

COMMUNITY AND YOUTH CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING

Situation:

The cornerstone of effective community capacity building is the active involvement and ownership of local citizens in planning, decision-making, and efforts to enhance local well-being. This adaptive capacity is reflected in the ability of people to manage, utilize, and enhance those resources available to them in addressing local issues and needs. Achieving this capacity helps ensure stable governance, social justice, gender equity, sustainable livelihoods, social inclusion, and educational equity for citizens of all ages, but especially young people. It also directly shapes local stability, security, and adaptability. .

In response to this need, a comprehensive community capacity building program was developed. Based firmly in community development theory and research literature, the program was developed, implemented, tested, and rigorously evaluated. The outcomes of the program have been deemed excellent. The UNESCO Chair program provides training and expertise in the area of community organization and building important skills necessary for empowering and transforming communities.

Major goals of this program include: a) efforts to measure, define, and understand community and its development; b) assessments of local assets and needs; c) efforts to bring together representative populations to form coordinated action efforts; d) identify and development specific training for community groups in methodologies so they can address problems/needs locally; and e) develop visions and plans to meet the general needs of our localities. To meet these goals, a series of objectives have been developed:

Program objectives:

1. To improved community involvement and civic engagement
2. To increased alliances and coalitions for citizen mobilization
3. To increased public advocacy of issues effecting communities
4. To increased resident satisfaction with groups they belong to
5. Make more resources available to communities and citizen groups

Educational Efforts or Activities:

This program area has been designed as 12 standalone training modules. Each module has been dually designed for traditional in-person trainings and also online through internet and videoconferencing system (Skype, Adobe Connect, Polycom).

Each module is as follows:

Defining and understanding the community (Objectives 1, 3, 4, and 5): This training is designed with the goals of: a) familiarizing citizens with an understanding of what community is; b) understand how community is defined and used by various groups; and c) explore how different views and understandings of community shape development options. In meeting these goals, participants take part in a variety of presentations and interactive activities. Included are activities focusing on understanding their community and its citizen groups, and efforts to describing their community and its structures. Through these participants identify a community for study and begin to gather information needed for applied community development efforts.

Understanding communities and the rural-urban interface (Objectives 3 and 5): This training is designed with the goals of: a) understanding various viewpoints and definitions of rural and urban; b) understanding how our perspectives of rural and urban shape development options; and c) understanding challenges to development in both settings. To meet these goals, participants take part in activities to explore definitions of rural and urban and apply these to communities in their county/region. Participants also take part in exercises designed to better understand local culture and to recognize how our impression of rural and urban life shape perceptions of development options. Finally, activities are undertaken to focus on the uniqueness of rural and urban communities as a basis for entrepreneurial and other territorial based development.

Understanding community development (Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 5): This training is designed with the goals of: a) understanding what constitutes community development; b) distinguishing between the development “of” and “in” community; and c) identifying and understanding various models for community development. As part of this training the process by which communities are shaped by organized social systems is explored, as well as how various systems interact with each other. Equally important the role of conflict and consensus as shaping forces of community change are explored. To apply these concepts, activities are conducted that help participants understanding different forms of community development and explore various models for developing community in your locality.

Measuring community characteristics (Objectives 2, 3, and 5): This training is designed to: a) understand how to conduct community based research; b) understand how to locate community population, land use, and economic data; and c) become familiar with the process of developing community profiles. Through this training, participants understand the levels and units of analysis used in community research. Equally important, the characteristics of local communities are identified and the role that sociodemographic characteristics play in local development is explored. By exploring various sociodemographic characteristics the attitudes, beliefs, attachment, and opportunities that shape development and community action are explored. To achieve this proficiency for gathering community data, activities are conducted which include assessing and choosing methods for community based research, exploring the international data sources, and building a social and economic profile for their community.

Understanding local decision making (Objectives 1, 3, and 5):
This training is designed with the goals of: a) understanding the local decision making process; b) understanding different models of decision making; and c) understanding how local citizens can take on a larger role in local decision making. Through this training participants explore the distinctions between the conventional models of the political system and a community decision making processes. They also examine what local demands, supports, and other inputs play in community decision making, as well as to look at the outputs of community decision making systems. Through this training, participants take part in activities designed to let them become familiar with ways to identify and track local decision making, explore ways that local citizens and their groups can be more directly involved in local decision making, and map local and other decision making structures.

Identifying local power structures (Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 5): Understanding and identifying local power structures and power elites is vital to effective community based development. This training program is designed to: a) understand the types of community power that exist; b) understand how to identify local power structures and networks; and c) understand ways for managing and working within the context local power structures. As part of this training, participants come to understand the differences between various forms of power, how local power structures and elites shape capacities for local development, and the ways can local power shape community development. Equally important the ways that various forms and functions of power interrelate are assessed. Participant activities for this training include identifying the different forms of power that exist in their localities, utilization of different methods for identifying the power structures of their local community, development of plans outlining ways that local citizens can work cooperatively with power elites and structures, and mapping of local power structures.

Community action and civic engagement (Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5): The active involvement of citizens is at the core of effective community development. This training program is designed to: a) understand what community agency and civic engagement are; b) understand how active citizens can facilitate social change; and c) understand how local citizen groups can be organized.

As a result of this training, participants will understand the role does local action play in community development, identify the factors shape and motivate local action, and become familiar with ways in which community agency be promoted and contribute to community development. Activities to achieve program goals include the development of plans to bring diverse local groups together to build local capacity, establishment of frameworks to link local citizens and their groups to facilitate social change, and mapping the local assets of community citizens, activists, organizations, and groups.

Community planning and visioning (Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5): Effective community development includes comprehensive planning and visioning that represents the diversity of the local population. This training program: a) facilitates understanding of various models for community visioning and strategic planning; b) increases understanding of how local citizens can come together to develop their own strategic plans; and c) aids in understanding how citizens groups can become more involved in local planning. As a result of participation in this training, participants understand how community goals are established and attained, how local planning is conducted, the role of visioning in community development and local resource planning, and key factors that should be included in local planning. Activities used to apply this knowledge include the development of frameworks for community visioning and strategic plan development, the development of methods for local citizens/groups to develop their own strategic plans, and methods for coordination of formal and informal structures that exist for local planning.

Models of development implementation (Objectives 1, 3, and 5): Active communities and community development plans can be implemented in a variety of ways. Each has particular strengths and weaknesses. This training program is designed to: a) understand methods for implementing and evaluating community based projects; and b) understand how citizens groups can move from ideas to coordinated action. Through this program participants explore how local resources can be managed and utilized to be meet community needs. Similarly techniques for bringing diverse parts of the community together for community action plans are explored. Participant activities designed to build this skill area in selection of methods for implementing action plans, development of plans for getting local citizens to become active, and developing methods for evaluating local plans and activities.

Exploring public policy (Objectives 3, 4, and 5): To advance community development efforts beyond action into formal policy is the next step in facilitating community change. This training is designed with the goals of: a) understanding what the processes by which public policy is developed and b) understanding how local citizens/citizen groups can contribute to and shape public policy. In achieving these goals, participants explore different definitions of policy, identify factors shaping the development of policy, and develop an understanding of how local, state, and regional policies are established. All of these are explored in the context of how policies shape group decision making and local community development options. To achieve a better understanding of public policy by participants various activities are utilized. These include exploring and mapping the local public policy process, and identification of who develops local policy, how they do it, and why. Exercises also explore ways in which local citizens can become active contributors to public policy.

Models of management (Objectives 4 and 5): This training of this program involves managing local groups for effective community development. This training program: a) facilitates understanding of methods for managing groups; and b) assists understand of resources that can contribute to effective management. Through this training participants gain knowledge of what the basic meaning and function of management in community development organizations is, and the effect of organizational roles on the function of management in development organizations. Participant activities include the development of plans for enhancing leadership and effective management within their community groups, self assessments of management models, leadership styles, and learning styles, and identification of leadership and management support resources that exist online and through the UNESCO Chair network.

Conducting community based research (Objectives 2, 3, and 5): The final training model critically examines and develops competencies in the area of community research methods and design. This module provides guidelines for conducting scientifically sound research, clarify the various methods and techniques used for data collection, determine their appropriate usage, and explore methods for assessing the reliability and validity of these. The primary objective of this module is to sharpen citizen abilities to evaluate social research and to provide a solid methodological basis on which to conduct your own work.

Adaptability of Trainings:

All modules are adapted for the culture, history, and unique settings of the communities in which they are delivered. Additional modules can also be developed to meet the special needs of local communities, regions, and nations.

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