

Expertise on tap, not on top

by David Drucker

The challenge of 'universal child immunization by 1990' is reaching more of those as yet unreached, and maintaining that contact through a full course of shots for succeeding cohorts of children. The involvement and participation of the community in this dramatic expansion of health care is likely, therefore, to be fundamental to its success.

From the scientific point of view, immunization is a success story with all the classical techniques of science from the identification of disease and the discovery of its transmission to the mass production of serums and vaccines and the storage, packaging and use of technologies such as cold chains.

The eradication of smallpox from our planet is a spectacular example of the triumph of science and (one may hasten to add) field level organization and dedication.

Successful we might have been in launching programmes of a categorical kind (as in smallpox). However, where programmes have to be sustained—as for immunization and particularly for poliomyelitis—we cannot reasonably plan to set up and continue a long-term and on-going programme unless it is part of a package of general health-care services.

Where a lively programme of health care presently exists, the establishment and maintenance of an immunization programme poses no great problem. The difficulty comes in expanding services to the communities where effective service does not yet exist, and this objective is currently being voiced as a medical, social and political priority.

This is where our science, primary health care and the participation of the community must come together.

A sobering discovery, however, is that so many ordinary people around the world do not readily understand or welcome our scientific approach and seem to have quite other modes of thought and ways of doing things.

Sometimes we dismiss *their* particular way of experiencing *their* world as 'people don't know what's good for them'. Perhaps we really mean 'people in *their* world don't know what's good for them in *our* world'.



Participation is a process leading to self-reliance and continuity in community-based social services, which grows most often out of people's involvement.

Development workers often talk about 'utilizing the community'...which gives a clue to what is really intended. It's an attitude in which *they* (the community) are used to help *us* (the professionals) do the work which we know 'best' needs to be done and is an extension of our programme.

Not just theoretically, but pragmatically, we should be able to appreciate that this does not work, at least not over the long term. At best, communities approached in this way simply react to our efforts for as long as the input goes on at a sufficient level of energy. But they do not take initiatives, or innovate, or become self-sustaining. Any slump in our contribution results in the programme becoming moribund.

Stimulation at the grass roots

There is a growing appreciation that true participation takes place when the programmes are known to be, are seen to be, and felt to be, responding to the communities' own needs and priorities and where they can actually utilize us for their own purposes.

Such an approach requires processes by which communities are stimulated at the grass roots—to collect their own information, gauge their own needs, fix their own priorities, weigh the available resources,

detail their own contribution, apportion responsibility, and manage and monitor their own work. Throughout, they must be encouraged and feel free to call upon the expertise and technical possibilities that can be made available to them.

This expertise must be ready with really practical possibilities adapted to the present community traditions with a reciprocal expectation that the community will be ready to create some new 'traditions'.

What all this amounts to, is bottom-up planning dovetailed into the necessarily modified top-down methodologies, so that the community knows it has a genuine and respected voice in decision-making.

This way expertise is on tap rather than on top.

Such an approach is profound and fundamental. It has enormous potential as a driving force not just for health but for the whole range of development activity.

Integration at the village level

The sooner we recognize that all our best-laid sectoral development programmes run into difficulties at the field level because of the inadequacy of our community participation processes, the sooner we will find a common focus leading to truly integrated inter-sectoral programmes. Unless integra-

tion is experienced and seen to take place at the village level, the rest becomes a futile rhetorical exercise.

Effective immunization over the long haul is not possible without a structure of primary health care, which in turn is impossible without this kind of community participation.

Carl Taylor, a leading public health advocate who is now UNICEF's Representative in Beijing, warns: "In developing countries, immunization may jeopardize its long-range impact if it gets too far ahead of other health services".

Perhaps the health sectors could lead the way by joining those already struggling to release the latent potential of communities in the wider perspectives of development.

It is an encouraging phenomenon that modern medicines are increasingly appreciated, even by the most tradition-bound. This does not mean they understand or care about the underlying scientific basis of medical knowledge; nevertheless something of what they utilize is readily accommodated in their own world view and fits with their notion of cause and effect. Injections, for example, are generally popular and are administered privately by many paramedics as well as by non-scientifically oriented persons. In Thailand it is reportedly common for clients

to introduce themselves to a *moo* (doctor) by saying, "I think I need an injection". Clearly the effective—should I say 'magical'?—qualities of modern medicine are appreciated by the public at large.

This said, there are important implications for an expanded programme of immunization, the aim of which is preventive rather than curative. Innoculations are generally well received, especially when patients are sick and under stress. Very ill persons even ignore the many and considerable cultural barriers and present themselves to the institutions where modern medicine is available. However, 'universal child immunization' is distinctly preventive, not normally linked to immediate illness (except in conditions of fear produced by an epidemic). It may be far removed from a community's sense of priority, necessity or timeliness.

To promote large-scale immunization will require understanding of why you do something at a particular time in order to ward off future consequences.

A need for mutual trust

Their understanding, however, need not be our understanding—the understanding beloved by health educators. For example,

many communities already have long-standing rituals to ward off evil consequences. Where this is the case we can adapt, for now, to prevailing ideas that the magic (of immunization) mediates with demonic and benign powers on behalf of the children, in the same way as their trusted healers do.

Whatever the basis for understanding the technology, the need for mutual trust and active partnership is essential. If the technology is good enough the community might even help handle the simple skills of administering shots. Any such suggestion is resisted with powerful arguments by professionals, but there are health posts systematically staffed by volunteers who do just this kind of work. Beyond dispute is that a properly consulted and freely consenting community can perfectly well do its own planning, run its own publicity, arrange for people to present themselves at a determined time and place, (see panel, page 20) and keep its own records so that the local inhabitants effectively know who is and is not protected, whom to encourage to get protection, and which villagers are due when for booster shots or re-immunization. What we are after is the vitalizing situation where we are not doing for *them* but *they* are utilizing *us* to the full. □



Community Participation: Now you see it, now you don't

by David Drucker

Community participation is like a chameleon. Now you see it, now you don't. It came to prominence in the newly independent countries in the heady post-war years under the name of community development. Its democratic and now-let's-do-it-all-together colours attracted much attention. Community development ministries, departments and institutions proliferated. Undoubtedly much was achieved in improving people's lives, but somehow by the mid-60s the land reform, rural co-operatives, agricultural projects, and training institutes had been largely forsaken.

Although community participation was not exactly in danger of becoming extinct, it was nevertheless in decline, espoused less and less—and then mainly by determined voluntary agencies.

Curiously enough, a 1968 conference of 89 ministers responsible for social welfare acknowledged the inadequacy of the largely Western concepts of welfare and development for conditions prevailing in the Third World. Such concepts allotted them simply the role of stretcher bearers. Their task was to assist unfortunates and the deserving poor who fell off the bandwagon of industrialization and the push to 'inevitable' economic growth.

The ministers' conclusions spoke of 'ensuring social justice', 'participation by the people', 'institution building' and the need for 'social policies and planning in development'.

According to these goals, *social* planning apparently should become a full partner, if not actually determine, *economic* planning (at that time in its unchallenged ascendancy). In addition, the improvement of the conditions of the people, especially the poorest, should become an objective of national policy, and participation a major method for change, in the nation-building endeavours.

Stirring words, but they seemed on their way to becoming an epitaph rather than a rallying cry, when, in the mid-70s, the World Health Organization turned attention away from curative medicine provided in

urban 'disease palaces', and launched primary health care. Under this initiative, joined by UNICEF, and helped along not a little by accounts of the 'barefoot doctors' of the People's Republic of China, the chameleon of community participation began a come-back. It figured prominently in the declarations on primary health care at Alma Ata: "The people have a right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care". Health itself was now envisioned as a part of an integrated overall development process *with* the people.

In a climate of global economic euphoria

The people have a right to participate in planning and implementing their health care.



David Drucker is a Social Policy and Community Development Consultant. He has worked with seven UN organizations in a number of countries in Asia and was formerly Lecturer in Social Administration at the University of Swansea, South Wales, U.K.

that gripped the more affluent and revived the 'trickle-down' theory of development, community participation again was to inspire many good people to perform good things for improvement in their living conditions. There was a resurgence of sightings not only in exotic-sounding places but even in our cities near at hand, and yet... and yet...

At the other end of events, away from international declarations, among community participation enthusiasts at the field level there is also a situation of—now you see it, now you don't.

Whose project?

All the way in our jeep the programme officer elaborated clearly and convincingly that "the project must belong to the *community*; it must be *their* project, not the agencies' project, not the government's project, but the community's own project". He, the *lurah* (the Indonesian village head man), and I stood inspecting the water hand-pump and its apron. We faced each other in a close knot while children, women, and a few men assembled and stood respectfully some way off looking at our backs. Three or four little girls were hunched down under the mouth of the pump, washing clothes by pounding them with sticks. Anyone coming for water would have to push them aside (as did one woman who placed her baby's soiled bottom under the spout).

I asked our community-oriented officer whether it would be good practice to separate the laundry and ablutions from under the pump which had been installed primarily to supply clean drinking water. "Yes of course." How would one design a place for doing the washing in this village? Would the villagers prefer to squat, stand, sit at a central trough and talk to each other...? He replied "I don't really know. I'll ask the *lurah*". I suggested instead we ask the large audience of ladies who were standing and staring at we *orang tinggi* (high persons). When the programme officer humoured me and put the question to them, they all began to laugh. "They are laughing", he said, "because they think it very strange—no one has ever asked them such things before!" So it seems no one had ever asked them how *their* project ought to be. How then could it really be *their* project?

Between the general theory of participation (or at least the rhetoric) and what actually happens in practice, a gap yawns. One *knows* and talks about participation but how does one *feel* it so that it permeates our attitudes and actions?

The above example is at the face-to-face level of the community where participation has to be manifest or nothing else counts. But in the middle—at the organizational and planning level, too—community participation has a way of vanishing—now you see it, now you don't.

An 80-country review of project documentation by an aid agency with a strong philosophical and policy mandate to community participation revealed that under the heading *Community Participation*, 45 of the 80 provided no information on such matters at all. Twenty-four indicated that free labour or a financial donation was the community's contribution. If planning was interpreted very generously (e.g. consultation regarding water distribution points) only 11 of the 80 indicated that the community played a part. Only one community was reported to have a role in evaluation of *its* project.

Seeking solutions

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has a special programme focused on participation and has an on-going 'dialogue' with about 700 interested persons around the world.

Reviewing the existing research they found that:

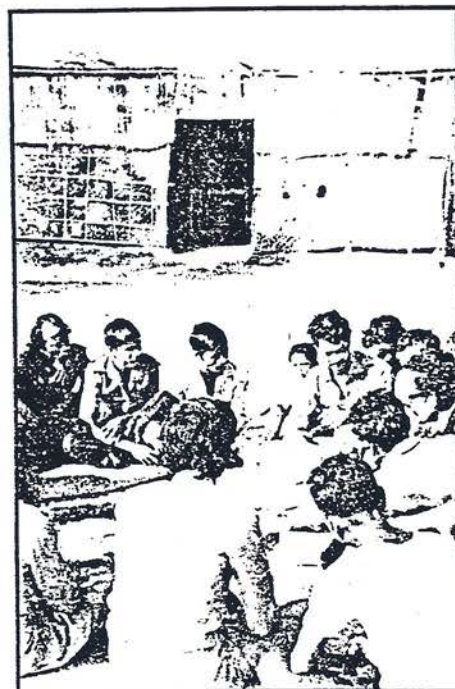
"large emphasis was given to the history, success and failure of particular 'participation projects' without however placing them in the wider social, economic, political, and cultural context...technical and management issues were often given priority...which ignored the social and political nature of such issues".

The research:

"showed convincingly that the central issue of people's participation has to do with power exercised by some people over other people...and implies an attempted redistribution of control over resources and of power in favour of those hitherto excluded".

UNRISD has concentrated on looking at the "generally hostile environment of *anti-participatory* forces" which "lies at the heart of the politics of development and social change but which receives scant attention or appreciation". The *practice* of participation seems, they say, to have borne little relationship to the bold *declarations*.

Projects examined in this context, it is argued, have only made marginal and limited gains. At best perhaps, they have provided basic learning experiences which take the local participants only to the starting point of envisaging, of asking more about and of seeking solutions to their local



Community participation was again to inspire many people to improve their living conditions.

concerns—concerns which in fact reflect the fundamental development questions of our time.

Perhaps a case of a chameleon switch—then we didn't see it—now we do! Participation in this sense is not about bits and pieces but about *systems*, about change, about how and where to begin, about intermediate and long-term goals, about organization and continuing open-ended processes, and, as the most current jargon has it, 'empowering the people'.

In a climate of economic decline and crippling Third World debt there is no surplus with which to fund community based programmes. It remains to be seen whether there will be a significant reallocation of resources away from our more familiar activities to tip the balance towards more radical, equitable and participatory change.

UNICEF is currently committed to a concerted effort to drastically reduce infant and young-child death and disease. The emphasis on child survival and development *could* certainly be effective as a determined first step towards a social revolution in which each child will have the opportunity to reach his full potential and truly participate in bringing about a world in which it is worth surviving.

Community participation...Now we see it...yes...yes...we still do! Can we rely on it? □

cal analysis and a catalyst for discussion and action. However, its policies, programs, and projects must be analyzed in terms of who benefits, how, when, where, and why.

As a tool for persuading people about development information, it is largely ineffective. Putting across information cannot achieve social change when the structural and institutional context in which the receiver exists opposes his development.

In order to avoid being marginal, co-opted, or reactionary, popular theater workers must make a deliberate commitment to reverse the social, economic, political, and cultural oppression of the poor. Theater workers and adult educators must engage themselves in the struggle of the oppressed, using theater as an aid in articulating their concerns and demands, in clarifying the nature of poverty, and in working out organizational strategies for challenging those forces that create or reinforce poverty.

Theater is a powerful catalyst, but on its own it cannot achieve significant social

change. It must be integrated with the organizational capacity for action. Otherwise it will never be anything more than an interesting and exciting spectacle. Linking theater with popular organizations and developing the necessary organizational skills is perhaps the hardest task but it should be given priority attention: control of the organizations must be put firmly into the hands of the peasants and workers. Given a clearer commitment and strategy, popular theater is anything but a palliative for the deprived groups of Africa. ■

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Ross Kidd is co-founder of the popular theater movement in Botswana. He is currently at the University of Toronto, writing a doctoral dissertation on theater and nonformal education in the Third World.

Games Tap Children's Skills as Planners

by David Drucker

One of the intentions of the UNICEF-sponsored International Year of the Child (IYC) is to increase the benefits that will actually reach the children — especially the underprivileged children of the world. However, such a way of stating it echoes concepts derived from charitable origins, where the privileged donated to the deserving underprivileged. We must acknowledge and appreciate what the newer emphasis on participation means, both in terms of technically effective development and in terms of the essential recognition of the quality and equalitarian citizen-status that should rightly belong to all individuals. It is time we consider children not merely as sentimentalized beneficiaries, but as respected and vital contributors to their own and their community's well-being.

It is obvious to anyone who is familiar with the developing world that children above the toddler stage soon begin to work and contribute to the household, if not actually providing cash, certainly enhancing the social economy of their family and community with their labor. Enter any village and you will see children working. Park a vehicle near any market and the children will want to sell you something or will seek casual employment. In fact, a recent report states that in South Asia alone, 29 million

standards. Another fact is that children know. They know an enormous amount, and adults have failed to gather and put to use the very careful research undertaken, quite voluntarily and without guidance, by children, using their inherent sense of curiosity.

Watch a child staring intently at a parasitic growth on the trunk of a tree; watch him prod with a stick at an insect; listen to him tell about a neighbor's baby, or discuss who died and how they were sick; notice how every little hole is investigated, and every puddle or trickle of water becomes a focus of attention. Listen to my sophisticatedly educated son tell me about fantastic and truly obscure "achievements" that he has gleaned from the *Guinness Book of World Records*, or my small daughter tell me her skin is full of tiny, tiny holes — all research, however academically faulted.

Let me not labor the point — children know. But the community of children shares the circumstance of any community that is to be involved in development: we who are in the development business fail to recognize that those whose lives are, we hope, to be positively transformed, and who have for centuries known the local circumstances and condition of their lives, need to assist themselves and educate us by being skillfully encouraged to know what they know. What is required is the organization and presentation of their knowledge, so that together we can examine their knowledge in

a thoroughgoing and persevering way. If we can help this to happen, we may have earned sufficient trust so that they might be open to listening to and incorporating any new knowing that we developers think we know.

We must do this not in an unconsciously arrogant manner of "we-know-best-really," but in a genuinely equalitarian "how-does-this-fit-in-with-what-you-know" spirit of inquiry, which truly expresses a community development philosophy of partnership. We must remember that we have to ally centuries of experience that tells communities that much of what is initiated by outsiders is self-seeking and accrues to those up the hierarchy in the high status positions.

If community participation is to have the vitalizing effect that all the sectoral programs rather suddenly are beginning to say is essential to their development projects, it will be necessary to painstakingly generate (with sufficient and appropriately allocated resources and skilled personnel) a process leading to viable community planning mechanisms from the "bottom up," with ministries and agencies gearing themselves to the largely unfamiliar role of "support-down."

This brings me a long way round back to the children, for they can most certainly contribute to, and might even spearhead, development. After all, they will be around longer than most of us, either enjoying or carrying the burden of all our activities.

Take, for example, those puddles and trickles of water, and add the wells and the ponds, and the tanks, even the storage jars, and the springs and the waterfalls, the creeks and the drains and the rivers that children are the local experts in splashing, floating, and falling in, and knowing about. We know that contaminated water is the cause of untold discomfort and disease, and is one of the main outriders of death itself for far too many of these children. We in UNICEF, our governments, and others have determined to do something about what we know in this respect, with a whole range of clean water supply programs and projects.

We know a lot about a range of possible technical innovations and hardware, drills and pumps and pipes; we know something about the macroeconomics of such matters; and we know something about how start-up ("pump-priming") funds are assembled.

How can we put all this knowing, both available and potential, together? Well, how about inventing "Look, See, and Tell Games" — pleasurable and exciting games, yet serious, as the best games should be?

One game would be for the children to look out for every conceivable source of water in the surrounding area. The children could work in pairs or teams, leaving some kind of marker or agreed "secret sign" at

(Continued on page 10)

Games with Children

(Continued from page 7)

each source discovered, so that the same source is not claimed more than once by any "player," and so that a proper claim is made of each "find" and can be judged to belong to the first finder. Some kind of point system and reward for the most points could be devised. All the information from this "Look, See, and Tell Game" would then be brought together and displayed on the largest possible area on which an outline map of the village or community can be marked out—the school playground, a sportfield, a market square, the side of a house. The map can be outlined with chalk, stones, or bamboo, or scraped in the dry earth. The children can make models, with mud, coconut shells, card, anything. Then, with sections of the map allocated to pairs of children, they would fill in the map, marking all the water sources.

A village leader, a health worker, or a youth group might organize the whole game. Better still, an enterprising schoolteacher might use a water "Look, See, and Tell Game" to teach and link many aspects of the curriculum, preferably as a practical activity illustrating what the school is supposed to be teaching anyway—map-making, charts, graphs, handicrafts, hygiene, social studies, essay-writing—or as a valuable learning project in its own right.

Children could be asked to write on "24 hours of water use in my family," describing where the water comes from, how it is collected and stored, how much is used for what, and something about the seasonal variations. They could be set the task of producing a wall mural (children paired, each pair taking a small section of the wall) illustrating water use in the village. All of this clearly has direct relevance to the school curriculum.

From this basic game, we can move on to a "Look, See, and Tell Sanitary Inspector Game." Teams are again formed and reward given, this time to the team that identifies from all the sources the most water risk danger situations (having been told all about these beforehand—cattle drinking, bathing, clothes washing, open wells, defecation). They must place a sign to mark the danger and to claim the site for their team. The signs could be semi-permanent so as to mark the site until the risk was eradicated.

Now the risks would be added (big red spots?) to the sources plotted on the huge map. These water games might be linked appropriately to local water festivals like Holi, Mahathingyan, and so on. When the whole layout is satisfactorily completed, the village leaders and the whole village should be invited to attend a ceremonial inspection of the map. The whole thing will be ex-

plained (perhaps by the children themselves) and a full presentation made on "Our Village Water Conditions and What Might Be Done for a Clean Village Water Supply."

Of course, these games and the whole procedure expect much of the schoolteacher or whomever, and might require a campaign to back them up, with an orientation and practice sessions, sponsored by the education, welfare, or health authorities.

All of this information and the community involvement and interest engendered by these "game" activities are the fertile ground upon which can be built specifically local, tailor-made plans. In full consultation with a well-informed community, the engineers, the health educators, and the community organizers can tackle together a whole range of problems. We would, under these circumstances, have every reason to believe that the community has a full stake and will give a full effort to implementation, for the plans will be a reality to them and a challenge to us to fulfill our part in mutually realistic expectations.

This is only one illustration for a child-contributed approach to planning. Variations can be prepared and experimented with in relation to many if not all development activities, such as malaria control, immunization, nutrition (remember children are the experts in knowing the whereabouts and condition of pre-school children and babies). Other sectors concerned with agriculture, irrigation, forestry, husbandry, transport, markets, and so on could help devise action-oriented exercises in this way.

What we need to do is to try it, learn from real experience in the communities and villages where development activity is to take place, and work out some persuasive "How to" guides.

Is there anyone listening and interested out there in the knowledge network? Can we get together, hammer out the details, design materials, and try the approach out somewhere in relation to specific projects? ■

David Drucker is project officer for Social Welfare Training, UNICEF, Rangoon, Burma.

Who Controls the Medium?

I was inspired to write after reading the article, "Development Aids or Global Village Artifacts?", by H. Stuart Hawkins (DCR No. 27). This article is representative of many situations in India, but it touches only the very surface of the problem. What has to be understood is the context in which "inappropriate" equipment or technology finds its way into remote parts of the world. The baby food companies have been criticized for advertising their products, but in many other aspects of development, certain transference of values and technologies is usually not taken as seriously.

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Sunil Mehra, former communications officer with the Voluntary Health Association of India

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Washington, D.C.
20037 USA

October 1979
No. 28

development
communication
report



Games with Children

(Continued from page 7)

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