

# RURAL ACTION RESEARCH PROGRAMME

## ASSET BASED APPROACHES TO RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### Literature review and resources

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## Introduction

In 2005 Carnegie UK Trust commissioned the International Association for Community Development (IACD) to undertake a literature review and to collect case studies on Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) as it is used in different contexts around the world. Although this approach is well developed internationally and its core values well understood by practitioners here, there has been little explicit application of the approach in community development policy and practice across the UK and Ireland. The purpose of this work therefore is to help inform future asset based community development initiatives in the UK.

In response IACD produced several papers. Firstly, in partnership with Forum for the Future who are researching the British and Irish context, we produced a detailed methodology paper which outlines our approach to this study. This is available: [www.iacdglobal.org](http://www.iacdglobal.org)

Secondly, in this report, we have undertaken a brief review of the global literature and pointed to some closely related material of relevance. This situates ABCD in the context of international community and participatory development. It outlines a range of perspectives from the literature, predominantly that which is published in English. It explores the ways in which the work has developed and some problematic areas and critical voices as well. There are preliminary lessons to be learnt from this experience for those wishing to incorporate an ABCD approach in the UK and Ireland.

Finally in June 2005, IACD ran a seminar entitled 'Does ABCD deliver social justice?' in conjunction with the CIVICUS World Assembly that took place in Glasgow in July 2006. Contributions to this event were made by three speakers with significant practical and reflective experience in the field.

In the final stage of the work we will produce a long list of ABCD projects at community and other levels and in-depth case studies of 10 inspiring and instructive projects (due late 06).

**This literature review paper is divided into three sections:**

- 1. Background and Key findings**
- 2. Short Glossary**
- 3. Resources, References and Bibliography**

## 1.0 Background

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a relatively new branch on the well-established tree of approaches to participatory development. Its history and heritage derive from several roots. This section situates ABCD approaches within the international participative community development literature, primarily that printed in English.

The primary root of ABCD reaches into the skills, culture and cosmologies of the communities who are pioneering this work on the ground around the world. Without this there can, by definition, be no ABCD. A second important root reaches up to us from the practice, theory or 'sense-making' work of practitioners and academics such as those at Institute for Development Studies in Sussex UK, the ABCD and Coady Institutes in the US and Canada respectively, and Centre for Development Practice in South Africa. This work has recorded the experience of community activists as well as well as drawn out the key ingredients in successful ABCD in order to develop resources and tools that could help to give us wider views of ABCD processes. It has encouraged us to move away from "the needs-driven dead end" that some believe has come to characterise public service provision (McKnight 1993). Many of these papers and resources are mentioned in our resource section and in the annotated bibliography.

Another root of ABCD which is worth noting for our purposes here is the policy and funding driver put in place by philanthropic institutions such as Ford Foundation and Carnegie UK, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and Government Departments such as the Department for International Development (DfID) in the UK, Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA) and Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGIS) in the Netherlands. Non-Governmental Organisation's (NGOs) that work on policy formation around the world have also driven the popularisation of the ABCD approach.

### Summary of findings

This literature review shows that ABCD processes are being developed and tested at all levels of society. These range from communities of interest intent on building sustainable communities to regional and state wide interventions in pursuit of social policy goals.

The examples cut across continents and cultures, from work with agricultural workers in Northern California, through youth work in Egypt and on to village level micro-credit projects in India (Coady & Sewa Jeewika 2006; Coady & Centre for Development Serv-



ices 2005; Kretzmann et al, 2005, 1998, 1993; Centre for Collaborative Planning 2002; Snow, L. K. (n.d.)).

The policy implications of a shift towards an asset-based approach to rural development have also been explored by regional and national government agencies such as DfID (Puntenney 1998; Kretzmann et al 1999; Pasteur and Scott-Villiers. 2004), NGOs and large international organisations such as the Ford Foundation (Plastrik Peter et al 2004; Chambers 2001, 2005, Coady International Institute, 2002, 2004, 2005) and institutions such as the World Bank & the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Blackburn, 2000; Woolcock, M. & Narayan 2000; Carney 2002; Mc Neil et al 2004; Mansuri & Rao, 2004; Craig 2005; McNulty 2005).

Asset Based Community Development is one of a range of similar participative approaches. These include Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Ford Foundation's Asset Building and Community Development, Community Driven Development used regularly at the World Bank and Rights Based Approaches that use the securing of human rights as their driving force. There is also a growing body of knowledge that focuses on community strengths.

Training for transformation and Gestion de Terrors are participative approaches to development that are widely used in Africa and further a-field. Some of these approaches are explored in this document and information on them all can be found on <http://www.livelihoods.org> or in the web reference section at the end of this paper.

Numerous tool kits, training manuals, resources and training courses are available to be downloaded or ordered from the websites of the following

organisations; The ABCD Institute; The Coady International Institute; Centre for Collaborative Planning; Institute for Development Studies; UK Department for International Development (DfID); Action for Neighbourhood Change in Canada; North Central Regional Centre for Rural Development Iowa State University; University of Wisconsin-Extension; The Department of Health and Community Services Newfoundland and Labrador; Dorfman 1998 at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland US; Fuller et al 2002 for the Canadian Rural Partnership and the Centre for Community Based Development at Clark University US; The Group on Health Promotion and Community Development 2003, University of Kansas.

Snow, L. K. (n.d.), Dedrick et al 1997; Dewar 1997; Uphoff et al 1998; Berkowitz & Wadud, 2003 have all produced ABCD handbooks and Kerka (2003) has produced an annotated review of mostly North American resources.

The 'Participation Toolkit' and 'Livelihoods Connect' websites also have many useful resources.

If there is a demand for this, these existing resources have the potential to be adapted by and for community groups, practitioners and policy makers who may wish to develop this work in a UK context.

There are areas of tension that exist in the field. Key debates that may be of relevance in a UK and Irish context are briefly explored but there is scope to do this much more comprehensively than has been possible here.

It is also beyond the scope of this report to analyse the differing value bases and therefore policy objectives that may be served by loose interpretation/definition of terms for example 'assets' and 'community development'.

Finally this report points to the rich learning that may be gleaned from these global ABCD experiences. It underlines the importance of these examples for understanding what fuels and nourishes ABCD work in different contexts and the extent to which the work has been able to fulfill its potential.

The next section includes Draft Learning Points on three key themes and some preliminary exploration of related issues. It also explores potential tensions in the application of the work arising from the various agendas that ABCD policy may be simultaneously trying to meet.

(Please see glossary in Section 3 for explanation of ABCD and key features)

## 2.0 Key Points to consider for the Rural UK and Irish Context

### 2.1 Learning Point 1: Questions of Scale

As Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) moves into the UK policy and practice arena there is much that can be learnt from the international experience of ABCD and related participative approaches such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). In the US, Canada, India and Australia for example, ABCD process have been internally driven by communities and then the learning from these written up and reflected upon. One of the key questions that is raised in the literature is that of scale.

Across the world participatory approaches to development such as asset based and livelihood approaches have moved from locally successful projects into scaled up programmes promoted by local regional government and international agencies such as the World Bank. There has been considerable learning in this process that is likely to be useful to UK and Irish policy makers and funders.

Jody Kretzmann, while describing himself as “militantly local” (in Coady 2002) says that :

*I think we are really interested in... ways in which activity at the local level can begin to be more influential at the policy level. We're convinced that the way to think about our militant focus on locality is to say that it is absolutely necessary, but absolutely not sufficient, to the work that needs to be done. I think we've learned about its necessity, and we've also learned about its limits. I think we're more and more interested in how the lessons and voices of local community building can be brought into a larger national policy discussion.*

Robert Chambers sums up the dilemma when he speaks of the choice between *small, slow and beautiful and big, fast and flawed* (Chambers 2005). He points to the necessary trade-offs between scale, speed and quality. In implementing new policies for social change it may be possible to maximise only two sides of the scale, speed and quality triangle at any one time. Along with several other authors he suggest the need for initiatives at local as well as national scales (ibid.).

Chambers suggests that while local projects are capable of delivering innovation as well as local benefit they will not on their own be able to make a larger impact (ibid). A big, fast programme which is based on good context specific pilot projects may improve the life conditions of more rural people overall. Scale, speed and impact must therefore also be considered and balanced.

Another report which may be useful for Carnegie UK Trust, Big Lottery and other partners considering policies to facilitate an asset based approach to rural development in the UK and Ireland is *Asset Building for Social Change: Pathways to Large-Scale Impact* by the Ford Foundation. From their long experience as funders of community development and later participatory rural appraisal programmes across several global regions, and more recently through a

review of their current asset building and community development programmes, Ford has identified and explored the following five pathways through which large scale social change happens:

- a. Developing Public Policies
- b. Fostering Communities of Practice
- c. Influencing Market Forces
- d. Changing Power Relationships
- e. Promoting Social Learning



It may be interesting to use these 5 pathways as a lens to organise thinking about policies, programmes and projects currently underway in the UK both for Carnegie UK Trust and its growing network of policy colleagues, researchers and community groups.

#### Multiple levels

With Chambers, Kretzmann and others, Ford point to the need for a plurality of approaches from local to global, acknowledging that large scale impact should not be the purpose of all projects. They quote Joel Orosz, formerly of the Kellogg Foundation:

*“for some projects, bringing to scale means establishing a national network of projects reaching millions of people with their services. For other projects, it may mean establishing two or three similar efforts so that other neighborhoods in a small town have access to needed services. Not every solution to a social problem can or should seek national or global scale.” In Plastrik, Peter, et al 2004.*

### Theme 1 : Questions of Scale

**“Small, slow and beautiful or big, fast and flawed”.**

Before scaling up a new approach there is a need for a pilot phase in a small number of communities to test processes and generate context-specific learning.

There is a need for long-term commitment by key stakeholders for an asset based approach to community development to succeed.

There is a need to strike a balance between speed, quality and impact in scaling up process.

It is essential to work through several pathways at once in order to achieve large scale change.



#### Acronyms used in text

**ABCD** Asset Based Community Development

**DfID** Department for International Development

**DGIS** Directorate General for Development Cooperation Netherlands

**IACD** International Association for Community Development

**NGO's** Non-Governmental Organisation's

**PRA** Participatory Rural Appraisal

**SIDA** Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency

**AI** Appreciative Inquiry

**IDS** Institute for Development Studies, Sussex

## 2.2 Learning Point 2: Creating Enabling Conditions for Rural Development:

### Paradigm Shifts in Values Attitudes and Behaviour

For those of us embedded in the 'deficiency culture' the shifts in values, attitudes and behaviour, which asset based approaches to rural community development implies, are challenging. This is made all the more so by the fact that these changes are personal and professional, as well as institutional. On the other hand the literature has plenty of examples of success stories driven by individuals and small groups who 'got it' (Coady 2005; Kretzmann & McKnight 1993).

### Personal Skills

*It is not that we should simply seek new and better ways for managing society, the economy and the world. The point is that we should fundamentally change how we behave ((Havel, 1992) in Chambers 2005, p184).*

Development of new skills and competences comes out over and over again in the literature. The ability to uncover and encourage previously hidden skills is an essential attribute for community members and for practitioners and policy makers seeking to drive this agenda forward. Additional skills and attributes necessary are the ability to look at a situation and see potential instead of impediments and the ability to value people. Related to these are additional needs for the development of listening skills, understanding issues of capability and power, learning to step back, learning to ask about what people have done well and learning not to judge, criticise or rush. (McKnight, McKnight & Kretzmann, Mathie and Cunningham, Chambers 2005, Edwards and Sen 2000, Senge 2004, Eyben 2004, Pasteur 2004 ). The tradition of appreciative inquiry, which is one of the roots of Asset Based Community Development, supports the development of some these skills and attributes (Ashford & Patkar 2001; Johnston 2005).

Authors as diverse as the South African Centre for Development Practise and the World Bank argue that values, attitude and behaviour change are essential to any successful policy intervention in this field. The need for this to be integrated into personal, professional and institutional practise is argued widely (Edwards 2002; Kaplan 1997 & 2002; McNeil 2004; Eyben 2004, Pasteur 2004).

Although there is no clear agreement as to whether behaviour change leads to values (more fundamental)

change or visa versa, there is a recognition that the values and behaviour should be congruent with the vision for the project/programme.

The 'Lessons for Change in Policy and Organisations' series published by the Institute for Development Studies is a good resource in this respect. The literature review produced for this series explores in depth the theoretical and practical basis for this work (Pasteur, 2004). Researchers and practitioners concerned with a sustainable livelihoods approach have identified the need for guidance on how to support initiatives for organisational and policy change in their own and in partner institutions.

Lessons and experiences are distilled from case studies and organisational collaborations in order to illustrate processes and suggest entry points for organisational change, for influencing policy processes, and for organisational learning.

Papers explore 'relationship building' as a central part of the rural development process and concrete examples of large-scale organisational change processes at the Department for International Development and Action Aid are also written up here (Pasteur and Scott-Villiers, 2004).

There is a substantial body of knowledge looking at organisational capacity for asset based community development. This emphasises the need for what is variously called a philosophical position, a vision or an ideological framework. This develops an understanding or position on how the world works and where our organisation fits. This understanding generates a vision for how the organisation might contribute to positive change. From this vision will flow an approach to work and engagement in the policy and practical issues at hand. Further down the line, in the implementation of an approach, we may make use of a range of tools. However these tools are only likely to have the desired outcome (for example, more sustainable livelihoods in rural areas) if they are delivered through people with the appropriate values, attitudes and behaviour.

### Professional Skills and Training

*Community is being rediscovered as an actual and potential co-producer of good outcomes, so that, for example, more and more people in the health care industry recognize the limits of their capacity*

*to produce health without the important participation and leadership of local communities, and more and more people in the criminal justice system recognize the limits of both police and jails in terms of dealing with justice issues at the local level.*

*So a lot of our work these days is being pulled into the intersection between big systems and institutions on the one hand and communities on the other. With all their diversity and messiness they have the potential of producing the kinds of outcomes that the people working in institutions want to produce*  
(Kretzmann in Coady 2002).

### **Being on tap rather than on –top..**

For professionals this involves a loss of our 'need



to be needed'. It involves believing in the people whose communities are our 'target group'. It involves arguably new ways of seeing our professional skills as being in partnership with, and sitting along side, the skills that reside, often overlooked and underutilized in community members, groups and associations. Our professional knowledge must work with the shared community knowledge to better connect and uncover people, places and local economies and local talents.

It is clear that there is a role for good quality training and capacity building in the implementation of an ABCD approach in rural development (Chambers 2005, McClenegan 2000, Craig 2005, Craig 2005 b).

However it appears that too much attention has been paid to date on the development of tools and technical skills without paying attention to values, attitudes and behaviour necessary to deliver these well (Pretty & Chambers, et al. 1993; Puntenney & Moore, 1998; Lyn et al 2003; Laverack 2001).

If we focus only on the tools ie where most training courses begin, we do not get into the deeper drivers which appear to be such a significant determinant of the quality of the training outcome. Ineffective interventions and poor training has led to widespread

frustration on behalf of communities and professionals when the tools appear not to work. The reason for this is that invisible values, attitudes and behaviour have much more significant influence on the successful implementation of a policy than the application of a tool. (Chambers 2005; Kaplan 2002)

People in communities all over the world and rural Scotland and Ireland are no exceptions, are extremely sensitive to tokenism, condescension and false promises. Successful roll out of asset based approaches to rural development therefore involves the building of relationships of trust. This process is two ways - from communities towards agencies and funders and from funders, agencies and government to communities (Pasteur 2004).

*The naive application of complex contextual concepts like participation, social capital, and empowerment is endemic among project implementers and contributes to poor design and implementation.*

*The evidence suggests that community-based and -driven development projects are best undertaken in a context-specific manner, with a long time horizon and with careful and well-designed monitoring and evaluation systems (Mansuri and Rao 2004).*

### **Institutional change**

So many of our institutions- education, the health (sickness) service, social services and politics, are driven by 'deficiency thinking' that we are scarcely conscious of its impact. Changes in institutional and bureaucratic behaviour are therefore necessary for asset based approaches to flourish.

Case studies already written up have shown how small groups of people within institutions can effect change. The whole 'beast' does not have to change at once. Communities of practice within and between sectors are important in maintaining support and momentum for these changes.

*We're working increasingly with a category of people that we think are really critical to understand and know about. They are self-described as 'gappers', people who live in the gap between big systems and institutions on the one hand, and communities on the other. They may get their check from a hospital or school system, but their practice and understanding and spirit is somehow in the community. Increasingly, we are finding creative directions being explored by gappers (Kretzmann in Coady 2002).*

The examples of this are not just national. In a comprehensive investigation into capacity enhancement in the World Bank and the International

Bank for Reconstruction and Development, McNeil & Woolcock attempt to provide a new conceptual framework and practical recommendations for capacity enhancement. According to their research, conventional capacity enhancement approaches assume that the fundamental development problem is one of inadequate technical skills (McNeil & Woolcock 2004). They argue for a move away from simple focus on skills transfer, to a more flexible and long term focus, emphasis on the 'social' aspects of development, and an understanding of the cultural, historical and sociological aspects that help to define local context. This may be described as a 'process approach' to local capacity enhancement initiatives. For many elements of service delivery, which are characterised by high levels of complexity, a purely technical approach is inadequate. Technical skills should be part of, not a substitute for, capacity enhancement. Technical skills need to be complemented by adaptive skills, and both integrated.

McNeil and Woolcock point out that adaptive problems are those that require fundamental changes in people's attitudes, perceptions, values and behaviour (ibid).

A World Bank Report from 2004 titled 'Making Services Work for Poor People' emphasises what it calls relational capacity, or the dynamics between different stakeholder groups. Strengthening the stakeholders through capacity enhancement is not enough. There is a need to build productive relationships between different stakeholder groups.

The report points to the importance of context and process to development outcomes. Context depends upon understanding, building upon and making use of local capacity. Process relies on a sustained and iterative approach that incorporates feedback from monitoring and evaluation in project design and implementation – a 'learning by doing' approach.

It defines social development (and capacity enhancement) as a process – 'one that by its nature is riddled with false starts, mistakes, and a decidedly un-uniform approach' (7). 'An emphasis on local capacity building over a sustained period of time and among a wide range of stakeholder groups' is essential to successful community capacity enhancement.

### In summary

1. Project design should raise the profile of capacity enhancement as a crucial ingredient for project success
2. Incorporate adaptive skills building and decision making as part of core social development staff training
3. Give greater attention and resources to the

systematic design of capacity-building component within projects, especially adaptive decision making

4. Reorient technical assistance components to pay more attention to local context
5. Design (initiatives) to leave space for adaptive problem solving

### Political realities

Many of these issues are older than the idea of development itself. As long ago as the 6th century AD similar questions were in currency.

*The best leaders are those the people hardly know exist. If you don't trust the people, they will become untrustworthy. The best leaders value their words, and use them sparingly. When she has accomplished her task, the people say, "Amazing: we did it, all by ourselves!"*

*Tao Te Ching Lao Tzu 6th Century China  
(Translated for the public domain by JH McDona-  
ld, 1996)*

In the UK and Ireland there are powerful political and pragmatic reasons why there will be challenges to institutionalising the "lead by stepping back" approach (McCleneghan 2000; Powell 2005; Chambers 2005; Daly & Howell 2006). We do have the space to explore these in detail here.

The realities and rapid changes implied by this time of rapid economic globalisation, confrontational media driven politics and parliamentary processes create a backdrop against which ABCD policies must operate. However Chambers, and others point to the impact that a small number of committed people can have in an organisation and hundreds of case studies from the ABCD Institute, the Coady Institute and others show that communities have been able to uncover internal skills, capital etc and use these to leverage external resources to drive their own development.

For those with experience 'on the ground' in communities and development institutions and agencies, none of the points in this section will be news. Perhaps what is interesting at the moment is the amount of evidence that has been gathered to show the increased impact that these skills and attributes bring when combined with effective and strategic action.

When policy and practice take account of value, behaviour and attitude issues outlined by authors above, alongside key technical and strategic issues such as those outlined in the Ford Foundation report we cited earlier, it has more chance of being effective.

Conversely programmes which don't are more likely at best to fail and at worst leave communities more

dependant and less resourceful than they were before the intervention.

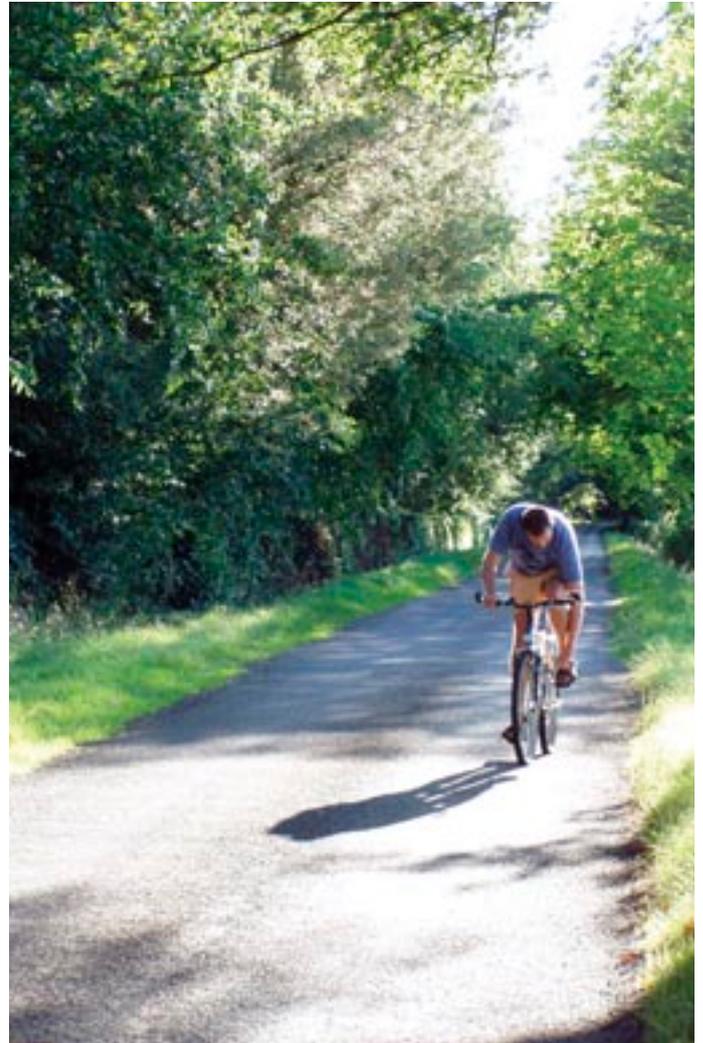
**Theme 2: Creating Enabling Conditions for Rural Development:**

Recognise that ABCD involves paradigm shifts in values, attitudes and behaviour.

Development of new personal, professional and institutional skills is needed for successful interventions.

Recognise that this change in practise is a process and that personal, professional and institutional changes do not all have to happen at once.

Small groups of people 'who get it' can bring about significant change in institutions and in communities.



## 2.3 Learning Point 3 : Capitals & Capabilities

### Capitals and Capabilities / Assets and Strengths

There is a heavy presence in the English-speaking sustainable community development literature of ideas relating to the use of capitals and capabilities as a framework for understanding what makes a sustainable livelihood (Chambers & Conway 1992; Bebbington 1999; Green & Haines 2002; Barnie 2003; Brocklesby & Fisher 2003; Hickey & Mohan 2004; Mathie 2005; McNulty 2005). The uses are wide-ranging, from internally driven self-help groups in India to the goal of a sustainable livelihood becoming the frame through which DfID has developed its policies and activity since 1998 (Coady & Sewa Jeewika 2006; Carney 2002).

According to DfID, "the sustainable livelihoods framework is best understood with reference to the following five categories: human capital, natural capital, financial capital, social capital, and physical capital." ([www.livelihoods.org/info/info\\_guidancesheets.html](http://www.livelihoods.org/info/info_guidancesheets.html)).

Our colleagues at Forum for the Future in the UK also use the five capitals framework which they define as "five types of sustainable capital from where we derive the goods and services we need to improve the quality of our lives."

For Forum for the Future these are natural, human, social, financial and manufactured capital ([www.forumforthefuture.org.uk](http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk)).

In the US Cornelia Butler Flora and her colleagues at the North Central Region, Centre for Rural Development in Iowa State University use 'Seven Community Capitals'. She covers financial, built, social, human, natural and, following Bourdieu, adds cultural and political capital. She defines capital as "resources invested to create more resources over a long time horizon" (Butler Flora 2006).

*Political capital is the ability of a group to influence standards, regulations and enforcement of those regulations that determine the distribution of resources and the ways they are used (ibid 2006).*

Butler Flora uses words such as 'voice' and 'power' and 'influence' in relation to this form of capital and points out that increased political capital can be shown in

*People who share a vision for sustainable future being organized and working together. These people know and feel comfortable around powerful people as well as those [who are] often excluded. They make sustainability part of the political agenda.*

She goes on to describe:

*Cultural capital determines how we see the world, what we take for granted, what we value, and what things we think possible to change. Hegemony allows one social group to impose its symbols and reward system on other groups.*

Although all capitals are essential to a sustainable livelihood they do not all have to be present in equal quantities. In

addition one kind of capital can contribute to an increase of other types of capital. For example a rural community transport system can contribute to financial capital as a source of income while also improving access to job markets and physical capital, natural capital through reduction in private car use and social capital through improved social networks.

Recent community development and development literature has discussed social capital in particular. The term originates with Pierre Bourdieu but has been popularised by Robert Putman in his book 'Bowling Alone' (Putnam, 1993a).

Through his analysis of government and civil society in Italy and the USA, he defines social capital as 'features of social organisations, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit' (Putnam, 1993a, p. 41).



## Social Capital

*Social Capital is a category of livelihood assets. It relates to the formal and informal social relationships (or social resources) from which various opportunities and benefits can be drawn by people in their pursuit of livelihoods."*

*These social resources are developed through investment in:*

- *interactions (through work or shared interests) that increase people's ability to work together;*
- *membership of more formal groups in which relationships are governed by accepted rules and norms;*
- *relationships of trust that facilitate co-operation, reduce transactions costs and sometimes help in the development of informal safety nets amongst the poor.*

*Critical benefits of social capital are access to information, to influence, or power, and to claims or obligation for support from others.*

For a basic introduction to the DfID approach to Sustainable Livelihoods; the Sustainable Livelihood Guidance Sheets are a set of clear resources 'that summarise current thinking about an emerging approach that is based in the concept of *livelihoods*, which is defined, broadly, as comprising 'the capabilities, assets... and activities required for a means of living.' A substantial glossary is included and it is pointed out that the guidance sheets provide a framework for further exploration rather than a set of guidelines. They suggest that this is a new and sustainable approach to putting people at the centre of development. The Sheets discuss core values driving the approach as follows:

- People-centred
- Holistic
- Dynamic

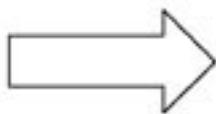


Social capital therefore consists of networks of civic engagement' and associated norms that affect the productivity, vitality and health of a community.

The goal of increasing social capital is the key reason why many agencies engage in capacity building work. (McClenegan 2000; Smith 2001; Barr 2002; Mansuri & Rao 2004; Craig 2005; Kay 2005; Daly & Howell 2006)

UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, apparently drawing on the work of the Department for International Development define social capital thus:

*Pentagram of human capital, natural capital, financial capital, social capital, and physical/manufactured capital*



*Septagram of human capital, natural capital, financial capital, social capital, and physical capital, plus cultural and political capital*

- Building on strengths
- Macro-micro links
- Sustainability

It is worth noting that in her review of the implementation of livelihoods approaches, Carney suggested that little innovation and integration had occurred in relation to the sustainability principle (Carney 2002).

This will be worth bearing in mind in the UK and Irish context.

In terms of community development in the UK and Ireland, there does not seem to have been widespread use of the Sustainable Livelihoods approach with its focus on 'capitals and capabilities'. The 'Five Capitals Framework' used by Forum for the Future is one of the few uses of the approach in the UK ([www.forumforthefuture.org.uk](http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk)).

This review suggests that to reach our goal of a socially inclusive, as well as sustainable, community development it may be that, as an overall picture of community health 'five capitals' are not enough. It may be that we need to change the shape of the assets frame from pentagram to septagram, through the addition of cultural and something which has been called symbolic capital by Pierre Bourdieu and political capital by Cornelia Butler Flora and others.

This may be particularly necessary in Britain and Ireland with their increasingly diverse rural communities arising from more widespread demographic changes and the influx of large numbers of migrant labourers. Relationships between particular sub-sections of rural community are complex, changing and evolving (Commission for Rural Communities 2006, Carnegie Rural Development Commission 2006, Daly & Howell 2006)

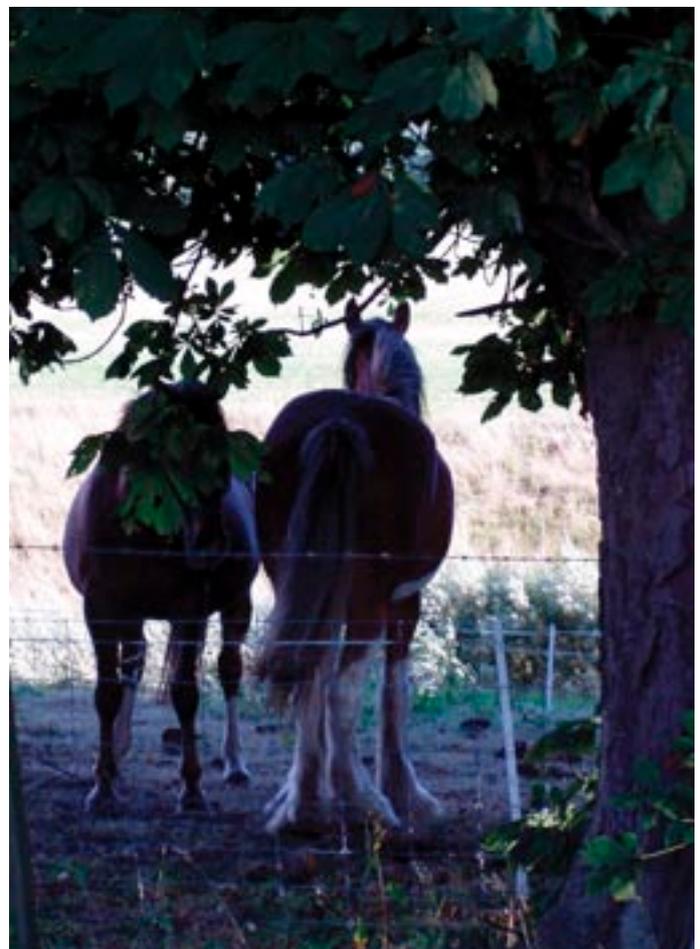
It may be relatively easy to work with those who have enthusiasm and experience. This is probably very necessary at the beginning to get things moving. The danger lies in staying with these groups (Cunningham et al 2005; Powell 2005; Craig 2005; McCleneghan 2002; Chapman & Kirk 2001). Several authors point to capacity building experiences which broaden the disparities within communities, as those with 'get up and go' join multiply committees and working groups. The work of Bourdieu is very useful here in his analysis of the different 'fields' of human experience and the multiple capitals, for example social, economic and symbolic, which people use to facilitate their social mobility. His work shows that a focus on simple economic indicators which lacks an appreciation of the invisible 'social' and 'cultural' and 'symbolic' capitals that people need to improve their lives, could be seen as contributing to the failure of so many efforts to tackle injustice. Language, accent and

even gait can be powerful exclusionary forces reinforcing existing patterns and acting as a barrier to the increase in social capital. Some of the pros and cons of adding political capital into the assets pentagram are explored by DfID (Carney 2002).

The more progressive traditions of community development and capacity building have of course always worked hard to develop critical consciousness around these issues (Powell 2005, Craig 2005).

However mainstream Community Development in the UK and Ireland has, in a service driven culture, struggled to hold this awareness and still maintain a critical effectiveness. This has perhaps been reinforced by romantic ideas of class and community. Polarising modes of communication turn off many who operate in a complex environment of New Labour Third Way policies and the Irish Celtic Tiger with its seductive engagement with civil society (Powell 2005, Levitas 2004). This has made it difficult to distinguish between voluntary sector and the state actors in many sectors and made it difficult for the critical voice of the sector to exist in a climate of fierce competition for funding (Daly & Howell 2006, Powell 2005, Savage et al 2005).

Finally although communities are extremely diverse and pathways towards sustainable community development are unpredictable and difficult to control, this literature review concludes that ABCD offers the



### Theme 3 : Capitals & Capabilities

- a. Capitals Frameworks may be useful for the development of an asset based approach to rural development.
- b. To facilitate more equitable outcomes, cultural, spiritual and symbolic/political capital may be useful additions to the five capitals described in the assets pentagram and the 5 capitals approach.
- c. Asset Based approaches to Community Development should build on existing experience within community development and other sectors in building capacity.

The assets under discussion may be persons, physical structures, natural resources, institutions, businesses, or informal organizations (Berkowitz and Wadud 2003).

Asset Based Community Development draws on a number of epistemological, social policy fields that have been explored in the literature review above.

#### Assets

ABCD projects, practitioners and papers vary widely in what they consider to be assets. The broadest understandings range across social, cultural, spiritual, physical and economic assets.

The narrowest definitions consider only physical assets such as buildings and land as assets which can be used to drive community development.

At the broad end of the scale the Ford Foundation, which has been working in this field for many years, uses the following:

#### Asset Building & Community Development Approach

This approach is used by the Ford Foundation which supports grantees in building assets that individuals, organizations, or communities can acquire, develop, improve, or transfer across generations. These include:

- Financial holdings of low-income people, such as savings, homeownership, and equity in a business; and philanthropic capital such as permanent endowments built by and used for poor communities.
- Natural resources such as forests, wildlife, land, and livestock that can provide communities with sustainable livelihoods, are often of cultural significance and provide environmental services such as a forest's role in cleansing, recycling, and renewing air and water.
- Social bonds and community relations—the social capital and civic culture of a place—that can break down the isolation of the poor, strengthen the relationships that provide security and support, and encourage community investment in institutions and individuals.
- Human assets such as the marketable skills that allow low-income people to obtain and retain employment that pays living wages; and comprehensive reproductive health, which affects people's capacity to work, overcome poverty, and lead satisfying lives.

#### Community Development

The Budapest Declaration on Community Development in Europe stated that “community development

## Section 3

### 3.1 Glossary      Origins and Definitions

This section explores some of the key terms littering the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) landscape. We do this to illustrate the need for practitioners and policy makers to be clear about how they are using these terms in their work.

#### Asset Based Community Development

Has become most closely associated with the work of McKnight and Kretzmann originally in Chicago and more recently with the international work of Mathie and Cunningham from the Coady International Institute in Nova Scotia, Canada. Although both institutions are key proponents of this method they are quick to point out that they are writing up and theorising learning, which has been shared with them by community leaders in different social and geographical contexts.

As the bibliography and reference section accompanying this paper shows ABCD is a burgeoning area of policy development and practice both in 'developed/Northern countries' such as the US, Canada and Australia and in countries of the Global South such as Ecuador, Egypt, India and the Philippines.

Mathie & Cunningham (2003) point out that: 'Asset-Based Community Development takes as its starting point the existing assets and strengths of community, particularly the strengths inherent in community-based associations and other social networks. As a strategy, it is shaped by a distinctive set of principles and these, in turn, inform field-based methods and practices'.

is a way of strengthening civil society by prioritising the actions of communities, and their perspectives in the development of social, economic and environmental policy.” The Declaration goes on to say that ‘community’ “taken to mean both geographical communities, communities of interest or identity and communities organising around specific themes or policy initiatives.”

It links community development with capacity building saying that “strengthens the capacity of people as active citizens through their community groups, organisations and networks; and the capacity of institutions and agencies (public, private and non-governmental) to work in dialogue with citizens to shape and determine change in their communities.”

Finally the Declaration links community development with social cohesion and the evolution of democracy and lays out a normative framework of public goods which, community development, it says helps to produce “plays a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by promoting the autonomous voice of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. It has a set of core values/social principles covering human rights, social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity; and a specific skills and knowledge base.”

Gary Craig (2005) summarises:

*“Community development is thus a method, a practice which involves a set of skills and a knowledge base and a value base.”*

However this definition is contested. Many writers challenge the use of community as an overly simple description of what in reality are often very heterogeneous groups with widely varying levels of access to social and other capitals.

At least one American writer distinguishes between ‘community development’ which is seen as restricted to the development and regeneration of physical infrastructure and ‘community building’ which related to capacity building processes in communities (Pinkett 2000).

It may be the existence of differing definitions such as these which partially explain the difference in emphasis and value base among Asset Based Community Development advocates in different parts of the world.

McCleneghan (2000) suggests that community development is generally defined as

*a social learning process; a learning process which serves to empower individuals and social groups by involving them as citizens in collective activities aimed at socio-economic regeneration, develop-*



*ment and change.*

Community development here is clearly linked with politics and focused on work with those on the margins of society. (See also Powell, 2005; Ledwith 2006)

*When we use the term ‘community development’ we are not referring to community in the abstract but very specific and empirically grounded communities defined by the concept ‘social exclusion’—individuals, social groups, whole communities, parts of communities, communities within communities—people whose life chances have been affected by the multidimensional processes of social exclusion generating social inequality (McCleneghan 2000).*

The Community Development Exchange and Scottish Community Development Centre define community development in similar terms and go on to outline the following aims of the profession:

- to strengthen community networks and co-operation
- to enable the participation of all by challenging inequality and discrimination
- to facilitate programmes for learning that recognise and develop skills held within a community
- to develop practises and policies that protect the environment and encourage long-term, sustainable change
- to put the voices and actions of communities first, prioritising the views and needs of those experiencing poverty in particular, in order to reverse the imbalance of power

[www.cdx.org.uk](http://www.cdx.org.uk)

[www.scdc.org.uk/](http://www.scdc.org.uk/)

In summary therefore care needs to be taken in the use of the term community to ensure that it reflects

the diverse interests and differential access to platforms, power and participative processes that different subsections within a community may have.

Voices of people with less access to the variety of capitals (see social capital below) should be prioritised in policy making and decision making.

### **More information on community development can be found at IACD**

<http://www.iacdglobal.org/documents/general/BudapestDeclaration4683D.pdf>  
(Accessed July 2006)

### **The Community Development Exchange and the Scottish CD Network**

<http://www.cdx.org.uk/about/whatiscd.htm>  
<http://www.scdn.org.uk/>  
(Accessed July 2006)

### **Capacity Building**

In his recent paper for the OECD, Gary Craig, takes an overview of the developed country capacity building literature (Craig 2005). He suggests that capacity building may be a new term for community development.

*Capacity building is a process of working with a community to determine what its needs and strengths are, and to develop ways of using those strengths to meet those needs.*

Smith et al (2001) and Craig (2005) comment on the strikingly similar definitions of capacity building and community development outlined: "In many ways, capacity building is the essence of community development" (Smith et al).

In an earlier piece of work for Scottish Homes, Chapman & Kirk (2001) define community capacity building as

*the term used to describe the process by which the capability of the community is strengthened in order that it can play a more active role in the economic and social regeneration of their area through long-term ownership of the regeneration process.*

The promotion of capacity building is not confined to national and local contexts but also has currency in the international finance institutions such as the World Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (McNeil and Woolcock 2004). The World Bank Report 2004 'Making Services Work for Poor People' points to need to strengthen accountability in three key relationships in the service delivery train- between poor people and providers, between poor people and policy makers, and between policymakers and providers.

The emphasis here is on relational capacity, or the dynamics between different stakeholder groups. The report recognises that it is not enough to strengthen the stakeholders through capacity enhancement. There is an additional need for productive relationships to be forged between different stakeholder groups.

This report also highlights the importance of context and process to development outcomes. Context depends upon understanding, building upon and making use of local capacity. Process relies on a sustained and iterative approach that incorporates feedback from monitoring and evaluation in project design and implementation – a 'learning by doing' approach. In his analysis of the Commission for Africa report Booth points out that: "One of the Report's leading proposals is a big aid-funded push on 'capacity building'. Like 'governance', capacity building is the kind of polite and non-threatening epithet that makes for easy conversation in any gathering of African and international leaders"(Booth 2005).

In their report on a health promotion initiative Neale Smith, Lori Baugh Littlejohns and Donna Thompson (2001) identify community empowerment through capacity building as key to reconciling theory and practice. Even without demonstrable improvements in health, they say, capacity building is a valuable goal in its own right. However, they foresee that where communities initiate action on the basis of their own priorities this will also lead to sustainable improvements in community health in the longer term.

### **Community Asset Building**

This is an approach, used primarily by public institutions and policy makers, which seeks to support community development by bringing assets into community management. Again there appears to be a broad range of approaches and understandings involved here. These range from processes which map existing assets within communities and work to build on these, to processes which have little community involvement in the development stages but involved communities to greater or lesser extent in the 'community' management of public or private assets such as community halls or private land.

### **Positive Psychology**

ABCD also draws interestingly on the relatively new field of appreciative inquiry (Elliott, C. 1999; Ashford, G. & Patkar, S. 2001). This in turn has links with the growing area of positive psychology which has been called the scientific investigation of human happiness or a move to addressing mental wellness rather than a primary focus on mental illness. (Johnston 2006; Seligman 2002; Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi 1996)

## Core Principles of The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

*These are that poverty-focused development activity should be:*

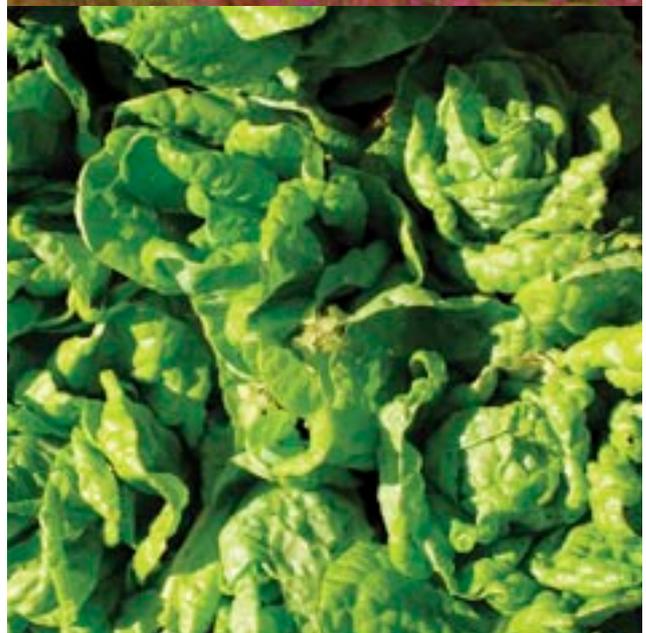
- *People-centred: sustainable poverty elimination will be achieved only if external support focuses on what matters to people, understands the differences between groups of people and works with them in a way that fits in with their current livelihood strategies, social environment and ability to adapt.*
- *Responsive and participatory: poor people must be key actors in identifying and addressing livelihood priorities. Outsiders need processes that enable them to listen and respond to the poor.*
- *Multi-level: poverty elimination is an enormous challenge that will only be overcome by working at multiple levels, ensuring that local-level activity informs the development of policy and an effective enabling environment, and that higher-level policies and institutions support people to build upon their own strengths.*
- *Conducted in partnership: with both the public and the private sector.*
- *Sustainable: there are four key dimensions to sustainability – economic, institutional, social and environmental sustainability. All are important – a balance must be found between them.*
- *Dynamic: external support must recognise the dynamic nature of livelihood strategies, respond flexibly to changes in people's situation, and develop longer-term commitments.*

### *Livelihood Assets*

*A key component in the SL framework, they are the assets on which livelihoods are built, and can be divided into five core categories (or types of capital). These are: human capital, natural capital, financial capital, social capital, and physical capital. People's choice of livelihood strategies, as well as the degree of influence they have over policy, institutions and processes, depends partly upon the nature and mix of the assets they have available to them (see Livelihoods Asset Pentagon). Some combination of them is required by people to achieve positive livelihood outcomes – that is, to improve their quality of life significantly on a sustainable basis.*

*No single category of assets on its own is sufficient to achieve this, but not all assets may be required in equal measure. It is important to note that a single asset can generate multiple benefits. For example, if someone has secure access to land (natural capital) they may also be able to get better access to financial capital, as they can use the land both for productive uses and as security for a loan.*

*Quoted from <http://www.livelihoods.org/>*



## 3.2 Resources

### Useful Organisations

**Coady Institute:** <http://www.coady.stfx.ca/>  
Follow publications on this website to find extensive resources, tool-kits and web references. In particular Coady has produced an ABCD Manual which contains an excellent grounding in the field:  
[http://www.coady.stfx.ca/services/ABCD\\_manual/index.cfm](http://www.coady.stfx.ca/services/ABCD_manual/index.cfm)

**Asset Based Community Development Institute**  
<http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd/abcdbackground.html>

There are extensive resources and references and tool kits available on the website of the Centre for Asset Based Community Development at the Institute for Public Policy at Northwestern University in Chicago.

**Centre for Development Practice South Africa**

News, resources and training available.  
[www.cdpa.org.za](http://www.cdpa.org.za)

**Institute for Development Studies**

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/>  
Sussex, UK: Livelihood & Development Resources  
Numerous academic articles and practical resources for those involved with participative approaches to development. The work of the Participation, Power and Social Change Team is particularly useful.

**International Development Research Centre**

<http://www.idrc.ca/>

**Myrada**

Indian non-governmental organisation with extensive experience of rural development.

<http://www.myrada.org/>  
[http://www.myrada.org/paper\\_rural\\_management.htm](http://www.myrada.org/paper_rural_management.htm)

**Livelihoods Connect**

<http://www.livelihoods.org/>

### Toolkits and Case Studies

**Asset Based Community Development Institute**  
<http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html>

Available as PDF: *Discovering Community Power: A Guide to Mobilizing Local Assets and Your Organization's Capacity* (by the ABCD Institute in cooperation with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation).

Available as PDF: *Hidden Treasures: Building Community Connections*

Numerous Guides and Workbooks are available for purchase, for example:

*The Organization of Hope: A Workbook for Rural Asset-Based Community Development.* This is written by Luther K. Snow with an editorial committee of rural community leaders experienced in ABCD.

Dewar; T. (1997) *A guide to evaluating asset based community development: Lessons, challenges & opportunities.* Chicago, ABCD Institute. ABCD Institute publications are available by order from ACTA publications.

**Coady International Institute**

<http://www.coady.stfx.ca/>  
There is a very good introductory ABCD course, plus lots of good articles and case studies available from the Coady Institute.

Available as PDF: ABCD Manual  
[http://www.coady.stfx.ca/services/ABCD\\_manual/index.cfm](http://www.coady.stfx.ca/services/ABCD_manual/index.cfm)

**Case studies**

Available as PDF:  
SEWA & Coady ABCD Manual (India)  
The Jamba Kiwa Story (Ecuador)  
Success Stories from Egyptian Communities: A manual for Practitioners

**Articles**

Available as PDF: *Who is driving development? Reflections on the transformative potential of asset-based community development*  
Mathie, A. & Cunningham, G. (2005). *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 26 (1), 175-187  
<http://www.coady.stfx.ca/work/publications.cfm#manuals>

## Centre for Collaborative Planning

'ABCD Resource List', <<http://www.connectccp.org/resources/library.shtml>>.

--- (2002), *We Already Know- Building Our Communities from Our Strengths An Asset- Based Community Development Guidebook for Agricultural Workers and their Communities A Community Building Tool* from the: Rural Community Assistance Corporation Agricultural Worker Health & Housing Initiative.' (Rural Community Assistance Corporation Agricultural Worker Health & Housing Initiative).

## Participation Toolkit website

This website contains numerous case studies on participative and asset based approaches to community development.

Eg <http://www.toolkitparticipation.nl/cases/26>

Citizen Participation in practice- case studies from Africa <http://www.toolkitparticipation.nl/news/81> (Accessed July 2006)

## Appreciative Inquiry & Community Development

International Institute for Sustainable Development IISD Canada  
<http://www.iisd.org/ai/>

Very good introduction to the subject and downloadable resources such as:

*Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry Charles Elliott, IISD, 1999*  
Available as pdf: <http://www.iisd.org/publications/pub.aspx?id=287>

## Livelihoods Research

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/1585>  
(accessed on 9/3/06)

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/poverty-elimination-ssr-2-1.pdf>

<http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/projects/commcap/7communitycapitalsfigure.pdf>

<http://www.livelihoods.org/>

## Capacity Building and ABCD

### Horizons Community Development Associates

Measuring community capacity resource kit. <http://www.horizonscda.ca/projects/ccmp.html>

## Managing Wholes:

i) An Assets-Building Model Of Community Development In A U.S. Neighbourhood by Marilyn Trail and Sally Horton, Washington State University  
<http://managingwholes.com/trail.htm>

ii) Generating social capital in an urban neighborhood by Peter Donovan  
<http://managingwholes.com/spokane.htm>

iii) An Assets-Building Model Of Community Development In A U.S. Neighbourhood by Marilyn Trail and Sally Horton, Washington State University <http://managingwholes.com/trail.htm>  
[http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/ahln/pdfs/1\\_FeaturesofCommunityCapacity.pdf](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/ahln/pdfs/1_FeaturesofCommunityCapacity.pdf)

## Community Tool Box -

### Mapping Community Assets:

Lots of capacity building tools for community development and health  
[http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/tools\\_toc.htm](http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/tools_toc.htm)

## Community Building Resources in Alberta

Community Capacity Building & Asset Mapping Philosophy  
[http://www.cbr-aimhigh.com/What\\_cbr\\_Does/philosophy.htm](http://www.cbr-aimhigh.com/What_cbr_Does/philosophy.htm)

## North Central Regional Center for Rural Development Iowa State University

Bregendahl Corry (2005) North Central Regional Center for Rural Development Iowa State University

Power point presentation for the 2005 Working Session on Community Capitals Framework: Research, Evaluation, Practice Ames, Iowa December 12-13, 2005  
<http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/projects/commcap/index.htm>

## Ontario Health Promotion Resource System

A literature review that was conducted recently by the Ontario Health Promotion Resource System – information on pages 4-9 is interesting:  
[http://www.ohprs.ca/resources/tina\\_finalreport\\_27dec2004.pdf](http://www.ohprs.ca/resources/tina_finalreport_27dec2004.pdf)

## The Wilder Research Centre

This one is about what makes community building work: <http://www.fieldstonealliance.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=7>

## The Ohio State University Resources

(Sandra Kerka 2003) <http://www.cete.org/acve/docgen.asp?tbl=tia&ID=170>

Sandra Kerka's paper contains an excellent starting resource for ABCD materials and references predominantly North American.

## **Selected Global & Regional Philanthropic Web Resources**

### **Ford Foundation**

<http://www.fordfound.org/>

### **Kellog Foundation:**

<http://www.wkkf.org/>

Website has a whole range of resources and materials including:

### **Kellog Rural Round Up**

#### **A compilation of North American rural websites**

<http://www.wkkf.org/Default.aspx?tabid=90&CID=274&ItemID=2740108&NID=2750108&LanguageID=0>  
(Accessed July 2006)

Using a Systems Change Approach to Evaluate Comprehensive Community Change Initiatives [http://www.wkkf.org/DesktopModules/WKF\\_Dmaltem/ViewDoc.aspx?LanguageID=0&CID=281&ListID=28&ItemID=5000160&fld=PDFFile](http://www.wkkf.org/DesktopModules/WKF_Dmaltem/ViewDoc.aspx?LanguageID=0&CID=281&ListID=28&ItemID=5000160&fld=PDFFile)  
(Accessed July 2006)

### **Synergos**

<http://www.synergos.org/globalphilanthropy/knowledge/> (Accessed July 2006)

In 2002 Synergos Sponsored an important **ROUND-TABLE ON ASSETS, LIVELIHOODS AND GOVERNANCE** AN EDITED TRANSCRIPT of this meeting which was prepared by The Coady Institute is available on the Coady website.

### **Benedum Foundation**

Focusing on rural US.

<http://www.benedum.org/>

### **Acronyms**

ABCD Asset Based Community Development  
DfID Department for International Development  
DGIS Directorate General for Development Cooperation Netherlands  
IACD International Association for Community Development  
NGOs Non-Governmental Organisations  
PRA Participatory Rural Appraisal  
SIDA Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency  
AI Appreciative Inquiry  
IDS Institute for Development Studies, Sussex

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