**Step 7**

**Organizing for Strength**

**Increase Capacity by Organizing**

**Other factor being the same, level of organization determines strength**

While there are many factors that contribute to strength, capacity, or empowerment, the one that most concerns a development worker is “organization”.—Other factors being equal, the level and effectiveness of organization determines the strength of a group, agency or community.

Let us use a football team as an example. If have two football teams, with the same number of individuals, the same range of skills, physical condition, and technology (e.g. quality of shoes), they would be equal. Let us say one team is not organized; there is no division of labor, no co-ordination, no recognizable social resources. The other team is organized, has a coach with authority, has different roles for goalie, defense, left and right wings, center forward, and other division of labor—different team members have different roles and practices playing in an integrated manner (e.g. passing the football). In this case it is easy to see that the second team is more powerful, has more capacity and strength then the first one, though their other characteristics and equal. Better organization makes better capacity.

So, too, with whole societies. Take this example (not for the history it contains, but for the sociological principle). The Akan of the West Africa expanded rapidly during the sixteen and seventeenth centuries, and rapid conquered the Guans who preceded them.—The level of technology(include weapons)was about the same, as were most other characteristics. But the Guan were patrilineal and lived in dispersed lineages, while the Akan were matrilineal in a way that organized the different clans into functional alliances, lived in nucleated settlements, each clan having a different role in warfare(forward, left, right, rear, domestic, and paramount) and a state organization. Like in the organizing of a football team, others factors being equal(technology, skills), the more organized system(Akan, the epitome of whom were the Ashanti) conquered the less organized.

The point, of you as a community development worker, is that your goal in strengthening a low income community, is to help your target group consciously organize for more effectiveness. You do not form CBO executive for it own sake, or help them choose chair, vice, secretary, and treasurer, just to have pertly title—You help them get organized, get better organized, or reorganized for effective action, to empower them, better organization results in better power.

**Action Training**

**Training that produced action as well as transferring skills**

Here the community members learn by doing, and the “doing” here is the choosing, planning, and organizing that are needed for engaging in a community self help projects that will contribute to their increased self- reliance.

The action the community will now undertake are to:

1. Form an exclusive committee;
2. Assess community conditions;
3. Prepare a plan of action;
4. Obtain need resources;
5. Ensure that all community activities will be monitored, and
6. Organize most effectively for action

Action by itself will not necessarily strengthen a community, nor will training—you task is to integrate community action with training and guidance of community members

At all time you are guiding the community, show them that this is an opportunity to learn.—Preparing an action plan may at first seem to them to be an unnecessary nuisance; you must be enthusiastic in showing them its importance and usefulness.

The community gets stronger when its members learn by doing and when you facilitate their self-learning.

**Forming the Executive (CIC)**

**Organizing the Community Implementation Committee**

Organizing the community for the self help project requires creating a community executive committee. The choice of its members must be that of the community, and community members must learn to choose trustworthy persons known to them, and to take responsibility for those choices. Your job is to facilitate their choices, not to make those choices.

The executive committee must be chosen by the whol community not just a faction or a few factions.(that is why unity organizing remains important, see unity organizing). The executive must be part of the community, and be responsible to the community.—You as community development worker must make this clear to the community members, using whatever communication skills you have. It is advisable to repeat yourself in different ways, and to different groups in different circumstances.

You also needed to break down assumptions in this phase. The choice of treasurer, for example, may be fraught with assumptions. Many people, especially in rural communities with many illiterate, many assume that they must select the most educated member of the community as treasurer.—This may have been a school teacher. It has often been our experience that the school teacher is from a far off district, has a low salary, has no roots in or loyalty to the community, and absconds with the community resources that he has been entrusted to handle.

Why does the treasure have to be educated? That is an assumption. One does not need to read and write in order to count. If an older woman, a grandmother, deeply rooted in the community and well trusted, is chosen, then she can be the treasurer, even if illiterate.—As she gets her school-going neighbors and relative to set up the books, the accounts are more likely to be transparent, as each expenditure is explained and discussed. Being treasurer means being responsible for the money; it does not necessarily mean physically keeping the books.

Your job is to help the executive get formed by the whole community.(see “training and organizing”). Forming the executive should be a transparent and democratic process (see both these key words: transparent and democratic).—This process must be culturally appropriate and acceptable to community members (that is why you must learn about the community characteristics as much as possible).

**Assessing Conditions**

**Introduction to Participatory Appraisal**

An accurate appraisal by the community members is necessary before members can decide upon priority agree on a community project to start their action.

A community should undertake its activity from an informed base.—The executive committee should make an on-site assessment, analyses it, then present their findings to the community as a whole. This is a “situation analysis”.

Although you have already made your own assessment, including a map, as part of your preparation phase, it is important that the executive committee make its own assessment. Do not do it for them. They should not delegate it to anyone else.

Set a convenient date for you and the executive committee to walk around the community. set aside as much time as possible. Walk around all or as much of the community area as you can, looking, talking to people, making notes, drawing sketches. See PAR.—Meet afterwards to compare observations and draw up a combined assessment report. Ask one member of the executive (not you, the community development worker) to write up the combined findings of the assessment, to be presented to the community as a whole. Their write-up, or report, is called the “situation analysis”.

If you can make a few copies of the report(at least maps) to pass around, very good.

In your assessment walk, look for problems and solutions, resources and constrains. Indicate broken water stand pipes and other communal facilities. Show roads that need repair. If you (including executive) identify and old retired carpenter, determine if he could give some training to some young people; if he is supported by his family would donate his energy and advice, or need a small honorarium?—Look for other potential resources; human and physical. Note them in the assessment.

After the executive meets to agree upon combined assessment and after the report is written (copied if possible) they should present their findings to the community as a whole. This requires calling another whole community meeting at a convenient time.—if you, as community development worker, have a flip chart and news print for their presentation, to learn them, or can borrow some, all the better. You should not present their findings. You facilitate themeeting and let them present their findings to their whole community.

The assessment is a prerequisite to the community plan of action. Ensure that there is complete understanding among the community members what the executive observed, and that there is consensus about the nature and extent of problems and potentials.

**Balancing the Internal and External Resources**

As a community development worker you will find that it is difficult to find a balance between resources that originate outside the community, and those from within. You and the community executive will be under considerable pressure to bring outside resources into the community—donor agencies want to help while community members want to receive. You know, however that bringing in outside resources contributes to the dependency syndrome and reduces the chances of sustainability and self-reliance.

Yet there are ways to maximize the strengthening ability of using outside resources as illustrate by the story of Mohammad and the rope. If you can convince and outside donor to provide some costs of skill training, management training, and mobilization, and assist the community in obtaining most of its own construction resources, you can contribute to self- reliance and sustainability—if Prophet (PBUH) had merely given food to the beggar, he would have been the training the beggar to be a beggar; by given him some advice and capital instead, he assisted the beggar to become self-reliance.

This handbook does help you in obtaining outside resources, as in Proposals which guides you in preparing effective proposals—like any powerful tool(e.g. fire), these skills can be misused, and may contribute to unsustainable uses in the long run. Use them well, and for the correct ends.