GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR USE IN DRR IN THE DRYLANDS OF THE HORN OF AFRICA

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Introduction

A number of the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities that have been promoted in recent years to strengthen mitigation and preparedness in the drylands of the Horn of Africa have been community based in their approach. These include Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR), and Participatory Natural Resource Management (PNRM) among others. However, the evidence of the impact of these community approaches has been limited for a number of reasons. Sometimes it is because these approaches are funded through short-term projects and thus have had little time devoted to monitoring and impact assessment; but in other cases it is because the activities have had little measurable impact due to their rushed and unsustainable engagement with communities. Community development that is rushed can often lead to inadequate processes for selection of community representatives, inappropriate capacity building support, actions that are not sufficiently grounded in community needs, and a lack of local ownership or commitment to activities. Donors that fund DRR activities need to be sure that their partners on the ground have the long-term engagement and sufficient understanding and trust of communities that is necessary to be able to effectively use short term funding to enhance DRR.

Genuine community development necessitates empowerment, transformation and the participation of the poorest and most marginalized people in their own development—including strengthening their ability to demand better services and accountability from government and other stakeholders. Community approaches to DRR share broadly the same principles and pre-requisites as community development, and similarly are not quick-fix solutions. The key difference with community development approaches for DRR however is that they have an increased focus on disaster risk, and short-term mitigation and preparedness, as well as providing the basis for longer-term resilience building. The value of short-term interventions is that they can enhance the level of attention paid to disaster mitigation and prevention within longer-term approaches, they can boost the effectiveness of government support and processes and the capacity of communities to address those issues. However, without attention to the key principles they are may undermine long-term development efforts.

There is no one 'best practice approach' for community DRR in the drylands. The various approaches emphasize different elements of the community development process, and thus need to be selected based on the particular circumstances and on what other long term development processes are in place. For example, participatory peace building approaches are appropriate for conflict situations where building trust and commitment of conflicting

communities is a priority. Participatory Natural Resource Management approaches are appropriate where use of natural resources is a major issue within DRR, and especially where there traditional resource management processes exist that can be strengthened. CMDRR may be appropriate where there is a need for increased emphasis and analysis of hazards and disaster prevention, and opportunities to feed community disaster risk sensitive development and contingency planning into government planning processes—both short and long term. A combination of different elements/methods may enhance effectiveness, but careful consideration needs to be given to monitoring the impact both positive and potentially negative as well as evaluating the approach for learning and replication.

The key to a successful community approaches to DRR will depend on how the approaches are implemented and to what extent the implementation adheres to the fundamental principles of good practice in community development. Some of these key community development principles are outlined below, for further discussion and enrichment by DRR practitioners[1].

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Good practice principles

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General principles for community development

Community development is about social change and is thus a long-term process that needs to be holistic and responsive to local circumstances and needs. It requires an intimate knowledge of the culture, livelihoods and range of perceptions in communities, including the past history of development in the area that may have caused disempowerment and dependency. To achieve this it is essential to:

- Work in partnerships with the community and other stakeholders, building creative and trusting relationships.

- Give priority to the needs and interests that the community identifies as their starting point, and involve them to the maximum extent possible in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of interventions.

- Recognise that the community is not a homogenous group but is made up of many sub-groups, and therefore that efforts need to be made to ensure all community members are able to influence the decisions that affect their lives. It is important to ensure that efforts do not adversely affect the disadvantaged members of a community.

- Encourage self-determination, self-help and self-reliance among beneficiaries by supporting rather than leading them. Build their capacity rather than just provide inputs.

- Respect and foster all universally agreed international human rights, including social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights.

- Seek to enhance gender equality in terms of the rights and responsibilities of men and women, as well as the various age groups in the community—respecting and valuing diversity and difference.

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[1] If you have any comments or suggestions on these principles please send to vtilstone@oxfam.org.uk

- Be conflict sensitive and follow '*do no harm'* principles (Anderson, 1999).

- Integrate environmental considerations, and mitigate against adverse environmental, social and economic impacts.

- Ensure that there is sufficient emphasis paid to addressing the underlying constraints to development, whilst raising the community's awareness of the range of choices open to them.

- Be clear about how any approach will fit with government policies and processes. Promote government involvement as much as possible to encourage buy in and support, as well as to build government capacity to support communities in the future.

Programme implementation process

- Continuous and long-term engagement with communities is required to enable the necessary capacity building for sustainable change (usually around 5-10 years of continuous and consistent engagement).

- Programming needs to be based on a solid analysis of local livelihood systems, examining all elements outlined in the sustainable livelihood approach including anthropological data about customs and traditions, gender roles etc.

- Use highly skilled and committed facilitators who understand the need for communities to develop themselves and who are able to listen and learn from the communities, and who have the necessary skills in facilitation and group dynamics.

- Facilitators should reside in, or live in close proximity to the location, and ideally be from the community themselves. Non-local staff should work closely with them to continually check their understanding of the context.

- Use reflective practice to engage community members in learning more about and understanding their community issues, as well as the economic, social, environmental, political, psychological, and other impacts associated with alternative courses of action.

- Work actively to enhance the leadership capacity (skills, confidence, and aspirations) of community members, leaders, and groups within the community.

Community representatives, collaborative working

- The existing structures within the community should be carefully investigated to understand how well they are functioning, whose interests they represent, and their strengths and weaknesses. Existing structures should be built on or enhanced where possible rather than creating new structures.

- If other organizations support activities in the area, co-ordinated approaches should be adopted to ensure approaches compliment each other and streamline demands put on community representatives.

- Carefully encourage selection of representatives who are committed to the development of all groups within the community, particularly under-represented groups. Communities should select their own representatives after a
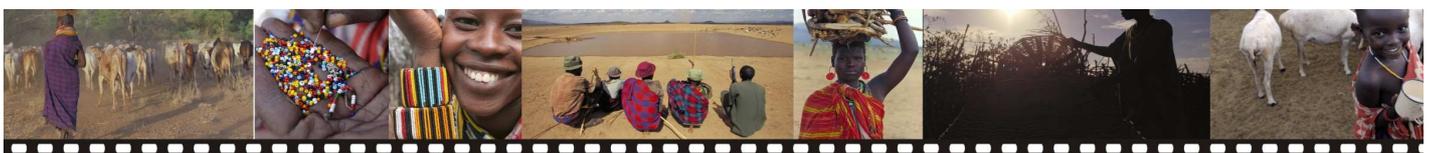
clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The key is to ensure that any committee has regular and effective communication mechanisms with the wider community, and particularly marginalized groups, so that their input is sought in plans, and there is transparency in activities and the use of any resources. There should also be clear and functional mechanisms for community representatives to be evaluated and replaced.

Empowerment of women and marginalized groups

- In cultures where women or other marginalized groups are not comfortable discussing issues in front of the general community and leaders, female-only forums or other mechanisms should be developed to ensure they have a say in decision making, especially around issues that predominately affect them. Facilitators of these discussions need to be sensitive to the perceptions and constraints that are faced by the group in question.

- In situations where women are not empowered, single sex activities can help to build confidence, skills and prepare women to participate in mixed *fora*. Such processes should be facilitated by female staff, who understand the social and cultural constraints that the women face.

- Women should not be forced to participate in male dominated processes simply for the sake of fulfilling quotas. Genuine participation and influence should be promoted on issues that affect them in ways that do not alienate male community members.

- Care should be taken not to demand the time of women (or other community members) unnecessarily, particularly where there is not a clear benefit to themselves or their communities. Visits and meetings with outsiders should only involve the people necessary for the activities.

Governance and advocacy

- The communities themselves should provide significant contributions in cash, or kind, alongside the input support for the planned activities to ensure that they are committed to, and will continue, activities. Grants should only be given for strategic support that benefits the group or community as a whole, and should be accompanied by capacity building support in transparent leadership and financial management as well as organizational skills.

- All interventions should promote an understanding of the Government's responsibilities and capacity to support communities, and widen spaces for communities to interact and demand services from the government and other actors.

- Capacity building support to government should be provided to ensure they understand the need and advantages of active citizenry, and have the skills to engage with and respond to community needs.

- A solid understanding of Government policy and local level implementation on relevant issues should be imparted to the communities, particularly in regard to what support/resources they can expect and influence.

- The community's capacity to engage with Government processes, monitor their implementation and advocate to all stakeholders to address genuine community priorities should be strengthened where possible.

Community planning

- Planning is a process to strengthen analysis, prioritise actions, agree roles and responsibilities, gain consensus and be prepared. It is not an end in itself and should be as practical and 'operationalizable' as possible. Plans should be regularly reviewed and updated as well as adjusted to take account of any new stakeholders.

- Short term planning should be linked to long term planning processes both of the Government, and of other actors, to promote the resilience of communities based on local realities and to build and strengthen what people already do in a crisis.

- Planning done in sub-groupings of the community, should be closely linked to broader community planning processes. Likewise planning done for location specific interventions should be linked to broader landscape or watershed planning processes.

Monitoring and evaluation

- It is essential that community members themselves articulate their own vision for development and thus can identify the changes that need to take place to achieve that vision.

- Any monitoring should focus on changes, both positive and negative, towards that vision and should focus on strengthening the programmes's potential to influence that change.

- It is important to develop mechanisms to interact with the community (and any vulnerable groups) to obtain their feedback on the impact and effectiveness of the programme. This should be done through participatory monitoring and evaluation tools that allow for mutual learning by both community members and partners.

- Ensure that sufficient time and budgets are allocated for monitoring, impact assessment, learning and analytical evidence-based documentation, and dissemination.

- Use external evaluations strategically to verify and explore internal processes, bring fresh perspectives and help both teams and communities reflect and learn.

- Change practices in response to learning and outcomes.

References and further reading

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