Community Development in Health

Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands

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Abbreviation

AHC	Area Health Centre
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FBO	Faith-Based Organisation
HPD	Health Promotion Department
HVP	Healthy Village Promoter
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
MOFT	Ministry of Finance and Treasury
MPs	Members of Parliament
MPAs	Members of Provincial Assembly
NHPD	National Health Promotion Department
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NCD	Non-communicable disease
NHSP	National Health Strategic Plan
NHVC	National Healthy Village Committee
PDC	Provincial Disaster Committee
PHO	Provincial Health Office
PHPD	Provincial Health Promotion Department
PHSCC	Provincial Healthy Settings Coordinating Committee
RCDF	Rural Constituency Development Fund
RDP	Role Delineation Policy
RHC	Rural Health Centre
VAP	Village Action Plan
VDC	Village Disaster Committee
VHC	Village Health Committee
WDC	Ward Development Committee

1. Introduction

The communities we belong to play an important part in our personal well-being. They are the source and root of many creative ideas, solutions, wealth and power, as well as the problems that arise often because of inequality in people's environment, resources and opportunities.

People in a community share certain values, but not all. While the difference sometimes causes frictions and challenges, individuality enriches the community when put together in a harmonious and strategic manner. Such experience will guide and facilitate development of a community paving a way to a healthy, happy and productive country.

The question is how do we put together what we have, including ideas, resources and values to create and live in a community that people desire; that is the very theme of this guide.

1.1 Objective of this guideline

- Orient facilitators* of the healthy village program on basic concepts, theories and methods of community development, to equip them with essential management knowledge of the program and to maximise the potential of each village.

  * Facilitators are public health officers, nurses, ward members, church leaders and others, who will facilitate the implementation of the healthy village program.
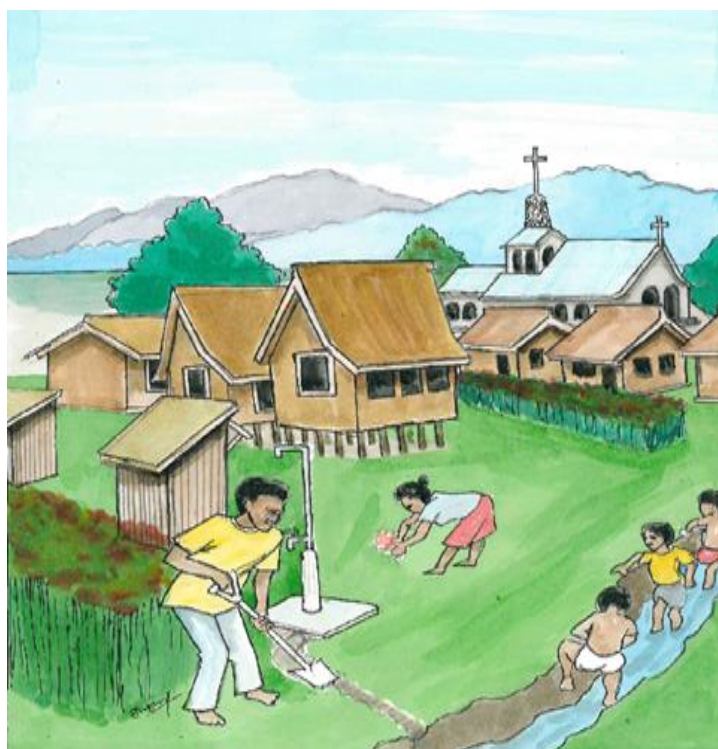
1.2 Health and community development

Solomon Islanders face various health challenges, but many of them can be prevented at the village level. As the community becomes more and more developed, people will be exposed to less health risks and enjoy a higher standard of living, therefore higher quality of life.

With the aim of realising the healthy islands vision, the Solomon Islands Government, through the National Healthy Settings Policy and the National Healthy Village Policy; promotes the implementation of the healthy village program across the country. The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) has developed the Healthy Village Manual as a tool to operationalise the program.

To reinforce this process, the National Health Promotion Department in the MHMS provides Facilitator's Guides on priority topics, which include community development, health communication, supsup garden, water and sanitation (Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, RWASH), lifestyle diseases (Non-Communicable Diseases, NCD), malaria and other priority and emerging health issues.

Because various health issues cause disharmonies in the community and vice versa, learning about community development becomes a fundamental process for improving individual, family and community health.

2. Concept of community development

2.1 What is a community?

"Community" is *a group of people with a shared identity.* Hence, community development relies on interaction between people and joint action, rather than individual activity – what some sociologists call "collective agency" (Flora and Flora, 1993).

Characteristics of a Community
- Community involves interaction which can be controlled and used by individuals.
- They readily interact with each other through known channels that are controlled by them.
- Members know each other well and readily access to each other: there is a sense of belonging among members.

- There is acceptance by others and loyalty to the groups' visions, aims and goals.

- This belonging gives a sense of identity and this identity gives the person self-concept - how he/she views his/her places in the community.

- Membership carries both rights and responsibilities. Responsibilities are tasks to contribute to the life of the community.

- Members are responsible for the maintenance needed for the community survival.

- Community allows members to interact with each other in a greater variety of roles, i.e. interaction with others as a whole person, not as limited roles.

- Community enables individuals to contribute a wider range of talents for the benefit of other members.

- Members of community value certain activities and principles or accepted rules.

2.2 What is development?

"Development" is a process that increases choices. It means new choices, change and thinking about apparent issues differently and anticipating change.

It involves change, improvement and vitality – a directed attempt to improve participation, flexibility, equity, attitudes, the function of institutions and the quality of life. (Christenson et. al, 1989)

2.3 What is community development?

Community development is *a structured (organised) intervention that gives communities greater control over the conditions that affect their lives*; that is a process aimed at working with the community as they define their goals, prepare plans, mobilise resources and take action for addressing themes they have collectively identified.

- In short, community development is an ongoing process aimed at people concerned to develop their own version (type) of their community.

- It is a means that a community itself engages in a process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the community (Ref. bellschool.anu.edu.au).

2.4 Principles of community development

Some of the key principles which guide process of engagement and action are: (Kenny, 2007)

- **Interest, desire and kindness of local people to drive action:** Belief, motivation and commitment are the "fuel in the tank" of community development.

- **Community ownership:** the community makes and implements decisions themselves. Their initiative and leadership are the source of change.

- People build **motivation** and **community capacity** through active involvement in decision-making and implementation.

- **Inclusiveness:** All people should be given an equal opportunity to be involved. Effort is required to encourage diverse sectors of the community to participate.

- External facilitators and resource people are "invited in" to work with rural people, rather than working for them or delivering services to them. They may challenge and suggest, but not make or influence community's decisions.

- Development activities foster **leadership**.

- The **existing capacity** of people and their community need to be **recognised** and **appreciated**, while creating more opportunities for them to build their capacity.

- A **holistic approach** is used, building economic, human, social and environmental aspects of community as an interrelated whole.

- **Success**, no matter how small, needs to be **recognised** and **celebrated**.

- Activities should be **fun** and **social**.

- **Not all communities are suited** to, or prepared for development activities.

2.5 What are the benefits of community development?

Community development influences people's life in the following ways: (Ref. aifs.gov.au)

1) Live healthy life

- helps people to understand the factors that affect their health, take part in delivering their own solutions and participate in decision-making on health services and policies.

- empowers people to take responsibility for changing their own health-related behaviour.

- increases mental well-being through the experience of effective action and the building of social links.

2) Improve skills

- gets people involved in learning by delivering, as part of their own activities.

- builds skills by relating learning to real experiences (e.g. supsup garden practice – photo).

- gives people the confidence that change is possible: this experience builds public engagement and equality for all.

3) Focus on environment

- gives people a say in their housing and living conditions.

- encourages people to take action to improve their local environment (e.g. to fence their domestic animals like pigs and chicken).

- enables recovery to take place, hence improving the land use and the quality of life in communities.

- helps people to identify local actions that can help to solve major problems: ordinances and regulations will guide people's decision making in the villages.

4) Improve wealth

- helps to develop the social economy i.e. businesses that trade for the benefit of the community (e.g. by negotiating with the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources to assist women to farm tilapia fish to improve family diet and income).

- helps groups that suffer from discrimination to have the strength to challenge it and play a full part in the wider community.

- builds people's ability to overcome barriers that lead to low income and unemployment.

- creates employment opportunities.

5) Strengthen preparedness and resilience

- helps people to look out for each other and their safety.

- tackles problems that lie at the root of disasters or sickness and other threats to safety.

- reaches out to and involve vulnerable (helpless) groups.

- helps establishment of Village Disaster Committees (VDC) in collaboration with Provincial Disaster Committee (PDC), NGOs and other stakeholders.

3. What actions do we take?

- Among a variety of methods for community development, this guide presents one called "the healthy village program", developed by MHMS and JICA from 2011 to 2021 through their two bilateral cooperation projects.

- A facilitator's main role of the healthy village program is to support implementation of the program by the community; more specifically to advocate for support, prepare a community, assist implementation of healthy village activities, monitor the progress and encourage continuously, as explained below.

3.1 Advocacy for support

It is important for healthy village facilitators to find supportive environments and stakeholders. To this end, the following actions are recommended:

Provincial Level

- Discuss with the Health Promotion and Nursing Units in the Provincial Health Office to identify target villages.

- Meet with the doctor or nurse manager in the local Area Health Centre (AHC) which provide service to the villages.

- Establish contact and work closely with the Provincial Healthy Settings Coordinating Committee (PHSCC), managed by the Health Promotion Department in the Provincial Health Office.

- Meet with relevant Provincial Government staff, Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs), the Provincial Government Executive, Ward Development Committee members (WDCs) and Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) for support.

- Meet with key NGOs stakeholders and donors involved in community health activities.

Community Level

- Meet with village leaders including Chiefs, Chairpersons, Elders, Church leaders, Women and Youth leaders on their interest in the healthy village program.

- Meet with existing village committees (village committee, water committee, clinic committee, ward development committee, etc.)

- Meet with the nurse manager from the nearby rural health clinic (RHC).

- Meet with other stakeholders in the provincial sub-station - local police officers, agriculture extension officers and NGO workers.

Tips

- Learn about the healthy village program to identify key players and supports at different implementation phases.

3.2 Prepare a community

1) Community wide Meeting

- At the first orientation to the community leaders, it is essential to clarify that:

  - the healthy village program is a community-driven and self-sustainable initiative that its progress will entirely depend on their commitment

  - this program requires certain responsibilities to be performed on a voluntary basis

  - the facilitators' roles are to provide them with information, tools and technical support for the program implementation

- It is important to organise the target villages, building upon locally existing and functional social structures like committees and leadership structure.

2) Establish a Village Health Committee

- To implement a healthy village program, a village health committee should be established by the community, if it does not already exist.

- Members of the village health committee will be the leaders for the healthy village program.

- Larger villages may be divided into smaller zones; each consisting of 20-30 households. It is ideal to select village health committee members from each zone to facilitate and manage the program.

- The members should represent all households of the village.

- The members should consist of roughly equal numbers of males and females to ensure inclusive program implementation.

3) Selection of Healthy Village Promoter (HVP)

- The village health committee members will choose representatives of the committee who coordinate with the local health centre: they may be called Healthy Village Promoters (HVPs).

What roles does a Healthy Village Promoter play?

- A Healthy Village Promoter is a community health volunteer selected by the community, resides in the community and often plays the following roles:

Facilitative roles

- Interaction: influence and inspire others to take actions
- Mediation: work with groups to enhance network and collaboration
- Support: help people to set their goals and move towards them
- Coordination: identify and utilise locally available resources
- Encouragement: uphold equity, equality, respect, listen to people's voice and allow people to take the lead

Educational roles

- Informing: provide people with information to raise awareness
- Advocacy: make people realise their situation and link it to broader social political and other dimensions

- Training: teach skills and feedback people to improve them
- Modelling: be a good example and show how to solve problems

Representative roles
- Liaison: coordinate with the healthy village program facilitators, local Health Centre, Provincial Health Office and others
- Networking: establish relationship with other helpful stakeholders
- Sharing: present useful knowledge and experiences in meetings
- Communication: advocate interest of the community and seek external resources if necessary

Criteria for selecting Healthy Village Promoters:
- Age: 18 years old or above
- Enthusiasm: willing to work for a long time (years)
- Resident: permanent resident of the village
- Education level: primary education or higher
- Marital status: married/single women or men, who would be less likely to leave the village
- Gender: preferably equal number of females and males
- Community acceptance: recommended by the Village Health Committee, recognised culturally and spiritually and accepted by the community

4) Train and orient the community leaders

- Facilitators of the healthy village program in health centres, wards, churches and others will train, orient and facilitate health committee members and other key community leaders.

- Below is an example of a two-day training:

[1] Registration, opening program, participant's introduction and training objectives (1 hr)
[2] Health status of the Province and rural communities (1hr)
[3] Main causes and impacts of Health Problems in the communities (2 hrs)
[4] Healthy village program (13.5hr)
    - What is Health? What is a Healthy Village?
   - Healthy village policy, structure, progress and experience

- Community development and organisation

- Program planning and implementation

- 6Ds Healthy Settings Approach

- Village mapping and profiling

- Resource mobilisation

- Tools and materials

- Monitoring, evaluation and learning

[5] Basic health service delivery provided for and with the community

3.3 Support Implementation of the Program

- Facilitators will assist the community leaders to analyse the situation of their village and to discuss, plan and take actions.

- Community leaders will use the **Healthy Settings 6Ds approach** to implement the healthy village program.

- In **6Ds approach,** in principle, there are 3 cyclic stages - **"See, Plan, Act"**.

- The community will work together on each of the 6D stages.
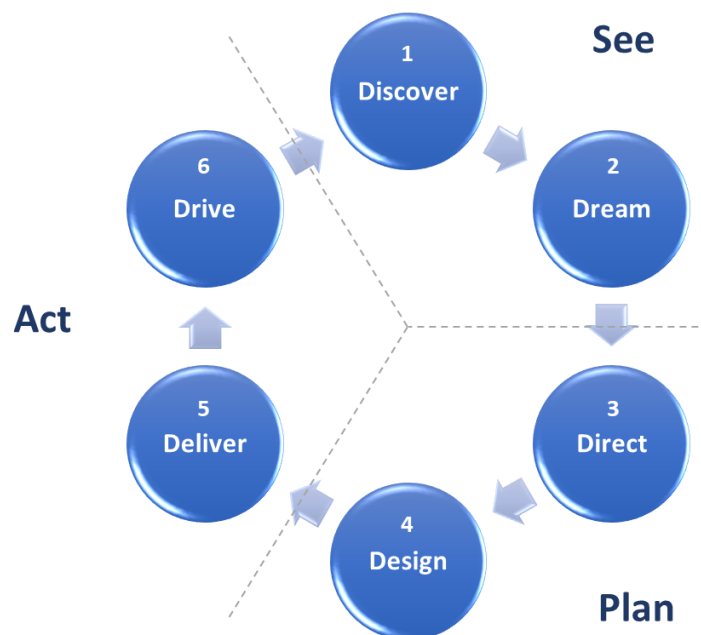
1) **Discover**

   It is about village mapping and profiling. Processes used includes village wide meetings, household interviews and collecting of health information at the health facility. People will know about the present status of the village and plan how to improve it.

2) **Dream**

   It is about creating a vision of a Healthy Village. People can imagine how their village will be like in the near future.

Plan

3) *Direct*

   It is about setting priorities and objectives to follow. People must involve in setting priorities for the Action Plan. There are so many things they may want to do. Therefore, it is important to set priorities and to start with urgent but easy matters to do.

4) **Design**

   It is about designing a Village Action plan. Always start with priority issues which are easy to do in a set timeframe and to achieve the objectives.

Act

5) **Deliver**

   It is about doing things and not just talking. The Acton Plan must be approved and owned by the people. Priority activities are to be implemented together as a team in the village.

6) **Drive**

   It is about Monitoring, Evaluation and update of the action plan to ensure how well the action plans is implemented. VHC/HVP will record and monitor progress of activities and review the village action plan annually.

3.4 Monitoring, evaluation and learning by facilitators

- It is the facilitators' responsibility to monitor implementation progress of the healthy village program through regular outreach and discussions with the community leaders: regular visit to the villages will provide technical and moral support to the community leaders.

- Facilitators will review the village action plan, its progress and challenges, and will record the village's status using the healthy village progress monitoring framework.

- It is important that the monitoring framework is used from the baseline and is familiarised among the community leaders.

- Local health centres are in position to provide the villages with technical support, especially health data as feedback to their efforts, so that changes in disease incidences (e.g. malaria, diarrhoea, hypertension cases) and health status may be observed.

- Supportive supervision should be carried out by the provincial management team, the Provincial Health Office professionals and members of the Provincial Healthy Settings Coordinating Committee at least on an annual basis.

3.5 Declaration of a healthy village

It is important that the villages involved in the healthy village program are assessed and declared as a Healthy Village after achieving their goals and objectives. The process leading to the declaration will be as follows:

- The provincial and health facility team will be deployed to the village and conduct the final assessment in collaboration with the Village Health Committee (VHC).

- The Healthy Village Progress Monitoring Framework will be used in the assessment.

- Declaration of the village may include guests from neighbouring villages, health programs, provincial government, stakeholders and supporters.

- The village leaders will need to present a plan to maintain the status of healthy village.

- Once the healthy village criteria become unsustained, the village will be decertified.

3.6 Encourage continuity and sustainability

Even though the healthy village program is self-driven and implemented by the community, external support can make a difference in their progress especially when the community members come across challenging issues. Below are examples of how a healthy village facilitator may encourage the community to continue working and sustain the healthy village program.

1) Promoting community participation
People may lose interest or become disengaged from community activities in the long run. It is important to review and understand the state of community participation. Here are some actions that healthy village facilitators can take:

- Listen to people and analyse the causes.

- Help review the village action plans and regulations, as well as their strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities.

- Assist to readdress the importance of having control over the determinants of health.

- Encourage and place people at the heart of our health actions.

- Apply collective skills and resources to increase the level of influence and control.

2) Resource mobilisation and management

Lack of resource can become a bottleneck and be avoided by taking the following actions:

- Provide the community leaders with a list of key national and provincial Ministries, donor agencies and embassies which communities can approach for financial and technical assistance to implement their priority activities in their VAP.

- Help the village chiefs and Village Health Committee members to identify local resources available and mobilise community fundraising activities to support the healthy village activities.

- For larger-scale activities, train the village chief and Village Health Committee members on how to write request letters for assistance to donors at provincial and national levels.

- Advocate for support and connect the village representatives with external stakeholders such as:

  - Members of Parliament (MPs) and the Ministry of Rural Development, for the use of the Rural Constituency Development Fund (RCDF).

  - Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) and Provincial Government to support the healthy village program through the Provincial Ward grant.

- Train Village Health Committee members in management of local and donated resources using an inventory and a user record book.

3) Providing incentives

There are many ways to incentivise the community leaders, VHCs and HVPs.

- Remind people that most people (volunteers) find recognition and appreciation as encouragement for providing service for the community.
- Give ideas and examples of how to express these sentiments, such as words of thanks, small gifts from the garden, kitchen or nature and so on.
- Suggest the community to support the volunteer's needs like building their house or garden.
- Provide Village Health Committee members with feedback on progress.
- Invite visitors from outside the village to come and observe the outcome of activities.
- Privilege active health committee members to have faster access to consultation at the clinic.
- Help organise a healthy village competition and an exchange visit between communities with the healthy village program.
- Document good practices of the community as a newsletter or a report.
- Celebrate constantly, even small progress or success.
- Create opportunities for further learning and training, such as good practices from other villages and new skills.

4) Training and Orientation

Many people find acquiring new knowledge and skills encouraging and empowering.

- Organise a refresher training of VHCs and HVPs in the community.
- Organise an in house training of HVPs at the health facility.
- Support HVPs during health awareness talks in the village.
- Provide HVPs with answers to difficult questions asked by community.

- Orient VHCs and HVPs on a specific health theme through a campaign run by Provincial health programs.

- Provide ongoing training programs on various topics (e.g. environmental health, resource management) for adults to be motivated to lead and participate fully.

5) Providing Information

Official information, guidelines and other documents may be useful for the community leaders.

- Present relevant regulatory documents such as provincial bi-laws and examples of village regulations.

- Share information on Government policies and schemes that may be useful for the community.

- Inform timely the community leaders of risks and hazards that may affect the community, such as infectious diseases and natural disasters.

- Share opinions of experts and specialists.

6) Working with Others

Oftentimes, solutions for problems are found in and around the community. Application of people's wisdom is the key for community development.

- Listen to opinions of different community members, including leaders, youths, elderlies, men and women.

- Build good relationship and friendship with community members.

- Show your interest in people you are working with, especially people with special needs (PWDs).

- Always make your aims clear to the people.

- Share knowledge and skills at every opportunity.

- Be culturally sensitive and watch your actions and language when meeting or working with people.

- Be flexible and fair when there are mistakes, delays and experiments.

Health Promoting Village Project

Japan International Cooperation Agency