commences by conducting a situation analysis, either by direct or indirect means.
- That there are several methods of gaining information about the impediments in a community, referred to as assessment.
- Community Participation in both assessment, prioritising and planning is vital.

### **Aim of this module:**

To learn how to formulate a plan of action, to implement the plan of action and to keep track of its progress and results.

## **2. Steps 3-5**

### **2.1 Step 3: Formulate a Plan of Action**

The procedure involved in the planning of community development projects is basically the same as for other models. In comparison, in development the focus is more on empowering the task group to take responsibility for the process. Some of the factors that should receive the attention of the change agents in this regard are the following rather basic objectives:

- what must be done,
- how it should be done,
- when it should be done,
- who will accept responsibility for each task.

In addition, the following basic principles will enhance the formulating of a plan of action:

- The nature of the objective should be very clear to everyone involved and be the results of felt needs.
- Deciding on the objectives should be a combined effort.
- The objectives should be jointly formulated.
- Objectives should be realistic in terms of achieving desired outcomes, they must be simple, small and as short term as possible.
- Skills and resources needed for the project should be identified and should be in relation to the objectives.
- Risks and threats to the project should be identified (a SWOT Analysis could be helpful tool).
- Objectives should be attainable and should address one impediment at a time. Ideally there should be a project for every impediment.
- The plan must be put in writing, reviewed by everyone, changed and reviewed again to the satisfaction of everyone. Consensus is always a challenge in any project. Reminding everyone about the benefits of reciprocity, honesty and trust, the key ingredients of social capital, will benefit the process of coming to consensus.

- Making the this phase a learning experience for everyone will enhance its sustainability, and motivate the role players to get involved with future projects.
- Stimulate interest and enthusiasm continually.

### **Type of projects that could be undertaken:**

Keeping the different cycles or spheres of community life in mind, the following is a list of projects that could address impediments, across a wide range of these spheres.

- **Income Generation Projects.** This is the favourite topic for discussion in conversations where development is the issue. It is unfortunately also a topic that attracts plenty of criticism due to its failure to have a meaningful impact on communities. It is easier said than done. Having a focus on improving the quality of life through projects that will save a person money rather than allowing them to earn money could be a more sustainable strategy in some communities. For instance, empowering a person or community to have a food garden might not earn them money but it will save them money as they will not need to buy fruit and vegetables. Instead that money could be saved or used for other urgent needs. Establishing a seed or grain bank in rural communities can be another project that will save money and also improve the quality of life. The requirements considered for lending money to community members by micro credit organizations like Grameen Bank and the Small Enterprise Foundation can serve as excellent guidelines for considering any income generation projects. This warrants some further study.
- **Housing Related Projects.** Recalling the definition of social development vs community development, housing projects fall into the category of social development projects due to the integrated approach by Government institutions and other bodies in these projects. The focus therefore will be more on helping people to gain access to so called "RDP houses", helping them with the application procedure and lobbying on their behalf. There is nevertheless room for self-building schemes especially in rural areas, not only for housing but also for schools and community centres. Churches in urban and rural areas have become a good example of a community self building scheme. If it is feasible for a church, it can also be feasible for other community structures.
- **Improvement of Infrastructure.** Once again this falls very much into the scenario of social development and the main focus will also be helping communities to get access to these projects. And, once again the need will be different in rural communities where integrated social development projects other than in urban areas, is nearly non existent. Projects can include the improvement of transportation services, improvement of roads, making new access roads, provision of community centres and recreational facilities, provision of storm water drainage and combating environmental degradation.
- **Improvement of water provision and sanitation.** A water committee for a local community can play an important role in securing clean water. This can include the promotion of collection and storage of rainwater, lobbying for the drilling of boreholes and installation of pipelines, digging of wells and the provision of infrastructure for the delivery of water. It can also include the protection of water sources, the cleaning of rivers and dams and the removing of alien vegetation in catchments areas.
- **Food and nutrition related projects.** Education about the nutritional needs of healthy as well as 'at risk people' like infants, the elderly and HIV positive people are a great need in almost all communities. Apart from education, establishing feeding schemes and soup kitchens will ensure that the nutritional needs of people are met. Food gardens, small scale farming and the planting of trees will secure food security and the sustainable use of renewable energy resources.

- Health related projects. This can include the provision of primary health care services (community clinics), secondary health care services (field hospitals in rural areas and hospitals), immunization services in times of epidemics, family planning services, prenatal and postnatal services and HIV/Aids services (prevention, home based care, dignity centres).
- Improvement of education and the development of human resources. Access to education is still a big concern especially in rural areas, due to logistical factors and the absence of educational centres and resources. Parent and care givers are also ignorant about the educational needs of children due to a pastoral lifestyle in rural areas. Projects can target these concerns. In urban centres the access especially to tertiary training can be a focus for a project.
- Welfare related projects. Projects not needing an integrated approach involving government and other sectors can include the establishment of self help groups and service organizations targeting specific needs for instance those of handicapped children, people recovering from substance abuse and the elderly.

## 2.2 Step 4: Implement and Monitor the Plan of Action

At this stage of the project there should be clarity about who is involved, what must be done and how objectives are going to be reached.

- The action group will begin to engage the impediments, and tangible and visible signs of change can already be observed at this stage.
- The action group will have to be very active at this stage.
- The group members will have to implement or alternatively, will need to develop the skills necessary to implement the plan of action. They must learn to function as a unit, to participate in the process and they will have to maintain their vision.
- Material and human resources are mobilised, change is brought about, goals and objectives are attained and impediments are eliminated.
- Ideas become action and dreams become reality.

Tasks during this phase:

1. **Legitimize the plan.** It is important to again get the consent of all the role players to be able to proceed; for instance, where Government Departments are involved. Consent from all the role players will give the mandate for the task group to proceed.
2. **Implement the plan.** A simple business plan is a valuable tool that can help the action group to understand what all the tasks are, who is responsible for every task, when it must be completed and what resources are involved in the completion of every task. A budget for the project can be incorporated into the business plan giving an indication of the funding available for the completion of every task. Another useful tool is an organogram which illustrates the direction and frequency of communication between the action group and all the role-players. A schedule for giving feedback needs to be included with the business plan.
3. **Utilise Community Development Techniques.** This phase of the project is probably one that places the greatest demands on the community developer's ability to win support and to influence people. There are different concepts that could be used to describe the community developer's actions. These include methods, tactics, modes of intervention, techniques, tasks and skills. For the purpose of this module the focus will be on two categories of change inducing actions namely modes of intervention, and techniques common to this phase of any development project. Let us call them general techniques.

- **Modes of intervention:** The concept of mode of interaction is based on the idea that there are always at least two parties involved in a project. The one is the group consisting of the community developer and the members from the community who will implement the project, often referred to as the action group. We have frequently referred to them as the change agents. The other party is the target system namely the consumers. The modes of intervention refer to the various techniques to be used by the action system to bring about change in the target system. Let us look at four of them briefly:
  - **Coercion.** Techniques are used to force or compel the target system to change its behaviour or position.
  - **Negotiation.** This includes techniques that will bring opposing groups together in order for them to reach agreement on a certain issue.
  - **Co-operation.** This includes techniques which will motivate individuals and groups to share their resources in order to accomplish a goal that is important to them all.
  - **Co-optation.** It entails a process in which techniques are used to absorb or include the target system in the action system.
- **General Techniques:** There are a vast number of techniques that could be used in this phase of a project. These techniques are common to projects in other fields as well. Keep in mind that the focus here is to influence, and change the target system. Some of these techniques have been referred to before, but at that stage, the focus was using it to empower and influence the action system.

**Education** — The focus is on educating the target system (community) with regard to a social issue or how to make use of the services of the action group or organization. Workshops, dramas and role plays are some techniques that can be used.

**Influencing** — Influencing the target group to understand a social need or concern can include techniques like media campaigns, protest letters, lobbying, bargaining, disruptive tactics, whistle-blowing, petitions and even lawsuits.

**Consultation** — This is a more indirect way of influencing the target system; for instance giving advice, counselling and technical assistance.

**Dispute settlement**— Disputes are part and parcel of all target systems. The community developer together with the action group often have to intervene in these disputes to be able to reach their objectives. The most common strategies include mediation, arbitration and negotiation.

**Research** — The focus here not so much on gaining information about the target group and community, as this forms part of an earlier phase. The aim here is more specifically, to establish perceptions and views of the target system about the action group (organization) and its services. Similar techniques can be used as those that were used earlier in the project for instance questionnaires, interviews, and observation techniques.

**Public relation** — At times it is necessary to build the image of the action group or that of the organization and to improve the community's image of these services. Techniques are aimed at improving understanding, sympathy and support for the organization.

**Marketing** — Techniques that are aimed at selling a social cause or service, for instance media campaigns, television, radio and the printed media.

## 2.3 Step 5: Evaluate

This is the final stage of the process and often already commences during the implementation phase. Evaluating the outcomes of the project is often the more visible part of the process as it is usually easy to distinguish whether the project is "working" or not. The majority of community development projects, listed earlier have very visible and tangible outcomes. The mood of the action group or the frustrations of the target group are often a very clear indication of the success or failures of the project.

- It is necessary not only to evaluate the results but also the process. Useful tools can be focus group discussions with the action and target groups, a questionnaire or personal interviews.
- Use the business plan as a tool to evaluate the process.
- Use the goals as a tool to evaluate the outcomes
- Gather as much information as possible about the process during the different stages. Do not wait until this phase.
- Use the action group to interpret the information and communicate the findings to all role players.
- Negative and positive outcomes will be dealt with differently.
- When the project has limited or no success, be realistic in the analysis but at the same time also give hope continually.
- Hope can lay the foundation for further efforts to address impediments.
- Celebrate any success and look for opportunities to maintain the involvement of the action group in future projects.
- Sustain Change. Keep the action group involved in sustaining positive outcomes and empower more members of the target group (community) to be involved.

### **3. Conclusion.**

The community development process has finally come to an end and it would be possible for the community developer to terminate his or her involvement and to exit the community. Very seldom do projects exactly unfold according to the theory and every project is a learning process and a journey of discovery. No matter what the outcomes the dynamics of the community development process is vibrant by nature and therefore will affect each and everyone involved. It will always be a very interesting and hopefully a rewarding process.

