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# Communities

## ICAE Virtual Seminar

Adult Education and Development:  
"Communities"  
Global commitments - local practices

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ICAE VS 2015: <http://www.icae2.org/index.php/en/news-2/136-virtual-seminars/292-icae-vs-adult-education-and-development-communities>

(1)These are the complete links to the publication in three languages:

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## Learning communities power and empowerment

By Alan Tuckett – President of ICAE (\*)

The key challenge that ICAE's eighth World Assembly in Montreal will address in June is how best to reconcile global targets, and their accompanying measures with local practice. Too often the gulf between theory and practice is yawningly wide, as the warm rhetoric of universal rights characteristic of international agreements is contradicted by the exclusions and resource shortages faced by learners and practitioners. The publication of *Communities*, the second Adult Education and Development yearbook published by DVV International, should help us in framing that discussion, and in sharpening the issues we address, as will this virtual seminar, I have no doubt.

The context in which the publication appears, of course includes the global debates about education priorities for the post 2015 era. Those debates culminate at Incheon, Korea in May at the World Educational Forum, and at the UN in September, when new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be set for the years 2015-2030, and will, without doubt, influence government and donor country spending priorities over the next years.

*Communities* contains a rich and critical exploration of community learning. There are stories here of hope and transformation aplenty, with communities finding, or re-finding inner strength in the face of external neglect or oppression. As Alfonso Torres Carrillo suggests in his article, 'New and old community sensibilities in popular education, 'ties and traditional community values do not disappear in the wake of capitalist modernisation'. He points to the experience of communities in Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and the Caribbean where people have worked to revive 'ancestral identities tied to strategies for the recovery of territories, customs, and forms of community governance. He calls this 'a process of re-Indianisation'. He points, too, to the power of community responses to natural disasters, like the earthquakes in Managua, Mexico, Armenia, and I might add Haiti and the Philippines, where in the absence, or late arrival of institutional help, communities acted in solidarity and collective action, helping them to reinvent themselves as communities. After four years of intensive debate about priorities for lifelong learning, can we expect governments and donors to offer better support to such creative responses by communities in crisis.

Astrid von Kotze's inspiring account of work in Vrygrond, outside Cape Town in South Africa highlights the strengths and the limits of community education, showing what community activism can do, but also where external action is needed to transform people's circumstances. In communities where unemployment, poverty, conflict and violence are rife, the Popular Education Programmes have acted as beacons of hope. As Xolela, an HIV positive housing activist, grandmother and programme participant comments: 'If we could get something like this (popular education) and empower them (community members) and give them a taste of real education it would change their lives.' Another participant captured the heady excitement and passion of the work: 'I'd go home every week and tell my daughters and my whole family 'We learned this and that'; I was so excited. I inspired other people to want to learn more; I was passionate about it. My enthusiasm led another group to want to do the course, from singing the praises of what we are learning.

Programme participants use what they learn to initiate community action – organising demonstrations against drugs and gangs, challenging politicians, offering housing rights advice. But Astrid's conclusion is an important reminder that emancipatory education, on its own is often not enough:

Hunger and violence stand out as significant obstacles: food needs contribute significantly to people's ability to sustain participation. Gang-related violence directly impacts our programmes in terms of absenteeism and cancellation of sessions as participants are at risk of being shot or caught in cross-fire on the way to and from sessions, particularly in the early evening.

Hers is a sober reminder that 'communities' are not uncomplicated. Gangs are communities, of territory, and of common interest, too – but not interest they share with the mainly women participants in the PEP programme.

Securing an environment where learning can happen safely is surely something to be demanded of local and national governance – a point also underlined in Venant Nyobwe's piece on the Batwa community of Burundi. The community accounts for some 2% of the total population of Burundi, and are, overwhelmingly landless citizens – confronting deep seated prejudice and exclusion in seeking their right to education, and economic and political participation. Venant explains: Traditional society did not allow eating, drinking or even marrying the Batwa, though they are full-fledged citizens. They are marginalised as well as excluded from all spheres of society, from its organisations and institutions. They have never received allocations for better health, for the education of their children, nor other social or political benefits. They are left with the impossibility of coping with the challenges of current realities.

This is an experience that endorses Martha Cabrera's analysis, quoted in Astrid von Kotze's contribution: 'Trauma and pain afflict not only individuals. When they become widespread and ongoing they affect entire communities and even the country as a whole. The implications are serious for people's health. The resilience of the country's fabric, the success of development schemes, and the hope of future generations.'

What Venant Nyobwe makes clear is that for the Batwa community to exercise its rights, there needs to be an effective alliance of state power, legislation and enforcement combined with activism from the community for the long standing prejudices he describes to be overcome. Happily in his illustration in Burundi that alliance is in place, but the history of many indigenous communities suggest such an alliance is not easy to create, and may be even harder to sustain. The advocacy needed outside the community is clearly as important as activism within it.

The difficult question about what kind of external intervention is appropriate and effective is considered in Anna Pluskota and Monica Staszewicz' paper on a resource-based model of community learning. They highlight the dangers of focusing on skills deficits, arguing that induces passivity on the part of the excluded and disadvantaged community. This, of itself poses quite a challenge to advocates who insist that the continued existence of more than 750 million adults without literacy must be a key focus for international action. However, the point they make is more focused on pedagogy than targetry. They continue that unremitting concentration on the strengths of groups is also unrealistic. They call instead for a resource based model that reminded me of the creative work of Augusto Boal, and the Theatre of the Oppressed, where collective analysis of current woes and future goals focuses on effective strategies for transforming social reality. The authors also include a useful typology of communities – of relations, space, thinking, memory and communities of practice. Each has different implications for the adult educator working alongside communities, but in each the goal of empowerment, and of ownership by the community is critical. But how is that ownership to engage with, and to influence the wider community in which the popular education initiative exists?

Alfonso Torres Carillo's answer to that question is confident, grounded in the transformative successes to which Latin American popular education has contributed. 'There are', he suggests, 'new ways of being and acting together that generate ties of solidarity and commitment around cultural practices, ethical choices and social movements involving people from different backgrounds and characteristics.'

In her marvellous interview in the volume Celita Eccher, the recently retired Secretary General of ICAE quotes her teacher, Beatriz de Maria, on how this process of building solidarity and commitment works: The distribution of power creates more power, we need to support creativity in the development of self-confidence, we must recognise our lights and shadows, we can better overcome our personal weaknesses in teams and we need to have thoroughness as human beings who are able to grow.

She concludes 'In this era of neo-liberalism and post-neoliberalism, many of these values are outdated.' Celita outlines the close interplay, indeed the fusion of feminism and popular education in her work, making clear that this involves feelings and emotions as well as the cognitive. 'I learnt that emotions conveying joy or sadness or other kinds of emotion contribute to our humanity and learning process.' This view of the work draws on the same vein of thinking as Jacques Delors' four pillars of learning. How far such a holistic view will be captured in the targets and measures of the global agenda must concern us. But if the official metrics don't fit the needs of community practitioners, isn't there a challenge for us to make our own.

Raymond Williams in *Keywords* observes that community is a word which has no negative opposite. It is, if you like a warm and cuddly word. He observed that it tended to be attached to failing institutions – as in community policing, or community schools, to give them a warm glow, without much need for rigour. This powerful and beautifully illustrated yearbook does offer lots of inspiration, but more importantly throws up questions about the relationship between communities and wider power structures, and about the role of educators and advocates, which we need to address collectively. I look forward with some excitement to reading the contributions and conclusions of the seminar.

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## New and old community sensibilities in Popular Education



By Alfonso Torres Carrillo

[http://www.dvv-international.de/index.php?article\\_id=1579&clang=1](http://www.dvv-international.de/index.php?article_id=1579&clang=1)

One of the most popular words used by popular educators is community: “We will work with the community,” “We learn in the community” or “We start with the problems of the community,” are common expressions among those who promote and develop actions inspired by liberation pedagogies and who are committed to social transformation. However, when we ask the same people about their understanding of the word “community”, they usually identify it with a population located in a territory that shares traits, needs and common interests.

This notion is relevant when we refer to peasant and indigenous groups, where members are recognised as “communitarians” whose main reference is to share a territory, social conditions and common cultural traits. At the same time it is limited to account for other processes which are recognised as communitarian but not anchored to a space or to the sharing of common characteristics or problems. There are new ways of being and acting together that generate ties of solidarity and commitment around cultural practices, ethical choices and social movements involving people from different backgrounds and characteristics. Many of these groups and actions are defined as communitarian in opposition to the ways of life, relationships and consumption of a capitalist character.

Actually, it is commonly recognised that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, capitalism has not only reached all corners of the planet but also into all areas of community life. Rather than being just a mode of production or an economic system, it has converted itself into a paradigm with a hegemonic vocation. Thus, the business and commercial paradigm now imposes itself in the world of art, education, health and even everyday life, infusing them all with its profit motive and competencies, its instrumentalism and individualism, its contempt for community values.

### Old and new community sensibilities in Latin America

The general commodification of social relations, taken to the extreme in the neoliberal model, seeks to dissolve “any form of camaraderie and the ability to freely produce other ways of living life that represent the mutual confirmation of individuality and the option of choosing common goals” (Barcelona 1999). As a “single way of thinking”, it also seeks to prevent the rise of individual subjective thinking and collective subjectivities suggesting other economic projects, social and political alternatives to the capitalist order.

At the same time this proletarianization of capitalist domination has also made visible, reactivated and enabled the emergence of lifestyles, values, ties, networks and social projects that diverge from individualistic, competitive and contractual logic. At least in Latin America, such alternative dynamics and social practices sometimes carry other community sensibilities. Through them a new sociability emerges, as do collective actions and ways of understanding democracy.

When we recognize these community sensibilities we encourage alternative proposals and projects to the material and subjective impoverishment that comes with capitalism. In this light it is challenging to build a perspective that shapes the community as a place to recognise and channel certain potentially emancipatory social dynamics and policies.

## Re-Indianisation

First of all, unlike the suppositions of sociology and development policies, ties and traditional community values do not disappear in the wake of capitalist modernisation. On the contrary they are sometimes even strengthened and revived when people start to resist the development. This is the case of many indigenous people and peasant populations in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico. In these places the community constitutes an ancient way of life based on the existence of a common territorial base, some forms of production and solidarity work, some practices of authority and a repertoire of community customs.

In recent decades there has also been a process of “re-Indianisation” in several countries. With this I mean a revival of ancestral identities tied to strategies for the recovery of territories, customs and forms of community governance. This has happened with some African-American populations in Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and the Caribbean.

The presence of sentiments, ties and practices seen as belonging to the community also appear in the initial stages and joint mobilisation of popular urban settlements when their precarious conditions or extreme situations of injustice activate processes of solidarity and mutual aid. We also see stable bonds of solidarity based on neighbourhood and other support networks such as provincial origin or ethnic affinity emerge. In the initial phases of establishing a people’s movement, a mesh of relationships are formed. There are solidarities and loyalties emerging, which constitute themselves into a collective strength and present resistance against the dynamics of a massive increase of urban life, the market economy and adverse policies.

## When disaster strikes

Similar processes have been found after natural or human disasters, like the earthquakes in Managua (1976), Mexico (1985), Armenia (1999), and landslides and floods caused by “La Niña” in hundreds of villages in Colombia (2011). Here the people were confronted with the absence of, tardiness of, or limited institutional action. They responded by solidarity and collective action, helping them to reinvent themselves as communities.

Apart from lifestyles or territorial community ties, we can add other ties around values of justice and sensibilities toward a shared future. One example is public social movements that bring together different people around the defence of the environment, the public, the reclaiming of gender or cultural rights. Such groups, from their common indignation, joint actions and the development of shared agendas, generate a sense of belonging and community ties that transcend the interests that motivate them. These purpose-led communities arise from the deliberate intention to reorganise a coexistence according to ideally elaborated values, based on beliefs or new social frameworks.

## Creating a culture

In the urban context, forms of sociability marked by strong and intense emotional bonds have been growing, either around massive spaces or cultural consumption, as in the case of the “youth culture” (punk, rock, hip hop), football bars and multiple groupings of adults around shared cultural practices. These are not stable solidarities nor oriented toward anticapitalist sensibilities, but they generate loyalty and interpersonal bonds that are not defined by mere selfinterest or economic benefit.

Along with the sense of community associated with particular social dynamics, others reclaim community by associating it with the need to reinstitute a sense of ethical policy from democratic ideals based on justice, so that there are no “facts” excluded from political communities. Others arrive at a notion of “common good” understood as a set of common issues which allow for the coexistence of diverse social actors.



This emergence of community in Latin America requires a conceptualisation that lets us understand and channel these lifestyles, ties and community processes through the emancipatory perspectives of popular education. Here are some ways we can do it.

### From the community as a representation to the community as a concept

Let us begin with the origins of the use of community as a concept in nascent sociology in the second half of the nineteenth century. During this period, European societies suffered rapid and radical changes because of the French and industrial revolutions. One change was the way people related to each other. In traditional societies collective life was articulated around subjective ties and compromises based on values such as loyalty and mutual commitment. In modern cities and the business world, social relationships are sustained by contracts between individuals, in agreements of interest based on a utilitarian rationality.

This metamorphosis was identified by the young German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies. In 1887 he introduced the term community in his book "Community and Society". He refers to a type of social relationship based on strong subjective ties such as feelings, territorial proximity, beliefs and common traditions, for example bonds of kinship, neighbourhood and friendship. This type of bond is opposed to that of society, characterised as a type of social relationship with a high degree of individuality, impersonality, and proceeding from mere interest.

Perhaps the fundamental difference between community and society is the fact that in the community human beings "remain essentially united in spite of all dissociating factors" while in society they "are essentially separated in spite of all the unifying factors" (Nisbet 1996).

For Tönnies the communitarian and societarian do not implicitly belong to an epoch or social class. During his time "communities of spirit" also emerged around values and shared life plans, like socialism, which he was affiliated with Max Weber saw a social action "based on the subjective feeling of the participants to form a whole; community ties also generate a sense of belonging based on all sorts of affective, emotional and traditional foundations" (Weber 1922). He warns us that not all participation necessarily involves community; dwelling in one place or belonging to the same ethnic group does not necessarily entail the presence of ties or subjective feelings of collective belonging.

These explanations are valid, to the extent that they allow us to criticise the relationships capitalism continues to promote as well as to challenge the assumption that any localised population is already a community. Even more, it allows us to ask how much community there is in any given neighbourhood or rural village, referring to the quality of the ties. Also, the initiation of adjunct communitarian-like actions does not mean that they stem from communities already there, unless they also seek ways to promote feelings and community ties.

### Community as gift

Another perspective of the community is that proposed by Roberto Esposito (2003), who, referring to its Latin etymology, shows that in the word *communitas*, the *munus* suffix is defined as "gift" and refers to an absence, to an obligation or shared debt and not to possessing something in common. So, community is not a set of individuals who share common properties, but a shared commitment between individual subjects which makes them responsible together and which has to be constantly renewed. Thus, the opposite to *communitas* is *inmunitas*, which refers to the one not wanting to bear the burden, the responsibility for and with others.

These ideas from Esposito may also be relevant for affirming and strengthening existing community practices and processes that emerge and sustain themselves around shared dreams and commitments not exhausted in the pursuit of a claim or the existence of shared utopias.

The community can also refer to the opening, the creative potential of initiating. Because of this it cannot be appropriated by any power, but rather makes the positions and af finities circulate, obliging continuous review in order not to be institutionalised. This sense of community corresponds to certain moments of social ferment and solidarity which Turner (1998) named *communitas*, contrary to “structure”, the socially instituted.

These contributions about the initiating character of community are very relevant in order to account for situations, conjunctures or processes in which sensibilities are acti- vated or reactivated. They help explain ties and practices characterised by solidarity – when in the heat of adversity emerging from a social process – the creative potential of collectives unfolds.

When the academic world notes a return to community, we can ask ourselves: What can we take from this large and still open intellectual and political field about the sensibilities of community “which are in play” in Latin America? First of all it lets us assume community to be a category of critical thinking which allows for the recognition of those processes, actions and experiences that demonstrate or promote ties, shared meanings and environments oriented toward solidarity, reciprocity, mutual commitment and the production of a sense of belonging, with the power to question or constitute itself as an alternative to capitalist rationality.

### Challenges to popular education in the community

What are the meanings and implications of understanding community and its emancipatory potential this way for popular education, in particular the intersections and interactions with groups, processes and community ideals? Let us con- sider the community as a way of life, a tie, a value and as a future horizon opposed to capitalism. From this perspective popular education is an emancipatory pedagogical practice.

Today there are several uses and abuses of the category “community” in the current political and hegemonic social context and its alternatives. On the one hand we have countries where the social policies are subordinated to the neo- liberal model. Here the programs and projects seek to slavishly integrate rural and urban poor to the capitalist economy and society. Under the name of “community development” or “community participation” these populations are instrumentalised as “users”, “beneficiaries” or “clients” of state action. These “community” policies weaken political ties and community values, foster welfare and client relations as well as passivity, individualism and rivalry between normal people.

On the other hand there has been a generalisation of the qualifier “community” from social initiatives and progressive, altruistic, and alternative policy to refer to a variety of practical actions with the common people. The idea is that because they live in the same territory and share poverty and common needs they are communities. Some proposals of support and community work, like “community education”, see these groups as homogeneous, assuming they share a common will and conscience which is to be mobilised in the interest and purpose of promoting change.

### The critical community

In response to these concepts, let us look at a perspective that reclaims the challenging, initiating and emancipatory potential. This is a perspective that rekindles the political, ethical critical and emancipatory sense of community, such as solidarity and commitment between individuals.

In this sense, “communitarianism” is a policy or educational action that promotes ties, subjectivities and community values. It is an ongoing process of creating and strengthening the social fabric and empowerment of the capacity of individuals and social groups joined together around different factors and circumstances (territorial, cultural, generational, beliefs and shared visions of the future). Communities is here not a given, a once-and-for-all structure, but in permanent evolution and learning.

This perspective implies that those who seek to promote projects or supporting activities, participation or community education, consciously incorporate devices that generate or feed ties, subjectivities and community values such as the production of narratives and symbols that affirm a sense of belonging. They also offer a joint reflection on what it means to be, and to be part of a community. They help identify the factors and actors that threaten ties and shared values, as well as offer education about the traditions, values and ideals of a community.

Finally, popular education can encourage the different expressions of community that incorporate reflective practices on the character and emancipatory potential, introducing opportunities for reflection on their dynamics, relationships and the subjectivities that constitute them. When these thought processes on factors, defining characteristics and potential ties and collective identities are generated, “critical communities” (Kemmis 1993) are being shaped.

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## Comment by Astrid von Kotze

When i was a student, the educator suggested that 'community is like apple-pie': something very delicious, comfort food even, to make you feel all warm and fuzzy. This connotation has not changed: the old magic of evoking community rarely fails to conjure this much-bigger-than-the-individual entity in whose name you can justify all kinds of things.

Yet, increasingly, it is something that needs to be built. Neo-liberal values of competition and individualism have been embraced as good and desirable and no longer in-need-of-question. So, when I am in the presence of a 'community' of young and youngish people, who are all working-class, unemployed but living and working within contexts that are torn apart by violence, drugs and gangs, abuse of children and women and boys, I might assume that shared 'warmth' of collective experience. The shock realisation that individual competitiveness translates into ruthless tearing down of each other, chants that articulate the desire for others to fail, to come short, jeering and ridicule, is a wake-up call. Who benefits, I ask, when you tear each other apart (here, and back home in your 'communities')? No one, they suggest - forgetting that the powerful thrive on the effects of divide and rule tactics that prevent empathy and solidarity amongst the oppressed (yes - let us not be shy to use that old Freirean term!).

This is where popular education has a role to play: naming the shame of division and envy, re-building insight into common conditions of oppression and exploitation, forging a sense of unity and helping to translate that into action fuelled by common purpose.

Community cannot be assumed as long as we fail to debunk the language of 'competitive advantage', of 'best practice'. Community has to be built - even if there is common suffering, this does not translate automatically into common purpose.

Warm regards from South Africa



## Reflection on the article "New and Old Community sensibilities in Popular Education"

By Ramon Mapa  
Philippines - IALLA Graduate

*... "come gather round people, wherever you roam, and admit that the waters around you have grown, so you better start swimming or you'll sink like a stone, for the times they are a changing - Bob Dylan"*

Manifestations of these new ways of being and acting together are evident either as by-products of social movement advocacies to the trendsetting products and iconic mores of consumerism - from Occupy Movements and Arab Springs to the market release of the latest i-phone model.

In the Philippines, issues of great political and economic significance, to responding to disasters and even the coming of popular and iconic figures including celebrities set off the emergence of new ties and solidarities.

New causes and “movements” rise up whenever scandals rock the government. One example was the public anger over the misuse of public funds by government officials that triggered series of protests nationwide and overseas in the middle of 2013. These were mostly organized through social media.

Responding to address poverty, disasters and other community problems, self-help groups and local initiatives emerge with or without outsider interventions. This is the demonstration of the community spirit – the sense of being united and working together in mutual aid especially in times of crisis.

I believe that these “new ways of being and acting together” are due to the traditional ties and inherent shared value of collectivity in every community.

The processes to manage and strengthen these with the goal of developing “critical communities”, however, poses challenges to adult and popular education.

Apparently not only popular educators in the progressive social movements are working within these concepts. The very same state institutions we confront and who perpetuate “neoliberal thinking” are learning from these perspectives as well. And to some extent, are very much way ahead. New ties and solidarities in the form of partnerships and collaboration with civil society organizations and NGO’s and communities are likewise introduced.

We may be quick to criticize these new emerging approaches as “abuses of the category of community”. But as popular educators, shouldn’t we re-think and reflect that despite the narrowed down and limited orientation to economic growth, these spaces offer avenues to community processes that could facilitate reflective practices and incorporate the empowering and transformative perspectives of popular education necessary to generate critical communities?

In the Philippines, we see the development and implementation of programs and mechanisms that adopted the concepts and methodologies of popular education. These programs facilitate spaces and forms of engagement with civil society organizations and open avenues for “critical engagement”.

How to “participate and engage” without being coopted, is a continuing debate and is the specific challenge faced by the social movement in the Philippines.

It is worth mentioning that Popular Education in the Philippines take its root from the social movement and has taken the process of constant evolution parallel to the changing political and economic landscape. And we can see how popular education made its way to influence and imprint its framework and methodology in these changes and spaces even going beyond the circle of work of the social movement.

However, over the years, we see the decline in direct community work by organizations that pioneered popular education. Likewise, capacities and resources of existing organizations that embedded popular education in their community development work are slowing down.

The social movement is in itself not immune to the impacts of neo-liberalism. But despite these challenges, they continue to exist and persist.

However, the changes and shifts in development cooperation place several progressive groups and NGO’s as mere implementers and service providers. Engagements and cooperation has narrowed down the emphasis of projects to deliverables and quantifiable outcomes. And education work becomes only incidental to organization and mobilization or simply as capability building intervention for project implementation to produce concrete and functional outcomes.

Even literacy and adult education programs are directed to serve the employment and skills requirement of the dominant economic growth model.

I am not saying that these are not important and do not contribute to the overall goal of development in making people's lives better.

But as popular educators, whose concept of education goes beyond the realization of the functional capacities, how do we re-configure ourselves under these ever changing contexts?

Have we fallen to the trappings of neo-liberalism that we have been overly chasing numbers and overlooking direct community education work that carries education's distinct goal of developing critical and creative consciousness?

It is not simply "returning to the community sensibilities of popular education".

We need new ways of thinking and doing, and we need to be within these processes and dynamics of these emerging "communities".

Our aim is not to bring the fire of esoteric knowledge from the gods to benighted mortals nor do we aim to dethrone the gods and reign in their stead.

As popular educators, our modest aim is to contribute to the ongoing evolution of people toward full humanization.

As popular educators, we need to revisit our own assumptions and perspectives to take into critical consideration our own practices, categories and modes of thinking.

However, this is easier said than done when direct community work and engagement are dissipating.

"The line it is drawn, the curse it is cast, The slow one now will later be fast; As the present now will later be past, The order is rapidly fading; And the first one now will later be last, for the times they are changing. – Bob Dylan"

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## Commentary and questions arising from "New and old community sensibilities in popular education"

By Shirley Walters

Gender and Education Office of ICAE - GEO, South Africa

Alfonso Carrillo asserts correctly that one of the most popular words amongst popular educators is 'community'. This article, based on the author's extensive experience in Latin America, problematizes the notion of 'community' and he offers new and stimulating ways of thinking about 'community'.

What are some of the ways he describes the evolution of the understanding of 'community'? What are some of the factors which have influenced the development of these understandings?

The reach of global capitalism, with its hegemonic values of individualism, consumerism and competition, Alfonso states, has penetrated even the most remote villages and communities. However, he describes how there is some resistance to these values taking root, and in some places, amongst some communities, there is a reclaiming of ancient ways of life which emphasise people's interdependence. He also refers to the re-emergence of solidarity amongst people after crises of an environmental or social or political kind.

What are values of global capitalism? In what ways do capitalist values influence understandings of 'community'? What are some of the ways people are resisting the domination of these values in their own communities, both in the article and in your own context? Can these new developments reinforce conservative traditions, which may well not encourage social and material justice, including gender justice? Do you have examples of these; or of ways communities have resisted reassertion of inequities that may have previously existed?

Alfonso argues that 'community' or communitarianism, can be an antidote to capitalist values. He describes different ways in which 'community' is being interpreted, which does not only refer to geographical communities. He asserts that "community is a category of critical thinking which allows for the recognition of those processes, actions and experiences that demonstrate or promote ties, shared meanings, and environments oriented toward solidarity, reciprocity, mutual commitment and the production of a sense of belonging, with the power to question or constitute itself as an alternative to capitalist rationality".

How do you respond to this assertion? What are the elements which you appreciate or with which you will take issue?

The author makes an important claim for the role of popular education in enhancing possibilities for anti-capitalist, communitarian values.

How important is this in your context? Do you have examples of how you are / are not able to do this? What are the possibilities and constraints? Is popular education by definition anti-capitalist? Alfonso's article is thoughtful, stimulating and provocative. It opens up conceptions of 'community' in important ways and it provokes a challenge for popular educators. What do you think?



## Comment by Luis Andrés Sanabria Zaniboni

from Costa Rica

Greetings from San José, Costa Rica. My name is Luis Andrés Sanabria Zaniboni and I am a reader of the journal Adult Education and Development. I would like to thank the opportunity to participate in this virtual seminar, where I hope to find many visions and stories that will allow me recognize myself and meet different people and processes.

Following the reading of the text of Alfonso Carrillo, I think it is important to highlight that concept of community, which I think enables it to be even more inclusive, where he stands out as one that is identified from these "new ways of being and acting together that generate ties of solidarity and commitment around cultural practices, ethical choices and social movements involving people from different backgrounds and characteristics".

Under this approach of "new ways and acting together" linked to the proposal of critical community, I think we begin to think and act from a "contesting, instituting and emancipatory" perspective where we can,

from our realities, places and times, comprehensively question the structures and dominant power relations inherited from the various processes of economic, political, cultural and social colonialism that from different times and places have rendered invisible the various manifestations of our peoples and condemned to marginality our knowledge, feelings, memories and individual and collective experiences.

This is why I find of great value to act consciously through popular education for the construction of that proposal made by Alfonso Torres of critical communities, like those spaces for "fostering projects or actions of community promotion, participation or education ... "where" consciously incorporate devices that generate or feed links, subjectivities and community values".

However, I have to add that from my perspective these efforts should lead to the construction and strengthening of autonomous processes of the various individuals and collective groups, in order to encourage the creation of truly emancipatory and liberating spaces where our peoples, from their realities, conditions and capabilities, can generate and decide their responses to various needs, responding to their historical and symbolic processes for both their everyday lives and the challenges they face with their hopes and dreams for that other world they are building for all of us.



## Analyzing actors and tools on the relationship between power and empowerment

By Monica Simons

ICAE Member, Brazil (1)

The spaces of discussion about the enormous complexity that characterize the consolidation of communities and learning communities have significantly increased in recent years.

Similarly, a common denominator is that, despite all the commitments made in various global agreements, there is still an enormous and painful distance between them and all the suffering of many communities around the globe caused by situations of violence, exclusion, unemployment, hunger, poverty, environmental exodus, discrimination, rural exodus, among others.

On the other hand, although not sufficient, it is also true that there are countless success stories worldwide that show significant concrete results as a consequence of popular education and empowerment processes in various types of communities.

In view of this context, it seems to be then necessary to try to find some innovative approach in this discussion which might contribute to *"reconcile global targets, and their accompanying measures with local practice"*, as Alan Tuckett expresses in his opening text of this seminar, aiming to meet the urgent needs of these communities.

Facing the unprecedented collapse of values in its current dimension (barbarism has always been present at different times in the history of humanity), we must use all possible resources, if not to defeat it, at least to try to minimize its dramatic effects.

In fact, we know that we are immersed in a circle that far from being virtuous is vicious par excellence, with actors that directly or indirectly contribute to the maintenance of the *status quo*, despite the sometimes beautiful speech of the current system. We can point at the corrupt politician who uses public money for



his own profit; companies that, with speeches of green economies, only disguise their exclusionary, unfair and shocking par excellence business practices; not forgetting the mass media that not fulfilling their true function are generally sold to capital; but we must also remember some members of the community who often accept crumbs of their government handout plans instead of organizing to build their own destiny which obviously gives much more work; without forgetting either some members of ganguees who, being the result of oppression and exploration of the system, and therefore victims, end by being blamed for their acts of violence. So, we need to analyze very carefully which power relations are established between all these actors and how to break this vicious circle!

As Ricardo Abramovay states in his book "*Muito além da Economia Verde*" (2), we face the challenge of trying to bring closer nature and society, as well as ethics and economy, and certainly adult education and popular education are a privileged way in their irrefutable role for community empowerment.

Faced with this condition and returning to the challenge of targeting possible ways of innovative thinking, I believe we can rely on principle number 14 of the Treaty on Environmental Education: "Environmental education requires a democratization of the mass media and its commitment to the interests of all sectors of society. Communication is an inalienable right and the mass media must be transformed into the one of the main channels of education, not only by disseminating information on an egalitarian basis, but also through the exchange of means, values and experiences." We know that the majority of the mass media leave much to be desired with regard to this role.

In general, reflections or discussions and their possible conceptual and strategic outcomes for better action against the injustices of the current economic system end up restricted to a proportionally small group and often do not directly reach communities as their true owners and beneficiaries! In this context I believe that maybe we should pay more attention to the potential of virtual media that are showing themselves as a powerful undeniable pressing force together with both governments and companies that do anything not to see their logos or trademarks linked to any kind of popular action that point them as aggressors, either to the environment or the people themselves.

I can give as an example a recent action taken by the international NGO AVAAZ The world in action ([www.avaaz.org](http://www.avaaz.org)), of which I am part, with millions of members. This NGO, in a very short time and thanks to the virtual support and adhesion of hundreds of thousands of its members, was able to exert such pressure that a powerful company like Benetton finally changed its position and compensated the victims of the collapse of one of its factories in Bangladesh, when it initially refused to do so.

I mean, I believe it is a good strategy to think more consistently and seriously about ways to empower the communities by preparing them, informing them and giving them access to ways of communication and mass media, for example, with the techniques of "edu-communication"(3), encouraging them to build their own communication channels through which they can demonstrate "en masse", showing their faces, announcing and revealing their dreams, their struggles, their victories and mainly claiming their rights, together with governments or companies, pressing in order that the collective consciousness, not always sufficiently informed, finishes by showing solidarity and mobilizing against the conditions in which many communities are.

I think it is now sufficiently clear what are the problems, the aggravating factors and the determinants that, for example, make us still having 750 million illiterate adults, as Alan Tuckett indicates in his article. So, we should now be able to implement concrete strategies for real empowerment "en masse" of the communities, lobbying for public policies in favor of lifelong education as an inalienable right for all. Only then, I think, we will have a chance to change the course of history and certainly, I fully agree with Celita Eccher, we should do this with a perfect link between emotion and reason!

I think I can conclude with a quote from Paulo Freire: *"I am an intellectual who is not afraid to be loving, I love the people and love the world. And it is because I love people and love the world, that I fight for social justice be implanted before charity."*

1 Director of CEAG - Environmental Education Center of Guarulhos - Sao Paulo - Brazil, and Member of PlanTEA Network - Global Network of the Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Accountability

2 Publisher: Abril, São Paulo, 2012

3 <http://www.uhu.es/cine.educacion/didactica/0016educomunicacion.htm>



## How the Batwa came in from the cold



By Venant Nyobewe

National Commission for Higher Education – Burundi

[http://www.dvz-international.de/index.php?article\\_id=1587&clang=1](http://www.dvz-international.de/index.php?article_id=1587&clang=1)

As Gorgui Sow says so well in his article Literacy in Africa: It's in our own hands, "a democratic and egalitarian Africa will be made from well-educated African citizens, aware of their rights and responsibilities" (Sow 2013). It is a reference to the right to education, proclaimed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Batwa community in Burundi is today a concern for the defenders of human rights. They need to be supported. Is it possible that in this era, our twenty-first century, their expectations may be considered in order to help them emerge? What is the role of education in meeting their expectations, their integration and their participation in political life? The current primary school reform in Burundi tends towards full free education for all children until the age of 16, including children from minority communities. But what about adults?

### The Batwa of Burundi: an excluded minority

Who are the Batwa and what is their lifestyle? Why should the Batwa community be a concern for us? To understand that you need to know who and what the Batwa are.

The Batwa are thought to be the original inhabitants of the forests of the Great Lakes region of East Africa bordered by Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are part of a larger group of people living in the Central African forests commonly known as "pygmies".

Batwa women carrying some clay pots, products of their traditional activities: pottery is now being challenged by modern utensils made out of aluminum.

In Burundi, the Batwa are full citizens; they can enjoy all the rights of citizens. That is, at least in principle. Unfortunately, according to Elias Mwebembezi, a missionary in Africa, they are landless citizens. They are mostly poor and disadvantaged, living on the margins of society. They are estimated to be 2% of the total population and are a real social minority who until recently was despised and marginalised.

Their poverty is due to a lack of land, making it hard to get enough food, money for clothes, housing and medical treatment. They are despised because they are considered to be a socially inferior class, comparable to the pariah castes living on the Indian subcontinent.

Traditional society did not allow eating, drinking or even marrying the Batwa, though they are full-fledged citizens. They are marginalised as well as excluded from all spheres of society, from its organisations and institutions. They have never received allocations for better health, for the education of their children, nor other social or political benefits. They are left with the impossibility of coping with the challenges of current realities.

### Fighting back

However, it is a community that is already aware of its situation. They protest against exclusion, of which they are historically victims, and no longer want to remain marginalised and forgotten. It is in this context

that their association, named UNI- PROBA (Unite for the Promotion of Batwa), was established in 1999. Without much ado, the President of UNIPROBA, Senator Vital Bamberi, said in 2012 that the Batwa community requires more considerations. This was on the occasion of the celebration of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples.

In the field of education, 3 Batwa are already graduates of higher education, 10 others are still in university and 20 graduates of secondary education have been recognised.

#### **Expectations of the Batwa community: education in democratic values**

The expectations of these people converge towards their integration into public life. To achieve this, the main strategies advocated include supporting the education of children belonging to minorities, adult literacy, economic empowerment and education rights of minority populations. It is clear that the government has already anticipated Batwa expectations. In fact, they have begun to realise the need to do something for them. This is why the Constitution of Burundi provides for the appointment of three Batwa who currently sit in Parliament.

#### **Education of children belonging to minorities**

This has led to a strong demand for schools to increase staff with immediate effect since almost all children go to school. Efforts are being made to meet the Millennium Development Goals for universal education by 2015.

The free primary education reform includes the Batwa children. Even though they were forgotten for a long time, they no longer live in the forest as in the past. Today they manage to build their makeshift homes in the same administrative units as the rest of the population.

The most affluent in the community practice animal husbandry and agriculture. This integration leads them to gradually settle and then have access to school. They share the school benches with other children their age without difficulty. The only obstacle remaining is poverty, manifested by lack of food, lack of hygiene and the problem of clothing, even if school is free. Poverty is today a real threat leading to school drop-outs.

Primary education is free in Burundi. Still, some of them abandon school. However, this phenomenon is not unique to Batwa children. Support for the education of children belonging to minorities has been a reality for nearly 10 years.

#### **Adult literacy and education in democratic values**

Aside from the education of children, another strategy needed is for adult literacy. This strategy is the most important of all because it goes straight to the point without having to travel the long distance to school. It can be organised at each administrative base, close to home. It is the best method to apply to face situations of mass illiteracy. According to Bhola, "literacy is the ability to read and write in a mother tongue or in a national language when cultural and political realities require it".

This is easy in Burundi because all members of the population communicate using one native language, Kirundi. It is an opportunity not to be overlooked.

Adult literacy attracts much more attention when it deals with an active population. The goal of literacy is not the skill itself, but what it can be used for. A literate population can contribute directly to the building of society and the development of the entire nation. Seen this way literacy is a national asset, not a costly programme.

The literacy sessions should focus on topics related to integration into economic life and education in democratic values, because the objective is the fight against poverty and for democratic emancipation.

#### The effects of education on the lives of the Batwa

There is a minimum of instruction which needs to be acquired in order to be able to integrate into institutions and participate in political life. Bholá sees that basic education is a source for objectivity and for the formation of personal opinions. It enables logical analysis and the ability to think abstractedly. It helps create a sense of history and the universal. That is what it takes to fit into the stream of life. That is what is sorely lacking in someone who has always been the object of exclusion and contempt. When you are on the outside, you fail to integrate into institutions and participate in political life.

Education frees the individual from feelings of inferiority and a relationship of dependence and servitude. It bestows a new status and new horizons are opened. From this perspective, adult literacy goes hand in hand with poverty eradication, the capacity building of women, the guarantee of a healthy lifestyle, food security and promotion of the means for livelihood.

The very process of literacy gives the feeling that a world has arisen where all social groups, all individuals have some- thing in common, beyond differences in economic status. We can definitely say that education gives birth to democracy as well as to equality of circumstances.

This is what the representative of the Office of Human Rights in Burundi, on the occasion of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples in 2012, referred to as the concepts of awareness of their situation and the evolution of attitudes. This was also a recognition that the progress already made in favour of the Batwa is sensible. The Government now has to implement the policy of integration and ensure that the necessary means toward integral development are in place.

It is clear that education is the starting point for any programme that wants to implement democratic ideals for sustainable development. All uneducated people are impervious to development. For the Batwa it takes a combined effort. The Batwa community, the policy makers and representatives of the international community involved in the defence of human rights must join forces. This is the only way to reach emancipation and the possibility to enjoy civil rights.

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## Reflection on the article “How the Batwa came in from the cold”.

By Nazir Ahmad Ghazi  
IALLA Graduate –Pakistan (\*)

First, I would like to let you know this article made me know about Batwa community, their way of living, their level of education, their basic needs for survival. While I was reading the article I realized that they are deprived from access to food, health facilitations and education. We should find the way to make their lives better developing specific measures. We should find the way to promote their health standards. Health can lead whole process of their development. Good health is key of good mental state. Most of the time health is more important than education.

Community schools are far away so we must also claim for measures regarding this issue, like availability of transport for indigenous people.

It's really very good that members of that community are aware of their problems. They can highlight the issues that are more urgent and need solutions.

Parliamentarian members can raise their voice for their needs according to their expectations. They are native or nationals of respective countries so it's beneficial for them.

Another important aspect of this discussion is that the organizations working for them need more and proper training. When they will be more trained they can find best ways to educate them, to provide them good health facilitations.

What I want to say is that education is a basic need both for children and adults. Education of adults can produce responsible citizen who will be more aware about their duties.

Now, I would like to share the experience of Grass-root Organization for Human Development (GODH). My organization fights for the rights of most marginalized Gypsy communities, living at the suburbs of metropolitan Lahore (Pakistan).

### Introduction about Gypsies

Gypsies are those communities or people who don't stay at one place, they move from place to place for survival or livelihood. They stay where they can cover their daily needs: food, water etc. To some extent they are source of transferring different cultures from one place to another.

### Gypsy's status

Unfortunately, they are not able to get formal status in Pakistan. They don't have national identity even and they do not own anything like land, house and permanent address. So that's the reason they are not in the national census. They are not able to vote because they are not registered. They don't have seats in parliament. That's why the government has no planning for them at national, local, and district level. Government is not paying proper attention towards gypsies.

### Gypsy's problem

Gypsies are facing so many problems in our society. They are deprived from all basic needs. They are suffering from lack of education, provision of good food and health services. They are compelled to stay at dumped places surrounded by garbage. Another important problem is early marriage, which impacts and

violates the women's health and rights. Their living places are not enough protected, not safe, not clean. Children suffer abuse at large scale.

#### Laws

There is no single law to protect the rights of this people. Most of the existing laws are not in favor of gypsies.

#### Government and non government organization's role

Government has no planning for them and has no information about their existence and other aspects related to them. No single one organization except GODH is working for them specifically.

#### Role of GODH

GODH's prime focus is gypsy people and all issues related to them. GODH is working for their education, health, birth registrations, identity cards availability, awareness of various aspects of life, livelihood and training them about income generating skills. GODH annually conducts sports day for them as well. The most important action of GODH's is Gypsy Mela. This is a cultural, intellectual, social and entertaining activity. The aim is to raise awareness and advocate for the recognition of gypsy people as citizens.

(\*GODH (Grass root Organization For Human Development)- Lahore -Pakistan

Web Site: [www.godh.org.pk](http://www.godh.org.pk)



## Which offers of education and training for pastoral / nomadic populations?

By Aminata DIALLO/BOLY

Andal & Pinal Association, IALLA Graduate, Burkina Faso

In most Sub-Saharan countries, pastoral/nomadic populations are frequently excluded from the formal education system because of their way of life, which is strongly marked by mobility. Mobility is a complex phenomenon that can be of different kinds: big or small transhumance, geographical or seasonal, including all the members of a family or just some of them.

The reasons for this way of life are justified by the constant search for vital elements for the shepherd and his herd: water and grass seasonal cycle, alternating management of space among the farmers, breeders and fishermen in a Sahelian climate where agricultural and pastoral areas are increasingly shrinking. Thus, pastoral / nomadic populations, because of their lifestyle anchored by constant migration remain excluded from education / training systems and often outside the processes of schooling and literacy. In view of this, it is important to find education and training systems appropriate to the lifestyles and interests of pastoral / nomadic populations in order to address the concern of the universal right to education. Yet if one looks elsewhere, these populations that are, for the majority, breeders, contribute to a significant portion of national and sub-regional economies without consequently being supported by their States in the field of education / training. For example, in Burkina Faso, more than 80% of the population obtains their income entirely or partially from livestock. It contributes more than 18% of the GDP and accounts for nearly 26% of export earnings but paradoxically, the farmer population is mostly illiterate. Indeed, only

18% of farmers declare being literate in any language (Source NLDP 2010). In view of these observations, and from the fact that education is a fundamental right, is it not the duty of States to reduce disparities between groups and to support the implementation of diversified and adapted educational offerings from an equity perspective?

In this context and given that this deals with education and training projects / programs of pastoral / nomadic populations initiated by some socio-professional organizations of farmers of the area and supported by technical and financial partners, most projects of donors and public policies build upon the construction of centers / equipment. Few have worked on this fundamental mechanism that are training programs, trainers, or explored the possibility of derogatory educational contents for standard curricula. Now, it turns out that the improvement of the level of schooling / training of pastoral / nomadic farmers is based more on identifying schooling and literacy programs / training of their interest, trainers from their communities capable of basing their teaching on the concrete elements of everyday life and that of pastoralism through its pillars which are the herd, the grazing resources (water and pasture) and the family. So, it would not be foolish to ask the following questions: what do these communities want to learn? What kind of knowledge do they need? Who is legitimated to transmit this knowledge and how to train the trainers?

Thus, these questions invite us to take a look at (make us take a look at) recent developments in education policy, transformations of nomadism and educational demands of pastoral / nomadic populations.

References that can contribute to better understand the problems of education / training of nomadic pastoral communities

1. Arguments in favor of education and training systems more appropriate to lifestyles and interests of nomadic pastoral populations, Triennial on Education and Training in Africa (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 12 to 17 February 2012)
2. Report on the workshop for building the arguments in favor of education and training systems more appropriate to lifestyles and interests of nomadic pastoral populations, 27 to 28 July 2011, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
3. 2010 NLDP Annual Report, Burkina Faso.
4. Pro Doc Regional Program of Education / training of Pastoral Populations, DDC 2012



## Reflection on the article “How the Batwa came in from the cold”

By Huber Santisteban Matto  
CEAAL, Peru

Why the native people, including Batwa people, weren't and are not accepted by other human beings who hold the political, economic and cultural power? I think there are several answers and the article by Venant Nyobewe argues that this is because the Batwa people have not reach “a minimum of instruction which needs to be acquired in order to be able to integrate into institutions and participate in political life”. The Batwa themselves could think this way. If we, the Batwa, reach a minimum of instruction, we will begin to be accepted. In the best sense, we, the Batwa, need to access contemporary education to become empowered and gain acceptance and achieve integration.

No one could be against these assumptions; the current common sense certainly would ratify them once and once again. But even though, I believe this is extremely incomplete and even, unilateral for the following. From an intercultural perspective that is exempt –as it must be– from any enthusiasm for integration or inclusivism per se, we should try, if we are generating integration, to maintain a basic two-way relationship, go and return, that starts raising questions as, for example: who integrates who? Who



takes upon him or herself the right to integrate me? Who integrates the Batwa? Why would I need to get integrated? Am I obliged to integrate myself? And me, as a Batwa, could I integrate other human beings because they are not? Etc.

I think the underlying problem is, as it is now in Peru and especially nowadays in the Amazon region, the growing dispossession of territories –by force or by using various tricks- suffered by the native communities; and this is not only the loss of their physical territory, but also the damage to the biological life, symbolic life, an important part of the human knowledge.

When native peoples are deprived of the forest, as in the current world there is increasingly less wildlife and less arable land, they are also deprived of a consubstantial part of their education. Because the teacher of teachers is our mother Earth and the wildlife, in the case of the Batwa and many other native peoples, is the great sage. Along with the dispossession of wildlife and their expulsion from their lands, they are also deprived of their knowledge and wisdom.

The wildlife is a vital living environment and thus a space of knowledge and wisdom, and the Batwa are, or were, favorite speakers because of the hundreds and thousands of years of coexistence. This is backed up by hundreds of years of direct intergenerational coexistence with the forest that has become knowledge and wisdom. This is one of the best presentation cards in to restore the fundamental rights and not just demanding “acceptation”. The native communities around the world were, and still are, the best forest and nature keepers, and the Batwa people are not an exception. The nature’s right to exist must be restored and this includes the native people who have lived there for centuries. The African native knowledge should be able to dialogue with the global contemporary knowledge. This way, a concrete exchange value would be added to the intercultural education. The contemporary education system must incorporate the African native knowledge. Thus, the first would be enriched, it could have a more human orientation and it could gain commitment to preserve biodiversity and cultural diversity, and deepen democracy.

The African nature’s right to live can be included in the Bolivian legislative initiative to recognize the rights of Mother Earth (Pachamama). Currently, in Bolivia, one of the world's most advanced pieces of legislation is being gestated. We need to realize that the recognition of Human Rights, Women’s rights, Children’s rights, native people’s rights is still not enough if there is not recognition of the rights of mother Earth.

Empowerment by accessing to hegemonic education must be a strategy to also promote the reunion with traditional education and the interaction with nature. Yes to access to global education! But in a constant dialogue with community education which preserves the nature and life.



## An Intervention with Sahariya Tribe

By Swarnlata Mahilkar  
Nirantar, IALLA Graduate - India

It was interesting to know the context of Batwas in Burundi. While reading it I could relate to various aspects of the article and could draw a parallel to our work in India. I would like to take this forward by sharing the experiences of Nirantar’s (1) intervention with the community especially women and children of Sahariya tribe, of Uttar Pradesh province. It is one of the most marginalized communities in India.

This paper talks about the context and lived realities of Sahariya tribe; approach and key strategies of our intervention; and the learning we acquired while implementing the intervention.

## Context of Sahariya Tribe in India

According to 2011 census, tribal population in India comprises 8.6% of the total population, out of which Sahariya tribe consist the lowest. In Uttar Pradesh's Madawara block (a sub unit of province) Sahariyas live in remote villages, mostly in the forest areas. They have no or very limited availability and access to basic civil facilities. Their access to government programmes and entitlements are also very limited with negligible representation in the institutions of governance at local, state or even national level.

Sahariyas are poor and mostly landless, they are highly dependent on forests and forest related products for their livelihood and work as laborers for daily wages. This has resulted in high migration for work to urban cities. Their livelihood options have shrunk mainly due to limited access to forests and ineffective implementation of government livelihood programme in tribal areas.

In school education system, Sahariya children have high rate of drop out, even after the implementation of Right to Education (hereafter referred to as RTE) Act by government. Enrollment, irregularity and retention of Sahariya children in schools are major problems mainly due to the attitude and treatment by school teachers; teacher absenteeism; and absence of schools in the vicinity.

The literacy rates for Sahariya men and women are the lowest amongst all communities in the area, which further contribute to their exclusion. Janaki, Sahariya woman, aged 40 explains:

"I had never studied. I had never even seen a school in my life; I didn't know what it means to go to school or what children do in school. I studied in the literacy centre in my village. "

## Need for Contextualizing Programmes and Strategies

We went to the Sahariyas with a literacy programme, but their initial interest was not learning reading and writing skills, they were very clear that they should get some benefits which are tangible such as, basic facilities and entitlements from government, employment opportunities to change their situation of poverty, education for their children, health facilities etc. Clearly, literacy was not their priority. We learnt that if literacy has to answer all these demands then it has to make link with their context and lived realities.

The strategy to initiate work with them was to build linkages with their basic rights and entitlement related to livelihoods and right to education, children's education and women's literacy programme.

## Basic Rights and Entitlements

- Work on the Right to Education (RTE) for children – To address the above mentioned problems in school system, the strategy to work on the RTE was adopted. Right to Education Act provides for free and compulsory education for all children between the ages 6-14 years till completion of elementary education and government has to ensure it.

In this, surveys with community and schools were conducted and a status report was prepared along with the people; the report was shared back with the community and administration in public meetings; capacity building of school teachers was done; and capacity building of women from Sahariya tribe was done to become members of School Management Committee (hereafter referred to as SMC) which is the formal forums of monitoring and accountability seeking. This is further explained in the next section on women's literacy programme.

- Work on Livelihood (NREGA) – Though, Government has implemented the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (hereafter referred as NREGA); Sahariyas do not get the benefits of it due to poor implementation and no provision of daily wages. To increase the participation of Sahariyas in NREGA,

dissemination of information was done in community meetings; they were made aware of the specific provisions for tribal communities in NREGA; their functional literacy skills were build so that they could access and demand for work.

### Women's Literacy Programme

- Women's literacy programme covers more than 2500 Sahariya women from 65 villages. This programme works to build their functional literacy and leadership skills and to mobilize other learners. An important strategy was to give fellowships to women learners from this community to compensate for loss of their daily wages.
- Developing contextualized material for newly literate learners in their local language was another important strategy. These materials were developed by women themselves with facilitation. The objective was to link reading writing skills with their oral tradition. They enjoyed reading the material as it was in their own language and about their own stories, folktales and issues.
- Sahariya Women as SMC members- Under the RTE Act one of the provisions is the formation of School Management Committees (SMCs) which has parents as members. Capacity building of Sahariya women was done to become SMC members and to monitor the schools according to the provisions of RTE.
- Women as members of Literacy Resource Group (LRG) - Sahariya women were encouraged to become resource persons to motivate and mobilize women from their community to learn and to share the information on government programmes.
- Training Women as NREGA Mates (Supervisors) - To increase women's participation and representation in work, Sahariya women were trained to become supervisors under NREGA. Supervisor prepares workers, does measurements of the work, maintains records and ensures that the facilities are available at work site and workers are getting their payments on time. The job of supervisor is considered to be a male's job and very few women are supervisors under NREGA.

### Impact of the Intervention

The impact is seen here in Sahariya women's lives, leadership roles, livelihood opportunities (NREGA), children's education and inclusion of women in the mainstream society. 15 women have been trained as Supervisors under the Employment Guarantee Act; 25 women are part of literacy resource group (LRG); 30 women are members of SMCs and around 100 women have given class 3rd, 5th and 8th standard examination.

- Impact on Sahariya women's Lives - Women have learnt and strengthened their own literacy skills; this has enabled them to express themselves, they have become empowered to use their skills for accessing various institutions and seeking accountability. Their mobility has increased with the increased information and confidence levels. They are raising question against discrimination and injustice.
- Sahariya Women into Different Leadership Roles- A cadre of Sahariya women has emerged as leaders and has occupied spaces of leadership at village level government body called Panchayat, SMCs, and LRG etc. As leaders they are participating in the governance process for seeking accountability from various institutions for ensuring their rights and entitlements.

As members of Literacy Resource Group (LRG), they have played important role in creating an environment of literacy and education for children and women in their villages. They have developed an

ownership of the programme by mobilizing a large number of Sahariya women to become part of the literacy programme.

As members of School Management Committees (SMCs) - They have ensured that their children stay in schools, not treated badly, not face any kind of discrimination, get the facilities in schools and learn with quality. They have reported incidents of discriminations and raised questions against discrimination in schools.

- Impact on Livelihood Opportunities– With the increased awareness and women as supervisors the participation of Sahariya women as worker has increased. Women supervisors are ensuring the facilities at work site and regular payment of wages etc. Though, their journey as supervisors are not without challenges despite that they have established themselves as NREGA supervisors in their villages.
- Impact on School Education- Regular monitoring by women and awareness has increased enrollment, retention and regularity of children from the marginalized communities; school teachers have started coming on time and quality of education has improved and the attitude of teachers towards Sahariya children is changing.
- Impact on the Knowledge Creation- Contextualized material development in local language by women does challenge the hierarchy of knowledge creation and language. Who can create knowledge and for whom? Who will decide what the content would be and in which language? These are important questions to be asked. It is important that women become part of this knowledge creation and they decide what they want to read and in which language. In this way they challenge.

## Conclusion

I would like to emphasize that, my experience of working with women from Sahariya tribe has made me believe that any programme when linked with the needs and contexts of people's lives, it does challenge and change the power dynamics in society. They break the vicious cycle of discrimination and exclusion by establishing their identities and at the same time by participating in the governance of the formal institutions.

(1) Nirantar is a resource centre for gender and education based in New Delhi, India. Nirantar is working towards enabling empowering education, especially for women and girls from marginalized communities.



## Comment by Moema Viezzer

GEO-Brazil.

It is most satisfying to see how this date is already understood by many as a great "Affirmative Action" which has become a kind of "annual reminder" of a great truth: Men and Women are human beings and as such equal in Human Rights, as well as in potentialities / capabilities to move towards a better world on our Mother Earth.

I have just read a book written about MALALA, the Pakistani girl, and I'm excited to see how a girl can, in this world still so unequal, make such a big difference in believing in education as a right for everyone!

This Virtual Seminar may be a good opportunity to look - inside and outside the formal systems of education – at the education promoted by women and men in the communities ... particularly in the contents and forms of education towards "another way" of being, learning, living and living together among

humans and throughout the Community of Life. In times of global crises like those we face today worldwide, the contribution of everyone is essential.

And within our Virtual Community, March 8 can also be a time to remember the role of GEOICAE: to facilitate Collective Intelligence of this great Educators Network around the world that ICAE is on these issues. The prospect of Gender Equity in Lifelong Education definitely needs to occupy its place in public policies and the daily life of organizations and individuals. Without it ... no better world.

Best wishes from Brazil.

Moema Viezzer



## Learning to live together

Comment by Timothy D. Ireland

ICAE member – Federal University of Paraiba, Brazil

Many years ago as a student on the diploma course on Community Development at Manchester University I remember that the literature talked about two types of community – the horizontal and the vertical. The concept of horizontal community was related to the idea of territory or geography whilst the vertical community was more related to interest groups which did not necessarily correspond to the notion of horizontal community.

It would seem to me that this rather dated notion of community is finding new and important expressions in the seminar. There is no way of avoiding the discussion about virtual or digital communities. ICAE itself could be described as a virtual community with some elements of verticality. Monica Simons refers to the global virtual NGO AVAAZ and its campaigns. The importance of social networks and virtual communities cannot be ignored. Huber Santisteban Mattos, on the other hand, expands the concept of community by including nature/mother earth in his definition as well as humans. This is a fundamental advance on the anthropocentric concept of community as a purely human activity. Shirley Walters refers to the importance of community being understood as a set of values relating to solidarity rather than just a geographical space.

I look forward to future interventions which can help us to advance in our understanding of what is community in the 21st century and how youth and adult education can help us to nurture the values of solidarity in a planet which depends upon our capacity for cohabitation – nature and humanity – if we are to survive.



## Synthesis

By Irene Lobo  
ICAE Secretariat

It is obvious that policies that are negotiated globally have direct effects on the lives of ordinary people. For instance, the Millennium Development Goals, which are now expiring, had great impacts on the orientation of international cooperation funds and social policies implemented by many developing countries.

What is less clear is the decision-making and participation power of the general population in the design of such policies. In fact, one of the criticisms that MDGs received was precisely that they were developed by a limited number of people in their offices in New York.

Then, is it possible that these policies meet the real needs of the people?

Alan Tuckett, president of ICAE, in his introduction to this Seminar provides an answer: "Too often there is a huge gap between theory and practice". From the organized civil society, including ICAE, we have a responsibility to make visible this fact and make an effort to bring the local closer to the global and vice versa.

This virtual exchange is a step in this direction, as it aims to reflect on the needs and interests of the "communities" in the field of adult education and link it to our advocacy work internationally.

In the first article shared, Alfonso Torres offers different conceptualizations of the word "community". In later comments received there was an agreement with Torres on the need to consider the community as something that goes far beyond the geographical link and has more to do with sharing a set of values. I would add that, as shown in the example offered by Monica Simons in her message, nowadays there are people who feel part of virtual communities and may be located thousands of miles from each other and never meet in person in their lives.

On the other hand, Torres insists on the power of the community to resist natural disasters, but also forms of oppression stemming from neoliberal capitalism. In this sense, and answering the motivating questions asked by Shirley Walters in her comment, we could think of another example of the values of solidarity that arise in times of crisis and join people together to fight against adversity: the clinics self-managed by volunteer medical staff in Greece to provide health services to people who, as a result of harsh austerity measures, have remained uninsured, and figures have reached 3,000,000 inhabitants (1/4 of the population).

Given these new forms of community, Ramón Mapa, in his comment on Torres' article, reminds us that it is necessary that those engaged in popular education accompany these processes. For this purpose they must have new ways of thinking and doing.

As stated by Torres and developed by Mapa, it is necessary to reflect on the dangers not only of abusing or instrumentalizing the concept of "community", but equally, it should be borne in mind the danger of idealizing the communitarian. Because as mentioned by Walters, sometimes, communities reinforce conservative traditions, or even practices that infringe upon human rights. Thus, we have seen lynching on behalf of community justice in Bolivia or perpetuation of female genital mutilation in communities in sub-Saharan Africa.

That is why it is so important, in the words of Torres, "A perspective to resume the political, ethical, critical and emancipatory sense of community" and some "emancipatory pedagogical practices".

After these reflections, along this first part of the seminar, we have known some very specific practical examples from different places on the planet: the Batwa community in Burundi, the Roma community in Pakistan, nomadic communities in Burkina or the Sahariya community in India. All these cases have one thing in common: they show groups of people whose circumstances exclude them from education, citizen participation and the exercise of their fundamental basic rights. In all these cases, authors refer to the state's responsibility to correct this situation, but also to the negligence and / or lack of capacity to undertake this responsibility and the necessary role of civil society to contribute and demand that the rights of these populations be met.

Hubert Santisteban, in his comment, poses a major debate about whether the incorporation into the hegemonic educational system, or a minimum level of education, as expressed by Venant, is a sufficient condition to being able to integrate into the institutions and participate in political life.

The experience described by Nirantar provides a good answer. Swarnlata relates how Nirantar became aware that mere literacy did not motivate women of the community they wanted to work with. To get them really involved they had to include the context and base on it and the issues that these people lived in their everyday lives. Thus, this story also supports Aminata's thesis. She says that before carrying out an initiative for the right to education we should ask ourselves: what do these communities want to learn? What kind of knowledge do they need? Who is legitimated to transmit this knowledge and how to train the trainers?

The objective set by Nirantar on its experience with Sahariya women proves to be as important as this: changing power dynamics of society and breaking the cycle of discrimination and exclusion. Thus, we go back to Torres and reaffirm the necessity of emancipatory educational practices that promote collective empowerment and values of solidarity and respect for human rights.

All in all, the theme of this seminar offers us the opportunity to put a human face to our work in advocacy and defense of the right to lifelong education. In many occasions this work can remain trapped in the abstract or rhetorical language of international agreements. In the historical moment we live, in which the new sustainable development agenda and the education agenda beyond 2015 are to be decided, it is more urgent than ever to stand ground, hear different voices and demand our leaders to engage in ambitious commitments to ensure that the roots and causes of inequality and injustice be addressed. Thus, the articles and comments that have been shared remind us why it is essential to continue the struggle for the acknowledgment of the link between education and the exercise of the rest of human rights, the universality of the right to education, including literacy not only for the youth but also for adults, the need for a holistic approach that do not disassociate the capacities for work from life skills, and ultimately, the role of education in all its aspects, formal and non-formal, to achieve a sustainable, just and dignified world for everyone.



## From vulnerability to resilience – a resource-based model of community learning



By Anna Pluskota  
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland

Monika Staszewicz  
University of Computer Sciences and Economics Olsztyn, Poland  
[http://www.dvv-international.de/index.php?article\\_id=1590&clang=1](http://www.dvv-international.de/index.php?article_id=1590&clang=1)

In times of crisis everything that used to seem safe, balanced and predictable, suddenly becomes uncertain, chaotic, ambiguous, multidimensional or simply gone. These uncertain, unstable and dynamic conditions impede development, including social development.

This situation is especially severe for communities. Those who cannot cope with the ramifications of the wide-spread economic crisis suffer from deprivation, poverty, marginalisation, social exclusion and learned helplessness. They give up or fall apart.

It is a grim picture indeed. Given this, are there any possibilities of development in a time of instability and uncertainty? There might be one. The most promising solution seems to be supporting resilience through community learning.

What might a resilient community look like? To what extent can the very idea of community learning support or build up a resilient locality, community? These are extremely difficult and complex questions to which you will not find a definitive answer here. What you will find are some thoughts on how and why resilience might be fostered in a community.

Our point of view is that the effectiveness of social interventions is a result of the base (model) upon which they are constructed.

To empower or to reduce deficits?

The failure of numerous social programmes is due to what they are based on, for instance, the deficit model. The deficit model strives to make up for shortages, to relieve pain, to compensate for deficits and to repair what is destroyed. This is the model on which inclusion policy (especially conducted by means of Lifelong Learning) is often based. One of the basic assumptions of this model is hard determinism.



The functioning of people in groups and societies is seen in terms of a disease model. Individuals, groups and communities are treated as “victims” of their own biological and socio-demographic characteristics.

The deficit model and hard determinism excludes responsibility, the ability to make decisions and free will. This model has resulted in ignoring or denying possibilities and potentials that could be accomplished through supporting strengths (in a human, community, institution, etc.) (Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Seligman 2005).

The effectiveness of social interventions based solely on the deficits model is arguable. These types of interventions do not guarantee a development of building new qualities or resources (Pluskota 2013).

**It is time to look at an alternative.**

The strengths model is presented as an attempt to overcome the limitations of the deficits model. The strengths model, or so-called positive model, aims not merely at helping the individual to return to normality (normality being understood as an absence of disturbances), but above all it strives towards optimal functioning and development (Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Seligman 2005).

In the strengths model, people in groups, societies and institutions are not understood as being restricted or predetermined. They possess a potential of growth in the form of strengths (Pluskota 2013).

The model builds up the resources of individuals, groups, communities, etc., reducing the need for “traditional”, social interventions.

### **Model limitations**

The deficits and strengths models are both limited – they are too one-sided. The deficits model ignores the strengths; the strengths model ignores the deficits. Both models suggest professional experts as leaders who know the answers and provide them for their clients. Despite many obvious differences, this similarity in role relationships is striking. Both are forcing us to think in terms of wellness versus illness, competence versus deficits, and strength versus weaknesses.

Perhaps we are better of looking at a third model. The empowerment model is a resource-based model where the main focus is on strengths and not on deficits. At first glance the strengths model may seem identical to the empowerment model (both are resource models). Both models are aimed at strengthening the competence and restoring the strength of the individual, of groups, communities and institutions. It is easy to make the mistake of thinking that the models are the same.

In our opinion the empowerment and strengths models are quite different. How?

The empowerment model presupposes the existence of deficits and barriers as important factors when restoring strength, competence, self-determination and enablement.

### **A third way?**

It is possible that the empowerment model offers a way to overcome the limitations of both models (deficits and strengths). The empowerment model can combine two types of interventions. The model focuses on identifying capabilities instead of cataloguing risk factors and exploring environmental influences of social problems instead of blaming victims. It suggests a belief in the power of people to be both the masters of their own fate and involved in the life of their several communities.

The effectiveness and successful outcome of support measures seem more likely if these actions are based on existing resources in the form of strengths.

The quality of social programmes is critical in determining people's destiny. Therefore, we are convinced that it is necessary to abandon the models based on difficulties, and instead use models based on opportunities – to leave the road of obstacles and re-orient toward the system of possibilities.

### Learning the potential

Empowerment, as an idea and a process, assumes that any individual and/or community is endowed with some potential. Furthermore, the empowerment model focuses on strong points in a community. By identifying and using these strong points, people in the community can obtain experience and skills that enable them to take control over their lives.

Without empowerment, communities cannot become autonomous change-makers. They will not be able to solve their problems using their own structures, i.e. mediatory structures of their own "design". The empowerment model believes that the best method to acquire new abilities is through learning. People should be offered conditions to learn skills and gain knowledge that will motivate them to take efforts to improve their lives.

It is crucial that communities have the possibility to recognize their own value and resources, as well as to recognize and define their own problems. Social context and social environment determine whether the potential of communities will be discovered, defined and utilized. Therefore the learning process must be active and take place in the context of the real life of learners and not through unnatural, artificial trainings programmed and controlled by so-called experts.

This is the central principle of the empowerment model and the most important recommendation for education. It is also the greatest challenge Adult Education has to face.

### The community as a space of resources

To understand the community as a space of resources we can refer to Thomas Sergiovanni. He has listed five qualities indispensable for any community to be defined as a "learning" community. These qualities include: the community of relations, space, thinking, memory and practice.

#### Relations

The learning community is a community of close formal and informal social relations and connections. The nature of these relations encourages cooperation. Close relations create a safe environment where knowledge and experiences can be shared. One result is a peculiar bond that develops among members of the learning community. It is similar to that which ties the family or close friends together. Learning takes place within a community, through shared practices and experiences. Not only do the members of a community learn how to fulfill themselves as individuals, but if necessary they also find out how to control selfish impulses for the good of their community. Moreover, being aware of their importance for the survival and further development of their community, they learn how to build up positive relations, social structures and social networks.

#### Space

Another characteristic of the learning community is the community of space. This shared space (physical or virtual) is chosen and created because it enables its members to learn and share individual experiences.

The most dynamic and changeable communities today are not physical. These are incessantly restructured and redefined by their members.

### Thinking

The community of mind refers to the ideas, beliefs, and systems of values shared by members of a given community. This is what encourages members to actively participate in actions undertaken by the community. In this case, learning takes place through participation in socio-cultural space.

### Memory

The community of memory is constituted by tradition, rites, patterns of behavior, and beliefs shared within a given community. It is handed down from generation to generation. The community of memory builds and forms individual and social identity. This type of community is especially important in times of crisis. Shared beliefs boost social cohesion and the individual's identification with a group. They form an identity backbone that helps individuals learn how to use their resources and cultural potential to cope with difficulties and threats.

### Practice

The community of practice consists of shared activities. It is through common actions and interactions with others that knowledge is constructed. Here, practical experience of individuals becomes the shared wealth of their community and influences educational processes taking place within it. The community of practice is also crucial for forming a community and the development of individual learning competences.

As noted by John Dewey to "learn from experience" is to be ready to discover relations between things, between the past and the future, between individual actions and their various ramifications. In the process of learning, the individual acquires cognitive and practical competences which enable him/her to find a "fragile equilibrium between the necessity of modernisation and the status quo, and to locate social practices within the process of intergenerational transformation" (Malewski 2010: 98).

### Treasure chests of the community

The above-mentioned characteristics of the learning community can be perceived as its resources, which empower and strengthen the whole community. Learning communities based on social capital consisting of the available resources rather than on deficiencies and their compensations may provide the opportunity for development.

We are certain that community learning is something more than learning from experience. While theorists try to come up with a precise definition of community resilience, little is said on the practical aspects. We know what community resilience is, but we do not know what factors determine it. How to obtain this ability, where to seek it?

We think that learning from experience is not the only condition for acquiring community resilience. So, what is the role of Adult Education? We argue here that one role of Adult Education practitioners is to facilitate learning.

### Moderation as the learning strategy based on the community's resources

In a community defined like this, the process of learning and its support differ fundamentally from education in formal educational institutions. Here, education is no longer understood as the process of supervised gathering, production and reproduction of knowledge. It is a shift from linear, one-way and

directive teaching into learning and obtaining competencies to learn. Arranging the new relations and conditions of learning creates and generates new abilities – the skills oriented to daily practice: creative thinking, emotional involvement, collective decision-making and activity.

Through empowerment of the individual and group, the moderation method enables learning that shapes and builds knowledge, attitudes and opinions of individuals. It develops interests and fulfils passions, it supports transgressive processes and moulds emancipation abilities. Finally this method also enables learning opposite to conventional thinking. It takes into account different interests, needs, aspirations, experiences and motivations of the learners and the community. It supports self-development, self-expression, self-improvement and self-fulfillment.

### Do it again, do it right

A community is a social space with resources. It is vital that a community is able to autonomously make use of its resources. To do so the community must learn how to discover and use them. This is a challenge facing modern Adult Education – to facilitate learning on how to use the existing resources, which would help communities to be resilient.

The task of the educator is to facilitate that learning and to create a space where a community can learn about its resources. This will help the community to use them for change and development.

The role of the practitioner and educator needs to be redefined in connection with community learning. It is time to abandon the deficiencies model in favour of a model based on resources. To be useful in the context of community learning and community resilience, Adult Education needs to change from a compensations based model to empowerment education based on resources.

Community learning should focus on the empowerment of communities. Without empowerment, the learning process within communities is severely impeded. Even though empowerment processes are spontaneous, communities often need professional tools that would initiate and guide these processes.

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## Reflection on the article "From vulnerability to resilience: a model of community learning based on resources"

By Fanny Gómez

REPEM/GEO - Colombia

I find that the model of community learning based on resources -whose result is the empowerment of people and their communities- as an alternative to models of deficits and strengths is similar to the theory of the "assets" or "portfolio of powers" or "portfolio of assets", promoted by the Network of Popular Education Among Women - REPEM, in education among adult women in Latin America.

The concept taken by REPEM arises from authors such as Caroline O. N. Moser, who calls "assets" the resources that people use to reduce vulnerability and identify threatening situations, difficult or risk circumstances, to respond to the negative effects of a difficult or changing environment, and Jeanine Anderson, who points out that an asset is "a good, a right, an intangible quality or ability that allows a person to act for the sake of his/her own interests and overcome the visions of deprivation and victimization.

REPEM develops these concepts in popular education based on the recognition and promotion of tangible and intangible resources that people have and can bring into play in their personal and collective development in a process of empowerment, as stated by J. Rowlands (1997), "to recognize their interests and transform the relationships that maintain their situation; with others to make shared decisions; and from within, to build on themselves, because power comes from the person and is not given or awarded". The means for the acquisition of power is "the agency of people themselves" considered as active subjects with the ability to process social experience and to devise ways of solving their lives; i.e., like "the ability to do things, to exercise power and produce effect". (Giddens 1984). The acquisition of power based on resources and through the effective agency of people focuses on the strengthening of those resources through learning.

I think that Anna and Monika provide a valuable contribution to adult education in the qualities that characterize the learning community: Relationships as a possibility of promoting agendas through interaction (a dialogue between knowledge and practices), cooperation and joint responsibility within networks of social organizations already interconnected that create safe environments; the common space to share and create experiences, thoughts (ideas, values, beliefs and memory (customs, rituals or traditions) that generate identity, to harness and boost resources in face of challenges and threats, and common practices that generate new learning and enrich their heritage, i.e., resources that are opportunities for development.

As for community resilience as a challenge in popular education, I would like to mention the controversy that arose at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2005 when it relates to the changes that it can produce.

On the one hand, it is argued that "it does not end poverty or underdevelopment, nor socialize the means of production, but it produces the joy of doing, acting on reality and changing it, and proving that reality is transformable". In this sense, the concept can have a positive charge because "the most resilient people have a better self-image, criticize themselves less, are more optimistic, face the challenges, are physically healthier, are more successful at work or in their studies, are more satisfied with their relationships, are less prone to depression". (Colussi. 2005)

On the other hand, it is stated that the idea of resilience involves an attitude of resignation, of flexible adaptation to reality; and it is not a question of knowing how to adapt to reality to cope with it, -passing over the idea of conflict as an engine of reality-, but to transform it. The idea points to the "smoothing" of the harshness of this reality, with "learning techniques, i.e. corrective practices of behaviors, regardless of social and psychological processes that block potentialities", said Ana Berezin and Gilou García Reinoso in their text "Resilience or the selection of the fittest" (2005) "The ideal of resilience seems to be the functionality, the effectiveness of the subjects" and in the education system, it refers to the concept of normality and adaptation.

Having brought these reflections from the World Social Forum, I think we can debate around the question:

To what extent does this concept make a theoretical and practical contribution to popular education?

What does it mean, in the context of vulnerable communities in crisis, such as those producing armed conflict, displacement, insecurity and violence, being resilient?

Is the solution to crisis situations that hinder the development of a vulnerable community to foster resilience through community learning?



## Comment by Luisa Cruz

GEO-IALLA Graduate

I would like to thank all those who have contributed with articles and comments that, from different perspectives, deal with education, and especially Fanny Gomez.

I believe this article on resilience is crucial for popular education / lifelong learning at all ages. I think little work has been done and this analysis fills this gap. How to encourage / motivate / unlock / boost the resilience of subjects (men, women, children, young people) living in vulnerable situations, poverty, misery? It would seem that in these conditions there is no "agency", "own resources". But yes, there are, yes, we have them. We recognize them or find them easily in groups (or communities of interest for social transformation), but they are there. The challenge is how our philosophy of education, the approaches, methodologies and tools are built to bring out that resilience that makes the subjects of education respectable beings capable of creating opportunities for themselves, catching on the fly the opportunities to succeed. Always with the conviction that even taking from his/her own strength, his/her own energy, this effort would not have been possible if there had not been for that "community" of support that opened his/her eyes.

Personally, I remember a distinguished group of teachers in Peru in the seventies. They reinvented the curricula to adapt them to the socio-economic environment of their students. They searched / found / encouraged RESILIENCE! Today over 80% of those girls, from popular sectors, are women leaders. Without the call from those teachers that 80% of girls might not have finished school, would have been filled with children and would have grown impoverished suburbs....

Let's search then and delve into the Resilience in educational development projects. I'm convinced. There's a key there that gave us a guide, and we don't use it enough.



## Reflection on the article “From vulnerability to resilience: a model of community learning based on resources”

By Nelly P. Stromquist  
GEO - USA

The article written by Prof. Anna Pluskota and Monika Staszewicz both from Poland, entitled “From vulnerability to resilience—a resource-based model of community learning,” offers several illuminating observations as well as some grounds for disagreement.

Let’s begin with the positives. Anna and Monica:

- (1) Recognize that all communities, regardless of their degree of poverty and social marginalization, have a number of resources they can deploy and mobilize, thus the authors encourage a very constructive and proactive approach;
- (2) Advocate strong responses at individual and collective levels in the community, thus invoking the indispensable possibility of agency;
- (3) Encourage communities to assume leadership rather than allowing others to define problems and solutions for them;
- (4) Assert that the ability, aspirations, and work ethic of poor communities can and do create cultural capital.

These points are well developed in the article so there is no need to revisit them.

There are, however, some areas about which divergent opinion might arise:

(1) There is a confusion in the article between resilience and empowerment. While resilience seems to be becoming fashionable (for instance, the 2014 Human Development Report is entitled, *Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience*), the concept of resilience is not as rich, theory-based, and dynamic as that of empowerment. A dictionary definition of resilience is, “the capacity to recover from difficulty; toughness.” I would submit that the poor in many countries have both endured and survived dismal conditions in their everyday lives. Resilient they are. The fundamental issue is not whether they can cope with their environments but how they can transform those negative conditions. Many of the poor in developing countries have experienced inter-generational poverty, so it is not a matter of “recovering,” but rather of becoming agents to question and build new institutions, new values, and new procedures so that ascriptive features of their society (regarding such issues as race, gender, social class, caste) can be profoundly questioned and systematically attacked. Resilience does not add to empowerment but rather diminishes it in the sense that resilience implies persisting even under adverse conditions and times. It is a skill that protects people but not one that makes them decide to be in control.

(2) The authors advise against engaging in “deficit approaches.” I agree we should not “blame the victim” and then say that the poor are so because they are uneducated, unmotivated, unable to plan, etc. However, among the chronically poor, capabilities regarding health, income, education, housing, and other basic needs, diminish over time and create serious problems in need of immediate attention. There is an extensive sociological research literature that finds that situations of deprivation and limited opportunities result in poor health, stress, hunger, and having to work intensely for precarious family maintenance. In the real world, there is a thin line between “deficit approaches” and recognizing needs for special attention

and compensatory policies. For instance, when discussing barriers to women's agency, the objective is not to bemoan women's weaknesses but to identify aspects that need to be changed and combatted. Barriers such as lack of time and limited physical mobility due to childcare and household responsibilities operate to exclude many women from participation in the public sphere. Such barriers need to be identified and countered if women are to become active leaders.

(3) We must recognize the critical importance of national and local contexts. We need as well to recognize diverse historical contexts. The experiences of Asian and Latin American countries, and even more so African countries, have little in common with those in Europe, which have experienced a much longer existence as cohesive and democratic societies. Eastern Europe—a region that is still making a difficult transition from communism to capitalism—is experiencing the loss of a previously established safety net and indeed it can be said to be looking for forms to get back to normalcy.

(4) Micro-levels of social interaction are not always democratic and participatory. Some communities are far from homogeneous or supportive of disadvantaged persons within them; often, communities have entrenched economic, ethnic, and gender hierarchies. Regarding gender, for instance, some rural communities combine pervasive patriarchal norms with stifling controls over women's identity, time, and knowledge, which often results in an extreme marginalization of women despite their greater participation in agriculture and market activities. In addition, cultural practices in some parts of the world such as forced and early marriage, compulsory dowry, widespread sexual harassment and sexual violence, and extensive female genital mutilation severely undermine women's agency. Communities must be key spaces for transformative action but we cannot idealize them as places where conflict and rivalry do not exist.

(5) A learning community needs a shared space; it cannot just be virtual. Space and location are critical. It is in physical spaces, with face-to-face interactions that fluid communication can take place and community resources be identified. Moreover, among the poor, the possibility of having access to Internet communication for such interactions is prohibitive in cost. Along those lines, although Anna and Monika argue that "learning should not be controlled by experts," it also should be acknowledge that expertise does exist and cannot be produced merely through people's dialogues. The challenge resides in creating a balance between using the accumulated academic knowledge and the indigenous knowledge acquired through years of experience by subordinated groups.

(6) Finally, empowerment can indeed be gained through relevant learning. Yes, but action based upon that learning is critical. Consciousness of problems is but a first step in individual and then collective resolve toward change. Empowerment is far from a spontaneous happening. It builds on systematic and recurrent reflection and action.



## Resilience and Community Learning

Comment by Jose Roberto Guevara  
ICAE Vicepresident Asia Pacific, ASPBAE

Anna Pluskota Nicolaus and Monika Staszewicz, attempt to weave the context of crisis, the value of an empowerment approach to community learning that recognizes and utilizes existing resources in order to build community resilience. They conclude that, *"a challenge facing modern Adult Education – to facilitate learning on how to use the existing resources, which would help communities to be resilient."* (p.87)

They argue that context of crisis has made the world that *"used to seem safe, balanced and predictable, suddenly becomes uncertain, chaotic, ambiguous, multidimensional"* (p. 86). I would argue that this idea of



*“safe, balanced and predictable”* was how we were taught to perceive our world, which helped us to try to control certain dimensions of life in this world.

Rachel Carson, in her book *“Silent Spring”* in 1962 helped identify how simplistic solutions to perceived simple problems can have detrimental outcomes. She argued that DDT used to eradicate insect pests, resulted the accumulation of these toxic chemicals as it moves up the food chain, which is potentially lethal for humans. It is said that this study resulted in the banning of DDT in some countries and decades later, there persist arguments that the banning of DDT resulted in the continued prevalence of malaria in these countries. What this chain of events illustrates is that indeed, the real world is complex, interconnected, multi-dimensional, and often very unpredictable.

The recent spate of natural disasters, which have become more frequent, more intense and more widespread, I would argue, is a reminder of this complex world. There are many who don't doubt that climate change, caused by the increase of greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels, is to blame. There are those who continue to deny such a link exists.

I recall when I started to work as a community environmental educator in the Philippines in the 1990s; we had a topic on the global environment that illustrated how the greenhouse effect can contribute to climate change, in our basic environmental awareness to action workshops. To the farmers, indigenous people and urban poor communities we worked with, this global phenomenon was too far from their lived realities to be relevant. Today, the variability of seasonal patterns have impacted on the planting season, the word storm surge has been added to the vocabulary of Filipinos after coastal communities experienced the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan, and the frequency of typhoons has resulted in flooding becoming a regular occurrence for urban poor communities forced to live along the river banks in order to gain some form of employment in the metropolis after having migrated from rural farms.

*What therefore does this understanding of a complex world and the context of crises mean for adult educators? We have often heard Albert Einstein's statement cited, “we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” Therefore, what knowledge or content should we impart in our adult education programs? I argue that it is essential that communities understand the symptoms and the causes of the current crises, but also critical about how the analysis is portrayed by different sections of society. This requires a level of critical thinking. However, it is not enough to be critical, we also need to instill creative thinking, if we are to truly find new ways of what some authors have described as “learning our way out” of this crises.*

Paulo Freire succinctly described an approach, which I would argue is consistent with the proposed empowerment approach that we as adult educators can take in such situations that require us to learn our way out. He argued that the

*...banking method emphasises permanence and becomes reactionary,” on the other hand, “a problem-posing education – which accepts neither a ‘well-behaved’ present or a predetermined future – roots itself in the dynamic present and becomes revolutionary. (Freire, 1993, 65)*

As for the existing resources needed to build community resilience, I invite the readers to explore the other case studies that are found in the current issue of the *Adult Education and Development*, to help illustrate what Nicolaus and Staszewicz described as the five key resources:

The Fiji story (p.81) clearly illustrates the value of recognizing and strengthening relations in building community resilience. FRIEND contributed to socio-economic empowerment by *“recognising and utilising the social strengths of individuals and communities, linking them with their resource strengths and motivating them in self-sustenance.”*

The Popular Education Program in South Africa (p.94-95) has demonstrated the resource of space and thinking. The PEP uses local facilities and schedules classes at times suited to participants, but this is not just about the physical space and the time but more importantly these considerations to create *“conditions for dialogue and knowledge production”*. So this is aptly described as a *“space where everybody is learning.”* The workshops offer *“a safe space to try out new ideas, deepen insights about conceptual issues and encourage critical engagement with difficult epistemological and pedagogical issues.”*

I particularly appreciated the recognition of intangible resources like memory as refreshing and truly empowering. As they described it memory forms *“an identity backbone that helps individuals learn how to use their resources and cultural potential to cope with difficulties and threats”* (p.87). The cross-generational community project from the UK called My Neighbourhood – Our World (p.49) illustrates this as it *“aimed to bring people from disadvantaged areas of Leicester together to explore identity and belonging in their own neighbourhoods and across the city.”*

All these resources need to find themselves in action, or what was called practice. The story from Mexico (p. 97) helps to see how *“using tools and technology with a critical vision and a sense of social responsibility [can] collectively defend the community and territory”* which is active demonstration of community resilience.

Finally, while Nicolaus and Staszewicz (p. 87) argue that *“little is said about the practical aspects of resilience [and] we know what community resilience is”* I would caution adult educators to be vigilant about the current growth of resilience training in the context of disaster preparedness. As many of these training assist communities in preparing for disasters, but very few of these trainings recognize the five resources that have been identified. I have argued previously (Guevara 2014), that addressing the symptoms without understanding the causes of what makes communities more vulnerable to disasters does not actually build resilience, but entrench re-silence.

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## Vrygrond in a changing world – what difference can Popular Education make?



By Astrid von Kotze

Popular Education Programme- South Africa

[http://www.dvv-international.de/index.php?article\\_id=1580&clang=1](http://www.dvv-international.de/index.php?article_id=1580&clang=1)

### PEP participant

Xolela's fourth grandchild, brother to a year-old sister, has just been born. His mother is barely 20 years old and his father is yet again behind bars for drug-dealing. They live with Xolela and her other daughter and 2 children in a 3-room shack constructed out of cardboard, corrugated iron and plastic in Overcome Heights, one of the 5 'camps' (shack settlements) in the greater

Vrygrond area.

Xolela is HIV positive, a housing activist and is running a women's support group. After demonstrating a keen interest in education, together with three others from Vrygrond she now attends Adult Education classes at the university, studying towards a Diploma in Adult Education. She struggles to prioritise her engagements and often runs from one meeting and action group to another.

Xolela is one of the inception members of the Popular Education Programme (PEP) in Vrygrond, now in its fourth year, and she has recently initiated a new course to be run for members of the women's support group. While exemplary, she is just one of many extremely resilient women in the area who suggests "if we could get something like this [popular education] and empower them [community members] and give them a taste of real education it would change their lives."

### Vrygrond / Lavender Hill

Vrygrond (Free Ground) and its environs is located near the False Bay sea board in the greater Cape Town municipal area. The history of Vrygrond is one of constant change in response to the political pressures imposed by Apartheid legislation and engineering on the one hand, and stories of increasing intergenerational rural-urban migration, unemployment, homelessness, and intra-African migration on the other.

Vrygrond is one of the oldest settlements in the Western Cape, where self-reliant families pursued a simple way of life over many decades. The first wave of residents settled on the beach dunes around 1942 and were characterized as "trek" fishermen. The Expropriation Act passed in this period removed many families from the neighbouring area of Retreat to the growing population of Vrygrond. The next wave in the 1970s was a result of Apartheid social engineering when many households were uprooted from District Six in Cape Town and forced into large blocks of flats in Lavender Hill. The next expansion produced Sea Winds in the eighties. In the last two decades smaller housing schemes were created through the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) housing thrust initiated by the new democratic government.

Meanwhile, five large shanty communities Village Heights, Hillview, Military Heights, Overcome Heights and Cuba Heights grew to over 6000 people by the late nineties and today the number of residents is estimated at 35,000. Schools and clinics can barely cope with the increasing number of residents and unemployment is approaching 70%. Vrygrond is a Babel of many languages; the streets are populated by children and youth spilling out of their homes and competing for public space. There is music from across Africa pumping particularly out of hairdressing businesses in shipping containers and informal pubs. The

sound of church bells is interspersed with mullana calling. The wind blows litter into rain puddles and the pollution is testimony to limited service delivery from the city.

### The Popular Education Programme

In 2011 the Popular Education Programme was formed by community development and Adult Education activists. It builds on traditions of 'People's Education' embedded in the South African anti-apartheid struggles of the nineteen-eighties, the philosophy of Paulo Freire as practiced in 'Training for Transformation' and popular culture. Its purpose is to contribute to progressive social and political change by building grassroots leadership. Unlike formal education, popular education begins with the daily realities of participants. There is a strong focus on issues of power, inequality and injustice as participants in popular education 'schools' explore who makes the decisions that affect us all and ask: in whose interests are those decisions?

Popular education claims to achieve some important things; in particular:

- help people make the links between their personal experiences and the broader socio-economic and political context
- identify practical and strategic ways to act with others for change
- organise, plan and affect change action

One participant echoed these aims when she said: "To me these sessions are valuable in terms of learning because each and every day I attend a session, I gain more knowledge through group discussions and these debates help me to express my own views. Most discussions are about our communities, like what role we play to make our community develop, free from hunger, poverty, free from crime, with improved healthcare."

#### PEP in Vrygrond

The choice of sites for popular education work was not random: the whole Vrygrond/Lavender Hill area is extremely volatile, as incidents of personal and community issues related to social and economic exclusion and oppression are very high. In the three months towards the end of 2013 alone, over 30 people were killed in the area in drug-related gang warfare. Children are especially vulnerable as they grow up with a sense that violence is normal and recruitment of boys as young as ten into gangs is common. Furthermore, one of the PEP facilitators lives in the area and is actively engaged in community organisations on a daily basis. This ensures continuity, support and follow-up.

In the last three years, PEP has run ten 'popular education schools' (PES) and three 'popular education development' (PED) courses in Vrygrond, working with diverse groups of residents and grassroots organisations. While 'direct' participants in those courses numbered approximately 150, the ripple effects on household members and community groups extends far beyond these participants. As one participant commented: "I'd go home every week and tell my daughters and my whole family 'We learned about this and that'; I was so excited. I inspired other people to want to know more; I was passionate about it. My enthusiasm led another group to want to do the course, from singing the praises of what we were learning."

A PES comprises twelve 2-hour sessions, run once a week in whatever space can be found – ranging from metal containers, to individuals' garages or community centre rooms. The PES curriculum focuses on community development, social issues, crime, human rights, basic research skills and an introduction to campaigning. Classes are highly participatory and (English) literacy is not required.

#### How this learning is used

The PES 2 focused on 'how to prepare, organise and run a campaign' and the group completed its programme by organising and running an event on 'child abuse' for parents of pre-school children. Participants made posters, designed the programme, formulated a brief for the guest-speaker and each

took on the role of facilitator for the 50 parents who attended. Course participants commented that “what we learned here we implemented – not just learning something and it goes nowhere.”

In 2012, PEP offered a PES 3 course for ex-PES 1 and 2 participants. This ran over 5 months (27 sessions) and was entitled ‘Power, Advocacy and Living Well’. The main focus was on food and food security/sovereignty. Many of the participants changed their nutrition habits and moved towards greater awareness of food production and healthy consumption in the course of PES 3. Having learned “to ask questions, not just to accept and to do things practically” they took their insights further, remarking “how the decisions we make or are forced on us has a negative effect on the survival of mother nature and how our mindset changes can make life better for all and the earth.”

### From shouting to explaining

A 16-week course for the volunteers at a local women’s organisation that looks after under-five year olds in the mornings, feeds approximately 150 children at lunchtime, and runs an after-school programme in the afternoons, happened on Fridays. The course focused on ‘neglect’ experienced on a large scale by the children. Participants analysed the underlying social, economic and political causes of neglect and abuse and examined these in the light of a changing world.

Participants then practiced a variety of facilitation processes aimed at improving communication and cooperation, with a particular emphasis on power, gender and culture.

The women developed personal and interpersonal communication skills; they articulated clearly how relationships with peers, family and children changed for the better, and they were able to explain gender and power – how these impact everything in their world. Participants described how as a result of the courses they communicate differently with their children (“I don’t shout at them anymore but try and explain”) and relate to colleagues more effectively.

Understanding the causes of violence and substance abuse has helped them to try less confrontational strategies. They are more able to take on public issues and speak with clarity and confidence, and this has motivated them to continue learning, and in turn, becoming role models for the youth in their families: “If this course was started five years ago, I think it would have made changes in our community, so they wouldn’t have to bring in the army to deal with gang violence. People in the community could do things for themselves. If more parents were equipped with this kind of knowledge they would be able to help their kids more by being ahead of the game.”

Overcome Heights is the largest of the five camps in Vr ygrond, comprising approximately 3500 shack dwellers. Representatives from the nine sections in the camp attended a PED held at a church venue in the camp and thus avoided the dangers of a long walk. Despite the ongoing violence in the area most members completed the practical work, including weekly report back meetings for all residents and house visits. An important characteristic of this PED thrust was building on proactive positive actions.

### Violence and Trauma

Martha Cabrera has pointed out how “Trauma and pain afflict not only individuals. When they become widespread and ongoing they affect entire communities and even the country as a whole. The implications are serious for people’s health, the resilience of the country’s social fabric, the success of development schemes, and the hope of future generations.” While positive actions helped participants to regain their sense of agency, the trauma and stress of living and working under the socio-economic, environmental and political conditions of the area were beginning to tell.

PEP responded by initiating a very well-attended PES in ‘Body Literacy’ to which all PEP participants were invited. The course included practical Tai Chi and Capacitar exercises and promoted intensive reflection. Participants articulated strong levels of personal development, such as improving empathy and the capacity to help others in moments and situations of trauma: “I have discovered the inner workings of my

body and mind. It has taught me to respect myself and other human beings per se”; “I relaxed and don’t get pains anymore”; “I’ve discovered it helps me personally as I regard myself easily aggravated and moody. So, personally, I find it to be something as a pacifier at times”. They also suggested how they could use their new-found strengths and skills of relaxation “to assist in training and implementing practices like this in the community, as it will certainly help reducing the levels of crime”.

Each year, PEP has built on the preceding year by extending the number and range of people participating in PES or PED. It became clear that the demands far out-stripped the provision. The answer has been to train trainers. In 2013 the first such course was offered, and residents such as Xolela was one of the participants. PEP also established connections between her and three others from the area with the university to enable them to continue their quest for education and skills development.

### Changing community?

The desire to learn is, in itself, a positive phenomenon as most participants have negative memories of schooling and persistent experiences of various put-downs and violence have led to a low sense of self-worth: Now, “I’ve learnt that everybody is equal and that I should not be intimidated by others who put themselves on a throne and make me feel less important because of financial category...” and “This knowledge can be used practically from the subject of nutrition to that subject of social action and political systems. It is transformative knowledge that can change the way communities think and behave. It helped create passion in me to become active in being part of change for the good of my own life as well as that of others.” And: “What I found exciting is the teaching on how we can build a better society for all. I found that if we can work together as a team we can achieve a lot of goals. I found that fighting crime in a society needs the whole society to come together and unite against it, then we have a better society.”

PEP participants are often key initiators of community action such as public demonstrations against drugs and gangs. They challenge local politicians at meetings and participate in housing activism. They have made repeated attempts to form cooperatives and contributed to food gardens to alleviate daily food insecurity. They have organised youth leadership training and women’s support groups – but broader systemic and structural changes are needed if Vrygrond is to become a better place.

### Challenges for the future

Hunger and violence stand out as significant obstacles: food needs contribute significantly to people’s ability to sustain participation. Participants who work as volunteers in local community-based organisations have to take on any paid work they can in order to meet bills. Gang-related violence directly impacts our programmes in terms of absenteeism and cancellation of sessions as participants are at risk of being shot at or caught in cross-fire on the way to and from sessions, particularly in the early evening.

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## When Aisha became a role model

Comment by Alaa' AbuKaraki

DVV International - Amman Office – IALLA Graduate

In September 2014, DVV International held a six-day training that focuses on the importance of transforming realities through empowerment. The training was held in southern Jordan in a remote village that suffers from the heated and dry desert.

The training hosted 15 young women, unemployed, desperate and helpless. During their interviews before the trainings, all women complained about the lack of resources, lack of opportunities and lack of hope. Almost all of them, did not have a particular reason to join this training, and said, "We have nothing else to do, so why not!"

All of the young women were university graduates, some of them have graduated six, 7, 8 or even 9 years ago, and until today, no job opportunity has been offered. In such communities, graduates are always seeking official employment in governmental positions. After graduation, they go register at the Civil Service Office in their area and wait for their employment turn. Most of the time, the uniqueness of their specialties or lack of matching nearby positions result in leaving them unemployed with despair, for a very, very long time.

The training aimed to tackle that fact. During the six days, the participants were given the space and some creative tools to reflect on their realities. To think of their roles, ambitions and futures. After the training, the participants decided to take on a stronger role in their community, with the support of their local community center.

Aisha, a 27-year-old participant, has a university degree in IT and aspires to develop capacities of her peers in the field of computer use and programming. Since graduation, Aisha has been looking for adequate spaces that help her improve her knowledge and skills in IT. She searched every possible opportunity until she finally managed to find some adequate space in the local center in her village. When she heard about the training, she had no idea what was the training about, but her quest for making her dream come true, led her in and she joined with other aspiring women.

After the training, she initiated a Photoshop training course at the community center at which the rest of volunteers and some others participated. She trained on voluntarily basis. Aisha believes that with this training she will build some design capacities that can be later invested in at the center's level for advertising and developing different media. She is currently working on developing a plan for a more advanced level of this training.

In the meantime, Aisha decided to apply for a micro credit loan at the center to buy couple of PCs and software programs to start her own home based business. She will offer computer classes and tutoring for university graduates and students, altering them based on both the demands of the labor market and the students' specialties. The business will help her secure some income and will allow her to develop labor market oriented needs computer skills of other young women in the local community for better labor market competitiveness.

Investing in young women like Aisha to support her to act for change creates change actions. Aisha became an inspiration for the rest of the participants and for the rest of other young women in the community to do something and not accept the circumstances that have been forced upon them. She

learned how to overcome challenged and how to develop the desire to learn and teach. She took her dreams further and is making them happen, one-step at a time.

Community, or popular education that helps marginalized public create a passion in life, does matter. The transformative knowledge that Aisha managed to develop, is helping one way or another change community behavior towards education. After the training, Aisha learned to live what she learned. She became a role model.



## Comment on the Article “Vrygrond in a changing world: what difference can Popular Education make?”

By Florencia Partenio

Cátedra Libre Virginia Bolten: building popular feminisms/FPDS Gender Spaces, Argentina

The article focuses on the communities of Vrygrond, located in the Metropolitan Municipality of Cape Town, which are going through conditions of high unemployment, poverty, conflict, pollution and violence generated by drug trafficking. It reconstructs the problems experienced by settlements of the five large communities of Village Heights, Hillview, Military Heights, Overcome Heights Heights and Cuba Heights in the metropolitan area of Vrygrond, where the population grew up to 35,000 inhabitants.

The article gets back the experience of the Popular Education Program (PEP) created in 2011 by activists promoting community development and adult education. The PEP is based on the traditions of "popular education" embedded in the context of the struggle of South Africans against apartheid in the 1980s, under the philosophy of Paulo Freire and in popular culture. The action of the PEP in the communities of Vrygrond designed a working model that allowed it to adapt to the characteristics of the population and emerging issues, and to enhance the capabilities of leaders and referents of the region.

In order to strengthen exchange and retrieve lessons learned, we will focus on three dimensions of analysis of this experience:

1) The first dimension focuses on learning modalities developed in communities that may have characteristics similar to those of Vrygrond. Following this experience, we found that one of the greatest strengths of PEP has been to awaken the "desire to learn", seeking to reverse the experience of exclusion and stigmatization suffered by its inhabitants in schools. The door that popular adult education opens favored the subjective activation from the modification of self-esteem, the addition of tools, teamwork, the application of knowledge in everyday life.

The article recovers the actual conditions and materials where the educational process takes place. In Vrygrond, the demand far exceeded the supply of education. In order to solve this, the PEP implements the training of trainers, which allows the expansion of educational opportunities in settlements suffering from severe shortages. In reference to this, we highlight three aspects that we consider key:

- The model designed in two variations of courses: Popular Education Schools (EEP, in Spanish), and Development of Popular Education (DEP, in Spanish). These courses involve different recipients' profiles and targets, allowing progress in many educational activities and integrated into a community.
- Another aspect to note is the focus and interest of PEP in the training of young and women leaders at grassroots levels.
- In turn, the program facilitates and accompanies the continuity of higher education for those who had attended. This favors participants' prospects for the future, increasing their expectations for training and building bridges between non-formal and formal education.

2) The biographical dimension in which the article focuses allows to follow the path of participants of PEP, both in their changes and challenges assumed.



The article follows the life story of Xolela, a woman who belongs to the first generation of participants in the Popular Education Program (PEP); she is an activist for the right to housing, leader of a support group for women and HIV-positive. It also follows the path of a group of volunteers from a local women's organization dedicated to the care of children under 5 years of age.

This look focused on the material experience enables us to understand the conditions under which participants hold their courses in the PEP, under so many difficulties and obstacles raised in their community. The look proposed by the article leads us to believe in the importance of recovering the perspective of intersectionality in inequalities (class, race / ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) cross-cutting people who participate in educational processes like this.

The article visualizes key issues, which are evident in the very development of PEP, and shows how they were worked in the curriculum of the program:

- The two or three days of work that stress and limit the participation of women leaders or referents in popular education courses (care tasks, meetings, action group sessions, low paid jobs, etc.)
- Gender relations as power relations.
- The preponderance to make care responsibilities in the community problematic, a task usually undertaken mostly by women.

From these experiences at Vrygrond, a comparison with the potential generated by the political training and education of adult women<sup>1</sup> in social movements in Argentina can be established, in which meeting in a private space for women allowed them to identify common problems and collectivize forms to address solutions. In both cases, education becomes the engine that organizes and promotes the collective agency; it is no longer about women alone fighting for better conditions of life, but women organized to face different issues (health, HIV, habitat, decent work, food security, environmental impact).

3) The third dimension links Adult Education to the development of communities. In the case studied, we find that this relationship becomes central through the lines of action that the PEP leads and are detailed below:

- The spotting of problems that allows mapping both the actors responsible for local needs and shortages, and social, economic and political causes that explain the situation of the community.
- The expansion of educational spaces in various fields to promote the accessibility of participants (garage of a family home, community center, container, etc.): this data is important if we consider that moving through the settlements often jeopardize people because of violent clashes between gangs linked to drug trafficking.
- The proposed curriculum is centered on the applicability and implementation of learned knowledge. This happens, for example, in matters relating to food and food sovereignty. Thus, knowledge is perceived as "transformative", capable of generating change in communities.
- The contents of the curriculum are totally related to local issues and focused on generating changes (community development, social issues, crime, human rights, development of basic research skills). Undoubtedly, this design should be thought under constraints and structural conditions.
- The recovery of agency skills, in a context of suffering, violence, trauma and stress linked to socio-economic, environmental and political conditions in the region. Once participants are a part of the PEP, they become "essential promoters of community initiatives". The PEP itself creates the conditions for learning to prepare, organize and undertake a campaign in different problems that arise from the community (addictions, child abuse, pollution, etc.). This has a multiplier effect as these participants become role models in their families.

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<sup>1</sup> In this regard see: Partenio, Florencia (2011) "Paths of Experiences and Learnings: Feminist Points on Practical Politics", <http://www.dawnnet.org/uploads/File/DI-Jul-2011-FLYER-FINAL.pdf>

- The very idea of campaign enables to organize and plan the joint efforts of facilitators, leaders and citizens to bring about change in their conditions.

As part of a final thought, experiences like that of PEP in Cape Town show the degree of interdependence between the demands for more education for youth and adults and global actions to ensure these experiences in different latitudes. Having this in mind, the debates on the post-2015 development agenda must be rooted in local experiences like the one analyzed, considering both its innovative aspects and its future challenges.



## Community participation within the post 2015 education framework

*(Opinion Article: for ICAE Virtual Seminar, February –March 2015)*

Comment by Limbani Nsapato

Regional Coordinator, Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA)

The global education movement will adopt the post 2015 education framework in Incheon, Korea at the World Education Forum scheduled for 19 to 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2015. This framework will be used for further input into the overarching post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to be adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

All indications from the consultations so far and especially the Muscat Global Education For All Meeting (GEM) 2014 Agreement and United Nations Open Working Group (OWG) of SDG proposals are pointing towards a new 15 year framework (2016-2030) for meeting the education goal and targets beyond 2015. The overall ambition in these 15 years is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all. Ambitious targets have been set to address key access, quality, equity and financing issues affecting education in all levels of education from pre-primary education all the way to primary, secondary, Technical and Vocational education, adult literacy and higher education levels.

For the world to achieve the ambitious goal and targets of education beyond 2015, the framework for action requires that all stakeholders including communities, civil society organisations youth movements, government, and donors play their roles.

Out of these stakeholders one would be interested to know what would be the specific roles of communities since these are an important stakeholder in any development initiative. However, before making suggestions on this question, it would be very helpful to understand the rationale for community participation.

Why should communities be involvement in the implementation for the post- 2015 education framework? Communities constitute citizens, the people who themselves are both initiators and beneficiaries of various development projects including education.

As initiators of development communities can for example set up schools which in most cases are accessed by the most disadvantaged children, youth and adults. This is the case of community primary schools found in many parts of the world such as Kenya, Malawi and Zambia. In the specific case of youth and adult literacy education, communities have been involved in setting up adult literacy and youth skills centres which have been key for fighting illiteracy among young people and adults.

As beneficiaries of development projects, communities have a right to demand services from government and policy makers and implementers. Moreover, communities have a right to hold policy makers accountable for their actions or for failing to take appropriate action to address the many challenges being faced in education including shortage of resources in schools, inequalities, and shortfalls within the curriculum and declining quality and poor learning outcomes.

The range of roles that communities can be involved in include constructing and maintaining classrooms or schools, mobilising resources , recruiting teachers and volunteers, and paying their salaries as well as monitoring teacher attendance. Other roles include advocating against negative cultural practices and policies; school related gender-based violence, conflict and abuse in schools. Communities can also be involved in monitoring and tracking the use of resources and demanding services from government. In addition, and most importantly, communities should be involved in school curriculum or policy formulation and design, implementation, review and appraisal.

Experience has shown that community participation is reinforced when it is organised, structured and coordinated. A number of countries such as Malawi have put in place a policy for community participation and encourage the establishment of school management committees and parents teacher associations as organs and structures for enhancing community participation. In other countries, community groups or formations set out to address the needs of the vulnerable such as mother groups, parents of disabled children have proved useful in reducing dropouts, improving attendance and promoting quality and learning outcomes. However, for communities and community structures to play their roles, they need to be sensitised, mobilised and capacitated through mobilisation or sensitisation campaigns, trainings and learning exchanges.

Community involvement is therefore critical for the realisation of the goals and targets that the education community seeks to achieve after 2015. In this regard, community involvement, engagement or participation should be considered as a right that should be protected at all cost. Stakeholders especially government and civil society therefore need to ensure that communities are informed of their roles and empowered so that such roles are sustained within the post 2015 framework.



## Towards World Education Forum in Korea

By María Graciela Cuervo  
ICAE Secretariat

From previous articles we have read the importance of community education, and the need to identify new forms of communities beyond the traditional views of those who live within the same territory. Communities have evolved and the contexts in which they define their educational priorities are changing too.

The context of setting educational priorities globally is also changing. For the last 15 years the global Education For All goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) influenced national policies and international financing for education. The EFA agenda and the MDGs led to significant progress, but unfortunately, the MDGs, with a much narrower framework, had a greater impact in detriment of adult education.

A new framework for sustainable development is being negotiated among governments now, in which civil society has actively engaged to avoid exclusion and to demand that the human right to education is fully acknowledged. The final agreement of these negotiations will result in a Political Declaration and a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, including a goal on education and lifelong learning for all.

At the same time, within the Education for All movement, UNESCO is promoting the discussion of a new framework for education in collaboration with other UN Agencies, civil society and other stakeholders. The World Education Forum (WEF) in Incheon, Korea (19-22 May 2015), is expected to agree *'a single education agenda for 2015-2030, anchored in a lifelong and sector-wide perspective, addressing access and results, equity and quality for all – children, youth and adults - from early childhood care and education to higher education and adult learning, and in formal, non-formal and informal learning'*.

Civil society has covered a long road to Korea, where there have been several milestones for education and lifelong learning: UNESCO General Conference (Paris, 2013), Global EFA Meeting (Muscat, 2014), Open Working Group for Sustainable Development proposal (July 2014), UNESCO EFA Regional Conferences (August 2014 – February 2015). However, there are still major challenges for civil society. The participation of civil society organizations in the forums has been limited, some governments and UN agencies have made a case on maintaining the technical level of the discussion, instead of political commitments, and there hasn't been enough discussion on means of implementation and the participation of civil society and other stakeholders in implementing and monitoring the post-2015 agenda.

The spaces for discussion and negotiation provided by the Sustainable Development and Education agenda-setting processes have served civil society organization to network among themselves and develop joint strategies for common goals. We need to acknowledge this opportunity and build on that to demand spaces that allow the world education community to come together as much as possible, and consciously promote links among each other.

Back to back to the WEF 2015 there will be a NGO Forum for NGOs to meet among themselves and agree on a collective civil society vision for education post-2015. On the 18 and 19 of May, a space will be provided to civil society organizations to reflect on strategies for civil society engagement and to come up with recommendations for successful implementation of the post-2015 education agenda.

Participation in the NGO Forum and WEF is by invitation only, as the total number of participants is limited to 300. But this shouldn't discourage organizations unable to attend into actively engage the debates. Through 2014, and the first trimester of 2015, national and regional EFA meetings took place around the world\*; there is a big task ahead at national level to disseminate information about the post-2015 agenda, and to hold our governments accountable for their commitments.

ICAE is fully committed to defend the education of youth and adults and lifelong learning for all and to represent the voices of its constituency at all levels of society. We recognize the impressive challenge that represent fulfilling basic learning needs in a wide range of different contexts, but we must start reflecting these needs in the international agreements. For example, I would like to quote the words of Alan Tuckett, ICAE President, in the recent World Forum on Lifelong Learning of the CMA:

*"The Muscat Global EFA meeting's overall goal for education was to "ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030". Yet in the subsidiary targets agreed the call was for universal literacy for young people, and an increase of a yet to be decided percentage in adult literacy. But doesn't all mean all?"*

Literacy is one of the most basic learning needs, but is not the only one, equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs for youth and adults need to be better reflected in the post-2015 agenda; we seek to improve data availability about wider adult learning; we need explicit recognition and further commitments to non-formal and informal learning, and overall the recognition of youth and adult learning as a key catalyst in achieving sustainable development and fulfilling all human rights.

\* Access to the 5 regional statements of UNESCO Regional Ministerial Conferences on Education Post-2015 in the following links:

- Asia-Pacific: [http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/epr/APREC/Presentations/APREC\\_Bangkok\\_Statement\\_Final.pdf](http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/epr/APREC/Presentations/APREC_Bangkok_Statement_Final.pdf)
- Latin America and the Caribbean: [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Santiago/images/Lima-Declaration-31-10-2014-ENG\\_01.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Santiago/images/Lima-Declaration-31-10-2014-ENG_01.pdf)
- Arab States: [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/pdf/Sharm\\_El\\_Sheikh\\_Statement-FinalDraft.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/pdf/Sharm_El_Sheikh_Statement-FinalDraft.pdf)
- Sub-Saharan Africa: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002321/232153e.pdf>
- European and North American States: [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED\\_new/Paris-Statement.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED_new/Paris-Statement.pdf)



## Resilience, empowerment, memory, space... Communities learning in the context of global crises

Conclusions by Alan Tuckett  
President of ICAE

'In times of crisis everything that used to seem safe, balanced and predictable suddenly becomes uncertain, chaotic, ambiguous multidimensional or, simply, gone.' Anna Pluskota and Monika Staszewicz

What a rich seminar this has been. From the start we were invited to re-examine ideas of community: Alfonso Torres Carrillo suggested that we should move beyond simply seeing community as shared territory, customs and social conditions, and to recognise that 'there are new ways of being and acting together that generate ties of solidarity and commitment around cultural practices, ethical choices and social movements involving people from different backgrounds and characteristics. Nelly Stromquist agreed, but argued that 'a learning community needs (my emphasis) shared spaces, it cannot just be virtual. Space and location are critical'. What then of Monica Simon's illustration of the impact of AVAAZ? Is this not action grounded in reflection? Another illustration of an empowering civil society distance learning space is the online community of expert patients with Parkinson's Disease, whose mutual support and learning leaves them often better briefed than the doctors they visit. But is that a community? People have a common interest, pool experience, learn from one another, and declare a sense of empowerment from their interaction. Granted it is a community limited to people with access to the internet, but it is a site where traditional power relations can be contested. And what, then, of this virtual seminar? Isn't it the case that many of us may never meet face to face, but that we share enough of common values to learn from the extraordinary variety of contexts in which our struggle to support learners in gaining agency? Yet the experience of ICAE's executive, which meets once a year for a couple of days, and otherwise keeps in touch by Skype does show the value of meeting in person. Clearly there is more for us to do to explore how the intimacy of face to face dialogue can be replicated in other contexts.

A second key theme that generated debate within the seminar centred around the meaning and importance of resilience in community development. Anna Pluskota and Monika Staszewicz asked 'what might a resilient community look like', and their analysis highlighted the weaknesses of a deficit model (what people lack, and need support to develop), and the limitations of a strategy that concentrated only on strengths. Instead they argued for communities to recognise their own value and resources, using Sergiojanni's typology of community resources – relations, space, thinking, memory, and practice. Fanny Gomez in a fascinating commentary recognised a similarity between this account of resources with Latin American women popular educators analysis of assets and portfolio of powers. She then went on to share a debate from the World Social Forum, where the question was asked about the value of the huge level of imaginative energy spent in imagining alternatives, when the dominant neo-liberal paradigms continued broadly untouched. She quoted Colussi in answer to the challenge, celebrating 'the joy of doing, acting on reality and changing it, and proving that reality is transformable.'

That joy, in the act of seeing the world differently, the recognition of our own resources to change, even in the face of hostile circumstances was picked up by several writers, and is reflected in Astrid von Kotze's account of Xolela's inspiring learning journey in Vrygrond. Determined to share her own experience of transformation, Xolela suggests 'if we could get something like this (popular education) and empower them (community members) and give them a taste of real education it would change their lives'.

Xolela's experience finds echoes in that of women of the Sahariya tribe of forest dwellers described by Swarnlata Mahilkar. Like Xolela, and like the Batwa people of Burundi in Venant Nyobewe, and the

Argentinian women highlighted by Florencia Partenio, the Sahariya face extremely challenging circumstances, in which the time for education is easily squeezed out by the need to address the most basic pre-conditions for survival. 'We learnt that if literacy has to answer all these demands it has to make links with their context and lived realities.'

Several pieces in the seminar describe the catalogue of human rights violations and economic exclusion facing the poorest and most marginalised communities everyday – from lynching as community justice in Bolivia, or female genital mutilation in sub-Saharan Africa, or for that matter in Britain, to the drug fuelled gangs that make attending class such a danger for Xolela and her colleagues. Astrid quotes Martha Cabrera in explanation: 'Trauma and pain afflict not only individuals. When they become widespread and ongoing they affect entire communities and even the country as a whole.' This leads, as Astrid comments in a short contribution to behaviour where people can take delight in diminishing each other. Monica Simon responds that 'barbarism has always been present at different times in the history of humanity'.

Yet a key function of community education is Astrid writes 'naming the shame of division and envy, rebuilding insight into common conditions of oppression and exploitation.' But more than that, sharing strategies for contesting exclusion.

This is what makes Nelly Stromquist's analysis of 'resilience' powerful. Unlike the concept of empowerment she argues, 'resilience' can leave us settling for survival, better adapted to tough circumstances rather than developing the resources and strategies to transform them.

As Ramon Mapa puts it, 'new causes and movements rise up whenever scandals rock the government'. But he goes on to suggest that new forms of acting derive from traditional ties of community. From the beginning of the seminar memory, and the recovery of traditional resources of community strength were an important focus – notably in Alfonso Torres Carrillo's account of re-Indianisation'. They provide a springboard for the powerful storytelling and reflection that characterises much of our work – in the voices rising from previously silent (silenced) communities.

However, memory has little to offer in the change of scale and force of the natural disasters brought on by climate change. Resilience in that context is the building block on which strategies for re-making and re-shaping lives is made. And as Robbie Guevara reminds us, whilst communities need to understand the 'symptoms and the causes of the current crises', it was only when seasonal patterns affected the planting season, and typhoons devastated coastal communities that farmers and fishermen in the Philippines were ready to engage. And we remain collectively uncertain in many parts of the world how best to engage popular education with environmental change – an analysis central to the Ecuadorian pachamama.

The point was made early in our discussions that our communities confront radically different contexts in undertaking community education – and whilst our values may be shared, the tools of our work differ. The strength of seminars like this, and of the DVV/ICAE Yearbook which triggered it that other people's experience in engaging in comparable struggles in very different places are resources of hope for each of us.

Certainly, the seminar provides a fertile backdrop to the global advocacy work that culminates in the World Education Forum in Incheon in May and at the UN in September. They provide food for thought, and further debate, as well for our debates at ICAE's World Assembly in Montreal in June, where we shall seek to share strategies on how best to turn global commitments into better supported local practice.

**Alan Tuckett**

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