



Community development practices in Tanzania: issues and challenges

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L'histoire de l'action communautaire en Tanzanie continentale remonte à la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Depuis lors, de nouvelles améliorations ont été apportées, même après l'indépendance (1961). Les activités qui sont menées proviennent des communautés elles-mêmes. À cet égard, les agents de développement communautaire font de leur mieux pour identifier les ressources locales disponibles en collaboration avec les membres de la communauté afin d'assurer la pérennité des différents projets à travers le pays. Les défis actuels, dans un contexte d'une grande diversité de cultes et de cultures, comprennent la formation de travailleurs compétents, l'adoption d'une approche nationale et la réalisation de recherches plus approfondies.

Mots-clés : communauté, action communautaire, développement, formation, recherche.

The history of community development in mainland Tanzania can be traced back just after the Second World War. From this time, more improvement has been made, even after independence (1961). Activities which are carried out originated from the communities themselves. In this respect, community development workers do their best to identify local available resources in collaboration with community members (community participation) to ensure sustainability of different projects throughout the country. Current challenges in a context of a wide variety of cults and cultures include training competent workers, adopting a national approach and conducting more in-depth research.

Keywords: community, community action, development, training, research.

La historia de la acción comunitaria en Tanzania continental se remonta a poco después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Desde este momento, se han hecho más mejoras, incluso después de la independencia (1961). Las actividades que se llevan a cabo proceden de las propias comunidades. A este respecto, los trabajadores de desarrollo comunitario hacen todo lo posible por identificar los recursos locales disponibles en colaboración con los miembros de la comunidad para garantizar la sostenibilidad de los diferentes proyectos en todo el país. Los retos actuales, en un contexto de una amplia variedad de cultos y culturas, incluyen la formación de trabajadores competentes, la adopción de un enfoque nacional y la realización de investigaciones más a fondo.

Palabras clave : comunidad, acción comunitaria, desarrollo, formación, investigación.

What is Community?

Community, as a concept, can either be a functional or structural entity; as a functional entity, it initiates a people –directed collective process based upon their own perception of needs. In that sense, community is an achievement, and not something given by reason of geographical residence. A community is not fixed; it changes as a result of experience or purposeful effort. The term refers to sociological entities such as a town meeting, self-contained rural hamlets, planned settlement, a town, city, country, a social system. According to Edward and Jones (1976: 12) define community as a group of people who resides in a specific locality and who exercise some degree of local autonomy in organizing their social life in such a way that they can, from that locality, satisfy the full range of their daily needs. Midgley (1986: 24-25) define community is usually defined in terms of geographic locality, of shared interests and needs, often in terms of deprivation and disadvantage.

Therefore, community can be defined variously as follows:

1. A condition or relationship which the people have to one another who share interests and values. It may be an urban neighborhood, town, country et, al. (Hornby etc.). Values include political norms and organization structure within a particular area.
2. A group of people who are living in a particular geocultural sphere of share values and interests (Odhanbo).
3. People who live in some special relationship to one another (in a given area) and who share interests and values (Leo cary).
4. A group of local people who have come together because they want to do something or change something that interests them all.

Whatever, a definition is given community as a concept connotes the following aspects:

- Populations.
- Geographical boundaries (place entity)
- Culture (traditions, norms, etc.)
- Interaction (relationship)
- Common sharing of customs and interests.
- Leadership (organization and roles)

Characteristic for a community is that people share:

- A common purpose (destination)
- Belongingness (« we » feeling)
- Being neighbors (cooperation)

Types of communities in Tanzania

Using different criterias (mainly location, occupation, ethnic background), they are several types of communities in Tanzania.

Agricultural communities: these are communities in which the main occupation is agriculture. The people in these communities have permanent homes and a separate area for farming crops. Most of the tribes in Tanzania fall under this type of community such as the Ngoni, Nyakyusa, Chagga and Haya, just to mention a few.

Pastoral communities: these are communities of people whose main occupation is animal husbandry. Usually people in these communities have no permanent homes but tend to shift from one area to another in searching for pastures for their animals. The Maasai and Sukuma tribes provide good examples of a pastoral community.

Semi-pastoral communities (mixed farmers): these are communities whose main occupations are both animal husbandry and agriculture. They therefore keep large herds of animals and at the same time cultivate crops in large scale. The people in these communities have permanent homes with separate areas for pastures and crop farming. They also have small garden plots around residential areas. Examples of these communities are the Gogo, Sukuma and Kurya Tribes.

Food gatherers and hunters communities: today in rural Tanzania, these very few communities have for main occupation collecting wild fruits and hunting wild animals for food. These people have no permanent homes, and they solely depend on the natural environment. The examples of such communities are Hadzabe and the Gorowe in the North-Central Tanzania, and the Sandawe in Central Tanzania.

Someone may use location as criteria and come up with different types of community in Tanzania such as Rural Communities; this is a type of community who resides in rural settings. There is also Urban Communities, the type of community who live in urban areas.

The identification of types of community is very crucial for community development work. It is through Identification of types of community where the real needs of the people will be known, and critical concerns are addressed. This also helps in proper allocation of resources for helping people help themselves.

What is Community Development?

Community development refers to the organized effort of the people to improve the conditions of community life and capacity of the people for participation, self-direction and integrated engagement in community affairs. According to UNO, community development is defined as « The process by which effort of the people themselves are united with those of Governmental Authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to the national progress ».

Community development is thus seen as group methods for expediting personality growth which can occur when geographic neighbors work together to serve the good of all. Community development is about promoting positive change in favor of those who benefit least from economic development, however it is not just about making concrete changes in the quality of people's lives, but also about how this is done. It should enable people to play a role in shaping their own lives and in shaping the society of which they are a part. Community development is fundamentally concerned with issues of powerless and disadvantages and it seeks to develop structures that enable the active involvement of people from disadvantaged groups. From the definition above, community development is a process which calls for different stakeholders to work together to reach a certain goal. It involves linking individuals and institutions. In that case a person (community development professional) who is responsible to link these Institutions need

to have knowledge and skills on how to work with people who do differ in different ways according to traditions and cultures.

Community development practices in tanzania

Tanzanian has been carrying out various activities geared to improving their living conditions since the colonial era. People were helped to construct roads, water services, construction of recreational centers and other communal activities with greater participation of community at large. But these activities were not identified by community development as we know today.

The history of community development in Tanzania mainland can be traced back just after the second world war in 1945. From this time more improvement has been made and even after independence 1961. Therefore, the history of community development in Tanzania can be categorized into two: during the colonial era and after Independence.

The colonial government established the Social Welfare Organization in 1945 with the aim of trying to resettle the ex-soldiers who were returning from the Second World War. The aim of this organization was to provide social services necessary in their rehabilitation so as to enable them settle in their new environment. The organization employed social welfares assistance who was charged with following:

- To establish social welfare centers for meetings, discussions and debates.
- Reading purposes (newspapers, magazines, etc.).
- Recreational purposes (eg. dances).

During 1949-1954, the social welfare organization put more emphasis on the setting of the ex-soldiers; little was done to improve the living conditions of the community as a whole. The social welfare department was established in 1949 so as to extend social services to the people in general. This department had the following functions to perform:

- To provide social services to the society: relief to individuals and family who were in difficulties. Poverty, old age, blindness etc.
- To establish and maintain recreational centers and clubs where solders coming from war could keep together since they were considered to be a threat to the colonial administration.
- To liaison with other agencies outside the country for assistance.

The department stressed on maintaining all the activities which were carried out by Social welfare Department in the years 1952-1967. This department enlarges its area of operation by extending its services to the rural people. The aim was to provide basic requirements to the majority of the community. Thus, social development department had the following duties:

- To carry out mass education of the majority of the adults so as to increase the ability of the people to adopt and improve technology that could improve their living conditions.
- Promotion and formation of self-help groups, such as youth groups, women groups, aiming at involving popular participation in activities which could improve community life.
- To establish and maintain social centers and clubs where people could meet and organize themselves in groups' potential for improving community life.

Just after the independence, the Social development Department was renamed Community Development under the Ministry of Local Government and Housing in the year 1961-1962. The

aim of this department was to give inspiration, guidance and practical assistance to the groups of people especially in the rural areas so as to make improvement in their housing, their local domestic water supplies, and their education, roads, bridges and all tasks which could be easily carried out by self-help methods. Community development Department gain momentum as time goes on. The Department was placed under different Ministries in different time until the year 1990 when the Ministry of Community Development, Women and Children was formed. The formal department was recognized, following gender moves around the world and Tanzania was not left aside to various conversions hence the name of the Ministry was changed to reflect efforts of the government in addressing gender equality. It is in this era where the name of the Ministry was renamed to Ministry of Community Development Gender and Children. After last general election in the country, which was done in the year 2015, the current government formed Ministry and merges some with an intention to minimize running cost. Hence, the former Ministry of Community Development was merged with Ministry of Health and form Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children. The new formed Ministry is served with two departments, Health Department and Community Development Department. This is in operation in Tanzania to date. Therefore, Community Development Department had the following objectives:

- Coordinate implementation of the community development policy.
- Develop guidelines on participation of people in the process of community development using available local resources.
- Advocate for the use of community development technical units in the planning and implementation of self-help projects.
- Research, develop, disseminate and encourage the use of appropriate technologies as a means of improving productivity particularly in rural areas.
- Coordinate, supervise, follow-up and amend training curricular so that they are appropriate for use in Community Development Training Institutes and Folk Development Colleges.
- Track the performance of graduates of the Community Development Training Institutes with the view to improving the professional training.
- Tackle the pressing problem of ignorance by organizing mass literacy campaigns.
- Encourage women to start their own groups, raise their own funds, provide their own materials for hand work and cookery and with the help of their husband to erect their own buildings.
- Stimulate the formation of village department committees so that they could be assisted in the building of the local village amenities (e.g. water supplies, roads, dispensaries, schools).
- Work hand in hand with the Ministry of Agriculture in campaign designed to persuade peasant farmers to increase their production.

Project origination

Community development activities which are carried out in Tanzania are originated from the communities themselves. Community development professional believe that in any given community people want change and they themselves can change. In this respect, community development workers do their best to identify local available resources in collaboration with community members (community participation). The intention is to ensure sustainability of different development projects carried out in the country. In so doing they observe the so-called community entry protocol so as to gain acceptance to the community. An observation of community leaders is essential at all stages of project development. Community development

professionals are directed to apply participatory approaches at all levels of community project, such as Identification, designing, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is evidently that people in any given community have potential resources and they are the one who know their environment better. In that respect, community development worker is an outsider in any given community. Therefore, he/she has to learn from community members or in other words we can say that he/she has to facilitate the process.

Community development activities are mainly done by the government through Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender Elderly and Children (Community Development department) or through Local government Authority under the Ministry of Local government. To some extent, these activities are done by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The NGO Act of 2002 allows registration of NGO to work and supplement government efforts in solving community problems. Both local and international NGOs work tirelessly to ensure that the most pressing needs of the people are met. These NGOs use community development professionals in observing community development standards. Most of them are trained in the Government Training Institutions.

Community development activities get funded from Government through its Budget though the demand always exceeds availability of funds. It is through this limitation most of NGOs secure funds from Donors outside to address community development activities.

Issues and challenges of community development in tanzania

There are several issues and challenges facing community development professions in Tanzania. Some of them are discussed here under:

- Lack of enough skilled community development worker at grass root level; as per the government structure we expected to have community development worker from village level, ward level, district, regional to national level. Very unfortunately many villages and wards do not have well trained community development worker. This has much implication when it comes to the issue of sustainability. They don't have principles of working with people as required by community development discipline. In that respect people from other discipline are consulted to fill up the gap as a result no output is seen. People from other discipline do lack skills on how to engage people into development activities, community development is democratic in nature, it requires people to exercise their right of identifying their most pressing needs, give priority of their needs due to the fact that resources to curb them are very limited. They need to come up with common understanding on what should be done first for the betterment of their life. At this stage, community development worker listens what they want and not forcing them to do what he/she thinks is good.
- No single agreeable national approach is applied: community development in Tanzania is guided by the notion of community participation; it is from their participation that we can ensure the sustainability of a project or program. Various approaches are applied to ensure that community led the process of bringing positive changes. In Tanzania, there are various participatory approaches to ensure clients become at the center of development. It became a challenge that there is no single agreeable participatory approach that is applied in the country when it come to the issues of project appraisal. In this respect, each organization may apply any approach it may deem fit in the field of community development. Some of these approaches omit the concept of sustainability at all levels.

- **Multiple Tribes:** the implementation of community development work depends on how people in a certain community accept and take part in the implementation of the program. Tanzania is blessed with multiple tribes with different traditions and cultural practices. It is sometimes became a challenge to implement community development projects or program by putting people of different cultural practices together or mix groups of people together contrary to their cultural practices, taking an example from Kurya or Maasai community you cannot hold public meetings mixing together women and men or different age groups; various approaches are required to implement community development projects, some approached may fail to comply with cultural practices in a given community.
- **Limited Research:** A limited number of researches are done due to limited funds to back up these researches. Despite of having limited funds to conduct researches on community problems, still those researches which are done do not give feedback to the researched community. Feedback is one among the key component of research, some researches do not bring back feedback on the issues found to the studied community due to limited funds as a results community cannot be in a position to find solutions to their problems. Most of the research results are found in libraries where normal community members cannot be able to find them.
- **Improper Monitoring and Evaluation System in place:** In any project, monitoring and evaluation are the key components. In the implementation of various community development program in Tanzania there is a vacuum in monitoring and evaluation system. It is through monitoring and evaluation where mistakes can be rectified for the better attainment of programs objectives. Community development workers who are the key people in the implementation of community development projects lack skills in monitoring and evaluation. The gap is based on the fact that most of their courses lack these important components; they just learn part or partially, and worse enough there is limited Institutions offering this course in the country at long term and even short courses.
- **Lack of Funds to various established NGOS:** Various policies and program in the country are implemented by Government and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). Tanzania enacted Law for the registration of NGOs in the Country. There is good number of Local NGOs established and registered in Tanzania. These organization need to be funded to run their activities. The government plays its role in registering and regulate them but do not provide fund to support them despite of doing good job which supplement government activities to the people. Apart from internal funders still fund from abroad is very limited to support NGO meets their intended objectives.
- **Curriculum Timeframe:** Institutions offering community development courses make use of well structures curriculum, the document exist for five good years before amendments are done. Community by itself is not static keep on moving as science and technology do, therefore, having timeframe to change the curriculum is a challenge to produce community development professionals who meet the contemporary world.
- **Linkage with other International Community Development Professionals:** There is a no common understanding between nations about community development practices. It is a matter of sharing different practices to learn from each other. Community development professionals in Tanzania limit themselves to interact with others professional from other countries so as to share experience on issues related to community development, as a result they lack exposure from other countries as far as community development practices is concerned.

Institutions for training community development professions

Community development workers and community developers are trained in community development institutions. There are government institutions which offer course in the field of community development at Certificate, Diploma, Degree and Master Level. Some private Institutions are also found in the country. Both government and private owned institutions are using the same curriculum for training community development professions. There is a regulatory authority established by law to regulate the quality of training offered. The main objective of regulatory authority is to ensure standard is maintained in producing unity development professions. The current curriculum for Certificate and Diploma (Working class) was developed in the year 2018 and the process involved various stakeholders to ensure various concerns are taken into consideration. The document is in use for five years (2018-2023).

Researches in community development

Research is the key to the advancement of any organization; the community development department under the Ministry recognizes this important work. At the head quarter, researches are done on issues facing communities in Tanzania directly and others are done in collaboration with the Ministries. Furthermore, training institutions available in the country are also mandated to conduct research on issues afflicting people in attaining sustainable community development. More researches are needed in community development in Tanzania.