



Country-Owned Programs for Community-led Development

In recent years, a growing number of developing countries have achieved very rapid progress in poverty reduction and broad-based economic growth by establishing national mechanisms for community-led development. Korea moved from the list of least-developed countries to becoming an OECD donor within one generation through this approach, and today Vietnam, Indonesia, Kenya and others are following this path.

What is required to move in this direction? We will start from our “big goal” and walk backwards to see what steps needed to be taken to get there.

Country CLD Programs: These programs typically include three critical components: finance, community mobilization and capacity building.

- **Finance mechanisms** involve ensuring that communities have timely access to a fair share of public resources (usually 20% of national budgets) under their own decision-making authority. This might be through a system of block grants, or through a regular devolution of revenues based on a transparent formula.
- **Community mobilization** involves devoting a revenue stream to training local volunteer community organizers with the skills to facilitate participatory decision-making. The Philippines, for example, has trained more than 250,000 community facilitators. Indonesia, Brazil and Afghanistan have contracted with civil society organizations to provide these trained facilitators.
- **Capacity building** involves training local government to be able to manage and be accountable for increased public resources, including mechanisms for transparency, social accountability and audits of public funds.

Country Pilot Programs: Generally, before launching a nationwide program, government ministries implement pilot programs in a limited number of districts, often in partnership with NGOs or other civil society organizations, to gain knowledge in how to make it work. While smaller than national scale, these pilot programs are usually much larger than any single NGO program, and are designed to test out the machinery of government applied to this challenge.

CLD Funding: In general, both the pilot and country programs have been funded through the World Bank or other International Finance Institutions (IFIs). The World Bank’s Community-Driven Development (CDD) global practice has enormous experience in helping countries establish the mechanisms for successful CLD programs.

Finance Ministry and Parliamentary Support: For IFI funding to flow to government for CLD, the Finance Minister must request it, and this generally required educating appropriate parliamentary committees and staff of several ministries. There are numerous

opportunities for **South-South Exchange Visits** as well as in-country visits to existing NGO CLD projects.

National Advocacy: CLD nearly always requires a significant **change in mindset** by both the citizenry and the government. The job of catalyzing the change in mindset, and of educating parliament and government staff can begin by national civil society actors aligning behind the goal of creating a national CLD program. This is the primary purpose of the Movement for Community-led Development, and is an agenda that can be adopted by many Civil Society Networks.

The argument for CLD:

Advocates for CLD can rely on several key points of high interest to governments:

1. **SDG 16** calls for participatory decision-making at all levels, and access by all to strong, effective local institutions. This can best be achieved through CLD.
2. **SDG 2**, and the SUN goal of reducing stunting, requires multisectoral integration at the community level (nutritious food, nutrition education, WASH, primary health care, halting child marriage.)
3. **Climate Resilience** requires community-level preparedness, training and response mechanisms that can only be done at the community level.
4. **“Demographic Dividend”** – channeling the energies of the huge youth population into constructive economic progress requires priority grassroots-level action in every community.
5. **Women’s Economic Empowerment** – similarly, there is tremendous evidence that women can only escape poverty when they can be assured of a comprehensive set of local public services (pre-school for children, nearby-access to water and healthcare, drudgery-reducing infrastructure such as grain mills and sustainable wood lots).

Champions for CLD: The creation of an aligned movement for CLD requires the dedicated effort of individuals with passion, dedication and the humility to build teams of very senior people. We can follow the above steps through this simple theory of change:



For more information, visit <https://communityleddev.org>. John Coonrod, October 2016