Article

Why Community-led Development Program Perceived an Effective Strategy for

Sustainable Economic Development?

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Abstract

Community-led development is a unique approach to tackling local problems and building on local strengths. Community-led Development (CLD) is the process of working together to create and achieve locally owned visions and goals. To ensure sustainable development focusing on local strengths (rather than focus on problems), collaborate across sectors, is intentional and adaptable, and works to achieve systemic change rather than short-term projects. In order for development interventions to be perceived positively by the population, local needs must be taken into account. Moreover, there will be a growing recognition that leadership and active participation by local communities is considered as a key to strengthening positive local futures of sustainable economic and livelihood development. Moreover, dynamic culture of people in the society could contribute positively or negatively for smooth implementation of CLD. This process might be viewed as complementary rather than competing approaches.

Introduction

Community-led Development (CLD) is the process of working together to create and achieve locally owned visions and goals. It is a planning and development approach that's based on a set of core principles that (at a minimum) set vision and priorities by the people who live in that geographic community, put local voices in the lead, build on local strengths (rather than focus on problems), collaborate across sectors, is intentional and

adaptable, and works to achieve systemic change rather than short-term projects. 'Community' is a broad term that can refer to both physical places and groups of people with common interests or concerns. For the purposes of this discussion, the notion of community is used only in its geographic sense. Community-led development in this paper focuses on initiatives undertaken in physical places – be they neighborhoods, cities or towns, rural or remote regions of the country (Torjman, 2012).Community-led development is a unique approach to tackling local problems and building on local strengths. Aimed at empowering participants to become agents of their own change, the involvement of citizen in their own affairs for their own development is critical. Despite the lack of community development policy at a national level, a wide range of community-led change efforts have sprung up throughout in the communities in all levels. The effort of community-led interventions are helping trigger a 're-learning' and 'remembering' about the power of local people and local places. Communities are actively inspiring other communities about what can be done!

Moreover, for example, in Aotearoa New Zealand the process of understanding, spreading and embedding community-led change is continues to be an evolutionary - and occasionally revolutionary one. Historically in Ethiopia the development initiatives were started with relief, rehabilitation and freehand out provision due to the cyclical drought in the country. However, the development actors didn't shift the trend on time to introduce community-led interventions to ensue sustainable development in the country. Actors in Ethiopia should learn from the Afghan and Iraq community to adopt community-led interventions with to create and achieve locally owned vision and goals to ensure sustainable development in the community in all levels. Growing recognition that

leadership and active participation by local communities is key to strengthening positive local futures of community-led development and CLD viewed as complementary rather than competing approaches. Because all actors collaborate and working together focusing on local strengths across sectors, as a result, the local issues taken into consideration.

While the term community-led development is now used more frequently, it continues to mean different things to different people in different communities at different times – which can and does, cause confusion.For example, sometimes CLD involves a whole community coming together to define its vision and goals and then develop a collaborative action plan.   Sometimes CLD is about bringing multiple community stakeholders together to explore root causes of a problem and develop solutions for positive changes in their community. Sometimes CLD is about local residents connecting in a street or neighborhood, building relationships and undertaking tasks or projects they decide will improve their place. In the examples above, while the scale, drivers and start points for CLD are all different, all incorporate CLD principles and approaches. Further, complicating things are similarities and overlaps with other related terms and fields, such as community and neighborhood development (Gamble, J.   2010).

Capability Approach

The concept of innate assets or strengths figures prominently in community-led development. The notion of innate strengths applies equally well to communities. Every locality – no matter how poor or impoverished – is rich in skills and human capacities that provide a strong foundation upon which to build. Every community can

start from a position of strength despite the fact that it typically is viewed from the perspective of its weaknesses. The principles of community-led development apply to communities of all shapes and sizes, and to both urban and rural areas (Torjman 2012).

Focus on governance

Torjman, S. and E. Leviten-Reid. (2003) asserted that citizen engagement is implicit in the concept of local governance. Citizen engagement is a new way of thinking about how government works with stakeholders and citizens to achieve a wide range of goals that it cannot achieve alone, such as improved population health, adjustment to climate change or the development of a skilled labor force. An active public engagement process at all levels for their development.

Emergence of Comprehensive Community Initiatives

Community-led development is also being shaped by changing practice on the ground. All communities seek, either explicitly or implicitly, to attain a high quality of life for their citizens. But few communities actually can claim that they are close to achieving this goal. There is also greater awareness that the traditional methods of dealing with challenges – single government programs to tackle identified problems – have not had particularly positive results, particularly in developing nations. These methods are ineffective because they do not take into account or focus upon the myriad factors that typically contribute to a given problem. Moreover, the solutions of the past are inappropriate because they assume that governments alone can solve problems

without appreciating or harnessing the substantive contributions of citizens and other sectors, including business and voluntary organizations. The complexity of the issues and the limitations of traditional interventions have given rise to a more integrated approach to addressing community problems, known as 'comprehensive community initiatives' [Kubisch et al. 2002]. These efforts draw upon the accumulating evidence that services meant to tackle complex economic and social challenges often prove unsuccessful – at least in part because they are so fragmented. In Ethiopia, the development initiatives hardly addressing the 'compressive community initiatives. Because all development interventions are service delivery approach without 'compressive community initiatives' from the start. For example, relief and rehabilitation program for emergency mitigation created cyclic dependency syndrome in all levels in the society.

Comprehensive initiatives are broad in scope and tackle a range of issues rather than a single concern. They typically identify an overarching theme or population as their broad focus. They then determine, in collaboration with key players in the community, the wide set of interconnected required actions that fall within that domain. These efforts are also concerned with fostering a community's capacity to solve its own problems – such as high rates of child abuse, crime or unemployment. They seek to build this problem-solving capacity by creating or sustaining networks, which serve as an important base for making local decisions. Often the focus of these discussions goes beyond the resolution of problems and considers various means of improving local areas through expanding economic opportunity or 'greening' the environment. For

example, in Ethiopia, particularly in Amhara region stakeholders established community care and coalitions (CCC) group from different sectoral and local community offices to address the issues of trafficking and child exploitation and abuse program in the region. The CCC is playing a key role and collaborating with NGOs and other actors. This initiative should learn from other countries the concept of 'comprehensive community initiatives' to broaden the development views. The Canadian the 'first nation community' and Aotearoa New Zealand community-led (CLD) development approach to strengthening the existing practices in the community could be beneficial to adopt.

The Three Main Reasons for the Positive Perceptions of Community-Led Development

"If we want our communities and country to be as good as we can be there is no alternative to community-led development. Strong, resilient families and neighborhoods are basic building blocks for a strong, resilient community." (CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012). According to Mercy Corps, (2009) assessment in Afghanistan and Iraq research found that three main reasons for the positive perceptions of community-led development:

1. The community-led development allows people to participate in and feels ownership for their own development. Communities perceive development projects as most successful when they include community involvement, build consensus, and galvanize a strong sense of community ownership. Building ownership takes time, yet also yields corresponding benefits by enabling a more durable, sustainable project impact.

2. Community-led development meets urgent needs specific to each community. Perceived needs of different communities vary widely. Because community-led methods

involve people in identifying priorities, these methods were perceived as more effective at resolving urgent problems.

3. Community-led development builds trusting relationships, positively impacting perceptions regarding the capability of actors and the impact of their efforts.

The programs perceived as most effective are those that create linkages between people, with NGOs serving as a catalyst for improving local institutions and promoting inclusion of all groups, especially the most marginalized. The community-led aid models can most effectively help societies transition from poverty to recovery. All development actors should believe the relevancies of the community-led program as an entry strategy in all levels in the community or society. However, the previous and existing practices of community development program in Ethiopia and other African countries hardly demonstrate community-led program interventions. Because all actors, particularly INGOs and local NGOs imposes the society with the donor-driven agenda without the local community participation. As a result, the community didn't take up the ownership of the development for the lasting solution in the community.

Community-Led Development Principles for Positive Change

Community-Led Development (CLD) is about working together in place to create and achieve locally determined visions and goals. CLD is not a service delivery model or programme. Rather, it's a strengths-based planning and development approach that's underpinned by some key principles such as cross-sector collaboration, empowering local voice and leadership, and working on broader systems change rather than one-off

projects. Key to this approach is also having local residents at decision-making and action-taking tables alongside others, including for example, central and local government, business, local residents, funders, community organizations, and academia. According to Aotearoa New Zealand the five core principles of CLD practice are as follows: 1) Shared local visions drive action and change 2) Utilizing existing strengths and assets 3) Many people, groups, and sectors working together 4) Building diverse and collaborative local leadership and 5) Adaptive planning and action informed by outcomes.

The challenges local communities face today have become increasingly complex. New ways of working are needed. Inspiring Communities believes CLD is a very useful framework for harnessing opportunities and addressing complex issues. This article tries to bring different demonstrated experiences from developing nation which could help practitioners and local actors to adapt according to their reality or context to ensure sustainable livelihood in the community. In Afghanistan and Iraq through hundreds of interviews, with the community leaders and members, the actors learned and believe that community-led methods of development lead to superior outcomes. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, INGOs were the most highly rated actor on every one of the community-led methods evaluated. They were also rated as the most effective actor in terms of program outcomes. Moreover, t*he results of this study indicate that community leaders and members interviewed view community-led methods of development, as implemented by NGOs, as more effective at contributing to stability and development than other methods used by other actors.* In fact, the more that different actors are perceived as using community-led methods of development, the more successful they are perceived to be.

The findings highlight three main reasons for the positive perceptions of community-led development:1) allows people to participate and feel ownership, 2) meets urgent needs specific to each community, and 3) builds trusting relationships. The same study conducted by NGOs in Afghanistan and Iraq suggested that development assistance investments could be more effectively employed through greater support for community-led development efforts, especially in insecure areas, such as food insecurity, political and economic instability nations. The above-mentioned principles both in New Zealand and Afghanistan /Iraq describes the community involvement and engagement at all levels in sustainable development.

What does community-led development (CLD) Take?

According to Think Piece contributors from New Zealand to highlight their biggest learnings and observations about CLD and what they think this tells us about the key ingredients for success.

Having the right people: Think Piece contributors strongly agree that highly skilled coordinators, conveners, and brokers are essential in CLD program. Contributors noted that the 'right people and right skills' combination is often the key determinant of progress and success. Given there's no fixed model for CLD, brokers in this space require a high degree of judgment, and be able to communicate well; read signs and sense patterns to design processes/advise on what's 'right for now'; understand that process is at least as important as results; hold the space and not do everything themselves; enable and support others to grow and shine and work with paradoxes. The CLD Think Piece

Contributors stated as follows: " *There are so many paradoxes involved in CLD – like having structure and no structure, being goal/milestone driven and open/emergent, leading and allowing others to lead etc. As a CLD practitioner, you have to hold both paradoxes yet depending on what's required, be at one end of the continuum or the other. This requires real judgment and intuition*" (CLD Think Piece Contributor, 2011).

The contributors stated that the reality is that CLD brokers with all of these skills are actually quite rare. How best to identify, support and grow more of them is a key area for future attention. In the interim, linking those working and wanting to work in this way is key to assist skill and knowledge transfer.

It's all about relationships: Interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship with different actors is a key strategy for the community–led (CLD) program in the society. As a development practitioner and leader, I observed in our development organization that projects are more successful when we maintain strong partnership and relationship with the relevant stakeholders at all levels. The stakeholders advocate and take ownership of the initiatives in the community. CLD relies heavily on relational rather than systems-based approaches to achieving shared visions. Quality, high-trust relationships are essential for successful CLD and take time to build. Really understanding others' drivers, histories, motivations, expectations, and aspirations is critical, with these aspects generally developed while working and doing together. Building solid relationships with CLD stakeholders means having honesty, respect, integrity, and transparency at the heart of conversations and collaboration efforts. In case of Ethiopia, to initiate CLD program, community-based, local government offices, faith-based organizations and influential senior citizens in the society are instrumental to build organic relationships to benefit the

target community to take ownership of their development. However, the concept of CLD in Ethiopia is weak and in the infant stage. The development actors' took over the local driving role instead of involving the community take over the initiative. There are few attempts have been made in different rural communities, for example, in Tigray region the soil conservation and environmental protection activities which are implemented by the community in collaboration with the local government. However, the majority of NGOs, government partners, and development practitioners are working the conventional approach and weak to adopt the CLD concept. In this undertaking, the local government expected to ensure the applicability and implementation of social accountability program to strengthen the CLD for program sustainability in the society. All development interventions in the community are conventional approaches for the poverty reduction program in Ethiopia. The community awareness towards CLD concept is very weak. The mental model of the society is more of the conventional way of community development approach, depending on donors funding, freehand out, service delivery approach and low level of ownership for the sustainable development in the society. *"There are key relationship holders within a community that make the big difference to engaging and growing momentum locally"* (CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012).

Some contributors also reflected on the dangers of assumptions and expectations in relationships, noting that you can't always assume that other partners can do all of what they say they can, or that everyone is necessarily always on the same page. This is a reminder:

•   Not to make assumptions.

•   To confirm the capacity/capability of those you're working with.

•   To be prepared to step in or out (as the need arises!) in order to support others to build, and work to their strengths.

Starting in and with communities: For many contributors, having CLD being driven from the 'bottom up' is essential. Without local communities committed and enabled to lead locally over the long term, the real likelihood is that any short-term gains will not be sustained.

"Central or local government choosing communities where it wants community-led development to happen and then investing big money is coming at it all the wrong way" (CLD Think Piece Contributor, 2012).

This raises questions about the best starting points for CLD and how, or even if, outside agencies can be effective catalysts and drivers of CLD. This is particularly important when along with resources they often also bring pre-determined parameters and expectations of what and how CLD should happen. The key issue here is power – not just who has it, but how it's used, including:

•   Who determines what will be focused on and how things will happen.

•   Principles, values and processes underpinning collaboration intent.

•   How success will be judged and measured.

Based on observation from different authors (Ninacs, W.A, and R. Leroux. (2008) vibrant communities chose to focus on poverty reduction rather than poverty alleviation. There should have guiding principles were the establishment of *local governance structures* that had to *include diverse sectors* as well as people with lived experience

of poverty. The purpose was to *enable community learning and change*. All efforts had to *build on local assets*. They all had to adopt a comprehensive approach to thinking and action.

The 'right' leadership: critical mass and critical skill-sets

Capable individuals can only take things so far in communities. Progress in CLD is clearly enabled when there are *a number* of leaders driving forward together, including those from grass-roots levels.   The type of leadership also matters. *"Leaders really need to understand CLD, be courageous and stay loyal to local dreams and goals. They often have to be tunnel visioned to help embed new ways of working. Leaders have to both catalyze and empower others. CLD needs more than just 'leaderful'; it needs leaders who Can lead" (CLD Think Piece Contributors 2012).*

Equally critical is leadership engagement from the top. Without the long-term support of key managers and leaders at multiple levels to support risk and innovation, it's hard for CLD approaches to get real traction or sustainability. Championing CLD sometimes requires thinking in unconventional ways and having the authority to break and/or create new rules as to how things can be done. Many contributors also highlighted the need for leaders to 'take organizations with them', acknowledging the need to not just transform those directly involved, but also parts of the system that can 'support from afar or far away'. Critical to these processes are 'entrepreneurs' – those who champion, navigate, educate and advocate within their own organization to enable broader awareness and

internal systems change. *Contributors discuss that CLD requires entrepreneurs and champions who can take politicians on a journey. Bridge builders who can both harness communities and work the politics necessary to bring high-level stakeholder, for instance, Cabinet Ministers on board - showing them too how systems could be made to work to support CLD (CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012).*

Convening organizations that can 'hold' the community innovation space

Selected organizations, networks and structures within communities are now increasingly recognized as critical for creating and holding spaces for communities and other stakeholders to talk and work collaboratively. There are many terms in use to describe these kinds of bodies – for example, 'backbone' and 'anchor' organizations. They currently take on a wide range of roles including:

• Supporting key individuals within communities to work in high-risk spaces, while providing assistance, guidance, and structure, often in a very low-key way.

• Owning assets and holding funds on behalf of communities to support and grow local development, services and activities

• Being a 'hub' – a connecting place for local people, organizations, and stakeholders.

• Providing convening/central administration services for constellation governance models.

The contributors also stated that "Anchor organizations can provide constancy and stability amidst the flux and fragility of community change processes. You can't just leave

communities on their own, they need supporting mechanisms in place to help things happen and to support, convene and lightly hold ongoing dialogue, planning and doing" (CLD Think Piece Contributors 2012).What's clear is that new ways of community organizing and convening challenge many of the traditional assumptions about the role and behaviors of a community organization. However, their role in CLD is pivotal, often nuanced, and needs to be much better documented and understood (Gamble J. 2010).

Being prepared for the journey

There was broad agreement that working in a CLD way is much harder than sticking with business as usual. Therefore, it's important for those working or investing in CLD to be realistic about the time things will take, how challenging it will be and the importance of communicating and celebrating successes along the way. It's also a reminder that all those involved have to be prepared to let go of previous ways of working and to really listen and learn to enable new co-created ways to emerge. The contributors reveal that CLD has become simpler in philosophy but harder in implementation. What it is and what might be is easy to talk about in comparison to actually creating it, doing it and maintaining it. It's really hard work – but much more meaningful to strengthen the community capacity to ensure ownership in development (CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012).

Systems Changes to enable CLD

Kubisch, A et al (2010) asserts that by far the biggest frustration expressed by contributors to this paper was around the very slow speed of systems change to support CLD – particularly in terms of flexible, long-term funding to support locally determined outcomes, joined-up policy and practice, power-sharing, supporting experimentation, and accepting risk and failure. This points to the need to identify key policy levers that will enable CLD to be integrated into policy work underway at both central and local government levels. It also means stating and presenting more clearly the value proposition and evidence for CLD processes, results and outcomes in language that 'systems gatekeepers' (usually middle management) understand and can own themselves. *"Systems are the hardest to move. People within them need to build comfort with the practice of CLD before they're prepared to 'let go' the way things have always been done" (CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012).*

Specific actions to enable a more supportive macro framework for CLD could include:

• Extending the Better Public Services Programme's results-based approach further and making joined-up policy and thinking in central government an imperative.

Developing a place-based policy framework so that interconnections can be better recognized, planned for and funded – especially at regional levels where relationships and agreements can be tailored with localities and local partners according to context, aspiration, and needs. The author suggested that allowing communities to determine

pathways should be part of government's purchase and investment decisions (CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012).

Strengthen collaborative cultures

While in some communities and organizations collaboration is part of the local DNA, it's certainly not the case everywhere. As a country, we need to get better at working together. The reality is that collaboration has to be proactively and thoughtfully nurtured and grown over time. In Ethiopia, the culture of the people could be advantageous to bring together people and societies towards the CLD goal. All people in the society is the member of Idirs or community-based organizations (CBOs) to support each other during the time of difficulties and to address poverty for the individual family in the neighborhoods. The existing culture of the Ethiopian society could be an entry point to initiate and bring together people for CLD program for poverty reduction and sustainable development in the society. The contributor of CLD stated that getting more political in our approach is not just creating bigger umbrella organizations and lobbying politicians. It's also about building relationships across difference and relationships with the people who we imagine we're in competition with (CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012)

Contributors noted that collaboration is strengthened by:
• Building and joining relationships one by one.
• Incentives and resourcing both to encourage synergies and sustain collaboration infrastructure.
• Intentionally crossing boundaries in local projects to ensure different groups and

sectors are working together.

•   Having skilled bridge builders who can navigate the spaces in between people, Organizations and agendas.

Importantly, it was noted that CLD really takes off when key people outside communities, such as funders, spot opportunities, make connections and provide support (moral and/or financial) in ways that don't take over the local driving role. Building strategic connections and collaboration partners then need to be seen as an iterative process, and one that keeps growing over a long period, and creating comprehensive solutions for better future of the society (Cabaj, M.2011).

More active citizens, more active citizenship

All development actors need to learn from the New Zealand CLD best practices and dynamic collaborative leadership principles to ensure the CLD concepts in their own community. The kind of citizenship in New Zealand, underpinning CLD is about more than democracy, having rights and turning out for elections every three years. It's also about doing things with and for others, getting involved locally and doing your bit to support those around you and the place you call home. This expanding notion of 'active citizenship' and having engaged residents who are empowered and supported to both lead and participate in community affairs is critical to the ongoing growth of CLD both in New Zealand and internationally. In here Contributors also identified the need to consciously build new strategic alliances across the many diverse, yet aligned, community movements social Innovation Group and Inspiring Communities. This was seen as key to enabling learning and experiences to be shared, and relationships,

activities, and evidence strategically leveraged to help stake a greater claim to power for community-led agendas.

Does The Concept of CLD need to be Strengthen and nurture capability in people?

As noted earlier, CLD demands a high level of skill and training. Think Piece contributors from New Zealand reflected that the need to provide more opportunities for CLD learning and training and for learning resources to be available in a variety of forms. For example, involving practitioners and development actors, to attend webinars, workshops, stories, online video clips, conference presentations, publications, developmental evaluation guides and other practical 'how to' tools – such as helping communities tell their own stories, could be instrumental to build and nurturing capabilities (CLD Think Piece Contributor 2012). More regional CLD networks were also seen as a key way to promote peer learning and resource sharing, as a community of practices in all levels (CLD Think contributors 2012). The aforementioned strategies are beneficial to strengthen and nurture people to introduce CLD in the society in developing countries, particularly in Ethiopia. Because the conventional development concept of the society was not linked with CLD principles, but, more of donor-driven and NGOs interests.

Another recommended hands-on way to build capacity and skills within a place is for a greater use of CLD experts and consultants – experienced practitioners who can walk alongside locals in supportive, enabling ways to share their knowledge, give advice, and demonstrate key CLD principles. These are wise people who can help co-create plans and next steps with local people. For example, it was noted that the burgeoning social

enterprise movement in the UK has been strongly supported by consultants who are engaged to work as critical friends or mentors to help local initiatives both in beginning phases and if/as times get tough. Ethiopia as a nation needs to adapt and learn the concept of CLD from those who have made it work and cross-fertilize just from the beginning of the development interventions in all levels.

Recognize the key role of local government in CLD

Giving recognition to stakeholders will enhance collaboration and create strong foundation among actors in development. As the layer of formal democracy closest to communities, local government is a key player and partner in CLD. For example, recognizing community-based organization (CBO) and religious leaders in Ethiopia, particularly the local community leadership role of the district offices is often especially critical in bringing people together and enabling local leadership and future planning conversations. As a result, the collective leadership, the defined roles, and responsibilities of each stakeholder will convey good quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions and help stakeholders to play the key role in supporting, investing and participating in CLD. Developing a partnership with the business community's also play a significant role to support the development initiatives. Particularly, local businesses are a key aspect of communities and economic wellbeing. It was noted that more strategic conversations about the relationship between business and community should be conducted on regular basis to build a strong partnership. New Zealand and Canada have proven an exemplary approach in CLD program in the society.

Does Community-led Development (CLD) Movement Free from Challenge?

No development is free from challenges. Practitioners and researchers always enjoy (development) challenges in the society. From the macro to micro levels there is always challenge in development. As development practitioners and stakeholders we need to be aware of political contexts and potential capture. It is evident to make sure that roles and responsibilities of stakeholders at all levels clearly articulated. There are, however, many valid roles for central government to play in CLD – for example, investing, enabling, brokering, information provision, capacity building, service provision and being a partner/participant. While government needs to be a key player, some are wary of too much government involvement in CLD – citing the need for government to both specify outcomes and control processes in order to minimise risk. Some fear this may result in the 'institutionalisation' of CLD – and its potential downfall. Because of these concerns, government and communities need to be mindful and tread carefully and respectfully, in order to fully appreciate the meaning and implications of CLD – and ensure it remains community-owned and driven.

Conclusion

All contributors and researchers agreed that CLD was here to stay – in some way, shape or form. CLD's positive aspects include its flexibility, dynamism, and its resonance and relevance to communities of place. All stakeholders should believe that local communities are the only security for a volatile environment. Excitement about a stronger CLD future was tempered by a sense of fragility brought about by the inherent bumpy road ahead. The fact that the community development agenda has been in and out of government favor numerous times over the past 30+ years was noted, with one

commentator positively reflecting that "if things disappear now, they will return again in a few years' time with new people and new ways of thinking and doing". The culture of communities could contribute positively or negatively towards CLD initiatives. Collaborative and cooperative culture will easily take up and adopt the concept of CLD program to ensure ownership and sustainable community development program in the society.

From the experiences of Canada and New Zealand communities, there's a lot to be optimistic about the CLD within their societies. Though incredibly challenging, current global financial, social and environmental challenges all provide new platforms for alternative approaches such as CLD to thrive. Researchers also see a growing desire for people to reconnect at a very human level in the places where we live. We have experienced the energy, pride, and hope that builds in local communities as this grows. As a result, neighborhood development and building community resilience (ahead of crises and natural disasters) are much more prominent in both policy and practice agendas right now, and deservedly so. Collaborating and cooperating for growth, change and development is the order of the day. Donors and corporates also interested to invest their resources on reliable and sustainable development concepts. While CLD is both aspirational and inspirational, it's important to remember that it's not a quick-fix or cut-price option. It takes long-term effort, patience, faith, hope, investment, and persistence. It's a marathon of small steps rather than giant leaps. It demands ongoing, collective dialogue, analysis of practice and results, and it requires an innovative forward-looking focus. We can't keep doing what we've always done and expect to suddenly see different results. Courage and openness to change are essential. The New Zealand and the first

nation communities (Canada) are actively demonstrating what's possible. The community is passionate to look for positive deviance (what appears to be working) and scale it up by sharing ideas, processes, and key ingredients; experiment like crazy to find out what works and why and focus on early adopters and innovators – follow their leads, insights, and intuition.

The development practitioners, local actors, and collaborators need to take up the best strategy as per to their context and to continue doing all principles of CLD and intentionally focus on where this takes them to next. All practitioners since it will be somewhere exciting! As a novice researcher, this article adds to a growing body of research that demonstrates the value of long-term, community-led, and needs-based assistance, even in insecure environments. It also raises significant questions about the efficacy of ongoing assistance strategies and investments in developing nations such as Ethiopia that do not sufficiently and critically involve the local participation of communities, and that often focus predominantly on achieving short-term impacts. The development policy goals of the country may ultimately be best served through a much clearer development objectives, based on the context of the developing nations and through a more concerted effort to ensure that the methods through which aid is delivered foster greater community involvement and ownership. All development efforts made for many decades by practitioners and development partners, but, none of us advocated and initiated the community-led development principles as the best strategy in the society to ensure ownership.

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