

A Review of Community Development Experience in the World, 1945-1967

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In an article written for the 1962 International Conference of Social Work, Louis M. Miniclier (1966) stated that: "Community Development as a new instrument and new institution of government was born of necessity. The leaders of new nations were faced with complicated tasks. More often than not Government meant to the masses of people : confiscation, taxation and conscription. Leaders were faced with the need to relate people to Government and Government to people."

It is through the United Nations that Community Development, the kind that places heavy emphasis on socio-cultural changes, became fashionable. By mid-1955, the United Nations had published 24 major papers on community development in four languages: Arabic, English, French and Spanish, including country monographs, reports of surveys, study kits and bibliographies. The United Nations' activity in this field arose from a 1951 resolution of the Economic and Social Council (United Nations : 1955:120) requesting the Secretary-General to compile information about "community welfare centers" in both urban and rural areas in order to place that experience at the disposal of member states. This first attempt was restricted to fact-finding. Later, an attempt was made to identify the general principles and techniques which underlay the successful programmes.

London with Batten (1957, 1962) and Washington with Miniclier, have also made large contributions. Individuals like Peter du Sautoy (1958, 1962) and Carl C. Taylor (1956) have, through their service as consultants and their many writings, had a great influence. Some social scientists like Margaret Mead (1953), Edward H. Spicer (1951), Jack Mezirow (1963) and Ronald Lippitt, Jeanne Watson and Bruce Westley (1958) have contributed a great deal to the theoretical formulation of the concept of community development.

The basic philosophy of Community Development and its methodology were not new. They were deeply rooted in the work of many great social reformers throughout the ages. The chief merit of Community Development has been to erect into a formal approach, at the government level, the personal practices of some of the best known economic planners and social reformers of past centuries.

Community Development emerged first in underdeveloped countries. The Indian programme was launched in 1952 by Nehru; by 1956 a full Ministry of Community Development had been formed. Today, there are an estimated 40,000 village-level workers reaching 400,000 Indians. It is estimated that between 1890 and 1945, the amount of food grains available to each citizen of Indian decreased from 270 kilograms to 180 (Dumont 1962). In 1943, when India lost access to imports from Burma, between one and two million citizens died of starvation. India's major concern at the end of the war then had to be that of producing more foodstuffs and, in 1948, a "grow more food" campaign was launched. By 1952, when the results of this campaign were evaluated, it was found that little progress had been made.

The failure was attributed to the high rate of illiteracy among the peasants which prevented them from receiving the government's message of urgency, from understanding the improved technology that was being promoted and even from making any new observations which might have resulted in challenging their traditional beliefs and practices. A survey conducted at that time further revealed that the peasants were so under-nourished that even if they had fully understood the government's message they would not have had the energy to devote a sustained effort towards its achievement. Thus originated the thought that a multi-dimensional approach would be necessary. It was decided that the problem of the traditionalist illiterate peasant would be attacked simultaneously in four ways, through programmes in public health, education, agricultural extension and credit. The fact that some multi-dimensional projects that had been privately financed had already succeeded helped to strengthen the decision to launch a country-wide endeavour.

The structure conceived was that of the "block" system. Each block was to consist of between 65,000 and 100,000 inhabitants.

The block team would be composed of an agrologist, a veterinarian, a co-op organizer, an educator and a public health officer, working under a Block Development Officer. At the village level were ten *gram sevaks* who theoretically were each to be assigned to one tenth of the block population, or approximately 1,000 families. Here was launched a truly gigantic programme which, block by block, village by village, was soon to cover all India. In addition, numerous special missions and aid-plans from foreign nations operated in India.

The work of *gram sevak* or village level worker was most interesting within this context. The first appointments represented remarkably devoted and inspiring individuals. No nation, however, can appoint over 40,000 such individuals and hope that they will all be exceptional. Initially, the village level worker's duties were defined in a manual published by the Minister of Community Development. He was to help in the training of the future municipal counsellors, worry about environmental sanitation, encourage the vaccination of children and domestic animals, organize adult education and literacy classes, etc. Soon, the other government departments realized that there was now a more complete government structure than before, and that they could now expect to reach the individual villagers through the *gram sevak*. Soon, he became the "chore boy" for all the departments, preparing reports, running errands, and doing other minor administrative tasks.

Undoubtedly, much progress still needs to take place in India before the *per capita* income reaches the level of "developed" countries. This is not to say that India's Community Development programme has failed, but rather to illustrate how difficult it is to achieve change when more than technological factors are involved. In a recent issue of the *Indian Journal of Adult Education* (Rao 1966), the main problem facing India is still described as that of helping the people change from a traditional folk culture to one which would be more adapted to a modern twentieth century industrial way of life.

Summing up his article, Dr. Rao concluded: "Social development requires creation of a rational attitude, conquest of superstition, freedom from taboos, totems and astrology, cultivation of an aware-

ness of social obligations and the recognition of one's role in society and developing the correct attitude towards women, towards education and towards taking the long rather than a short view. To my mind, all these are essential conditions for social development."

The Community Development programme launched by President Magsaysay in the Philippines in 1956 was devoted largely to political and organizational objectives (Schneider 1965). Slowly a greater emphasis is being given to economic objectives. After three hundred and fifty years of Spanish domination and fifty years of American rule, the Philippine people suffered heavily from the war, being subjected to two war campaigns and the Japanese occupation. At the end of the war, the Philippines became independent. The country was devastated, its people completely disorganized. A complete job of rebuilding not only the economy but the social and political institutions was required.

Between 1950 and 1954, a number of government departments each independently developed programmes of socio-economic rehabilitation. The net effect of all these activities was a confusion and a failure to serve the deeper development needs of the people. To coordinate these programmes, a Community Development Council was created in 1954. Sitting on the Council were heads of departments concerned with rural development. There was a field staff but no field operating budget. After a period of time, it became evident that cooperation amongst the national departments was not being achieved satisfactorily and also that an effective Community Development Programme would need to have an operating budget and a field staff of its own.

In January 1956, President Magsaysay created the Presidential Assistant on Community Development (PACD) in place of the Coordinating Council. Once again, national coordination was sought but this time at the bureau head level rather than at the departmental level.

Field workers, mainly college graduates, were recruited: each worker was given an intensive six-month training course prior to being assigned to cover five or six *barrios* (neighbourhood). As workers went to the field, municipal mayors and technical personnel from various agencies were given six-week courses. The goals of

the programme first centered on making the *barrio* an effective form of social and political structure. Economic goals gained in importance, but it is significant that, in this newly independent country, local and regional governments were established first, and economic goals came later.

All was not solved, even at the political level, by the introduction of Community Development. In his inaugural address on the state of the nation, President Marcos referred to the current problems facing his country saying: "The Filipino, it seems, has lost his soul, his dignity, and his courage. Our people have come to a point of despair. We have ceased to value order. Our government is gripped in the iron hand of venality, its treasury is barren, its resources are wasted, its civil service is slothful and indifferent, its armed forces demoralized and its councils sterile" (De Roos 1966).

The experience of these two countries are mentioned first because they are better known in American social science literature. They also symbolized a dramatic decision by governments involved to rely upon the ideology of western democracies rather than upon communism for their future.

It is, however, with the British Colonial Office that Community Development first saw the light of the day. A 1948 dispatch (Du Sautoy 1958:31-32) from the British Colonial Office to its Gold Coast Office already contained much that is now commonplace in Community Development circles but at the time such theories were still considered revolutionary. The objectives of Community Development were defined as covering all forms of development activity in the field and were described as "a movement to secure the active cooperation of the people of each community in programmes designed to raise the standard of living and to promote development in all its forms . . ." "The people who will be affected by development planning should be associated with it from its inception", the document went on to say, "and the surest way of stimulating enthusiasm is to give the community reason to believe that the ideas and plans put forward are their own."

Before this, in French and British Colonial Africa, the big emphasis in development programmes had been on mass education, which in practice meant literacy campaigns. Even when programmes

of mass education became more than mere attacks on illiteracy and included attempts to eradicate ignorance, apathy, prejudice, poverty, disease and isolation, in brief all those factors which hindered the progress of African communities, the relationship between the outside agency and the community was one of teacher-pupil, and not of shared leadership as idealized in modern Community Development literature.

The 1948 instruction did not put an end to this but it did launch British Colonial programmes in a new direction. Today, in Ghana, adult literacy is still regarded as a first step in a Community Development programme as it is felt it gives a real sense of progress and enlightenment to any illiterate community. Secondly, home economics, or work "among women", teaching better care of the child and the home is stressed. Thirdly, there are the self-help projects symbolizing the people's desire to improve. Finally, there are the extension campaigns which are aggressive attempts to teach communities all types of improvement in their ways of living.

It will be noted that, at the beginning of this programme, a fair measure of the goal-setting was done from the top. When I was directing a Community Development programme in Manitoba amongst people of Indian ancestry, I was never able to convince myself of the necessity to give as much importance to the elimination of formal or functional illiteracy and to the teaching of family building crafts. In fact, I do not recall a single instance in my first round of visits with the families of any given community in which I heard a family head, whether male or female, ever say: "What we need here is a course to teach people how to read and write", or "What we need here is a course to teach us (or our wives) better housekeeping habits" (Lagassé 1959).

We did get requests for such courses but it was only after the people were already considerably involved in a programme of Community Development and had suddenly discovered that a certain clearly identified step could not be taken unless the community did some catching-up. This realization usually resulted in a request for courses ranging from how to speak, read and write English, to how to type; from how to add, subtract, multiply and divide, to

how to keep books for a producer's cooperative and how to conduct feasibility studies. The relationship between income and educational achievement so well documented in modern literature and so evident to one who earns a living from a white-collar job is not that evident to the fisherman, the trapper and the lumberjack.

Returning to the Ghana programme, it has to its credit many valuable achievements as is evidenced by the relative advance this country has taken over many other African states. From the Gold Coast experience as well as that of many other British Colonies has emerged, as described by Batten (1962, 1964,) a British School of Community Development in which the Community is often the small community; in which the development sought is mainly of the socio-cultural nature; and in which the main emphasis is on what happens to the individual villager rather than what happens to the economy of the country. Its role in the British Colonial Office was quite clear: it was aimed at enabling the local population to achieve self government and independence. Perhaps this was so because the economy of the country was still largely controlled by outside commercial interests and meaningful planning for that sector could better be done from that location.

This kind of Community Development, however, needs to be complemented by economic development. While in Ghana, the fourth dimension of the programme was extension which included the development of improved cocoa growing methods, this did not, in itself, constitute an attempt to plan the entire economy of the country. Other authorities became necessary to develop outside markets, diversify the national economy, decide on national investment priorities, etc.

I have reviewed briefly the Community Development programmes in India where it is the main tool for orienting the rural population to modern technology — in the Philippines, where it was used to establish regional and *barrio* units of government and self-help projects — and in Ghana, where it was introduced by a Colonial authority to hasten the achievement of national independence. A Mexican example will now be presented to illustrate further the difference between social and economic development.

The *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (1964) in Mexico could be seen as the equivalent to a public corporation in Canada in that it receives its funds from the government but is not responsible to the government for its policies. Its work is entirely with Indian communities. The central figure in the Institute's work is the bilingual *Promotor Social*. This person is an Indian who speaks the local Indian language and Spanish. At first, he might have had no more than a Grade two education. Now, he usually has six to eight years of schooling. He is brought to the "Center" for a three-month general course and is sent back to teach his people. While there are formal courses, the bulk of the teaching is done through informal visits. While at the Center he may have seen illustrations of a grain of wheat or corn, how it germinates, the role of fertilizers and the life cycle of nefarious insects. He will pass this information along to the native households as he visits them. I was impressed, however, by the care that is taken to appear not "to teach" but rather just "to explain" as one does when asked to show how one's new hi-fi works.

The headquarters of the Institute is in Mexico City. At headquarters are a number of special advisors in anthropology, economics, forestry, agriculture, adult education, public health, road building, etc. The real work of the Institute, however, is performed through the programmes of its fourteen centers, each serving a large geographical area.

There are over three million people in Mexico who in the words of Dr. Caso, the Director of the Institute, "have not acculturated enough to be able to participate in, or benefit from, the usual national programmes of socio-economic development. The role of the Institute is to help them in their present state of Indian culture and to hasten the pace of adjustment in order that they can as soon as possible relate to the general programmes."¹

The Institute's budget is not designed to do all that is required in Indian communities. Even the *Promotores Sociales*, 1,500 in number, are paid by the Department of Education even if they

¹ Address given by Dr. A. Caso, Director of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista to an educational tour organized in April 1966 by the Canadian Institute of Public Affairs.

are trained by the Institute and report to its regional directors. This constitutes a very progressive form of inter-agency cooperation.

In the country as a whole, however, many agencies have a Community Development component. The Ministry of Home Affairs has a coordinating Directorate of Councils of Moral, Civic and Material Improvement. The Department of Agrarian Affairs and Colonization has an Office of Cooperatives and Community Development. The Ministry of Agriculture has a Department of Agricultural Extension. The Ministry of Health and Assistance has a Directorate for Literacy and Adult Education as well as a Department of Cultural Missions and a Directorate General of Indian Affairs.

From the above, one gets a picture of a very complex superstructure of social development agencies. In the economic field, however, there is an equally intricate framework, with the National Center for Productivity, the *Nacional Financiera*, and the Bank of Mexico playing major roles.

The concern of this sector with socio-economic planning is well illustrated by the words of the Mexican Minister of Finance and Public Credit on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of *Nacional Financiera*: "To achieve this policy (i.e. established true prosperity and greatness for the Mexican nation after independence), economic policy had been directed at strengthening the physical infrastructure needed for agricultural and industrial development; incorporating the railroads, the petroleum industry and electric power into the national Dominion; creating the adequate institutional infrastructure for new productive tasks; modernizing the banking system so that it may perform better its important and unsubstitutable function of providing credit: encouraging investment in the most desirable economic areas for the country; and distributing with greater fairness the tax burdens involved" (Ortiz-Mena 1964).

I think the difference between social and economic development in Latin America and elsewhere becomes most evident when one considers a 1963 publication of UNESCO entitled: "Social Aspects of Economic Development in Latin America" (1963). In its four hundred pages of small print, the book does not once

mention community development and directs its attention almost exclusively to national productivity, economic planning, population growth, political organization, and social change. Probably the avoidance of the term Community Development was due to the fact that the sixteen scientists who contributed articles were focusing on national rather than local development, as officers of the Bank of Canada might be expected to do if they were to give a talk on development.

Likewise I suspect that in a sense many of us at the federal and provincial administrative level do not have as our first point of reference the local community, but the provincial or national economy. The four divisions of the book just mentioned were: 1) the situation in Latin America; 2) prerequisites for rapid economic development; 3) the strategy of development programming, and 4) the role of education, administration and research in development. This sort of approach constitutes something we can immediately relate to.

On the other hand, we might not feel that the division in Du Sautoy's book (1958) quoted earlier was relevant to our work. He divided his book into: 1) the beginnings of Community Development in Ghana; 2) plans for mass literacy and mass education; 3) the organization of the Department of Welfare and Social Development; 4) mass literacy; 5) women's work; 6) village project work; 7) extension campaigns; 8) training, and 9) lessons learned in Ghana.

It is clear that the Latin American publication is focused on a more general level of operation while the Ghanaian book is oriented to the village level. While these represent two components for a complete national programme of development, it is quite possible to have national programmes that will neglect one in favour of the other. And it is more than likely that within any national programmes there will be individuals giving exclusive attention to the particular segment they represent and denying the validity of the other.

Indeed, there have been many theories of development. Sol Tax (1960), in a book called *Action Anthropology*, attempts to show the role anthropology must play in Community Development programmes. Espinosa Zevallos (1963) of the University of Ecuador,

in his publication *El Desarrollo Humano Regional* (Regional Human Planning), emphasizes the role of sociology. The reports of the various economic councils in Canada formally highlighted the contributions of economists and political scientists.

It should not be a cause for concern that each of us should identify with a particular orientation rather than with another. All developments do not have the same goal. Being multi-dimensional, they require different approaches for each type of goal sought. As long as we are aware of the need for coordination, the different emphases placed on Community Development may in fact enrich our mutual contributions.

Another important factor that leads to different concepts in developmental work is the model chosen as the desirable end. Essentially, developmental work consists in bringing a certain phenomenon from Point A to Point B. Therefore, Community Development will then consist in bringing Community A from its present condition to a condition quite similar to that of Community B which may exist already in some other geographical location or is primarily an ideal condition in which one would like that community to be. This preferred form of community can be called "The Model Community".

It would be interesting to compare what constitutes a "model community" under different programmes. In the Philippines, at first, the main characteristics sought were those of an elected form of local authority responsible for the planning of a certain geographical area and involving all the citizens in that area. In India, the model community is one in which there would be less reliance on traditional technology and beliefs and more efficiency in food producing activities. In Ghana, it was one in which the native African population would occupy positions of control, while in Mexico it was one which would retain much of the culture of the Indians while adapting to the requirements of modern-day Mexico. What are the model communities for the BAEQ or for the Interlake? Are they similar?

I am not too sure how meaningful these short descriptions of national programmes are other than to reassure us that we are in good company. Significant in all this is perhaps the fact that while

we in Canada have done very well in some aspects, we are lagging behind other nations in others.

One thing is clear as one reflects over the great variety of national programmes for social economic development. The agencies interested primarily in economic development have realized that in modern industrialized society economic development cannot take place without considerable re-training and upgrading of human resources. Those agencies which are involved in vocational upgrading and adult education realize that little learning can take place unless there is first among the people a willingness to change by improving their basic education achievements and understanding the main direction in which their society is moving. This understanding presupposes an active involvement of the individual in his social milieu. Without some tangible relationship with the larger society, the individual is hard put to understand why he should seek to participate in any kind of national programmes or even in purely local ones.

Another consideration is that the literature which is published by all these national programmes is quite similar and draws mainly from five or six basic texts produced in the period 1948-1955. It would appear that success or failure was due not so much to the academic ability to conceptualize about elaborate socio-economic theories and models, but rather to the personal orientation and motivation of the men involved in the programmes. In each case, however, there was a genuine attempt to relieve immediate human miseries and to provide long-term solutions for preventing their reoccurrence. This orientation is perhaps best described in the workings of l'Abbé Pierre who proposed as a basic principle to his supporters : "Devant toute humaine souffrance, selon que tu le peux emploie-toi non seulement à la soulager sans retard, mais encore à détruire ses causes . . . Emploie-toi non seulement à détruire ses causes, mais encore à la soulager sans retard . . . Nul n'est, sérieusement, ni bon, ni juste, ni vrai, tant qu'il n'est résolu, selon ses moyens, à se consacrer, d'un cœur égal, de tout son être, à l'une comme à l'autre de ces deux tâches." ²

² Quotations from Abbé Pierre's speech carried on the inside cover of *Faim et Soif*, the official organ of the Abbé Pierre's Missions.

In the long run I think programmes of Community Development are more than a mere technology of programme planning. It must become part of a philosophy and a way of life for those involved in the planning process. Community Development is not a livelihood. It is life itself.

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