A. Key roles in the Umoja process

As there are lots of different people involved in Umoja, it is helpful to list what part each role plays in the process. It is important that women as well as men are involved in these roles.

i) Programme co-ordinator

The programme co-ordinator manages the overall Umoja programme on behalf of their church denomination or Christian organisation.

Their role is:

- to liaise with senior denominational church leaders about the process
- to work with senior church leaders in identifying appropriate local churches and communities to work with
- to recruit the local facilitators
- to ensure those training the local facilitators are well supported, and that the process is adapted to the local context
- to monitor and evaluate the programme
- to communicate regularly with senior church leaders and the wider church so that there is a growing interest and commitment to the process to find what funding is necessary for the programme.

ii) Trainer

The trainer is someone experienced in Umoja. (They may be the programme co-ordinator). Their role is:

- to train and support a number of facilitators.

iii) Local facilitator

The local facilitator may be from outside the community, or be a skilled and credible person from within the community. Their role is:

- to work with a local church and community at grass roots level in facilitating them through the stages of Umoja.
iv) Local church leader

Their role is:

- to work alongside the facilitator in envisioning the church for action and in relating to community structures.

NB In some situations, where the church leader has facilitation skills (and not just preaching skills), it may be appropriate for them to be the facilitator.

v) Local church

Their role is:

- to engage fully in Umoja through Bible studies and activities
- to initiate and resource local projects as a way of showing the community what is possible
- to encourage all community members to be involved in Umoja
- to be active community members in helping to implement community actions.

vi) Community

Their role, guided by the facilitator, is:

- to identify and analyse the needs and resources in their community
- to make decisions together
- to get involved in implementing those decisions.

vii) Community leaders

Their role is:

- to encourage high levels of community participation in Umoja
- to be part of the decision-making processes
- to help with the implementation of projects.

viii) Local co-ordination group

This is a group elected by the community who provide support to the facilitator. Their role is:

- to help to organise community meetings
- to co-ordinate the gathering of information
- to ensure there is regular community reflection on the process.

ix) Senior church leaders

The role of the senior church leaders of the denomination or network of the local churches going through Umoja is:

- to promote Umoja within their denomination or organisation through sermons, meetings, etc.
- to ensure there is adequate staffing and resources to enable the process to happen
- to monitor the programme regularly at senior level committee meetings
- to visit Umoja churches and communities
- to plan for and enable the growth of the programme throughout the churches they are responsible for.
B. Stories of transformation

Here are two stories showing the impact of Umoja type programmes - one is from Africa and the other is from Asia.

Case study: Olkeri community cattle dip, Narok, Kenya

Olkeri is one of many communities in Narok that has been through the Umoja process. The process was started in 2000 and the significant outcomes evaluated in July 2006.

The cattle dip at Olkeri had originally been supplied by the government and after a while fell into disrepair. During the Umoja process, the community identified it as one of their priorities in their action plan.

An important part of the process was encouraging the community to analyse why the cattle dip had fallen into disrepair and what they could do differently to stop it happening again.

The parents of children in the local schools decided to take responsibility for the repair and setting up of the cattle dip as they were all livestock owners and saw the value of the dip running again. They decided to make the running of the cattle dip accountable to the community. They developed rules and regulations for the use of the cattle dip and agreed a fee for its use. They interviewed for a new supervisor who would be paid from the income generated by the cattle dip and would be required to report any members of the community who failed to follow these rules and regulations. They established a fining system for breaking the rules which has been successfully implemented.

Impact

The dip has contributed directly to the following results:

- A decline in major livestock disease over the last three years. This has resulted in an increase in herd size, and improved household incomes.
- The dip has generated enough income for the wages of the supervisor and supply of dip treatment.
- The income has been enough to contribute to improving the classrooms and other aspects of the school.
- The parents gained a number of skills from the process, including planning and budgeting, interviewing and selection, and setting up systems of accountability.

There have been other far reaching outcomes as a result of the Umoja process:

- Construction of the old church building at Olkeri centre has been completed and a new church building for a congregation of 60 members has been started.
- At Olkeri, three new permanent classrooms have been built and are in use.
- Many members of the community have begun to improve their livestock, especially through introducing improved breeds.
- In 2000, there were no self help groups. Now eight active groups have been formed and are running small scale businesses, generating cash to meet domestic needs.
- The community appointed a development committee that meets monthly and is comprised of men and women.
Case study: Wholistic Development Organisation (WDO), Cambodia

Background

In Cambodia, in the 1970s, the oppressive Khmer Rouge regime reduced people’s ability to care for their families, to make community decisions and to participate in community activities. As a result, responses of local churches to needs in the community are often relief orientated, which creates dependency.

Wholistic Development Organisation (WDO), a Christian organisation, wanted to challenge dependency and facilitate local churches to empower communities to take action. They trained Christian facilitators, who then envisioned local churches. The local churches identified six members to form a Christian core group, which worked with the community to identify problems and possible solutions. The facilitators and Christian core group provided support to communities as they addressed their own problems.

Aim of WDO’s work:

To establish Christian core groups to facilitate community initiatives that contribute to food security, improved income and health.

Steps in the process

1. Selection and training of facilitators.
2. Selection of target communities. Communities are identified by WDO on the basis of need and the maturity of the local church and its leadership.
3. Formation of community-based Christian core groups.
4. Community needs analysis and action planning.
5. Taking action. The community takes action to address its problems. The community development facilitators and Christian core group facilitate the process.
6. Developing the capacity of the Christian core group. The community development facilitators invest time in developing Christian core group members throughout the process so that eventually they can manage initiatives in the community with minimal support.

Trapeang Keh

Trapeang Keh was a poor community with dry land, migration out of the area, ill health and debt. There was little trust or co-operation between members of the community. The church consisted of four members and they were persecuted and marginalised by the rest of the community. After the mobilisation process, the community members began to work together to address their problems, such as through digging improved wells and setting up irrigation systems.

Impact

1. Attitudes and relationships between community members changed in the following ways:
   - There is less social disruption because men no longer need to migrate.
   - The community discussions encouraged men to listen to women.
   - Men’s respect for women has therefore increased.
   - There is less domestic violence and more sharing of “women’s tasks” with men, such as gardening, water collection and cooking.
   - There is less quarrelling and fighting in the village, and less alcoholism.
   - Decision-making is fairer and more inclusive.

2. Attitudes to the church have also changed:
   - The Christians have grown in confidence to care for their neighbours and share their faith.
   - There is less persecution and more respect for Christians.
   - The church has grown, and all but two households now attend the local church.
1. Those who have experienced poverty themselves tend to make the best facilitators

The facilitators do not need to have any development qualifications or experience. In fact, those with formal qualifications tend to be less willing to stay in communities or travel to remote areas, and have not stayed long with WDO.

Facilitators were willing to spend time in the community, including staying overnight, which many development workers are unwilling to do. This has led to the formation of deep relationships that has enhanced the success of the mobilisation process.

2. Relationship-building helps to overcome community dependency

At the beginning of the process, communities were often resistant to participatory approaches and the emphasis on the importance of community involvement and responsibility. WDO overcame this challenge by investing time in each community, building relationships and sharing the vision of the work.

3. Existing power structures can feel threatened by the process

Local power structures, such as village development committees, sometimes felt threatened because the process empowers poor people and gives them a voice. The process often achieves far more in a community in a few months than village development committees achieve in years.

4. The process works better with well established local churches

If churches were too young and immature, they were unable to take on the responsibility of being a catalyst for the mobilisation process. They saw the process as an opportunity to grow the church by offering aid as an incentive for people to convert, rather than as an opportunity for the local church to show that it cares about the community.

Bibliography

Listed below are books that you may find useful:


Chambers R (1983) Rural Development – Putting the Last First, Longman


Tearfund publications

(all of which can also be downloaded for free on-line at www.tearfund.org/tilz)


Blackman R (2007) ROOTS 11: Partnering with the local church, Tearfund


See also http://tilz.tearfund.org/Churches/ for a large number of articles, case studies and good practice guides on church mobilisation.