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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## “CENTERSHIPS” Community Owned Resources Centers for Development – a multi-Sector approach to development

**Centershops** are a mechanism to establish community-owned and operated development centers that offer business support services to development partners and other community based organizations (CBOs) working in the community. Rather than each stakeholder investing individually in infrastructure, data, information, and communication services to support their own programs, they buy-in to community owned centers which offer these same services with state-of-the-art technology on fee basis. The fees are used to support the center and provide income for the community. Centershops serve the data, information and communication needs of health, agriculture, education, trade, nutrition, civil, and legal concerns, and other social matters addressed in communities meetings.

Centershops provide for

- (a) community owned enterprise,
- (b) support services critical to community-based aid and relief workers and volunteers,
- (c) information and communication technology for use in collecting data and information that support community development.
- (d) convergence point for the community, CBOs, and Aid workers to pool resources in support of a harmonized approach to community development .

The Centers offer a physical place for the community to meet and discuss cross-sector issues collectively. Assistance is provided to help communities articulated and package their own “vision” for development and channel the same as business proposals to appropriate sector mechanisms in government, civil society and other development partners.

### **Rationale for this Model at Community Level**

Communities find themselves at the bottom of the food-chain. Estimates are that for every dollar spent on community aid less than three cents on the dollar are expended at community level.\*

There is a lack of human resource and capacity for scaled program implementation.

- Lack of incentive for community investment in data and information useful for their own development priorities.
- Little or no compensation for community workers and volunteers; these cadres pay “out of pocket” for expenses that should be borne by programs.
- Basic lack of support services for workers and volunteers to enable them to perform their work better and more efficiently and respond to the extemporaneous demands placed on their time and resources from the clients they serve.
- Unavailable or inadequate space for training and discussion for community workers and volunteers at program sites.
- No support services to “community conversations” that allow the community to move from concept to implementation.
- No venue for workers and volunteers that allow them to network with colleagues within other sectors.
- Under staffed and resourced community administrative units and public agencies for sustainable program operations.
- These same programs and services each pay for the same back end office support for communications, copy and other office services, and other necessary business functions. Their limited resources inhibit full utility.

### **Description of Services and Functions**

**Community Information and Development Resource Centers** services are an array of back-end business supplies and services that support community outreach and extension workers, volunteers and functionaries of the community administrative units. Centers are to be locally staffed and trained and provided other TA to be fully owned and functional by the community. The Centers are to be equipped with computers and telecommunications equipment useful to community workers and volunteers. Centers will serve as common work and meeting spaces for community-based programs for all sectors. Staff and technical advisors will provide data entry and informatics training and services; facilitated discussion groups open to all community-based workers and volunteers; The Centers will follow a B2B (business to business) model using a “member subscription” for development program operators on a fee basis.

Where private businesses are not in competition, these same Centers may offer similar “storefront” services and/or other enterprise to the public on a sustainable fee basis.

### **Illustrative functions and utility of Centers are**

Resource space community workers and volunteers such as,

- health extension workers
- agricultural extension workers
- volunteers in various sectors
- future para-social workers

Physical Infrastructure to house equipment and power-hungry devices needed used by community workers and volunteers:

- location to charge cell phones
- fax services
- telephone line
- computer stations
- connectivity to Internet, where available

Meeting and discussion space

- for cross-program area sharing and communications skills training
- for data and information exchange gathered by community workers and volunteers
- discussion on evidence presented taking a multi-discipline “development” approach
- articulation of community “vision”
- packaging of vision into a community proposal
- channeling proposal in whole or by component to appropriate agencies and development partners or authorities.

Data and information publishing

- program data
- operational research
- community assessments
- BCC and Social Marketing
- Information and educational materials for the community

### **Supportive Database and Information Systems**

The database and information system will be a basic open-source operating system configured for multi-platform use, and will be able to support robust and extensible software applications serving multiple purposes. These systems will be available for use by volunteers and community workers. Staff will be hired and trained to manage the database and information system and support functions for Center operations. Computers will be pre-installed software applications and useful pre-loaded locally gathered data and central localized in

a community context to build community-relevant, locally applicable, user-friendly data and information services useful for any number of development programs and interventions.

### **Prospective Development Partners**

This concept has engendered serious interest among the following partners in areas suggested:

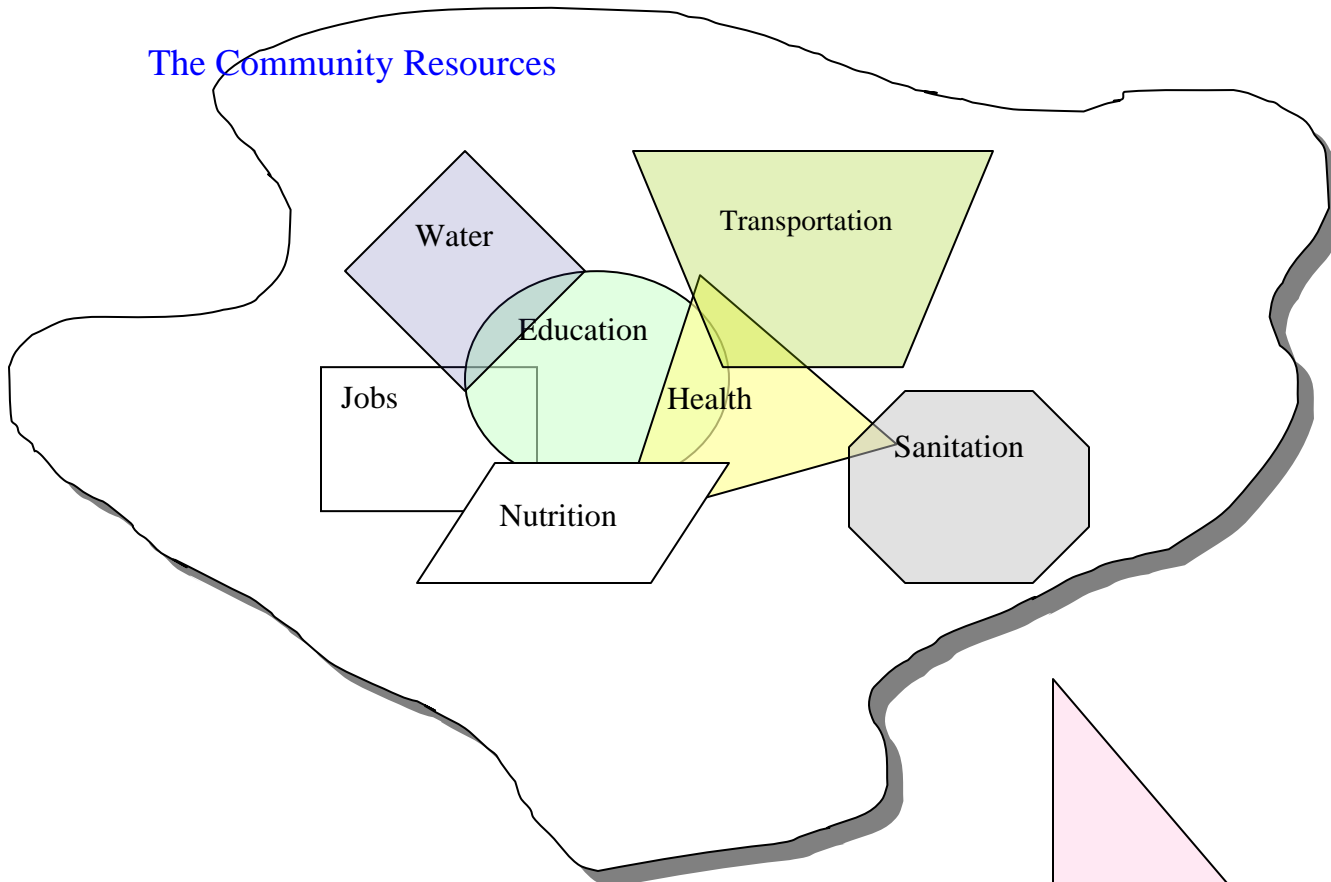
ITU -ICT equipment, connectivity, training

World Bank -Community Investment financing “Block Grants”

Peace Corps -Volunteer support

USAID/W -Catalyst funding and technical support to central coordinating

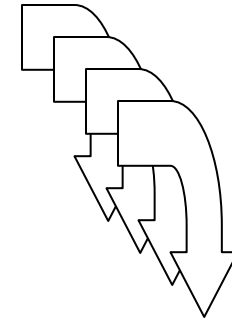
## The Community Resources



### Community Characteristics:

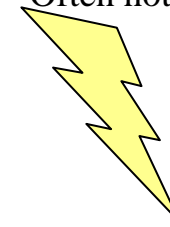
- usually an undefined geo-spatial boundary often crossing political jurisdictional boundaries
- multiplexed social structure –economically, educationally, socially
- elastic in nature (expansive, contractive) –people move in and move out –usually a core remains
- leaders can be local or remote
- most are non-insular and connected
- communities are faced with multiple issues –some constant some cyclic
- there are priorities for every community and they change
- informal communications channels

## DONOR RESOURCES

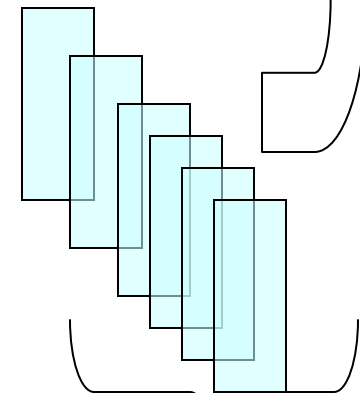


### Program Characteristics

- Accountancy driven
- Often not accurately targeted
- Often not synchronized



Resource  
request  
channels



Evidenced based descriptions (based on data from community) of community development needs into upstream processes especially the health intersects >>>