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# Exploring Community and Community Development

## Introduction

Community Economic Development so called CED is constituted by three of community, economy and development. These elements are interwoven tightly. The community is formed by a group of people having the same interests or just simply living in same place. In light of the existence, the community must be developed and strengthened by its people's resources and capacity. Moreover, the factor that necessary for improving people life is the economic factor helping those community to use and control their resources and maintain their competitive advantages. Once the community is strengthened and developed in economy, it will be maintained and sustainable. In this assignment, I will demonstrate the relationship of community, community development and community economic development.

## Community

"Community" term was defined long time ago by many experts coming up with unlimited definitions. Theoretically, 'community' is an abstract noun. Bhattacharaya (2004) cited in the Journal of the Community Development Society, they had troubles in community definition because of its ambiguous meaning. According to MacIntyre (2003), although there are many definitions about the community, they all shared the same meaning that people relate to each other in one community. The community cannot be constituted by lifeless things like rock or trees, but human relationship. MacIntyre also cited in the "Sustainable People" that since the human element, the community is complex because every person is a unique object having different ways of acting and thinking about the world around them. Regarding the class's lecture, the community is not simply a geographical, but is about shared meaning i.e. learning, that connects its shareholders come together. The purpose of the community works is bringing benefits to shareholders and having positive impact to other communities. The community fuels economic democracy that means by people, for people and with people. Therefore, this is a core element in the community economic development.

## Community Development

As cited in Sustainable People, 'development' is defined as a 'process' which is a big picture about the interwoven of elements in the community. Development manifests the change in positive ways with the intention of making better quality of life for members of a community. Community development basis exists over time as well as human beings. However, the formal process was started in 1930s by the British colonial officer. Later on, the British Colonial Office defined the community development with characteristics of 'holistic', interconnectedness of shareholders in operational process in order to improve their quality of lives. According to Cavaye, when two terms – 'community' and 'development' come together, that means the community taps into a process of improving its situations of society, economics and environment. The process improves the effectiveness in decision-making process of the community by using its tangible and intangible resources. Moreover, community development is the effort to improve the quality of lives in that community including resource mobilization,

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opportunity network access and policies innovation (Labonte, 1999). Once the community is strengthened, the outsiders are automatically excluded as part of community's nature. On the other hand, economic development requires the ability of connection between members and outsiders beyond the community's boundary – 'social capital' (Lotz & MacIntyre, 2003). In addition, Cavaye also noted that economic development plays an important role and an essential part of community development.

## **Community Economic Development – CED**

According to MacIntyre (MacIntyre, 2003), having 'economic' in the middle of 'community' and 'development' changes the face of local empowerment. When communities know how to manage their communities, capacity and resources; they are able to seek opportunities and partnerships beyond their boundaries, their communities can be sustainable and competitive. Moreover, they can be confident on the road of bringing benefit to their shareholders. Economics settles the scarce resources' allocation to compete with others. Limited resource including leadership, time, capacity and other immaterial aspects, is an insoluble problem to communities, especially small communities. If they are not well-managed or controlled effectively, people from outside can exploit and misuse them. Economics fosters the economic freedom which are the primary factors in a community. Once the community has care-free about their financial situation, people can be creative and productive. They can contribute to the community effectively and productively as active participants. MacIntyre also addresses that communities having an independent financial situation can be confident to form partnerships with other communities on the ground of 'mutual aid'. Like Maslow's hierarchical theories of needs, shareholders, who are independent in their lives, they will have self-actualization - the top of the needs pyramid, they do not need to depend on their government or private sector to have their demands met further.

## **Synthesis and reflection**

Although community development and economic development have different goals, they are interconnected closely. Community development not only includes economic development, but also strengthens it and influence the big picture of the whole society (Cavaye). According to MacIntyre, in ancient times, people had a symbol standing for prosperity life - 'the medicine wheel'. The symbol manifested four axes of life, which are mental, physical, spiritual and emotional. The four axes are equivalent to four primary elements in our modern society - politics, the economy, culture and caring. This is a goal that CED is trying to achieve. Moreover, MacIntyre also cited in the class's lecture that CED is a 'three-legged stool' including three interwoven factors: economics, sociology and political science. This means if one of these factors is missed, the whole scheme will be collapsed. All of CED scheme is about human beings with the attempt to achieve a better life with their head, their heart and their hands altogether. Regarding economic perspective, CED is the third party that can deal with both government and private sector to solve issues that none of these parties can deal with. In a conventional society's management system, people are controlled as their hierarchical levels or 'top-down'. The decision-making relating process only involves top managers or people who are in charge of managerial position. However, CED makes an effort to involve people's participation from all levels to these process or community operations. It is trying to reach the fair relationship between people to people, to nature and regards them as human, not 'production factors'. Besides, it aims to eradicate poverty, reduce unemployment rate and foster people to care

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about each other, their families and their lives, as MacIntyre concluded (Lotz & MacIntyre, 2003).

In my city, Hochiminh City, Vietnam, there are many non-profit organizations and volunteer groups are working on bringing benefits to community. Among them, one volunteer group, "Side by side Vietnamese families", came up with an initiative of opening a reality broadcast program aiming to call for humanity in order to alleviate poverty situation in provinces. Once the initiative was approved, it became the first reality broadcast program on over the country to help poor families improve their quality of lives and poor patients to pay their health care fee. Although reality program is not a new definition, reality broadcast program is totally new in our country because it is very hard to make audience be conceive and persuaded speaker's messages and understand difficulties that the poor is suffering. After five years (2011 -2016), the program has attracted more than 50,000 followers on radio channel and the organization itself has been funded more than VND 40 billion (approximately USD 2 billion). The fund has been used for charitable works such as building free homes for seniors and poor families, free schools for ethnic minority children, supporting healthcare fees and programs, building bridges in remote areas.

In my country, people have to pay all fees for healthcare program unless insurance. However, the problem is the life insurance is very expensive in comparison to the average income level. Therefore, poor people cannot afford it for their family members. There are many volunteer groups works in healthcare sector. They try to call for charitable funds and supports nationwide. "Humanitarian blood donation" is the one of those groups that mainly focuses on blood donation to support the blood banks in remote provincial hospitals. It is to help those banks enrich their blood reservation, especially rare blood groups such as AB+. Many people die every day due to shortage of blood. Thus, this action is an answer the insoluble problem in blood reservation. Besides, the organization also support free lunches and suppers for poor patients in hospital in cities every day. Since this organization was established, poor patients in hospitals have had adequate foods while having treatments. This is a very thoughtful move because those patients will carefree about their meals or they do not need to skip its due to expensive in hospitals' cafeterias. The food is not made by fancy or special elements, but rich humanity.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, community, community development (CD) and community economic development (CED) are interconnected. Community is a core element of CD and CED that is about shared meaning and aims to bring benefits to its people and positive impacts on other communities. CD is a process that fosters community to improve its situations of society, economics and environment. CED, the third party working with both government and private sector, is a big picture about the whole theme. It is trying to achieve goals of society – politics, economy, culture and caring standing for a prosperity life and involve people's participation as independent participants from all levels with their head, their heart and their hands in order to achieve a healthy, sustainable community.