

# Participatory Development:

## Power to the people

### What is development?

When you first hear the word development, what do you think of? Possibly you think buildings or wealth - more money, bigger houses, faster computers and more powerful cars. This material and economic development has been very unevenly distributed throughout the world. The richest 20% of the world's people consume about 80% of its resources whilst the poorest struggle to survive with unclean water, inadequate food, shelter, education and health care.

Development is not just about quantity but also quality. It should mean structural changes to overcome poverty, environmental awareness to conserve natural resources, decision making that includes all people affected by the decisions and quality community interaction. All people, not just those in leadership roles or with money, have a role to play. Development should mean giving all people a fair go, giving those in need a 'hand up' – not a 'hand out'.

**Various descriptions have been used to highlight development that involves people. These include:**

#### 1. Participatory development

This emphasises that people being offered a 'hand up' should be involved in decision making processes including, planning, undertaking and assessing their own development.

#### 2. Community development

This emphasises the involvement and improved interaction between people in the local or regional community.

#### 3. Transformational development

This is a term used by World Vision to indicate the changes in physical, spiritual, social and cultural conditions, which lead to improved relationships with God, other people and the environment.

### How do people participate in development?

People with finance, knowledge and technology can provide advice and help but they should not control the process. People being offered assistance play a vital part in defining what can be done and implementing changes. People who are given 'handouts' can feel inadequate, powerless and dependent.



*Approximately 800 cyclists and thousands of spectators witnessed the opening ride of World Vision's month-long AIDS Cycle Relay an international cycle event which visited six countries in Southern Africa to raise awareness of the AIDS pandemic.*

### Participation is most effective when it:

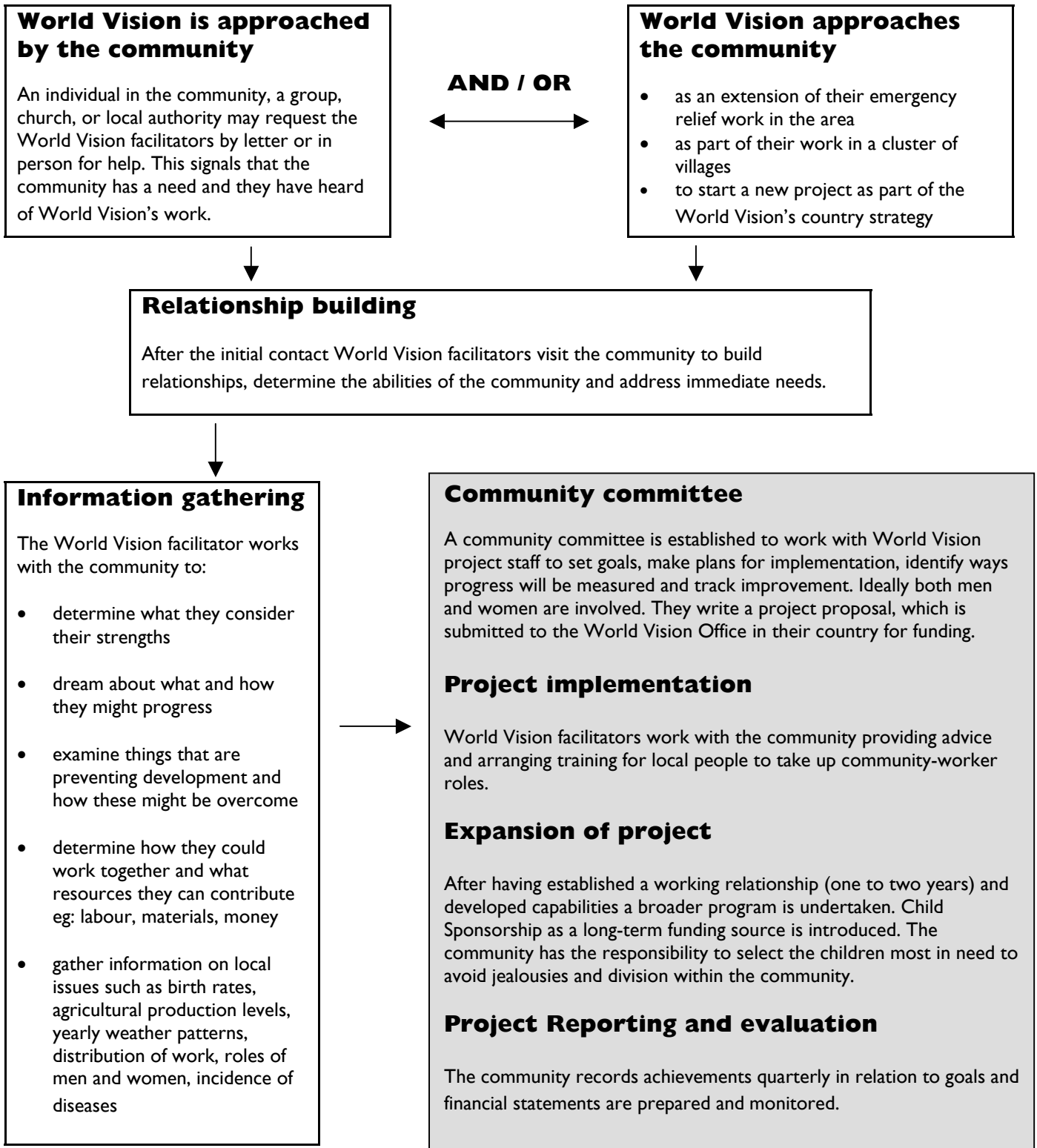
- respects people's knowledge and skills – local beliefs and methods offer insights based on years of experience which cannot be underestimated
- empowers people to take control of their lives - training, resourcing and supporting people to make their own decisions
- includes all of the people – men and women, aged and disabled, religious and ethnic minority groups
- is flexible, not bureaucratic – adapted to local circumstances not bound by outsiders' rules and timelines

#### TOPIC SHEET

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# How do people participate in World Vision projects?

The following is a generalised account of how World Vision projects work. Details may vary from country to country and according to the situation and skills of people involved. Often World Vision works across a geographic area in an Area Development Program (ADP) which is defined by some social, natural or political boundary, typically covering 40-60 square kilometres. This is so a number of communities, which have similar needs, can be linked together, learn from each other and make cost effective use of resources. The ADP may contain 20-50 villages with a population of 40,000 to 100,000 and may take from 15 to 20 years from start to finish.



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## How does World Vision work in Battambang, Cambodia?

The Banan Area Development Project, ADP is west of Phnom Penh in an area previously referred to as the 'rice bowl' of Cambodia because of its fertile soil and intensive rice cultivation. Many people fled as their homes were destroyed by ongoing war. World Vision began working with returnees in 1994 focusing on health, agriculture, skills training for the disabled (landmine victims), landmine awareness education, and de-mining, in partnership with the Mines Advisory Group (MAG). Sponsorship was introduced in 1996.



*Community members learn to live in areas affected by landmines. Through World Vision training and support for an animal husbandry and agriculture project, parents are now able to feed their children and send them to school.*

## Food

The community identified food shortages as a major problem. Landmine clearance, funded through the Australian government's overseas aid program, is slowly increasing the amount of land available. High quality rice seeds have been introduced to increase yields. Rice storage facilities have been built so that good seeds are available for future harvests. New varieties of vegetables have been introduced through demonstration plots. Fruit and nut trees have been planted on the banks of dams to provide further nutrition as well as to help prevent erosion. Community members have also been trained in appropriate crop production techniques, which have increased family food production.

**"Development has often bypassed the poorest people, and has even increased their disadvantages. The poor need to direct action to bring them into the development process and create the conditions for them to escape poverty." <sup>1</sup>**

## Education

Many young people have had disrupted, or very little, education as they have moved around or cared for younger siblings while their parents work in the rice fields. The community have identified education as a key method of improving life for future generations. World Vision provides teacher training, payment of teachers, books, blackboards and teaching materials. As a result, formal school availability has increased. Teachers are so committed they visit parents in their own time to help them understand the benefits of the program.

## Health

World Vision has provided cement and training to build water tanks and toilets to reduce the spread of preventable diseases. Community members attend workshops to learn about a range of health care issues, including the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, hygiene and nutrition. In cooperation with Catholic Relief Services, training for local hospital and clinic staff is provided, resulting in increased health-care services.

## Credit

The community also identified a need for support to start small businesses to generate their own income that was not dependent on farming. Through its micro-enterprise development program, World Vision has introduced micro-credit programs, which a community committee oversees its operations. Communities are encouraged to save to be able to set up viable village banks. Training in vocational and profitable marketing skills has also been introduced into the community.

## How does WV work in Western Abaya, Ethiopia?

World Vision originally became involved in this drought prone area south of Addis Ababa through famine relief in 1984. The Western Abaya ADP emerged in 1990 and now serves 150,000 people in a score of villages. Overcoming the impact of unpredictable rainfall is a major focus of the project.

Before World Vision's assistance began, farmers struggled to produce enough food to eat and sell. Dry weather conditions and lack of education and resources made it very difficult for the situation to improve. Health-care services in the community were limited and local water sources were contaminated which meant disease spread quickly. Children were unable to complete their schooling as their parents could not afford the costs of school supplies and many were required to work on the family's farm.

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## Income Generation

Farmers are assisted to increase the amount and variety of food they produce through the provision of resources and training. Goats, sheep and poultry have been purchased to improve community members' diet and a veterinary post has been established. To diversify their produce, farmers are planting new crops such as apple and avocado. Irrigation schemes are helping to improve crop production and farmers are employing appropriate techniques to prevent further environmental damage. The community is learning other income-producing activities including bee keeping, pottery, soap making and weaving and loans are made available to assist people to run small businesses.



Community members learn income-producing activities like, weaving.

## Health and Education

Health centres have been constructed and parents are encouraged to bring their children for regular health checks. Through attending discussion groups community members are learning about a variety of health-care issues including disease prevention, nutrition and family planning. Wells have been dug and water springs developed providing community members with clean water.

Children are assisted to attend school through the provision of school fees, supplies and uniforms. The renovation of classrooms is helping to improve the children's learning environment. Additionally, the construction of another elementary school is underway.

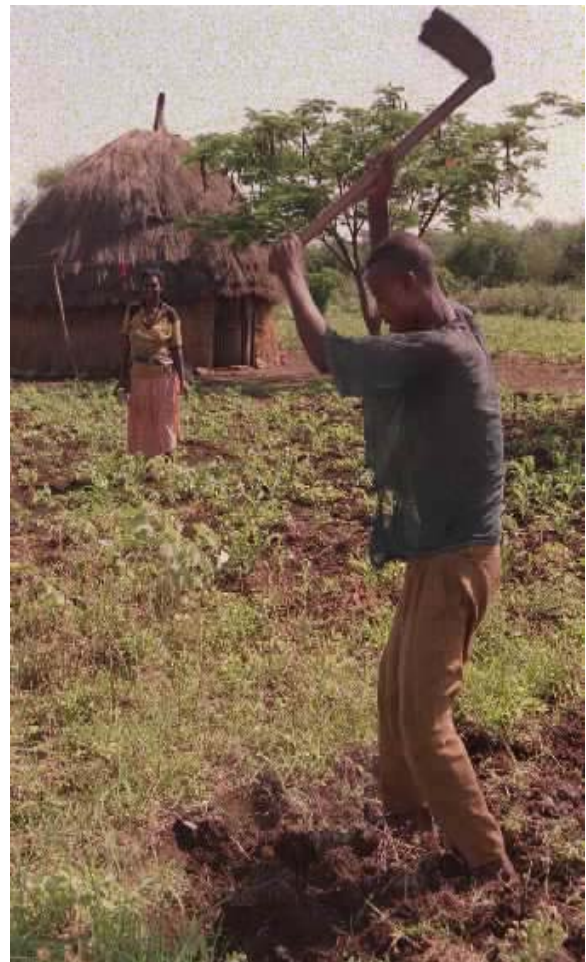
## How is success measured?

World Vision makes a commitment to work in an area for 10-15 years. Success measures include:

- project goals are achieved
- community members trained and able to take active role for on-going development
- community leadership committed to continuing project activities

## Action you can take

1. **WRITE TO** the Hon. John Howard, Prime Minister <http://www.pm.gov.au>, write a letter to your local paper or ring your local talkback radio program to voice your concern about Australia's declining aid levels in the face of global poverty and insecurity – despite Australia's relative wealth and despite other countries increasing their aid.
2. **DONATE** to World Vision's development projects: online <http://www.worldvision.com.au> by phone 133240; or by posting your donation to GPO BOX 9944, Melbourne 3000.
3. **TELL YOUR FRIENDS** about the issue. Pass on this topic sheet and raise the issue or your community group, church or school.
4. **FIND OUT MORE** check out World Vision Australia's Resource Centre at <http://www.worldvision.com.au/resources> and the Australian Council for Overseas Aid <http://www.acfoa.asn.au>



Farmers are provided with resources and modern agricultural training. As a result, the Western Abaya community has benefited from increased food production.

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, A (Ed) (2002) *The state of world population* UNFPA: New York.

### TOPIC SHEET