SEND Foundation of West Africa

RESUME OF PRESENTATION ON NETWORK OF PEACE ANIMATORS (NEPA)

Introduction:

It is evident that the style and approach to implementing a community development project largely is the determining factor to whether the populace of the target community will benefit from it, appreciates the intervention and or prepared to own the process. Service delivery approaches to implementing community development projects have tended not to meet the aspirations and development needs of a lot of target beneficiary communities in Sub-Sahara Africa because it lacks the participation of the beneficiary group in the determination of how their needs should be met and owing the process.

Participatory management processes and networking in community development projects has of late proven to be a better approach to community development interventions. It involves mobilizing all actors to be engaged in the process and allowing as much room as possible for the fuller participation of community members at all levels of the process. This has the twin advantage of efficient engagement of all actors in the process and appreciation of the intervention and ownership of the process by the beneficiary group.

Participatory Management of Community Development Projects of SEND Foundation

SEND Foundation is a specialized organisation in participatory project management, monitoring and evaluation. SEND is using this approach in the implementation of its Ghana's programmes. The process requires the identification and engaging all the key actors / partners in the process of animating, mobilizing and generating ideas and resources (both human and material) to facilitate the interventions. A case in point is the establishment and management of the Network of Peace Animators (NEPA).

NEPA is a brainchild of the Gender, Rights and Peace Education (GRPE) Project, which seeks to engage the populace of the Eastern Corridor of Northern Ghana in the identification analyses, intervention and management of conflicts using community based development drama groups. The area the project is being implemented has for the past 22 years beset with over four violent intra and inter ethnic violent conflicts that have resulted in the lost of several thousands of lives and properties. The government of Ghana and Civil Society Organisations intervened in these conflicts but have not succeeded in addressing the root causes of these conflicts nor develop structures for the people to manage their own conflict situations.

The Network of Peace Animators (NEPA) is a collection of Peace Animators trained form among the different ethnic groups from the communities the project is being implemented. Of the five communities, Peace Animators are selected from the major ethnic groups of the community and trained in Introduction to Conflict Paradigm and Skills in community Peace Building Practice. The individual Peace Animators have their respective ethnic groups as the primary constituency. At the community level, the various individual Peace Animators come together as the community's Peace Animators primarily the Peace Animators do conflict surveillance and management in their communities. The community Peace Animators also come together as the Network of Peace Animators (NEPA). NEPA meets every quarter and one annual meeting. At NEPA, various

communities come with reports of their activities in their respective communities to share with other Peace Animators. Every community then prepares a plan of action for the following quarter. The experiences and reports so shared at NEPA's meetings are also shared with other stakeholders like SEND, the state agencies and other peace building institutions like the Ghana Network of Peace building (GHANEP). The Network of Peace Animators (NEPA) suits very well into the broader National security framework and it is gradually gaining constituency legitimacy on peace building in the eastern corridor of northern Ghana.

Outcomes of the Establishment of NEPA

✠ There is an improved relationship and solidarity among the individual Peace Animators who for the first time are working to other enemy ethnic groups
✠ NEPA has become a pressure group on the district authorities and community leaders on matters of Peace
✠ There is a vigorous community mobilisation through out the eastern corridor by members of those communities to discuss and generate action on peace building
✠ In each of the communities the Peace Animators work, social upheavals are referred to them for resolution
✠ The Peace Animators have successfully identified, intervened and resolved over 10 intra and inter ethnic conflicts which other wise could have resulted into bloody conflicts.
✠ There is a high demystification of peace building as being academic and intellectual field but a process that all must be involved at all times.

Lessons Learnt

✠ Networking is effective for community development only if the local populace are supported to be involved in the process at all levels

✠ For networking to make a great mark in community development, there is the need for an external organisation to play a strategic role in the process of mobilizing and establishing the network

✠ Networking in community development can serve as bridge builder to sensitive issues like peace.

Conclusion:

Participatory approaches to community development projects are effective in the implementation of projects that deals with sensitive issues like peace building. The involvement of critical stakeholder like the District authorities and national networks in the planning and implementation of such projects guarantees some level of sustainability. Notwithstanding all this, an external organisation should be involved to play a strategic role of mobilizing and establishing the network.