



Transcriptions

Participation: The Key to Development Strategies, Part 2 Ted Ward

Annotation: *Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya, 1978.* Ted Ward identifies the various tasks of a community development specialist such as communication, stimulation of reflection, and so on.



Almost always, the first task for the developer is to find ways to talk about the situation “with the people.” By the way, everything we talk about in this chart should have “with the people” assumed though it is not spelled out. In order to save space on the transparency, I didn’t repeat “with the people.” [Chart not available.] We’ve already been through that question of what is participation? Now we’re asking, what is that participation focused on? First of all, finding ways to talk about the situation. With reference to the praxis notion, reflection or action, does that sound more like action or reflection? It’s actually reflection, even though finding might be thought of as an action. It’s a talk about, it’s a reflect on, and it’s a reflect on one situation—situation is the action being reflected on. In other words, when you move into a community and relationship, you don’t first do something and then ask people to reflect on what you’ve done. You move in and say, what is going on here? What have *you* been doing? Where are *you*? Not where am I or what impact have I had on *you*? So, the finding of ways to talk about the situation. That is, more precisely, describing the community and its conditions. Now what if this community is a community that is in a certain kind of need—whether it is a local men’s group that needs to be revitalized or needs to become more involved in its own development processes, that is still a safe place to begin. Let’s talk about what you’ve been doing; let’s talk about where you’ve been. What has been the strengths and weaknesses?

What's been going on? Now you might not want to start with that kind of an evaluative approach in every situation, but in some situations you can.

The next thing that needs to happen is to engage in the improvement of communication. And this is something the developer typically takes deliberate steps toward. And in the process, you see of finding ways to talk about the situation, it emerges that there are needs for more effective ways to talk. There are more effective needs for more effective ways to share ideas. So we get involved, in large-scale sometimes, of literacy, and, of course, this is exactly where the Paulo Freire method ties in. If that first engagement in improvement of communications demands literacy because it's not there, then that's where the literacy begins to enter in. But, more typically, it's a matter of developing the kinds of uses of the present available communication modes for the purpose of talking and sharing ideas about this particular situation that emerges in the discussions. For example, the use of posters, newsletters, sometimes even drama, and as we've done in several projects in Indonesia where puppets are so well loved, begin to develop the little community puppet shows that deal with—they call them *Wayang* shows—that deal with the with the particular problem, or the particular area of concern that this group wants to talk about, wants to express itself on. It's a matter of, first of all, saying, let's express this. Now the purpose of that is so that the breadth of that community awareness and involvement will just grow through processes of communication. It's not to be construed as a recruitment activity. It is simply a communication activity.

Again, back to the nature of man, the human being is basically a communicative creature and to enhance communication is to enhance his humanity—or her humanity, pardon me, ladies. We share this need to communicate and whatever is done to enhance communication is a step in the action of the praxis relationship. Then typically the next function comes back to the right-hand column which is in the praxis formula at the reflection side. [Comments about the chart displayed on a transparency.]

Identifying the circumstances that need to be changed becomes usually the next process of reflections. We've started to communicate, now let's talk about what sorts of things need to be done. After we've done that, then we need to move in to the action again in terms of carrying out surveys; not taking action on these first tentative notions about what needs to be changed, but carrying out surveys or interviews or, if you please less formally, simple conversations on a broader scale. Sometimes a community action group will say, "Well, let's spend this next week each of us talking to five people and then we'll come back together again and see what we learn after we talk with five people each in the community about this thing that we've been focusing." The purpose of that, of course, is to broaden the awareness of the community and to verify the viewpoints of those that are in the action team. Now sometimes an action team might be representative of a community. In other more communal situations, it might be the whole community itself. But there needs to be this step, usually, of doing something a little more systematic to see the breadth of the awareness of any need because it is quite counter-developmental for a handful of people to charge off in some direction that the rest of the community does not really understand or comprehend. And this is one of the ways that a developer makes a terrible mistake. He finds five people that he can bring to a point of view and then he gets those five people all heated up about doing something. And those five people plus the developer begin creating something totally new. And quite often the rest of the community resents it.

Even if you're going to do something on an experimental basis or on a demonstration basis, there needs to be a broad base of understanding and what that demonstration is about. I would

never, for example, encourage people to do experimental farming or farming-type demonstrations on a large scale within a community. Do them on a small scale but have a large scale of involvement of awareness. You see the communication should be broad though the experimentation may be small.

So we carry out surveys as part of the building of the understanding and also it's a two-way communication through surveying, through interviewing, through conversations. You make people more aware of what the emphasis of the activity is, what what's going on so that you don't leave people out. The most tragic thing that happens is when you leave out anyone that is on the formal or the informal power structure of a community, then you're dead. And quite often it is impossible to find out what is the informal power structure. Nobody can really tell you because quite often there are not even any words to express it. But if you ask people to start doing survey work, and participating, finding out, they will instinctively, if not deliberately, go to the right people because they tend to go to the power structure to talk. And that's why this step becomes extremely important.

Then, typically, you begin to deal with the matter of relating causes and effects. This one is a conceptual problem and the developer often has to deal with it very directly and ask people to consider not only what's wrong but what causes what is wrong. The relationship between cause and effect is very difficult in certain parts of the world. Many people, especially in animist societies, tend to assume that cause and effect is somehow predetermined and that one simply answers the question of what caused it by saying, with a shrug, that God's willed it, or the spirits willed it, or something else of that sort; and to try to get any functional connection between a frequency of deaths, for example, of newborns, and anything associated with sanitation is just terribly, terribly remote and sometimes this step of trying to build an understanding of causes and effects takes months.

From that and sometimes, by the way, you can recycle back and forth between any two of these, and you recycle back and forth in the praxis relationship. You keep re-doing, you keep re-reflecting, keep re-doing and re-reflecting. This is stylized to the point of being almost storybook simple, but the typical next step we see is that people, the developer, or the development "expert" will bring other "experts" to bear. It may surprise you that I start talking now about experts or officials. The quote marks around the experts are there to concede that usually people are called expert whether they are or not. What we refer to here is simply someone who has a little bit more experience with a given particular problem. For example, if what you've looked at is a problem of drainage in a community, you certainly don't want to start out as a remodel preacher engineering a drainage project. You need somebody in there who knows how to do some basic surveying. And, at this point, the community needs to be in a position to have well enough defined its problem that it understands why that expert is in there. If you, as a giving act, give the service of an engineer to a community to solve its drainage problem before it has come to grips with its drainage problem, you are not only wasting your time but you're wasting the time of the engineer. And you'd be wasting a lot of money. You don't bring experts into the situation, and you don't really confront civil officials until the community has some sense of what the problems are that they really want to deal with.

Now obviously in this frame of reference I'm talking about larger community problems in the realm of such things as drainage, sanitation, health, etc., where there are experts in the community or in the region that can be brought to bear through the public health services or through other government agency. And, by the way, I am not any more inclined to say that depends

on what country, because some countries don't have these services. I know of precious few countries today that don't have these sorts of services available. The trouble is that, in many countries, people aren't aware that they're there. And, in some cases, these services are a bunch of bureaucratic people that have become very lazy because nobody knows how to ask them to do anything. And I have seen plenty of health offices and plenty of sanitation district offices and water control project offices, and so forth, sitting full of bureaucrats in little rural villages with absolutely nothing to do because nobody's asking them to do anything. And they are not always happy when someone from a local community development project shows up and says, "Hey, we want you to do something, we want to help us," because that means they might have to work. But, on the other hand, they invariably cooperate—well, I shouldn't say invariably—they can be counted on to cooperate because they know if they don't, they're not doing their job. And one of the things that I believe the church can do is to begin to exert pressure on the public services and the agencies of the government that are there but are not doing their jobs. This need not be done in a confrontational way; it needs to be done in an invitational way. We need not have mass rallies to say the government bureaucrats are not doing their job. Instead, we need to have small delegations of people coming in to offices saying, "We need some help; we can show you what's wrong; we've decided we want it changed and we want you to help us." And even in bureaucratic governments and even in situations that are very totalitarian, even in Brazil, this has produced some results. And I think, again, that's one of the things in terms of justice and righteousness that the church can take a stand for is simply, kindly, calmly asking the civil servants to do what they're supposed to be doing. I want every one of you to please read the statement that is posted on our board. Your President has said that it is the responsibility of those civil servants. You should take a copy of that article and carry it. If you're really interested in development work, carry that article. And when the civil servant says to you, "We can't do that," say "Well, this says you can." And I think it might have an effect.

After that, then we move off into real planning for action. Notice you get the experts involved before you get serious about planning. You get the officials involved; you give them a chance. You don't bring them a plan; you let them get involved. And then you go back to the reflecting on what they've been saying and you use their input as part of your planning strategy. Then after you've done some planning, which is part of your praxis, you go into the carrying out of those actions. Now therein lies a lot of gap and a lot of projects fall down about that point because human beings seem to be much better at planning than they are doing things.

Then, if all goes well, you have something to evaluate; and if the evaluation goes well, you ought to be able to decide whether you want to re-plan and get a better plan of action, or recycle the whole process again from the top. And the illustration that I gave you yesterday showed the fulfillment of such a simple thing as the putting of lights on a soccer field that was evaluated as eminently successful, needed no re-planning at all, eminently successful. But that group of people were ready to go back to the top and that's exactly what they did. They went back to find ways to talk better about their situation. And the next situation they talked about was not the soccer field but the huge drainage problem. So this recycling sometimes is what saves us from otherwise a frustrating sort of an experience.

The note on this chart that I put at the bottom is, "Every step *with* not *for* the community." *Does the recycling always have to go back to the top one, Ted.* No, no, it might it might jump back to most anyplace, but generally we encourage people to go back to the top.

Now, a developer can take initiative on any and all of those points. And a developer does take initiative, not as a dictator but as a suggester and as an encourager. There is enough about that kind of a flow and the nature of the reflection/action process that makes these things natural steps and quite often the developer does not have to suggest them because they suggest themselves. And that's the magic of the process: if you get so well in tune with that natural process, the development process itself, you energize it through encouragement. You do not command it. You do not take this list and go to the community and say, "Well, now they told me in a course I took in development that we're supposed to do this now; let's do it." That's the worst thing in the world. But you will find that if you get into the spirit of the community, many of these process steps will take place naturally, the one after the other because they are part of apparently a natural flow of thought and concern if it begins with a broadly based sense of awareness and concern and mutuality. That sense of concern and mutuality quite often does not emerge in the secular structure; hence, a lot of development goes down the drain. I do believe that it can and should be expected to emerge among people who not only have some degree of materialistic motivation, but have some degree of spiritual motivation.

The developer suggests going on to doing this. In other words, let's now see if we can find ways to improve communication. That is not the same thing as saying, what we ought to do is build a dam. Now what the developer suggests is not let's go build a dam, but let's take the next step in the process and encouragement of that process. And, as I suggested, when it works best it is not a matter of even having to nominate that, or name that step, but simply encourage a step that is already naturally beginning to emerge anyway; that we're not ruling out the potential of technology introduction.

In fact, let me go right on to that now because your comments demonstrate the probability that this set of questions really is on your mind now. And that is, what are some of the stereotypes? What are some of the thinkings in the extreme that we need to avoid when we're thinking about how this process works? For example, the developer who pushes too hard, or the technology introducer who's too, you know, pushy. The developer who pushes too hard obviously is going to have a difficult time of it because the developer who pushes too hard is going to be rejected. Now it is a stereotype to say that all developers push too hard. But it is also a stereotype to say that the developer shouldn't push at all. David and I were talking the other day about the question of roles and when we start talking about the role of a facilitator, we start talking about a series of do's and don'ts and they become very flat and very unnatural. No human being avoids being critical; it's part of being human. No human being avoids making a suggestion; it's part of being human. Now the role of the developer might not be to make suggestions or to introduce ideas by some definition of the role, but if a human being is filling that role, the human being is going to have a bigger texture of behavior than the role and, therefore, that will happen. But we should not, on the one hand, be developers who push too hard nor should we be developers who don't push at all. The truth lies somewhere in between. The truth lies in a human dimension that says pushing is part of making a situation important. But there's a danger in it. Development is an art form. You know, how hard do you pull the bow on a violin? There's no book that tells you. It's an art form.

But it's not all fuzzy either. Let's see if we can't close in on it from a variety of directions here. The developer who knows everything is a stereotype. Sometimes we act that way. We know the dangers in acting that way. But, on the other hand, we don't solve that problem by being the developer who pretends to know nothing. We create artificialities. We create artificial extremes. And one of the real problems in people who are at first getting a hold of the development idea, is that they become aware of the danger of pushing too hard, acting like you know everything, and they go

to the opposite extreme. And the opposite extreme is also useless. These are stereotypes; reality lies between. In effect, then, these extremes become the fence on the two sides of the trail. And we try not to cross those fences. We stay within them, between them. Now on occasion we veer too much this way, too much that way, or we try not to cross those fences.

Again, a stereotype: the developer who interferes in lifestyle. And, of course, this is one of the things that is quite often leveled on the missionary. And then the sharp new missionary comes gleaming forward to the field as the person who completely avoids lifestyle issues. And that's not a good answer either. It's but another contrast stereotype. You can't avoid lifestyle issues and get on with the work of the gospel. You can't avoid lifestyle issues and get on with the work of development. But there is such a thing as interfering too much in lifestyle.

And another of the stereotypes: the developer who brings in too much technology. Of course, this is one that's usually leveled on people who are doing government-sponsored project work. And especially project work that has the AID money in it. Now a person who has worked with AID as a consultant and in various projects, as I have over the years—I have to defend myself on that. One of the things that you must understand is that AID projects are initiated within the host countries, the receiving countries. They are not initiated in Washington. They are initiated in the host countries. And the reason that so many of them are high-technology projects is because the host country perceives the United States as being able to offer high technology and, therefore, they go to the Germans, or the Dutch, or the English for low-technology projects but they bring the high-technology projects to Washington. And we end up paradropping TV receivers because that's what the local government wants. Now in the case of such obviously malfunctioning projects as that we do not come through with them. We do not provide them. We do not agree to such things. We did not paradrop TV receivers. Instead, we simply said, we cannot do that. It does not make any sense in terms of the guidelines of our legislation. But, on the other hand, we do end up providing an awful lot of high technology that quite often does not make much sense.

But put yourself in the place of the development man. Let me tell you another incident, when the director of AID (American Agency for International Development) in the country of Bolivia had, during his early years, a larger budget than the national budget of Bolivia. In other words, the amount of AID money coming into Bolivia was larger than the money generated by taxation in Bolivia. It is no longer anywhere near the case but Bolivia, at that time, was one of the world's two basket cases. The basket cases—something is so dead that you have to carry it around in a basket. Bolivia was in sad shape. This was not too long after World War II and the economy of Latin America, in general, was in trouble and Bolivia was the worst possible example.

This director of AID was having a very difficult time getting the government of Bolivia to come forward with any practical suggestions as to how to use this vast amount of American AID money that was available because, as is quite often true with the poorest of the poor, he couldn't even define his needs. So on one occasion when in a series of conversations with various officials, this particular AID director took to a man who was the chief of police in the city of La Paz. And this was during a time when there was a tremendous amount of political unrest and there was an awful lot of rioting in the city, and it was almost a weekly occurrence that the police of La Paz would be stoned by the crowds. And the crowds, largely Marxists, would come rushing down one of these cobblestone streets and tear up the street as they came and throw rocks. And the police had shields and they had a few other things that would allow them to retreat back, usually uphill. They were pretty shrewd at it. The city of La Paz goes like this. The police would always retreat uphill so that

the fellows would have to throw upward, and it made the whole thing usually a standoff. So the AID director, in a fit of sheer brilliance, suggested something to the police chief of the city of La Paz that would, at least, unload a little bit of this American money.

He says, I have noticed that you have these weekly riots, and a number of your police get hurt. I think I have an idea. Why don't we build an asphalt plant? Now an asphalt plant is an American equivalent of a tarmac plant. And why don't we just put tarmac over all the cobblestone streets of the city of La Paz? Now the city of La Paz is not all that big and it really wouldn't be a bad idea at all. Whereupon, the chief of police jumped up and screamed, "ASSASSIN! ASSASSIN!" He was emotional about it. He'd been suspicious of the Americans in the first place and this confirmed it. And my friend, the AID director there, was a very gentle man who was just absolutely floored by this show and he was embarrassed to tears. And he finally calmed the good man down and got him seated again and he says, "I'm sorry, I don't know what I said." And he says, "Don't you understand? Don't you understand?" And my friend said, "Of course I don't understand. I don't understand, please tell me." And he says, "We need the cobblestones." Thereupon, my friend thought it was just a matter of tradition, so he began making some polite remark about offending tradition and so forth, and the policeman says, "No, you Americans don't seem to understand how things work in Latin America." He says, "Don't you know that if the rioters did not have the cobblestones, they would go and get guns and then my police would be killed." And quite often innocent technological changes mean a very different thing in the local context. And this was a very real thought in the mind of this police chief: that if anybody ever did anything to deprive the rioters of the stones that they would turn to guns. And he feared that above all other fears. So the developer who brings in too much technology is quite often contrasted, then, with the shrewd developer who brings in no technology at all.

I'll never forget a little speech that I made in the square of a little Indonesian village when we were beginning to launch a project and we were doing all this ceremonial stuff that you have to do in many parts of the world. And the district chief was there and all sorts of dignitaries were there and I was representing Michigan State University. And I was making this eloquent speech with reference to, "We did not come to bring jeeps, we did not come to bring guns; we did not come to bring jeeps." And the minute I said, "We did not come to bring jeeps," everybody went, ha, ha, because they thought we were going to bring jeeps. And the point was that I had absolutely ruined my speech because I had let the cat out of the bag: that we didn't intend to bring hardware. We wanted to bring software and to see local indigenous development occur and they wanted the jeeps. And so quite often you're into a terrible bind if you say, "We don't want to bring technology in here because that would hurt your situation." They say, "What do you mean hurt our situation? You know, that's what you guys have got; let's have it." And sometimes I think we see this when local church groups will say to the leadership people in a denomination, "Never mind your experts, give us the money." And the same problem occurs then when you say, "Well, we don't give money." Well, what are you there for?

The last portion of our talk will simply focus again on a view of the praxis relationship as we talk about what the practical steps of praxis for the development worker really are. This little cycle, with two little internal cycles, says something about the steps that are taken. The developer, first of all, listens (at the top of the chart) and asks and listens and asks, and recycles this process until the developer, with the people, is ready to start talking about pointing out relationships. As relationships are pointed out, then the next facet of the praxis cycle takes the form of suggestions of activities. By this we mean "experiences." Now these experiences may have to do with the solution of the

problem directly, or they may be just next steps of action in order to come to grips with the problem, but they are experiences. The developer suggests experiences. Maybe together we can find this out. Maybe together we can go to talk to the official. Maybe together we should go and do a survey in the community. Maybe together we should ask the water division to come down here and talk about that creek, that stream.

Something, then, is put into action. And the participation in that action is a recycled function, at this point, until it's ready to spin off and people have had enough experience together that you're ready to start saying, let's reflect on that experience and see what it means. They ask about the meaning of experiences and then we go back into the listening mode again. And the cycling and recycling of this model tells us much about the nature of participation of the developer with the people in development. In effect, it underlines the basic proposition that the key to development is participation, and the key to effective participation is doing things *with* people, not *for* people.