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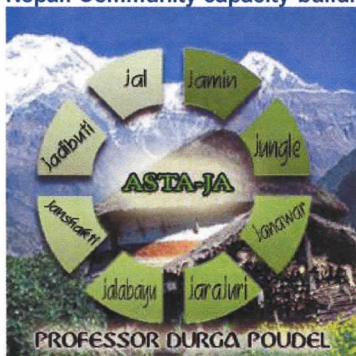
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## Nepal: Community capacity-building

*Professor Durga D. Poudel*



Although community capacity-building has been traditionally viewed as simply providing training, developing skills, organizing field days, workshops, meetings, and providing material support to a community, many current developmental experts and practitioners view community capacity-building as an approach to sustainable socio-economic transformation. When we view community capacity-building as an approach, it extends beyond raising community awareness, trainings, and organizing field days to a whole

process of identifying community problems, analyzing the problems, developing collaborative partnerships, project design and implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of community projects. It includes the generation of both tangible and intangible outputs to a community. Tangible outputs of community capacity-building may include training, material supply, etc., intangible outputs include the vision, mission, confidence, motivation, and commitment for sustainable development.

Besides some appreciable growth on the communication sector, foreign remittances, community forest conservation and development, and the development of private sector in selected areas, success in Nepal's developmental efforts in the past decades are far from satisfactory. Nepal faces multidimensional developmental challenges consisting of not only the development of infrastructures such a road networks, irrigation system, hydroelectricity, hospital systems, educational facilities, research and development, and industries, but also on law and order, security, good governance, social inclusion, and environmental and natural resource conservation and development. Developmental challenges in the coming years will be further complicated due to increasing population, food and energy security, unemployment, global climate change, and increasing natural disasters. Natural resources problems such as erosion and land degradation, contaminated water and food system, depleting aquifers, and deforestation continue to be major challenges. Other challenges include widespread corruption, political instability, lack of appropriate policies and programs, lack of research and innovation, lack of competitiveness in global trade, and poor information management.

To address the multitudes of challenges and issues effectively and to realize a fast-paced socio-economic transformation, Nepal government must come up with a pragmatic and comprehensive plan and strategies. Of course, the implementation of large scale developmental projects such as roads, irrigation, hydropower, health services, transportation, etc. are beyond the capability of local communities. By forming community organizations, local communities can effectively participate in nation-building by designing and implementing small to medium size community development projects. Such projects may include food production, agricultural commercialization, eco-tourism, drinking water supply, community schools, herbal processing, marketing, handicraft development, small irrigation, micro-hydro, forest management, bio-fuel, wind energy, and pasture management. This certainly requires appropriate policies and programs for community development.



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## FIVE QUESTIONS



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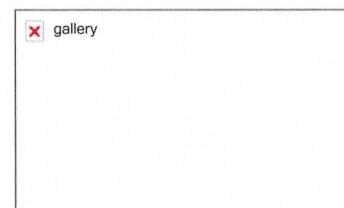
**Should the Monarchy be revived?**

- Yes
- Wait for some time
- Not desirable

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Decentralization and donor-supported NGO delivery mechanism has been adopted to facilitate country's development, especially after 1990, hoping that through this mechanism a fast-paced service delivery as well as raising community awareness and empowerment is possible. The Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) can certainly be taken as an example of successful community-capacity-building effort in Nepal. Currently, more than 16,000 Community Forest User Groups manage over a million hectare of forests areas, which is about one third of Nepal's forest areas. Available literatures indicate that the CFUGs have been successful in improving the health of their community forests. This success of the community forestry program may sufficiently testify the potential of Nepalese communities in addressing their community problems successfully. It also indicates that Nepalese communities possess potential for revolutionizing nation's economic development through multitudes of community initiatives including micro-hydro, small irrigation systems, drinking water supply, solar and wind energy, bio-fuel, eco-tourism, medicinal and aromatic plants, agricultural commercialization, and agro-industrial development if appropriate policy measures are developed. However, the encouraging story of CFUGs does not necessarily reflect the whole aspect of communities in Nepal. Recent coverage on Kantipur Television showed VDC staff in Taplejung basking in the sun, chatting, and weaving scarves during office hours. The VDC office had recently received about 55 lakhs rupees for community development for the next six months. This certainly speaks a whole lot about community motivation, and was quite disappointing. This is most likely not an isolated incident as similar occurrences are likely to have been taking place elsewhere in Nepal, including in other VDCs and governmental offices. Nonetheless, this may sufficiently indicate that our communities basically lack motivation for development. The question, now, is how to motivate them for development?

While there exist several motivation theories including the famous theory of Maslow' hierarchy's of needs in literatures, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of Professors Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, Department of Clinical and Social Psychology, Rochester University, New York, is certainly quite mind-boggling. The SDT theory, in its broadest sense, states that motivation develops from within us because of our needs and the urge for their fulfillment by developing various skills and capacities. In other words, intrinsic motivation comes from within when people like to work and get enjoyment by accomplishing their tasks. According to Karen McCally (2002), "Deci's and Ryan's most startling finding was that rewards such as prizes and money were not only less effective than behavioral psychologists had long supposed, but under some circumstances could actually *diminish* people's feelings of engagement and motivation." How does it translate into developmental initiatives that include monetary incentives, support, perks, etc. in Nepal? Perhaps, focus should be on community outreach activities such as awareness campaign, education, community media coverage, and one-to-one consultations for increasing intrinsic motivation of community members for resource conservation and community development. Certainly, school teachers, politicians, social workers, and other community members can effectively play their roles on community development by educating their community members. In this context, NGOs involvement on community awareness, education, trainings, skill development, and motivating community members and community capacity-building for community development is well justified.

Community capacity-building programs in Nepal have been largely undertaken through donor assistance. Some of the organizations involved in community capacity-building in Nepal include the PACT for improving the competitiveness of farmers and agribusiness sector in selected commodities value chains, helping farmers in commercial production of agricultural commodities, creating and strengthening industry-wide partnerships, and facilitating agricultural and food trade, the USAID for strengthening community-based organizations for management of natural resources, the UNDP for capacity-building in community-based disaster management, and the IPDC for capacity-building in community media. In addition, other notable agencies that are involved in capacity-building in Nepal include the UN-HABITAT for capacity-building in water and sanitation sector, ADB for gender equality and empowerment of women, UNESCO for environmental sustainability, and PAF-Nepal for capacity-building of community organizations and partner organizations in Nepal. Various line ministries are also found involved in capacity-building programs. For instance, the Ministry of Irrigation is involved in capacity-building at local levels to ensure the effective participation of the local communities in planning, construction, and the management of small and medium irrigation systems, and the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology in national capacity self-assessment to address the environmental challenges including climate change, biodiversity and land degradation.

Community developmental initiatives such as agricultural development, food security, drinking water supply, irrigation, hydroelectricity, forest management, clean environment, agro-industrialization, wholesome food, or tourism development require development and utilization of basic resources such as land (*Jamin*), water (*Jal*), forest (*Jungle*), livestock and wildlife (*Janawar*), farm crops (*Jarajuri*), medicinal and aromatic plants (*Jadibuti*), climatic conditions (*Jalabayu*), and manpower (*Janashakti*). Since all these eight resources begin with Nepali letter 'Ja', they are collectively referred as 'Asta-Ja'; 'Asta' meaning 'eight' in Nepali language. It is

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## CARTOON OF THE DAY



Vestibulum consectetur, diam elementum tristique dapibus, felis dui placerat magna.

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possible to achieve a fast-paced socio-economic transformation that includes income generation, health services, educational facilities, social inclusion, gender equality, community empowerment, equity, and social justice through the scientific management and utilization of *Asta-Ja* resources. For this, scientific understanding of *Asta-Ja* resources, exploring their economic potential, assessing their environmental and ecological conditions, designing appropriate policy measures, and community capacity-building is necessary.

Considering the current status of NGOs and their participation in developmental works, governmental involvement, support from multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies in Nepal's developmental initiatives, developmental problems, and the status of local communities, the following guideline is suggested for an expedited community capacity-building and sustainable environmental and natural resources conservation, utilization and socio-economic transformation in Nepal:

- (1) **Recognizing and confidence-building.** It is a time for recognizing the hard work of various NGOs, INGOs, private foundations, tax-payers of those nations whose governments have helped Nepal in her socio-economic transformation, donor countries, multilateral agencies, academicians, media, and many other stakeholders who have been involved in capacity-building and socio-economic transformation in Nepal in past two decades. Recognizing and confidence-building on the part of governmental agencies, private industries, developmental practitioners, political leaders, local governmental bodies, local communities and other stakeholders that the NGO and INGO delivery mechanism presents a viable opportunity for an expedited community capacity-building in Nepal. However, the need for necessary improvement in NGO's and INGO's functioning, delivery process, transparency, and accountability in the context of Nepal's socio-economic, physical, and political environment cannot be overlooked.
- (2) **Community awareness and motivation.** Community capacity-building is a continuous, dynamic, and rigorous process. Community members should be sufficiently aware of the community problems and its nature, they should be educated and interested on these problems; and they should be sufficiently motivated for problem-solving. Various community awareness events, educational programs, and one-to-one consultations are necessary for raising community awareness and motivating community members in community capacity-building. Education raises interest level in an individual.
- (3) **Comprehensive view of development.** Currently, capacity-building programs in Nepal are largely uncoordinated, fragmented, single disciplinary, and partial. In order to develop community capacity-building as an approach to socio-economic transformation, capacity-building should be holistic, comprehensive, participatory, and problem-centered. Community capacity-building by adopting the *Asta-Ja* framework of resource conservation and utilization presents an opportunity for addressing community resource problems comprehensively and holistically.
- (4) **Long-term perspective.** Current community capacity-building programs in Nepal are supported by external funds, short-term, and dependent on foreign experts. A long-term perspective on resource conservation, management, policy implementations, community mobilization, and the formation and strengthening of community-based organizations is essential for sustainable environmental and natural resources development and utilization. While ensuring the longevity of community capacity-building programs, it is also important to make sure that these programs are self-reliance, dynamic, and locally owned.
- (5) **Active involvement of Government in capacity-building.** While NGOs, INGOs, and other private organizations are efficient in raising community awareness, working closely with local communities, conducting trainings, delivering services, and to some extent they are also free of bureaucratic norms, they are often limited on comprehensive technical capabilities and scientific know-how with regard to contemporary challenges and issues. Government should actively engage public institutions such as universities, research centers, colleges, grassroots organizations, private agencies, industries, and other similar organizations in community capacity-building and sustainable socio-economic transformation.

The *Asta-Ja* Abhiyan Nepal ([www.astajanepal.com](http://www.astajanepal.com)), is a non-profit, non-governmental organization with headquarters in Kathmandu, Nepal. Under the chairmanship of Mr. Lok Krishna Bhattarai, the *Asta-Ja* Abhiyan Nepal is spearheading efforts for raising community awareness, community capacity-building for sustainable *Asta-Ja* resource conservation and utilization, and socio-economic transformation in Nepal. The *Asta-Ja* Abhiyan Nepal envisions an economically prosperous, environmentally sound, and socially just Nepal through the sustainable development and management of *Asta-Ja*. The *Asta-Ja* Abhiyan Nepal also envisions Nepalese people and friends of Nepal recognizing, appreciating, caring, and sustainably developing and managing *Asta-Ja* for Nepal's economic prosperity, environmental quality, national pride, and social integrity by

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supporting nation's capacity-building for sustainable *Asta-Ja* conservation, utilization and socio-economic transformation in Nepal.

**Reference**

McCally, K. 2002. Self-Determined. What motivates you? Two Rochester experimental psychologists are challenging some cherished assumptions. Available at [http://www.rochester.edu/pr/Review/V72N6/0401\\_feature1.html](http://www.rochester.edu/pr/Review/V72N6/0401_feature1.html)

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