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Abstract

A series of terms that together describe Ted Ward's understanding of development. *From the first session in a workshop series on development at Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya, 1980.*

Reflections on Terms for Development

Community. Change occurs only when a community wants it to happen. The term *community* is usually used to indicate a group of human beings that have something in common (e.g., ideology, space, hopes, aspirations). It is this shared community that drives development. Development does not occur around individuals.

Need. It is unlikely that anyone really knows the needs of another person. It is unreasonable to assume that anyone outside a community can know the needs of that community. Educated cosmopolitan people tend to over-estimate their capability to determine the needs of people who lack education. Even an outsider would be hard pressed to know the needs of a group in three to four weeks of assessment.

Therefore, if *naming needs* is where you start, it will take too long. There has to be a place to start other than *needs*. Assessing needs is a difficult task; people can become soon frustrated if they begin at this point. Furthermore, it is possible to arrive at early and erroneous conclusions about needs.

People must become part of the process of identifying their own needs. Certain physical needs can be met promptly. Such needs might be resolved promptly but more basic needs may go unresolved. In the incident reported in Mark 2, the man's friends clearly identified his need as they had observed it. Jesus, however, never even mentioned this need until he had addressed the sin issue. Jesus met both needs—but He had addressed the real need: sin.

Meeting needs can lead to temporary solutions. Ultimately solving the problem will require long-term development. *Relief* is the short term solution to needs. There is no such thing as precision in defining "real" needs. Any truly basic need is likely complex and will require several different skills to understand and effectively deal with it. An outsider may identify it but have no idea how to fully comprehend its scope.

Priority. Which needs do we deal with first? Priority is usually established in some hierarchy of survival, beginning with what appears to be most urgent. However, there are exceptions. When a village in Brazil with a serious sanitation problem elects to put lights on a soccer field, it could be said that they did not meet the basic need. But the villagers knew that their basic need was a spiritual and emotional attitude that said "we can't do anything for ourselves." They needed a viewpoint of hope. Because a need can be identified is no assurance that it is the best place to start the remediation. The view of the development specialist is relatively unimportant. The issue is where are these people ready to start? Need, though important as a concept, does not provide the keys to the appropriate development activity. Only a dialogue with people, a process by which people begin speaking for themselves, will reveal the more likely tactics and path to the solution. Even the most elegant and clever analysis of needs will likely fall short.

But most people cannot tell you what their needs are and simply to ask people “What are your needs?” is not a valid approach. A community usually needs assistance in defining and naming its needs, but the competent development specialist usually avoids simply telling people what they need. The role of the development specialist is a facilitator of dialogue and analysis, not a maker of pronouncements!

Integrated Development. Development activity is concerned for more than one sector of life. Sectors that require attention include health, agriculture, nutrition, literacy, financial security, employment, sanitation, and so on. Integrated development is needed because no sector stands alone. This word of warning should be a special concern for Christians in mission work. There is no wise development that lacks integrated planning. In making an artificial distinction between spiritual and other aspects of life the church has for decades been involved in unbalanced, one-sided, non-integrated, development planning.

Self-Help. Sometimes a community is capable of finding within itself and within its own resources the way to move forward without dependency. The development consultant must exercise self-discipline and caution in order to avoid the default role as *expert*. Since the goal is encouraging self-help in the community, the methodology or the consultant should avoid *telling the answers* and *speaking from ‘on high.’* The sections following provide clues about possible tactics. The goal is stimulating self-help initiatives that will avoid increasing the community’s dependency.

Facilitation. Many communities are in a state of non-development because the development processes have been arrested for one reason or another. Sometimes outside help is needed to facilitate the restoration of the self-help process. Self-help does not always restart itself. The facilitator can bring processes into action. The skills of the facilitator, then, become important—not directing, controlling, or managing, but facilitating.

Conscientization. Paulo Freire, the Brazilian god-father of community development, popularized this term. He fervently believed that development was ultimately a concern of the human conscience. Not just knowledge, information, ideas, or procedures, but awakening and respecting the conscience of the person, the community, and the nation. His images were huge, his concerns for people were boundless, and his faith was eternal. As he spoke, usually in quiet unhurried short phrases, as he shared ideas and reflections, those around him were *hearing actively*, stimulated by Paulo’s thoughts and always ready to interact, never simply listening. He rarely needed to encourage discussion because it was already happening! The term conscientization, both in English and in the comparable word in Brazilian Portuguese, suggests both *conscious* and *conscience*. Thus the single word embraces the whole of Paulo’s emphasis: development is a concern for raising people’s consciousness of their world to such an extent that it touches their conscience. In Paulo’s view of the Gospel message, there is an absolute linkage between knowledge and morality. If you truly know, you truly believe, thus your Christian commitment is not just to know Jesus but to believe and act with Jesus. Conscientization has to do not only with the *conscience* but with one’s *consciousness*—the heart and the head. It focuses on one’s own condition—to understand with head and heart why things are the way they are. It is not common for many in the world to think in terms of need. That is a western notion. The problem is that where development is arrested, quite often people have not stopped to think about what is wrong, especially those who are caught in religious fatalism (it is what it is, because God has willed it).

Those people need conscientization to begin to understand the forces working on them and to assume responsibility for their own situation. Thinking more clearly and feeling more deeply about their situation is conscientization.

Organic Growth. Growth, as in getting bigger, is not necessarily good. The development process itself is a function of organic growth. Organic growth is a growth that is regulated by the nature of whatever it is that is growing. When communities develop they grow like communities. You do not have to tell them to grow like communities (any more than you would tell a banana to grow like a banana). The nature of community is what it is. Gardeners do not sit around diagramming the growth of plants. They help things grow. Gardeners facilitate by giving attention to the conditions.

Communities have organizational patterns of growth. Development planners energize or facilitate organic growth. The development planner does not need to make a precise model of what is to happen. He or she reaffirms the organic growth processes. And that takes the pressure off of the developer.

Why is nothing growing? Because the gardener does not understand the dynamic growth processes that are within the plants' nature and fails to attend to the environment and nourishment required for the development process.

Intrinsic and Acquired Needs. Needs may come from inside the perception and value system of the person or group, or they may be "transplanted" from some other source or person or group. Thus the distinction is made between sources: intrinsic or acquired from the inside versus needs that have been acquired from another person or source. An acquired need may spring from an intrinsic need as one discovers a "better way of looking at it."

There is a possibility here that the nuance in an acquired need may represent a manipulation that subverts the person's original conviction. Generally when dealing with needs, both intrinsic and acquired needs will be dealt with. This distinction cannot be forced on people. If it has become "real," it is what it is!

Functional and Felt Needs. Any need draws or drives the person's motivations. A *functional need* is a desire, eagerness, appetite, or aspiration that is organic or actively functional in a society or person. A *felt need* is any need that person feels (believes or claims) to be important. Functional needs are usually already being acted upon, resulting in consequences of some sort or determining some observable effect.

Reciprocity. The satisfactions one derives from receiving and giving are the major evidence of reciprocity. Sometimes defined as the procedure and the goal of effective training, reciprocity is a major cornerstone of a community's development. Whatever is done is carefully planned as a two-way street, a give-and-take of discussion, a balanced forum or dialogue, and a mutual sharing of every task and each decision. It is the spirit of a deliberate balancing that keeps each party in a relationship of acceptance and commitment to others. It is the heart-beat of community development. Without it, bias and prejudice will predictably emerge as the barrier to effective collaboration.

Three choices. There are three basically different sorts of goals that can be seen in development projects.

1. *Bringing change in a situation regardless of the needs of people* (e.g., the introduction of large-scale industry into a region.)
2. *Bringing change based on an outsider's views of the needs of people.* (e.g. "These people seem to be malnourished; we shall bring some extra food for them.") Much in current practice in mission and social development planning seems to be of this sort. This is not necessarily wrong, but it does suggest that the resulting procedures will be weak and the results will be less than intended.

3. *Bringing change as a result of planning and working with people based on their view of their need.* There is such a thing as working *with* people and living *among* people so that their view of their needs and their resources matures. Paulo Freire calls this development of the community conscientization. It requires dialogue and time; nevertheless it is the road worth traveling!

But it is not a magic charm; there are difficulties here, too! For example, most people do not respond well to the suggestion that they have needs. True enough. Getting beyond the self-protection hang-up is not easy. Self-discovery of needs in a community is an essential process, but defensiveness always disrupts. It must be approached carefully and patiently. Situations that lead to changes in one's own perspective are always difficult and even threatening. Most people have been living in a selfish world for so long that it is profoundly jarring to move to a more compassionate and selfless stance.

Consider this incident: a missionary shows up in a Jeep, and after many confusing remarks are exchanged with the tribesman, the missionary declares, "You need Jesus." The tribesman ponders for a moment and replies, "All that you say is true," but his eye is on the Jeep.

Adding it all up. We can make a distinction between needs and wants, but the problem is still there. When we ask people to face up to their needs, it is easier for them to name their wants.