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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

theory and practices in central and eastern europe

5

Approaches and Trends in CEE

Community development is a process of developing active and sustainable communities most importantly based on social justice and mutual respect. Thus we could say that community development is about changing power structure and removing the barriers that prevent community members from participating in issues that are affecting their lives.

Community development is about communities. Mostly – we talk about community of location or so called geographical communities. Thus they could consist of either people living in a block of flats or people living in Bulgaria, or people living in Central Europe. But there are communities of culture that differ from the community of location. It is important to make differences based on the different type of communities. Most of us are working with communities of culture that represent a kind of a subgroup that is called community of need. Thus most often we are working with marginalized groups....

Talking about community development we are talking about community organisations. That could vary from groups of relatives to local foundation. They could work on different geographical scales. However the agents of change in the community development process are the citizens' groups. Thus most often we are working with civil society organisations...

Community development is based on certain values such as social justice, participation, equality, most important on learning, effective work and flexibility. As we very often use as a slogan, it is based on working together for better communities...

And finally it is about commitment to challenge the discrimination and oppressive practises in different communities no matter whether they are geographical or communities of culture. It is about developing practices and policies that are part of the sustainable development, encouraging networking and connections, about influencing policy mostly from the perspective of the community members. It's about prioritising the issues of concern to people, it is about promoting long term sustainable social change, and it is about supporting community collective actions.

The above mentioned is very much related to the WCIF mission statement – we are encouraging different communities to take responsibility and work actively for social development using effectively local resources. Actually WCIF is investing in socially responsible communities, in people challenging the local power structures, in organisations effectively developing local resources and responding to the most urgent needs.

The above mentioned is valid for many other organisations and Community development practitioners, gathered in a conference in Sofia, discussing the Community development process, practices and prospects. In this issue of the CD Journal we are presenting to your attention some of the presentations made during the conference. They describe the community development practices both in Bulgaria and Romania, the trends in the field, the approaches used, reflecting most of the issues mentioned above – the Bulgarian challenges to the community development process (Rumen Petrov), the role of the faith groups and religious institutions in the process (Plamen Sivov and Anemary Gasser), the poverty alleviation practice of micro lending (Elena Trifonova), community organising (Roxana Mircu and Razvan Stan). At the same time we have developed a case study to show the effect of a development programme over a community group. There are two additional things, a follow up from the previous issue, that seemed important to us as well as three articles from Alliance magazine, that are in line with the topic of the current issue.

Enjoy your reading,

Iliyana Nikolova

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International Conference “Community development approaches and trends in Central and Eastern Europe”, Sofia, 2007

The international conference on Community Development Approaches and Trends in CEE was organized in Sofia, Bulgaria (November 29th - 30th 2007) as a part of the project Dialog on community development – discourse and practice in CEE, funded by EC. The Conference was a profound opportunity for presenting and discussing different good practices in the field of Community development (CD) developed and implemented in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), after the fall of the communist regimes. The aim of the conference was to bring together theory and practice and to provoke discussion on similarities and differences, on challenges and prospective, on communication and partnership, on donors' role and public involvement. Sociologists, social anthropologists, art and cultural studies specialists together with civic organisations practitioners and local authorities' representatives discussed issues based on their experience and reflect on community development as an instrument for social development.

The Bulgarian and Romanian practices were given special attention as the project within the framework of the conference was focused on the two countries. Among the many different conclusions made during the conference, one was that the role of the local authorities and their commitment for local development is crucial for the implementation of community development initiatives both in Bulgaria and Romania as well as elsewhere in the region. Discussing CD processes, other national and regional similarities and differences were noticed but the role of civic organisations as leading agents for community development were definitively pointed out. Related to this the role of the donors was also discussed and the future for CD is seen mainly in projects funded by European Structural Funds and other European financial instruments.

The conference was opened by Iliyana Nikolova, WCIF Executive Director. In her presentation she tried to outline the conference topics, and the reasons behind their selection.

The first plenary session was developed and delivered with the aim of building common understanding on the term community development and its principles and practices. How do we understand Community Development as a development instrument? What is the social profit of its implementation? What are the implications of CD? What makes a certain Community Development (CD) approach successful? All these questions were discussed in the presentations of the keynote Bulgarian and Romanian speakers. At the same time answers were given from different perspectives of the speakers and participants.

PhD. Rumen Petrov and PhD Haralan Alexandrov from Bulgarian Institute for Human Relations, presented the basic concepts of CD and point out the main challenges that the communities and

community identifications in Bulgaria confront. The presentation Community development from the perspective of the human relations theory and practice describes CD as active involvement of people in the issues that affect their lives and focuses on the relations between individuals and groups and the institutions that shape their everyday life.



The heavily centralized and domineering central government was recognized as a main challenge of CD in Bulgarian context. An additional obstacle for successes in community development the speakers see in the limited community affiliation based on the contemporary Bulgarians forced to re-understand their connections with some traditional communities and to establish new ones in very short time. "Since nobody feels welcome in this country, in terms of the way his needs are addressed by public institutions, people somehow struggle to survive in these closed communities which are kind of clientless networks " Haralan Aleksandrov

Talking about the poverty alleviation as a main aim for CD H. Aleksandrov shared that there are huge challenges for all those working in the field of academic researches or policy-making and conceptualization – one of them is how to remain sensitive towards the very individual human needs. "It is not easy to talk about that... Poor people are not a pleasant view; very often, they create feelings we want to avoid. This is the reason we the academy representatives prefer to talk about poverty rather than about poor people. Thus we try to defend ourselves from the reality of human suffering."

PhD Marieta Tzvetkova from Resource Centre Foundation presented three approaches in Community development that have been implemented in Bulgaria for fifteen years now. She made a comparison of those three approaches and their vertical orientation. Two of them were top-down oriented – initiated by the donors and implemented with their money on local level addressing the local communities. Despite the main agents involved and addressed on local level – formal or informal leaders, local authorities etc. - the top-down approach did not work, because its nature does not create a possibility for real local initiatives. The third of the presented

approaches was about a community where people are stimulated to work together and collect money from local sources themselves and therefore are to receive additional funding for their initiative realization. This is the only down-up oriented approach where the initiative is given to the community groups and foundations and this is the only one successful and sustainable. With her presentation Marieta Tzvetkova raised several questions about the donors' responsibility in the CD process.

Prof. Teodor Alexiu, The West University of Timisoara, Romania in his presentation made a distinction between communities of interests as a group of people who share common values and behaviors and have a sense of group identity and community of location where only interests are in common. The speaker presented his idea that in CD in CEE the problem is very often in the existence of different interests within the community and thus the main development question is who represents the legitimate interest and who has to be empowered. Prof. Alexiu shared the opinion that the local authority is the one that has to take over the responsibility for local needs fulfillment, especially when the foreign donors are leaving.

The parallel panels of the conference were organized around different topics closely related to the Community Development approach and its practical application.

In the first panel on Rural development there were two speakers from Romania. Vasile Deac from Romanian Association for Counseling and Support and Roxana Mirciu – from PACT Foundation (her presentation is available within the magazine) The session was moderated by Stefan Stoyanov, Freelance Consultant from Bulgaria, with extensive CD practices, being involved for years in Partners Foundation Bulgaria activities.

Vasile Deac presented cases related to his work within the Romanian Association for Counseling and Support and shared his perception as a practitioner opposite to the opinion of the university professors. His impression of significant development within the rural areas achieved especially in terms of strategy development was backed with the practice of participation of many municipalities in Leader programme.

During the panel on Community Development and Environmental Issues Stefan Popov from the Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation made a presentation, focused on community role in sustainable development. The presentation described involvement of the community members in sustainable development as working and learning together /valuing and using the skills, knowledge, experience and diversity within communities/, empowering communities to develop their independence and autonomy and participation development - everyone has the right to fully participate in the decision making processes that affect their lives. Those are the main lines where the community could participate - protection, quality development and maintenance of the environmental resources.

In the Poverty Alleviation and Minorities Issues panel the participants discussed the nature of poverty and the key speakers presented different approaches for poverty alleviation. In this issue we published the presentations of Anemarie Gasser from the International Organisation for Christian Charity, Romania and Elena Trifonova, Catholic Relief Services, Bulgaria (both presentations are published in current Journal edition). Elena Kabakchieva, Health and Social Development Foundation, Bulgaria made another presentation. She presented a case study developed on the base of the work done by her organisation. The audience got acquainted with the experience of solving health care problems of the Roma, living in the biggest Roma neighbourhood in Sofia.

Two parallel evening sessions were held thematically regarding the role of culture and art in community building and organizing.

Within the first one Svetla Kazalarska from Sofia University "St. Kliment of Ohrid", Bulgaria and Momchil Tsonev, White School Foundation, Bulgaria presented their articles and viewpoints published in the 3rd edition of the CD Journal. There was a discussion moderated by Yuriy Vulkovsky about the cross-cutting of art, community life and social development.



The second session on Art and Community Development was focused on Forum Theatre method. The workshop named Forum Theatre – an artistic method for community development was a dynamic and experimental exercise for the participants, developed alongside the principles of learning by doing. Each participant took an active role in the performance, aimed at solving community problems. The session was lead by Violina Vasileva from Theatre Tzvetze, Bulgaria. During the session Florina Rizoica from Romanian Association for Community Development, Romania presented the project "Forum Theatre – a method for adult education" implemented in Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Slovakia and Poland and funded by EC. Except the performance of the Forum theatre method, a discussion on its applicability was held.

During the second day of the Conference, there were two parallel panels and closing plenary. One of the sessions was devoted to Agents of Community Development where special attention was given to the local authorities as a key actor in CD process. Valentin Mitrita Giorgita Mayor, Romania, held the presentation about the role of the local authorities and their involvement with other stakeholders in the community. He presented his involvement in CD project within the community and stressed on the role of local administration in any process of local development, mentioning the lobbying as an important instrument for earning local administration involvement. The other speakers within the same panel presented the specific role of Bulgarian local community organisations – chitalishte (Katya Ivanova, Chitalishte Foundation, Bulgaria)

- and church as actors for community mobilization and organizing by (Plamen Sivov, Pokrov Foundation, Bulgaria his article is available in the Journal).

In the parallel panel the Approaches in Community Development the CD process were discussed. The Romanian speaker Marcel Yordache from The West University of Timisoara, Romania made a presentation on Allocation of the community resources. The resources classification, as well as identification and measurement of available resources is a substantial part of the CD approach. Kaja Mikova, Partners for Democratic Change, Slovakia presented a case of building both public spaces and living communities. Her presentation gave impression on one way of approaching community that became a base for further discussion.

The Prospects for Community Development were discussed in the closing plenary session during the second day of the Conference. Ginka Kapitanova and prof. Neli Petrova gave the main input. The discussion after their presentation was a kind of follow up on the issues discussed in the opening plenary of the Conference – and namely – sustainability of community development practices, challenges due to cultural, administrative or bureaucratic practises; importance of the good communication with the local authorities etc.

Ms Ginka Kapitanova, Foundation for Local Government Reform, Bulgaria presented a seven years CD program aimed at strengthening local communities through development of structured and open public debates on local level with the participation of all community stakeholders. The programme was implemented in 60 local communities where local discussion forums with large and diverse participation of citizens, organisations and institutions were organized. During the project those forums initiated discussions on community problems and proposed solutions on the base of major community approval. The results could be summarised as raised capacity of the involved communities and a creation of channels for communication and cooperation between local authorities and other stakeholders. On the base of the presented practice the perspectives for CD were discussed, mostly in the direction of involvement of local authorities in the process, as once attracted they guarantee sustainability of the process. Thus the involvement of local authorities was considered as the main challenge to the community development practices in Bulgaria and Romania.

Prof. Neli Petrova, Social Activities and Practices Institute, presented practices related to community based services for children, focused on real child needs and respectful to their rights. Substantial part of her presentation was given to the perspective for development of community-based social services and important role of the community based cooperation with the local authorities for their successful implementation.

The final discussion entered in details related to the community development and the role of the civil society organisations in the process. The participants discussed the responsibilities of local NGOs, their collaboration with other community stakeholders, their interaction with different donor agencies and how the donors' priorities reflect in the process of Community development. The discussion also tried to find answers of questions like who should be responsible for the community development or who is the owner of the community vision, etc. The prospects for the community development were seen in the participatory process as democratic approach in the very foundations of the Community Development as the only way of having reliable criteria for inevitable choices in development processes. In that direction the role of the local authorities was seen as a leading agent.

Community Development from the Perspective of the Human Relations Theory and Practice

Rumen Petrov

The current article was presented during the International Conference on Community Development and covers main issues related to the Community Development approach. What is CD, how it works, what are the main challenges in Bulgaria and what are the possibilities for bringing together practitioners and theoreticians are questions that find their answers within the article.

Rumen Petrov, PhD is assistant professor at the New Bulgarian University and works at the Bulgarian Institute for Human Relations in Sofia, Bulgaria.

What is development?

Development represents growth, and growth means much more than simply gaining mass. To grow also means to become more complex and viable. Development is a gradual process of achieving a higher level of complexity, which subsequently enables a system to adapt better to its environment, whether it is an individual, a group or an organisation. Development drives the improvement of the inner organisation of a system such as a group or society in general. This becomes apparent when observing the increased capacity of different units or individuals within a system to self-organize and to reach higher levels of individuality, solidarity and creative collaboration amongst themselves. In societal terms, human development at all levels promotes autonomy, learning and interdependence and the sustainable utilization of natural resources.

Development means change

Development also represents social change in the following cultural dimensions:

- The technological dimension, which is culturally expressed by human and technological capital, by the tools and skills utilized and by the methods of coping with and improving the individual's physical environment. This is the interaction between humanity and nature.
- The economic dimension, which is expressed by the various methods and means of production and the allocation of wealth, goods and services represented by activities such as donations, obligations, bartering, market trade, or state allocations.
- The political dimension, which is expressed by the different ways and means of allocating power and decision making. It encompasses the various types of governments and management systems and includes the ways people make decisions about their community life.
- The social or institutional dimension, which is expressed through the manner in which people act, react, interact between each other, and their expectation of each other. It includes institutions such as marriage or friendship, roles such as a mother or a police officer, status or class structures, and other patterns of human behavior.
- The ideological dimension or the views and perspectives of the world, comprises the structure of ideas that people have about good and bad, about beautiful and ugly, and about right and wrong, although they can sometimes be unconscious, inconsistent, or even contradictory. These ideas are employed as justifications that people cite to explain their actions.

What is community?

Community is the web of personal relationships, groups, networks, traditions and patterns of behaviors that exist amongst those who share physical neighborhoods, socio-economic conditions or common understanding and interests.

A community is a group of people, which share distinctive geographical, cultural and social characteristics. Within the group, there exists a specific relation called belonging.

To belong to a human group means to recognize and to be recognized by this same group of people. The relationship thus established is one of interdependence between the individual and the group.

Contemporary community challenges in Bulgaria:

People today are forced to sever their connections with the traditional communities and to establish new ones in very short time spans due to migration, urbanization, and the transition from totalitarian to democratic public arrangements.

The severe inequalities which occur between the different communities create the so called communities of the oppressed. In Bulgaria, a public consensus hasn't been reached yet as to whether such communities exist and what would be the best social policy to alleviate their fate.

Currently, the contemporary Bulgarian citizen experiences a dramatic change in predominately the technological, political, social and ideological cultural dimensions. This change goes generally unassisted and unmediated in regards to the emotional cost it entails.

Thus one of the basic human needs; the need to belong and to feel valuable and interdependent is denied to many vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, mentally ill people and children, the elderly, HIV positive people and immigrants.

There are drastic urban-rural inequalities, which additionally erode the community sense of belonging and the human dignity in depopulated, abandoned and severely underserved rural areas and the over-populated and environmentally deleterious urban districts. These two challenges would definitely benefit from a community development approach and a shift from the centralized and uninvolved manner of management.

Poverty

Community development defines poverty as social exclusion and strives to alleviate it while recognizing its roots in human relations driven by social stigmas and oppression.

Community development challenges the dominant assumption in Bulgaria that the state is the only agent of development. This is the main reason why it is largely unpopular as a policy making paradigm at present. Community development regards many spheres of public life as opportunities for citizens to participate, learn and improve the quality of their life:

finances (budgeting), housing (tenants associations), urban planning (regeneration), education (especially primary but increasingly often higher education too), penitentiary services and probation programs, health (primary health and public health issues), mental health (community mental health care, prevention and promotion), social welfare (child protection, youth work, the elderly), culture (local identities, traditions, oral history, festivals etc), security (community policing) etc...

In order to be democratically managed many, if not all of these policy areas require a dramatic cultural change within and amongst all citizens. Community development workers should be prepared to face this potential limitation.

Community development then, is

the process of developing active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about influencing power structure to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives...CD expresses values of fairness, equality, accountability, opportunity, choice, participation, mutuality, reciprocity and continuous learning. Education, enabling and empowerment are at the core of Community Development. (The Federation for Community Development Learning)

The community work approach emphasizes the active involvement of the people with the issues that affect their lives and focuses on the relationship between the individuals and groups and the institutions, which shape their everyday lives.

Community development is a democratic process of inclusion and engagement of citizens in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the public services they consume. Community development

includes rather than precludes social action and public protests as a means towards achieving desired results and changes.

Bulgarian community development challenges today

It is clear that the primary task of any heavily centralized and domineering central government prone to corruption with a lack of effective accountability and an inhumane public service system is not human development but exerting control over people's lives.

The most striking examples and specific cases are the following:

- The abusive institutionalization of children with special needs;
- The severe stigma and social exclusion created by the traditional mental health care system;
- The exclusion and neglect for Roma poverty;
- The deepening educational inequalities between rural and urban areas;
- The institutionalized segregation of Turkish and Roma minorities;
- The helpless and inefficient yet unreformed school system;
- The centralized and inefficient system of disaster and emergency management.

Such institutions breed a culture of dependency, passive aggression, cynicism, apathy and an overall corruption of the public. The overall cultural outcome is a pervasive lack of political activity and organized social action, a poor collective public life, widespread poverty and the lack of sustainability of the work of the non-profit organisations.

Community development still lacks a strong political representation, as of yet no political party has included CD based policies within its programs.

Furthermore, only a few citizens and/or organisations express criticisms towards the dominant centralized paradigm and the inhumanness of many of the public services in Bulgaria.

Dependency

The primary challenge CD has to face in Bulgaria is the "dependency syndrome" - the belief that a group cannot solve its own problems without external assistance. This weakness is additionally amplified by charitable actions. For example, if an outside agency such as the Government, an international NGO, or a mission comes to a community and builds for example a water supply facility then naturally the community members will see the infrastructure as owned by the outside agency. Therefore, when that agency leaves or runs out of funds the community members will lack the motivation to repair and maintain the facility or to sustain the service.

Unless the community as a whole has been involved in the planning, management and overall decision-making concerning the facility and has willingly contributed to its construction, the sense of responsibility or ownership will be lacking.

The facility acquired by the community will not be effectively utilized, maintained or sustained.

As populations grow, the governments are getting less access to the fewer resources per capita every year. It is simply no longer feasible for communities to be completely dependent upon central governments for infrastructure, facilities and services. The same applies to international donors such as the government of wealthy countries, UN, World Bank, international NGOs as they simply do not have enough resources to give to every poor community around the world no matter how worthwhile the cause.



Whereas it was once believed that community self-reliance in itself was a good thing as it promoted grass roots democracy, human rights, self-development, and human dignity, now it has gone much further than that. If communities cannot become more and more self-reliant and empowered, unfortunately, they simply will not develop and poverty and apathy will eventually destroy them.

Counteracting dependency is the primary goal of the community development approach. Dependency in the community must be reduced by every action a community development worker undertakes. When training a community organisation how to obtain resources best the trainer must keep that goal in mind and act accordingly. A donor agency should try to avoid giving the community something for nothing as this encourages dependency. A genuine community development approach must always encourage community members by stressing that they can implement the project themselves and that the role of a community development worker is to offer some skills and tips while the actual work must be done by the community.

The community development worker role is to mobilize and facilitate: he/she can provide communities with guidelines as to how to raise money and other resources, educate how to ensure that finances can be kept transparent and simple, and how to translate non-monetary donations into financial inputs. At the same time

the development worker must always emphasize that the actual obtaining of the resources must be initiated by the community or community-based

organisations.

Community development is a public policy-making paradigm that works effectively in the process of reforming public services

In our country today many public service areas are in desperate need of thorough and fundamental transformations, more specifically the most urgent areas are: the primary and secondary school system, the nonintegrated and bureaucratic social and health care systems, the poor local infrastructure roads, transport, sanitation etc., the neglect of environmental protection and planning, urban and rural housing and planning.

Community development and the role of the government

Competent governments are those, which combine efficient and uncorrupt central administration combined with a strong, autonomous and uncorrupt local government.

Competent governments resort to community development approaches whenever they can thus investing in democracy. Community development is a democratic government paradigm.

Community development agents are professionals and volunteers who share the community development philosophy.

Community workers invest in their own professionalism and professional standards by being accountable to the public through public survey agencies and academic research.

Action Research

This is a research paradigm in which the primary assumptions state that the agents of change are best equipped to study their own work and that a system can be best understood when being subjected to change.

Action research¹ is a social science approach, which integrates action (a change of a given human system) and the reflection on the results of the action. Usually it requires collaboration between social scientists and the agents of change.

Community development projects are particularly suitable for action research because of their commitment to change, democracy and human development (autonomy and interdependence).

¹ Kurt Lewin's Group Dynamics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the National Training Laboratories in USA and the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations in UK for example.

The Role of Foundations in Society

Barry D Gaberman

The article is published in Alliance Online - September 2006. When speaking at the launch of Trust Africa in Dakar, Senegal on 6 June 2006, Barry Gaberman listed ten attributes of foundations that make them important in getting what he called the “business of society” done. Together, he says, these add up to “a picture of a sector that goes beyond just the provision of services, important as that is, to one that challenges the status quo in society”. Particularly important, in his view, is the support they give to the institutions of civil society. What follows is part of his presentation at the TrustAfrica launch.

Barry D Gaberman is Senior Vice President of the Ford Foundation.

To this point I’ve concentrated on the Ford Foundation’s reasons for helping to establish TrustAfrica and the development of the effort to date. But there is a broader reason for building a foundation and it has to do with the role of foundations in society. I think one can best see this role in a set of attributes that have made foundations important in getting the business of society done.

For the purpose of these brief remarks, I will define philanthropy as the capture of private wealth for public purposes and I suggest that foundations are one important vehicle through which organized philanthropy is practised.

Philanthropy existed long before there was a United States and long before Europe was organized into a cluster of nation states. It is not today, nor was it ever, solely a Western concept, and each society puts its unique stamp on this work in progress called philanthropy. And while that will be true of TrustAfrica, there are certain attributes that most foundations hold in common.

- First, because of their accountability structures, foundations can take risks in a way that is difficult for institutions responsible

to the public or for for-profit institutions that must meet a bottom-line test. In other words, these are institutions that can afford to fail.

- Second, foundations can take on sensitive issues that public institutions will often step away from. This was the case with the early development of contraceptive technology in the United States, for example.
- Third, because foundations are not governed by the tyranny of the bottom line as are corporations, they can take on activities that are not sustainable with only earned income and that require a certain measure of subsidy. Such as microfinance funds, which because of their high transactions costs may not be sustainable from earned income.
- Fourth, an important but often overlooked role of foundations is to help sustain services desired by a particular segment of society, but where there is neither the level of demand nor the consensus necessary to make it a government priority. This is particularly the case in diverse ethnic and racial societies.
- Fifth, foundations can afford to think long term and recognize that the solutions to many complex societal problems are multifaceted and take time. There are few silver bullets.
- Sixth, foundations have the capacity to be flexible and to incorporate mid-course correction to their programmatic efforts in a way that is difficult for the larger bureaucracies of the public sector.
- Seventh, related to this attribute is the point that foundation can act rapidly. The 2001 response to 9/11 was a case in point, as are the more recent responses to the tsunami in South and South-east Asia, Hurricane Katrina, the earthquake in Pakistan, and the earthquake in Java. In fact, in a strange way, both manmade and natural disasters often prove to be a catalyst to the growth of civil society institutions, supported by foundations.
- Eighth, foundations can often test innovative and new initiatives or demonstration projects that, if successful, can be brought to scale.
- Ninth, foundations can fund independent policy analysis as a check on the claims of the public sector.
- Finally, foundations can fund advocacy organisations, a function not always looked on kindly by the public sector.

These are ten attributes that seem particularly important to me, but I'm sure most of you could come up with additional attributes.

What emerges from the attributes I have suggested is a dynamic picture of foundations and the institutions of civil society that they support. It is a picture of a sector that goes beyond just the provision of services, important as that is, to one that challenges the status quo in society. It does this by analysing programmes to see if they deliver on their promises, and by suggesting new and innovative ways to deal with complex issues. It constantly holds us up to the yardstick of fairness and a level playing field. And it gives voice to those that tend to go unheard in our society.

We need to be clear about this vision of the role of foundations in society and whether this is a vision we are prepared to support. I say this because this is not the only vision one can have and it is likely that this vision will be increasingly challenged.

This challenge is likely to come from those holding a vision that is much more static and that tends to see the legitimacy of foundations in their support of the status quo. The argument essentially goes that the government does not grant the benefits of the tax exemption to institutions that work to undermine its legitimacy and the legitimacy of its programmes. It is an argument with a solid intellectual underpinning and one that we should not dismiss easily.

Before adding a final attribute to the list of ten, let me mention two things. The first is that, unfortunately, foundations do not always live up to their attributes. They often tend to play it safe, rather than take risks. They often stay away from sensitive issues. They can jump to follow the current fad rather than sticking with complex issues that demand long-term solutions. And, as many of our grantees tell us, we can become overly and unnecessarily bureaucratic, thereby reducing our flexibility.

The second caution for us is not to fall into the trap of thinking that philanthropy and the institutions of civil society that it supports are alternatives to either the public sector or the for-profit sector. If you need to extract significant levels of resources and sustain them over time to affect societal change on a large scale, there is no alternative to the public sector and its power of taxation. The point is that each of the sectors has a set of comparative advantages and the task is to craft policies and programmes that take these comparative advantages into account. Now a final attribute of foundations, and one that I would like to suggest should be their primary objective or mission, is the support they give to the institutions of civil society. I say this because the reality is that for the most part foundations support their substantive priorities by funding the institutions of civil society to conduct the work that operationalizes and implements their substantive strategy.

Basically, civil society organisations are organisations that:

- provide services, often to the most disadvantaged, isolated and marginalized segments of our populations;
- educate and train us throughout our lives;
- do independent policy analysis and assessment;
- engage in advocacy to make sure that people's dreams and demands are heard;
- strengthen our awareness, identity and enjoyment through artistic expression and cultural understanding.

If we think about the transition to more open and participatory systems that took place in Latin America in the 1970s, Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, and Africa and Asia in the 1990s and the new millennium, we can reasonably ask what is to prevent a regression to authoritarian regimes, as has been the pattern in the past? The answer for an increasing number of people is that in large measure it is a vibrant civil society and the social capital it builds that offer the best protection against regression.

To be sure, the institutions of civil society have always been there. What is different in this period of history is that they have a conscious sense of being part of a sector, and these linkages reinforce and strengthen the soft power of their influence.

We live in a time when societies and the issues they face are very complex. The traditional safeguards against the abuse of power, such as the separation of power into legislative, executive and judicial branches and the newer addition of an independent press, may not be enough. In this context, the institutions of civil society add another layer that helps safeguard against the abuse of power.

So, as you can see, the task before TrustAfrica is daunting. It must not only continue to build itself up as a foundation, but it must help nurture the institutions of civil society that will be its partners in making Africa a place that offers dignity and livelihood to its people. And in that task, the Ford Foundation is proud to be a partner with TrustAfrica.

Community Based Organisations, Actors of Citizen Participation

Roxana Mirciu and Razvan Stan

The article describes the community based organisations (CSOs) with their role in community development. Attention is given to the PACT foundation programmes for capacity building of CSOs. The second part presents a case of Romanian CSO, supported by PACT Foundation.

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What we do

Starting with 2002, a dedicated team of Romanian community development and organisational development trainers and consultants had come together to fulfill an important mission. It was also a difficult mission, as it was about challenging the mistrust and misuse of people and ideas, changing attitudes and long standing beliefs and behavior patterns. The mission was about to empower citizens in local communities to express their views and take action for the improvement of their lives and their fellow citizens.

Community-based organisations were thought to be the vehicles for this involvement and the trainers and consultants' team had targeted their efforts to build new community organisations or improve the work of existing ones. By community based organisations (CBOs) we mean "registered or non-registered community groups formed by members of one community (geographical or community of interest) who act voluntarily in the interest of their community members". The team has been working to this mission using a methodology which combined training, consultancy and seed funding (up to US\$1400 per community group). The methodology was wrapped together under what we call "Learning, Participation, Trust- Community-Based Organisation Development Programme". On a later stage, the methodology has enriched with a mentoring element- the team had included in the programme experienced CBOs which would provide mentoring to new groups.

This methodology had given people the theoretical knowledge

and practical experience of community work- planning and implementing community projects, addressing different needs of community members, negotiating and partnering with other community members. They had also acquired the skills in raising resources to support their ideas- either from individuals, local and national businesses, local and national governments, institutional donors or the EU.

Over the course of 5 years (2002-2007) and within 4 different development programmes, the team had assisted 68 community groups, located in the Southern region of Romania, counties of Gorj, Dolj, Mehedinti, Valcea, Olt, Arges, Teleorman, Calarasi, Ialomita, Ilfov and Giurgiu. 59 of these groups had received funding (between \$700 and \$1400) to run various community projects of small infrastructure (digging wells, refurbishing playgrounds), social services (extracurricular activities for children, therapeutic activities for children with disabilities, day center for elderly), ecological (waste collections and reforestations) or educational (courses for children and adults).

The programme for developing community-based organisations originated in the Bulgarian programme "Learning, Success, Change", carried out in Bulgaria by the team of Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation. In Romania, the programme was initiated by Allavida, carried forward by Romanian Association for Community Development and presently fostered by Foundation PACT.

Advantages and roles of community-based organisations

Community-based organisations are registered non-profit organisations or informal groups of citizens made up of members of a community who associate in order to initiate activities which contribute to the development of the community they represent, meeting the needs locally identified by community members.

These are small and informal organisations located in the community and run by community members. They operate on a volunteer basis, rely on participation from the community members and tend to lack a formal structure or strategy (Yachkaschi, 2005, p. 2). Community-based organisations are initiating and supporting transformations in their communities based on a participatory decision making processes and empowering community members. (Opare, 2007, p. 252).

The role and contributions of CBOs in the process of community development stem from their structure and dynamic. First of all, as members of the organisations are also members of the community, they are very aware of the local needs and could react more efficiently, flexible and faster than other nongovernmental or governmental institutions.

The organisation's members have an intimate knowledge of their community (Esman si Uphoff, 1984, p. 26), therefore the CBOs have the best potential to implement authentic community development projects (Owens, in Opare, 2007, p. 256).

Secondly, the community organisations provide important opportunities for mobilizing internal and external resources. Through the vehicle of the community-based organisation, the community members could mobilize their talents, skills and time for the public good (Opare, p. 251). On the other hand, these organisations are also working to bring in external resources. And resource

mobilization means generating new resources as an effect of the activities and the efforts of the organisation (Esman si Uphoff, 1984, p 76-77).

Community organisations also have a strong transformational effect upon their members. As Caltecott si Lutz are stating "the members of <rural> communities could become more organized, better educated, more aware of the economic and ecologic realities and more assertive in protecting their own interests (In Opere, 2007, p. 254). And if we were to refer to a general role of community organisations, then this would be to provide organizing and participation channels for the most disadvantaged groups of the community.

As a consequence, these organisations empower disadvantaged people to make credible requests to local authorities and other actors which control local resources (Esman si Uphoff, p 27).

Therefore the community-based organisations could reshape the balance of power relations and resource control in the communities.

An important role that these organisations could play is to mediate other initiatives and resources for community development. The social and economic development programmes could benefit from accurate information on local realities, as well as an adequate feedback. Even more, the cooperation with local organisations increases the chances of acceptance and sustainability (Esman si Uphoff, pp. 24-26). Community-based organisations are best at providing the local institutional support, needed to obtain specific objectives which require significant local mobilization (Opere, p. 253).

Limitations and risks in the development and functioning of CBOs

The informal character of community-based organisations, as well as the diversity of its members and the nature of relations at the community level, all these are factors that could contribute a series of limitations and risks in the life of these organisations.

One of the major limits is represented by the lack of professional staff. Usually community-based organisations do not hire professional staff and this fact has implications on the nature and scale of the activities and projects which the organisation is carrying out. These organisations rely on volunteers, whose technical and managerial abilities are usually low, especially in case of the members coming from disadvantaged groups (Esman si Uphof, p. 196).

Given the informal character of these organisations- and especially in their first stages of development- there is no surprise that these organisations lack formal structures and strategies (Yachkaschi, p. 2), as well as management and decision making procedures (Opere, p. 260). Due to this lack of structure, cooperation and partnership with other actors, including donors and local authorities, could be very difficult (Yachkaschi, p 2).

It is asserted by various authors, such as Esman si Uphoff (1984) that community-based organisations could not be considered completely apolitical. The organisations have the potential to make power alliances in the community, to oppose specific political groups and have the capacity to raise political capital. As a result, the CBO leaders could become opponents of the present

elites, as they challenge the control over resources and political capital.

Humanity Rom, a community-based organisation working to improve the living conditions of Roma population

As presented above, over the past 5 years, the team of Learning, Participation, Trust programme had assisted through training, consultancy and seed funding some 59 organisations located in 11 counties in the South of Romania. The distribution of these organisations by location of origine (rural/urban) is almost even, with 32 of these organisations located in rural areas and 27 in urban areas. More of the groups assisted were informal non-registered groups (33), compared with the formal, registered organisations (26).

This article will present the case of one community-based organisation assisted by Foundation PACT starting with 2005- Association Humanity Rom. Humanity Rom started off as an informal group in 2003, struggling to improve the living conditions of Roma population in Iancu Jianu commune (Olt county). They started off with a project of waste collecting business and in parallel they benefited from training and consultancy from the PACT team. With financial support from PACT, they had a project for equipping a local folklore music band. Presently Humanity Rom is a mentor organisation for other 2 community groups within PACT project "Empowerment through participation" and is also planning for a community enterprise, a barber shop within another PACT project, Community Enterprises Development Programme.



Humanity Rom is an illustrative case of capacity building through learning and participation. What is remarkable is the transformation of the organisation's leader, from a situation of marginalization and survival thinking to an enriched perspective, team work abilities, planning, vision and generating new options.

The following quote illustrates the case:

“I participated in the trainings. And we were ignorant at the beginning. Now I can say that they have changed my life since 2005 when I started the first courses. The first and the second training module have changed my way of looking at things and dealing with people. Because we, Roma people, we have this thing, to do all by ourselves. We are the judge and the guardian. Now this has changed. They <PACT> had put an emphasis on team work, taught me how to negotiate. I have understood that there could be different means to acquire my goal.” Feraru Ilie (Lica) – leader of Humanity Rom, interview conducted by Razvan Stan, Iancu Jianu, Dolj county, november 2007.

Humanity Rom had managed to mobilize a significant number of volunteers, Roma and Romanians. They had 12 volunteers in the waste management project, then 47 volunteers for the folklore band. The waste management business created employment, so did the band.

As the members are saying, the organisation had a motivational impact on Roma youth to continue their education and they could also provide some financial support to them. They got involved in the cultural life of the village and organized traditional dances. All these activities have conducted to the improvement of the relations between Roma and Romanian villagers.

“Before they would call you Gipsy in the face. Now they talk to you, they participate in activities. We have folklore band members who are not Roma. We are happy that they are open.” (as above).

The organisation has managed to mobilize human, material and logistical resources, both from the inside and outside the community. The leaders’ abilities to coordinate activities and delegate responsibilities have an important role for the participatory mobilization. With regard to financial and material resources, one could notice the symbolic exchange strategies and the conversation of symbolic and cultural capital into material capital “the funds were provided by others [...] There are also local businesses which participated. We had learned how to fundraise and had offered something in exchange: we organized parties, we invited parents, businessmen, we sold them songs, glasses painted by children, a dance with Lica” (as above).

The leaders of the organisation have a participatory vision on community development. This might be slightly different from the structural economic development vision of the local authorities, which define community development more as improving local infrastructure. Humanity Rom leaders define the community development as:

“Community development is [...] when all people or some people from the community are working together to achieve something. To make something that is good for everybody.

When you are making a waste collection business, a folklore band, all people are benefiting, the kids, the old people. This is my idea of community development... and I would also say, not only the people should work, but the institutions, together with the people. And they should go to courses like this [...]. I think community development is not just economic development - it should be cultural and social and economic.”

The Centre for Local Development, Buhovo

This is a case study on the programme in Bulgaria the authors of the previous article refer to. Actually WCIF has been implementing a Learning Success Change programme for Community based organisations in Bulgaria since 1998 in partnership with the British Organisation Charity Know How. In the 7 years the programme was run in the country more than 130 informal groups coming throughout the country gained knowledge and skills and had the possibility to test them in practice through the small grants provided by the foundation. The stories of the participants are gathered in a special publication. One of these stories is presented to your attention.

Buhovo is a small town, with a population of 3000, 20 km to the north east of Sofia, on the edge of the beautiful Balkan range. It is close to the Kremikovtsi steel and uranium plant, Bulgaria's largest metallurgical plant. Although the deposits of coal, lead, zinc, and iron ore were actually found to be inadequate, the extremely expensive Kremikovtsi plant finally opened in 1963, using Soviet iron ore to produce over half of the national production of steel and iron. Costs were inflated by premium wages paid to maintain the labour force and by delays in construction and delivery. Production at Kremikovtsi consistently failed to meet planned targets, the enterprise never showed a profit, and in the 1990s the plant adopted an export-oriented model of economic development, with one third of the supplies of iron ore and carbonised coal now coming from Latin America. When the uranium works were closed many of the specialist workers left and Kremikovtsi is only operating on half-capacity.

The land around the plant is heavily polluted, with much of the agricultural land abandoned. As the plant slowly downsizes and many of the skilled workers leave- the population was 12,000 in the mid 1970s- the local people have to cope with a health and ecological legacy. It is this legacy that brought Todor Dimitrov, an experienced geophysicist and Party official at the factory, and Zoya Damyanova, the local secondary headteacher together in the mid 1980s. Political opposites- they cheerfully admit there was a period when they didn't talk- but they decided we should unite so we could achieve better conditions. The Centre started as a formal group in the mid 1980s- very early for Bulgaria- and registered in 1999. They have 18 members and many volunteers.

The beginning of the story

Sat in the WCIF, Learning, Success, Change gazebo in the school playground, Todor and Zoya tell the story like a ball thrown from one to the other:

Our work started in 1985-6 when the government system started to open up to ideas around democracy and civil rights. This is an industrial area and the company runs the largest metallurgical complex in the Balkans as well as producers of uranium and storage of radioactive waste. We had screened the health of the children and knew there were major problems. We started an ecological movement with meetings and protests. We asked that the pollution of the area be dealt with. We were afraid that our protests might rebound on us, but we gained acceptance bit by bit. However, we jumped from one problem to another looking at the different kinds of pollution. We needed to make people more active to solve their problems. In 1986 we were unique in Bulgaria.

Todor explains:

I was the secretary of the local communist party and she was a coordinator of the ecological movement from the Democracy movement. Working in the interests of the citizens became more important to me than pleasing the government. The pollution was getting worse –there were no filters on the factory. We were becoming public figures - the problem could not be hidden any more.

We started an informal organisation and people with different kinds of specialist knowledge got involved. We got the press and media involved, including foreign press. We had no intention of starting an NGO, but just felt we had to do something. Kapka came here, one of the oldest members of the NGO movement. There were two days of discussions about what was planned for the NGO sector in Bulgaria. There was a heated discussion! We belong to the Shopi (the original country people who moved into Sofia) and we're pig-headed: we never believe anyone, but hey made us think about making our informal group something different and legal.

At the first attempt they did not have enough energy and strength to complete the registration, but a local resident, Georgi Bogdanov, working for an NGO and one of the first WCIF trainer-consultants, showed us the way, he had experience, he gave us moral support.

Zoya explained:

There were problems at the kindergarten and there was a group of mothers who formed an association "Home for our Children" – we offered them a room. We got a room and the furniture, and Georgi brought us a semi-operational computer, and in these basic conditions we started working.

The learning programme

Zoya and Todor explain:

We applied to the WCIF programme because we needed to learn how to work as an NGO. We learned about how to create a project, and how to get the citizens involved, especially children

and parents. The organisation acquired a system that allowed it to work. When we came back from the training, I explained to the other group members what it was all about using flip charts.

Todor described the effect of the training on him and his professional work:

I grew up as somebody who could do many things both professionally and as a person. I am a geophysicist, used to measurement and now my job is about the standardisation through the ISO systems and the harmonisation of legal controls. However, the experience of the training allowed me to use these systems. I learned how to work in a team, how to overcome misunderstandings and find ways of overcoming conflict.I learned that being a volunteer is about taking as well as giving and I've used this learning in everyday life. I've learned to communicate with people who are different from me and accept the difference. We learnt so much from having the foreign volunteers.

Recently, they were invited to join the Partnership for Local Development Programme with two other towns, Devin and Madan. *'They have similar problems to ours but they had been part of the programme for two years before we got involved and we had to catch up; but we managed to because of the background given by the learning programme. We are equal partners to them.*

The action project

Zoya and Todor explained how the project had developed:

'The first thing we did after the course was a survey of what the students wanted, so that to make a more pleasant environment around the school. There were 100 ideas some were absolute fantasies. They included a bike park, a zoo and a swimming pool. We put them all together and had a public discussion with the children, some parents and representatives of local groups. We had a flip chart and people voted for the ideas using dots. They decided on having a pavilion big enough for a class so they could have lessons in the open air. The other ideas that we have achieved over five years were benches, a water tap, a clock, and basketball and football areas, funded by other donors. The children and parents helped with the work as volunteers.

Next steps

The project set the organisation off on a new path:

We had our first camp the same summer as the project. We had 15 foreign volunteers through the Youth Alliance for Development to mend the schoolyard fence, so animals could not get in. We borrowed beds from the orphanage, and made a bathroom by bringing things from our own homes, and the volunteers slept in the school. We were worried how the foreigners would react to the pollution and how the local people would treat them. But we passed this test! And the young people, who were from all over Europe and Japan, were like fresh blood to us.

We had a series of five camps, and from the beginning we said the camp was going to be for both Bulgarians and foreigners - working and living together. The foreigners started speaking Bulgarian and vice-versa. After the first camp ended, some of the foreigners stayed on for a second camp, living in a hut in the mountains 20km from here. One of the volunteers was the daughter of a Danish millionaire and with all the hard work she got blisters on her palms. People

said "if there is a girl who is so rich and who has travelled so far to be a volunteer then this will make us volunteers. One year, our volunteer camp cleaned up all the parks, and the people came out of their homes and started to help. There were always activities every night and a wonderful party at the end.

They describe changes in the involvement of local people in their town:

On the millennium night the whole town gathered for a great celebration. We recreated a typical folk festival that we had not celebrated since 1983 because no one was interested. It's called a Gamal – the women dress in traditional costumes and go around the houses to say goodbye to the winter and wish good health to everyone. A film of the event was shown on television, and the event has become an annual tradition.

They were bubbling over with information about their activities including work in the 11 villages in the Kremikovtsi district where they developed with their help a booklet of local businesses and tourist attractions; a successful campaign to keep the local hospital open; the successful proposal to site a Waste Disposal site in the area; the 1998 enquiry into the effects of Kremikovtsi on the environment, where they were one of five NGOs presenting evidence to the environment; and the new Youth organisation to start a school council. There were reps for each class and a day of self-governance, which involved 2 months of preparation. Zoya said: *The young people passed on the lessons very successfully.*

The difference made:

Both Zoya and Todor feel that there are significant changes:

People have started creating initiatives themselves. For example, last week a group of students - who were a notorious badly behaved group-asked me as a headteacher, to make an announcement: they wanted to clean up the town.

Zoya noted how local people are starting to take initiative and be more independent:

This new year I wanted to be away from Buhovo and people came and said 'if you're not going to be here, we will do it', and people have told me the festival was magnificent. There are stable traditions now.

Victor Sredovsky, who is a new volunteer in the programme said:

When I saw that after working as a volunteer you could see the benefits for the community I had the motivation to become a member of the group and I am now responsible for youth work.

Where next?

The organisation is going through difficult times at present:

For the last 18 months we've had no funding at all. We've written some 15 project proposals, but without success. It's heroic that we still exist, but we've decided to carry on because the most important resource is the human factor. We have been through so much training, it would be a sin to waste it all. The basis of all our work was the WCIF programme. We got the most important help: what to do, what not to do and how to do it.

We had a meeting yesterday to decide the way ahead: the work must continue. People expect us to do something. They ask for help. There were periods where we lived at the office and we got exhausted, disappointed, and lost enthusiasm.

Zoya and Todor felt that 'When you first start involving the community, there is a transitional period when things are going backwards. There is no faith, no trust, and no fun. Everyday life gets harder and harder – people need hope to believe in the future. .. In the past we used to think that the party would look after everybody but we have learned the importance of making the parents active and involving the community'

They also recognised the need to work with other groups:

One of the most important aspects of our activities was identifying and working with 8 NGOs in the town. If you draw in other organisations and their experience you help each other and you feel strong.

The lessons they wanted to share with new organisation were:

- Find out about your own problems;
- Don't copy other people;
- Work out your own strategy;
- Go to the training and learn how to solve the problems;
- Take a global view but undertake local activity;
- Work with the people because so many organisations are only of two or three people;
- Be open to new members.

They felt strongly that the learning programme was needed but also want the workshop to continue with its support to participants:

We need more programmes like WCIF to help new NGOs learn to walk, to help people to become socially charged. If they don't get help, when they grab the vision of potentially wonderful things but then fall down and get hurt, the effect can be serious. They are disappointed and less open. I've told Iliyana, "If you give a child a dummy, you need to keep an eye on them as a parent – you need to give them a hand. We were very disappointed and felt dropped at the end of the programme. We need continuing advice from a person with a clear vision.

What is a social justice foundation to do?

Colin Greer and Barry Knight

The article is published in Alliance Online - February 2007. The first in a series of articles on social justice philanthropy was published in Alliance Online in December 2005. In this first article, Colin Greer and Barry Knight attempted to answer some basic questions about what social justice philanthropy is and why it matters. In their next article, in March 2006, they traced the history of philanthropy in the US and Europe since the end of the nineteenth century. Now they take up the discussion to try to tease out exactly what the role of social justice philanthropy is and who its targets are.

Colin Greer is President of the New World Foundation (US). Barry Knight is Secretary of Centris (UK).

Barry Knight Despite much charitable effort and expenditure, the world remains in a terrible mess: widespread failure to meet basic needs alongside ever more greed, environmental melt-down, war, and so on.

Isn't philanthropy just wasting its time?

Colin Greer No, philanthropy has a key role: to redeploy wealth.

As you say, greed – the insatiable desire to create and possess wealth – is the source of much of the world's troubles. Yet philanthropy has been produced by the very processes it is trying to deal with. So for me the question about philanthropy starts with recognizing that philanthropy is a creature of the profit-driven market. So how much of a corrective can it be? That's the challenge.

BK I agree that much philanthropy is a creature of privilege and, as a consequence, apes the class divisions in society and reinforces them though its practice. The rest is mostly harmless.

The category of philanthropy that I think most important is that which seeks to transform society as its chief objective. This leads me to the question that I think is central: 'What are the characteristics of those foundations that are effective in redeploying wealth?'

CG The most important one lies in their commitment to create the conditions for public benefit, where public benefit is defined as (a) ensuring that the market is subject to appropriate regulation and (b) redistributing the surpluses of the market on a more equitable basis.

BK I agree that the overarching goal has to be greater equality. Rigorous statistical work by Uslaner has shown that unequal societies tend to be unhappy societies on many different dimensions. But, a century after Pareto (who in the nineteenth century observed that 20 per cent of the people owned 80 per cent of the wealth in many European countries), we seem to have made little progress in tackling structural inequality.

Surely, if we are to make progress, this is the job of government – only governments have the power, the authority and the resources.

CG Sure, it's ultimately about government. But the problem is that we live in an era where public problems are expected to have private solutions. Public services are increasingly privatized; wealth increasingly stays in the hands of those who make it; and with the demise of the Soviet Union went the legitimacy of state intervention on behalf of equity and justice. Instead, social reform has become philosophically and practically dependent on private wealth.

In these circumstances, a key task for philanthropy is to ensure that the government takes back the responsibility for dealing with inequality. To do so, philanthropy has to establish a mandate from the public, and it will have to come to understand and embrace the concept of 'the commons'. This is the public space where ideas are assessed and actors are made accountable. Otherwise, action will be based on a self-perpetuating elite.

BK So, we've identified the targets for social justice philanthropy: the government on the one hand and the people on the other.

CG For me the starting point has to be the people. Philanthropy needs to develop strategies to obtain a forceful mandate from the public for governments to pursue a social justice agenda. That means supporting activism across sectors to build a powerful opposition force which confronts and moves government to an equity agenda. The agenda must be developed through local policy experimentation and the gradual transfer of that to the national and global stage. In this way policy options are tested at a level close to the experience of problems and local support is built that will coalesce into a national imperative

BK That will create demand for change from the bottom up. Don't we also need some kind of steer from the top down?

CG Yes, foundations can support this work through the agenda and policy-building they like to do already.

BK We need a hierarchy of goals with some understanding of the links in the chain between what we are trying to accomplish and what we are currently doing. It seems to me that too many unconnected things are being done without regard to the bigger picture and how things intercon-

nect with one another.

CG Agreed, but we need to avoid the typical social engineering ethos which foundations follow that cuts off the experience and potential power of those whose condition is to be reformed and restructured. There have to be links between grassroots organizing and policy development. One should feed the other so that we get an ever-expanding constituency for change. Foundations don't typically connect in this way and they need to.

This means that foundations should support both intra- and inter-sectoral dialogue across professions and across race and class boundaries. Whether we like to face it or not, race and class are rigid barriers that philanthropy has yet to challenge seriously. This will increase understanding and then we will be able to communicate results to wider audiences and begin to shape public expectations. Foundations will then be able to prioritize advocacy of two kinds: firstly, that organized on behalf of people living in severe conditions and secondly, that organized by people living in severe conditions.

BK But isn't this just going to lead to more talk and no action?

CG No, the multi-sectoral approach I've suggested will result in strong local leadership and sustainable institutions that can connect with global research and advocacy carried out with foundation support.

Action in the short term will involve an attack on the severity of conditions at the bottom of society and a nimble readiness to take advantage of openings for change created by political, economic and environmental circumstances. Short term, we want to push back poverty, fight exclusion, empower oppressed people, and combat assaults on human rights. Longer term, we want to restructure social priorities to reverse poverty creation processes, exclusionary systems, and the wasteful use of human and environmental resources. Short-term and long-term integration means that foundation evaluation of grantmaking programmes would both assess short-term targets and include attention to long-term goals in short-term tactics and strategies.

BK This is big and ambitious. I think that foundations need to figure out who does what in going after big issues like poverty, race, gender and class together with their intersections; otherwise it's just tilting at windmills. What are the specific things that we can accomplish that will affect the big picture? At the moment, it seems to me that social justice foundations are doing specific things without regard to a big picture. We need to get a greater sense of working together in which particular foundations pursue particular goals but there is some higher-level co-ordination necessary. Otherwise, there's just a series of well-meaning initiatives that don't necessarily add up to much.

CG Yes, there needs to be joining up. For example, economic development must be integrated with political participation. If economic development projects occur without empowering constituencies, the market will rule, and its rule is ruthless even when its goals are benign. Recent advances that foundations can support in the US include community benefits agreements and tax subsidy accountability. These have developed out of local initiatives by community activists, who have treated the market's use of the public commons and the public purse as an opportunity to restructure the social costs of private ventures.

BK I agree that we need to do more to join these efforts up. I estimate that there are around 80 foundations across the world that focus on social justice, human rights or building peace or some

Discussion

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combination of those. It is important that those foundations begin to engage in this dialogue so that we can begin to develop a common agenda and theory of change that we can test and evaluate together.

CG Yes, and efforts to develop this dialogue must include the community organizing sector, where new policy models and tools are being developed that reform economic and governance systems that might lead to a new social contract. Pursuing social justice must move forward from the reinvention of the social contract and the development and support of countervailing structures that permit the public to weigh in.

Community Dimension of Microlending

Elena Triffonova

Here the author presents the microlending as an instrument for poverty alleviation. The microlending programmes result in credits to marginalized people and their most substantial impacts is on generalization of economically active actors in small communities that affects the community and creates opportunities for some of them to develop large scale business initiatives.

Elena Triffonova has graduated as MA of political sciences at Sofia University "St. Kliment of Ohrid". She has ten years experience in civil society sector in Bulgaria. Her field of expertise is advocacy management and training, budget advocacy, health advocacy and negotiations. Elena Triffonova has been a contributor and editor of several publications both published in Bulgaria and abroad. Since 2006 she works on the Global Development Alliance Programme for microlending for Roma entrepreneurs in Bulgaria.

What is Microlending?

The starting point of microlending is a series of experiments in the field of poverty alleviation and community development. The sector has primarily developed to respond to the inability or lack of concern of commercial banks and the formal financial system to serve the needs of low-income clients and micro enterprises. Microlending programmes launched different approaches for addressing the needs and opportunities poor families are facing, particularly their health and education attainment and housing.

The basic product of microlending is a micro credit that is originated in the developing countries where it has successfully enabled extremely impoverished people to engage in self-employment initiatives. Usually micro credit loan amounts less than 500 - 700 euro (for Bulgaria). These loans are enough for hardworking micro – entrepreneurs to start or to expand small business. The traditional banks are not generally interested in issuing small loans because the interest benefits do not exceed the transaction costs. But the poor people who are active and who have business ideas need a diverse range of financial instruments to be able to build assets, stabilize consumption and protect themselves against risks. Usually the clients of microlending are from different minority groups who live in rural areas

and who are not educated.

Which are basic steps to serve the poor people?

A method called “village banking” - you hire loan officers from the community and after that build confidence with important community leaders and hold meetings with self-employed members. The meetings are focused on explaining of opportunities to get a loan and who is able to get it;

Small loans scheme (500-700 BGN) - relying on group guarantees as “social collateral”, small loans are disbursed to the self-employed. Loan terms are between 4 and 6 months.

Group lending method. It means “joint liability” when the borrowers select themselves into the credit group. And it has a positive effect on repayment rates, resulting from the possibility that a successful borrower may repay the loan of a defaulting partner. And the golden rule of group lending is: **No one member of a credit group may receive a new loan unless all members are current on their last loan.**

Most of microlending clients are people from vulnerable groups

According to the World Bank data base nowadays there are more than 7000 microfinance institutions that serve about 16 million poor people in developing countries and approximately 500 million households benefit from these small loans. The basic principals of microlending institutions¹ all over the world are:

- **To serve the poorest clients and to promote social and economic justice. Targeting their services to the poorest communities and entrepreneurs.**
- **Use solidarity guarantees.** Group-guaranteed loans replace collateral.
- **Practice participatory management.** Clients are directly involved in the management and administration of the services they receive, from voting on loan applications to collecting payments from other borrowers.
- **Invest in scale and self-sufficiency.** Investing in research, design, staffing and training from the beginning of a programme, and throughout later stages of growth is crucial to successfully moving a project from start-up to formalization. Achieving scale (i.e., reaching at least 5 000 clients per partner) through efficient operations and by charging interest at market rates.
- **Permanence.** It includes creating a formal financial institution, helping partners transform programmes into specialized microfinance institutions or consolidating pilot activities into larger local entities.

In Bulgaria 3 micro-fincial institutions (MFI) were established as programmes within 3 different NGOs:

“**Mikrofond**” Joint Stock Company was established as a programme within the Resource Center Foundation. Mikrofond was founded and supported by the Open Society Institute. Their mission is to support entrepreneurs in Bulgaria by providing alternative sources of financing for start-ups

¹ The summary in the following bullets is on the base of microlending principals of Catholic Relief Services, Opportunity International and Grameen Foundation;

and small and medium businesses which do not have access to the bank system sources of capital. Their aim is to create the first sustainable microfinancing non-banking institution that supports the micro and small business in Bulgaria. They believe that small business entrepreneurs are the engine of the economic development and have the greatest growth potential

“**Ustoi**” Joint Stock Company the legal and operational successor of USAID and Catholic Relief Services – supported the microfinance programme “USTOI” that went from October 1999 until December 2004 when Ustoi became an independent joint stock company. Ustoi supports micro-businesses by providing entrepreneurs with sustainable and continued access to credit while promoting partnership and mutual assistance. A large number of clients are women.



“**Nachala**” Joint Stock Company has been established as a public foundation in 1993 with the assistance of Opportunity International. Its mission is to support small entrepreneurs through training and financial capital.

Ustoi, and Opportunity International’s Nachala, reached many of Bulgaria’s smallest entrepreneurs, including many women and disadvantaged minorities.

Ustoi and Nachala have become self-sustaining and will continue to provide loans to microbusinesses after USAID is gone.

The development credit programme stimulated lending by sharing with private Bulgarian financial institutions 50 percent of the risk of lending to small entrepreneurs and agriculture sector organizations.

All microlending programmes established in Bulgaria in the last 10 – 15 years lead the way to micro financing ground, long before the opening of various programmes for microcredits of trade banks. Nowadays all these institutions (banking and non-banking) work in a very highly competitive environment. However a small number of banking programmes are open for Roma micro entrepreneurs, for instance. This is because the sensitivity and understanding of grass – roots issues are characteristics only of people oriented programmes whose mission is poverty alleviation and community development.

Which are the challenges?

Originally the MFI started as a foundation that had grant – giving components. They provided small grants and supported a number of NGOs and citizens' groups and they are recognized as a donor. Actually the grant mentality becomes a barrier for the MFI. Because everybody knows that when you get a grant the money you spent you are not obliged to return back but ones get a credit installment must be paid every month or week.

Community dimension of microlending

More than 15 years, microfinance in Africa, Europe and Asia has demonstrated that

its impact goes beyond providing individuals with access to capital. It has also helped to protect, diversify and increase the sources of income and assets that enabled people to exit from poverty.

Microfinance has touched the lives and communities of more than 100 million families, and has helped many of them to generate incomes. It stimulates the process of saving small amounts of money. If we take a glimpse of the world statistics we will see that more than three billion people still live on less than two dollars a day; more than a billion have no access to electricity; and three billion have no access to safe sanitation. And for all these people, microfinance is a tool that must continue to be deployed and leveraged to its maximum potential.

In most communities where the women are underprivileged and have no access to education and job, microlending is a “window of opportunity” for their empowerment. In Bulgaria 70% of clients are women, basically from Roma community.

But the most important impact of microlending is the fact that it generates more economically active actors in a small community and some of them become able to develop large scale business initiatives.

The tangible effects of it are:

- improvement of housing and health care (most of the clients of micro credits have actually registered their business and started to pay their health insurances);
- improvement of infrastructure in small neighborhoods
- building social capital in rural and urban areas;

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The Church as an Actor of Community Development in Bulgaria

Plamen Sivov

The ethos of the Church is being a community and it is natural for it to be an agent for community development. Here the author presents the history of the involvement of the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria with social activities and describes four reasons for the church being an active partner in contemporary community development initiatives.

Plamen Sivov was born in 1970. He graduated Law at the Sofia University, studied Non-profit theory at Johns Hopkins University (USA, 1993-94), became fellow of the World Bank (1997). He started his career as a project coordinator at the Open Society Foundation in Sofia. Plamen Sivov has been Executive Director of Pokrov Foundation an Orthodox Church related foundation since 1995.

Religious communities traditionally have played a major role in communities. In modern civil societies, religious beliefs are still among the key factors that bond people together to form communities, both large and small. In countries like the United States, it is often emphasized by researchers that religious communities are the backbone of American civil society. Most of the modern social institutions' roots in many countries, such as hospitals, schools, retirement homes, etc., can be traced back in the structures of the churches.

The church is often regarded as an institution itself, and this attitude is often passed onto the social institutions that the church creates and maintains. In many countries the church has a special place among the state's institutional partners, as a key provider of a long range of social services. However, with the advancement of the welfare state, the continuing secularization of modern societies and the further separation between church and state, the institutional role of the church decreases.

The religious institution can be a full-fledged provider of certain social services at acceptable levels of quality, but all other things being equal, it is in a position to compete for state or public support with secular providers of similar services only within certain limits. And these limits are exactly the communal dimensions of the church's approach to social problems. Therefore,

the Church may be of interest to the state and to the NGOs exclusively in its capacity of a distinct community, and not so much as an institution.

Further in the text I will try to argument this statement.

Whenever a communal spirit, high level of personal motivation, or a personal approach to the sometimes dehumanized “target groups” is needed, the church has a lot to offer. The church cannot compete on the grounds of quantity, but it has no match on the grounds of quality or holistic personalized approach, when it comes to provision of different kinds of care for the vulnerable groups.

How are these generally perceived and registered trends reflected in post-Communist Bulgaria?

Bulgaria is a country with extensive Christian Orthodox heritage, dating back as far as the 7th century, when the first proto-Bulgarian tribes began to settle on the lands South of the Danube river and to form the first Bulgarian kingdom, mixing with Slavonic and Thracian ethnic groups, under the heavy cultural influence of the Eastern Roman empire, Byzantium. After a series of historic choices (accepting the official church jurisdiction from Constantinople, translating the liturgical books and the Bible in Slavonic, etc.), the Bulgarians firmly embraced the Eastern Christian tradition, and it has been so for nearly 14 centuries now. Thus, Bulgarian identity has been shaped almost exclusively by what is now known as Christian Orthodoxy.

Most of Bulgaria’s history has been spent under some sort of foreign domination (Byzantine and Ottoman are the typical examples). In the centuries of a practical absence of a national State, it has been the Church that provided the communal bonds that kept the nation together. Even in times when it was not possible to read or write in the national language, the Orthodox identity of the Bulgarians and the language they spoke made them different and separate from all the other nations that formed the Ottoman empire.

But this historic role of the church was not manifested only on the superficial meta-level of the abstract notions of “nation” and “faith”. Virtually all community life in those days was somehow related to, focused in, or streaming from the church. In the small village communities, during the times of the Bulgarian national revival (17-18th century), people started to self-organize in community centers and to put aside portions of their income for education. This was done mostly through the so called “cell-schools”, which were a completely church-driven institution, and the “reading rooms”, which were a unique Bulgarian-invented form of small community centers in virtually every village, many of which have survived up to this day.

One might have expected that after the liberation from the Ottoman empire, which was finalized in 1878 with the Russo-Turkish war, and the establishment of the new Bulgarian state, the need for such community-centered activities and church-driven education would vanish. But both these institutions (the Church and the “reading rooms”, which had separate elected Boards of Trustees) proved to enjoy a stable and deep public trust. And while the former “cell-school” educational system was quickly and irreversibly replaced by the new secular state school system, still the church managed to find a special and extensive role in many aspects of public life in the beginning of the 20th century.

For nearly 50 years (from the liberation from the Ottoman rule until the Communists’ takeover in

1944) the church developed both large-scale and small-scale social enterprises and services. Hospitals, schools, retirement homes, soup kitchens, crisis centers and many other forms of community action have been in the arsenal of the Bulgarian church in those times.

It is notable that the church has never been reluctant to “experiment” with sophisticated organisational forms and to go beyond the general concept of “charity”, understood mainly as giving alms to the beggars on the street.

In the early 20th century the church operated complex social programmes, involving large numbers of specialized personnel, using modern scientific approaches and demonstrating unprecedented effectiveness. Apparently, this was not done only with the efforts of the clergy; many lay people have formed voluntary organisations to support the church in its social mission.

None of this would have been possible without the general public support and the focus on community level, the true laboratory of both church and social life. Examining the history of Bulgarian philanthropy, one can easily track down the obvious dependency: large private donations on a national level have been made to the Bulgarian state, while the greater amount of small-scale donations and testaments were directed towards the Church, mostly within concrete communities.

The two largest single endowments in recent Bulgarian history have been the establishment of the Sofia University and the Svishtov School of Economics; both are results of private donations, made soon after the liberation from the Ottoman empire. Both are secular in nature and are invested in the secular education field. On the other side are the hundreds of smaller donations of land and other property, directed towards the church by generations of community-rooted people. There is therefore a clear tendency that national causes related donations are usually made to the state, while community-oriented philanthropy normally finds the Church as the most likely recipient. Apparently, in the national perception the church is a stable and community-centered entity.

The years between 1944 and 1989 have interrupted this old tradition of the church's deep involvement in the lives of Bulgarian communities. The Communist regime's prime concern towards the Church was to block its ability to be an alternative to the all-encompassing State; to provide any care or to play any public role. For nearly half a century the church's role in the society has been severely limited to a function in the national protocol; a merely historic institution of some importance to the national identity. All social institutions which used to belong to the church or to the many church-related organisations (CRNGOs) have been confiscated. The church was allowed only to perform its “religious ceremonies”.

The “awakening” of the church which many expected to take place soon after the collapse of the Communist regime in 1989, however, never occurred in the field of community involvement. Partly due to a continuing schism, which tormented the clergy and the laity for more than 10 years, partly because of the clergy's difficulties to adapt to a rapidly changing environment and to respond to both the society's expectations and to the church's own historic heritage, the Bulgarian Orthodox church entered the 21 century with virtually no national platform for social action.

At the same time, the local church communities have proven to be effective vehicles of social

change at a grass-root level. With assistance from international sources and local businesses, many parishes started to develop their own small-scale charitable and educational programmes, oriented to the needs of the local people.

Church communities have turned to look at the needs of the larger communities they are situated in, often reaching out to nearby social institutions (orphanages, elderly homes) and creating the fabrics of a local social support network.

Although sometimes neglected by the central church leadership, such initiatives have enjoyed substantial public interest and the priests involved in these activities have been largely recognized in the media. Fr. Georgi Fotakiev (Varna), who is running a drug-rehabilitation programme, Fr. Ivan (Novi Han), who has established a shelter for abandoned children, and several others have become acclaimed figures in the eyes of the public.



It is clear, however, that enthusiastic groups and leaders cannot be a substitute for a nationally implemented church-related policy for restoration of the social mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and of the other religious communities, where similar processes have occurred. With that understanding in mind, one of the largest CRNGOs in Bulgaria, the Pokrov Foundation, has implemented a programme which involved both access to small-scale funding for grass-root groups and parishes, and relevant training in project management, in order to ensure the re-establishment of the (Christian) traditions of organized philanthropy and social action in Bulgaria. The programme took place in 1996-2004 and has exposed hundreds of individuals, dozens of organisations and church institutions to both motivational and skill-building sessions, providing courses and tailor-made support for many church-related initiatives. The Pokrov foundation has taken the challenging role to be a catalyst for what may be described as the rebirth of the social

mission of the Orthodox Church in modern Bulgaria.

The exposure to good practices and the resulting networking activities within the community of CRNGOs have resulted in many lasting relationships on local and national levels. And although the church leadership has not been particularly active in these processes, the results in dozens of villages and cities have been encouraging and inspiring.

There are at least 4 good reasons for non-religious national and community-centered NGOs to consider the parishes and the church in general as potential partners for long-term socially-related programmes.

1. The Church's ethos, or code of conduct, if you wish, is firmly rooted in the concept of the (spiritual) community. The very word "church", in Greek, *ekklesia*, means "gathering". Contrary to common misconceptions, that relate the church to a (nationally presented) institution, the genuine meaning of the church is actually "community" of believers, united by a common faith. Although universal in nature, the church is manifested through concrete local "churches", or communities.

2. From a purely pragmatic point of view, the church is one of the few institutions, that have a "branch" in virtually every settlement, both large and small. When a high level of reaching out is sought, or a national coverage for a programme is necessary, the church is one of the most natural partner for awareness-raising campaigns, regional programmes and large-scale networking initiatives.

3. The church has property in proportions which rank it second only to the state. This property includes buildings, agricultural lands, etc. This resource has not been explored and taken account of by none of the national programmes for social integration or provision of social services. Many projects for regional development would benefit if proper patterns of co-operation with the church are established.

4. It is within the church's mandate to serve the community it is situated in, without differentiating or discriminating anyone on grounds of gender, age, social status, or, for that matter, religious belief.

To conclude, the religious communities in Bulgaria, and the Orthodox Church in particular, are facing challenging new opportunities, resulting from the integration of the country in the European Union. While there are still many obstacles for the church's full participation in the larger development projects (legal, political, related to capacity, etc.), there is already good evidence that the traditional cultural and instrumental elements of a possible church's involvement in the lives of the Bulgarian communities are already present and deserve the non-governmental sector's attention.

Two Examples of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) Community Development Work in Romania

Anemarie Gasser

The two projects described in this article were presented at the Approaches and Trends in Community Development in CEE Conference, during the workshop on Poverty Alleviation.

Anemarie Gasser is the Senior Community Development Officer for the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) in Romania. She graduated Sociology at the University of Bucharest, specializing in community development work. Annemarie is one of the first professionals to serve as a Community Facilitator in rural areas of Romania and is a founding member of the Romanian Community Development Association (RCDA).

International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) in Romania

The International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) is a non-profit humanitarian organisation with headquarters in Maryland, USA. IOCC currently has field offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Georgia, Ethiopia, Jerusalem/West Bank and Lebanon.

IOCC opened its office in Romania at the invitation of the Romanian Orthodox Church to launch a number of emergency and community development programmes benefiting Romania's children and families at risk.

The present article presents two projects of the International Orthodox Christian Charities focused on community development work in Romania, which began implementation in 2000. They illustrate the community development approach used by IOCC and the results achieved on the difficult road of de-institutionalization of childcare and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Philanthropic Committees for reunification of children with their families

The launching initiatives of IOCC in Romania were focused on child abandonment and were implemented in partnership with the Romanian Orthodox Church and the local administration of the Southeast counties, which represent the poorest and

most socially excluded part of the country. The project's idea emerged from the need for de-institutionalization of children who live in state-run children's homes, a serious problem Romania is presently facing. To this end, one of the goals of the project was to identify the most appropriate approach to address the issues of child abandonment and family support.



The Orthodox Church participated in the project through the local priests, who are actively involved in the life of the communities and are aware of the individual circumstances of each family. Together with the local administration, they researched and identified the family history and background of each child. Local groups of volunteers, united in the so-called Philanthropic Committees, which functioned on town or community levels, used the collected information to assess the capacity of the immediate and extended families to provide adequate care for their children.

The Philanthropic Committees included five to twelve formal and informal community leaders under the guidance of the priests. The Committee members were social workers and representatives of the local child protection departments, the local administration and the community.

The assessment of the families' circumstances included visits with the family and observation of the factors, which lead to the abandonment of the child, which may vary from poverty to alcoholism, domestic violence or a combination of multiple factors. After the initial assessment, the main task of the Committee was to discuss and find adequate case sensitive solutions to apply for the successful reintegration of the children in their immediate or extended families. The result was the preparation of an individual intervention plan, which included short term reintegration measures and longer term monitoring of the children and their families.

The above described model proved to be successful due to the application of a community-based approach and the active involvement and cooperation of the local communities and all local stakeholders.

As a result of the project implementation 583 cases were addressed in only two years (2002

– 2004), resulting in either reintegration of the children in their birth families or in prevention of abandonment through provision of services for families at risk and pregnant women.

After the end of the project, using the same model, the local child protection departments created the so-called Community Steering Committees for child protection to ensure the sustainable continuation of local activities and services for families and children at risk.

HIV/AIDS Prevention Project in Romania

The presented activities were part of the “Strengthening Community-Based Initiatives for HIV/AIDS and Domestic Violence in Romania” project, launched in April 2005 by the Romanian Orthodox Church and the International Orthodox Christian Charities, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research and with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The project’s main goal was to promote responsible social behaviour among Romanian people, with a special focus on youth, by strengthening Romanian communities to better address HIV/AIDS, domestic violence and other critical social problems. This goal was achieved through the efforts of local priests and teachers in the project’s twelve target counties: Iasi, Neamt, Bacau, Vaslui, Galati, Constanta, Ialomita, Dolj, Mehedinti, Timis, Alba, Brasov and Bucharest.



The idea of the project emerged as a result of the negative trends in the neighboring Ukraine and Moldavia where the number of HIV infected people was rapidly growing. The project aimed at preventing the dramatic spread of HIV infection in the cases when immediate and appropriate measures were not undertaken to restrain the epidemic.

Another reason for the significance of this issue for Romania is the large number of young people

who were infected with HIV in their early childhood years. The infection occurred before 1990 because of the poor sanitary conditions in some Romanian hospitals. A large number of the infected children are now teenagers and are becoming sexually active. Therefore a need emerged to approach these young people, their families, friends, and the people of their communities to educate them on the threats of HIV/AIDS and the ways to prevent infection.

The project used a community-based approach, which empowered each community to make tailored decisions and come up with locally sensitive solutions to address the issue. Over 1,200 priests from twelve dioceses were recruited and trained on how to work with local teams and how to develop HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness raising campaigns.

The priests had the freedom to expand the issues to work on with the local communities including other social problems of local significance. Giving the priests and the local communities the freedom to select and prioritize the problems they want to address is the core for the project's community-based approach, which promotes sensitivity and flexibility when solving issues on local level.

A lot of work was done to sensitivize the local people to the HIV problem: "We are a small community, and our people are not threatened by this issue, this is not for us", was what they initially shared. In the course of the project the project workers educated the people on the relevance of the problem to their lives, helped them understand it can affect their families and children and therefore immediate measures need to take place.

As a result, some of the communities formed youth clubs, others used the same approach as in the child and family reunification project - establishment of local Philanthropic Committees. Again, the Committee members were representatives of local authorities, social workers, doctors, teachers and other community leaders. Their main task was to observe the developments related to HIV/AIDS in the community and to plan appropriate intervention through regular meetings and discussions.

An example for the successful work of the local stakeholders was the project implementation in Dolj county, Ocolna village, where the majority of the population is of Roma origin. The local priest initiated training for the community Philanthropic Committee members and as a result the Committee organized an open community campaign to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS prevention. The campaign was held among the local community, talking to people on the streets, educating them on the issues related to HIV/AIDS. People were very open to the initiative, expressing interest in the problem, asking questions and attending follow-up meetings to discuss HIV/AIDS prevention.

The evaluation of the project results emphasized the importance of community involvement and empowerment of local leaders, represented by the Church and other local stakeholders. Local leadership, as well as community responsibility ensured the success of the project and its future sustainable continuation.

Lighting up civil society

Caroline Neligan

The article is published in Alliance Online - September 2007. Transparency and access to information are preconditions for the continued growth and health of civil society. Without information on the activities, accomplishments and finances of CSOs, those who seek to support them are unable to effectively allocate resources, while those who seek to minimize their role make claims that cannot be disproved. There is a real risk that the critical work of CSOs will be undermined through lack of trust and disappointment in their ability to deliver. The internet, because of its extensive use and reach, can be the means par excellence of communicating information about CSOs. But there are drawbacks, too, such as the plethora of information on the web and the sometimes prohibitive expense for smaller CSOs of developing effective internet presences. GuideStar International can help furnish a solution.

Caroline Neligan is Director of Programmes, GuideStar International.

Civil society's role in ensuring progress and well-governed and vibrant societies is widely documented and broadly accepted. A strong civil society not only provides means for direct citizen oversight of government practices; it also ensures an enduring counterweight – the alternative capacity to deliver services, ensure human rights, preserve the environment, provide education, develop policy and conduct research. CSOs are closely connected to the grassroots, more flexible than government, and more socially inclined than business. The strength of these private social initiatives ultimately determines a country's quality of life and the quality of its governance.

The recognition of their central role has made CSOs much more visible at all levels of decision-making. At the same time, they have become more directly challenging to governments, contesting global rules of trade and decision-making and promoting development policies to take account of the world's poorest people.

However, this prominence has led inevitably to questions about their legitimacy, effectiveness and accountability. Increasingly, governments, wary of the political influence of CSOs, seek to disable them by tightening regulation, and in some cases imposing even more draconian controls. Media's simplistic response doesn't help matters as the donor public is bombarded by stories of CSOs' abuse, or ineffective use, of funds.

CSOs are understandably eager to address these challenges and to define solutions themselves before they are imposed upon them. But to whom should they be accountable and for what? CSOs' multiple stakeholders have different reporting demands, which place a burden on CSOs, especially the smaller ones.

At the same time, funding for infrastructure initiatives is inadequate, ephemeral and, in the case of private funders, actually declining. With this decline, the ability of organisations to demonstrate their legitimacy and effectiveness is further compromised. We all lose as a result.

The power of the internet together with the increasing need for CSO transparency makes online visibility of CSOs imperative. In one response to this need, GuideStar International works to illuminate the work of the world's CSOs through its online information systems. It is a grand vision but one we aim to realize through the development of nationally owned and operated GuideStar systems. These national GuideStars aggregate information from annual government filings as well as actively encouraging CSOs to produce high quality reports on their organisation's mission, governance, objectives, activities and finances.

CSOs play a vital role in providing critical social services, advocating for a vast array of otherwise unheard voices, and generally promoting conditions that enable responsive and accountable national governance.

But without clear and effective communication of what they do – to friends and enemies alike – CSOs will be unable to live up to the expectations placed upon them to transform the development experience of countries and make possible the emergence of well-governed, just and strong societies.

Oxford Community Development Journal Review (Number 4, Octo- ber 2007)

Community Development and the Arts: Reviving the Democratic Imagination

Lilia Angelova

The 3rd edition of Journal in Community Development theory and practices in CEE presented the topic “Art and Community Development” where the culture and art as mediators for community and social development were discussed. As a follow-up, here in this Journal a review of the famous Oxford Community Development Journal is presented. The topic of Volume 42 form October 2007 is Community Development and the Arts: Reviving the Democratic Imagination.

Community Development Journal Special Issue: “Community Development and the Arts: Reviving the Democratic Imagination”

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This special issue asserts the role of community development for strengthening democracy which, as Rosie Meade and Mae Shaw argue in the Editorial, is not just a set of institutions but an ‘active social, political and cultural process through which change occurs’. It presents a collection of articles exploring the potential of arts to foster imagination committed to democratic ideals.

The authors share their experience from community development art work in different parts of the world – Australia, Canada, Eastern and Western Europe – and comment on its potential to empower people, to encourage critical thinking and active citizenship and thus to contribute to social change.

'Legislators of the World', Adrienne Rich, p. 422-424

Continuing Shelley's 'defence of poetry', Adrienne Rich reminds us of the power of poetry to bring about social change. Art can go under the surface, awakening 'what is still passionate, still unintimidated and still unquenched' in people – a source of resistance to the dominant oppressive system found on 'ownership and dispossession, the subjection of women, outcast and tribe'. Poetry can free our imagination to create a new and better world built on the 'continuous redefining of freedom'.

“A New Deal”: art, museums and communities – re-imagining relations’, Declan McGonagle, p. 425-434

Declan McGonagle challenges the idea that art is independent of the social. Drawing on his experience as director of the Irish Modern Art Museum, he questions the traditional division of artists and non-artists and respectively of producers and consumers. Instead, he suggests that the artist is a 'negotiator' – 'someone who does not predetermine the form of the art before negotiation with context, people and/or place', and argues for new models of art and institutional practices which could transform consumers into participants.

'Vignettes of Communities in Action: an exploration of participatory methodologies in promoting community development in Nigeria', Oga Steve Abah, p. 435-448

Oga Steve Abah focuses his attention on the Theatre for Development – a performative approach used as a 'tool for research and community building'. He argues for 'methodological conversation' that brings together different methods in development work. The benefits of such approach are demonstrated through a case study from the conflicting area of Niger Delta where three different methods were used – classical questionnaire, Participatory Learning and Action, and drama.

'Common ground: cultural action as a route to community development', François Matarasso, p. 449-458

The individualisation of the British public policy in the last decade of the 20th century has led to parallel changes in community arts. They became more concerned with individual rather than community development. Yet, the two cases which François Matarasso presents – from rural England and South-East Europe – remind us about the great potential of arts for community development. Their effectiveness stems from their focus on community resources and strengths rather than on problems.

'Community media: local is focal', Nitin Paranjape, p. 459-469

Globalization has reached India's changing traditional lifestyles and relationships in many com-

munities. In an attempt to stop the erosion of the local culture and to reclaim 'the diverse voices of local communities', the Indian development organisation Abhivyakti initiated a programme to encourage community dialogue through forming loose networks of community artists – or 'media activists'. The artists were encouraged to engage with local issues, which turned out to be a challenging but promising approach.

'The last laugh: humour in community activism', Marty Branagan, p. 470-481

Using a number of Australian case studies, Marty Branagan reveals the important role of humour in community activism. Humour has a number of advantages in the process of popular education – it creates inclusive environment and promotes greater involvement, attracts the attention of the audience and makes complicated arguments understandable. Using humour to convey critical messages can 'break down resistance to behaviour change and educate people in a variety of holistic ways'.

'Campaign for education in democratic citizenship, Guadalajara, Mexico', Luis Fernando Arana Gtz., p. 482-489

Luis Fernando Arana presents a campaign for education in democratic citizenship led by two Mexican civil organisations before the local elections in 1994. The campaign has adopted some untraditional and provocative methods such as street forum TV to interest and involve people and to encourage them to participate in public affairs. The author shares some important insights and lessons from the campaign stressing the need to link such activities with the broader attempts to achieve social change.

'(From) Cultural resistance to community development', Stephen Duncombe, p. 490-500

In this article Stephen Duncombe explores the promises and the problems of cultural resistance in an attempt to situate its relationship with community development. Cultural resistance could challenge the dominant culture and values, while it might as well serve to sustain the dominant ideologies and support the status quo. However, politicising cultural resistance and turning it into political actions could be one possible way to utilise its potential for development.

'Whose problem? Disability narratives and available identities', Colin Cameron, p. 501-511

Colin Cameron's article highlights the oppressive representations of disabled people as victims, abnormal, deficient, etc., offered by the contemporary mainstream culture. He explores the history of the Disability Arts Movement in Britain as a cultural resistance to these problematic images and describes its contribution for the development of an alternative, empowering framework for understanding disabled people's experience. In this context, the role of community development practitioners would be to support the development of liberating perspectives and identities among disabled people.

'Feminist aesthetic practice of community development: the case of Myths and Mirrors Community Arts', Darlene Clover, p. 512-522

Drawing on the experience of Myths and Mirrors Community Arts – a feminist education and development organisation from Canada – Darlene Clover argues for the creation of aesthetic forms of community development. Such forms could open space for civic dialogue and encourage political engagement to challenge the hegemony of the neo-conservative agenda. The power of creativity and imagination to encourage risk-taking is emphasised as an important aspect of the transformative social learning and the process of social development.

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