

# In detail: Key principles for organisations involved in church and community mobilisation

For the purpose of this document, the term 'organisations' refers to Christian NGOs or networks working with a number of churches, or a church denomination at a national or regional level (e.g. a diocese).

## Role

The role of organisations involved in church and community mobilisation includes:

- Initiating the process amongst a group of churches
- Providing leadership, management and co-ordination of the process
- Recruiting or allocating staff to the process, and providing them with training, resources, support and oversight
- Recruiting, training and supporting facilitators
- Selecting potential churches and communities to work with
- Obtaining or providing resources for the project, where necessary.

## Key principles:

### **1. Senior leadership of the organisation need to be actively involved and feel a sense of ownership of the process**

The following are important for the senior leadership of an organisation involved in church and community mobilisation. Senior leadership should be:

- educated about the process and envisioned for it from the beginning
- able to 'buy-in' to the process and commit the organisation's resources to making it happen
- involved in monitoring the pilot stage of the process, and learning lessons for the organisation from the process
- visiting the pilot churches and communities, both to learn from and to be inspired by what is happening. This also demonstrates support for the process and gives it credibility
- recognising the long-term nature of the process, and set realistic timeframes and targets
- ensuring that staff involved in the process receive support and resources.

### **2. Key implementing departments need to be well informed, and highly involved in, the process of mobilisation from the beginning**

Although the process may begin as a small pilot project, the organisation must plan for it to be replicated as a key strategy across all its work.

- Key representatives from each of the main implementing departments (for example, in a denomination, both the development department and the missions department; and in an NGO, the various sectoral departments) should be involved, and their staff trained as facilitators.
- From the outset, the process should be viewed as a fundamental strategic approach to the organisation's ministry and not as an add-on to existing programmes.

### **3. The organisation should recruit or allocate full-time staff for managing and co-ordinating the process, in invest in their training and support**

Staff responsible for managing and co-ordinating the process should:

- Liaise with the external consultants for the process, where these exist
- Ensure involvement and participation of the key stakeholders within the organisation
- Ensure the facilitators receive necessary logistical support
- Facilitate the training of the facilitators (When external consultants are involved the staff members should work with them in order to learn how to reproduce the training with future facilitators, without the assistance of the consultants.)
- Monitor the work of the facilitators
- Communicate regularly within the organisation the achievements and progress being made through the process.

They should receive training and mentoring in:

- replicating the process in non-pilot communities
- responding to complex situations
- managing and monitoring the overall programme
- creating a positive team environment where facilitators feel valued and can develop their skills and experience.

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One full-time staff member is required for every five communities during the pilot stage. Once mobilised, the communities still require significant levels of support during the implementation of initiatives and while establishing sustainable community development structures for a further three to five years.

### **4. The organisation needs to invest time and resources in the recruitment, training and ongoing support of its facilitators**

The organisation should:

- recruit facilitators on the basis of their character and skills, their proximity to the pilot communities, and their commitment to the process
- provide training for the facilitators through opportunities to observe the trainers/ consultants in modelling the process in communities, and through the provision of accompaniment, mentoring and peer review support
- provide training for facilitators that equips them to facilitate community discussion and action on issues such as HIV and AIDS, disaster risk reduction and advocacy
- provide training for facilitators in supporting churches and communities to implement action plans and build sustainability
- regularly monitor and evaluate the facilitators' work (including the quality of their relationships with the local church and the community).
- identify and agree on an appropriate means of motivating and encouraging facilitators, as well as remunerating them for the significant time commitment they invest in the process. This may include:
  - accrediting their training
  - meeting their travel expenses or providing them with bicycles or motorbikes
  - providing them with food supplies
  - giving them loans to initiate their own income generation projects.

The church and community should be encouraged to contribute to the facilitator's remuneration, but in the initial stages, the organisation will usually need to take responsibility for this.

### **5. The organisation should select communities on the basis of: the strength and openness of the leadership of the church and community, the stability of the community and the degree of dependency of the community on outside help**

When selecting communities to work in, organisations should consider the following:

- Weak leadership, factions and power struggles within the local church, or complete reliance on one leader, which make it vulnerable to failure during a mobilisation process
- Churches with unstable leadership can struggle to keep the focus on church mobilisation when a new leader is recruited. Organisations should invest in church and community mobilisation processes where the local church leader is likely to be in post for at least the next three years.
- Local church leaders need to understand that integral mission is about more than just evangelism or handouts. It is vital to clarify expectations before the process begins.
- The process is more successful when those who make decisions in the community (e.g. village development committees or local government) are open to the process. Before starting the process, it is important to meet with these decision-makers to assess their openness.
- Churches and communities that are heavily reliant on external resources will struggle to engage with a process that requires them to identify and utilise their own resources. If there are other NGOs working in the community with a hand-out approach this can undermine the process.
- Church and community mobilisation processes are more effective in stable communities, where people do not fear displacement or want to move on, as they are more willing to invest in positive long-term changes.
- Church and community mobilisation processes are more effective in places where the community is clearly defined (e.g. a rural village), and less effective in contexts where there is less clear community identity (e.g. in some urban contexts).
- Church and community mobilisation processes are more effective in places where the community has a degree of social cohesion. It can be difficult to involve the whole community in contexts where the community is significantly divided (e.g. along tribal or religious lines).
- It is easier and more cost-effective to pilot a church and community mobilisation programme in communities that are located near each other.
- A helpful way of identifying appropriate communities to pilot is to carry out a needs assessment of all the churches in an area. This should include an assessment of the church leadership's understanding of integral mission.

### **6. The organisation should allow communities to identify their own issues and responses, and not impose its own agenda upon them**

- Church and community mobilisation processes are most effective when communities are able to analyse for themselves the causes of their poverty and determine for themselves their responses. Organisations that impose their own agenda on communities tend to take away ownership and decrease involvement of the community in the process. It is appropriate for the facilitators to encourage discussion in key areas, such as HIV and AIDS, but facilitators should not insist that the community must address these issues.

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- Organisations with specialist departments (e.g. health, education, water and sanitation) should encourage these departments to play a supportive role to the process, providing technical advice and support once communities have identified a specialist issue.
- Organisations need to accept that communities may identify non-project responses to issues. For example, a community that identifies internal division and conflict as an important aspect of its poverty, may choose to spend time improving relationships, rather than running a project. This can be a legitimate response.
- Organisations need to agree with donors who may be funding church and community mobilisation that the outcomes of the process should be determined by the communities, and not by the organisation or the donors. The organisation is then less likely to feel pressured into forcing the community to identify certain outcomes.
- Organisations need to trust in the long-term cost-effectiveness of such programmes. Although, initial costs may be high without immediate results, in the long-term, the achievements of the process can be high, making it cost-effective. For example, in one process, after just two years, the value of community inputs (e.g. new houses and classrooms built by the community without external resources) exceeded the cost of the process (e.g. the training and staffing costs) by 33%.

### **7. The organisation needs to be open to challenge and to change**

- Church and community mobilisation tends to challenge the organisational structures developed to support more traditional, sectoral approaches to development.
- Church and community mobilisation, with its commitment to integral mission, merges the development work of the denomination with its spiritual ministries, challenging the often long-standing division between development and spirituality.
- Specific development departments (e.g. health departments) within an organisation may also need to change to reflect a more responsive approach to needs identified by the community.
- Local churches, empowered through the process of envisioning, may challenge organisations, particularly denominations. Following church and community mobilisation, local churches may desire greater involvement in decision-making at the regional or national level. This may challenge traditional top-down approaches to decision-making within many organisations.
- The organisation may need to invest in building its capacity to help its staff adapt to new ways of working that church and community mobilisation may bring about.

### **8. The organisation needs to build the capacity of communities empowered by the process so that the communities' development is sustainable and continuous**

This can be done by:

- Planning from the beginning of the process the ongoing support (training, finance, accompaniment, etc.) that the organisation will provide to communities once they have been mobilised.
- Providing communities with small amounts of financial assistance to assist in funding community initiatives. Such financial assistance should be small enough to avoid creating dependency and stifle initiative, but enough to motivate the community to act.
- Helping the churches and communities to agree on the most appropriate community structures to take forward the longer-term development interests of the community (e.g. structures that are integrated into existing community structures, new structures that are formed as part of the church, or the establishment of new community-based organisations).
- Building the capacity of the local co-ordination group and appropriate community structures in project management, decision-making and conflict resolution.
- Ensuring that there are community-owned institutional structures to co-ordinate and manage further development within the community.
- Linking specific community initiatives with technical experts, who can advise and support the development of these initiatives.
- Supporting exchange visits between mobilised communities to inspire and learn from one another.

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