

Summaries of the Study Report of Linkages and Networks through CLCs (Full country reports are also available in the attached CD-ROM)

1. Bangladesh

The Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) has conducted an examination of “*Networks and Linkages of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) for Community Development in Bangladesh*” to develop an understanding of how and to what extent CLCs have contributed to the welfare of their communities. The major focus has been on how linkages and networks in and outside the local community contribute to improving the quality of life of the people and to ensuring the sustainability of CLCs. The researchers adopted an in-depth case study approach by deliberately focusing on seven CLCs of five different implementing NGOs. The findings of the study indicate that networking is done by a few NGOs and their CLCs, although many engage in different forms of linkage with government as well as non-government agencies.

The DAM is the pioneering agency in networking among the CLCs within the fold of its programme, in addition to linkage with many other external organizations. Plan Bangladesh also has some networking functions among its CLC units. Empirical evidence indicates that linkage and networking with other agencies, wherever present, is resulting in positive changes in people’s quality of life. There are indications that conditions toward attaining the sustainability of CLCs for community development are gradually taking hold, even though current limitations are also notable. Despite positive changes particularly in the life situation of the poor and disadvantaged community members, the CLCs appear to remain still in a burgeoning state in regard to achieving improvements at a higher scale.

The fuller potentials are yet to be explored, and for most of the CLCs surveyed there is an absence of planned and organized efforts in this direction. The findings also reveal that only one implementing organization has developed intra-organizational networking through a community resource centre (CRC) providing support services to member CLC units. The CRC provides a channel for sharing resources and information/knowledge among the units and carries out planned activities on a larger scale through the identification and prioritization of needs.

The CLCs are currently providing a wide range of services to community members. Included are birth and marriage registration, immunization, primary health care services, maternal and child care, agricultural counseling, safe water and sanitation, various skills training related to income generation (including training in ICT), micro-credit and legal aid, rights awareness, prevention of women and child trafficking, prevention of drug abuse, and preservation of the environment. In providing these services, relevant government departments and NGOs are contacted for technical support as well as human resources. Essentially, CLCs are open to all community members but (consistent with overall national development policy) they pay particular attention to the poor and disadvantaged groups, opening opportunities for them to have upward social and economic mobility. Rights awareness and prevention of exploitation are among the critical achievements of CLCs through networking and linkage.

The interest of communities in using and strengthening the CLC as an institution for comprehensive community development is growing. The increasing participation of community members and increasing involvement of managing committees have contributed to the institutional strength of the CLCs. Internal resource mobilization has

shown a positive trend. CLC networks and the expanding role of CLCs have drawn the attention of local-level government institutions and other local stakeholders that wish to use CLCs as peoples' organizations toward self-sustaining community development.

The full realization of CLCs' potential lies in strengthening and expanding current efforts to cover more beneficiaries. There must also be continuing efforts to increase the current level of networking and linkage. Also required are more contacts with civil society organizations, more effective advocacy and campaigns, increased documentation and dissemination of benefits, increased communication about the reciprocal benefits of partners in linkage and networking, and an intensification of effort for intra- and inter-organizational linkages, with the greater involvement of local government institutions.

2. China

The rural community learning centre (CLC) in China is usually established as a non-formal education mechanism to provide literacy education and functional technology training in practical productive skills for children, youth and adults not in formal school education. With some technical and financial support from governments at various levels, the CLC is established and managed by local people with the full utilization of local educational resources at schools and other institutions in the community.

Generally, there are four CLC models: CLCs at county secondary vocational schools; CLCs at township cultural and technical schools for farmers; CLCs linked with village agricultural technical stations; and CLCs at local primary and middle schools.

Training content and target groups vary depending on different local conditions and learner needs. Content and functions may include literacy and post literacy education and training, continuing education and training, libraries or reading rooms, income generating activities, small-scale enterprise training, computer knowledge and skills, social and cultural activities, sports and recreation, and education and training for women and girls.

CLCs in the China study participate in linkages with local government agencies, NGOs, business enterprises, agricultural agencies and institutions of education. Local governments deal with the different governments at the county, township and village levels. NGOs and enterprises link with the Women's Federation, Youth Federation, student associations and volunteers, as well as with various enterprises. Agricultural departments have connections with agricultural extension groups. Universities, colleges and other educational bodies are involved with agricultural broadcast schools and facilities for satellite and distance education.

There are many benefits from networking and linkage. Instead of two or more institutions having separate expenses for training and other activities, networks and linkage enable them to share costs. There is no duplication of effort because they have common goals, objectives and programmes. Networks and linkages are able to ensure greater use of resources by all partners working together. Networks and linkages have a greater impact than a single voice.

Normally, there are organizational committees for CLCs in the study regions. This kind of committee is set up at county, township or village level depending on where the

CLCs are located. The committee is mainly responsible for coordinating different agencies and conducting various kinds of educational activities and technical training courses.

3. Japan

Recently, many communities in Japan have promoted development through the active participation of residents, and most of these communities are facing various problems. The case of Niimura District in Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture, provides one example of a community learning centre (CLC) and its role in community development. The collaboration of the centre with Matsumoto University shows how higher education institutions can get involved in community development.

Niimura District, a peaceful agricultural area, has faced three big changes in recent years, including the opening of Matsumoto University and the construction of a superhighway across the district. Working among people who were conservative and against these external changes at first, the CLC was able to promote community development as follows:

- 1) clarifying community problems as a common theme among local organizations
- 2) organizing learning activities to develop human resources, networks and leadership
- 3) connecting learning activities with practical activities towards community restructuring

One of the important roles of the CLC is to connect various kinds of local groups and organizations through learning and practice. In Niimura District, the CLC has created local networks among neighbourhood associations, local government agencies and educational institutions.

In addition, the collaboration with Matsumoto University enables the CLC to play a leading role in community development. The centre has organized a mutual cooperation structure between the district and the university. In particular, it has changed the consciousness of residents from passive to active through close contacts with the district and the university. The CLC helps to generate a synergistic effect between the district and the university, both of which cooperate to solve mutual problems and share objectives toward community development.

Not only providing learning activities that enable people to improve their individual skills and knowledge, the CLC is also developing human networks and addressing community issues as a key centre in the district. In addition, it is now advancing community development and fostering residential autonomy in the district.

4. Indonesia

According to the CLC Directory published by the Community Education Directorate, in 2004 there were more than 3,000 CLCs located in 33 provinces. There are many varieties of CLCs based on community characteristics, programmes and objectives. There are four types of CLCs based on similarities in community characteristics, programme characteristics, geographic location and type of personnel.

According to the government action plan, the Indonesian government has a target of 6,137,556 illiterate people to become literate between the years 2001 and 2015. The

government also intends to enroll 7,800,000 dropouts in elementary school equivalency programmes and 7,800,000 dropouts in junior high school equivalency programmes by 2015.

In our study, most of the communities surrounding CLCs are poor. Most community members (88%) have low incomes and have not completed basic education (65%).

Seventy-two per cent of the CLCs observed in the study obtain their personnel resources from the communities around them. On the other hand, 79 per cent still depend on the government for financial support. Fifty-eight per cent of the CLCs stated that the financial contribution of the community is low. This study also found that some of the CLCs (65%) have tried to become more financially independent by developing CLC business units. Fifty-five per cent of the CLCs stated that they get income from their business activities.

The training programme is the most popular feature of CLCs (90%). The other programmes conducted at CLCs include programmes for income generation (79%), equivalency (69%), early childhood education (55%), reading corners (48%), literacy (31%), and art and culture (21%).

The CLCs in Indonesia are concerned about their weaknesses and limited resources, and as such are deeply aware of the need to develop linkages and networks for supporting and increasing the quality of their programmes and activities. All of them have had experiences in developing linkages and networks, especially for local and short-term programmes.

The networks help to supply CLCs with information, facilities, learning materials and personnel. They are also useful in CLC socialization, financial support, personnel capabilities development, assistance and consultancy, business cooperation, product promotion and learning materials development.

The main benefits of networking with others for sustaining the activities of CLCs are 1) to improve CLC access to information and resources; 2) to increase the support of local and international businesses, national and international NGOs, and the government; 3) to improve the quality of CLC programmes, management and output; and 4) to support and control government policies related to CLCs and non-formal education.

There are difficulties in maintaining and expanding the networks. Among CLCs that want to initiate networks, there is a lack of information, facilities and communication. There is also a lack of funds and capable personnel to support programmes and activities for maintaining and expanding the networks. In some provinces and districts, the existence of the CLC Forum is not well accepted by local government education officials. A final obstacle is the diversity of CLCs in their programmes, community-based characteristics and geographical location.

Strategies for overcoming these difficulties include facilitating interaction among CLCs in initiating the networks, finding alternatives to solve financial problems, developing links with donor agencies, providing more government funding, encouraging CLCs to build up their own profitable businesses, and motivating the members of the networks to meet financial obligations.

Future plans and directions include socialization of the strategic role of linkages and networks in developing CLCs, improving the capabilities of CLC personnel in initiating, maintaining and developing linkages and networks, and institutionalizing linkages and networks among CLCs in the Asia-Pacific region.

5. Philippines

Education is a fundamental right. The Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities Inc. Women in Enterprise Development is the Asia-Pacific Cultural Center for UNESCO (ACCU) Philippine Literacy Resource Center partner. As such, it is today the major advocate of Education for All in the Philippines, particularly in the promotion of literacy, education and training in conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. It was selected by UNESCO-Bangkok to conduct a study on the linkages and networking practices of community learning centers (CLCs).

The objectives of the study were: 1) to document and disseminate successful experiences of CLCs in Mindanao in promoting linkages and networking with various partner organizations for effective community development; 2) to use the results of the study as a guide for the management and control of CLCs; and 3) to recognize the important roles and functions of key personnel in initiating and coordinating with other stakeholders.

There were fifty CLCs covered in the study composed of a mix of government and NGO organized centres in three regions of Mindanao: 11, 12 and the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao. The study was a cooperative effort of the NDFCAI-WED and the regional offices of the Department of Education. The CLC Study Team was composed of professionals with extensive knowledge, exposure and experience in non-formal education. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews, field visits and a survey questionnaire were used to elicit vital information on CLC operations.

CLCs are viewed as catering to the learning needs of their target beneficiaries and are used for other community needs such as NFE, reading, livelihood skills training, health and nutrition activities, and the promotion of peace.

CLCs are used by farmers, women, indigenous people and young people in the community. The CLCs get support from the local government units through local school board funds, donations from users and their families, funding from NGOs and in some cases from local donor agencies, religious groups and the business sector. They are able to get this support through linking and joining forces with organized groups in their communities. Management working committees were set up by the CLCs to manage their affairs. Community participation and ownership, relevant and appropriate services in NFE, and cooperation and coordination with local government units and NGOs were viewed as the major resources and reasons for the sustainability of the CLCs.

6. Thailand

In Thailand, community learning centres (CLCs) are regarded as an important basic structure for the lifelong learning of people in local communities. In many sub-districts, they have either been newly built or improved, and have been promoted so that every sector takes part in the administration of every aspect and cooperates in the education network of each community. All this has been carried out in order that CLCs can

respond effectively to the educational requirements of the people. These centres are available in virtually all sub-districts of the country and total 6,680 centres in all.

This research aimed to study the circumstances related to the administration of CLCs that have achieved success in developing an administrative network in order to develop their communities. The focus was on the form and method of promoting the establishment and development of networks for the administration of CLCs, as well as the factors related to their success. The methodology of the research combined the study of documents with a field study of four CLCs. The instruments used were a non-structured interview guideline and focus group discussion protocol. Data were collected by researchers and their assistants during April and June 2005. The collected data were then analyzed according to the content analysis method. The findings were as follows:

- 1) The major organizations in the networks of CLCs fall into two large categories: internal organizations within the community and external organizations outside the community.
- 2) The important reasons that lead the various organizations to participate in the implementation of CLC activities are twofold: the urgency of problems and the necessity to solve problems within the communities that are mostly related to extreme poverty and debt. These are followed by social problems – conflicts between people in the community, and urgent matters related to changes in state policies, affiliated agencies, and the organization's mission. Therefore, the CLC is a publicly owned centre where everyone in the community can meet to mobilize their thoughts and analyze and find a way to solve problems.
- 3) People who initiated and coordinated the networks had similar characteristics. They were deeply rooted in the community, were socially acceptable, and had produced clear results relating to community development for a long period of time. These key people believed that activities for development or for the solution of problems on the whole began with the knowledge and understanding of problems, participating in their analysis, and collective decision-making. The study further found that non-formal education agencies played a very important role in cooperating with these key people in establishing a CLC for the benefit of the community by having them motivate community members to keep the centre going and sustaining its activities.
- 4) The networks established are of two kinds: 1) those that develop naturally, such as networks of relatives in the same domicile that have the same beliefs and have interrelated problems; and 2) those that are established by state agencies or the private sector that gradually stimulate or arrange organizations that support the implementation of activities, such as state agency networks, state agency/community organization networks, etc.
- 5) The main activities of networks that cooperate with CLCs mostly begin with those that are related to the economy of the community such as the promotion and development of vocations and the generation of income. Beginning with recognized problems and the needs of the people in the community helps the organizations that exist within the community to show interest, as they have already had similar experiences in the past. However, the study results indicated

that the administration of activities by CLC networks, including both internal and external organizations, concentrated mostly on activities that existed in the community plan and had to be based on the recognized problems and needs of the people as a matter of importance. Activities that are the responsibility of external state agency networks, but are not in line with the recognized problems and needs of the people in the community, are first modified so that they correspond to these problems and needs.

- 6) There were two methods of linking networks: 1) horizontal linkages that foster the exchange of news and information between organizations on the same level as the CLC; and 2) vertical linkages that foster the exchange of news and information between community-level organizations and organizations that are at a higher level. There are both formal methods, such as the arrangement of meetings and seminars, and informal methods, such as going out to pay visits to people as if they were relatives or close friends in order to consult and discuss, and exchange experiences and knowledge with each other. Those who are key people in the formation of linkages are the chairpersons or committee members of the CLC and non-formal education teachers.
- 7) Factors related to success in the creation and development of CLC networks included the following: leaders/key groups that are members of CLC committees; the potential of non-formal education; a system of rotating the group of network leaders; having common perceptions and a common vision; clarity of objectives and activities of the networks; relevancy between activities and context and the needs of the community; appropriateness of the body of knowledge; mutual interests/benefits; and complementary relationships and network linkages.
- 8) The most obvious benefits of networks enabled the CLCs to manage additional factors with regard to administration. These factors included budgets, personnel, materials and equipment. Apart from these, it was further found that network linkages resulted in the exchange of knowledge between members of internal and external organizations -- in particular, people of the community working with lecturers from outside the community. In addition, the evolution of network organizations from pseudo networks to become allied networks that could coordinate, link, create relationships and create activities based on mutual benefits, resulted in the CLC and community becoming stronger and each organization being able to reach its goals as well.
- 9) The major obstacles to establishing, running and expanding networks included the following: limitations of the leaders and key groups in the networks; activities that did not conform to the problems and needs of the community; the absence of vigilance, intervention and control; and incorrect information within the networks.
- 10) The researchers make the following recommendations for the strengthening and sustainability of CLC networks:
 - a. The leaders and key groups that make up the CLC committees are also people who play an important role in the linkage of networks. These people have been accepted by community members and have proven to be people who are public-minded, have charisma, and are natural participants in the existing networks. Therefore, if a new network were to be established, or a present network was to be strengthened, these people and their groups should be

sought out first as allies, followed by expansion towards other community organizations.

- b. The potential of non-formal education teachers should be further developed to give them an understanding of the context of the community. They should be able to analyze the potentials of the community and to adapt themselves to the people of the community.
- c. In the beginning, representatives of organizations and those affected should be invited to attend meetings. The topics of the meetings should stress the benefits and points of interest of the network organization, i.e., the collective aims – its vision, and the determination of goals, objectives and activities of the network.
- d. The network leaders and key groups should consider modifying or integrating the activities and body of knowledge that the network is going to implement to make them appropriate to the problems, needs, way of life and culture of learning of the people in the community.
- e. Clear systems of internal communication should be established, both formal and informal, by appointing a group to be responsible for the distribution of information. The information should be distributed regularly, should emphasize two-way communication and perhaps should use effective communication channels that already exist in the locality.
- f. The networks, for the sake of the development of the community, should avoid being involved in politics and with politicians, no matter if they are local or national politicians.