



Key Concepts of Development¹

Ted Ward

Community. Change occurs only when a community wants it to happen. Typically, the term is 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. For example, it is elitism for educated people to think that they can know the needs of uneducated people. Even an outsider would be hard pressed to know the needs of a group in 3-4 weeks of assessment.

Therefore, if this is where you start, it will take too long. There has to be a place to start other than needs. Assessing needs is one of the most difficult tasks and persons can become easily frustrated if they begin at this point. Also it is possible that one could arrive at early and erroneous conclusions.

People need to become part of the process of identifying their own needs. Some needs can be met physically, promptly. We met these needs but don't assume that these are the real needs. (See Mark 2: The man's friends identified his needs but Jesus never even mentioned this need until he had addressed the sin issue. Jesus met both needs—but perceived the real need.) Felt needs, basic needs are temporary solutions. Ultimately what is needed is long term *development*.

Relief is the short term solution to needs. There is no such thing as precision in defining “real” needs. Any need is complex and an outsider can identify need in several ways and still see only part of the situation.

Which needs do we deal with first? Priority is usually established in some hierarchy of survival. 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 *they* knew that the basic need was a spiritual and emotional attitude that said “we can't do anything for ourselves.” *They* needed a viewpoint of hope. Because you've identified a basic need, it may not mean that it is the most basic problem. The view of the development specialist is relatively unimportant. The issue is, where are these people ready to start? Needs, though important as a concept, does not give us the answer to how do you begin with a development activity? Only a dialogue with people, only a process by which people begin speaking for themselves, answers the question. No analysis of needs answers the question.

¹ Ted Ward. Key Concepts of Development. A series of terms that together describe Ted Ward's understanding of development. From a workshop series on development at Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya, 1980. Subsequently adapted for publication: Ted Ward. Key Concepts of Development. *Common Ground Journal* Vol. 10 (2) Spring 2013, pp. 86-89.

But many people cannot tell you what their needs are, and simply to ask people “What are your needs?” is not a valid approach. People need help in naming their needs; but the development specialist avoids simply telling people what they need. The role of the development specialist is as a facilitator of dialogue and analysis.

Integrated Development. Refers to that kind of development activity that is concerned for more than one sector of life. Sectors: health, agriculture, nutrition, literacy, financial security, employment, sanitation, and so on. No sector can stand alone. Therefore, the reason for integrated development. There is no wise development that is not integrated planning. In making an artificial distinction between spiritual and other aspects of humanity, the church has, for decades been involved in unbalanced, one-sided, un-integrated, development planning.

Self Help. When a community is capable of finding within itself and within its own resources, the way to move in development without dependency. What use then is the outsider?

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—not directing, controlling, or managing, but facilitating.

Conscientization. This has to do not only with the conscience but with one’s consciousness—the heart and 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 (i.e., what is, is because God has willed it). Such people need conscientization; to begin to understand the forces working on them and to assume responsibility for their own situation. Thinking more clearly, feeling more deeply about their situation is conscientization.

Organic Growth. Growth itself is not necessarily good. Growth as just 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 don’t 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 don’t sit around diagraming the growth of plants. Plants 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 doesn’t something grow? Because you don’t understand the dynamic growth processes that are part of its nature, and plan with the development process.

There are three basically different sorts of things that are done in the name of development project activity.

(1) Bringing of change in a situation without concern for the needs of people (e.g., the introduction of large-scale industry into a society).

2) Bringing change based on outsiders' views of the needs of people. The modern mission movement is a good example of change from an outsiders' perspective. This is not necessarily wrong but the weakness is in the use of an outside opinion without regard for insiders' views. (Note that when someone came to Jesus with an expressed need, he began with that need. Jesus didn't stop there, but he began there.)

Missions began with the scattering of the early church from Jerusalem. The scattering was an outreach. The first clear example of church-to-church sending was not in response to an outsiders' view of need; but a spiritual response of encouragement and rejoicing. Only in the modern missionary movement is there an outreach based on a view of need: "Look at those people. They need the gospel." Missions oriented themselves to changing society based on this perception of their need.

(3) Bringing change as a result of planning and working with people based on their developing view of their needs. There is such a thing as a developing consciousness of one's need. Most people do not respond to an outsider's assertion of their needs; they respond to what they see *in* someone else. For example: What happens when a missionary shows up and says, "You need Jesus." And the missionary is driving a jeep? The person says, "O, I do need what you've got." There is such a thing as working with people and living among people so that their view of their need matures. The secular scholars call this conscientization. It takes dialogue and time.

We can make a distinction between needs and wants; but the problem is, when we ask people to name their needs, they name their wants.

Intrinsic and Acquired Needs. Needs from the inside versus needs that have been acquired. An acquired need is generally related to a basic need but is one expression of meeting that need (e.g., tea is related to food or drink but in some cultures it is an acquired need). Generally when dealing with needs, both intrinsic and acquired will be dealt with. We can't force the distinction on people.

Functional vs Felt Needs. A functional need is something that is organic or functional in a society or person. A felt need is any need that people feel to be important. A technician can make the distinction, but can't impose the distinction on people.

Reciprocity. The satisfactions one derives from receiving and giving.