Towards Common International Standards for Community Development Practice

A draft consultation paper for
IACD members – December 2017

IACD DRAFT GUIDANCE: TOWARDS COMMON INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE.

iACD
International Association for Community Development
Association Internationale de Développement et D'Action Communautaires

2018 65TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR
WITHOUT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
THERE IS NO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Foreword

This discussion paper has been prepared for IACD members. It aims to provide guidance as to common international standards for community development practice. The paper presents the key themes and areas common across community development practice wherever that practice might take place. It identifies the purpose of professional community development practice, the values that should underpin practice and the key methods used by the practitioner.

In January 2017, IACD wrote to all members of the association to inform them that following the adoption of IACD's new definition of community development at the 2016 AGM, the IACD Training Committee was initiating work to produce Guidance for members around community development practice. IACD has been working with the CLD Standards Council Scotland to take this project forward over the past six months. CLDS was IACD's partner in organising our 2014 international community development conference in Glasgow and is the specialist agency in Scotland working in this area, with a track record in the production of CD Standards going back three decades.

The paper explains the background to this project and why IACD feels it would be helpful to the various stakeholders involved in community development – practitioners, trainers, employers, funders, policy advisers and most of all the communities they serve – to be able to present a common international understanding as to what is meant by community development practice. In other words, what it's all about. At this point in the member consultation, IACD is keen to get your views on this draft Guidance. In light of feedback the intention is to then publish Guidance on a set of Common International Standards for Community Development Practice required by stakeholders working in this field.

John Stansfield

Chair IACD Training, Publications and Professional Development Committee.

Background

In 2016, the IACD Board and AGM adopted the following global definition of community development for the association:

"Community Development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings."

Since then a number of national CD associations have also adopted this definition or are considering doing so. This indicates a growing consensus amongst members that the IACD definition resonates with the realities of practice and thus helps provide a common understanding of what that practice is about.

The IACD definition builds upon the very broad understanding of community development adopted by the U.N. which it endorses as a general statement of intent. However, the generalised nature of the U.N. definition , and the two English words 'community' and 'development' risk meaning all things to all people. Over the years, they have been adopted in quite contrasting ways by training providers, employers and even practitioners. Sometimes these terms have been applied to activities that would not be understood by IACD as representing community development.

The reason IACD wanted to publish its own statement defining and explaining community development, resulted from research (the 2015 IACD mapping study of CD training programmes around the world) which indicated that community development was indeed being interpreted very widely and loosely by different training providers, employers and practitioners in different countries. IACD, therefore, as the international professional association, identified the need to encourage professional practitioners to adopt a shared understanding of the purpose of community development. The IACD definition of community development is the starting point for designing and promoting common international standards for community development practice and for the education and training of practitioners.

At a time when there are increasing challenges as well as new employment opportunities for community development practice across the world, the most significant being the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and their implementation nationally and locally, it is essential for our profession to take stock and to reassess whether the community development training that currently exists is up to the challenge. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the U.N. in 2016 presents a huge opportunity for community development practitioners to demonstrate how to build the capacities of communities to engage in the SDG agenda, whether that be strengthening the resilience of communities to deal with climate change, health promotion, poverty reduction and lifelong learning.

Building upon National Standards

In recent years a number of national community development associations and agencies have produced what are generally called national standards or National Occupational Standards (NOS) for community development. These describe what a person needs to do, know and understand to carry out good quality community development practice, and assist in the professional development of the workforce by promoting good practice, bringing together the skills, knowledge and values that underpin the work. Most of these standards are based in the practice and theory (and the assumptions) of societies in the global North. The fact that different national CD networks and agencies have produced National Occupational Standards is a tremendous starting point. Over the past three decades or more great work has been undertaken in different countries by practitioners, trainers and employers to agree the competences required for practice and thereby what knowledge, skills and values practitioners should have and the training they need. These provide a starting point upon which to build through a process of challenge, change and enrichment.

IACD has identified several hundred graduate level training programmes which include community development as part of an undergraduate degree . Some are specialist community development degrees; others link community development with disciplines such as health, economic development, social work, rural development or international development (to name a few!). Our research did not look in detail at what these degrees taught nor tried to assess their quality, but the fact they exist and are marketed as providing education and training to enable students to enter a career in community development, indicates that practice is taking place in many countries across the developing and developed world and that there is a market demand for practitioners.

Community development practice is more than community work

Alongside people explicitly called professional community workers (and people taking on essentially the same role but with a different job title) are professionals in other occupations ranging from social work, adult education, health disciplines, environmental education, local economic development, to urban planning, regeneration, architecture and more who seek to apply community development values and adopt community development methods.

We propose to refer to them all as "community development practitioners", and to use this as an overarching term that includes also "community workers". We are using the term 'community development practitioner' to include people employed in the occupational field of work and other professionals in allied sectors who are using a community development approach. This guidance on standards is also intended to be useful to volunteers and activists engaged within their communities, who seek to apply community development values and adopt community development methods, and who therefore come within our definition of a community development practitioner.

We also recognise that professional community development practice encompasses a range of occupational settings and levels from development roles working with communities through to managerial and strategic community planning roles. All play a vital part in promoting participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality, and social justice, through the organisation, education, and empowerment of people within communities. And we would hope to see these Standards as being helpful for all.

Let us look in more detail at the IACD definition

"Community Development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings."

This definition can be seen as embodying a set of underpinning values, a purpose and a set of methods for work.

a) Underpinning values

Within the definition are both explicit and implicit statements about the values and ethos that should underpin practice; these can be expressed as:

Commitment to rights, solidarity, equality and emancipation.

This value statement positions professional practice as working according to a set of ethical standards.

b) The purpose

Within the definition is a statement about the purpose of community development:

To work with communities to achieve participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice.

This purpose statement is very high level, but can be used as a template against which to measure both the journey and the destination.

c) The central methods and processes

Within the definition there is a clear statement of the methods and processes adopted by community development practitioners:

"(the) organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings".

Community development methods of organisation and education are distinguished by their focus on and concern with the empowerment of participants, and by the linking together of organisation and education, of action and learning. This process is based on dialogue between participants and the community development practitioner, in her/his role as organiser/educator; it needs to be based on the development of mutual respect and trust.

But who are the participants?

d) Participants

The IACD definition refers to people within their communities, whether these are of locality, identity or interest. The inference here is that the primary groups of people the community development practitioner will be working with are those within communities; and clearly this is at the heart of community development. But a community doesn't exist in a bubble; it constantly interacts with a wide variety of government agencies, ngo's, businesses, service providers and decision-makers, politicians and the wider civil society.

This highlights the two-way direction in which community development practitioners must work: both with people within their communities and with a wide range of agencies and organisations that almost certainly will lie outside those communities e.g. the local council, non-governmental organisations, funders etc. So the organisational and educational work that the practitioner engages in also relates to influencing those external agencies to work in more empowering ways.

We have identified eight Themes that are common across practice in community development. These are:

• Values into practice

• Engaging with communities

• Participative planning

• Organising for change

• Learning for change

• Diversity and inclusion

• Leadership and infrastructure

• Developing policy and practice

We have then identified Key Areas related to each of these themes for community development practice carried out by people whatever their occupation. Following from this, we have developed standard statements for each of the Key Areas about what practice should demonstrate.
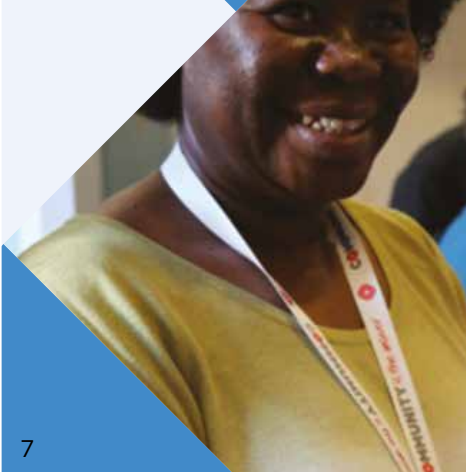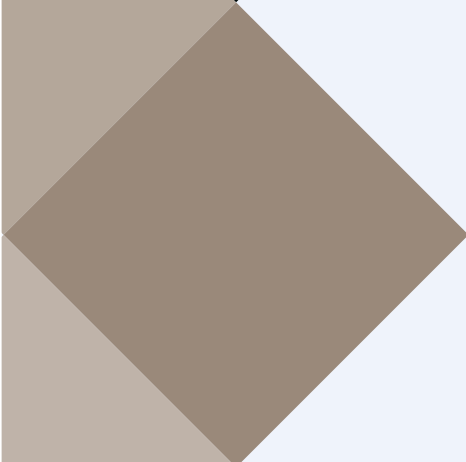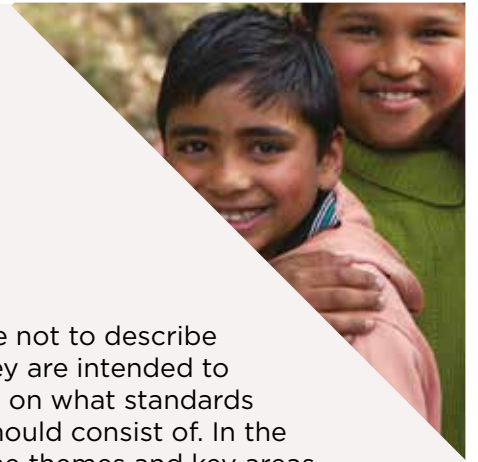
It seems preferable at this stage not to describe these as "standards"; rather, they are intended to provide the basis for discussion on what standards within this aspect of practice should consist of. In the following sections we set out the themes and key areas, and then each of the themes with the relevant key areas and the standard statements for each of these.

As already noted, professional community development practice encompasses a range of occupational settings and levels. Within particular roles, practitioners will be focused more on some themes and work areas than others and may not have the opportunity or the need to practice in ways that relate to all of the standard statements. All community development practitioners should nonetheless have an awareness of all the themes, work areas and standard statements so that they have an understanding of how their practice relates to and impacts on wider processes.

Themes and Key Areas

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE: KEY THEMES AND WORK AREAS

1. Values into practice. Understand the values, processes and outcomes of community development, and apply these to practice in all of the other key areas.

2. Engaging with communities. Understand and engage with communities, building and maintaining relationships with individuals and groups

3. Participative planning. Develop and support collaborative working and community participation

4. Organising for change. Create conditions in which communities can take collective action, increase their influence, access and participate in managing resources, and delivering services.

5. Learning for change. Support people and organisations to learn together for social change.

6. Diversity and inclusion. Design and deliver practices, policies, structures and programmes that recognise diversity and promote inclusion.

7. Leadership and infrastructure. Facilitate and support organisational development and infrastructure for community development, promoting and providing empowering leadership.

8. Developing policy and practice. Develop, evaluate and inform practice and policy for community development, using participatory evaluation to inform strategic and operational practice.

Themes, Key Areas and Statements about Practice

Theme 1: Values into practice

This theme focuses on understanding of the values that underpin community development practice in all contexts, the processes on which it is based and the outcomes that result from it; and the application of this understanding in the practitioner's own context.

Community Development Practice Key Area 1: Understand the values, processes and outcomes of community development, and apply these to practice in all of the other key areas.

In this Key Area, community development practitioners working in a range of disciplines should demonstrate that they:

a. Understand the values, processes and outcomes of community development within their own context and role.

b. Know how to develop themselves as a community development practitioner.

c. Know how to support and promote community development within the practice of their own and other organisations.

Theme 2: Engaging with communities

This theme focuses on getting to know the communities the practitioner works in, understanding the issues that impact on them and developing the relationships that provide the basis for working for positive change.

Community Development Practice Key Area 2: Understand communities and support engagement with them

In this Key Area, community development practitioners working in a range of disciplines should demonstrate that they:

a. Understand the social, political, economic and environmental factors impacting on local communities.

b. Know how to get to know a community, identifying assets, needs, barriers to participation and opportunities using relevant information and evidence.

c. Know how to seek out and engage with all sections of the community.

d. Understand, respect and recognise the work, values, capabilities and objectives of groups involving all sections of the community.

e. Know how to work with others to identify community assets and needs, opportunities to develop participation, barriers to this and how to overcome these.

Theme 3: Participative planning

This theme focuses on developing community participation and empowering partnerships, and supporting communities and agencies to develop the skills to sustain these.

Community Development Practice Key Area 3: Develop and support collaborative working and community participation

In this Key Area, community development practitioners working in a range of disciplines should demonstrate that they know how to:

a. Assist communities to understand local, national and global democratic and political processes and where power and influence lie.

b. Initiate and participate in partnership and collaborative working for the benefit of communities, acknowledging and addressing conflicts of interest.

c. Promote relationships between communities, public bodies and other organisations for the benefit of communities

d. Support public bodies to build effective and empowering relationships with communities

e. Work with communities and agencies to identify needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities, acknowledging and addressing conflicts of interest

f. Break down barriers to community participation and enable community representatives to play active roles in strategic planning, decision making and action.

Theme 4: Organising for change

This theme focuses on enabling communities to take collective action and to develop the skills needed for this; and on developing a context where their collective action is sustained and supported as a positive force for change.

Community Development Practice Key Area 4: Creates conditions in which communities can take collective action, increase their influence, access and participate in managing resources, and deliver services.

In this Key Area, community development practitioners working in a range of disciplines should demonstrate that they know how to:

a. Enable people to work together, identify what they want to achieve, and develop groups and activities.

b. Support communities to organise to bring about positive social change.

c. Support communities to effectively manage and address conflict, within and between communities or community groups.

d. Support decision makers to recognise the potential benefits of collective action by communities and build relationships with them.

e. Support communities to increase influence, access resources and manage services where they choose to do so.

f. Work with people in communities and in agencies working with them to effectively manage and address conflict affecting community development.

Theme 5: Learning for change

This theme focuses on facilitating the learning of people in communities and practitioners working with them in support of their priorities for change and development.

Community Development Practice Key Area 5: Support people and organisations to learn together for social change

In this Key Area, community development practitioners working in a range of disciplines should demonstrate that they know how to:

a. Use people's experiences, knowledge and skills as the starting point of participatory activities and methods for meeting learning needs.

b. Develop learning opportunities and activities to meet expressed needs in dialogue with individuals and groups on the development of their communities.

c. Promote social change reflecting the values and aims of community development though community learning.

d. Enable partners to identify the learning needs of their managers and staff in relation to community development.

**Theme 6: Diversity and inclusion**

This theme focuses on recognising diversity and supporting inclusion as core aspects of practice.

Community Development Practice Key Area 6: Design and deliver practices, policies, structures and programmes that recognise diversity and promote inclusion.

In this Key Area, community development practitioners working in a range of disciplines should demonstrate that they:

a. Understand how social, political, economic and environmental factors impact on different sections of the community, working in inclusive ways across diverse and marginalised communities, ensuring that methods of engagement with communities promote inclusion and respect diversity.

b. Know how to support groups to develop the skills and confidence to involve marginalised communities

c. Know how to support people who are excluded, marginalised or discriminated against to participate fully and actively in activities and groups

d. Know how to support agencies and communities to adopt inclusive practices and respect diversity.

e. Know how to develop and advocate for socially inclusive policies, programmes and practices.
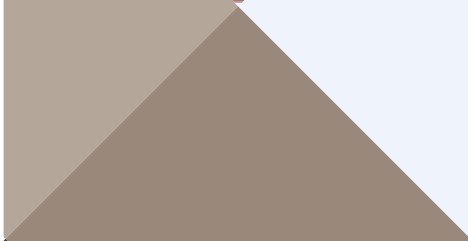
Theme 7: Leadership and infrastructure

This theme focuses on developing empowering leadership in and with communities and developing the infrastructure for community development and sustainable social change.

Community Development Practice Key Area 7: Facilitate and support organisational development and infrastructure for community development, promoting and providing empowering leadership

In this Key Area, community development practitioners working in a range of disciplines should demonstrate that they:

a. Support groups to review their own practices and policies and external opportunities and threats.

b. Support groups to plan for their future sustainability, and to develop strategic and business plans to achieve their aims and objectives.

c. Support development of capacities for accountable and democratic leadership within communities.

d. Know how to influence and advise on organisational structures, culture, policies, practices and behaviours to support community development within own and partner organisations.

e. Understand and take account of the political context, and support communities and partners to do so.

f. Adopt and encourage others to adopt appropriate styles of leadership for working with communities and in partnerships that seek to involve communities

Theme 8: Developing policy and practice

This theme focuses on using evidence from participatory evaluation, and from analysis of relevant external factors, to inform and develop policy and practice.

Community Development Practice Key Area 8: Develop, evaluate and inform practice and policy for community development, using participatory evaluation to inform strategic and operational practice.

In this Key Area, community development practitioners working in a range of disciplines should demonstrate that they know how to:

a. Monitor and evaluate community development activities and practice using participatory methods.

b. Support community groups to undertake monitoring and evaluation.

c. Gather and use evidence from own practice and from communities worked with to inform and influence the development of policy and practice.

d. Analyse the impact of social, political, economic and environmental change on community development practice in own context.

e. Support practitioners and community groups to undertake participatory monitoring and evaluation of community development activities.

f. Assess the evidence from evaluations of community development activities and analysis of the wider social, political, economic and environmental context to inform the development of policy and practice.

Next Steps

We are inviting IACD members to respond to the Draft Standards Guidance. Following this we shall revise this document, with the aim of launching the IACD's Standards Guidance for Community Development Practice at the World Community Development Conference in June 2018.

**PLEASE SEND YOUR COMMENTS NO LATER THAN 1ST MARCH 2018 TO charliesmcconnell@gmail.com
Please mark your email IACD Standards Guidance:**

This discussion paper was prepared for IACD by Susan Bisset, Colin Ross, Anna Clarke and Charlie McConnell

www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk   www.i-develop-cld.org.uk

About IACD

IACD is the only global network for professional community development practitioners. We support development agencies and practitioners to build the capacity of communities to realise greater social and economic equality, environmental protection and political democracy.

What do we do?

IACD links people to each other. We facilitate learning and practice exchange, both virtually and face-to-face. We work with partners to deliver regional, national and international events, study visits and conferences. We document the work that our members are doing around the world by collecting case studies, tools and materials on community development, and sharing these through our website, publications and ebulletins. We carry out research projects, drawing on international experience.

IACD aims to give its members a voice at the global level, advocating for community development principles and practice in international forums and consultations. IACD has consultative status with the UN and its agencies.

Contributing articles

Our international *Practice Insights* publications are issued three times a year, each one focusing on a particular theme of relevance to community development. If you would like further information or to contribute to future editions, please contact charlie.mcconnell@iacdglobal.org Alternatively, IACD members are welcome at any time to contribute news items, research, case studies or other materials to our members' Facebook site and to the IACD website.

Join us

For full details and to join, go to www.iacdglobal.org/join-us.

Benefits of membership include:

• Daily Facebook News posts about community and international development;

• Access to the Global Community Development Exchange resource bank on the IACD website;

• Opportunities to participate in Practice Exchange study visits;

• Discounted rates at IACD conferences;

• Discounted subscriptions to the Community Development Journal;

• Opportunities to share your work and experiences with a global audience, through our website, Facebook sites and other publications;

• Members also have the opportunity to nominate to serve on the IACD Board of Directors. Our next Annual General Meeting will take place in July 2018.

www.iacdglobal.org