Understanding Community and Community Development

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Abstract

This chapter delineates what is meant by the term 'community' in community development practice. Is the meaning changing in the context of development taking place in the socio-political and technological areas or is it some aspects of community functioning that are important in community development practice? Thus, the nature of community and its function towards meeting goals of human society has been explored.

Social workers work with communities at different levels ranging from micro to mezzo and macro level. Their processes in community development are guided by values and principles based on human rights, social and ecological justice. These are at the core of community development practice. While applying these values and principles and working at the grassroots level, social workers face dominant societal views and power structures that operate at local, regional, national and even international levels. Thus it is imperative to revisit the knowledge and skills a social worker needs to have in the field of community development.

Key words: community, community development, community development practice

Defining the Concept of Community

The earlier and most commonly held meaning of 'community' refers to people living in a place who have face–to-face contact with each other. Based on this assertion Tönnies (1955) classified community as 'Gemeinschaft' to refer to pre-industrial social formation where face–to-face contact was possible in rural and tribal society. With changes in industrialised society, a new society emerged that was more akin to impersonal contact amongst its people. People related with each in formal ways and life was contractual. Tönnies denoted this with the term 'Gesellschaft'. This conceptualisation served the purpose of defining and conceptualising community in earlier days; however, such a tight compartmentalisation changed over time as community crossed physical boundaries of place and people could connect with each other by using technologies and still fulfil most of the functions of the community. A critique undertaken by Bhattacharya (2004, p. 11) also points out that a place-based conceptualisation of community

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itself is not sufficient to conceptualise community development practice for three important reasons. Firstly, it refers to 'a neighbourhood, a small town, or a village… regardless of the absences of any cohesion in it'. Secondly, it disguises various differences and shared interests that transcend boundaries of place and unite people together to act. This is also regarded as Durkheim's 'organic solidarity' and Tönnies' 'Gesellschaft'. Thirdly, place-based conceptualisation of the community 'fails to take into account the radical social change that is brought by modernity' (Bhattacharya, 2004, p. 11).

Defining community in the context of community development requires a broadening of definition that includes both place-based, interest-based and other forms of new and emerging communities, for example, web community, Facebook or other social media community and online groups that traverse physical boundaries and relate with unknown people in diverse locations.

This can also be explained by looking at different theoretical explanations about what constitutes community. Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan (2012, p. 294) cite Luloff and Krannich (2002) who have used three theoretical approaches – human ecology, systems theory and field theory – to explain what constitutes community.

The theory of human ecology explains 'community as the structure of relationships through which a localised population meets its daily requirements' (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan (2012, p. 294). It points out its key role of providing support to its members for its survival by forming relationship of care. Systems theory identifies community as the amalgamation of different units or sub-systems that jointly work towards achievement of community goals. This theory views people as holding different roles and statuses as part of different systems closely linked with each other. The field theory describes 'social interaction as the most critical feature of community' (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012, p. 295). Thus these theories contribute in explaining the community as a structure of relationship whose members are inter-related and function through social interaction. Community relationship could be based on shared identity that is derived from place, ethnicity, culture, interest or ideology. This identity helps bring solidarity amongst people, what Durkheim (1960, as cited in Kenny, 2011a, p. 46) identified as 'mechanical' and 'organic solidarity'. The distinction between these two types of solidarity is regarded as a difference due to commonality of experience for the former and divergence of experience for the latter type of solidarity. This concept is useful in understanding community as an entity where people share identity that brings solidarity in relationship. It helps cross physical boundaries and thus becomes relevant in understanding post-industrial and post-modern communities that have shared identity and are functional communities. Kenny (2011a, p. 47) describes two types of solidarity: thick and thin solidarity. The thick type of solidarity is

where people have 'deep [feelings] and an all-embracing relationship', such as racial or ethno-religious groups, and thin solidarity refers to relationships that are most evident in the post-modern era whereby people take membership of different organisations on the basis of identification with a profession, group or place; however, their involvement may not be as deep and all-encompassing as in thick solidarity. An example could be membership of a professional organisation, human rights group, or action groups. Nevertheless, each sort of solidarity has its place in community development work as people are entrusted with different roles and responsibilities based on their affinity and sense of ownership.

Elements of Community

For communities to function and help their members to achieve their goals, compositional factors that include structural aspects and circumstances for growth (poverty, crime, housing and environment) (Chaskin, 2009, p. 32); and physical location, including both natural and built environment are important. According to Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan (2012, p. 295) these 'physical resources are important for functional, aesthetic and symbolic reasons'. If we examine the impact of physical resources on the inhabitants of a place, then it is clear that people who live in places which are deprived of resources, opportunities for growth in education, skills development, and offer limited employment opportunity, are restricted in functionality. Aesthetically, people also prefer to live in places that are pleasurable and, symbolically, physical resources strengthen the identity formation of community members (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012, p. 295).

This does exemplify that the quality and nature of physical resources are important and constitute an important ingredient of the community. However, different professional groups focus on different aspects of community. Physical resources are an area of possible improvement where urban planners are more likely to focus to. Social workers and social theorists are more likely to be concerned with another ingredient of the community, that is, people's relationships, networks and trust in those relationships. These things form the basis of community strengths as different stakeholders in the community (individuals and groups) bring different sets of knowledge and skills that determine existing community capacity to effect change and helps in building an empowering process that relies on existing community social capital. This can also be described in the form of various assets that make up what has been termed 'social capital' (Putnam, 1993). Putnam describes social capital as a resource that the community can draw upon to achieve common goals. A very similar conceptualisation of elements of community structure and functioning has been theorised as 'community interaction theory', initiated by Wilkinson and further developed by others (Wilkinson, 1970; 1991; Cheers & Luloff,

2001; Sharp, 2001; Carroll et al., 2006, all as cited in Taylor, Wilkinson & Cheers, 2008, p. 31). This theory points out that every community has elements of 'local society, the community field, community structures (including power networks); horizontal and vertical patterns of interaction; strong ties and weak ties and community narratives' that together promote and develop social interaction which is the essence of the community. In order for the community to achieve goals of development its members should act together in various social fields such as education, health, transport and welfare. Thus the rise of community is not possible until social fields linking together act for achievement of the common good (Taylor, Wilkinson, & Cheers, 2008, p. 34).

Understanding processes of social interaction and how different social fields/ sectors link together and act together thus becomes important in a local society/ community that could be geographically based, interest-based or in a virtual environment.

Functions of Community

If one examines the role and importance of community in the social, economic, spiritual and political life of human beings, it is far clearer that various functions that are performed by the community have a bearing on the extent of well-being and disadvantage experienced by its members. Communities through identification and symbolic artefacts provide a sense of belongingness to their people. Human beings associate and form relationships with each other based on shared identity of place, class, race, ethnicity, cultural heritage and various other mechanisms that help form these identities. This *sense of belongingness* connects people with each other and builds social capital that is referred to as relationships based on mutuality, trust and cooperation. Although there is no certainty that people will develop trust and cooperation, a sense of belongingness opens up possibilities of establishing connections, networks and generating solidarity. This formation of social capital can be both inclusive and exclusive of marginalised and disadvantaged communities. How people can be excluded by shared identity of some members of the society can be understood by looking at three case studies in Victoria, Australia presented by Mendes (2004): Footscray Matters: excluding drug users; Port Phillip action group: excluding street prostitutes; and the Blackshirts group who went against single mothers. (See website URLs for action groups following the reference list.) These show contrasting examples of social inclusion and exclusion in policy debates in that Australian state. Kenny (2011a, p. 52) adds to our understanding of this phenomenon by pointing out that 'people identify with communities on the basis of their own concrete experiences and relations', thus paving the way for both inclusive and exclusionary practices.

It has been generally agreed that communities are formed based on people's shared interest, mutual concerns, and identity formations, and may dissipate when needs are met or tasks accomplished (Kenny, 2011a, p. 53). However, the relationships formed and associations built are channelled to work together on issues that are similar and conform to the value orientation of members. The organisations raising awareness and taking action to bring about change in policies and actions taken by public and private sector players in the socio-political and economic and environmental context could encompass many diverse issues such as the green movement, environmental degradation projects, an anti-corruption drive, the fight for land rights and gender inequalities. Such examples could be GetUp!, Avaaz, Human Rights Watch, Greenpeace, and Amnesty International. (See website URLs in reference list.)

In contemporary society, advancement in communication technology has helped in reducing distance and bringing like-minded people together, thus increasing the functionality of interest-based communities. 'Virtual communities' is one example of such communities which exist across boundaries and help in bringing people together to work closely, not only on local issues but also on matters that concern humanity globally. Virtual communities function to empower those who feel marginalised in traditional structures of community life (Blackshaw, 2010, as cited in Kenny, 2011a, p. 51). They provide an alternative to face-to-face interaction, although they could be forming thin relationships with new members in the community; however, they could also act to cement existing relationships, thus providing an opportunity to build rich community experiences. Communities thus have wider roles to play. It is not only about thinking locally, but also acting globally.

The current environment of uncertainty and exponential growth in materialism has given rise to inequalities and unjust distribution of resources for the majority of people living in the 21st century. Moreover, the current trend in most of the developed and developing economies is towards shifting responsibility for welfare services onto the community. Thus the community has to take more responsibility in providing support, care, financial resources, technical know-how and maintenance services to its members with minimum resources provided by the state. Thus changes in the functions of the community call for alternative ways of working with communities to support them in new functional responsibilities (Ife, 2013).

Community Development as an Approach of Social Work

Community development has been identified as a core social work approach or method to work with communities who are disenfranchised, marginalised and faced with broad social issues resulting from unjust policies and planning at global, national, state and local level. The failure of neo-liberal policies and the social democratic

welfare state in meeting human needs has become evident in the last four decades and the current 21st century where widening gaps between the rich and poor, an increase in hunger, poverty, crime, and social unrest is evident in most of the world. Countries such as Congo, Zambia and Zimbabwe now have a lower human development index (HDI) than in 1970. There are widening gaps in the health status of some countries where they have suffered serious set-backs; besides this, economic growth has been extremely unequal amongst the countries of the world (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2010). Still there are 1.2 billion people who live in conditions of extreme poverty. The global financial crisis has widened the global jobs gap by 67 million people (United Nations, 2013). Social workers are faced with these challenges on a global scale and have roles and responsibilities to effect change that prevents marginalisation and meets human needs.

The social work profession has addressed human sufferings through charity and philanthropy in the past. The Welfarist tradition of western countries (such as the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia), where people have reliance on government support, has also failed in meeting human needs, which is evident by increasing disparity in income levels, rising employment even in these countries over the last decade. Ife (2013) argues that community-based solutions are needed to address contemporary social issues such as poverty, hunger, illness, crime and violence. Thus developing community-based structures can serve as an alternative to large-scale bureaucratic structures and governance that might be distanced from the community it plans to serve. Kenny (2011a, p. 8) defines community development as 'a method for empowering communities to take collective control and responsibility for their own development'.

The main focus of the community development approach is on instituting those interactive processes that help communities to take autonomous decisions on meeting their needs and addressing issues that affect their life the most. It promotes collective action rather than an individualised approach and thus can be differentiated from approaches that focus on individual well-being. The International Federation for Social Workers regards social workers as change agents who bring change in the lives of individuals, groups and communities. Community development has the potential to transform society and thus bring change in the status quo.

Community development needs to be contextualised in the current environment. Many societies are now developing as mixed pluralistic societies which embrace heterogeneity in their composition, relationships and practices. Modern societies that are best known as industrialised societies share a common feature: relationships amongst people are no longer confined to 'places' and have been extended to unknown

people in unknown places. They no longer hold the same norms and value system that were pertinent in pre-industrialised society.

Kenny (2011b, p. i17) believes that what is needed is 'an edgy community development practice that is never secure and does not operate in a comfortable "home"'. Largely community development is being practised through non-government organisations (NGOs) also known as the third sector that includes non-government organisations, not-for-profit, non-profit, voluntary organisations/ associations, community-based organisations, civil society that work autonomously from governmental control or semi-autonomously. These various forms of community-based organisation are the basis of organising communities, working with communities to effect change processes.

To understand what community development offers, it is important to consider its purpose and what it is that it tries to achieve. Community development fosters **active citizenship** whereby individuals work together to improve human conditions for the 'well-being of their communities' Kenny (2011a, p. 19). This role of being active citizens can be performed in four ways. Firstly, it largely maintains existing power relationships between the 'giver' and the welfare recipient under the guise of 'civil virtue'. The second type of active citizenship is 'individualized self-help or do it yourself' (Cornwell, 2008, as cited in Kenny, 2011a, p. 110). This ideology is promoted in neo-liberal policies where citizens are obliged to aim for their self-fulfilment. Thirdly, it can be in the form of 'defensive opposition', where citizens may challenge a particular policy and resist change to an existing relationship or assets; however, power relations are not challenged. The fourth type of active citizenship is the idealistic version of 'visionary active citizenship'. This form of citizenship brings alternative ways of thinking and doing and changing the existing power relationships in the community for the benefit of those who are oppressed and marginalised. The concept of active citizenship is also aligned with developing **human agency** as one of the goals of community development. Bhattacharyya (2004, p. 13) cites Giddens (1984), who postulates human agency as being able to 'act otherwise'; it is further explained as 'to be able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs'. Thus the aim of community development practice is to promote human agency, that is, human freedom to choose actions that could sit anywhere on the continuum from maintaining existing relationship, self-help, defensive opposition and visionary act of citizenship. According to Bhattacharyya (2004), development of human agency as a goal of community development also serves the purpose of including the broad spectrum of community development that encompasses 'economic, social, [cultural] and improvement of quality of life'.

Principles and Strategies of Community Development

The practice of community development should be guided by its goal. As discussed earlier, developing 'human agency' and 'active citizenship' is a key goal of community development practice; an ideology of equality, social justice and rights seems to be closely linked to this goal. Key principles and strategies that a worker might adopt to guide community development practice are delineated here with evidences from studies in related fields.

Human beings can achieve their full potential in the society only if they have equal opportunities to grow and prosper and their basic rights are secured; that means that society takes responsibility for meeting people's rights and ensuring that distribution of resources is just.

The seminal work of Paulo Freire (1972) regards human beings as change agents who in active pursuit of their goal should be able to identify needs, and make decisions on how to meet those needs. This positions them in a state of power where they hold decision making power. He further postulates that human beings can only be liberated from oppression if they have critical awareness of their current situation, which he termed as 'conscientization'. It is this consciousness raising that empowers people to make decisions that affect their life. Doing community development work that aims to develop human agency to transform their existing conditions of powerlessness and act as a collective to change human conditions begins with personal empowerment.

To bring about change in the society, ***empowering members*** of the community is thus important and to empower their participation and voice in the decision making process is the cornerstone of the community development process. However, it has been noticed that not all members of the society have equal opportunity to participate. One such example could be the voice of children in their neighbourhood community development. Goodwin and Young's (2013) work with children and young people in a 'school engagement project' found that children's perspectives reflected not only their own age-related issues, but also shared adult perspectives influenced by their developmental stage and experiences. Their study concluded that it was important to include the voices of children in neighbourhood development programs as they are important stakeholders in the developmental processes. Similar examples of the value of empowering processes can be drawn from Quinn and Knifton's (2012, p. 593) paper on a 'Positive Mental Attitude' project, which showed that mental health service users gained mastery over their lives through participation in arts, drama and performances. Stephens, Baird, & Tsey (2013) argue that empowerment even needs to be embedded in preparing and training community development practitioners. This can be achieved by providing opportunities for critical reflection on practice and experience which will bring attitudinal change in

individuals and transform their lives. It is this approach that prepares empowered people to empower others in the community.

The concept of human agency, where people have decision making power to decide what they need and how these needs should be met, is further linked to values that inspire people to act for their own self-development and for a group as a whole. Values around **human dignity and worth** are considered to be driving the liberation movement for people who have suffered disadvantage and marginalisation (Rahman, 2008). One of the examples given by Rahman (2008) is the liberation movement of indigenous tribes who were bonded labourers in Maharashtra, India and who organised themselves and fought for land rights, minimum wages and later focused on cultural and political rights.

Community development aims to bring about change in the oppressive powerful structures and institutions in the society. These structures could be class, race, gender and institutions such as capitalism, patriarchy, racism, ageism and sexuality. Community development workers are involved in **social policy action** to bring about change in existing inequality in policies that disadvantage and marginalise certain sections of the society. This requires collective action and involvement in conflict with unjust policies and practices. There are many examples of people's movements and resistance to politically and economically driven modern development efforts that have resulted in economic, social and environmental disasters for the society. One such example is the formation of 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' (Save Narmada Movement) in 1985 to resist the development that had devastating consequences for the people who inhabited Narmada Valley and would have been affected by the construction of a number of dams on the Narmada River in Central India. The Narmada Valley Development Project (NVDP) plans to build several mega, medium and small size dams. One of the largest dams, Sardar Sarover Project (SSP), is recognised as causing large-scale human displacement. Official figures project human displacement to be only 40,000 and rehabilitation plans have been put in place (Ahmad, 1999, as cited in Routledge, 2013); however, figures obtained from Save Narmada Movement (McCully, 1996; Ram, 1993; Sangvai, 2000; all cited in Routledge, 2003) project these figures to be much higher, that is, nearly '85,000 people will be displacement by the SSP and with completion of dam 400,000 people will be displaced and another 600,000 will have adverse livelihood conditions'.

The Save Narmada Movement is a people's movement where both insiders Adivasis (Indigenous) people who belong to the Narmada Valley and outsiders who are activists – social workers such as Medha Patkar, students and like-minded people who oppose such development efforts – have come together to resist such developmental change. The movement has now a history of nearly two and a half decades where it has progressed through their effort of resistance by mobilising

people, raising people's awareness, conscientisation, reconstruction and use of Gandhian non-violent techniques such as 'Satyagraha', fasting and Yatras (marches), strikes, hunger strikes and self-sacrifice. Such mass efforts of resistance and reconstruction could not be possible without people's participation, involvement and commitment.

A number of global issues that are affecting humanity in the 21st century include poverty, water scarcity, food insecurity, climate change and resultant disasters. Pawar (2013, p. 249) discusses the main issues that are related to water security, such as 'water availability in the eco-system', 'water distribution', 'fair distribution of water resources, 'use and abuse of water', 'ownership and control' and governance that warrants appropriate social action if we need to address such wide-ranging issues associated with water scarcity. Social workers who are intending to bring change in existing policy are likely to benefit from community development principles and processes to organise the community and raise awareness in the community. This will require **people's participation and engagement** at all levels. Any social action requires mobilisation of people who are committed to the cause and willing to take collective action. This might include strategies such as having consultations, negotiations with people who are in governance and control resources. '[Social workers] can mobilize communities to participate in the redistribution decision making process, stop vested interests, seek accountability for external costs and to ensure adequate rehabilitation policies and programs' (Pawar, 2013, p. 257). Social action strategies such as lobbying, public demonstrations, protests, signature campaigns, media talks, street plays and peaceful disobedience could be used in exposing those who have vested interest in exploiting ecological resources and using them for their own benefit.

Another important principle of community development is ***sustainability***. An example of how social workers can work towards **sustainable development** is presented by Rambaree (2013). He presents the case of Mauritius, where local people are denied their rights to access the beach by economic power-holders who represent the minority Franco-Mauritians (2%), who possess 75% of beachfront houses and control more than 80% of land ownership, have strong links with multinational companies and exploit the tourism industry for their own benefit, thus depriving local people of economic gains. Another group holding power in this society is the Mauritian Indian community who came to Mauritius as indentured labour several decades back and now control political power. This group is leasing out 'state land' to its own community for a hundred-year period. Oppressive measures have been used to silence the voice of local people by political groups in the past. Local people are of the opinion that their involvement and participation in the sustainable initiative are important for them to share the benefits of economic

development. It should also be an integrated approach where development is promoted in all spheres, such as socio-cultural, economic and political. Rambaree (2013) suggest that social workers who work as community development workers have requisite knowledge and skills to mobilise people and engage them in sustainable development initiatives. He argues that social workers can challenge existing structures of inequality by mobilising people and helping them create alternative structures for overall community well-being. They can embrace political activism to guide the direction of change and work towards collective empowerment by engaging with international support groups to boost the agenda of change. Their knowledge and skills in analysing existing power dynamics in the society and ability to work at the grassroots level guided by values of social justice enables them to effect change that is just and sustainable.

Over the last few decades, social workers have encouragingly been involved in environmental issues and ***building awareness at the community level*** about the harmful impacts of unsustainable, unequal and unjust practices in the ecological sphere. A well-known environmental movement of the poor known as 'Chipko (Embrace) movement' (1973-1981) is a good example of forest protection by the people of the hill region of northern India. This movement led to 'prohibition of commercial deforestation' (ref?). Although this prohibition also led to non-availability of forest goods for the local residents for home and livelihood purposes, the ripple effect of this movement also led to the preparation of a cadre of social activists who became active citizens; they formed associations and organisations to fight against unjust policies and mentored other youth and workers who were conscious of environmental degradation and its impact on humanity (Ishizaka, 2013).

Another issue that has significance in both the economic and environmental realm relates to global food insecurity that has raised questions about unsustainable food growing systems, marginalisation of small farmers, rising hunger and non-availability of fresh produce in urban localities, along with heavy reliance on convenience stores that are selling processed food. Macias (2008, as cited in Besthorn, 2013, p. 193) affirms that community development initiatives at the grassroots level and involvement of professional organisations have been increasing in past few decades. Besthorn (2013, p. 198) says that social workers are trained in conducting needs assessment of communities, identifying strengths and community resources. These skills can be vital in identifying specific needs of urban local neighbourhoods whose needs for ethnic fresh food and preferences for the availability of cooked meals close to where they reside is important in sustaining vertical farming in urban localities. They are also trained to effectively work with **culturally diverse communities**, which is important for relating to people who may belong to different age, gender and ethnicity groups. Social workers can also use their **advocacy** skills

and organising skills that may be needed to develop relationships and negotiate change with 'city planners', 'law makers' and 'municipal governments' (Besthorn, p. 198).

Being a Generalist Practitioner

The diversity in nature of community, its culture and needs point towards the need for generalist community development practice that embraces the principle of holism and rejects a linear solution to problems (Ife, 2013). This is also aligned to the post-structuralist perspective that values the subjective experiences of people and communities and emphasises the changing nature of knowledge that is constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed, thus highlighting a pluralistic perspective. This form of conceptualisation implies that there are various theoretical perspectives and viewpoints about how communities function and what could be achieved in community development practice.

Community development workers thus need to embrace wide-ranging perspectives to work with communities. They need to understand issues from micro to macro level. It could be as small as locality/neighbourhood development to connecting with interest communities across the borders or bringing changes in existing institutions, policies and structures. A work of this nature warrants a generalist practice approach where they are open to learn and be educated by the community itself. It does not require a specialist approach where power dynamics are inherent in a specialised knowledge base. However, it does not deny access to specialists if need be, but that should be only a last resort (Ife, 2013).

The work carried out by social workers has to be in conformity with the principles and values of community development.

Educating Social Workers in Community Development Practice

According to Ife (2013, p. 380), a 'professional model' for practice or having a 'specific community work educational qualification' is contrary to the ethos of community development. This will set community workers apart as having specialised knowledge that discounts people's local knowledge. Rather he suggests that community development workers should have a broad knowledge base that helps them deal with the complexity and challenges of community work.

The question then arises as to what sort of knowledge should be imparted and how it should be given. Purcell (2011, p. 267) suggests that instead of having a narrow focus on some theoretical perspectives such as the critical perspectives of Freire and Gramsci as the main or only critical theories, community workers will benefit from having a broader knowledge base, that is, 'theories of everyday life'. Purcell (2011, p. 272) further argues that the community worker might explore a

knowledge base in everyday life that is space bound rather than in a time zone. Students visiting a physical space observing, strolling without a preconceived notion and knowledge base will explore the everyday experiences of ordinary people in those spaces and understand how 'ideology, social control and resistance' is being played out. This observation can be undertaken by even an ordinary person who can be instrumental in generating knowledge/understanding that is specific to that space and population and develop insights for practice.

Stephen, Baird and Tsey's (2013) experience of imparting community development education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities points out the need to develop collaborative education based on real-life experiences. They propose that teachers need to be humble to learn from the students. A model that is based on empowering the learners to empower others; linking personal learning with practice experience through participatory approaches and enhancing their bonding and bridging social networks with fellow students, community members and alumni involved in various community projects could be beneficial in getting support, resources and guidance.

Community development work is challenging, time-consuming and at times frustrating as processes of change are slow and involve power conflicts amongst the community members, local, state and national government. The breadth and depth of community work is far-reaching and thus includes various stakeholders with whom to negotiate and deal on a daily basis. Community development workers thus need to have time to themselves for self-reflection and support to deal with the stresses of daily life. Social work education thus needs to build resilient workers who are equipped to face the challenges of this work.

Community development education and training thus needs to be based on the principles of community development work. What applies to practice is very much related to what should be the imparted knowledge and how it should be done. Thus participatory approaches to learning that is embedded in everyday life experiences and empowering workers to empower others are some useful strategies that an educational institution could foster in program development and delivery.

Conclusion

This chapter has briefly described some of the processes and challenges facing communities in contemporary society. It has then examined the concept of community, its elements and function that has relevance for the community development perspective. Community development as an approach has been proposed to overcome some of the challenges posed by wider socio-economic, political institutions and the resultant failure of national and international policies to overcome these. How the community development perspective can be utilised

to solve some of the crises of 21st century such as the water crisis, food insecurity, unsustainable of food-growing practices, access issues and rights of the poor and marginalised has been examined. Lastly, a case for generalist practitioners and education that is based on community development principles has been put forth.

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Websites of action groups

Port Phillip Action Group (http://ppcg.org.au/about-us/)
Blackshirts group (https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/26650)
GetUp! (https://www.getup.org.au/)
Avaaz (http://www.avaaz.org/en/)
Human Rights Watch (http://www.hrw.org/)
Greenpeace (http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/)
Amnesty International (http://www.amnesty.org.au/)