

ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH CHECK



Inclusive Local Development: How Does Your Organisation Fare?

Let's face it...

Working in the community sector is not easy. A lot of the time the problems we work on are what are referred to as 'wicked problems', meaning that we need to confront many different contributing factors, all at the same time. Often as well, we're dealing with resourcing and time constraints—so as much as we want, we simply can't do everything as thoroughly as we'd like.

Add to that the usual project management issues in a sometimes-difficult environment: dealing with problems (and politics), managing staff and resources so project results are worth the project costs, and hoping and praying that the project will show results that the donor recognises as important and worth pursuing.

It can get overwhelming! And that's before you even start to think about the work from the community's perspective.

You know that working well with communities is important for your project. But as you get busier and busier, you may be tempted to put the principles of good local development in the 'nice, but not necessary' basket. This is normal. But it also doesn't have to be this way.

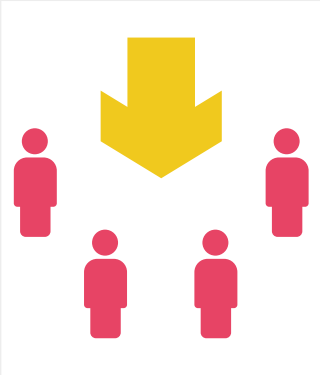
The alternative is to take a strategic approach, incorporating good local development principles into your planning and approach so that you don't have to deal with it as something separate and extra to what you already do.

Think of good local development in terms of sharing decision-making power

This tool will help you analyse whether and how decision-making power is shared. Do you and/or the donor make all of the decisions? Or do beneficiaries (everyday community members) also get to be involved in decision-making?

Sharing decision-making power is best understood as a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum you have either minimal interaction with community members, or possibly even negative, manipulative interaction with community members (although I truly hope you don't!) At the other end of the spectrum, you empower community members to make their own decisions over what changes they would like to see in their community, and how they would like to see this achieved.

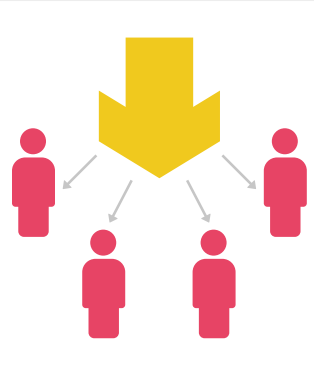
NO ENGAGEMENT



1

- ◆ NGO/donor makes all decisions about the project.
- ◆ NGO/donor give inadequate or misleading information to local leaders and the community.
- ◆ There is no real interest in including community interests, priorities, needs or strengths from the community perspective.

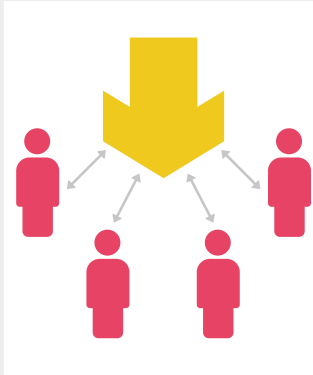
INFORMATION GIVING



2

- ◆ Often referred to as 'socialisation'.
- ◆ NGO/donor makes all decisions about the project.
- ◆ NGO/donor makes an effort to ensure that they give adequate information to local leaders and the community, in a format that they will understand.

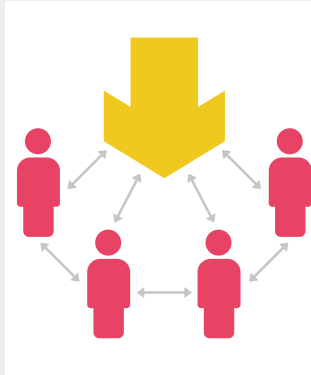
CONSULTATION



3

- ◆ NGO/donor makes all decisions about the project.
- ◆ NGO/donor makes an effort to not only give adequate information, but to gather community interests & concerns.
- ◆ NGO/donor makes an effort to include community interests & concerns in their final decision-making.

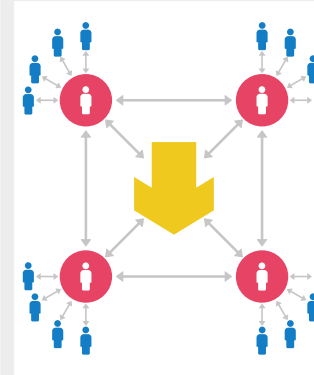
INVOLVEMENT



4

- ◆ NGO/donor shares some decision-making power with community leaders, organisations, groups or committees.
- ◆ Community representatives actively contribute to project decision-making.
- ◆ NGO/donor continues to make final decisions, according to project structure & guidelines.

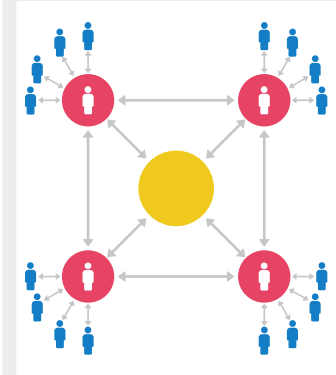
BUILDING LEADERSHIP



5

- ◆ NGO/donor supports community representatives in making project decisions, according to pre-determined group structure & guidelines.
- ◆ Community representatives begin to make their own plans and decisions.
- ◆ Community representatives have the right to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes, with the continuing support of NGO/donor.

LOCAL OWNERSHIP



6

- ◆ Beginning of project phase-out.
- ◆ NGO/donor gives full decision-making power to community representatives according to agreed group structure & guidelines.
- ◆ Community representatives make their own plans and decisions.
- ◆ NGO/donor may or may not provide ongoing secretarial or other support to community representatives.

Check the health of your organisation

The next step is to assess your project's performance. You will do this using a simple matrix that will allow you to measure how you share decision-making power across different stages of the project life-cycle. Once you become accustomed to using this tool, you might want to make this a fun team-building exercise with your staff or colleagues!

1. Draw a large matrix on a whiteboard or wall, with different stages of the project life-cycle at the top of the matrix. This will likely include:
 - a. Project identification
 - b. Project planning
 - c. Project implementation (this will probably need to be broken up into more than one stage, depending on your project)
 - d. Project completion (including, if appropriate, exit plan and sustainability plan)
2. On the left-hand side, write the different levels of community engagement:
 - a. No engagement
 - b. Information giving
 - c. Consultation
 - d. Involvement
 - e. Building leadership
 - f. Local ownership
3. Using sticky notes or post-it notes, list some of the major activities that you typically perform at each stage of the project lifecycle.
4. Either alone or together with your team, assess each activity according to their level of engagement (what degree you share decision-making power with community members?)
5. Place the sticky note in the appropriate section of the matrix (eg. project planning/inform.)
6. Once you've gone through the activity, take a step back and look at the general shape on the whiteboard or wall. Is it uneven? Can you see obvious gaps? What impact do you think that has on project effectiveness and/or sustainability? What might you do to support community buy-in and sense of local ownership over the project?

See [example matrix on the next page...](#)

Your matrix should look something like this, with enough space to place many different post-itnotes (sticky notes).

	Project identification	Project planning	Project implementation	Project completion
No engagement				
Information giving				
Consultation				
Involvement				
Building leadership				
Local ownership				

Happy Workshopping!

