IACD Board Report June 2015
Mapping of Community Development Training and Education Programs and National CD Practitioner Support Organizations and Networks

An Exploratory Exercise

BACKGROUND: THE PUSHES AND PULLS IN CREATING A PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Training for Community Development

Grassroots community development has been around as a UN recognized area of practice intervention since at least the early 1950s. The International Association for Community Development (IACD) was set up in 1953. Paradoxically, considering the mantra of support for ‘bottom up’ development approaches, IACD pre-dated the establishment of national associations and networks of community development practitioners. These only began to be formed from the latter 1960s, initially in the US, the UK and the Commonwealth. The leading peer reviewed publication in the field – The International Community Development Journal (CDJ) was founded in 1966.

As in other areas of what might be termed the ‘people professions’, such as teaching and social work, community development practice on the ground also led to the recognition by practitioners, employers and funders of programs of the need for pre and in-service training to ensure competence and quality interventions - in other words that the community developer was competent to do the job.

There has not however been a linear progression of the emergence of a new ‘guild’ of professionals in this field. Unlike teachers or social workers, university lecturers or doctors, community developers have been ambiguous about creating a discrete profession. For many there has been a concern that professions create inequitable power relationships between professionals and ‘ordinary’ people in marginalized groups at the grassroots, who are generally already poor or disadvantaged in some way. This school of thought has been a strong proponent of the view that the best community developers are indigenous local people and that there should not be barriers to them becoming community developers because they are somehow unqualified.

For others in the field, there has been an equally powerful argument that unless community developers themselves organized, this field would remain underinvested in, poorly paid and with practitioners lacking effective knowledge and skills to do what is a challenging and demanding job. This school of thought, whilst not opposed to local people becoming paid community developers, argues that one should not assume they are already effectively skilled and knowledgeable at doing a job that is not the same as being a community activist.
This school has been a strong proponent of the need for training and education, but has recognized the need for wider access and for flexible often work-based programs of training that are not a barrier to working class and indigenous people.

A third school of thoughts argues that community development is, in fact, a way of working – a skill and attitude set that can permeate many professions, from architects and social planners to environmental educators, social workers and health educators (to name a few). In other words, that it should not be promoted as a discrete professional discipline, but as a ‘democratic and empowering way of working, that many professions should adopt. This school tends to be a strong proponent of continuing professional development and of the inserting of community development modules within the training of such professionals.

All of these schools lay a strong emphasis upon the importance of practical on the job experiences as a part of training. Within the training of Community Development Workers there has been a strong move towards practical placements and/or on the job training as a key component of any course. That said there has also been a fourth trend within training for grassroots development work, whereby universities have seen a market for running community development type programs that are almost entirely academic. These are usually marketed as enabling graduates to get a career in development work. The assumption being that the graduate will gain experience in the workplace post qualification. Generally such courses appear to be unregulated by employers’ interests and professional bodies. The more vocationally oriented training programs that contain a high level of practice do appear to be more likely to have been shaped or influenced by such interests.

The last sixty years have been ones of ebb and flow between these schools of thought. All of these paradigms have validity and the reality is that all have shaped the history of community development across the world. This has been both the strength and the weakness. As a professional discipline, whoever the employer, community development work tends to be quite poorly paid, with short term appointments and little career progression, other than into management positions (bringing hopefully empowering styles of people and resource management). University programs have taken off across the world, but have tended to have a mixed lifespan vulnerable to influences such as government investment in higher education or the interest and funding of non-governmental players such as foundations or large NGOs.

National Support Networks

Just as training for community development practice has had a chequered history, so too have been the mixed fortunes of national associations and support networks for practitioners. Ironically community developers have notoriously been poor at organizing themselves. The above push and pull pressures have been at play here. Should we set up a closed or open association? Should we be part of another profession’s network? The vagaries of employment in probably all countries have led to practitioners who take a lead in forming local and national associations coming and going quite rapidly. Network building and the sustainability of national associations can take years.
RATIONALE FOR MAPPING STUDY

In 2014, as part of a Legacy Fund following the “Community Is The Answer” international conference held in Glasgow, IACD decided to initiate an exploratory exercise to determine the ‘health’ of training and education programs for community development around the world and, the ‘health’ of national support networks/associations for community development practitioners.

Who Supports the Practice?

IACD’s interest in this was in large part basic intelligence gathering. IACD had just celebrated 60 years and was seeing a growth in membership. However it remains a small membership organization compared, for example, with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). This in turn limited its income and ability to provide legitimacy and support as a global voice for the community development field. Unlike IFSW, IACD’s membership has always been either that of individuals or of generally local community development organizations. Never as part of its architecture has it built upon a framework that included national networks/associations. IACD wanted to explore whether this might become a constituency.

Who Delivers the Training?

IACD’s interest in training and education programs was that they train the new generation of development practitioners and it was keen to engage them within an international professional association. The third rationale was to try to identify the gaps, where training and education and networking opportunities were non-existent or few and far between and thus where IACD might play a role in linking less well organized and practitioners and training agencies with those that were better organized, including the sharing of training support teaching and learning resources.

IACD is the only global network for professional community development practitioners. It supports development agencies and practitioners to build the capacity of communities, to realize greater social and economic equality, environmental protection and political democracy. It is a non-governmental organization accredited with the UN. As the only global body representing the field of community development, whose members include academics, practitioners, and community leaders and community development organizations and practitioner organizations.

Ultimately, it was hoped that the mapping would facilitate dialogue within the profession and provide support for its growth and enrichment.
OVERVIEW OF THE MAPPING STUDY

Community Development is a diverse field with different models of practice. Despite the important work of CDJ and others, including IACD, in publishing case studies and research, we were not aware of any comparative study to date in this area. While the present IACD exploratory exercise is trying to locate training and education programs and national community development support networks it is presented as a reminder of the depth and breadth that would be of value with a more robust funded effort and would be very keen to partner with others in identifying a clearer picture of the health of the CD field country by country.

Research Challenges

This IACD mapping was only intended to be a first step in what we hope will become a more thorough and indeed ongoing research study to understand more about the health of the CD field through the lens of professional training and education and practitioner support organizations within each country. It was pretty quick and dirty research undertaken over five months. Needless to say we encountered many challenges during the data collection process:

- **Language Limitations (of Information and Researchers)**
  The language in which information on community development activities is available in a country and globally is a major challenge for a research team of limited linguistic capability. The principle researcher for this exercise was fluent in English and Chinese. The IACD board member assisting her is fluent in Spanish and English. However, there are vast areas of the world that could not be covered to make the project more inclusive.

- **Outdated Website/E-mail Contact Information**
  This research was desk based and relied upon secondary data. Some websites are outdated, especially in Africa and to a lesser degree in Latin America. An initial cut of what might be considered community development support organizations was extracted from web research, including the listings in the “Directory of Development Organizations” on the World Bank website. We also became aware that, for some Community Development Workers, and potentially for some networks, there was a desire not to be identified or listed. Some of these organizations’ websites are no longer active. Another approach was to try to obtain information by sending an enquiry, if listed, through email. However, some emails also failed to be delivered because the contact information was outdated.

- **Low Response Rate from Enquiries**
  We sent out an enquiry email to all 4,000 IACD members and subscribers all over the world in the hope that they would assist us in the project. Some members indeed provided us with quite useful data and information. However, most did not respond. At the same time, in order to get more detailed information, we emailed contacts listed on the website for some community development support organizations and education/training programs with a letter from the IACD President explaining our survey’s purpose to ask for more information directly. However, again few organizations responded.
• **Community Development Definition Alternative Language**
Overall the research recognized the following as terminology for potential community development graduate programs and practitioner networks by searching for the following key words: Community development, Community engagement, Community economic development, Community education, Community health, Community learning and development, Community organising, Community work, International development, Outreach extension work, Rural development, Social development, Social work, and Youth and community work. Countries use different names or labels. For example, in the Asian countries we explored, there are no programs that are labeled specifically as community development. Most are social work programs where social work is seen as a participatory tool for tackling social justice issues. In the US, social work programs are designed both for people who will work with individuals within a case management perspective as well as with a holistic community development perspective.

• **Community Development Support Organization versus Service Delivery**
The concept of a ‘support organization’ and networks also caused some problems. In requesting information on known community development support organizations many responded by directing the researcher to NGOs providing community development services directly to individuals, groups, and/or communities. They were not necessarily organizations that supported the community of practice. These were, at times however, included in the database as a possible future reference source to networks or support organizations.

• **Overwhelming Amount of Information to Sort Through (and a Proposed Model)**
For almost all countries researched in the mapping project to date, the researchers had to go to the websites of NGOs that were possible community development support organizations or for each and every university/college, to check if the NGO was in fact a support organization. This process is time-consuming, but necessary, given the state of available information. Google can get you only so far with respect to information on community development – activities, organizations, and training and education - around the world.

• **Lack of Information Regarding Degree Programs**
Most universities may provide a reference in a department or school about a diploma or degree program in community development (under a number of labels), but other than a listing of some core and elective courses that may comprise the program, little other detailed information is available through their website on the program, e.g. content of courses, tutor qualifications, theory/practice balance, community service, etc.
FINDINGS - PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND CONTINUED PROGRESS

National/Sub-National Community Development Support Organizations/Networks

IACD’s membership structure is organized into seven regions of the world. Below is a listing of the regions including 35 countries explored so far and the 88 “support organizations” identified.

• **North Africa and Middle East** – none.
• **Africa (Sub-Sahara)** – Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe – **22 organizations identified**.
• **America (North)** – Canada and United States – **10 organizations identified**.
• **Asia** – India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, and Singapore – **9 organizations identified**.
• **China** – China – **data still to be analyzed**.
• **Europe** – Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland & North Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) and Northern Ireland – **30 organizations identified**.
• **Latin America** – Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and El Salvador – **12 organisations identified**.
• **Oceania** – Australia/New Zealand – **5 organizations identified**.

More detailed information on each of the 88 identified support organizations/networks in 36 countries is contained on the database. IACD will need to follow-up with these organizations to get more detailed information on their membership, structure, and services as well as requesting their assistance for additional information on the field of community development in their countries.

Training and Education Programs that provide a certificate or diploma/degree in community development

Below is a listing of the regions including the 38 countries explored so far where we have found 1,039 graduate level programs which make reference to subject teaching relating to the key words associated with “community development” (variously labeled) identified as including some level of education in the field.

• **Africa and Middle East** – Israel, Somalia – **7 courses**
• **Africa (Sub-Sahara)** – Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe – **735 courses**
• **America (North)** – Canada and United States and Virgin Islands – **179 courses**
• **Asia** – India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, and Singapore – **38 courses**
• **Europe** – Germany, Norway, United Kingdom of Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) and Northern Ireland – **53 courses**
• **Latin America** – Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago – **4 courses**
• **Oceania** – Australia and New Zealand – **28 courses**
More detailed information on each of the 1,039 training and education programs in 38 countries is contained on the database. Again, IACD will need to follow-up with these training and education programs to get more detailed information on content, qualifications of instructors, and balance of theory and practice as well as requesting their assistance for additional information on the theory and practice of community development in their countries.

CONCLUSIONS

• The exercise is very complicated, fraught with linguistic, cultural and logistical challenges.
• This initial exercise has also demonstrated the lack of professional interconnectedness of the community development profession and arena within countries, regions, and globally.
• In essence, the profession of ‘community organizing’ has not organized their own ‘community of interest’ as well as it could and should!
• Finally, given the increased global trend towards local participatory development there is a need for sharing the lessons learned and providing expertise and experience to those struggling to enhance their quality of life.
• An expansion of this study may pave the way for increased collaboration and cooperation within and across countries but requires to be appropriately resourced.

The IACD Board decided to ‘pause’ the mapping study and put out a call to the academic and research community to partner with IACD to extend both areas of enquiry.

This study was supervised by Randy Adams, Vice President, IACD, and Board Member for North America.

It was supported by a Reference Group, chaired by Stewart Murdoch, Vice President, IACD, and Board Member for Europe.

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