

COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS: PRODUCTIVE ENTERPRISE

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a moment; teach a man to fish whilst giving him access to the source and you feed him for a lifetime.

Dr. Eric Williams, former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago asserted “Development has a face and that face is the face of man. Development, therefore, must cater for the total needs of man”. Development has also been defined (Dunn, 1971) as “The ability of an organization, community or society to change (transform itself) as the result of research and planning”.

Projects are very prevalent due to rapid technological and industrial growth, larger number of more complex programmes to facilitate development planning, more sophisticated beneficiary groups and the need to adequately respond to increasing levels of competition.

Within the context of scarce resources (time, money, people) projects seek to foster efficient and effective goal accomplishment. Developmental projects may go one step further by attempting to promote equitable distribution of project outputs. Projects are good for organisational, technically and financially complex activities that are non-routine; require particular magnitude of effort and yield a specific end-service or end product.

“Programmes are generally larger and more directly related to basic organisational objectives than are projects. A programme may be composed of many different projects. Programmes may also be open-ended in nature, while projects have specific objectives and specific end-points (Cleland and King, 1968).”

A very interesting example of a programme is ‘Banana Kelly’ (CBC, 2000) which exists in the south Bronx section of New York City. The programme was initiated over 20 years ago as a community’s (Kelly Street) response to the threatened demolition of their apartment buildings. The community members formed a cooperative in which they devoted their time, skills and money to redeveloping and managing the buildings and blocks in which they resided; the youth from the community receive self-development lectures, employment and on-the-job training within the refurbishment process and small businesses gain technical assistance and loans. ‘Banana Kelly’ has fostered government, business and civil society cooperation that have changed the community from an area of urban decay into one of urban renewal. The initiative has sought to promote increased health, economic growth and self-sufficiency via community consultation; elucidation of hopes, dreams and aspirations and work/knowledge creation which facilitates such dreams, hopes and aspirations. The ‘Banana Kelly’ slogans are “Don’t move, improve” and “People are assets listen to them”. I believe that this programme can teach us several valuable lessons regarding social project success.

Project Approach vis a vis Development

Development is dependant upon the project approach for focussing the planning process; implementing the resulting initiatives and assessing the validity of the enacted plans to developmental goals. “This has been substantiated by (Dr J. Khan, 2000) when he states that a) projects are the concrete manifestations of the development plan and the sum of such projects makes up most of the capital budget of a country and b) projects are instrumental in quickening the pace of socioeconomic progress in developing countries.”

The existence of the project as a tool of inter-group cooperation is exemplified by the statement (Hirschman, 1967) that “projects are the nexus of a complete network of management activities – those of public and private sector organisations, international funding and technical assistance agencies, bilateral development assistance agencies, investors, contractors, suppliers, users and beneficiaries.”

Projects may seek to effect change within beneficiary group behaviour, thereby improving their well being, for example, the Ministry of Health’s initiative (via its Environmental division) which promotes the practice of regular exterior clean ups by Barbadian householders so as to facilitate the eradication of the *aedes aegypti* mosquito. This example is interesting because it encompasses the all too often overlooked need for enforcement (in this case a fine or imprisonment) especially within developing countries, which is vital to avoiding delinquency that negatively affects project success.

Projects may aim to obtain a particular level of investment; to promote income growth and redistribution; to improve the standard of living; to alleviate poverty and income inequality; to increase aggregate consumption; to promote increased employment; to generate foreign exchange; to increase trade efficiency and competitiveness; to facilitate self-sufficiency and engender sustainability. “ It is argued (Hirschman, 1967) that the successes and failures and promises and performance of projects, the new skills and attitudes they impart, and the internal tensions they sometimes generate have a bearing on development initiatives.”

The Ministry of Social Transformation in Barbados has conceptualised ‘Relief 2000’, a poverty eradication initiative which targets indigent families comprising young, unemployed and unskilled single mothers; youth ‘on the block’; unemployed heads of households; the disabled; the chronically ill and old age pensioners. (I personally query the possibility of eradicating poverty in a world in which it has been a phenomena since Biblical times and the sole initiative which bore widespread success was where Jesus Christ *alleviated* ‘spiritual’ poverty) Recipients of social assistance and other needy families identified by community groups will be the focus of the programme. Government agencies (including social services) will play a prominent role in the execution phase of the program. Non-governmental organisations and the private sector will be sought in facilitating training programs, counseling services, determining market needs and employment requirements.

‘Relief 2000’ will seek to facilitate target group change via sessions that promote the building of self-esteem; instill professional attributes, promote personal development

values; encourage initiative in economic pursuits and the cultivation of a culture that transforms regressive lifestyles to productive engagements. The initiative is designed as a pilot project to attempt to ascertain the appropriate structures to promote program goals; harmonise relationships across the social services infrastructure and incorporate services to ensure that particular needs of the clientele are met.

One must wonder about the modus operandi to achieve the change within the bureaucratic structure deemed necessary by the Roett Report (1998), which proposes an amalgamation of services under one social service agency in an effort to improve efficiency, reduce duplication and introduce a generic approach to the intervention process. Relinquishing of power and centralised coordination will most likely be two of the difficulties faced. Sustainability is another concern, as the success of the strategy will inevitably depend on the level of cooperation received from constituent agencies and their ability to meet the required demands from their available budgets. Beneficiaries must 'buy into' the program if it's to efficiently survive. A fundamental issue in my opinion is that the project must be more than a means of political patronage or a 'hand-out' system if it is to be truly beneficial to Barbados.

See Dialogue 201 notes

The view is held (Henry, 2002) that "...only those solutions that are developed co-operatively by our peoples are the solutions that will work, that will sustain, that will endure and that will see the Caribbean being able to achieve development".

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