



HiMaT Development Thinking

Bulletin Number Two

September 2013



THE HiMAT FIVE-POINT STRATEGY

Introduction

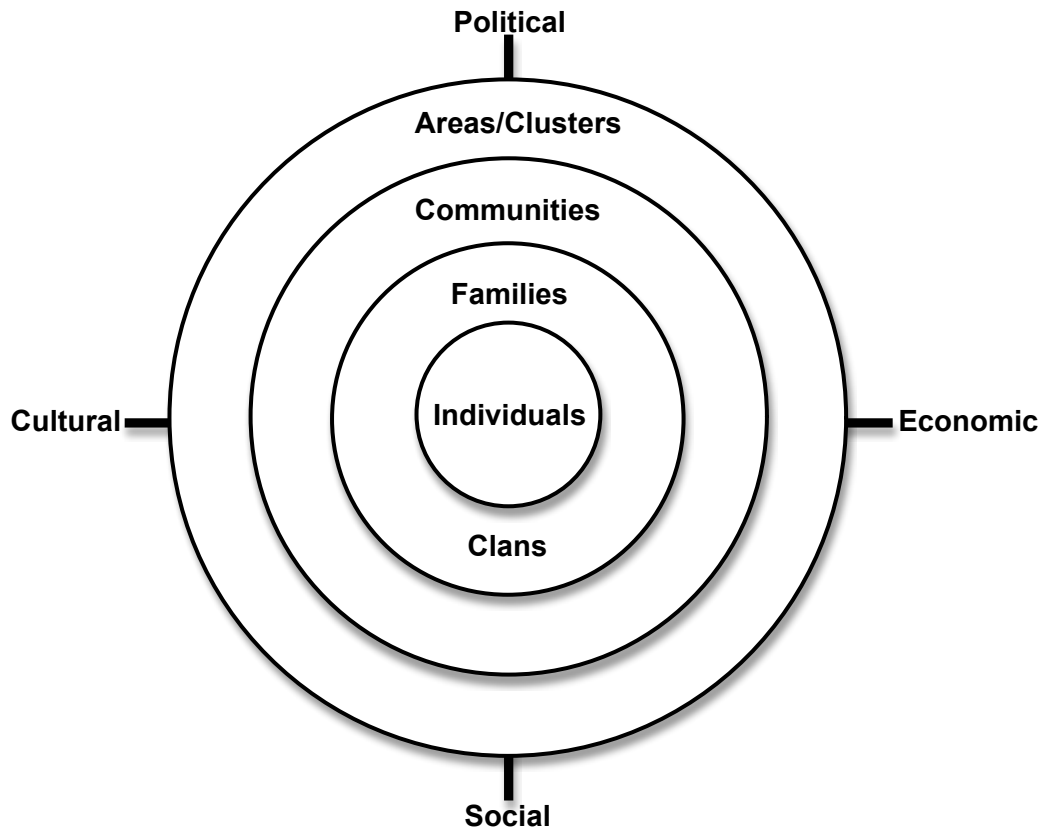
Consider how the different parts of a car work together to create a functioning vehicle. What is a car that has no wheels? No body, steering wheel or seats? No engine or drive train? No fuel? Each of these parts is important, but it is difficult to argue that any one of these can make the car go on its own.

Similarly, the HiMaT project has five interdependent strategies that need to be implemented in each and every development context that seeks to effectively promote its own social and economic progress. These five areas are: 1) Raising the Spirit, 2) Strengthening Institutions, 3) Participatory Community Development Planning, 4) Education and Training, and 5) Raising up small and medium sized social and economic initiatives that are community-led, owned and operated (we call these “quick-wins”).

HiMaT Development Principles

The following principles guide the HiMaT development approach.

1. **Development comes from within.** “Sewing wings on a caterpillar doesn’t make a butterfly”, said the writer Marilyn Ferguson. Development is not something that is delivered to people and communities by development organizations and projects like a sack of flour, a kilo of meat, or a package of pills. Development is the unfolding of human and community potential from within. Its aim is sustainable wellbeing and prosperity for all.
2. **The realization of human and community potential comes about through the exercise of human volition** (i.e., choice making, perseverance). **Participation** is the process of people’s engagement (mind, body and spirit) in the processes of learning, analyzing, deciding and acting to produce development outcomes. **Participation is really a collaborative expression of community choice-making and perseverance (i.e., volition).** Participation is to development as sound is to music or movement is to dance. It is essential. Without it, there can be no authentic development.
3. **Authentic development is always holistic, integrated and organic.** All of life is interconnected. No part of life is independent or disconnected from any other part. Consider the human body. It has a number of important functional systems, such as the digestive, skeletal, nervous, and circulatory systems. All of these have their own functions, but none of them lives or operates apart from the rest of the body. In the same way, the social, economic, spiritual, cultural and political dimensions of life are all interconnected. So economic development, governance, education and training, youth development, women’s development, agriculture, natural resource management—each of these important areas are impacted by what happens in the other areas.



In practice this means that no matter in which area of development we focus (and focus is certainly necessary to achieve anything), we also need to be aware of the ecosystem of factors in which our area of focus is imbedded.

Consider the challenge of economic development. Is economic progress impacted by education and training (i.e., by the capacities of people)? Is economic development affected by politics and governance? By culture and values? By the strength and density of social capital? By levels of unity and solidarity?

The HiMaT approach says that of course these are all connected and need to be linked in practice and that, in fact, if we fail to link the various interconnected dimensions of life in our development processes, we are very likely to fail in reaching important development goals. So for example, improving livelihood outcomes is not merely a matter of transferring money or goods to the poor. It is primarily a matter of building human, community and institutional capacity.

4. **Learning is the primary engine of development.** “Development” may be thought of as the process of building the capacity of people, institutions and communities to achieve their development goals. In this sense it can be said that without continuous learning for self and community improvement, development progress is impossible. This is because without development learning people will continue to think and act as they always have, and are therefore likely to achieve the same old results. Learning is life-long. We begin to learn while we are still in our mother’s womb, and we can keep on learning all the way into the next world. For development to advance, learning needs to be central, explicit, systematized and continuous in our program efforts.

The HiMaT philosophy is that we are all learners and we are all teachers. Progress is possible only to the extent that all of us (no matter what our role or our position) open-heartedly adopt a humble posture of learning.

The Five HiMaT Strategies

1. *Raising the Spirit*

Human beings are both material and spiritual beings, and so it should be obvious that the development of human potential at any level (individual, institutional, community) must also be both material and spiritual in nature. In practice, HiMaT strategies for raising the spirit include.

- a) Igniting the spark of hope in the possibility of growth and change, as well as the spirit of enterprise and self-reliance.
- b) Linking development institutions and efforts to God, asking for His continued guidance and blessings on our efforts and utilizing whatever spiritual guidance is relevant and meaningful to the targeted population.
- c) The development of key moral capabilities, such as the ability to foster unity and harmony across a diversity of previously estranged people, the capacity for honesty and trustworthiness in all of dealings and affairs, the capacity to accept and learn from constructive critiques, the orientation to devoting one's life to the service of others, a passion and dedication to work for justice and, more specifically, the capacity to recognize and analyze oppressive systems and patterns and to work for their transformation as well as the capacity to adapt and maintain a humble posture of learning.
- d) The nurturing of bonds of solidarity and "common-ness" (the essence of true community), as well as a shared sense of vision, purpose and inter-connectedness into the many diverse efforts we are all making that are woven together into the web of development. This sense of shared community and connection in the vision, goals and actions of development can be nurtured and encouraged through monthly community gatherings designed to inspire unity and mobilize community efforts, as well as through quarterly reflection meetings to evaluate progress and continuously refine goals and strategies.
- e) Finally, within the HiMaT approach, great attention is paid to the use of culturally appropriate traditional arts, poetry, music, storytelling, dancing, drama, etc. to fan the flames of love, unity and understanding of the development path and its requirements.

2. *Institutional Strengthening*

Institutions are the organized focal point through which community aspirations and will can be expressed, pursued systematically, and consolidated over time. The Village Organizations (VOs), Women's Organizations (WOs), various CBOs (other community-based organizations) as well as the area institutions such as Local Support Organizations (LSOs) constitute a powerful network of mechanisms through which communities can make plans, marshal resources, mobilize and coordinate the energy and creativity of community members and weave together a wide diversity of efforts into a coherent development process that leads to real and measurable improvement in the lives of the people.

But the capacity of institutions to do all these things is limited by the capacity and orientation of the members of those institutions. HiMaT focuses on the training and coaching of the members of institutions in such areas as development leadership, participatory planning and project implementation, and good governance, and on strengthening management capabilities including financial management, transparency and accountability in order to maintain, build and trust between grassroots people and their institutions.

3. **Community Development Planning and Implementation**

An important HiMaT strategy is engaging grassroots community members from all walks of life (farmers, women, business people, elders, youth, students, leaders, etc.) in analyzing their own reality, identifying needs and goals for development, designing strategies and plans, and implementing them in ways that lead to measurable improvement for all. The idea that a community development plan could be made without involving community members as co-authors of that plan is a thing of the colonial past. True development engages the beneficiaries of the process in every stage of plan making and program implementation.

HiMaT uses a participatory tool called “the Community Story Framework”¹ to engage a wide range of community stakeholders in developing a narrative that describes (in many dimensions of life) how things are now, what happened in the past to create the present, what we can learn from the past, and what the future will look like when things are really good. This process produces rich descriptions of current realities, the roots of the past and the needs of the future. Once this document is validated by the community, it forms a solid foundation for long-term planning.

Beyond the process of making a plan (however participatory and effective the process), the true test of a good plan is in the implementation. HiMaT continues to work with communities in a coaching and support role as plans are implemented, encouraging ongoing learning for continuous improvement, as well as ongoing monitoring of the process and its outcomes through (at least) quarterly reflection meetings involving a broad spectrum of grassroots community members and stakeholders in order to make refinements and adjustments aimed at continuous improvement of the process and its outcomes.

4. **Education and Training**

Based on the understanding that learning is a fundamental engine of growth and change, HiMaT has developed a series of core courses call the **HiMaT Indigenous Leadership Training Program**. This program focuses on developing the capacity of individuals to contribute effectively to progress in development efforts.

The methodology of this training program seeks to reach as many grassroots community members as possible from all sectors of community life through “study-action” circles. Anyone who has taken a particular course can start a “circle” and share the material with others. Trained tutors and coordinators support these efforts.

Each course focuses on some important dimension of development work, such as participatory planning (Book III), economic and business development (Book IV), or governance and management for development (Book V). Each course requires practical actions that are an important part of the learning process. The required

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actions are not merely academic in nature, but rather are designed to contribute directly to community development progress.

Beyond the core courses, HiMaT facilitates sector-specific training in many areas, ranging from livelihood skill development to organic agriculture as the need becomes apparent for such training.

The proof of the effectiveness of training within the HiMaT learning and action framework is that it should enable people to achieve positive development outcomes.

5. *Practical Projects – Moving into the Flow of Development Action*

The fifth strategy is to generate many small and medium-sized social and economic projects involving core groups, and engaging a wide diversity of stakeholders representing the full spectrum of community members, including youth, women, the poorest, leaders, institutions and many others.

Our experience is that as a cluster begins to see a bubbling up of many social and economic initiatives, the spirit of enterprise and creativity begins to flower and bear fruit. From many small efforts, communities experience the real possibilities of change, as well as tangible progress in addressing development goals.

Successful small initiatives can organically grow into large enterprises with the right support and encouragement, and a mobilized and engaged community is a powerful resource to be harnessed for large-scale change by effectively led development institutions.

Final Reflection

Once a community reaches the stage where a significant (at least 30%) of grassroots community members from all walks of life are mobilized, trained and have arisen to make changes in their individual and collective lives, and once local and area institutions are strengthened and can confidently work within the framework of development plans created in collaboration with their communities, that area is ready for significant development investment.

In our experience, without the raising of needed spiritual energy and a collective sense of purpose, without institutional strengthening and systematic capacity building, and without the concrete experience of small practical projects, communities are often not able to effectively absorb and utilize development investment for sustainable outcomes.

The HiMaT Five-part strategy represents a proven path to building community capacity for long-term development success.

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