

Community Development: Some thoughts

In thinking about Community Development there are a number of important questions:

1. What does a developed community look like?
2. How does it get to the point of development?
3. Who is responsible and active in the development?

My own view is that you can change the physical surroundings of people but they can actually be worse off if the change does not also incorporate a continuity of positive and supportive relationships, and the enhancement of dignity.

So what is community development? Community development is the process by which, a community (with or without assistance) strengthens its relationships, forming a culture of mutual support and accountability, and where their physical living conditions are improved in the areas of health care, sanitation, access to water, adequate housing, and safety. This cannot be done without reference to the environment, as community development will only be long term sustainable where it works in harmony with nature. Additionally, community development involves the ability of everyone to be productive in order to meet household needs, and fulfill their individual potential. The more ownership a community has of the process, the more the change is likely to last, and also the more their dignity will be affirmed.

One process that seems able to deliver this involves:

1. building community spirit
2. broad community consultation about what are the priority needs and the existing community assets
3. community determination of how these needs will be met, by whom, and by when (although this may be more or less relevant depending on the context)
4. gathering of resources and protection of them
5. community action to address these needs
6. monitoring of the activities and evaluation of the outcomes by the community including outcomes related to community cooperation

This understanding and approach comes from Genesis 1:26-28. The reason that CD is needed is because of systemic injustice, greed and selfishness = sin. Therefore, there needs to be recognition of Genesis 3, as well as Ephesians 6 as CD is attempted. Prayer must underpin the process.