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The Role of Education in Self-Sustaining Community Development

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Abstract

Self-sustaining community development strategies, focused on education as a means for change, have great potential to make an impact on worldwide poverty. Instead of a one-time intervention with results that fade over time, the cyclical structure of participatory development will yield increasing results as time goes on. Teaching the community how to improve itself will increase its ability to deal with future problems, and positively impact women, children, and the environment in developing countries. This philosophy and practical strategy could be effective in any geographic location or culture, focusing on education and the ability of the local people to transform their own communities.

The Role of Education in Self-Sustaining Community Development

Introduction

Over the last century, the standard of living has been improving for much of the world's population. Innovative technologies and improved infrastructure have transformed daily life for many, as indoor plumbing, electricity, automobiles, and even internet access have changed from being luxuries to being basic commodities. Access to medical care and education are accessible to most, facilitated by communities and governments. While in the past availability of food, clean water, and a warm place to sleep were once common concerns, they now take up very little of people's thoughts in developed countries. However, for some, medical care and education are elusive luxuries, and the effort to survive eclipses all other endeavors.

Extreme poverty is diminishing year by year. In addition to grassroots efforts at growth and development, efforts by government organizations, non-government organizations (NGOs), and private benefactors have advanced the wellbeing of many people in developing countries. These nations, once called third world countries, are described in the report *World Economic Situation and Prospects* (United Nations, 2014). Developing countries are classified by their low gross national income per capita, or GNI. The United Nations classifies countries with low income, with a GNI less than \$1,035, and lower middle income, with a GNI between \$1,036 and \$4,085, as developing. These countries are concentrated in Africa, East Asia, South Asia, Western Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Large-scale issues such as a country's economy, political stability, foreign policy,

amount of land per capita, and presence of natural resources may have the greatest impact on the GNI and the related standard of living enjoyed by its citizens. However, management of existing resources is important as well. This thesis presents an action plan for individual communities seeking to use the resources they already possess to achieve the best lives for themselves in their own unique context. The cornerstone to successful implementation of this community development plan is education. Education is a proven tool to develop, enable, and empower a community's most valuable resource: the people.

This thesis includes an outline of the ideology of past intervention efforts, many of which require large investments of people and resources, and have diminishing returns over time. It will propose a community development plan which requires only a small investment of trained community development personnel. Their role is to introduce impoverished communities to a cycle of self-improvement that will positively impact the lives of the inhabitants in the short term, and most importantly, in a growing tide for generations to come. When education is used effectively and local people take their places as agents for change, communities in developing countries can be transformed.

Background

The essential context for a community-centric development plan lies in understanding the history of poverty and its current prevalence in developing countries, in both urban and rural settings. An overview of previous mindsets toward developing countries lays the foundation for a mindset that underlies the proposed community development plan.

Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas Worldwide

Though the percentage of people living in poverty has decreased dramatically in the past 25 years, The World Bank reported that the number remains high due to population growth (World Bank & International Monetary Fund, 2016). As world population rises towards an estimated 8 billion in 2023 (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2017), the percentage of the population living in cities will also continue to increase. Ring towns or slums house many impoverished city dwellers. In these makeshift housing areas people live, often illegally, on undeveloped land. According to the United Nations, a slum is an area which has one or more of the following five characteristics: inadequate access to safe water, inadequate access to sanitation and infrastructure, poor structural quality of housing, overcrowding, and insecure residential status (UN-Habitat, 2017). These factors are realities for almost one billion people living in slums worldwide (Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme Team Nairobi, 2016).

Slums form and develop as the population in the city exceeds that which the city's infrastructure can support. Slums in developing countries sometimes rival the population in the city itself. In 2014, 30 percent of the urban population in developing countries were living in slums (Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme Team Nairobi, 2016). The proportion is far higher in many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, with 75-95 percent of the urban population living in slums in countries such as Chad, Guinea-Bissau, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (United Nations Statistics Division, 2015). Slums in developing countries are often staggering in proportion, from the 400,000 residents of

Khayelitsha, South Africa to the 2.4 million in Orangi Town, Karachi, Pakistan (Hutt, 2016).

The prevalence of the urban slum has been influenced by many factors. As we have seen, sheer population growth contributes to slums' expansion. Additionally, rural-urban migration contributes to the growth of slums (United Nations Human Settlement Program, 2016). War, drought, deforestation, and climate change make traditional ways of life harder to sustain. For those living nomadic lifestyles, or in tribal villages and towns, disease and famine are closely tied to the performance of the land. Poorly managing land can lead to its exhaustion and ultimate abandonment, as once-fertile fields become fruitless brown dust. In all, 10 million hectares of Earth's arable land are abandoned every year due to soil degradation (World Wildlife Fund for Nature, 2017). That is an amount equal to the size of New Zealand, and removes 1 percent of the arable land from production every five years even as world population continues to rise. People leave rural areas for reasons beyond the reduced ability to sustain a traditional agrarian lifestyle, but a common trend, and perhaps the primary reason to make the move, is because of the increased economic opportunity that cities provide. The potential to receive education, healthcare, improved sanitation, and other potential benefits of cities may also contribute to the increasing urbanization of the modern world. However, due to mismanaged urban planning, including lack of housing, sanitation, and transportation, as well as the process of contemporary urbanization (Bolay, 2006), many of these people fall short of their ideal city life and end up in slums.

Poverty in rural areas is often equally acute. War, famine, drought, and other

factors can lead to a collapse of an agrarian lifestyle. Community members that don't move to a city must deal with a collapsed economy, finding new means of income. Lack of access to healthcare and education are common in rural areas. Poverty rates are increasing in Sub-Saharan Africa where HIV/AIDS has decimated the adult population, leaving many children orphaned and causing huge problems for the economy and the organization of the society.

Communities face issues beyond economic poverty. These issues include the treatment of women as second-class citizens and the lack of opportunity for children, who are working in the formal sector and in the home instead of attending school. Additional problems are the epidemics of water-borne illnesses such as cholera and dysentery, sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, and mosquito bone illnesses such as Zika and Malaria.

Previous Strategies for Poverty Assistance Worldwide

Global organizations such as the United Nations, national and local governments, NGOs, private investors, and individual donors work in developing countries and disaster areas. This work falls into two categories: short term disaster relief, and community development. In the initial stages of a disaster, humanitarian organizations focus on saving lives and alleviating human suffering (Bowles, Brooks, L'Hermitte, & Tatham, 2017) by providing life-sustaining materials (Lijo, 2017). This immediate response, usually involving food, water, temporary housing, evacuations, and first aid medical response, saves thousands of lives in the 24-72 hours after a natural disaster (Palmer, 2007). Long term aid, otherwise known as development activity or continuous aid work,

focuses on developing the infrastructure, self-sufficiency, and sustainability in a community (Jalil, Tariq, & Zaffar, 2017). Disaster relief and community development should address the root causes of problems instead of the symptoms. Ideally, when the aid stops coming, community members will be left with a greater capacity to solve the problems on their own.

The methods by which developed countries provide relief have changed as their view of developing countries has changed. An overview of their thought and the basic policies over the millennia will provide context for the process of aid ultimately presented by this thesis. J. Jeffery Palmer, executive director and CEO of community development and disaster relief organization Baptist Global Response (“Jeff Palmer,” 2017), outlines the historical progression of thought in his book *Kingdom Communities: Koinonea as if it Really Mattered, Or, a Practical Guide to Seeing God's Kingdom Come Through Community Development* (2007). These are imperialism, infusion, instruction, and interaction. According to Palmer, the Roman, Chinese, and British empires exemplified the imperialistic view, by conquering other peoples and pressing them to adopt the culture of the conquerors. In doing this, they often destroyed the cultures, customs, and values of the indigenous peoples.

Palmer (2007) titles the next stage infusion. This widely held policy, emerging around the time of the formation of the United Nations and World Bank, assumed that poor communities were poor because of lack of capital. Pouring money into the community, through trade, gifts, or jobs, was expected to transform the society. Following infusion came the philosophy of instruction. Advocates of this method

believed that education was key to remedying economic and social issues. This had the connotation of the “haves” bestowing wisdom upon the “have-nots.” While education does have a key role in sustainable development, it must be used as part of a two-way conversation with the communities. The educational practices used during the period of instruction tended to be condescending, dismissing the value of the indigenous people’s knowledge. The policies of instruction, imperialism, and infusion tended to overlook the rich cultural and historical context of a community, an error that dramatically undermined attempts for sustainable development.

Imperialism, infusion, and instruction each involved misconceptions that led them to ultimately fall short of their intended purpose: to assist in the development of healthy, sustainable communities in each unique regional context. Due to the ineffectiveness of these systems, a fourth and final stage in the progression of thought developed. According to Palmer (2007), it is the system held by most “serious” community development groups today: interaction. Palmer writes,

“Recognizing the local indigenous knowledge of peoples as well as their ability to work together to solve their problems, [interaction] believes people working together can do amazing things. It recognizes the appropriate role of the outsiders as well as the insiders and realizes that if the task of development is to occur, it must be “...of the people, by the people and for the people” (p. 30).

Interactive community development views the outsider as a catalyst or facilitator of community growth and development, not as the foreman or director of it. The beauty of interaction is that the community directs their own development in ways that are

meaningful to them, using their own resources as much as possible, and ultimately creating the type of community that they themselves want to live in, not one that an outsider prescribes to them. Teaching a community how to develop itself using the human and physical resources at its disposal develops the community's ability to solve future problems without relying on outside intervention.

Logically, interaction entails extensive community participation in the process of development. *Slum Upgrading and Participation: Lessons from Latin America* (Imparato & Ruster, 2003), discusses the possible dangers and unique benefits of participation. According to the authors, participation is risky due to the potential for popular protests, conflicts of interest, or hard-to-meet expectations. However, Imparato and Ruster maintain these are outweighed by the positives: participation creates opportunity, enhancing the quality of projects, increasing the potential for continuing development, and encouraging problem solving, teamwork, and negotiation. Ultimately, participation creates informed, responsible citizens. In the philosophy of interaction, and within it, participation, we find a unique mentality for the alleviation of poverty, the promotion of economic growth, and the expansion of human health and happiness in the most impoverished communities worldwide.

Proposed Strategy for Self-Sustaining Community Development

The community development plan presented here finds its roots in the philosophy of interaction. In short, it is a process through which a community develops itself. Outsiders are only involved to initiate the process. This increases the efficacy of the community, enabling them to effect their own change according to their own values and

desires. The plan as outlined below, and which can be used around the world to effectively treat the root causes of many the issues we have already examined, is based on the writings of J. Jeffery Palmer (2007). In *Kingdom Communities*, Palmer (2007) describes a plan that respects and prioritizes the community itself. Rather than shaping the community into what outside developers may think it should become, this community development plan requires workers to set aside their own priorities, agendas, and pre-conceived ideas to listen to what the community prioritizes, values, and perceives as needs. Susan Hatfield, a worker for Baptist Global Response, notes that an outsider's view on the community's biggest problem may significantly differ from the community's own views (personal communication, September 8, 2017).

The community itself is the ultimate change-maker, and Hatfield recommends allowing the projects undertaken to flow out of their own discussions, values, and priorities (personal communication, September 8, 2017). An outsider's role in helping includes teaching people how to use cause and effect problem analyzing tools. These will aid in clarifying the potential connections between the problems they see and the causes that the developer may see.

Community development that is community directed leaves the potential for great frustration on the part of the developer who may have trouble understanding and respecting the seemingly backwards priorities of the community itself. However, the philosophy of interaction and participation is crucial to the success of the undertaking, and there is always hope for future change. The goal is not to change every injustice now; it is to teach the people how to see problems and how to solve problems. The community

that learns to develop itself has great potential to thrive, even though this may take time.

Now that we see the basis for interaction for long-term, enabling impact, it is time to look at the basic structure of community development: the cycle. Rather than seeing improvements as up and up, always heightened forward motion, it is helpful to view it as a process, a series of repeating cycles that go up over time. Generally, the developer can lead the community through the first cycle, transition to their ownership during the second cycle, then watch as the community continues to develop itself in subsequent cycles. This basic, eight-step process is outlined in the book *Kingdom Communities* (Palmer, 2007), which focuses on rural community development and is influenced by the author's work in the Philippines and Thailand. The steps are modified and informed by the book *Slum Upgrading and Participation* (Imparato & Ruster, 2003), which focuses on urban community development and is influenced by its authors' work in Bolivia, Peru, Costa Rica, and Mexico.

The concept of self-improvement and participation is important for any community development undertaking, but will be especially useful to those which have limited resources, are willing to make a long-term investment, and seek after societal impact including improving health factors or better quality of life, rather than easier to measure means such as rate of disbursement (Imparato & Ruster, 2003). These groups, which may include international aid organizations, NGOs, or government programs, need to have an intermediary group facilitating community participation. These groups have the responsibility of establishing links across disciplines, and between the community and other stakeholders. A group, or for a small community perhaps one person, that has

knowledge of the local culture and political context, can be instrumental in getting a community participation plan to work (Palmer, 2007). This intermediary should be able to partner with its most influential players, and have close connections and trust already established (Imparato & Ruster, 2003).

The following outlines a specific process of facilitating self-motivated, self-sustaining community development. It should take place after an initial meeting to introduce who the organization is, why they are meeting with the people, and what they hope to accomplish (Palmer, 2007). The initial meeting should also include a response from the local leaders, and questions and answers to put the local people at ease.

Steps 1-4 from *Kingdom Communities* (Palmer, 2007) fall under the Planning stage in *Slum Upgrading and Participation* (Imparato & Ruster, 2003).

Step 1: Hold Community Meeting, Including Leaders and Most Vulnerable

The structure of this meeting should differ based on the population size of a community. In a rural area, it may be feasible to invite the entire community (Palmer, 2007). In urban areas, beginning with a subgroup in a certain area may be a more manageable starting point. People in local leadership positions, including chiefs, heads of households and government officials, should be present. Additionally, a special effort should be made to include the most vulnerable and often overlooked members of the community, which generally includes “children, particularly those who have lost one or both parents, the disabled, elderly, HIV+, widows and sometimes women in general, depending on the social structure” (S. Hatfield, personal communication, September 8, 2017). These people may not come to the meeting, or the social structure may prohibit

them from speaking. In this case, it may be helpful to have advocates from the local clinic, churches or schools speak on their behalf.

With these people gathered at the meeting, introductions should take place, and then the attendees should break into small groups of 5-10 people (Hatfield, 2016).

Step 2: Identify Problems

This begins the “participatory information gathering” in the Planning stage (Imparato & Ruster, 2003). In their small groups, the attendees can discuss problems they see in their community (Hatfield, 2016). This is the time for the locals to carefully inspect their own daily life, homes, communities, and surroundings, and take note of every problem found there (Palmer, 2007). Next, the main group can reconvene and the groups can share the problems they identified (Hatfield, 2016). This builds a sense of community togetherness as even marginalized problems are heard, and people become aware of the lives of those around them.

The input of women should be given attention throughout the eight-step process, according to the findings of case studies by Imparato and Ruster (2003). They concluded that “the female population is the main human resource in the development of low-income settlements and plays the main role in all aspects of a project: community mobilization, project management, monitoring and evaluation, and financial contributions” (p. 134).

At this brainstorming stage, no problem should be treated as too big or too small (Palmer, 2007). A tool that can enhance awareness of problems is situational mapping. In this exercise, the people draw a map of the community, illustrating the existing problems.

In a rural area, bad water, poor roads, and deforested mountains can all be drawn on this map, while an urban area might show overcrowded houses, lack of roads, or unsanitary gutters. After illustrating the existing problems, the people can draw a corresponding “vision map” (p. 93). Keeping the landmarks the same, they can illustrate what their perfect community would look like. This vision map may include clean water, good roads, and reforested mountains.

Step 3: Analyze and Prioritize

At this point, the community will have compiled a list of 20-30 problems. The next stage is analysis, according to Imperato and Ruster (2003). The community can begin to make sense of the problem list through triangulation, or looking at something in multiple ways to gain better insight (Palmer, 2007). Some tools that can facilitate this are calendaring and making a tree diagram.

Calendaring helps the community see the connections between problems (Palmer, 2007). To begin, make a chart with the problems in a column on the left, and the months of the year along the top. Then, the chart can be filled out by which problem is HIGH, MED, or LOW in severity during each month throughout the year. This will help connections form, especially for rural communities, whose lives revolve around crops and seasons.

A second tool is the tree diagram, which helps the community see cause and effect (Palmer, 2007). The facilitator can draw a big tree with the issue, such as clean water, written on the trunk. Then the community can write the root causes of the problem at the roots of the tree and the visible effects of the problem at the branches of the tree.

These tools should be used to facilitate thinking and discussion, with the goal of narrowing down the list to pick one problem to solve in the first development cycle (Palmer, 2007). Once the community has chosen two or three of their highest priority problems, it's time to move to step 4.

Step 4: Start Coming Up with Solutions to the Highest Priority Problems

In Imperato and Ruster's (2003) research, this is classified as discussing and negotiating alternatives. Tree diagrams can be surveyed in this step, and some of the "root" problems may be the ones chosen for the final project (Palmer, 2007). How can viable solutions be distinguished from more unlikely ones? The Community Resource Circle is a tool that visualizes the community's ability to implement the solution using their own resources. For each potential solution, the participants draw a circle, representing the community. They then place each resource needed for a solution inside or outside of the circle, depending on whether the community has it available to them or if they would have to acquire it from elsewhere. It will soon become apparent that some solutions are unrealistic (most of the necessary resources are outside of the circle) and that some are realistic (most of the necessary resources are inside the circle).

Step 5: Choose the First Project.

The community should now identify one problem and one solution for their first project. It isn't important what problem the community chooses, but it is best to start with a manageably sized project that can be completed within a short time frame with some degree of success (Palmer, 2007). The main goal is to get through one cycle of the development process so that the community can become comfortable with the process

and ultimately continue it on their own. Ranking is a tool that can help the community decide which project to undertake first. Each person may be given ten tokens, such as seeds. They can put the seeds in vessels placed beside a list of potential solutions, placing more seeds beside options they consider practical or effective, and fewer seeds beside options they believe to be impractical or ineffective. The results of the ranking exercise should be shown to the group, and it may quickly become apparent which course of action the group favors. However, ranking shouldn't be used as a final decider, but as a tool to help the group see what the general consensus is as they try to make their final decision.

Step 6: Begin Implementing the Solution

As recommended above, the solution should come mainly from the community's own resources, if possible. Analyzing available resources, determining what needs to be done, who will do it, when it needs to be completed, and what they will need, are all important stages of planning (Palmer, 2007). One way to help keep the community accountable for following through with their project is to post a timeline in a public place and include a list of people's names and their responsibilities.

Step 7: Monitor and Evaluate the Project

This step does not require the teacher to monitor the community's project. It involves the community monitoring and evaluating their own project (Palmer, 2007). A project lead or committee that meets regularly to assess the progress can be effective in doing this.

Step 8: Celebrate

This may be the first time the community has come together to make a real change, and the completion of the project should be celebrated as an important occasion (Palmer, 2007). The whole community should be involved, and though this does not have to be a formal ceremony, taking time to acknowledge the accomplishment is valuable and worth the time. Often at this stage, others will learn of the development projects and may join the next one. Initial planning for the next project could even take place at the celebration.

Ultimately, the goal of this first development cycle is not to have a good product, but to teach the community how the process works. During the process they will build relationships, learn teamwork, increase understanding of one another, and begin to form a network within the community and possibly with government and non-government organizations. They will also increase their knowledge of the resources they have, either physical or personal. At this stage, building confidence and self-efficacy is also important. Some people may have given up hope, resigning themselves to their way of life, or run out of energy to keep trying and failing to make changes. Successfully completing one project in a timely manner, no matter the size or impact, can be a massive morale booster.

The cycle of development, beginning on a small, manageable scale, will build two characteristics in the community: capacity and capability (Palmer, 2007). According to Palmer, capability is the community's ability to solve problems with the resources it has, whether physical resources (a truck) or human capital (day laborers). Capacity, on the

other hand, involves the community's connections to outside resources, and their ability to leverage these connections. Borrowing a truck from a neighboring village, acquiring a micro loan from a lender, or asking a government official to send a civil engineer are all ways that a village can use their network of connections to further their own development.

The goal of community development is to create a self-sustaining system in which members of the community depend on one another. This means that short-term, quantitative results may be underwhelming (Palmer, 2007). While an outsider may be able to rally the troops to accomplish a task the outsider sees as important, and finish it on schedule, the community will return to its previous way of life once they have gone. The "improvement" may barely impact them at all. However, the slow and patient process of teaching a community how to work together, use their resources, problem solve, and network may take a long time. The first projects may not seem to be high quality nor efficiently completed (Hatfield, 2016). However, if the time is taken to thoroughly teach the process, the projects can become bigger, better, and more efficient over the course of months and years, and require less and less outside intervention.

Education and Community Development

Researchers Sivakumar & Sarvalingam (2010) found that education is one of the basic needs for human development and a requirement for escaping from poverty. The deprivation of education is itself an integral part of poverty. Development leaders in 30 out of 44 countries list education as one of the top two developmental priorities (Markova, 2017). A small sampling of the research regarding education will help in

gaining an appreciation for the true potential of education to impact those in developing countries.

Women are often the most vulnerable members of society, and an education can help improve their quality of life, as well as that of their children and their community. Education of the mother reduces child mortality (Scommegna, 2013), child malnutrition (Abuya, Ciera, & Kimani-Murage, 2012), female genital mutilation/ cutting (FGM/C) (Population Reference Bureau, 2017), and family size (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2011). Women in Mali with more education have smaller families: an average of three children per family to those with a secondary education vs. seven children to those with no education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2011). Smaller family sizes are associated with better health and schooling outcomes and lower poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (Bongaarts, Cleland, & Das Gupta, 2011).

Furthermore, a study performed using data from Nigeria shows that child mortality rates decrease as a mother's education increases (Scommegna, 2013). This study found that a child is 28% less likely to die before his fifth birthday if his mother can read. A child's health is also affected by his mother's education: 40% of children in Sub-Saharan Africa are stunted due to poor nutrition, but those with educated mothers receive better nutrition (Abuya et al., 2012).

Many African countries practice some type of female circumcision, or FGM/C. This practice "poses serious mental and physical health risks for women and girls, including increased complications in childbirth and maternal death" (Population

Reference Bureau, 2017, p. 16). However, daughters of women with some education are far less likely to undergo FGM/C than those with no schooling. In developed countries such as the US, children's test scores in reading and mathematics improve as their mother's reading skills improve (Scommegna, 2013). Overall, a lack of basic education in childhood is linked to poorer health, fewer job opportunities, and decreased political participation later in life (Fustos, 2010).

Education also impacts the environment by influencing population growth and the use of natural resources. When managed in transparent, inclusive, and sustainable ways, natural resources can help drive human development (United Nations Development Programme, 2012). Training officials on best practices in natural resource management, including enforcing the collection of revenues from companies that process and sell the natural resources, has had great effect in Afghanistan, increasing revenue by 490 percent between 2009-2012. Much of Sub-Saharan Africa has limited natural resources, as well as institutional constraints to economic growth (Bongaarts et al., 2011). This means that improvement in quality of life as population grows is contraindicated, because the resources to sustainably support the growth do not exist. Many of the positive results of education, including increased wages, improved child health, and greater labor force participation, have also been shown to reduce fertility, which in turn takes the pressure off natural resources as the population grows at a more sustainable pace. Educating the people near biodiverse areas, coastal areas, water sources, arable land, and forests can reduce the pressure on these areas, and enable people to profit from these natural

resources through sustainable economic development, such as ecotourism (Palmer, 2007).

Skills training can also provide non-traditional ways to generate income, as seen in Kenya, where families traditionally split their land among their sons as an inheritance (Dodoo & Shreffler, 2009). As land plots shrink, families are instead putting their hope for their children's future in education instead of sustaining themselves on the land.

Barriers to Education

While education is essential to community development (Sivakumar & Sarvalingam, 2010), 264 million children were out of school in 2015 (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2017). Of primary school aged children not in school, more than half were in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ortiz-Opsina & Roser, 2017). Lack of financing for schools (United Nations, 2017), early marriage (Samara & Singh, 1996), social stigma, and child work (Kumar & Shukla, 2016) have all been cited as barriers to children completing their education. In many developing countries, early marriage compromises girls' ability to get formal education, as motherhood becomes the sole focus of their lives (Samara & Singh, 1996). Researchers Kumar and Shukla (2016) found that child work was a barrier to education. While child labor is illegal, many children work in the home or with the family business, older children caring for younger ones or doing housework while the parents are away. This prevents them from attending school, and decreases the energy they have to fully invest in it while they are there. Development leaders in developing countries

cite lack of financing as the biggest obstacle in the way of providing universal education (United Nations, 2017). Low- and middle-income countries face an annual financing gap of \$39 billion between 2015-2030 to meet the United Nations' sustainable development goal for education.

Some of the factors involved in improving education in developing countries can be better understood by looking more closely at one country. While implementing educational programs in communities has great potential for the improvement of that community, the issue of instituting it is complicated by regional culture. It is essential to learn as much as possible about the larger picture as well as local issues when implementing any development project, particularly regarding education (Palmer, 2007). The issue of education in India is an example of the complexity of implementing educational programs in communities. The Constitution of India states, "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years" (India Const., art. 21A), but economic class, caste, and gender remain strong factors in whether children actually obtain that education. Karen Pandagade (personal communication, September 2017), a student from India studying at Liberty University, said that in rural parts of some Indian states, including Bihar, Jharkhand, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, it is very common for girls not to go to school. The literacy rates reflect this personal observation, as 81.3 percent of males can read and write and 61.6 percent of females can read and write (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). Caste systems have a complex impact on education in India. Dalit and Adivasi persons are still considered "outcasts" and "untouchables" despite the official abolishment of untouchability by the

Indian Constitution in 1950 (Art. 17), and literacy rates of these peoples range from 43 to 54 percent, compared to 69 to 74 percent for those in the upper castes (Desai & Dubey, 2012). Practices regarding treatment of untouchables, including students' refusal to eat lunches prepared by Dalits or sit with Dalit students at mealtimes, complicate the institution of schools (Navsarjan Trust & RFK Centre for Justice & Human Rights, 2010). However, education reduces the practice of untouchability. Ultimately, while education may be hindered by the very practices it hopes to change, community developers and community members can work together to find effective means of circumventing these issues, ultimately benefiting the wellbeing of individuals and the entire community.

Conclusion

Self-sustaining community development strategies, focused on education as a means for change, have great potential to make an impact on worldwide poverty. While short term relief may bring faster, more quantifiable results, participatory development is the surest means of solving the root problems and ensuring a continued upward growth even after the developing organizations have withdrawn from the community.

Transformational processes, such as the eight-step community development cycle, have the potential to improve quality of life and strengthen the community's capability and capacity to solve future problems as they arise. Finally, the community development cycle is grounded in the philosophy that education holds the power for change. Education improves the overall health of families by reducing child mortality, increasing child health, and increasing wage earnings and employment. It also impacts communities and

the environment by encouraging sustainable resource use, and slowing population growth, which taxes resources. Further study in this field, including best practices of training local people to facilitate development and educate their communities, has potential to improve sustainable community development projects in developing countries.

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