

4 COMMUNITY ACTION PLANNING

4.1 Introduction

In the Community Action Planning process people are considered to be the primary resource rather than the objects of development. This approach motivates the conflict and disaster-affected people to take the lead in the planning and implementation of reconstruction activities.

The challenge in a comprehensive disaster recovery program is to provide shelter and basic amenities while addressing the livelihood and other related issues in very short time.

Disaster-affected communities are assisted in identifying their needs for housing reconstruction; community infrastructure needs, restarting their livelihoods and other problems confronted by them. These communities will implement their plans with the support of the Local Governments (LG) and other support organizations with the resources provided for reconstruction either by Government or partner agencies. Community Action Planning, which develops the capacity of the communities to take appropriate action for their own development, is the framework for the implementation of actions decided by the communities. It is important that the community itself prepares the Community Action Plan. This helps in the communities to internalize the plans and to take responsibility for their implementation and maintenance. The planning process is carried out in the form of a workshop, in which the CDC members participate.

The identification of needs should not be viewed as making a "wish list" of what communities want, but as a process of understanding their present situation following a disaster or war. Together they want to find out what they need to do to overcome their problems. The emphasis is on the process of understanding. The

Box 4.1 Together Helping Each Other

"Actually, in relief and rehabilitation work, the government provides in the style of welfare with the assumption that people are helpless victims, instead of allowing all the problems to be managed by the affected communities themselves. In my area of Baan Nam Khem, we the affected people began to organize ourselves as a group, at the very beginning at the relief camp. One leader for every ten tents and these 60 to 70 groups brought the problems of the families to the nightly meeting. Then we divided all the tasks and responsibilities of the camp into people's committees; issues such as toilets, bathing places, communal kitchens, security, donations, liaising with Government agencies and visiting aid groups. All the outside help was organized by those of us who actually lived in the camp. And right away we started working on our long term issues of rebuilding our livelihoods. We started savings groups and set up a revolving fund using some of the donor's money and started income generating projects".

Source: ACHR News
Maitree Kongkrajak, Thailand
June 2006



objective is to achieve a qualitative difference in lives, ensuring safety and security for the future. The Community Action Plan should not be predetermined by the potential resources for reconstruction. It should rather identify actions, which are required to improve and rebuild lives.

The role of the government, development partner organizations and the local authorities is to support this process.

Community Action Planning demands considerable flexibility, patience and creativity from the project staff. Flexibility is required because each community is different in its problems, needs and solutions. Patience is needed, because every community has to go through a similar process of understanding its situation, identifying its problems, setting its priorities and mobilizing its resources. Creativity is necessary, because Community Action Planning often does not fit into the existing procedures, rules and regulations of the government or development partners.

4.2 Social Mapping

In order to create a spatial overview of the main features in the settlement the community should be involved in drawing

a social map. For this purpose men and women who are familiar with the area and who are willing to share their past experiences should be called to participate in this exercise. A suitable place to write (ground, floor, paper, etc.) must be found and a medium (sticks, stones, seeds chalk, etc.). The participating people should be helped to get started but they should draw the map themselves. First the hazards in the settlement and the location of houses, fields, roads, schools, wells, places of worship, etc. must be indicated on the map. Next the participants should indicate vulnerabilities, i.e. vulnerable people, vulnerable property or vulnerable infrastructure that needs protection. Lastly the community should indicate where the resources are located, i.e. food reserves, medical facilities, concrete roads, clean water resources and potential shelters, areas and routes for evacuation.

4.3 Guiding Principles

- Community Action Planning is a process of action and not a blueprint for future development
- Solutions to problems are with the people and the role of the facilitator is to extract the solutions from the people
- Community Action Plans should not



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Getting Organized to Prepare the Community Action Planning

be predetermined but be generated by the affected communities

- Refrain from lecturing to the community; rather conduct the workshop as a discussion
- Ensure the participation of all interest groups, especially women and people engaged in different vocations
- Facilitate inputs of all groups and do not allow one group or the leadership to dominate the discussion; remember that an issue may seem unimportant to one group may be critical to another
- Refrain from drawing and writing too much; it is easier to absorb and remember a few points rather than a long list
- Use simple language and avoid complicated terminology
- Keep it as simple as possible

4.4 Preparation for the Workshop

The vehicle for the Community Action Planning and management is the interaction/partnership workshop. At such

workshops, community members interact as partners with the staff of the project, the Local Authority and the Non-governmental Organizations. They discuss the problems of the community, identify solutions and formulate plans of action. The community assumes the responsibility to implement these action plans in collaboration with the project and other organizations, and to maintain and manage the built environment after the completion of the project.

The first step in the process of Community Action Planning is the CAP Workshop. It provides an opportunity for the community to obtain a comprehensive view of the consequence of the disaster of conflict, its socio-economic situation and to identify its main problems and priorities. The workshop exposes the community to opportunities available for the improvement of its living conditions as well as the constraints and obstacles that need to overcome. Participants in the workshop are Community Development Council members and representatives of the various interest groups members in the



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Community Action Planning Activities

settlement, staff of the project, the Local Authority and other organizations concerned.

The objective of the workshop is to identify all problems of concern to the community, to determine the nature, the magnitude and, where relevant, the cause (s) of each of the problems, to prioritize the problems, to explore possible solutions and determine the resources needed and to prepare a concrete plan of action which spells out who will do what, when and how. Also to develop a system to monitor the implementation of action plan, and to design ways to ensure that everyone concerned is aware of the plan of action. The key to the workshop is the options-and-trade-off technique, because a problem may be solved in several ways and each solution may call for different trade-offs. The planners have an important role to play by clarifying the trade-offs for the community, but the selection of the option is left entirely to the community and individual families. The number of participants at the workshop should ideally be about 25. It is also important that female members are well represented.



Community Involvement

4.5 Venue

Ideally the venue could be a community hall, classroom or any public building within the settlement or very close to it. If a suitable building cannot be found, especially after a disaster, an open space where people can sit on the ground is also suitable during daylight hours and if no rain is expected. Make sure that there is space for smaller groups of 6 to 8 to sit around and discuss.

Table 4.1 Workshop Agenda

Activities	Time
1. Opening What is the workshop about?	15 min. General Session
2. Social Mapping What have we lost and what do we have now?	30 min. General Session
3. Identification What are the problems?	30 min. Group Session
4. Prioritization What are the priority problems?	30 min. General Session
5. Strategies What are the approaches to solve the problem?	30 min. Groups Session
Lunch Break	
6. Options and Trade-offs What are the practical actions?	30 min. General Session
7. Planning for Implementation Who does what, when and how?	30 min. Group Session
8. Implementation and Monitoring How and who will follow up and monitor?	30 min. General Session
Tea Break	
9. Presentation Presentation of the Plan to the whole community	45 min. Whole Community Session