Building bridges in Maharashtra: a dual approach to tackling poverty 03

Passage from India: Re-imagining self-interest and common good through Self-Reliant Groups (SRGs) in Scotland 06

Community development and poverty: reflections on experience in Scotland 08

Tackling poverty in Scotland: a local view 10

Asset building in Europe: a community approach 12

Brazil and the struggle against poverty 14

Celebrating co-operatives: a global movement to build a better world 16

Community organising: the Chicago experience 19

Victory Village Forum: a partnership approach to transformation 21

About IACD 23

Issue 1: Poverty and Community Development
Poverty has been increasing in far too many countries across the globe, despite the promises of the Millennium Development Goals. In the relatively wealthy city of London, in UK for example, the top 10% of the population receive 273 times more than the bottom 10%. Poverty is a major problem in relatively rich countries as well as in relatively poorer ones. And so is inequality. Neo-liberal economic strategies have been loading the burdens of austerity in Europe onto the shoulders of the poor. It is the most disadvantaged who are disproportionately suffering as a result of the financial crisis from 2008. Meanwhile inequality has been increasing too, even when countries such as India have been experiencing overall high levels of economic growth. This all matters desperately, with devastating effects on people’s livelihoods, undermining their health and well-being and exacerbating social tensions more widely.

This publication, the first in our new series of biannual ‘International Practice Insights’, explores community development strategies in response. How have those engaged in community development been addressing the structural causes of increasing poverty and inequality? How have they been balancing community-based advocacy and campaigning strategies with the need to strengthen communities’ own survival strategies in the here and now? And how have communities and those who work with them been working with others, in social movements and in structures of governance? IACD’s view is that poverty and inequality need to be tackled at both ends, addressing immediate needs whilst campaigning to take on structural causes, for the longer term.

Poverty is a major problem in relatively rich countries as well as in relatively poorer ones. And so is inequality.

This collection of articles provides illustrations of varying types of approach, rooted in very different local situations. Some focus upon the contributions of community-based strategies, such as asset building initiatives in Europe and the development of co-operatives in Africa and Canada – whilst recognising the significance of the wider context. Others demonstrate the potential for building bridges between different types of approach. This dual approach emerges from the Indian case studies, for instance, illustrating ways in which communities have been engaged in self-help initiatives, building on community assets, whilst also being engaged in advocacy – campaigning against exploitation by employers, and campaigning against so-called ‘development’ projects that undermine poor people’s livelihoods. Rather than seeing asset-based development as being in competition with strategies to tackle root causes, these examples illustrate ways in which these can be mutually re-enforcing approaches.

The articles raise important questions about the potential – and indeed the limits – of locally based community development. The importance of building alliances emerges from the discussion of community organising for instance, a theme which emerges too in the Brazilian context, although in different circumstances, taking account of vibrant popular movements for social change and social justice.

The Brazilian example also raises important questions about the ways in which local communities interact with the state, progressive political parties and structures of representative democracy. These relationships between local communities and the state emerge in the Scottish context too, exploring in ways in which local authorities might support local communities, enabling people to make their voice heard. These are particularly important issues to address, given the wider anti-statist rhetoric that has been characteristic of neo-liberalism – arguing the case for cutting collectively provided public services whilst expanding the scope for services to be provided for profit, via the private sector.

Taken together these articles offer a range of experiences, based upon varying perspectives and approaches amongst IACD members and others. The aim is to stimulate discussion, reflecting on the varying ways in which community development can contribute to tackling the scourges of poverty and inequality, across the globe.

On behalf of IACD Board members and staff, we hope you find this publication useful and we welcome your feedback. IACD is a vehicle for sharing experiences and reflections across geographical and cultural boundaries, with the aim of identifying solutions to challenges which, despite differing contexts, have much in common. We invite you to join the conversation.

Prof Marjorie Mayo is an IACD Board member and Chair of IACD’s task force for Learning and Practice Exchange. She has been Professor of Community Development at Goldsmiths, University of London, where she currently still works part-time although formally retired.

Join the network: www.iacdglobal.org/join-us

Building bridges in Maharashtra: a dual approach to tackling poverty

In August 2012, IACD held its first ever Practitioner Dialogue, in Maharashtra, India. This was an opportunity for practitioners from around the world to hear from some of the strongest examples of grassroots community development and advocacy work in India, and to explore processes in dialogue with local practitioners and with each other.

The Dialogue involved small group visits to urban and rural communities who are organising themselves to tackle poverty. This article focuses on one of these – a visit to a small NGO, Sakav. Some of us had the privilege of spending two days with the Sakav team at their training centre in an indigenous village, with members of some of the communities with whom they work.

Context
Sakav operates amongst fishing and farming communities in the Raigad district, Konkan region, along the Mumbai-Goa national highway. Two-thirds of the population here are dependent on natural resources, but rapid industrialisation has in recent years seen these degraded or destroyed. Large companies in the petrochemical, steel, plastics and other industries have quickly bought up land, changed its use and asserted their control over it. Their operations have led to environmental disaster: sandy areas are plundered for construction materials, agricultural land salinised by the blooming of estuaries, and mangroves destroyed. Local people, coming from long traditions of land- or sea-based livelihoods, have lacked the education or technical skills to secure employment in these industries. Rather than working to uplift the local population, companies address labour shortages by importing workers from elsewhere.

“As communities lose their cultural traditions, women are those who miss out most.”

The loss of traditional livelihoods has forced workers into scratching a living on the periphery of Mumbai or migrating altogether. The knock-on effects include child malnutrition and an increase in domestic violence. As Sakav founder Arun Shivkar comments: “As communities lose their cultural traditions, women are those who miss out most.”

Industrialisation is not the only factor at play. Many of the communities Sakav works in are among the indigenous groups included in the Indian constitution’s appended list of ‘scheduled tribes’. (According to the Indian government’s National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, these are communities who for historical, social and geographical reasons “were suffering from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness... who need special consideration for safeguarding their interests and for their accelerated socio-economic development...”). Traditionally, many tribal people have cultivated forestslands, and some indeed have access to these lands under legislation; but this is not clearly established and they are often evicted. This extreme insecurity has naturally led to a focus on survival, rather than any more long-term community development.
Agitation processes can fail if they aren’t backed by knowledge, if they are just an emotional response.”

“there is no sense of ‘them’ and ‘us’ that staff are facilitators, rather than experts parachuted in from outside.”

Fishing communities

Despite these impressive successes, the story is not altogether complete. When we met with men and women from the fishing communities along the coast, some of whom had spent years participating in our dialogue. A scene of industrial ravage greeted us – a large steel plant belching out fumes and industrial waste into air and water which had transformed into a critical source of livelihood for many people with their livelihoods. The ISPAT Steel plant is one of many such industrial operations along this stretch of the Arabian Sea. The first, their large boats destroyed our nets and our smaller boats”, the men explained. “As we were level with the construction of industrial units, chemicals were released into the sea, poisoning the fish...instead, the秋冬 chose to take action to protect their rights...” The Commission Order urges the early rehabilitation of all 1,630 affected families and “to do all that is necessary for the welfare and for the benefit of the complainants...”

To date, of the 1,630 families, only 318 have been given any form of compensation. The compensation, though helpful, has enabled them to repair and update their equipment, but it does not represent rehabilitation to a new and sustainable way of life. According to the people we met, the companies, subject to central government, rather than state controls, are ignoring the plight of families as they argue between themselves how much each should provide to fund the rehabilitation. In the meantime, they try to replace some of their lost income by taking menial jobs in industries which have supplanted them.

The struggle goes on, and the communities are eager to connect with others who have successfully tackled similar issues.

The process

The People’s Organisations have grown organically out of a development structure and strategy. “We divided the area into five zones, identified their issues in each and developed a strategy for tackling these in each zone”, Arun explains. Asked how the work is supported, Arun acknowledges that his staff are overworked and underpaid, and that he worries for their wellbeing. However, they receive some financial support from SwissAid and support from DST Pune, who helped train the first SHGs and once a month send their reports. “No Objection Certificate” from the local government, any industry wishing to conduct on fishing, aims to provide for small fishing communities and to enable traditional methods to continue. Under Indian law, any industry wishing to conduct on fishing, which have supplanted them.

The communities started on a course of non-aggressive action in 2004, gathering photographic evidence and survey data. After a number of years, the Collector ruled that the fishermen did indeed have cause for complaint and an expert committee was established, which in 2006 concluded its extensive report investigating the fisherman’s claims. The report concluded that “the complainants being people from the development activities really suffered and practically lost their source of livelihood...” and set out a series of recommendations, including rehabilitation for 1,630 families. A year later, nothing had been done. The communities therefore took their case to the National Human Rights Commission. An Order issued by the Commission in February 2010.

Members of the fishing communities...

“First, their large boats destroyed our nets and our smaller boats”, the men explained. “As we were level with the construction of industrial units, chemicals were released into the sea, poisoning the fish...instead, the秋冬 chose to take action to protect their rights...” The Commission Order urges the early rehabilitation of all 1,630 affected families and “to do all that is necessary for the welfare and for the benefit of the complainants...”

To date, of the 1,630 families, only 318 have been given any form of compensation. The compensation, though helpful, has enabled them to repair and update their equipment, but it does not represent rehabilitation to a new and sustainable way of life. According to the people we met, the companies, subject to central government, rather than state controls, are ignoring the plight of families as they argue between themselves how much each should provide to fund the rehabilitation. In the meantime, they try to replace some of their lost income by taking menial jobs in industries which have supplanted them.

The struggle goes on, and the communities are eager to connect with others who have successfully tackled similar issues.

The process

The People’s Organisations have grown organically out of a development structure and strategy. “We divided the area into five zones, identified their issues in each and developed a strategy for tackling these in each zone”, Arun explains. Asked how the work is supported, Arun acknowledges that his staff are overworked and underpaid, and that he worries for their wellbeing. However, they receive some financial support from SwissAid and support from DST Pune, who helped train the first SHGs and once a month send their reports. “No Objection Certificate” from the local government, any industry wishing to conduct on fishing, which have supplanted them.

The communities started on a course of non-aggressive action in 2004, gathering photographic evidence and survey data. After a number of years, the Collector ruled that the fishermen did indeed have cause for complaint and an expert committee was established, which in 2006 concluded its extensive report investigating the fisherman’s claims. The report concluded that “the complainants being people from the development activities really suffered and practically lost their source of livelihood...” and set out a series of recommendations, including rehabilitation for 1,630 families. A year later, nothing had been done. The communities therefore took their case to the National Human Rights Commission. An Order issued by the Commission in February 2010.
Passage from India: Re-imagining self-interest and common good through Self-Reliant Groups (SRGs) in Scotland
Noel Mathias

Paying attention to everyone else’s self-interest – in other words to the common welfare – is in fact a precondition for one’s own ultimate wellbeing...it just isn’t good for the soul; it’s good for business.” Joseph E. Stiglitz, The Price of Inequality

We are living in very difficult times in Europe. Some very hard questions are being asked of us and of our way of life that has left a vast majority of us, but especially the poorest, deeply susceptible to the seismic shifts in the economy. It is right to conclude that there is no going back to business as usual. There is an urgent need to restructure the institutions that serve our society, democracy and economy so that ‘one for all, all for one’ is legitimised not by subsidies and benefits but as a creed or a policy in favour of the most disadvantaged – people and communities – and their aspirations.

For the purpose of this paper, we focus on an innovative local institution-building experiment in Scotland that recasts self-interest and common welfare – one without the other is unrealistically sustainable – through a convergence of aspirations and skills; has at its very heart a deep trust in those living on the margins of our society and their potential to come up with solutions for themselves; and where women in deprived communities play a central role as resilient leaders and enterprising agents of socio-economic change.

The Indian Experience of the Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Seeing Is Believing

Passage from India (PiF) is an initiative of the Church of Scotland’s Priority Areas Committee that has modelled its anti-poverty work in Scotland on the principle that poverty cannot be adequately addressed without involving those who experience it in the development, delivery and evaluation of any policy: ‘Nothing about us without us is for us.’ PiF grew out of a 10-day immersion trip in January 2011 through which 13 women from 7 of Scotland’s most deprived communities experienced at first hand the transformative impact of SHGs in India on women and through them, their families and communities. SHGs in India are formed around microfinance – a tool of financial inclusion recognised and accepted globally as one of the foremost development paradigms for alleviating poverty, with a particular focus on empowering women and increasing their participation in the socio-economic and political processes within society. They are peer groups of 15-20 members built around trust, solidarity and mutual support with an emphasis on savings in a common fund; access to affordable credit; and carrying out sustainable income-generation activities. Started in the 1980s, the SHGs have become a movement of socio-economic change and currently involve an estimated 50 million women. The Indian experience of the women from Glasgow – spent in the company of women in the slums of Mumbai and rural villages of Gujarat – can be distilled to a single catchy refrain: from being appalled with the sight of desperate poverty to complete awe and overwhelmed with the determination, resilience and self-belief of women overcoming it through the collective institution of the SHG. As one of the women noted: “The circumstances that they were living in you wouldn’t think it would be possible, that they would have had the power inside them, the energy, but they were able to come together, start saving and had done wonderful things with it.” Differences in culture and context notwithstanding, the transnational nature of gender-affinity found its echo in a historic decision the women made before leaving the Indian shores: if this can work in India, it can most definitely work in Scotland for us and other women. And so began a cross-fertilisation effort of translating an idea from a developing country: Scotland’s first Self-Reliant Groups (SRGs).

The SRG model provides an environment for people in poverty to count and to take charge of change.

Members of the Pollokshaws SRG

As the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence draws near, it is valuable to reflect on the factors which have influenced the role of community development in tackling poverty.

In the post-war years the economic base of urban Scotland moved rapidly away from the heavy engineering, mining and steelmaking industries that had been the mainstay of relative prosperity for a century. At the same time, many of the established neighbourhoods in inner-city areas were redeveloped to make way for new, high-rise estates or motorways. In either case this resulted in the displacement of established neighbourhoods and communities, and the arrival of new housing estates, new towns, or the redeveloped inner city high rise estates. These changes had a profound impact – both on levels of poverty, and on the ability of communities to protect, support and nurture families and children. There was a rapid increase in welfare-dependent poverty and a decline in the ability of communities to protect, support and nurture families and children, and to encourage a focus on working with people in poverty.

It seems clear that in the 1990s a series of pilot and action-research projects emerged with a small area focus, and with a particular concern for housing issues and the active involvement of community workers drawn from a social work tradition that saw a clear role in prevention of social and community breakdown, as much as in picking up the pieces. These projects were in place in the 1990s as a reorganisation of local government did away with the regional councils and their community development work; with a reorientation in social work from a community approach to a risk management, protectionist model; and the consequent reduction in the numbers of community workers in the most challenging communities. By this time, however, a significant network of community organisations had been built up across urban Scotland and these organisations were often able to continue to local government and maintain a voice in policy.

Themes emerging in more recent years include significant work on community engagement – seeking to encourage more productive relationships between government and people; an ever-stronger concern with the relationship between poverty, inequality and health outcomes; and an emerging interest in asset-led approaches to community development entailing both the idea of encouraging communities to take ownership or control of land, buildings, services and organisations to work for community benefit, and the idea of helping people and communities as having social and human assets to build on, rather than as problems to be dealt with. Prospects for the poorest communities, and for community development, are not encouraging. Austerity programmes in response to long-term recession are doubly disadvantageous the already most disadvantaged. There will be cuts in welfare benefit payments to disabled people, older persons and tenants of social housing: mean that poor people are becoming poorer – both relatively and absolutely. Meanwhile the public services viewed as most required by those communities are the most vulnerable to budget cuts and cost savings so their long-standing concern to help alleviate some of the impact of poverty on people’s lives is severely compromised. And – perhaps it is a triple disadvantage – resources to support community development and to support deprived communities to become more resilient and sustainable are also reducing. Having acknowledged that, it is also important to understand that in many poorer communities there are a range of good practice, and to support community organisations.

SDCC is currently engaged in work, funded by the European Union’s Grundtvig programme, to establish a network for community development with marginalised social groups. It also works directly with community organisations through the Achieving Community Empowerment (ACE) project. More details on these, and the other work of SCDC can be found at www.sdcd.org.uk.

Full IACD members are eligible for discounted conference fees.

Check www.iacdglobal.org for updates or sign up for our ebulletin.

June 2014, Glasgow, Scotland, UK

This major event will explore some of the most significant local and global questions we face today in the context of the answer: community.

How will we address: The changing economy? Of growing inequality? Of the environmental crisis? Of the failure of our institutions?

Community is the Answer will showcase community-based solutions from Scotland and around the world. It will allow community members, activists, practitioners, researchers and policymakers to come together and examine what actually matters to people, how to measure it and how to place it at the core of what we do.

Taking place in the run-up to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Community is the Answer will attract several hundred Scottish and international participants. The gathering is a collaboration organised by the International Association for Community Development (IACD), the University of Glasgow, the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development for Scotland.

 ideally matters to people, how to measure it and how to place it at the core of what we do.
Tackling poverty in Scotland: a local view

Stewart Murdoch

There are many others better able to produce an academic analysis of the successes and failures of government initiatives to tackle poverty in Scotland. My direct experience dates from the mid-1970s when I moved from Fife to Glasgow to study youth and community work. The local authority, Strathclyde Regional Council, had committed itself to an ambition programme to “tackle the problems of multiple deprivation”. In the 1980s, Strathclyde faced the twin problem of a recession and increasing unemployment, with the rapid erosion in the ability of local authorities to continue to provide the same level of service. At the time, it was seen as a shocking statistic that 25% of the population of Strathclyde, which was then the largest local authority in Western Europe, were dependent on income support.

When Strathclyde published its strategy for the 1990s, its analysis and literature had moved from heady aspirations to a much more managerialist approach. The basis principles remained unaltered, but there was a clear shift towards “making best use of existing resources to tackle the problem” through setting up area management structures, better communication, better targeting, further research, etc.

With the benefit of hindsight, there might also have been a recognition that, despite the very real efforts made by Strathclyde to tackle deprivation, it was proving intractable. The same neighbourhoods, the same families and the same clusters were showing up as “trapped” within a cycle which would not easily be broken at a neighbourhood level.

A further change was recognition that not all those who experienced poverty lived in those geographies which were identified as having multiple indicators of deprivation. Greater attention was given to “client groups” (regardless of where people lived) who faced or who were at risk of deprivation, disadvantage and discrimination – for example, carers, disabled people, minority ethnic groups, gay men and lesbians, lone parents.

During this period a huge array of excellent projects developed, many of which were community-led and most had strong community development values and approaches within their DNA. Where Strathclyde led, other Regional Councils followed.

When Strathclyde published its strategy for the 1990s, its analysis and literature had moved from heady aspirations to a much more managerialist approach. The basis principles remained unaltered, but there was a clear shift towards “making best use of existing resources to tackle the problem” through setting up area management structures, better communication, better targeting, further research, etc.

With the benefit of hindsight, there might also have been a recognition that, despite the very real efforts made by Strathclyde to tackle deprivation, it was proving intractable. The same neighbourhoods, the same families and the same clusters were showing up as “trapped” within a cycle which would not easily be broken at a neighbourhood level.

A further change was recognition that not all those who experienced poverty lived in those geographies which were identified as having multiple indicators of deprivation. Greater attention was given to “client groups” (regardless of where people lived) who faced or who were at risk of deprivation, disadvantage and discrimination – for example, carers, disabled people, minority ethnic groups, gay men and lesbians, lone parents.

Everything was supposed to change with the election of a Labour Government in 1997. For the first time, there was a UK government which made very clear statements about its intention to “end child poverty in a generation”. The same government produced an ambitious social exclusion strategy which, in Scotland, was rebadged “social inclusion strategy”.

Rather against the trend, Dundee City Council, where I worked at that time, decided not to produce a social inclusion strategy, but an anti-poverty strategy. It held that poverty referred to material deprivation, economic circumstances and social relationships, and that, while there were many disputes about what it was and who and who was or was not poor, there was agreement that it was a moral concept that, at its heart, reflected an unjust inequality.

In terms of economic poverty, it identified that people become victims as a result of sudden changes in their lives – the victims of flood or a natural disaster, the victims of economic shock, such as unemployment, disability or bereavement.

In relative terms, those whose income was significantly below that of the people around them became cut off from full participation in society. We took as our benchmark the European measure, which is 50% of the median income (the median being the middle point of the income distribution). Those below that level were at risk of economic exclusion.

In terms of social relationships, we wanted to challenge the media stereotype which saw those who depended on the welfare system as “scroungers” or living in a “dependency culture”. Our view was that people who lacked rights and power and who experienced poverty became progressively excluded from society and that that exclusion made it more difficult for them to contribute fully and to live an ordinary life.

There are many examples where people have become excluded, not as a result of economic poverty, but of social circumstances. Those who have served a term in prison, people with learning disabilities or psychiatric illnesses and traveling people were all at risk of social exclusion. But this couldn’t necessarily be a result of material or economic poverty.

Dundee’s Anti-Poverty Strategy looked at the relationship between these overlapping concepts and addressed a key action plan which set out to address poverty in the City.

The Dundee Anti-Poverty Forum played a key role in monitoring the impact of poverty. Their report ‘No Room for Dreams’ was the result of participant-led research. It gave people living in the city who experienced poverty the opportunity to have their voice heard. Sharing the feelings of people in poverty, it was argued, would assist everyone in developing a deeper understanding of the issues.

The summary of key findings highlighted the following people were experiencing poverty for the first time. Factors such as dismissal from employment, redundancy, retirement, divorce, pregnancy, illness and disability were taking people into poverty.

So where are we today?

We’ve moved from social strategy, beyond social inclusion policies to “fairness”. Our language is around evaluating poverty and promoting inclusion through a Fairness Strategy (www.dundeecity.gov.uk/reports/reports/249-2012.pdf).

The underlying issues are not fundamentally different from the ones which Strathclyde faced in 1972.

Cities like Glasgow and Dundee present two faces the world. One is of a modern, vibrant city which has undergone remarkable transformation. We have seen the growth of our cultural facilities, the renaissance of our city centre. At the same time, levels of poverty and deprivation continue to make daily struggle for individuals, families and for communities where too many people have lower life expectancy, a higher exposure to crime, high levels of unemployment and lower educational attainment, and where children are born into circumstances of multiple deprivation.

A local authority can only do so much to change the economic circumstances of its citizens. Strathclyde attempted to do this on an ambitious scale. Today, local authorities have many smaller boundaries and their capacity to redistribute income and to target services is far more limited.

The Dundee Fairness Strategy is based on ensuring that every person and family in the city has:

• a fair household income;
• someone to turn to;
• a fair voice.

We’ve simplified our understanding of poverty and inequality. “Poverty is about not having enough” – and the impact this has on aspects of the lives of those who experience it, how they are treated and how they feel about themselves.

All of the statistical data and trends analysis suggest that the position of cities like Dundee and Glasgow remain broadly the same as they were 40 years ago, relative to the position of Scotland as a whole. From a local authority perspective our only response is to ensure that the way in which we deliver services and target resources is fully conscious of these inequalities and that our actions work towards achieving fairness. Significantly, we’ve moved from “treating the symptoms of multiple deprivation” towards working with communities to address the issues which they identify as having the greatest significance for their quality of life.

In developing our action plan the Dundee Partnership have embraced an asset-based approach: recognising community strengths and not focusing on deficits. The work of IACD and others has given a much higher profile to the capacities, gifts and potential of poor neighbourhoods and of people living in poverty to resolve issues with support from public sector agencies. This is addressing the structural barriers and injustices which prevent people from prospering, while recognising the wealth of skills, experience, traditions, culture and other assets that are present in all communities.

The commitment to empowering local communities is central to strong traditions of community development in Dundee. The crucial role of the community and voluntary sectors is reflected in Dundee’s Local Community Plans. For service providers, a greater awareness of approaches like asset-based community development means providing support that doesn’t undermine the way in which those who are being helped can first of all help themselves. It is a shift that we all still have to work on.

Asset-based approaches are about the non-financial value of personal and community knowledge and what it means to make a contribution. They recognise the importance of family, friends and community as ‘assets’ which can be mobilised to provide opportunities to give and to influence the way in which public services are designed and delivered. They are based on treating people with respect regardless of their economic and social circumstances.

Assets approaches will not, of themselves, reduce poverty or solve inequality within and between communities. They can, however, help communities to develop greater understanding and a stronger voice in engaging with the structural causes of poverty, exclusion and inequality.

We will be judged against the extent to which we are able to respond to the resource that is the opportunity our local authority has to make Dundee a fairer city. What we can’t be judged against is the importance of our work which is about going much wider in society through schools, and social care and community organisations. We should also be able to contribute robustly to a public debate and advocate for greater understanding in the way in which resources are distributed.

Stewart Murdoch is Director, Leisure and Communities, Dundee City Council and an AIAB member. The views expressed in this article are his own and not necessarily those of his current and former employers.

Sources

Strathclyde Regional Council, Multiple Deprivation, 1979
Strathclyde Regional Council, Social Strategy for the Eighties, 1983
Dundee City Council, Dundee Dream, 1999
Dundee City Council, Anti-Poverty Strategy, 1999
Dundee and Poverty Forum with Paul Tucker: No Room for Dreams. Dundee City Council, 2004
Dundee’s Anti Poverty Strategy, 1999
Dundee City Council, Dundee Anti Poverty Strategy, 2004
Dundee City Council, Dundee Anti-Poverty Strategy, 1999
Dundee City Council, Dundee Anti Poverty Strategy, 2004
Dundee City Council, Dundee Anti-Poverty Strategy, 1999
Dundee City Council, Dundee Anti Poverty Strategy, 2004
Asset building in Europe: a community approach

Discussions about poverty levels tend to focus uniquely on income. Income is of course important – but it is not the only indicator of poverty and inequality.

Research conducted in Europe over recent years shows that financial assets are far more unevenly distributed than income, and that this has a significant impact on the ability of individuals and families to break cycles of poverty.

What do we mean by ‘poverty’?
The Runnymede Trust estimates that between 10% and 20% of people in the UK have no financial assets at all, whereas the highest earning 10% of the population own almost half of all assets. The Office for National Statistics notes that, in 2003, the wealthiest 1% of the population owned around a fifth of the UK’s marketable wealth; whereas half the population shared only 7% of total wealth. Runnymede points out that asset poverty disproportionately affects certain communities (e.g. minority ethnic groups). This asset inequality has severe and wide-ranging consequences for social mobility.

The economic crisis has brought home the dangers of over-reliance on credit to fuel consumption. People and institutions in Europe are beginning to change their behaviour. But we are still not at the point of having developed – or, perhaps, ‘rediscovered’ – the culture of saving which came naturally to previous generations. While the at-risk-of-poverty rate within the EU27 is 16%, those unable to deal with unforeseen expenses is more than twice as high at 34%. This indicates that a significant proportion of European households with income above the poverty threshold still do not have any savings.

Why do savings matter?

Without savings, people are much more vulnerable to unexpected life events – illness, the loss of employment, the break-up of a relationship, for example. Without assets, low-income people often find themselves turning to quick and expensive forms of credit, inadvertently digging themselves into a deeper hole. Savings not only form a cushion and allow people to cover unexpected living expenses; they also enable people to make choices which will improve their lives – to retrain, for example, to change jobs or start a new venture.

Indeed, research indicates that assets have significant positive economic and social effects on individuals, families, and entire communities – they are associated with greater household stability, higher educational attainment, local civic involvement and increased levels of health and satisfaction among adults. Having financial assets reduces the likelihood of poverty being passed on – to children, for example – and makes us look for help before starting new ventures. “We advise start-ups not to overthink… once you start and have something to show, build a network. You see the advantages of the methodology after a few months of working.”

The enthusiasm of the ACAF team comes from firsthand experience: every single staff and Board member is part of a self-financing community. And it is infectious. Four years ago, the first self-financing communities were set up amongst low-income Roma groups in rural Hungary. This project has been supported by the Levi Strauss Foundation, but the model has also attracted keen volunteer advocates who are now introducing SFCs in countries including Indonesia and Italy. After the initial training, ACAF offers ongoing support where necessary. But the team recognise that the best approach is a facilitative one: ‘Nobody knows the reality more than the group members – it’s about guiding them through the decision process but not making the decision for them’. David adds. ACAF also believes in giving groups opportunities to solve problems together. The SFCs meet twice a year, in a large ‘congress’, where common problems are identified and solutions discussed. “People are eager to collaborate to see why things don’t work and to find a solution. Any decision to reuse the technology – the innovation comes from the groups.”

ACAF is now at a turning point. As the model’s success has grown, the team is struggling to support demand, though their focus has shifted from working directly with users to working with ‘initiators’. The team are passionate about communicating the methodology far more widely, so that more low-income people can participate. Moreover, they want to make the most of the energy and experiences being generated by the groups, who are now springing up all over the world as people relocate. Part of their solution is the development of a new digital platform, Winkomuni. This will give free access to the methodology – ‘everyone people need to communicate, promote, create and manage a self-funded community. It will include a networking platform – ‘Winkomuni’ – enabling group members around the world to connect and create their own live learning content.

“We are part of a worldwide savings revolution”, says Patricia Pulido, one of the ACAF team currently working in Tunisia, Italy to establish SFCs. “The post-Venus paradigm is that the key to getting out of poverty isn’t just credit”, David adds. The team hopes that building a global community will help to build self-funded communities locally – on a scale not seen before. For more information about ACAF, go to http://comunidadescaf.org.

Innovative approaches to asset building in Europe

Over a number of years, the Levi Strauss Foundation has nurtured a number of innovative projects in Europe, aimed at bringing about a cultural and political shift around saving. For the last two years, IACD has co-ordinated the network of projects, facilitating opportunities for social innovators to meet, connect and share experiences.

While improving the financial stability and material circumstances of individuals and families may be the goal, the actual impact can be far more far reaching. Where it is based on principles of community development, the process of building financial assets has a wide-ranging and lasting effect. This is illustrated particularly well by the model of self-financing communities.

Case study: Self-funded communities

Asociación Comunidades Autofinanciadas (ACAF) was founded in Barcelona, Spain by Jean Claude Rodriguez-Ferrer Massons, whose impressive list of achievements includes recognition by Ashoka as Social Entrepreneur of 2006 and Globalizer Social Entrepreneur (the cultur 2010). Jean Claude based his model of ‘communidades autofinanciadas’ – or self-funded communities – on the methodology first developed in Venezuela.

Self-funded communities (SFCs) are groups of low-income people, usually between 10 and 30 in number, who buy shares to create a credit fund, from which they finance themselves. There is no external money, and only members can invest in the group. As owners, they decide the credit conditions and receive all the benefits. It is completely self-managed and self-financed. Since ACAF’s foundation in 2004, almost 90 groups have been established in Spain, Hungary, Portugal and the Netherlands.

The premise is that poor people can and do save – but often they do this below the radar, as many have trouble accessing mainstream financial services. ACAF identifies that many millions of people in Europe engage in group savings activities – informal lotteries or tontines, for example – which are often high-risk, undemocratic and insecure. The SFC methodology provides a framework for the development and management of savings groups, based on democratic, transparent structures and good governance.

“During the week I clean houses, at the weekend I’m director of a bank”

The ACAF team are in no doubt that the model works, in terms of giving some financial security to people who are often on the margins. Many, but certainly not all, are migrants – one group member recently described the SFC as ‘the economical family we don’t have now’. The use of the word ‘family’ is significant. According to ACAF, members repeatedly report that, for them, the social networks they develop are more important than the financial benefits of being part of a SFC. “Money is a hook”, explains Abdoulaye Fall of ACAF, “but what is really important is the community that sticks.”

The use of the word ‘family’ is significant. According to ACAF, members repeatedly report that, for them, the social networks they develop are more important than the financial benefits of being part of a SFC. “Money is a hook”, explains Abdoulaye Fall of ACAF, “but what is really important is the community that sticks.”

A Senegalese SFC meets in Barcelona

Over its eight years, ACAF has identified the factors most likely to help a group succeed. Firstly, the group members – often members of a self-financing community. And it is infectious. Four years ago, the first self-financing communities were set up amongst low-income Roma groups in rural Hungary. This project has been supported by the Levi Strauss Foundation, but the model has also attracted keen volunteer advocates who are now introducing SFCs in countries including Indonesia and Italy.

After the initial training, ACAF offers ongoing support where necessary. But the team recognise that the best approach is a facilitative one: ‘Nobody knows the reality more than the group members – it’s about guiding them through the decision process but not making the decision for them’. David adds. ACAF also believes in giving groups opportunities to solve problems together. The SFCs meet twice a year, in a large ‘congress’, where common problems are identified and solutions discussed. “People are eager to collaborate to see why things don’t work and to find a solution. Any decision to reuse the technology – the innovation comes from the groups.”

ACAF is now at a turning point. As the model’s success has grown, the team is struggling to support demand, though their focus has shifted from working directly with users to working with ‘initiators’. The team are passionate about communicating the methodology far more widely, so that more low-income people can participate. Moreover, they want to make the most of the energy and experiences being generated by the groups, who are now springing up all over the world as people relocate. Part of their solution is the development of a new digital platform, Winkomuni. This will give free access to the methodology – ‘everyone people need to communicate, promote, create and manage a self-funded community. It will include a networking platform – ‘Winkomuni’ – enabling group members around the world to connect and create their own live learning content.

“We are part of a worldwide savings revolution”, says Patricia Pulido, one of the ACAF team currently working in Tunisia, Italy to establish SFCs. “The post-Venus paradigm is that the key to getting out of poverty isn’t just credit”, David adds. The team hopes that building a global community will help to build self-funded communities locally – on a scale not seen before. For more information about ACAF, go to http://comunidadescaf.org.
Brazil and the struggle against poverty

Ted Scanlon

Brazil, like many Majority World countries, has produced numerous strategies in the struggle against poverty. With the defeat of the military dictatorship in the 1980s, Popular Movements and demands became more visible. Popular Movement leaders became local councillors and MPs, thus more openly involved as active participants of left wing Political Parties, the majority of whom identified with the Partido Dos Trabalhadores (PT), the Workers Party.

Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva (Lula), a former trade union leader and founder of PT, was elected to the Presidency of Brazil in 2002, on his fourth attempt, and the struggle against poverty gained an important ally. Lula declared that the priority for his government would be the struggle against hunger and launched “Fome Zero” (Zero Hunger). This programme constituted a National Programme of Food Sovereignty aiming to eliminate hunger in Brazil, while promoting a broad range of public policies in favour of the poor in the Amazon region.

In 2010 the PT managed to secure the Inaugural Meeting of the Xingu Vivo para Sempre (People’s Right to the Water) Forum, which has met with strong resistance from indigenous NGOs, the MST, CUT, other left wing Parties, Church groups and a wide range of local community groups.

Both Lula’s and now Dilma’s projects and programmes focused on improving the living conditions of the poor. They also provoked a process of rethinking the role of Popular Movements and popular education in Brazil. During the years of military dictatorship the State was the main target of popular struggles. Now, however, the State is no longer seen as a monolithic entity. Since it can include many Popular Movement leaders within its ranks, it can also contribute to improving some of the basic living conditions of a huge number of people. Due to the participation of Popular Movement leaders it has also stimulated a challenging debate around the role of government, Popular Movements, Political Parties and the meaning of citizenship in general.

“At home” as opposed to “co-opted” or “submissive” Popular Movements, forged through twenty years of struggle, against a military dictatorship, not only engaged in localised struggles for better living conditions, but promoted a process of “conscientization.” This continues to date albeit acquiring a much broader agenda and incorporating new themes. Popular education now requires an understanding of the role of the State in promoting social change as well as how it is influenced by the agendas of different Political Parties and international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

In this new context, demands from all sides are being made upon Popular Movements in Brazil with co-operating processes in force both from right and left wing groups.

However in the midst of this confusing but challenging context a rich variety of organisations has emerged seen most notably in the World Social Forum, the first of which was held in Brazil and since then has counted on active participation from many Brazilian organisations and Popular Movements. The Forum gives global visibility to the tensions, struggles, conflicts and contradictions which characterise world transformation in favour of the majority.

Many lessons can be learned from Brazil’s struggle against poverty among which the need for a coordinated strategy between left wing Political Parties and Popular Movements since all propone to intervene in society to change it: the need to consider the respective roles of “representative” democracy and “direct” democracy and their relationship with civil society in the Third Sector; how to govern from a socialistic perspective in a capitalist world assembly and perhaps above all an urgent need for popular educators to engage in these processes and reinvent popular education in practice.
Celebrating co-operatives: a global movement to build a better world

“Through their distinctive focus on values, co-operatives have proven themselves a resilient and viable business model that can prosper even during difficult times. This success has helped prevent many families and communities from sliding into poverty.”

(Un Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon)

Building youth livelihoods through co-operation

Sally Hartley

T he UN’s nomination of 2012 as the Year of the Co-operative signals an increased interest in and revival of co-operatives. Core to the revival in developing countries is the potential of co-operatives for enabling people to tackle poverty; as the Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation stated, “Co-operatives and producer organisations will be increasingly important in efforts to eliminate hunger and rural poverty” (2012).

Co-operatives are diverse, operating in a number of sectors, ranging in size and operating with different structures – owned by workers, by service users and by consumers. Despite the diversity, there are principles of member ownership and control, as well as the co-operative values of self-help, democracy, equity and equality, that unite them. On the other hand, co-operatives have a mixed history globally and do not always operate according to the principles and values, and as a result questions have been raised about the potential of co-operatives to impact on economic and social development. This has spurred growth in research on the role of co-operatives for development.

My own recent research focused on co-operatives in Lesotho and Uganda – particularly on their role for the growing youth populations. It found that as well as increasing the incomes of youth, co-operative Movements have multiple effects on different areas of a youth’s life – including enhanced personal and social development, and community participation.

Building youth livelihoods through co-operation

Sally Hartley

As part of the revival in Lesotho and Uganda, efforts have been made to engage youth with co-operatives in schools and communities. As a result youth have formed co-operatives doing business in farming, tourism and savings and credit.

In my research, youth reported that co-operative membership provides a number of opportunities for them to change aspects of their lives that they value. They see themselves as becoming better informed, more experienced and better able to manage their lives as they have the finance, the know-how and motivation to develop themselves. They also gain the skills and opportunities to develop relationships with other youth and the wider community. This enhances their networks, provides them with further possibilities for work and community collaborations, and provides secure, trust-based relationships that they can call on when they need financial or emotional support. They also report becoming more interested and engaged with the community; developing a sense of concern for the community; and taking up leadership positions. This community engagement, plus the democratic experience the co-operative provides, increases key areas of citizenship development for youth.

Being in the co-operative also provides important access to finance for youth to grow their businesses.

Canada’s 3,000 co-operatives and credit unions are involved in virtually every sector of the economy and touch the lives of millions of Canadians. No matter where you live in Canada, you are likely to find co-operatives. You can be born with the help of a health care co-op and buried by a funeral co-op. In between, you can work in a worker co-op, live in a housing co-op, eat food produced by a co-operative network, purchase your insurance and get your education from a co-operative network.

Building youth livelihoods through co-operation

Sally Hartley

As part of the revival in Lesotho and Uganda, efforts have been made to engage youth with co-operatives in schools and communities. As a result youth have formed co-operatives doing business in farming, tourism and savings and credit.

In my research, youth reported that co-operative membership provides a number of opportunities for them to change aspects of their lives that they value. They see themselves as becoming better informed, more experienced and better able to manage their lives as they have the finance, the know-how and motivation to develop themselves. They also gain the skills and opportunities to develop relationships with other youth and the wider community. This enhances their networks, provides them with further possibilities for work and community collaborations, and provides secure, trust-based relationships that they can call on when they need financial or emotional support. They also report becoming more interested and engaged with the community; developing a sense of concern for the community; and taking up leadership positions. This community engagement, plus the democratic experience the co-operative provides, increases key areas of citizenship development for youth.

Being in the co-operative also provides important access to finance for youth to grow their businesses.

Community-based strategies for alleviating poverty: the Canadian perspective on co-operatives

Keith Cossey

Early interest in co-operatives as a poverty reduction strategy emerged from England in the early 1800s from industrialist and social reformer Robert Owen’s “Report on the Poor”. Responding to the atrocious working and living conditions of the time, he advocated the use of a network of co-operative communities for the poor to provide opportunities for their self-rehabilitation.

The development of Canadian co-operatives was informed and inspired by two parallel movements: the UK co-operative movement, led by the Owen-inspired Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in 1844, and American farmers movements such as the Grange, which emerged in 1867 after the American Civil War. For more than 150 years, co-operatives have played a major role in the life of Canadians and their communities. Many co-ops were initially set up to avoid exploitive “middlemen” and moneylenders and to assist workers and farmers to become masters of their own destiny.

Canada’s first co-operative was a mutual insurance company, established by farmers in what is now Quebec and Ontario as early as the 1830s. From the 1860s onwards, large numbers of farming-based co-operatives were developed, for the purchase of inputs, such as fertilisers, and to sell produce. As a result, many youth reported that they have not seen co-operatives, seeing it as more relevant to their parents, until they learnt more from co-operative officers or from seeing their peers joining and benefitting from co-operatives.

Finally the research showed consistently that youth reported having more confidence, as values-based structures to ensure the social and economic impact on their members; they also reported having a better understanding of legislation and mandates, particularly at a national level, to create the freedom for independent and true co-operatives to develop.

More information about this research and co-operatives can be accessed through www.co-op.ca

Sally Hartley is based at the Development Policy Practice Department, Open University, UK. Her interest is in finding ways to bridge academic research and practical practice – producing applied and useful research in innovative ways that practitioners want to use.

Co-operatives have a long history in Africa from the start of the 20th century when they were typically located in the farming sector. Farmers came together to buy inputs, such as fertilisers, and to sell produce. As a group, members were able to negotiate better prices. Over time co-operatives have expanded beyond agriculture. They have experienced periods of success and failure. They have been criticized for failing to bring economic benefits to all of their members, particularly women, and of being at risk of capture by elites. More recently the number of co-operatives has again grown, particularly in the area of farming and also savings and credit. Co-operatives are being promoted by national governments and adopted by community members as a way to tackle unemployment and poverty.
Community organising has provided an important development model for over 50 years. From its early years in Chicago it has spread across North America. Initially this was through the Industrial Areas Foundation created by Saul Alinsky. However, a range of variations on the original model quickly developed, the most famous of these being ACORN (Association of Community Organisations for Reform Now) founded by Wade Rathke. Variations on community organising are now found in India, South Africa, Australia and the UK, where it has influenced policy discussions around the idea of the Big Society and is leading to the recruitment of 5000 new ‘community organisers’.

The fundamental idea behind community organising is that disadvantaged people can only effectively change their circumstances by obtaining more power over their individual lives and their communities. To do this they need to build large, powerful organisations that can and will challenge existing sources of power (corporations, city councils, the state). In Rules for Radicals, Alinsky wrote that the goal is to build power organisations “to realize the democratic dream of equality, justice, peace... Better to die on your feet than to live on your knees”.

With statements such as these and a history of radical campaigning, it comes as no surprise that community organising is seen by right-wing politicians as a neo-communist conspiracy, and anyone associated with it a virtual hate figure. Community organising must therefore be doing something right.

With a long history, an increasing number of variations of the model, international diversity and sometimes government support, community organising is now a multifaceted approach. To try and get a sense of where community organising is going and its possible contribution to broader community development, recently visited Chicago – the city where it all started.

Back of the Yards Neighbourhood Council (BYNC)

Located on the south side of Chicago, the Back of the Yards area is named after its location next to the large Union Pacific railway yard. It is the old meatpacking area of the city, labelled by Upton Sinclair as ‘The Jungle’ and the poet Carl Sandburg as the ‘hog butcher for the world’. The area was until recently populated mainly by East European, especially Polish, immigrants. Alinsky’s innovation was to see the potential to use aggressive trade union organising tactics to mobilise a poor community to fight for improvements in its terrible living conditions. To do this he needed to build alliances with the Catholic Church – the main form of organisation in the neighbourhood. Alinsky was also able to bring on board the diverse ethnic groups in the area and a range of schools and social clubs, to create a broad-based local coalition committed to social change.

In the early years BYNC engaged in conflicts with the Union Stockyard owners and the city, increasingly, though, BYNC obtained resources for neighbourhood development, for example the then-innovative school lunch programme. By the 1970s much of the European population had moved away and the area became increasingly dominated by Hispanic immigration and a significant African American population. BYNC also changed into the key service delivery organisation for the area, with an increasing focus on social and cultural support and economic development.

As part of Nova Scotia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy, Target 100 is an exciting new initiative developed by the Nova Scotia Co-operative Council in partnership with the Provincial Department of Community Services. The program is designed to recruit, train and hire 100 people who are living in poverty or falling into poverty. Jobs will be offered in co-operatives and credit unions over 5 years. Target 100 will demonstrate the values inherent in the co-operative sector – self-help, equality, honesty, fairness, social responsibility and caring for others.

The International Labour Organization’s 2003 report on “Working Out of Poverty” found that participation and inclusion are central to poverty reduction and that co-operatives are an ideal instrument for such initiatives build human capacity through regaining traditional knowledge and reconnecting with these initiatives build human capacity through regaining traditional knowledge and reconnecting generations for hope, healing, and health. Examples include Saskatchewan Trappers Co-op and Big River First Nation Arts Co-op.

Youth-based co-operative organizations, such as Youth Development Corporation and Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op, are examples of how to break the poverty cycle by empowering at risk youth through employment and job skills training with support and mentoring. Housing co-ops provide homes to members on a continuing basis and operate as close to cost as possible.

An Arctic co-operative

Canadians continue to use the co-op model in innovative ways to address a wide range of needs and challenges.

“to realize the democratic dream of equality, justice, peace... Better to die on your feet than to live on your knees” - Saul Alinsky

A St Patrick’s Day parade from the BYNC archives

The Youth Development Corporation, a local youth-based co-operative organization, are examples of how to break the poverty cycle by empowering at risk youth through employment and job skills training with support and mentoring. Housing co-ops provide homes to members on a continuing basis and operate as close to cost as possible.
Currently BYNC provides a diverse range of activities covering community and personal needs, whilst supporting the cultural diversity of the area. For example:

- **Youth services:**
  - Homework tutoring
  - Computer classes
  - Mexican folk dances
  - Youth Council

- **Adult services:**
  - English Classes
  - Legal advice

- **Seniors services:**
  - Senior club covering health and safety
  - Issues and social support
  - Free transportation using BYNC's own bus fleet
  - Benefits advice
  - Computer training

In addition BYNC is involved in supporting access to free medical care, and collective initiatives to regenerate the community, create employment and stimulate inward investment.

### The Woodlawn Organisation (TWO)

Just a few miles away from the Back of the Yards is the neighbourhood of Woodlawn. Until the late 1940’s Woodlawn was mainly a white middle class area, including many people employed by the nearby University of Chicago. From the 1950’s onwards the area was characterised by ‘white flight’ to the suburbs and increased inward migration and expansion of the African American community.

The Woodlawn Organisation was formed in the early 1960s to resist urban clearance by the University of Chicago and support the wider civil rights and voter registration campaigns. Just as the Catholic Church significantly funded the BYNC, TWO was initially funded by a coalition of local churches.

Over the years TWO has moved from activities covering urban regeneration and the direct delivery of services. Its organisational structure is based upon a broad alliance of block clubs, churches, tenant councils and other civic and institutional organisations.

TO two employs around 350 staff working in the areas of real estate, health, education, social service, law, urban planning and policy, finance, administration, employment training and advocacy. Currently TWO programmes include:

- Housing for more than 10,000 citizens
- Daycare and Head Start for more than 200 children
- Child abuse counselling for 70 families
- Alcohol and substance abuse residential treatment for 2500 persons
- Crisis intervention for 150 mentally ill adults
- Welfare to work programs for more than 300 clients

In addition a comprehensive network of health and education services focus on infant mortality reduction and reaches more than 3000 teenagers and young adults.

### Lessons

The basic premise of community organising is that disadvantaged communities cannot achieve serious change unless there is a transfer of power. This is where community organising and more traditional community development part company. Community development can be small scale and operates under the direct hegemony of the state. Community organising challenges many of the assumptions which underpin this approach. Maybe we are often simply not ambitious enough in challenging the status quo, and do not believe sufficiently in the ability of people to create a better world. As Alinsky wrote “we must believe that it is the darkest before the dawn of a beautiful new world. We will see it when we believe it.”

### Links

- Back of the Yards Neighbourhood Council: http://bync.org/
- Back of the Yards: Our Story
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oOdtGkNqY
  - The Woodlawn Organisation: http://twocicago.org/Blog/

**Recommended is Saul Alinsky’s ‘Rules for Radicals’ which outlines his basic system for building community organisations.**

**Rod Purcell is Director of Community Engagement at the University of Glasgow and IACD Board Member. Community Organising: An International Study, by Dave Beck and Rod Purcell will be published by Policy Press in early 2013. Rod can be contacted at Rod.Purcell@Glasgow.ac.uk**

---

**Victory Village Forum: a partnership approach to transformation**

Victory Village – Nelson, New Zealand was named 2010 Community of the Year for outstanding development, and, as a result, many people wanted to find out first hand about Village achievements.

In true Victory style they came up with a creative response and worked with The Families Commission and Inspiring Communities to run a national forum – based at the Village. Initially the idea was to meet the strong public interest in Victory. Then it grew into an opportunity for others to share their experiences.

Victoria Village describes the partnership between Victory Community Health Centre (VCHC) and Victory Primary School (5-13 age group) and active relationships with families, the broader community, local and central government agencies and supporters.

In the last ten years it has become the hub and heart of the wider Victory community.

**250 participants – and a waiting list**

So in July 2011 more than 250 people from different sectors and from around the country were warmly welcomed to Victory Village to experience Victory’s approach to family-centred, community-led development. Developed their understanding of new ways of working and to plan together for further success and tangible progress.

A group of innovative organisations and community leaders and practitioners, representatives from local government, iwi (Maori tribes) central government, support agencies, services, philanthropic organisations and NGOs experienced Victory Village. They shared their own developments and were able to access skills workshops about family-centred, community-led development.

The forum was full beyond capacity with a waiting list.

**It’s all in the design**

The Forum set out to build a network of people to support and inspire each other, understand how meaningful change occurs, demonstrate progress and systems change.

This was a tall order and meant the forum design was taken seriously. Along with content-filled workshops and panel sessions it was evident, demonstrate progress and systems change that the local city administration or other institutions. The size and political power of community organising often means they can attract scarce inward investment and negotiate the take over of major service programmes.

A final point is that it is important to think big. For twochicago.org now delivers housing for 10,000 people, and in New York the community organization East Brooklyn Congregations has built over 5000 homes, other community organisations bid for funding in the tens of millions of dollars.

**What did people get out of the Forum?**

Overwhelmingly, themes of pride, achievement and positivity emerged from the forum. Participants shared stories of communities using their strengths to lead locally run initiatives, local government and businesses understanding the importance of applying the ‘family lens’ and successes ‘against the odds’.

The Victory story was a highlight – ordinary people taking continued small steps towards the extraordinary.

“We called ourselves ‘opportunity rich’ because we were a low-decile school. Not everybody believed to have an educational value, there was also social capital,” Mark Brown, Principal, Victory Primary School.

Following the forum, participants were invited to provide feedback. Satisfaction was very high, with 89 percent of survey respondents being extremely satisfied or very satisfied.

Four specific highlights were identified:

- Being at Victory Village – having a chance to see, hear and feel what it is like – and the opportunity to meet a range of people from Victory.
- Having the chance to network with like-minded people from around New Zealand.
- The World Café because it brought together the forum themes.
- Home groups – they helped make sense of the forum and built relationships.

The Forum emphasised the importance of local communities leading. Successful change must be driven ‘from the ground’, and communities must ‘own’ the process – was a key message. Equally, the local ‘dots’ need to be joined up across the country, and insights gained at the forum shared with key community funders, policy makers and central government.

People were keen to see resources, case studies and support materials disseminated – the wealth of ideas and case studies and support materials.

A forum report has been published and discussed at existing regional networks.

The organising group is planning future involvements, including a possible learning resource. The forum has already been a special feature of NZ’s Future Times: www.futureresources.org.nz
Victory Village: It takes a village to raise a child
About 6000 people live in Victory and over 3000 are in the highest need category according to NZ’s deprivation index. Life can be tough and hasn’t always been rosy for the Victory community. Ten years ago the area was characterised by high levels of crime, low school achievement, high numbers of families moving in and out, a large number of solo parents, high numbers of refugees and migrants and low access to health care.
Mark Brown, Principal at Victory Primary School, stresses that everyone matters at Victory. “We don’t enrol a child, we enrol a whole family.”

Transformation from ‘lows’ to ‘highs’ – “we are all in this together”
Over the last decade the community has transformed itself into a place that thrives – with students achieving higher than national averages in many areas, higher levels of safety, improved housing quality, a more settled population and a more actively engaged community that remains similar in make up to 10 years ago (see: www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0ydg08aqt)
It is this transformation that sparked popular interest in Victory Village and in the Forum. On the surface it is a school campus that has a community centre and health services. In reality it is so much more.
The combined ways of thinking about learning, education, accessible services and strengths-based, community development have produced shared values and an innovative approach. It is a first step provider and facilitator of health, education and environmental services, community connections and celebrations. Services and activities support health and well being, are low cost and accessible to all residents.
For example families receive support that addresses needs and family strengths – this evolves as families’ circumstances, needs and capacities change. Reciprocity is another key principle – as people are helped, so they become helpers.
Victory Village creates an environment where people, services and ideas positively converge and this cross fertilisation strengthens and expands activities. Education and community health and development positively overlap and intersect in many ways to nurture families.

Partners in the Forum
Families Commission
The Families Commission is a centre of excellence for knowledge about families and whānau.
This is achieved through the key activities of:
• knowledge creation
• knowledge synthesis
• knowledge translation
• knowledge transfer
• knowledge exchange
Use of kaupapa Māori models, methods and processes.
Policy and support are often based on the idea that government and organisations provide services to families, and families simply receive those services. Commission research shows clearly the limited success of this model. Instead, families, whānau, and community need to be seen as a core part of the solution, with services supporting. Families and communities help to design and deliver the support needed. When this happens, services and support are more accessible, successful and cost effective.
www.nzfamilies.org.nz

Inspiring Communities
Inspiring Communities champions community to flourish. It is a not for profit Trust that has been working since 2008 to grow the recognition, understanding and practice of community-led development (CLD) and promote the difference it makes in Aotearoa New Zealand. Inspiring Communities is part of a growing network of people practising community-led development in NZ. Inspiring Communities provides a connecting hub. The opportunity to co-create the Victory Village forum was seized, both to profile the local story, and to create an inaugural national opportunity for sharing and learning about how the two lenses of family-centred and community-led can work hand in hand.

Although relatively new Inspiring Communities is already highly valued for its:
• active contribution to raising the profile of communities and community-led development
• sharing of communities’ learning through tools and tips, case studies and stories
• promotion of the theory and framing of community-led development
• role in identifying, discussing and profiling emerging community themes and issues (November, 2011 Survey)
www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz

Authors: Mary-Jane Rivers and Barbara MacLennan (Inspiring Communities)
Kindra Douglas (Victory Village)
Charlie Moore (The Families Commission)

2. Taken from Paths of Victory, a 2010 report undertaken with Victory Village by The Families Commission – http://www.nzfamilies.org.nz

About IACD
IACD is a global network of community development organisations, practitioners, researchers, activists and policy makers who are committed to issues of global justice.

What do we do?
IACD links people to each other. We facilitate learning and practice exchange, both virtually and face-to-face. We work with partners to deliver regional, national and international events, study visits and conferences. We document the work that our members are doing around the world by collecting case studies, tools and materials on community development, and sharing these through our website, publications and ebulletins. We carry out research projects, drawing on international experience.

IACD aims to give its members a voice at the global level, advocating for community development principles and practice in international forums and consultations. IACD has consultative status with the UN and its agencies.

Further information
For full details and to join, go to www.iacdglobal.org/join-us.
Benefits of membership include:
• Regular ebulletins and email updates
• Access to restricted areas of the IACD website, with opportunities for learning and practice exchange
• Opportunities to participate in study visits and other face-to-face learning events
• Discounted rates at IACD conferences
• Discounted subscriptions to the Community Development Journal
• Opportunities to share your work and experiences with a global audience, through our website, ebulletins, newsletters and other publications
Non-members can sign up to our free ebulletin by following the link on our homepage.

Contributing articles
Our international Practice Insights publications are issued twice a year, each one focusing on a particular theme of relevance to community development. If you would like further information or to contribute to future editions, please contact gill.musk@iacdglobal.org.

Alternatively, IACD members are welcome at any time to contribute news items, research, case studies or other materials to our regular ebulletins and to the IACD website.