

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

By the local community, we mean the community (village, urban district) in which the church and community mobilisation process is taking place.

### The role of the local community

The role of the community in a church and community mobilisation process is:

- To select members of the local co-ordination group
- To describe their community, and gather and analyse information on their resources and on the causes of their poverty
- To envision, plan for, and work towards a better future, using their own resources
- To initiate and monitor projects.

### Key principles

#### 1. The process can threaten existing power structures

The process gives the poor a voice and actively engages them in decision-making, where previously they may well have been marginalized and unheard. It may also achieve far more in a few months than the development committee has achieved in years, reflecting badly on them. And the process may end up challenging the unjust structures that the powerful are benefiting from.

#### 2. The whole community should be involved in decision-making, planning and implementing development initiatives whenever possible

Initiatives that benefit the majority of the local population (Christians and non-Christians) help to take away jealousy, factionalism and discrimination. In particular, women and children have a crucial role to play in decision-making and implementation and should be fully involved at all points in the process.

#### 3. The tools used to mobilise the community should be as inclusive as possible

Tools should aim to especially include those who tend to be marginalised, such as women, children, and people with disabilities. Activities should take literacy, language and cultural sensitivities into account.

#### 4. Forming a development committee

This can be a helpful way of taking the mobilisation process forward. Such a group will need significant input if they are to develop project planning and management skills, running meetings, monitoring and evaluating, etc.

#### 5. Exchange visits

Exchange visits are a very helpful way of enabling communities to learn from one another and grow in confidence.

#### 6. External resources

Communities may always have some expectation of receiving external resources and at times this may be appropriate. At times the resource organisation may want to meet them half-way. However, other agencies who operate on handouts or providing 100% of resources will challenge and undermine CCM, intentionally or not.

It needs to be recognised that the process is most effective where the local church and community have to rely on their own resources for initial initiatives. This builds self-confidence and breaks the dependency culture. This may mean starting small.

#### 7. Community leadership

Strong community leadership with a vision for improving the welfare of all in the community can help to ensure the church and community mobilisation process is effective.

#### 8. Community cohesion

Communities that have some element of mutual support and evidence of working together respond well to church and community mobilisation processes. Where there is low cohesion much greater effort in building trust and relationships within the community is required.

Author: Tulo Raistrick