1.2.a. Community 1, Community 2

(Adapted from Sheehan, 2008 by the Coady International Institute)

Session Title	Community 1, Community 2
Session Objectives	Demonstrate how focusing only on needs limits our ability to see opportunities for investmentin community-driven development
Duration of Session	45 minutes
Resources	Flip chart Markers
Training Materials	Community Summaries

Introduction

This exercise contains two descriptions of the <u>same </u>community. One focuses on needs and problems and the other focuses on assets and capacities. Groups are divided into two and asked to come up with recommendations for community, NGO and donor investments. These recommendations depend very much on whether we choose to see communities as "half empty" or "half full" (or both). It is intended to challenge the assumptions we make (and decisions we make), which are often based on incomplete information.

Instructions

Separate your group into two teams. Give each team <u>one</u> of the community summaries provided below and in the accompanying training material guide. There are two examples. Use whichever summaries are useful for your context. You may even choose to come up with one of your own.

Tell each team that they are members of a community and they have been provided information about their community. NOTE: <u>Do not read the community summaries aloud at this point</u>. <u>Do not label this exercise as a "needs/asset" exercise</u>. This compels people to find the "right" asset-based answers.

<u>The Assignment</u>: You are a team of community members that have been asked to make recommendations to local funders that want to support your work. Use the facts given in your summaries. What would make a difference in your community? Where and what should funders invest in to improve family and community life in your community? Please discuss. As a team, identify your top three recommendations and be specific in your recommendations.

<u>Time</u>: Give the groups 20 minutes to discuss and make recommendations. Have them write their recommendations on a flipchart or board to share with the rest of the group.

<u>Group Reports</u>: Ask someone to read the summary of Community 1 out loud. Then ask all groups that had Community 1 to share their 3 recommendations. Do the same with Community 2. Have all groups share recommendations with the entire room.

<u>Debrief</u>: Look at the recommendations and note any differences. Possible questions:

- What made a difference in what each team recommended? *(This is usually tied to the facts given. Which groups recommended investments in programs? Where were recommendations for investments in the local people? Why?)*

- Which community does the group feel will be most successful? Why? *(Groups will always say that Neighborhood 2 will be able to improve because it doesn't have the same level of problems or because there is local leadership.)*

After hearing their comments and analysis, tell the group that both community summaries are real. Would they be surprised to know that both communities are in fact, the same place? Does this fact, change their recommendations? How? If their group had "all the facts" would their discussion have changed? Their recommendations?

Summary Comments

- Traditional investments for community work are based on an assessment of "needs". Needs assessments tell nothing about potential investment strategies in that community; only about program and services to meetneeds.

- Asset assessments uncover resident skills, abilities, and talents. It can also uncover local resources such as facilities, equipment, information, knowledge, etc. all of which can be used for local investments to improve conditions.

- Note what happened:In summary 1, we focused on facts about the failure of people and systems. What did it generate? "A belief that we have to get in and 'fix' what's broken."In summary 2, we focused on the people, their gifts, talents, and energy. What did it generate? "Possibilities and investments that follow local leadership and action." In your experience, which has the greater possibility of long-term success?

Bottom Line: Never underestimate the power of perspective. The information we use to frame a situation leads to the response considered. How often do funders or leaders conduct "needs assessments" and assume they have sufficient information to develop community plans? Without an asset assessment, we have no opportunity to identify and investigate support of local initiative and action.

Community Summaries Example 1
(These summaries are provided as handouts in the Training Materials Guide. Give each team one of the summaries - not both)

Community 1:

This is a community that was forcibly removed from its land to make room for the growing industries of the nearby city. Despite being located only 3km from the city, the community has been largely ignored. On top of losing their ancestral land, this neglect has left deep psychological scars. There are no large employers (95% unemployment) so the population is in decline as more and more people have moved away to find work. This has left few formally educated people residing in the community and full economic dependency on the government. Fiscally, there is a large deficit and a limited operating budget, which is at a near-crisis point. There is no school, library, youth recreation program or community centre in the area and illiteracy rates are high. Health problems are also rampant and adequate housing is not being provided.

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Community 2:

This is a community that is considered poor because unemployment rates are high. There are employment opportunities in farming and fisheries, but most families are economically dependent on the government. However, although a number of people who were educated in the adjacent city universities have left the community to find work elsewhere (law, financial institutions, construction etc.), they still consider this community their home and come back often. Indigenous forms of knowledge, inclusive governance, and principles of consensus, fairness and sustainability are widespread and very much promoted by the local Chief. There are many people in the community who are trying to maintain and revive their culture. They have started drumming and basket-weaving associations and engaged in activities to preserve the traditional language. The chief is viewed as a credible and visionary leader from both those within the community and those who have left. The proximity of the nearby city means that this community is becoming a popular tourist attraction and meeting place, and has a potential market for business enterprise.

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Community Summaries Example 2
(These summaries are provided as handouts in the Training Materials Guide. Give each team one of the summaries - not both)

Community 1

This is a slum neighborhood in a capital city. The area is historically rural and was annexed to the city less than 10 years ago. The dwellings are overcrowded and many do not provide adequate shelter against the weather. There is little infrastructure and very few city services are available. For example, streets are dirt roads with no street lighting or sidewalks. Most homes are not hooked up to electricity or water. When it rains, which it does often, the streets flood and there is no sewer system to empty the water and keep roads open. There are no large employers and only one small market area with several small vendors.

The neighborhood has one of the highest crime rates in the entire city. In particular, teenagers commit a large number of crimes. There are some social services but they can't keep up with demand. There is neither health centre, nor school, nor recreation program or community center in the area. There are a large number of squatters, so neighborhood transience is high. Illiteracy is very high among adults (about 80%). Close to one quarter of families are headed by a single parent (mostly female). Unemployment is a key issue with most households dependent on the informal sector.

The Assignment: You are a team of neighbors that have been asked to make recommendations to local funders that want to support your work. Use the facts given in this summary. What would make a difference in your community? As a team, identify your top three recommendations.

Community 2:

This is a neighbourhood that has been identified as "poor". Unemployment is high and many families depend on the informal sector to survive. A recent local government initiative has provided squatters with tenure for their land in exchange for forming committees responsible for managing their neighbourhood. These committees have taken on responsibility for upgrading the neighbourhood. For example, they have cleaned up many streets and repaired roads and some buildings. The local government has provided very small grants for materials to those committees that have shown that they will undertake upgrading tasks. Since this initiative was launched, residents note significant improvements. It turns out the committees have also organized "block clubs" to address teen crime in the neighborhoods. The committees work closely with police and have begun to organize youth in the area to clean up after there has been vandalism. The police note that already there is reduced theft and property damage because youth are monitoring and protecting cleaned-up space themselves. Police-youth relations are greatly improved.

Unemployment has been a major issue so a number of individuals have come forward, volunteering to teach their skills to interested neighbors. Examples of the skills being taught are small engine repair, carpentry, tailoring, and screen-printing. There is a great deal of entrepreneurial experience in the neighborhood. Roughly 1/3 of residents have operated a business out of their homes. With confidence in these talents and experiences, a group of women has organized a neighborhood self-help group. This group organizes all training for residents. A local church has donated space and equipment for use in the training classes, and the group recently negotiated with a local NGO to deliver 7 training sessions

there. As a result, three small businesses have already been started. More residents have been coming forward each session.

The Assignment: You are a team of neighbors that have been asked to make recommendations to local funders that want to support your work. Use the facts given in this neighborhood summary. What would make a difference in your community? As a team, identify your top three recommendations.