

Context,
international cooperation



Working Paper Child Centred Community Development

Report of a participatory workshop
held on June 6-10, 2004
ISVW Conference Hotel, Leusden

Context, international cooperation
June 2004
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Colophon

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Introduction

On 6-11 June 2004, IREWOC, Plan The Netherlands, Save the Children the Netherlands and Context, international cooperation, organised a workshop on Child Centred Community Development (CCCD). The workshop was attended by sixteen staff members from various international organisations, which are all active in the field of CCCD (for a list of participants see Annex III).

The workshop was facilitated by Mr. Fons van der Velden and Ms. Lotte Vonken of Context. The facilitator of the closing public event on Friday June 11th, titled “Where are the Children in Development Co-operation Policy & Practice?”, was Plan The Netherlands.

The idea for this workshop was born after the four above mentioned organisations met each other on several occasions in the area of Child Centred Development. They decided to organise this workshop because they all acknowledged the increased importance and recognition of Child Centred Community Development. Moreover, an important motivation for organising this workshop was to provide a forum where experience and knowledge could be shared in order to learn from each other.

The document starts with a more analytical overview with regard to Child Centred Community Development and then deals with the process, outcomes and reflections of the workshop itself, with the aim to make the outcome of this meeting available for a broader audience.

The report is a collective effort of the Context-team. The process reporting has been done by Ms. C. Huijsmans en Ms. R. De Jong in collaboration with Ms. L. Vonken. Ms. R. De Jong has analysed the feedback of the participants. Final editing and lay out was again done by Ms. L. Vonken.

We are grateful that the resource persons, Mr. A.Fowler and Mr. K. Lieten, allowed us to include their presentations. We appreciate the fact that all participants permitted us to include their presentations as background documents (in the annexes).

On behalf of the entire Context-team, I would like to thank all the participants and resource persons for their active participation in the workshop.

We are aware of the fact that the issue of Child Centred Community Development is complex: feedback to this report is therefore highly welcome at info@developmenttraining.org.

Fons van der Velden



Context, international cooperation
Utrecht, June 2004

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Box I: Context, international cooperation

Context, international cooperation has been set up in 1996. Core competencies of Context relate to research, facilitation and training.

The mission of Context, international cooperation is to support organisations to solve self-identified problems by themselves. The methodologies being used are action learning, participatory learning and facilitation.

Context staff members and associates have a sound academic background as well as working experience in the development practice. Context closely works together with similar organisations in South Africa, India, and East and West Africa. In the Netherlands joint activities are being carried out with the University of Nijmegen and University of Amsterdam.

Clients of Context are, among others, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, various Non-Governmental Development Organisations in The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany and various organisations in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Thematic areas of specialisation are: participatory organisational assessment and development; facilitation of policy preparation and formulation; gender; NGDOs and civil society; the 'learning organisation'; transfer of functions; and Child Centred Community Development.

1. The Process

Aim of the workshop

The general aim of the workshop is to contribute to further enhancement of policies, guiding principles and tools for CCCD within development organisations. The specific aims of the workshop are first of all to enhance conceptual understanding of CCCD, secondly to identify 'good practices' at an operational level and finally to contribute to application in the context of the participants.

Methodology of the workshop

The guiding principle for the workshop is generating knowledge (policies, instruments, and procedures) on the basis of developmental practice/experience of the participants. This does not only imply that active participation of all stakeholders is required, it also means that ownership lies with the participants.

The methodology to be applied is a combination of action learning and participatory learning. Action learning is understood as 'A social exchange in which participants learn with and from one another during analysis and treatment of real problems.' (Revans). Participatory learning means that learning is treated as a two-way process, in which participants learn from each other, as well as from resource persons, bringing tangible and tacit knowledge to the surface. Furthermore, the process entails double-loop learning, which means that underlying beliefs, values, thoughts and feelings are also being put to the forth. Participants formulate learning questions in order to organise the learning process, so that they learn in a conscious and systematic manner.

In the approach of this workshop we first deal with guiding principles and concepts and later with tools and practical information. The learning process is organised as follows: the first stage is knowledge sharing by participants (*inside out*); the second stage is about learning from others, e.g. from literature, resource persons (*outside in*); the third stage is called knowledge *application*, and is about reconnecting to future actions.

2. Guiding concepts

Introduction

CCCD is a development approach in which children, their families and communities are the owners of the development process. CCCD represents an opportunity to tackle seemingly intractable problems of poverty, as children are the building blocks of nations and can be the starting point for breaking the inter-generational cycles of denial and discrimination. The well-being of children is essential for the well-being and foundation of a nation.

The four basic concepts of CCCD were defined by the participants, and do not necessarily represent current findings in literature or organisational policies. The following common notions on CCCD functioned as working definitions during the workshop.

Child

According to the UN definition, a child is a human being between the age of 0-18, unless local law defines differently (for example by a legal point of view).

We adopt the non-discrimination principle of the CRC (article 2): all rights apply to all children, without exception.

Childhood is seen as a stage in human development, where the child gradually matures into adulthood. Childhood is about evolving capacities, nevertheless, during childhood, it must be acknowledged that, in many ways, children are less skilled than adults. Another characteristic of children is their vulnerability, and their need for protection.

In development processes, on the other hand, children must be recognised as social actors, capable of making a social change. This starts from childbirth within the 'family' context, but later they are social actors in community as well.

Centred

Children are a starting point and an end-point for analysis and intervention. However, maybe the distinction between children as a start- or endpoint of community development is actually false. The point is to focus on the specific developmental needs of children, and if this results in community development in a broader sense, that must be seen as a side-effect.

Children should be in the centre of the attention of all the stakeholders. The needs and rights of the children must be in the heart of every action (best interest of the child: CRC, article 3).

Children should not just be listened to, but should be involved in decision-making as well, because they have the possibility to advocate for their own rights and interests.

We need a generational or time-framed perspective on development: not only is a child the future, the child is also 'in motion'; it will not remain a child for the rest of her/his life.

Community

Community can have many different dimensions: culturally, politically, economically etc. It depends on the perspective on these dimensions how 'community' is defined.

The major characteristics of a community in a specific situation in terms of development are therefore usually very context and situation specific. The binding factor of a

community is not necessarily geographical proximity, but more about what people share. What is needed, is a process to define 'community' locally.

The community is able to provide basic services to its members. Individual people can be members of different communities at the same time.

Development

Development is a purposeful process of change in the social, economical, political etc. field. It must be perceived as such by the people involved in this process of change.

Development is about recognising and changing the balance between winners & losers, but also about recognising each other's 'human-ess'. With regard to development processes in developing countries, westerners need to understand the non-western social concept of "I cannot understand me outside of you".

We must not forget that *rights have costs* : somewhere, some people have to pay. Changing the balance between winners and losers is not a win-win situation. The acknowledgement that everybody has the same rights, does not help every rights-holder to the same extent.

3. Inside out learning

Introduction

Participants formulated learning questions about what they wanted to learn with regard to CCCD. In this part of the workshop the focus was on current practices within the participants' organisations. Participant shared their experiences, through exercises in small groups, and in plenary discussions. They discussed constraints and dilemma's and identified 'good practices' with regard to CCCD.

Identification of good practices

In the following we report the good practices that were mentioned more than once, by different participants. In this summary we only recapitulate the CCCD practices, not practices referring to community development in general.

- CCCD is about enabling the environment, so that children feel free to express themselves. Adults need not only look out for the best interest of the children, but have the responsibility to show them options and help them to learn to negotiate their own rights and interest (empowering). CCCD is a rights-based approach.
- CCCD strives for active participation of children, although this must always be done with respect for the capacity of children to influence. Adults have the plight to recognise the capability and motivation of children to participation. We must be aware of the so called tyranny of participation: child participation is a means, not an end of CCCD.
- CCCD is an integrated approach, child-centredness is one of the components of a successful community development process.
- Partnership with national NGO's and capacity building on CCCD. Community and national level should be linked through advocacy and lobby.
- CCCD should be broad-based, it needs scaling-up, linking up at an organisational level. CCCD should be directed to macro-level networking as well as to micro-level practices.

Discussion

We elaborately discussed the question what needs to be done when the state is failing as a duty-bearer. One answer is that the role and position of rights-holders needs to be strengthened in order to be able to hold government accountable.

Another answer is that we must not run down or substitute the state. Not in all developing countries the state is a failure, it can be dysfunctional towards some aspects, and functional to others. Furthermore, we must acknowledge the fact that governments of most developing countries do not have the same capacities as a developed country. Where gaps exist you should intervene, and states should not immediately been run down.

In addition to this, there is a first amount equals. There is no good alternative of the state. Every society needs an institution that can mediate and enforce. It is questionable if there ever is an alternative to the state.

Learning Questions

- “Assuming the positive benefits to Child Centred Community Development”, how do we empower the children to participate in decision making?
- Are there limits? Can participation be overwhelming and ‘disempower’ rather than ‘empower’?
- ‘Who, how, when and where’ may child-participation best be promoted?
- What are the challenges of the right-based approach to community ownership and how to overcome them?
- In how far is CCCD narrowing down development work, excluding other very critical issues?
- How do we ensure that CCCD is not minimalised into just ‘child participation’?
- How do we ensure that ‘child participation’ does not instrumentalise children?
- CCCD is a general approach which takes into account the diversity within communities and within the group of ‘children’. How are these diversities (cultural notions of childhood, sex, age, ethnic background, caste, classes etc. accommodated during implementation of CCCD and during policy development in specific areas? Provided that insight into the heterogeneity/diversity of a group will be given through field-based research, how can organisations access this data (intra-household as private domain)?
- How to be able to make convergence of the child focused / child centred and other child participatory approaches (children being heard, consulted, involved in program or even as protagonists) to community development.
- What are the experiences with peer-education in CCCD?
- In what way are the dynamics between child and family incorporated in CCCD?
- How are psychosocial & relational changes, as a result of CCCD interventions, measured?
- What is CCCD, who should be involved and how do we operationalize, monitor and evaluate it?
- How do we promote children’s rights when basic needs cannot be met?
- What child are we talking about in CCCD?
- In a simple way how do we monitor, measure and assess our work in becoming a child centred community development organisation?
- How do we transform from a needs-based approach to a rights-based approach?
- What we do differently when applying rights-based approach in a community development project?
- How can we ‘use’ childrights-based approaches to change gender inequalities? What is the conceptual linkage between both concepts? How can we use this to put it in practice, programs etc.? How can this be monitored?
- What are the key ingredients/criteria to ensure child centred development?
- When is successful integration of child centred programming possible?
- Who decides why funds should be allocated to organisations and why?

4. Outside in learning

Introduction

This part of the workshop is based on what can be learned from existing literature, experiences from others and from external resource persons. Participants gave presentations on policies, and on monitoring and evaluation, whereas Mr. Fowler and Prof. Lieten were invited to contribute to the discussions, provide new input and clarify concepts.

Mr. Alan Fowler: “The architecture of development aid and Child Centred Civic Driven Development”

Personal introduction

Alan Fowler (England, 19..) has been working with NGOs for over 20 years as a manager, consultant, donor, writer, researcher, and as a Visiting Fellow at the World Bank and the Society for Participatory Research in Asia. He obtained degrees in engineering, pedagogics, management and organisation and political science.

Alan Fowler is co-founder of INTRAC and a Director of the International Society for Third Sector Research. His popular book on enhancing NGO effectiveness, *Striking A Balance* has been translated into Spanish, Russian and French.

In this report the most important points of the lecture are briefly discussed. For detailed information on the first part of the lecture, we kindly refer to *International Development Framework, Policies, Priorities and Implications – a Basic Guide to NGO's* (Fowler, 2003). For an elaborate description of the second part of the lecture, please see Annex (...).

The major aim of the lecture is to put CCCD in a wider perspective. CCCD is not an isolated micro-level approach, but should be understood and implemented at a macro-level as well. In order to do so, we first have to get straight what the current architecture of development aid looks like.

Macro-level frameworks

At Monterrey the financial framework for development was being set, whereas at Doha the framework on trade and development was put to the fore. At the Sustainable Development Forum in Johannesburg the policy framework was being established. Global Compact is the UN's contribution to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It is an attempt to fill in the gap of the social dimension of global governance.

These four set the policy framework. The framework is put into practice by different areas of objectives, priorities and preferred methods¹, which are in some cases connected. For example, measuring results is a logical result of setting goals, and Rights Based Approach and

¹ These are: *Millennium Development Goals* (MDG - steers efforts in a desirable direction); *Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers* (PRSP - is supposed to build on the Comprehensive Development Framework. It provides a reference point and sets goals); *Results Based Management* (RBM - deals with how results have to be measured); *Rights-Based Approach* (RBA - is meant to operationalize international agreements, conventions and laws on human rights); *Sector Wide Approaches* (SWAs - aims to bring together internal and external financing for one sector), and *Good Governance*.

Good Governance should be consistent with each other because governors are used to be the duty-bearers in relation to rights-owners.

Conclusions

The results of this process of re-building the architecture of development aid are:

- Macro-level frameworks have become standardised and homogenous. There is a strong coherence in policy.
- There is scope and opportunity to opening and tying up public, private and developmental issues. It makes partnerships more likely to emerge, which has its pitfalls, but also creates opportunities.
- Local NGO's are being pulled closer to the state/government. This can cause frictions with processes of democratisation, because the moment organisations become 'dependent' of government, the critical voice erodes. If organisations are dependent on governmental funding, it is very important to decide which strategies are going to be drawn around these subjects.
- Good Governance is in particular very important in current development practices and policies. It entails the role of being watch-dogs on the side of democratisation as well as being delivery agencies to Public Administration. According to some, these roles are impossible to combine, according to others, it is difficult, but not impossible.

Vulnerability of NGO's is not caused by questions on their legitimacy, but by questions towards their accountability. That is why awareness on this topic matters: NGO's need to know what the demands for performance are.

CCCD should be understood in this framework. Organisations have to tune in, and have to be aware of this macro-framework in order to be able to take stands.

Child Centred Civic Driven Development

It is probably impossible to point out one starting factor for the current boom of attention with regard to CCCDD. But, according to Fowler, the enlarged collective consciousness of child abuse, exploitation and child soldiers is part of the explanation.

Organisations must be careful with development effectiveness as a driver for CCCDD, because of the risk of functionalism. More or less the same goes for child centredness: we must make sure that specific qualities of children, such as honesty, do not get institutionalised, because this might provoke this feature getting lost during the process.

Civic Driven Development

Fowler pleads for a change in conceptualism: civic driven development instead of community development. There is a need for a definition that better fits into the rights based view. In a legal sense, community does not exist, citizens do. Community is a sociological concept, civic society is more political. The rights of individual citizens are stressed from a right-based approach.

Fowler stresses the importance of amplifying and supporting already built structures of participation: we must try to locate where the civic energy is. This energy or potential should be the motor of development processes. To identify civic energy, the scope must not be on what people need, but the focus must be on strengths and successes. The key word is appreciative inquiry (See *Appreciative Inquiry*, Hammond, S.: 1998).

The civic view puts governance in the centre of society by letting the civic drivers steer the wheel: in this way they are able to hold organisations and government accountable. To adopt this view, we have to shift the lands to assets, institutions and partners.

Civic society, public space and households and livelihoods come together in associations. This is where development processes can be made possible.

Concluding remark(s)

Questions were raised about the gains of the concept of ‘civic’ in comparison to the concept of ‘community’. In response to that, Fowler pointed out that the notion of civic is political. It assumes a relationship between people and the state. In comparison with the notion of community, it is more consistent with the current understanding of change processes. In a point of view where society is divided in rights-holders and duty-bearers, we need a more political approach towards development. The problem with the community-view is that it is a-political and that it is loosely defined. This view allows us to take a non-political view on development processes, whereas we discovered in the fifties that development is political. The community-view makes it too tempting to uncouple power relations from social relations, whereas the aim of development is to change the balance between the winners and the losers in society. The civic-view does push us to take the matter of power-structures, it helps to understand power structures in society. That understanding is necessary to shift the power structures, and that is what development is about.

Prof. Kristoffel Lieten: “Child-Centredness: Local Cultures and Universal Norms”

Personal introduction

Kristoffel Lieten (Belgium, 1946) obtained degrees in linguistics, political science and history respectively. He did his PH.D on the triangular relationship between the trade union movement, the nationalist movement and the colonial state in Mumbai, 1928-29. He has worked extensively on political developments in South Asia and on issues related to development sociology. Lieten presently holds the Child Labour chair at the University of Amsterdam and at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. He is also a visiting professor at the Institute for Human Development in New Delhi. He is the director of the IREWOC Foundation (Institute for Research on Working Children) and in that capacity Dr. Lieten has initiated several research projects on child labour and child agency in various countries across the globe. His present research interests relate to aspects of child labour, globalisation and development and development aid. (Annex VI: full lecture).

CRC

Talking about rights is a new and promising approach, according to Lieten. Organisations should try to involve children in a bottom-up approach. Children are not only objects in development processes, but also active partners. CRC is a good universal baseline because it is supported by a large number of governments and it has a basis in universal norms.

There are some second thoughts, though, on putting all the emphasis on rights. E.g. by focusing on child-rights we notice the tendency of infantilisation of poverty (comparable with the process of feminisation of poverty when all the stress was put on women’s rights). Another second thought is that rights are only one of the enabling factors to participation. If we’ll

‘unpack’ CRC for children, we will get three P’s: Provision to assets, Protection and Participation. Because children are in some aspects vulnerable and dependent, their needs have to be met first before they can participate. Provision and Protection have to be in place before we put too much emphasis on Participation. In this way, Participation really plays the third fiddle.

Participation

The strong emphasis on participation in development processes started in the eighties, and was influenced by Robert Chambers *Putting the last first* (1983).

There are two forms of participation: *for* or *with* the people. Participation *for* is not necessarily wrong, but depends on the developmental process/aim. E.g. you need not ask the children whether or not to build a school. Participation *with* the people however, is very important with regard to ownership. The question is where and how children fit in a participatory approach.

The way in which children have access to essential sources of society tells us a lot about children, but also about society. Therefore, we must not separate children from the development process.

Parents need to understand verbal and non verbal communication of their children. Hearing children’s voices is the basis of participation. Participation should in any case involve listening to children, later on adults should create opportunities for meaningful participation.

Depending on the aim of the development process, there are different ways and levels of participation. It is very important to be aware of the capabilities of the child, to make sure that the child is willing and able to make its own contribution.

Participation can be used both as an aim or as an instrumental approach. Identification of major learning points from the experiences of participants, resource persons, research and background documentation during the process is important.

I have, I am, and I can

For people without the means it can be very dis-empowering to talk about rights (in comparison to needs). To give children the means to participate and enable them to claim their rights, projects need to be organised from the children’s perspective. This perspective should be: *I have* people around me who I can trust, who can protect me; *I am* self-confident, aware of my self-worth; *I can* trust in my own capability.

To empower children and to make them active participants in development processes, should result in the fact that from a child’s point of view, there is hope for the future, and they are respected as capable beings in the society.

Concluding remark(s)

With regard to the needs- and/or rights-based approach the following remarks were being made: firstly, the prioritisation of the rights mentioned in the CRC should be contextualised, because the priorities will be different for each child in each country. CRC is based on civic rights and not on social-economic rights. Secondly, CRC is about rights *and* needs. Both needs and rights are related to duties. A need is something one can decide upon on objective indicators. Rights are something to conquer, to claim. But in practice much of the NGO’s switch from needs to rights. Why could one not have continued with a needs-based approach?

You cannot have your needs implemented unless you fight for the rights. What is the advantage of a switch?

With regard to participation, we would like to add the following remarks: the aim in a number of development programmes has been to let children do the projects. Replication and imitation of adult-behaviour is, in that case, a serious risk. This relates to sustainability. Sustainability will be very difficult. Children's Parliaments for example are only sustainable if adults are there all the time. We must be careful with separate entities and organs for children in order to raise their voices, we must rather try to integrate children, in their own way, with their own needs and capabilities, in projects. The aim of CCCD has two aspects: firstly, knowing where the children are and how they deal with the circumstances². Secondly you should reinforce their position/personality (I have, I am, I can). Child participation is fine as means and as instrument to CCCD, but only as long and for so far it is implemented in the best interest of the child.

² Paper of Jason Hart: An example of a project with children in war situations.

5. Conclusions

Major findings

- Action needs to be driven from within and NGO's have the responsibility to enable this process. There is a paradox between the power NGO-staff inevitably obtains within communities, and the aim of getting the community to be in the 'drivers-seat'.
- A combination of the needs and rights-based approach is difficult. Conceptual these two concepts are related, but distinct. They do not make a big difference to your practice, but to how you 'translate' what you are doing. Rights are to some extent a public recognition of an obligation, which is not the case for needs. Certain needs have been recognised in laws, while others are not. Without this legal recognition it is difficult to claim rights. Duty bearers have the obligation to provide the basic needs, and then you go and supply the rights.
- Some things are maybe more need-based than rights based. There is a distinction between what is supposed to be a right, and what needs to be a right. Furthermore, we must not forget that rights have costs, and that there will be resistance from those who have to pay.
- There is a difference between positive and negative rights. The firsts are about the do's, and the second are the don'ts. A negative right is when a certain personal right is being denied to protect the common good or somebody else's positive right. Societies can not survive without defining at least some negative rights.
- In order to make changes sustainable, the institutional framework has to change. The new architecture with for instance results-based management, good governance, rights-based approaches should be sufficient to make this change possible. Institutions must, however, be willing to share their power.

Mutual CCCD statement

- Pre-CCCD should ensure that pre-conditions, such as respect, trust, information, related to different fields (eg. with regard to participation) are in place.
- Intergenerational/inclusive approach. CCCD is not a parallel approach, it is an integrative structure of community development.
- Governments are recognised as duty-bearers in implementing rights, without neglecting citizens responsibilities.
- Civil society must push the governments to perform duties.
- It recognises and builds on positive generational potentials and energies, and promotes new CBO's/associations to manage their own affairs, and implies a complete withdrawal of NGOs from service delivery.
- CCCD is guided by CRC as an instrument or as a goal in itself.
- It is layered and thus linked to macro-level.