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# Theoretical Concepts and Practice of Community Organizing

JOSEFINA T. DIZON

**Abstract.** Community organizing, one of the methods in community development, is a Western concept adopted in the Philippines. The different definitions of foreign and local authors highlight the nature of community organizing as a process by which a community identifies its problems and finds solutions through collective mobilization of the people and resources. This paper discusses the theoretical concepts of community organizing, which include its ideological background and value orientations, assumptions and propositions, goals, approaches, and principles. Towards the end, the paper discusses the steps involved in community organizing and forwards a conceptual framework of community organizing focused on people empowerment and based on the concept of people-centered participatory development.

**Keywords:** *Community organizing, empowerment, people-centered development*

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## I. Introduction

Community organizing is one of the strategies adopted in any community development project that requires the full participation

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of the community. Rivera and Erlich (1992) discuss about community organizing in a diverse society. Community organizing is a Western concept and has been adopted and adapted in the context of Philippine culture. Community development workers/community organizers must fully understand the concept of community organizing to be able to practice it under the Philippine socio-cultural context. This paper discusses the theoretical concepts of community organizing, which include its definitions, ideological background and value orientations, assumptions and propositions, goals, approaches, and principles. In addition, it also discusses the steps in conducting the community organizing process.

## **II. Definition of Community Organizing**

Different authors have defined community organizing in various ways. Ross (1955) provides one of the earliest definitions of community organizing from the Western perspective as:

*“Process by which a community identifies its needs or objectives, order (or ranks) these needs or objectives, develops confidence and will to work at these needs or objectives, finds the resources (internal or external) to deal with these needs or objectives, takes action in respect to them, and in so doing, extends and develops cooperative and collaborative attitudes and practices in the community” (page 39).*

Kramer and Specht (1975) emphasize the role of a professional change agent when they define community organization as:

*“Various methods of intervention, whereby a professional change agent helps a community action system composed of individuals, groups, or organization to engage in planned collective action*

*in order to deal with social problems within a democratic system of values. It is concerned with programs aimed at social change with primary reference to environmental conditions and social institutions” (page 6).*

Meanwhile, Murphy and Cunningham (2003) emphasized place-based community organizing, which they define as:

*“a process in which local people, united by concern for renewing their own small territory, plan and act together from an organizational base that they control. It is a practice that involves collective human effort centered on mobilization, advocating, planning, and the negotiation of resources” (page 79).*

Several local authors have also defined community organizing, and Manalili (1990) provided one of the early definitions and said that:

*“Community organizing is a process that revolves around the people’s lives, experiences, and aspirations. It is a process that is people-centered and geared towards [the] continuing capability building, self-reliance, and empowerment” (page 65).*

Dela Costa-Ymson (1993) cites that community organizing as a method is a tool for human development. She defines human development in the context of community organizing as:

*“A process of unfolding the potentialities of persons to the level where they can exercise the faculties that will enable them to create, act and manage resources to live a decent life” (page 32).*

Dacanay (1993), on the other hand, defines community organization as:

*“the process which builds/mobilizes people and other community resources towards identifying and solving their own problems, establishing people’s self-awareness and capacities to stage their own future...taking action collectively considering the bureaucratic structure and restrictive institutional arrangements” (page 8).*

Meanwhile, David’s (2004) definition of community organizing highlights it as a major weapon of powerless communities in asserting their demands, holding accountable those who rule and treading their own autonomous path to development.

These definitions highlight the nature of community organizing. It is a process by which a community identifies its problems and finds solutions through collective mobilization of community people and resources. The ultimate goal/objective of community organizing is to effect changes in social and environmental institutions so that people can direct their own lives.

### **III. Ideological Background and Value Orientation of Community Organizing**

Sherrand (1962) believes that community organization/organizing is firmly based on democratic tradition and emphasizes the realization of the individual’s full potential to contribute to society. According to him, while the ultimate concern is the improvement of the individual’s life and fulfilment of his/her social role, community organizing emphasizes the development of a creative interrelationship between the individual, the group to which he/she belongs, and the community in which he/she lives.

Ross (1955) lists down comprehensively the articles of faith that characterize the value orientation of community organizing. These are:

- Essential dignity and worth of the individual;
- Individual's potentials and resources for managing his/her own life;
- Importance of freedom to express one's individuality;
- Great capacity for growth within all social beings;
- Individual's right to basic physical necessities;
- Individual's need to struggle and strive to improve his/her own life and environment;
- Individual's right to help in time of need and crisis;
- Importance of social organization for which the individual feels responsible and which is responsive to individual feeling;
- Need of a social climate that encourages individual growth and development;
- Individual's right and responsibility to participate in the affairs of his/her community;
- Practicability of discussion, conference, and consultation as methods of solving individual and social problems; and
- Self-help as the essential base of any aid program.

#### **IV. Assumptions and Propositions of Community Organizing**

The practice of community organizing is based on certain assumptions and propositions, which were derived from the ideological background and value orientation of community organizing. Ross (1955) enumerates the following assumptions of community organizing:

- 1) Communities of people can develop capacity to deal with their own problems.

- 2) People want change and can change.
- 3) People should participate in making, adjusting, or controlling the major changes taking place in their communities.
- 4) Changes in community living that are self-imposed or self-developed have a meaning and a permanence that imposed changes do not have.
- 5) A holistic approach can deal successfully with problems with which a fragmented approach cannot cope.
- 6) Democracy requires cooperative participation and action in the affairs of the community, and that people must learn the skills that make this possible.
- 7) Frequently, communities of people need help in organizing to deal with their needs, just as many individuals require help in coping with their individual problems.

Meanwhile, Sherrand (1962) lays down the following assumptions of community organizing:

- 1) Conditions of life in the community are subject to improvement, and it is the responsibility of the individuals and the community as a whole to seek solutions to problems and to attempt to prevent problems before they occur.
- 2) There is not only compatibility but also an imperative relationship between individual self-realization and general community improvement.
- 3) The greatest possible measure of self-determination should be accorded to local communities and to their residents, and every means should be emphasized to encourage local initiative.
- 4) Local self-determination is not feasible without broad local participation.
- 5) Local community improvement must, as far as possible, be carried on within the framework of planning for the larger community or the nation.

Hollnsteiner (1979) and Isles (1981) have the following premises or propositions that underlie community organizing:

- 1) Unorganized poor people do not participate actively in societal decisions affecting their lives because they are powerless.
- 2) When weak individuals band together and confront authorities, their collective number can rectify the imbalance between the weak and the strong and allow interaction on an equal basis.
- 3) The sheer experience of participation in mobilization and group actions develops in ordinarily dependent people a sense of power, which brings about self-reliance, pride in oneself, and dignity.
- 4) Organizing people for power seeks to establish powerful people's organizations through which the disadvantaged can enter the spheres of decision-making. Power is the means by which ordinary people can find redress for their grievances and act against those conditions that oppress and dehumanize them.

The premises upon which community organizing is based state that lack of participation among the poor is due to powerlessness, but this powerlessness can be overcome if people band together and are mobilized to take group actions, and eventually develop a sense of power among them.

## **V. Aims /Goals of Community Organizing**

Apuan (1988) forwards three aims/goals of community organizing: 1) to achieve effective power for the people so they can determine their own development and shape their own future; 2) to establish and sustain relatively permanent organizational structures, which best serve the people's needs; and 3) to build or join alliances that are useful to the people. She explains that the first goal of



empowerment enables people to overcome the dehumanizing effects of powerlessness and become human beings with dignity, assertive of their rights, and able to determine their destiny. Organizational structures, on the other hand, become the venue for people's participation and linkages with other groups. Lastly, alliances may include sectoral, regional, and national multi-sectoral coalitions, political parties, and international organizations.

The Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP 1981) adds three other goals of community organizing, namely: improved quality of life, leadership development and mobilization, and social transformation.

Rubin and Rubin (1986) state four goals of community organizing. These are: 1) enhancement of people's potential and the increased likelihood that they will fulfill their potential, 2) improvement in the quality of life through the resolution of shared problems, 3) exercise and preservation of democratic values, and 4) improvement in overall equity in society.

Chiong-Javier (1987) cites the following objectives of community organizing based on a pilot project of the Upland Development Program (UDP) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which they implemented in Mindoro: 1) to develop the capability of the community members for participation in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of project activities on a sustained basis, and 2) to assist the farmers in establishing a cohesive and viable community organization that is able to promote the welfare of its members and to manage its physical environment.

Community organizing is essentially providing power to the people, or what is termed as empowerment. Empowerment as a component of Ford's (1987) model of development refers to the "sustained process in which people, through collective action and

reflection, gain deeper understanding of the root causes of their powerlessness and gain self-confidence so that they can become authors of their lives and their destiny in the pursuit of total human development.”

Another definition of empowerment involves defining its opposite, powerlessness. According to Wallerstein (1993), powerlessness has both subjective and objective dimensions. Subjective dimension is when people feel powerless because they may learn helplessness, have an external locus of control, or feel alienated from the world in which they live. The objective dimension, on the other hand, arises because people may lack the economic and political power, and live in the conditions of poverty and resource privation, which they internalize as feeling powerless.

Wallerstein (1993) adds that the most commonly cited definition of empowerment focuses only on changing the subjective nature of powerlessness. Based on this, individuals are blamed for not having the skills or motivation to rise out of powerlessness. Hence, empowerment programs that address the subjective nature of powerlessness include promoting self-esteem, job competencies, or literacy.

A much broader definition of empowerment is proposed by Rappaport (1987) and Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988as cited by Wallerstein 1993). Broadly defined, empowerment is “when people gain control of their own lives in the context of participating with others to change their social and political realities.”

Following this definition, Wallerstein cites the characteristics of an empowered community as proposed by several authors:

1. Having abilities to identify their own problems and equity or capacity to solve these problems (Braithwaite and Lythcott 1989 and Naparstek et al. 1982)

2. Having increased participation in community activities (Chavis and Wandersman 1990)
3. Having control over the determinants of health (Health Promotion 1986)

In 1992, Wallerstein came up with her own definition of empowerment as “the social action process that promotes participation of people, who are in positions of perceived and actual powerlessness, towards goals of increased individual and community decision-making and control, equity of resources, and improved quality of life.”

Navarro (1993) cites Iglesias’ belief (Iglesias 1986) that empowerment can be achieved through viable and effective participation of community organizations in decisions affecting their lives and welfare.

The social action community organizing model discussed by Rothman (1968) seeks to redistribute power, resources, or decision-making in a community. Hollnsteiner (1979) sees community organizing as the method for organizing people for power. It is through community organization that the poor and the powerless can obtain power and become the masters of their fate. Hence, community empowerment can be assumed as one indicator of successful community organizing.

In her empowerment study of selected community organizations, Poblete (1995) operationally defines empowerment as “the process by which local organizations obtain power and authority in managing and controlling local resources and in increasing their capability for decision-making and problem solving through increased membership, linkages, and level of participation.” In measuring empowerment levels, Poblete used leadership, financial and manpower growth, linkages, local resource management, and organizational prestige. Based on her findings, the variables that are related significantly to organizations’

empowerment level include type of leadership, size of membership, members' participation level, economic stability, continuity in carrying out development activities, and communication factors such as maximized use of various communication channels and access and utilization of new communication technology.

Meanwhile, Laverack (2001) enumerates the operational domains of community empowerment, which include participation, leadership, organizational structures, problem assessment, resource mobilization, asking questions, links with other people and organization, and program management. According to the author, involvement of individual community members in small groups or in larger organizations must occur in order to attain empowerment. He added that leadership plays an important role in the development of small groups and community organizations, which are part of the continuum of community empowerment. Meanwhile, the presence of organizational structures characterized by cohesion among its members, concern for community issues, and sense of belonging are crucial for the people to socialize and to address their concerns and problems. Problem assessment is most empowering when the community carries out the identification of problems, solutions to the problems, and actions to resolve the problems.

Another ingredient of empowerment is the ability of the community to be able to critically assess the social, political, economic, and contextual causes that contribute to their level of disempowerment. Links or partnerships can be especially effective toward community empowerment because the individual partners share the same responsibilities, tasks, and resources. Lastly, program management that empowers the community includes the control by the primary stakeholders over decisions on planning, implementation, evaluation, finances, administration, reporting, and conflict resolution.

World Bank defines empowerment as "the process of increasing the assets and capabilities of individuals or groups to

make purposive choices and transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes” (World Bank 2002). The Bank identified four elements of the empowerment practice, namely: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, and local organizational capacity.

## **VI. Principles of Community Organizing**

Community organizing as a process and a method is based on certain basic principles, which serve as guidelines to sound or effective practice. David (1982) defines the lines according to which community organizing perspective must operate. Community organizing must promote self-reliance instead of dependence; employ evocative instead of provocative organizing methods; engage in facilitation instead of manipulation; balance “felt needs” and “objective needs” of the community; engage in consciousness-raising instead of dole-outs; balance the benefits from immediate economic impacts of projects and long-term political development; aim at non-issue based organizing but realize that issue-based organizing might be initially necessary; aim at building democratic participation, without disregarding the usefulness of identifying potential leaders in the community; and confront the inherent “subversiveness” of community organizing, which offers an alternative social order.

Meanwhile, Apuan (1988) cites the following principles that should guide community organizers:

- 1) Community organizing involves consciousness-raising through experiential learning. Central to the community organizing process is the development of awareness and motivation among the people to act upon their problems. As conscientization is achieved through practice, community organizing therefore emphasizes learning that emerges from concrete actions.

- 2) Community organizing is participatory and mass-based. It involves the whole community in organizing experiences and is primarily directed towards and biased in favor of the poor.
- 3) Community organizing is based on democratic leadership. It is group-centered, not leader-oriented. Leaders emerge and are tested through concrete action, not externally appointed or selected. Hence, leaders are accountable to the people at all times.

The tenets espoused by the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction are what PBSP (1991) use as its guidelines in its community organizing activities. These are:

- 1) Go to the people, live among the people.
- 2) Learn, plan, and work with the people.
- 3) Start with and build on what the people know.
- 4) Teach by showing, learn by doing.
- 5) Not piecemeal but an integrated approach.
- 6) Not relief but release.

These principles, which the IIRR espouses, embody the ethical principles of community organizing (Swanepoel and De Beer 2006). The first principle dwells on human orientation, which says that community organizing must be able to address the people's concrete needs (food, clean water, clothing, and shelter) as well as fulfill their abstract needs (happiness, self-reliance, fulfilment, and human dignity). The second principle, which is about participation, says that people must be mobilized to participate fully in all aspects of community organizing activities. The third emphasizes the concept of empowerment, which must aim to give people the power or the right to make decisions. The fourth principle highlights that community organizing must activate people to take up the responsibilities of ownership and manage their future. Lastly, community organizing is aimed at breaking the deprivation trap so

that people can become free. Transforming efforts attempt to release people from the trap, so that free and self-reliant, they can gradually improve the situation themselves.

Russel-Erlich and Rivera (1987), on the other hand, enumerate the tenets of the so-called radical community organizing, which radical organizers use as guide in their community organizing activities. These are:

- 1) Community organization must work towards people's empowerment so that they may liberate themselves from their oppression.
- 2) Community organization must have an integrated sense of social problems' history and how personal concerns develop from a broader historical experience.
- 3) Community organization must attempt to work with community problems at the primary level of problem severity and magnitude, not the secondary or tertiary.
- 4) Community organization's political position is based on an ideology that is flexible rather than fixed along a political continuum. What is critical here is the praxis that organizers bring into the community and the subsequent development of a shared consciousness as it emerges.
- 5) Community organization is education in that it emphasizes social, political, economic, and class dynamics.
- 6) Community organization's results must not only be those that may be discretely measured, but also community sociotherapy or transformation of the individual personality.
- 7) Community organization must always see its role as a temporary one. As it works towards people empowerment, it is also working towards reducing the professional presence in the community by training indigenous leadership from the earliest possible time.

- 8) Community organization should be practiced in such a way that organizational power sharing is to be sought above power consolidation, participatory decision-making is to be sought above leader-controlled decision-making, and cooperation between and among organizers and clients is sought instead of competition.

## **VII. Approaches and Models of Community Organizing**

The literature points to a number of community organizing approaches coined by various authors (Ross 1955; Rothman 1968; Kramer and Specht 1975).

In 1955, Ross came out with three approaches to community organization depending on the objective of the group, namely: specific content objective, general content objective, and process objective. In the specific content objective approach, an individual, an agency, or an organization becomes concerned about a needed reform in the community and launches a program to secure this reform. In the general content objective approach, a group, association, or a council focuses on the coordinated and orderly development of services in a particular area of interest. In the process objective approach, the group aims to initiate and nourish a process in which all the people of a community are involved, through their representatives, in identifying and taking action about their own problems. What is sought is increased motivation, responsibility, and skill in recognizing and securing reforms the community considers desirable. The objective is the development of community integration and capacity to function as a unit with respect to community problems.

Two other major approaches in community organizing, namely: the project approach and the political action approach were later coined. The former attempts to organize communities around



certain projects that aim for community self-reliance, while the latter focuses on collective action in which the community makes known its grievances and its demands to relevant authorities or to the public.

With regard to models of community organizing, Rothman (1968) enumerates three types, i.e., locality development, social planning, and social action. Locality development model holds that community changes can be pursued most effectively by widely involving the local people in determining and achieving goals. Social planning, on the other hand, necessitates the services of experts in effecting planned change processes, especially in solving social problems. Social action is premised on the belief that there are disadvantaged segments in society that need to be organized to enable them to voice out their demands for social justice or democracy. Rothman (1968) gives the following rules of thumb as to which of the three approaches organizers can use. Locality development is used when populations are homogeneous or when consensus exists among various community subparts and interests. Social planning, on the other hand, is adopted when community problems are fairly routinized and can be solved through the application of factual information. When community subgroups are hostile and interests are not reconcilable through usual discussion methods, social action is most suitable.

Rothman's community organizing approaches are summarized in Appendix 1.

In their article entitled "The Process of Community Work," Brager and Specht (1975) define the practice of community organizing as one that consists of what community organizers do (method) in response to particular behaviors (process). Method implies a set of artificially created procedures while process connotes naturalness. According to the authors, the two terms go

together because conceptions of process are necessary to design methods to intervene in them.

In 1975, Kramer and Specht proposed two models of community organization, i. e., community development and social planning. The community development model refers to efforts to mobilize the people directly affected by a community condition into groups and organization to enable them to take action on the social problems and issues that affect them. Social planning model, on the other hand, refers to efforts directed toward integrating and coordinating the efforts of agencies and organizations inside and outside the community. It also involves efforts aimed at bringing about changes in voluntary and public agencies' attitudes, structure, function, resources, decision-making patterns, and policies and practices. The authors believe that these two community organizing prototypes can be conceptualized as forms of purposive, planned, or directed change and related to theories of social change as well as community decision-making.

Aside from Rothman's models, Pyles (2009) cited other approaches such as Mondros and Wilson's models, Fisher's Neighborhood Organizing approaches, and the progressive organizing frameworks, which run from the spectrum of being transformative to being utilitarian. The Mondros and Wilson's models of social action organizations include: a) grassroots, b) lobbying, and c) mobilizing. The grassroots or the populist model aims to organize marginalized citizens into a powerful group with the intention of targeting power holders who tend to resist change. The lobbying model, on the other hand, is based on a pluralist pressure change orientation, which sees the government and the legal system as the mechanisms for change. The mobilizing model is also referred to as the movement approach, which views the government as resistant to change and that change can be achieved through political activism.

Fisher's neighborhood organizing approaches include: a) social welfare, b) political activist, and c) neighborhood maintenance. While the social welfare approach tends to focus on increasing access to social services through coalition building and lobbying, the political activist approach focuses on obtaining and restructuring power. Carried out by middle- and upper-class individuals, neighborhood maintenance aims to maintain the neighborhood status quo and property values.

Regardless of the particular model used, Kramer and Specht (1975) emphasize that all community organizers help people identify problems, develop organizations, plan and carry out programs, and assess their efforts. Bagadion (1993) identifies the roles of community organizers as researchers, managers, and teachers. In relation to these roles, community organizers must possess certain skills, which according to Kenny (2007), should include facilitation, organizational, strategy, networking, communication, and research skills.

Meanwhile, Phillips and Pittman (2009) enumerate the values that community organizers should possess, namely: honesty, loyalty, fairness, courage, caring, respect, tolerance, duty, and lifelong learning. They also provide the ethical standards, which should guide the community organizers, such as establishing and maintaining a professional and objective relationship with the client community and its representatives; always performing in a legal and ethical manner; immediately disengaging from illegal and unethical activities; clearly and accurately detailing the scope of work to be performed and its anticipated outcomes; avoiding conflicts of interest and dual relationships; and disengaging from activities that may result in one group or individual unethically or illegally benefiting at the expense of another.

## VIII. Steps in Community Organizing

Several authors (Hollnsteiner 1979; Patron 1987; and Apuan 1988) discussed the different steps in community organizing, which the author integrated in the following discussion. These cover nine steps, namely:

**Entry into the community.** This step enables the community organizers to introduce themselves to the local community officials and inform the local authorities about the project, its objectives, and the nature of their stay in the community. As a strategy, the community organizers adapt a lifestyle in keeping with the community and choose an appropriate place or family to stay with.

**Integration with the people.** The purpose of this activity is for the community organizers to imbibe community life and get to know the culture, economy, leadership, history, and lifestyle of the people. It is a means of establishing rapport with the people and building mutual trust and cooperation. It allows the community organizers to be one with the people and learn or understand the people's problems. The community organizers participate in the economic activities, household work, group discussion, and social functions of the community.

**Social investigation.** Through this step, the community organizers systematically acquire information and analyze the political and socio-cultural structure of the community to identify issues around which to organize the people. The different strategies include gathering and reviewing secondary data sources such as records and documents, holding personal interviews, conducting a survey, and observing.

**Problem identification and analysis.** The community organizers identify, analyze, and rank the problems and needs of the

community. The component steps include identification of the scope and degree of the problem, investigation of past efforts to solve the problem, analysis of the origin of the problem, and identification of factors that maintain, increase, or eliminate the problem, undertaking consequence analysis, and problem prioritization.

**Planning and strategizing.** This step is done to translate the goals and objectives into specific activities to solve community problems. Its component activities include identification of the problem, identification of resources, formulation of possible solutions, and setting plans of actions.

**Core group formation.** The purpose of this step is to form a small group of potential leaders to assist the community organizers in organizing and mobilizing the community. This involves identification of contacts and potential leaders in the community, and conduct of training in leadership and organizing with the core group members as participants.

**Organization development and mobilization.** Through this step, the community organizers facilitate wider participation and collective action on issues and problems concerning the community. They do this by setting up a formal organizational structure and mobilizing community effort/action to solve community problems.

**Evaluation and reflection.** The community organizers together with the community members review the course of action that has been undertaken to solve the problems. This can be done by holding of workshops, dialogues, etc.

**Turn-over and phase-out.** During this step, the community organizers transfer the community organizing roles and responsibilities to the organization as soon as the latter is ready or fully prepared to handle the responsibilities.

The PBSP (1991) divides the steps into three stages, namely: awakening, group empowerment, and group maintenance or institutionalization. The awakening stage comprises entry into the community, integration, social investigation, problem identification, analysis and priority setting, and goal setting. Implementation of plans and evaluation make up the empowerment stage, while organization building and turn-over/phase-out comprises the institutionalization stage.

Three community organizing activities in irrigation system management were documented by Illo and Felix (1981) and Chiong-Javier (1982, 1987). Illo and Felix (1981) and Chiong-Javier (1982) focused on community organizers' integration into the communities and groundworking with farmers. Accordingly, the community organizing experience in Mindoro was composed of the following activities: a) choice of entry point for organizing, b) delineation of basic organizing units, c) formation of an upland farmers' organization, d) integration with the communities, e) groundwork and mobilization, f) farmers' meeting, g) identification and mobilization of *sitio* leaders, and h) tactics session.

In its community organizing, the DENR follows basically the same activities cited by Metin (1993): a) starting from people's needs, b) collective action, c) identification and development of local leaders, d) raising of consciousness among members, and e) establishment of strong and viable organizations.

The examples provided in this paper focused on government and the academe's experiences in community organizing. David (2004) provides an extensive discussion of the community organizing experiences of people's organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGO). Other NGOs that have done community organizing include the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM).

## **IX. Community Organizing Practice**

Community organizing embodies processes/methods and approaches/strategies in order to attain its goals. The elements of community organizing are discussed in the following sections.

### **Processes/methods of community organizing**

These include social preparation of the community, education and training, value orientation, and mobilization.

**Social preparation.** This is very much related to community readiness. According to Fellizar (1993), a community is considered ready when an appropriate social preparation has been undertaken. Dela Costa-Ymson (1993) narrates how the Social Development Foundation undertook social preparation among farmers in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija, which took one year. According to her, social preparation has four stages: 1) general assembly, 2) formation of committees, 3) survey of needs and prioritizing them, and 4) preparation for the training.

In the DENR's Community Forestry Program, the social preparation process involves the development and concretization of the communities' capacities on 1) organizational skills (e.g., establishment of a people's organization, development of conflict resolution skills, and initiation of systems and structures to sustain forest management schemes); 2) technical skills (e.g., training of local people in forest management planning and conservation); and 3) entrepreneurial skills (e.g., development and management of alternative sources of livelihood). All these activities are implemented using the participatory approach.

**Education and training.** Community organizing is essentially a learning process and central to it is the development of awareness through experiential learning (Apuan 1988). Kwo (1986)

cites Compton's definition of community education as a process whereby members of a community come together to identify their problems and needs and seek solutions amongst themselves, mobilize the necessary resources, and execute a plan of action or learning or both. In the educative process, adults can learn through participation and cooperation with others in community action and community development projects. Practitioners term this "learning by doing" or learning through experience.

Castillo (1983) cites the International Foundation for Development Alternative, which says that education as a community organizing process does not refer to the conventional academic schooling but to a pedagogy of self-reliance: learning to participate, to assume responsibility, to take decisions, to be less dependent, to communicate, to serve others, to receive messages critically, etc.

Paolo Freire, a Brazilian educator laid down the principles of empowerment education. Apuan (1986) discussed Freire's principles in a booklet entitled *Organizing People for Power*. Freire's first principle states that no education is ever neutral. This means that education can either be designed to maintain the status quo or liberate people, helping them to become critical, creative, free, active, and responsible members of the society. Second, issues must have importance now to people. All education and development projects should start by identifying the relevant/important issues. Third, problem posing as an educational approach allows the animator to raise questions on a common problem for the participants to act, describe, analyze, suggest, and plan. Fourth, dialogue can be a venue for a mutual learning process because in a dialogue everyone shares one's experiences, listens to, and learns from others. Fifth, people learn through a cycle of reflection and action, where they can critically analyze the causes of mistakes and failures and become capable of effective social transformation. Finally, radical transformation of



life in the local communities must parallel the transformation in the whole society.

In support, Wallerstein (1993) defines empowerment education as one that “involves people in group efforts to identify their own problems, and to develop strategies to effect positive changes in their lives and in their communities.”

**Value orientation.** Since the desired ends of community organizing are people’s empowerment, self-reliance, and participation, there is a need to transform the negative value of the people from selfish individualism to one that is socially oriented. Value orientation essentially entails value re-orientation or transformation. Value orientation determines desired ends of behavior and prescribes norms or socially acceptable means of attaining the desired ends.

Hossain (1984) cites Rokeach’s (1979) definition of value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or a state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence.” Rokeach emphasizes that once a value is internalized, it becomes a standard for guiding action, for developing and maintaining attitude towards relevant objects and situations. Patanapongsa (1981) cites Hushner et al.’s (1962) belief that “strong external pressure may produce the appearance of change, but without alteration of character structure, such change will be superficial.” The statement implies that in order for change to take place (as in community organizing), people must alter their value orientation.

**Mobilization.** This refers to the “process whereby a group of people have transcended their differences to meet on equal terms in order to facilitate a participatory decision-making process” (Ben-Ali & Carvalho 1996). This means that it is a process, which begins a dialogue among members of the community, to determine who, what, and how issues are decided, and also to provide an

avenue for everyone to participate in decisions that affect their lives. In an organized community, strategizing serves as a means to address its needs. Mobilization arises from a number of factors: (1) presence of expertise amongst the community members, (2) the willingness of the community as a whole to give up individual interests to form a broader cooperative, and (3) presence of available resources to facilitate the mobilization process (Ben-Ali & Carvalho 1996). The presence of pre-existing community groups can potentially serve as the basis for a mobilization strategy.

## **X. Theoretical Framework of Community Organizing**

Majority of the population of the Third World countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa remain poor despite the implementation of development programs and projects. Korten (1992) explains that this is because many of these programs and policies are a direct consequence of the way human society equates development with economic growth. Growth-centered development, according to him, is not alleviating the deepening poverty and environmental devastation that is happening globally.

Castillo (1983) sees poverty among rural poor as a consequence of being unorganized, marginalized, oppressed, and exploited. Poor people hardly participate in the decision-making regarding their economic and social upliftment. Hollnsteiner (1979) reasons out that unorganized poor people do not participate actively in societal decisions affecting their lives because they are powerless. A theory of poverty along this line looks at poverty as a result of powerlessness due to lack of belief in self, possession of basic skills, organization, and political consciousness. Korten (1992) sees this powerlessness resulting from lack of community inertia and is self-imposed.

Espousing the theory of community inertia, development agents have been implementing community development programs.

However, Hollnsteiner (1979) says that these development programs have proven to be inadequate because the agents found out that powerlessness was not self-imposed but rather externally-imposed and sustained by state/government policies and programs. In this way, these policies and programs deprive the poor access to productive resources and thus maintain them in a state of dependency.

Hollnsteiner (1979) believes that community organizing is the way to empower the people, make them participate, and help them become self-reliant. It is through community organizing whereby relatively permanent organizational structures are established. According to Apuan (1988), these structures ensure maximum people participation. Poblete (1995) adds that it is in the organization where people's talents and resources are pooled and utilized so they can carry out development projects that can respond to their common needs and problems.

Community organizing as a development strategy is anchored on Harbison and Myers' (1964) principle in human resource development. This principle states that "people in the rural areas have the basic capabilities to improve their quality of life and that the problems confronting them can be overcome through their own efforts with assistance and support from development agencies."

In the '90s, community organizing was focused on people empowerment, which is based on the concept of people-centered participatory development (PCD). According to the concept, an outside community organizer may help or facilitate the organizing process, but community organizing must be initiated and sustained by the people themselves since they are the principal actors involved. Navarro (1993) enumerates the characteristics of this development alternative. First, PCD seeks to return control over resources to the people and their communities to be used in meeting their own needs. Essentially, this refers to the empowerment of the

people in controlling their own environment to meet their basic needs. Second, PCD seeks to broaden political participation, building from a base of strong people's organizations and participatory local government, with political and economic democracy as its cornerstones. Third, PCD calls for active mutual self-help among people, working together in their common struggle to deal with their common problems.

The theoretical model shows that poor people who are characteristically powerless, passive, and dependent can be organized. The process of community organizing aims to establish people's organizations, which will serve as the venue to empower people, make them participate, and become self-reliant. All these development goals are primarily aimed at achieving a people-centered development (Figure 1).

## **XI. Summary**

The various definitions of community organizing highlight it as a process of problem identification and solving through collective mobilization of people and resources. The ultimate goal/objective of community organizing is to effect changes in socioeconomic and environmental institutions so that people can direct their own lives.

As a process, community organizing is based on a democratic ideological background and is governed by a certain value orientation. The assumptions and propositions of community organizing are, in turn, based on these two items. The sound and effective practice of community organizing is based on certain basic principles.

Three models of community organizing have been discussed in the paper, namely: locality development, social planning, and social action. There are various steps in community organizing as discussed by different authors; the variation depends on the



**Figure 1. Theoretical framework of community organizing**

community setting and the characteristics of the community organizers. Hence, there are no hard and fast rules in community organizing. Whatever steps are followed, three processes/methods of community organizing are present, namely: social preparation, value orientation, and education and training.

The theoretical framework of community organizing as discussed in the paper, provides that community organizing is a process that aims to achieve a people-centered development for resource-poor communities characterized by passivity, dependency, and powerlessness. As shown in Figure 1, this kind of development is only possible if people are conscientized, socially-transformed, self-reliant, participative, and empowered. These desired characteristics can be achieved through the community organizing process.

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**Appendix 1.Community organizing approaches and strategies**  
(Rothman 1968)

<b>Practice variables</b>	<b>Social planning</b>	<b>Locality development</b>	<b>Social action</b>
1. Community characteristics	Community has substantive social problems/needs such as employment, housing, recreation, etc.	Community lacks relationship and democratic problem-solving skills.	Community is composed of a disadvantaged population, which lacks power and organization and suffers deprivation, social injustice, and inequity.
2. Basic goal of community organizing	Deals with concrete social problems efficiently (task goal).	Strengthen the horizontal pattern of community through community integration, education, group dynamics, and cooperative problem- solving (process goal).	Shift power relationship and resources and develop needed legislation for social change (process and tasks' goal).
3. Basic change strategy	Gathers facts about the problems and makes decisions on the most rational action.	Broad cross- sections of people are involved in determining and solving their own problems.	Issues and organization of people are crystallized to take action against enemy targets.
4. Change tactics and techniques	Conflict or consensus	Consensus, communication, and group discussion	Conflict, confrontation, direct action, and negotiation

Appendix1 continued...

Practice variables	Social planning	Locality development	Social action
5. Orientation toward power structure	Members of the power structure are employers and sponsors.	Members of the power structure are collaborators in a common venture.	Members of the power structure are external targets of action and are considered oppressors.
6. Role of community organizing	Fact gatherer, analyst, program implementer, facilitator	Enabler, catalyst, coordinator, and teacher of problem-solving skills	Activist, advocate, agitator, negotiator