



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Sometimes it seems like global problems are so big that we can't help change the lives of the world's poorest people.

Just giving more money or resources isn't the answer. Neither is just lobbying for political change. However, a combination of these strategies together with 'community development' can make a real difference to the lives of people in poor communities.



In a poor community in Mauritania, Fatma has been trained as a midwife by World Vision.

### How does community development work?

Community development is about change and partnership. It is work or projects undertaken jointly between people in poor communities, local authorities, governments, and outside organisations such as aid agencies, to bring about long-term improvements.

It is about communities moving 'step by step' and others working with them 'side by side' to improve living conditions and create lasting change. The existing knowledge and skills of the people are affirmed and they are seen as active participants in the process of change.

The way that community development works for one community will be different to that in another community. For example, in one community, unclean drinking water may be contributing to poor health – which may cause children to miss school and adults to miss out on work and a reliable income – which may lead to hunger – which again affects health, education and income.

In this example a several-stranded solution might be necessary, involving the improvement of water quality, healthcare, education and income opportunities.

### Not just roads and schools

Sometimes development is seen only as the provision of tangible things like water tanks, roads or school buildings. This model can see poor communities as passive recipients.

Community development, however, is also about assisting community members to work through their problems and the causes, effects and solutions, themselves. They learn to understand the issues that are contributing to their poverty, and the methods and resources that will help them to be self-reliant. The skills that remain will help communities build a better future for their children.

### Transformed Communities

The types of change that might need to occur are:

- behavioural change – washing hands before eating or encouraging health workers to wear disposable gloves to prevent HIV and AIDS transmission
- participation changes – including women in decision making



- skills improvement – techniques for irrigating crops or training to run a small business, training classroom teachers
- structural changes – local leadership may need to become more accountable and consult with all the groups they represent
- increasing access – bridges are built over gorges so women can get to healthcare centres or clean water.



Widowed by the war in Somalia, Habibo received seeds, tools and training to manage her crops. She now grows her own crops on her own land, enough to make a living and keep her family healthy.

### What's at the end ?

It takes time to bring about lasting change. The time it takes in one community may be different to another. World Vision might work on one project for three years, or stay with a community for up to 10-15 years, until the community has the skills, ability and resources to manage independently.

Ultimately, community development is about the capacity of the community to respond to change themselves and to develop their community in a way that is sustainable. At the end of the day, communities can manage their future without relying on external support.

### For you to do

1. Why is it unhelpful to simply send money or resources to developing countries?

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2. Identify the skills that would help a community develop in the following areas:

Sector	Resources	Skills
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• build a school</li> <li>• send pencils, books</li> </ul>	
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bags of food, seed, tools</li> </ul>	
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drill a bore and install a water pump</li> </ul>	