

LESSONS FROM COMMUNITY DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT IN MYANMAR : ANALYSIS OF PRELIMINARY RESULTS¹

Background to Community Development

Myanmar is a vast country with a varied living standards of people across her landmass. The living conditions in remote and inaccessible villages are obviously much different and challenging compared to others with an easier access. Although over 85% of the people live in rural areas, the majority does not have adequate (the word adequate covers everything) drinking water. Still others have to pay for drinking water even in predominantly rural areas such as Kyunsu islands. Due to the remoteness and difficult access, the people are not benefitted from development assistance as much as those in “better served” areas. Until recently, the majority of assistance for community development has been planned for and delivered by the Department of Rural Development (DRD) under the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development. In addition to DRD-led approach, the communities themselves have planned, funded and implemented various development activities in remote villages. The latter approach is entirely people-led of which the frequency is much less as majority of the communities find their daily existence difficult. In the latter approach, people have implemented activities for a long period, and widely recognized in the country only after the World Bank-assisted National Community Driven Development (NCDD) was launched and the implementation commenced on a pilot basis in 3 townships since October 2013. The concept of people driven development has been a hallmark of the development process in the south-east Asia region including the Phillipines, Indonesia and Cambodia.

This article presents the main lessons learned during the implementation of the first cycle of the people driven approach to development in the NCDD project that ended on 30 June 2014 (1 October 2013 to 30 June 2014). The article also provides a brief review of the different practices of community driven practices in Myanmar as a backdrop. The first cycle of the community driven development (CDD) has been implemented in 3 townships, one in each township from Chin State, Shan State and Tannytariye Region respectively.

Government centred community development

The community development activities can be grouped into 5 main methods.

Department of Rural Development (DRD)-led: The first and the dominant form of assistance is planned and administered by the DRD. The Department has its offices in each of the states and regions, in some districts and in the majority of townships who are responsible for the planning and the delivery community development activities. The common practice for the identification of development assistance is led by officers located at various levels such as province, district and township. In this approach, the officials identify activities, provide for funding and implement. The identification of activities is done using several approaches. The most common is that government officials at the village tract level identify activities that are considered important to the people who submit such activities to the higher levels of administration. The latter after review, submits important activities that need to be funded communicates their request to district, which is then passed to the State

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and finally to the Union DRD. However, only a handful of activities identified via this process receives funding due to limited resources.

Public agencies led: The second method is community development assistance led by other public agencies, mainly line departments, the Members of Parliament in their own constituencies, by the members of the State / Region's assembly. The development activities identified by the government agencies are funded by the respective resources allocated to such agencies. The activities are implemented by line departments except for those proposed by MPs and the States where the implementation is undertaken by the DRD. The dominant form of implementation of approved activities, either originated from grassroots level or by other agencies, is by private contractors selected and awarded by DRD.

In both above scenarios, the only involvement of the beneficiary community is in the identification of activities. The work implementation including the procurement of necessary goods and services is decided by the agency. The local people do not have any influence over planning or implementation of development assistance. Whenever the work is implemented under a contract, the workers are brought into the village where it is implemented from outside. Hence, the local people, more often than not, are given the option to work as casual labourers whenever the labour force brought from outside is in short-supply. Hence, villagers who are expected to benefit from rural development works are labourers within their villages.

NGO-led: The third method is assistance supported by other development agencies such as international and (national)non-government organisations (NGOs). In this case, the assistance is designed for and implemented by the agency concerned where the role of DRD is limited to provide occasional technical advice and reporting progress. The beneficiary communities have a great deal of engagement in work planning and implementation under this approach.

Private organizations led: The fourth method is by private individuals, organisations and other entities (Trusts, conglomerates) where the decision is entirely based on the preference of the individual or organisation concerned. Examples for such assistance are religious organisations, monasteries, mosques and churches. The assistance may either come from a local and/or outside organisation.

Community led: The final form of development assistance is planned for and implemented by the community itself. In this case, a village elite with the support of the local community, plans and implements small-scale projects such as school building, drinking water, jetty, etc. For example, water, school and health posts in the majority of island-villages in Kyusnu township have been built by the community with the support of an individual. In many cases, the school teachers are paid for by the community and the school managed by the local people. This approach is common in villages located in remote areas or in islands far away from the mainland.

The last 3 methods provide a greater level of flexibility for local people to plan and manage construction of the activities. On the other hand, the entire work in the case of the final two methods is planned for and managed by the community, where the people are in control of assistance.

Due to the limited resources, community development cannot be provided simultaneously to every village in any given township. As a result, only a minority of villages receives development assistance in any given year. For instance, the DRD-led development

assistance in Kanpetlet township has been received by 25 villages in 2010 and another 23 villages in 2011. This township has 118 villages. This reveals that 70 villages in this township have not received any development assistance from DRD in the years 2010 and 2011. It is also to be highlighted that because of difficulties to implement activities caused by poor access and remoteness, the DRD-led assistance has a drawback in that recipient villages are those with better road access; the villages located further afield continue to be neglected.

The research conducted within the framework of NCDD reveals that the majority of remote villages in Kanpetlet and Kyunsu townships never in their history, received development assistance from outside agencies. The infrastructure items that exist in the two townships has been built through own efforts by the community itself.

These reasons highlight the need for a new paradigm of community development in the country where the attention is on the development of the capacity of rural people to plan and develop their own areas, supported through funding made available directly to them. The approach also calls for a greater buy-in on the part of rural people to manage development assistance that may come from outside. As the “control of development” is vested in the community itself, this paradigm is recognised as “community-driven” development.

It is against the above background that the outcome of the pilot CDD implemented in 3 townships should be reviewed. The CDD began in 2013 in 3 townships on a pilot basis will have covered 15 townships by 2015, one in each 15 Regions and States of the country.

Before the main features of NCDD as was piloted in the country are described, the next section begins with a discussion on the current status of infrastructure in the 3 townships. This is important as the support to either rehabilitate or build village infrastructure item is the main emphasis of NCDD.

Current state of village infrastructure

The critical infrastructure items required by the local community for their sustenance, including access (road or jetty) to the village, water supply, sanitation, electric power, place of gathering for the community, school and health facility. The data on health, schools and access (roads or jetty, for villages surrounded by water) in the three townships is presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1: Distribution of Health Facilities

Township	Type of Health Facility (per cent of villages)		
	None Health Facility	Rural Health Centre	Other Health Facility
Kanpetlet	86	4	10
Kyunsu	59	7	34
Namhsan	50	0	50

NCDD: Monitoring data

The data demonstrates that the number of villages without any health facility is the highest in Kanpetlet (86% villages with none facility) followed by Kyunsu (59% without any facility). The situation in Namshan township is comparatively better as only 50 % of villages do not have any health facility.

Table 2: Distribution of Schools

Township	Type of School (per cent villages)				
	None	Primary	Middle	High	Combination
Kanpetlet	18	51	7	2	23
Kyunsu	1	76	10	8	6
Namhsan	9	59	24	2	6

Source: NCDD monitoring data

An eighteen per cent of villages in Kanpetlet have no schools whereas only 9% villages in Namhsan do not have any school. Only one percent of village in Kyunsu township is without any school. It was observed that schools in several villages have been built by the community through its own efforts and resources. The local people building their own school is common in Kyunsu township formed by a series of Islands. It was also noted that teachers in several schools are paid for by community funds where there are no government paid-teachers .

Table 3 :Modes of Village Access

Township	Mode of Access (per cent of villages)		
	Footpath	Track	Metal-surfaced
Kanpetlet	45	53	2
Kyunsu*	24	93	20
Namhsan*	27	5	97

*As some villages have more than one mode of access, the total exceeds 100%.

Source : NCDD monitoring data

With regard to accessibility (Table 3), it is poorest in Kanpetlet where 45% of villages are served only by a foot path. Twenty-four percent of villages in Kyunsu are served by a foot path as the only access whereas 27 % villages in Namhsan township have foot path as the only access. It is to be noted that the majority of Islands in Kyunsu township has at least one jetty to access the Island. Namhsan is a township where every village can be accessed by a motor cycle in the dry season. This township has 97% villages that have a metal-surfaced road.

In the above context, the funding and facilitation for infrastructure will positively support community development. This is the main basis for the NCDD program implemented in Myanmar.

Basic characteristics and guiding principles of NCDD

The basic data for the 3 townships where NCDD implemented are presented in Table 4. It is to be highlighted that every household in all villages one way or the other, will benefit from CDD. This approach heavily relies on building and fostering partnerships between local community, contractors, local government and national agencies. The partnership principle was applied from the first step of CDD which is the selection of township from among the 15 States and Regions. The townships were selected based on consensus reached among the development practitioners through active participation and transparent method adopted in a workshop. The participants for township selection came from all agencies engaged in

development in the township. Among them are the representatives of civil society agencies, private organisations, community-based organisations, local administration consisting of village, village tract and township administrators, development agencies and the government both the State/ Region's representatives and the Union government which is represented by DRD Union. The two main variables in selecting the township are the lack of previous development assistance and high level of poverty. The local people and development partners by consensus identified the 3 townships for NCDD implementation in the first year of operation. This principle will be followed through the life of the program.

Table 4 : Village Tracts, Villages and Population under NCDD Project in Year 1

Township	Village Tract (VT) (number)	Village (number)	Population	Households (number)
Kanpetlet	26	118	17,800	3,013
Kyunsu	20	149	145,612	26,634
Namhsan	26	123	71,658	11,830
All	72	390	235,070	41,477

The partner agencies for each pilot township were selected by the DRD through open-bidding. Accordingly, two international NGOs (INGOs) were selected. The International Rescue Group (IRG) became the partner agency for Kanpetlet township while Mercy Corp was the agency selected for other two townships namely, Namshan and Kyunsu. The partner agencies are expected to initiate and facilitate the development assistance including capacity development of community members in their assigned township. The other steps of the project cycle are summarised in Tables 5 and 6 where program formalities are in the first table while the major milestones are in the second table.

Table 5 :Principles of Community Driven Development Initiative

Step	Description	Participation
Socialization	Facilitated by the partner agency through participation of all community members and organisations. It provides an opportunity for community members and leaders to educate on CDD principles and to seek further clarifications	Leaders of all villages in township, village tract administration, township administration, relevant staff of district and State administration and DRD staff
Staff recruitment	Project team in each township consists of a technical team to represent CDD, infrastructure, monitoring, communication, finance and procurement and a team of facilitators. The latter is primarily responsible to work and assist village and village tract committees to implement activities. Facilitator are youth (male/female) who are expected to reside in villages assigned to them. Their role is facilitation, assistance and catalyse the community development process	Technical assistance agency and DRD. A contract is written between partner agency and DRD for the provision of service in each cycle of the project
Establishment of township Secretariat	Secretariat team provides capacity development in CDD, monitoring, finance and procurement management,	The secretariat consists of technical assistance team, facilitators and assigned DRD

	infrastructure and communication. Secretariat has communication equipment and operates an office	staff
Capacity development for staff and communities	Covers aspects relevant for the implementation of CDD such as training on infrastructure, monitoring, finance, procurement, communication and documentation;; working together with community; frequent dialogues, etc.	Facilitated by a team of international specialists covering all aspects relating to CDD

The implementation activities are undertaken in a sequence starting from community familiarisation of the technical team of two INGOs. The process is summarised in Table 6.

Table 6 : Process of Community Driven Development

What is the purpose?	Who involves ?	Achievements / Comments
Familiarisation		
Technical team establishes itself in the township	Members of technical team and facilitators	Accomplished in 2 weeks
Meeting government staff	Team members	All staff met and contacts developed
Collect and review basic data on villages and population	Team members and government staff	Completed in two months
Field entry		
Facilitators visit assigned villages in a pair	Male and female facilitator	For safety and security, small groups consisting of 2 or 3 facilitators are fielded
Village orientation meeting		
Create awareness and educate community on project approach, mechanism and guidelines; to elect project support committee as the main mechanism to implement activities; explain process of committee election roles and functions of committee members	Meeting chaired by village leader. Men and women to represent each household in assigned village; representation of each ethnic group and religion in village. Project staff present methods of electing community members, eligible criteria and tasks. Facilitate election process	A total of 389 orientation meetings were conducted within a period of 2 months. 20,817 community members (about equal per cent men/women) participated
Election of committees		
One committee for each village with 3 sub-committees - monitoring, procurement and operation and maintenance; volunteers and grievance focal persons; The purpose is to manage construction of infrastructure in village with accountability and transparency. Village tract committee is	Villagers, men and women	389 village committees comprising of 4,731 committee members (56 % men and 44 % women); 1,167 sub-committees; 1,139 grievance focal persons of which 51 % are women; 446 village volunteers, 49 % women

made up of elected members at village; 2 sub-committees at village tract – finance and grievance. Village tract committee is responsible for supervision of work of all villages under the tract		
Social assessment		
Conducted by villagers facilitated by project staff; special sessions with women, poor and ethnic minority people	Majority villagers, village leaders, facilitators	Could not be successfully conducted in every village due to poor access where 8-10 hours of walking in difficult terrain was required in the case of some remote villages
Identification & prioritization of village activities		
Small projects that provide immediate benefits to community, i.e. water supply, roads, jetties, school buildings, irrigation, electrification. List of projects prepared and priorities determined through participatory interactions. 3 prioritized projects for each village	Village committee, villagers, village leaders and facilitators	About 2,000 items identified for rehabilitation and new-building
Village tract priorities and development plan		
Prioritized projects at village are further assessed by village tract level to determine most important single project that can be funded through block grant; village tract development plan is prepared incorporating selected project for each village	Village tract committee, village tract administrator, facilitators	357 items prioritized and included in tract level plan
Review village tract development plan		
Village tract plan is ratified by township planning committee; ensure projects are included in government plan for subsequent operation/maintenance	Township planning and implementation committee	357 small infrastructure items (roads, paths, bridges, jetties, school buildings, water supply work, electrification, irrigation, etc.) approved for implementation
Community training		
Provide training to all members of VPSC on procurement, finance, infrastructure, monitoring, record keeping and documentation.	Training team, village committee, volunteers, village tract committee	Total of 4,731 community members trained on subjects stated in left column.
Village Tract (VT) open bank account		
After training of finance sub-committee, opens a bank	Finance sub-committee members, facilitators and	About 220 members of finance sub-committees were trained on best

account for village tract with 2 signatories	finance specialists	practice for financial procedures and standards
Block Grant transfer to VT bank account		
A block grant of 21 million Kyats transferred by DRD directly to 72 village tract accounts; Village tract committee is responsible for account management with highest transparency level; finance managed utilizing best practices; tract committee decides on sum to be allocated for each village; money is withdrawn and handed over to village committee until item is completed	Village tract finance sub-committee	A total of 1,500 million kyats deposited in 72 village tract bank accounts by 31 March 2014
Detailed design and costing		
Items approved by township proceed to implementation; township engineers and technical assistance team prepares designs, cost and provide design to village committee	Village committees, facilitators, technical team	357 infrastructure items designed and costed
Village procurement		
Procurement sub-committee procures materials and services following best standards; procurement information publicised at village level for information; village committee adopts unique procurement practices for its advantage	Procurement sub-committee members, many women and facilitators	85% of infrastructure building implemented by village committee and 15 % by contractors
Construction		
Construction is by contractors hired under leadership of village committee; follow designs and procedures agreed; simple work executed by village committee hiring skilled technicians; villagers work on payment of wages; committee adopts mechanisms to recruit poor people to work; frequent meetings to explain villagers	Village committee members, contractors and facilitators	21 % of infrastructure items completed by 31 May (within 2 months) and 61 % by June 30. Total of 82 % of items within 3 months

The main highlights of CDD as implemented in the first year are:

- Local people via committees taking over the responsibility for planning, execution, monitoring and completion of infrastructure items with responsibility for operation and maintenance;
- Women received formal technical and managerial training for the first time. Training coupled with subsequent capacity building has helped them not only to achieve project expectations and standards but also to better manage their private businesses and activities in the villages. This is a high-spin off benefit realized through CDD approach;
- Women were elected to decision-making positions which is the first time for them to hold such roles within their villages. All village leadership positions previously have been held by men. NCDD has facilitated to create new leadership positions in target villages and has helped place women in commanding positions. About 50 % of committee positions are now held by women;



photo 1 Committee Members Finalizing Village Development Plan

- NCDD has been the first externally funding mechanism that planned and implemented infrastructure building in about 400 villages that include some of the remotest villages in the 3 townships. This was achieved within six months. What people had prior to NCDD were locally-built items and the majority was not functioning satisfactorily. Many other villages did not have the basic infrastructure items prior to the implementation of the NCDD;
- All village committee members received training in committee affairs, financial management, supervision of construction, procurement, monitoring, documentation and sharing of information. This training has been the first time for the huge majority of community members including women;
- All villagers were afforded the opportunity to participate in an open and fair grievance handling system where their questions and concerns were resolved;
- Villagers are primarily responsible for financial and procurement management which has been the first experience in their life;
- All activities and processes have been implemented following international best practices and standards. Examples are procurement, financial management, work

place safety, safeguards, equal wages regardless of sex, no child labour and equal opportunities for both women and men;

- 357 infrastructure items in about 400 villages were planned and construction completed within a record time of just 3 months; and
- The infrastructure items selected for rehabilitation and construction reflect on the local needs.



photo 2 Village Committee Member Training Session

The Emerging Evidence

New evidence and experience on infrastructure building and village empowerment have been surfaced through the process of implementation of CDD, highlighted below.

Gender Empowerment

After the NCDD, there was evidence that almost all villagers have achieved a higher level of empowerment. The significant empowerment was experienced among women in committees, none of whom have ever worked in a committee before. Prior to the NCDD, all decision making positions in the village tract were held by men. All of the administrators of 72 village tracts under the project are men and so is the deputy administrator. With regard to the village, all leaders were also men. The NCDD transformed this status to elect women to decision making entities; the composition of village committees, about 50% now women. Several of the village committees were headed by a woman which has opened a new chapter in the village social dynamics. Women have taken such a huge initiative to learn from and to practice their new skills in not only community affairs but also in their personal

lives. Several women believe that the new skills learned together with their psychological transformation facilitated by the project will lead to a better future life.



photo 3 On-the-Job Training for Committee Members

Other aspects of villager empowerment is measured by variables such as being able to speak up in the public, discuss and negotiate with the government staff, implement community work efficiently with documentation, being able to take down minutes of meetings, maintaining a high level of transparency and accountability, visiting banks and withdrawing funds.. For majority of women in distant villages, NCDD has been the only opportunity that gave them an access to training. The capacity of village committee members was hugely enhanced through their working together with project staff. The momentum is set for the implementation of next cycles of the NCDD project.



photo 4 Village Committee Members Building a School Wall

Community benefits

The implementation of the CDD approach has produced several community benefits. Among the direct benefits are, better water supply throughout the year, building school facilities, access via rehabilitated roads, jetties, and culverts, and similar other infrastructures newly built such as bridges, village electrification, market roads, etc. It has been estimated that one village water supply system has saved the time of villagers walking daily to a water source 2 km away. The savings are equivalent to 73 million Kyats per year in one village where 102 households are present. This is equivalent to a saving of about 60,000 kyats per household per month.

The project has had impact on poverty reduction of the local people. This is achieved both through their empowerment and increase in household income. The empowerment has already been described earlier. The community members increased their household income by way of receiving wages for work undertaken. The wages income has been in the region of Kyats 50,000 to Kyats 100,000 by providing their unskilled labour. The NCDD gave women a new experience as they received equal wages as men. This has been the first time in their to have received the same wage as men for similar job. Some other community members have received cash for supplying local materials such as sand, rubble and timber. Entire community is benefitted by the item built.



photo 5 Meeting in a New School Building Supported by NCDD

The above are some of the new benefits that the community could have never gained if the construction of infrastructure was undertaken by the conventional methods.

The first CDD project has generated evidence that building village infrastructure items is cost-effective while ensuring the quality of the items built. It was noted that the cost of construction of a similar item under non-CDD approach is three-times higher compared to what has been achieved under NCDD. The low cost without jeopardising the quality is a huge benefit achieved under the NCDD.



photo 6 List of Community Donation to a Village Bridge

The Box 1 describes the process that has been planned for and undergone by the local community in order to ensure high-quality of items built.



photo 7 New Built Village Water Supply Facility

Box 1 Ensuring Construction Quality via CDD Approach

The NCDD experience tells that entrusting the construction responsibility with the local committee after its capacity improved, has enhanced overall quality of work completed as outlined below..

First, the committee selected and appointed an experienced and skilled contractor who is trust-worthy to do the job. There was evidence that committee members travelled to other villages in search of experienced technicians before beginning the work.

Second, committee sought assistance of experienced technicians to asses designs and sought advice on improvement in construction. In one case, the local committee visited the engineer of a government-executed construction site in an adjacent village to seek clarification on design given by the project team and to receive further advice on the construction. The engineer in turn conducted a practical work session to upskill committee members.

Third, committee members visited the construction site every day, in turnto supervise work and to ensure that contractor fulfilled all the requirements such as the concrete curing time, spraying water on concrete, quality of wood work, etc. The regular inspections and supervision also gave committee members the option to learn as work was progressing and to make adjustments in construction work as required. In one case, they decided to change the design of foundation work from bricks to metal (??) as they realised the ground was wet. In another case, members changed timber materials realising the originally selected material did not withstand the local condition. This would not have been possible without incurring an additional cost if the construction was done by a contractor appointed by the DRD.

The fourth and final method was to use the best raw materials for construction. Committee members learned from their social networks the best material for a given field site and where it can be procured from. In some cases, material was transported from outside as the local material was considered to be of poor quality. It is unlikely that this would have happened if the work was undertaken by a contractor appointed by the DRD as in the past.



photo 8 A Village Committee Acknowledging its Contribution to Development

The implementation of specific activities planned for and implemented by the community have reduced construction costs substantially while contributing to the high level of quality as presented in Box 2.

In addition to the above advantages, there were several other benefits of the CDD approach as outlined below:

- Construction of infrastructure items by the community made it easier to carryout maintenance work;
- The operation of infrastructure was found to be easily understood by the community;
- Community planning and implementation promote active learning. Their skill in construction, supervision and monitoring were up-graded;
- Community comprising of different ethnic groups and religions working together cultivated unity among them. The same applies to committee structure that was made up of people with different ethnic and religions and, women too;
- In some cases, committee requested contractor to repair existing facility for example repair of an existing water tank, without incurring an extra charge. In one case (Mar Kyar village in Kanpetlet), village committee requested the contractor to repair some existing infrastructure at no extra cost. In another case (ZerKaMi village in Kyunsu), at the request of VPSC, the contractor built a culvert for free using excess building materials procured for the school building; and
- NCDD approach is also seen as an opportunity to apply and demonstrate international best practices and standards. Examples are gender empowerment, equal wages for men and women, transparency of the entire process and outcome

documentation, accountability standards and procedures, social audit, voluntary land donation.

- The NCDD approach also facilitated gender and ethnicity-disaggregated data collection and adoption of flexible construction methods.

Box 2 Community actions to reduce construction costs

The careful study of construction costs as incurred by the community reveals several methods that have led to reduce construction costs due to several inter-related factors, all of which were planned and implemented by the locals..

First, the mobilization of voluntary community labour is a local practice of the community. It is customary that voluntary labour is utilized for any activity that provides benefits to the community. After an announcement by the village leader which is then conveyed to each of the ten-household leaders and finally to every member of the community, the locals organise themselves to provide labour where both men and women take part equally. Although the NCDD by design did not emphasize the use of voluntary labour, local communities following their customs have mobilized voluntary labour. In some case, the labour is for construction itself while in many cases it has been utilized for transport of building materials from the nearest jetty or vehicle access point to the construction site. It is difficult to see a single infrastructure item that has not employed voluntary labour. The construction of a jetty at San Thit village in Kyunsu township where the village committee received Kyats 2.5 million as against the construction cost of Kyats 5 million would not have been completed if not due to mobilization of voluntary labour. There are several activities in other 2 townships where local community mobilized labour to bring down the construction cost .

Second, the village committee received cash donations from the target community, its business people and the monastery to raise funds needed for building. The village monastery donated Kyats 15,000 for a bridge in ZeKaMi village tract in Kyunsu while the head of the monastery offered his technical skills free of charge to the builders in a major jetty work yet in another village.

Third, the village committee raised donation of construction materials from local businessmen and other users of the facility under construction. The jetty building at San Thit village received in donation 10 bags of cement from another village that uses the same facility. Similarly, other items such as food and refreshments were organised by the community for workers. In the case of some activities contracted to private contractor, the committee obtained a low price quotation for the work agreeing to provide free food and refreshments for workers . The refreshments came from individual donations of community members.

Fourth, committee negotiated up front with the contractor a special price for the work. In majority of cases, the negotiated price was lower than the market price for a similar job. Only in few cases, the committee had to agree to the price quoted by contractor.

Fifth, the committee negotiated materials cost with suppliers. Such negotiations, in a majority of cases were lower (by 20-30 %) than the market price for the same quality material.

Sixth, the locals have combined their transport requirements with 2-3 other committees, thus lowering the transportation costs for each of the committees.

Seventh, there is evidence that some village committees have given the contract to a local contractor who himself was a beneficiary, and agreed to do the work for a special price.

Finally, the committee by consensus agreed to pay a reduced wage rate to the workers when employed on infrastructure building under NCDD since they were all from the same village.

Lessons for future

The NCDD provides a number of lessons leading to effective and sustainable community development. Described below are some benefits achieved under NCDD with a note on what could have been done in order to improve the final outcome.

First, it is necessary to improve participation of villagers through the adoption of strategies such as further training, facilitation and provide flexible time for construction. The decision to complete all construction works within 3 months is often not practical. Villages that have not

received assistance in the past are unaware of managing construction works of a community structure. They will require more time to learn and practice.

Second, it is necessary to invest further on social assessment that helps to identify infrastructure items of the best value for money. Building a wall around the school in a village where there is a severe water shortage does not sound to be a good practice. There are several dozens of school wall building projects in Namshan township that have been completed under NCDD.

Third, many villages are not quite familiar with the project principles. This is reflected in a number who attended some village meetings which has been below 50 % of the target population. The participation issue should be addressed through further research and making modifications as appropriate.

Fourth, the sense of ownership of village infrastructure is important in community development. It ensures low-cost without compromising quality standards. It also ensures appropriate maintenance and protection of the structure from wilful damage. This is so as every member takes an interest in minimising potential damage to infrastructure work newly built. There is uncertainty on the sense of ownership of village infrastructure items built under NCDD. This is caused by gaps in socialization, social assessment and sometimes inadequate training of community members. It takes time to build community awareness and empowerment which have not been the main focus of NCDD.

Fifth, facilitators are supposed to be living within the assigned community. Their closeness to the community helps provide improved awareness and education on community infrastructure. Because of various reasons, facilitators choose to live in the township and to make “flying” visits to assigned villages. The level of experience and skills of some facilitators was also required improvement in order to bring about an effective transformation of the villagers.

Finally, community members in remote villages require the adoption of different techniques to enhance their capacity. Further research would help to formulate an effective strategy to enhance capacity of rural people in remote villages.