

What is Community?

- How do we define **community**?
 - Is it a place?
 - Is it a group of people?
 - Is it spontaneous or planned, formal or informal, legal (or even illegal)?
 - Is it defined by boundaries, defined by shared beliefs, values and cultures?
 - What are its characteristics?



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The answers to these questions suggests that the way we as individuals or as a member of a group see community is determined by our identity, our connection and interaction with place, space and people.



Explaining Community

Community is a collection of physical properties and attributes.



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Community incorporates concepts of space and place with people, suggesting that community is a social system, a common interest-based group (for example, schools, clubs, churches, neighbourhoods) and who are interested in local socio-economic well-being and development.

There are deeper notions of **Community** such as personal communities and social communities, which are explained as a mix of private, personal and public relationships.



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Understanding Community

Community needs can be defined as the gap between what is and what should be, and can be felt by an individual, a group or an entire community which arise out of the social and economic circumstances of everyday living.

By examining situations (individual and group vulnerability) and resources (human and physical) within community closely, helps uncover what is truly needed and what can be used leading toward future improvement to build community health and well-being.

How can this be achieved?

There are two ways to go about it:

1. By using information that's already out there , or
2. Collect new information.



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Community Tool Box

Collecting information about the problem

Ten steps in information collection ...

1. Agree on the value and purpose of the information that you will collect
2. Determine when you want to use this data
3. Determine exactly what you want to know
4. Determine who will find the information
5. Identify possible sources of information
6. Set limits as to how much information you want to collect
7. Collect the data
8. Identify gaps in your knowledge
9. Redo the process to try to fill those gaps – or collect your own data
10. If possible, you might want to compare data for your community with that of other communities, or that of the nation as a whole or to trend out your own community's data over time.

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/7/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/collect-information/main>



Understanding local community needs and strengths

Identifying community needs and gaps together with community based assets present opportunities for social transformation through the development of effective, efficient and innovative ideas or novel solutions to social problems.

Rather than talking about the 'problem', let's approach this from the perspective of local community needs and strengths.

One of the approaches to identifying possibilities is community development.



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Approaches to Community Development 'Locally'

- **Community Development** is an approach by individuals or organisations to build social capacity of individuals and groups through participation to influence issues that affect them and their communities.

- Eversole (2015: 2-3) proposed that **Community development** focuses on the social drivers of change and how people can work together to improve their situation.

- **Community development** is now seen as something on the ground, in particular places and in partnership with communities in those places.



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Defining social drivers of development

Social drivers are defined as social structures, institution and agency grounded in social norms and values that determine directions and processes of change.

- **Social structures** are entrenched patterns of stratification and difference, related for example to class gender, ethnicity, religion and location.
- **Institutions** are the “rules of the game” – formal (laws) and informal (norms) – that shape the behaviour of people and organisations in fairly predictable ways.
- **Agency** is the capacity of individuals and groups to make their own choices and influence decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- **Social norms and values** which vary in different contexts, may include respect for human rights and dignity; meanings of identity and citizenship; commitment to social justice and equality, tolerance; and respect for diversity and the environment.



Taking an Asset-Based Approach

What is Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)?

ABCD is a methodology for the sustainable development of communities based on their strengths and potentials. It involves assessing the *resources, skills, and experience* available in a community, organising the community around issues that move its members into action and then determining and taking appropriate action.

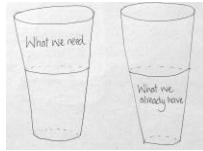


Image adapted from <http://www.communitypartnering.info/assets4.html>

- Everyone has gifts – the abilities we are born with: each person in a community has something to contribute.
- Citizens are at the centre: citizens should be viewed as actors – not recipients – in development.



Asset-Based Community Development

- Identifies and mobilises the assets of individuals, especially those marginalised in mainstream society or those who are “clients” of social services, eg unemployed;
- Builds relationships among community members, especially those that are mutually supportive;
- Gives community members more roles and power in local institutions such that citizens lead efforts; and
- Fosters **social capital** by recognising that all people have gifts.

Social capital is defined as the collective value of all social networks in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively.



Five key assets in ABCD Communities



Communities can no longer be thought of as complex masses of needs and problems, but rather diverse and potent webs of gifts and assets. Each community has a unique set of skills and capacities to channel for community development. ABCD categorises asset inventories into five groups:



Five key assets in ABCD Communities

Individuals: Are at the centre of Asset Based Community Development and are the actors within the community that have gifts and skills.



Everyone has gifts and assets. Individual gifts and assets need to be recognized and identified. In **community development** you cannot do anything with people's needs, only their **assets**.



Five key assets in ABCD Communities

Associations: Small informal groups of people, such as clubs, working with a common interest as volunteers are called associations in ABCD and are critical to community mobilization. They don't control anything; they are just coming together around a common interest by their individual choice.

Institutions: Paid groups of people who generally are professionals who are structurally organized are called institutions. They include government agencies and private business, as well as schools, etc. They can all be valuable resources. The assets of these institutions help the community capture valuable resources and establish a sense of civic responsibility.



Five key assets in ABCD Communities

• **Physical Assets:** Physical assets such as land, buildings, space, and funds are other assets that can be used.

• **Connections:** There must be an exchange between people sharing their assets by bartering, etc. These connections are made by people who are connectors. It takes time to find out about individuals; this is normally done through building relationships with individual by individual.



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Take home messages

- **Community** is a social unit of people who have something in common, such as norms, values or identity, sometimes within a geographical area or space.
- **Community needs** are identified by examining situations within community, and are felt by an individual, a group or an entire community.
- **Community Development** is an approach by individuals or organisations to build social capacity of individuals and groups through participation to influence issues that affect them and their communities.
- **Social drivers** are social structures, institution and agency grounded in social norms and values that determine directions and processes of social change.



Take home messages

- **Asset-Based Community Development** is a mechanism for the sustainable development of communities based on the strengths and potentials of individuals or groups, utilised as a resource for solving social problems.
- **Social capital** is defined as the collective value of all social networks in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively.
- **Understanding local community needs and strengths** presents opportunities for social transformation through the development of effective, efficient and innovative ideas or novel solutions to social problems.



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[This knowledge about community needs and assets provides the groundwork for innovation and entrepreneurship as community development mechanisms to address local social issues.](#)



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