Principles of Community-Led Development:
Concepts, Methods, and Practice

Course Syllabus

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MEETING TIMES: Tuesday 5 – 8 pm, April 27 thru June 8, 2021 (Zoom meetings)

LINK: https://zoom.us/j/95527570056?pwd=RDBvSUk4MzEzNnZwRHh1bWJGb01WZz09

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This introduction to Community-led Development is offered as part of the partnership between the Arava Institute of Environmental Studies (AIES), the Arava International Center for Agricultural Training (AICAT), and the University of Arizona (UA). It is funded under the JNF Joint Institute for Food, Water, and Energy Security. This course is designed to build a conceptual understanding and specific skill set that will prepare its student to engage actively in community-led development. This foundational learning is a key component to a larger initiative to create long-term community partnerships in Africa, initially in Kenya, in which a process of collective problem-solving can be supported by technical expertise from the Arava and Arizona.

Community-led Development (CLD) is a process of change intended to increase well-being in an inclusionary manner. The core philosophy is that every community has the potential to solve its most urgent collective problems; that is, to assess needs, to decide on priority projects, to organize community participation, and to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of this collective action. In the dynamics of CLD, the role of the external development actor(s) is to mobilize community leadership, offer change options, support local decision-making, and identify linkages to external sources of knowledge and investment resources. A major goal of CLD is to promote community problem-solving, where the ownership of the change process resides within the community is the result of community initiative. CLD seeks to encourage local empowerment and instill local confidence in the ability to design and embark on a development path of their own choosing.

In this spirit, this course mediates theory and practice. It provides learners access to the reigning concepts, frameworks, and methods in community development. At the same time, however, the class activities are centered upon building the skill sets to approach local communities, create effective partnerships, promote a process of community self-assessment, negotiate alternative change options, and build local capacity to manage collective activities. Armed with these "tools" of development, the participants will have the opportunity to apply the ideas and new skills to the reality of rural Kenya and its social, economic, cultural, and institutional environment. The class activities focus on expanding the knowledge base on such factors as local environments, livelihood patterns, social practices and cultural values, the public institutional context, and access to external development actors (e.g. NGOs). The outcome of the course will be a proposed strategy to identify and approach potential community partners.

The course is designed for seven weeks, with a single meeting (3 hours) each week focused on a specific theme. It is expected, however, that course co-learners will take advantage of virtual communication technology to interact and engage in knowledge-sharing outside the class sessions.

COURSE OUTLINE

DATE	SESSION TOPIC	MESSAGES/READINGS
Apr 27	Introduction to the Course	*This session introduces the course and establishes the "rules of engagement."*
	• Introductory remarks (Hanni) • Ambassadors' welcome • AIES welcome (David) • Meet the participants	*Participants present themselves*
	• Course objectives, learning outcomes, expectations • Course content outline and organization	*Class discussion*
May 4	Community-led development in the broader context: concepts and measures	*Introduction to the concept of community-led development in the context of the broader development community of institutions and actors*
	• Meaning of development as directed change • Poverty and its determinants	

- Measures of poverty and development
- The emergence of the "development community"
- Development approaches
- Where does community-led development come from?
- How is CLD different? *Class Discussion*

May 11   Frameworks for understanding development change: how people talk about change

Session presents the "language" of development and the ways of analyzing the empirical reality of communities.

- Livelihood systems
- Sustainability
- Vulnerability
- Resilience
- Power: gender and social inclusion
- Participatory development
- What is a theory of change?

May 18   From ideas to projects to people

Session focuses on how a project is identified and organized within a community. Skills emphasize the tools of information management in assessment and evaluation.

- "Anatomy" of a development project
- Project design: the role of information
- Quantitative and qualitative assessments
- Participatory appraisal techniques
- Tools of participation: mobilization, capacity-building, articulation
- Community ethnography
- The critical importance of collective action
- Challenge of structural inequities
- Mediating diverse interests
- Monitoring and evaluation

| **May 25** | The role of technology and knowledge in the process of development | *Session discusses how external knowledge and technologies are incorporated into local communities.* |

- Development of technological alternatives
- Examples of technology initiatives — *Presented by AIES staff/faculty*
- *"Appropriate technology,"* what does it mean? — *Discussion of what is "appropriate technology"*
- Concept of "externalities" of change
- Concluding insights — *Class discussion*

| **June 1** | Project design within the context of rural Kenya | *Session focuses on the context of rural Kenya framed in development "language."* |

- Environmental factors: natural stressors, climate, water and soil resources — *Student participation*
- Livelihood factors: the range of livelihood options — *Student participation*
- Cultural factors: ethnic groups, religions, family structure, etc. — *Student participation*
- Institutional factors: government and governance, public delivery systems, markets, health care, education, etc. — *Student participation*
- External actors: government projects, NGOs, churches, private companies — *Student participation*

| **June 8** | Collective strategy for community-led development | Class-led design of a CLD strategy |

- Identification of candidate communities — *Student participation*
- Strategy for contact with community leadership — *Student participation*
- Compilation of background data and documents — *Student participation*
- Presentation of the initiative to county and local officials — *Student participation*
- Presentation of the partnership proposal to the community — *Student participation*

- An action plan for the practicum   *Student participation*
- Final thoughts

PROCESS: This material in the syllabus constitutes the course content. over the period of six weeks. The first two sessions are led by the instructor and seek to create a common understanding and language of the key concepts of community-led development within the context of broader development approaches. The third week focuses on the tools and methods of CLD for the purpose of building a common skill set. The fourth week introduces the potential roles of Arava and Arizona as external sources of technologies designed to solve locally-identified problems. The following session seeks to apply the principles and tools from the previous meetings within the context of Kenya. Participant teams will be asked to work in designated counties and design a strategy for identifying a community-led development partnership. Since the participants reside in Kenya, real time data collection will be possible for some of this context information. The final session has this concrete outcome in mind: a step-by-step strategy for selecting and approaching a set of communities, contacting the formal officials and development actors in the counties, and preparing a proposal to present to community representatives. This strategy will be based on the CLD principles discussed in the sessions. Student participation is critical, especially in defining the Kenyan context and designing a potential project. A limited number of readings will be assigned for each week to complement the discussion.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: The purpose of this Community-Led Development course is to develop a solid capacity to engage in a development approach that centers on community empowerment, ownership, and project management. This is not a traditional development approach where "experts" arrive at a community to "solve their problems." It is rather an extended dialogue which begins with a partnership and a bilateral commitment to community problem-solving. It is intended that you will leave this course with confidence in your approach and skill sets and a strategy for creating CLD partnerships in your country.