Chapter

6

ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (ABCD) AND HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN (HCD) TRAINING

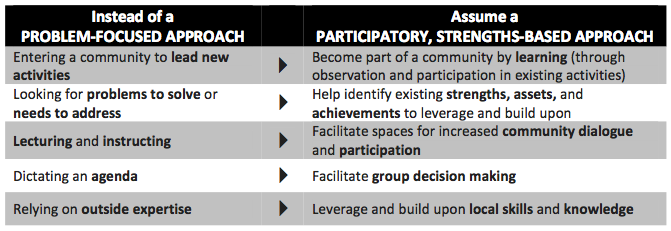
HCD

1. EMPATHY
2. IDEATION
3. PROTOTYPING

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to sustainable community-driven development based on the premise that *communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognized assets*. ABCD stands in contrast to a deficit-based approach that focuses on identifying and servicing needs. From the start, an Asset Based approach spends time identifying the assets of individuals, associations and institutions that form the community and sends reinforcing messages of building on existing power rather than “empowering” from outside influences. The identified assets from an individual are matched with people or groups who have an interest in or need for those strengths. The key is beginning to use what is already in the community. Then to work together to build on the identified assets of all involved.

The first key method of the ABCD approach is that development begins with the recognition of asset categories that can be uncovered in any community and place. When applying ABCD principles, communities are not thought of as complex masses of needs and problems, but rather diverse and capable webs of gifts and assets. Each community has a unique set of skills and capacities it can channel for community development.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The chart below provides more detail on the contrasts between an asset-based vs. needs-based approach:



*Human-Centered Design* (HCD), formerly called *Design Thinking,* is an approach to community development based on a deep empathetic understanding of the community and rapid development and testing of prototype concepts. This approach is grounded in the belief that people who face challenges are the ones who hold the key to their solution. HCD is a system of overlapping phases (*People, Observations, Principles, Ideas, Experiments)* rather than a sequence of orderly steps.

**People and Observations** are about understanding the people in the community, their assets and needs, and what is happening that is influencing the outcomes the community is having. Crucial to this is empathy and discovering new perspectives: Now that I recognize a challenge that the community is facing, how do I better understand it from others’ points of view? This is accomplished through observation, interviews, and immersive experiences. This phase goes hand in hand with relentless questioning: why? why? why?

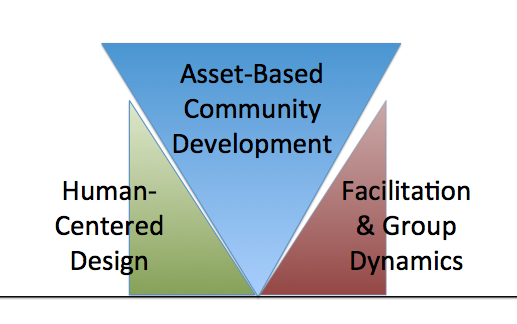
**Principles** is about analyzing and synthesizing observations and uncovering the underlying causes, values, and beliefs that influence the community. It is about distilling insights about the specific community to be able to frame the challenge in a way that leverages the assets and particular circumstances in which the challenge exists.

**Ideas and Experiments** are about generating ideas and making them tangible so that community members can interact with them and provide information on how to further adapt and refine those ideas to have a positive impact on the community’s development. It is crucial that many different ideas are generated and tested with the community to gain new insights about the optimal way toward addressing the community’s need.

**ABCD/HCD Training for CorpsAfrica Volunteers**

CorpsAfrica’s training program centers on developing a deep understanding of Asset-Based Community Development as the guiding framework while simultaneously developing practical skills in Human-Centered Design and Facilitation & Group Dynamics.

**Asset Based Community Development.** In building a deep understanding of Asset-Based Community Development, Trainees grapple with such questions as:

* How can I be a catalyst and facilitator with community members as the true drivers and implementers of change?
* How can I ensure that my work and the ways I lend support send messages of empowerment (not disempowerment) to the community?
* How can I support the community’s re-discovery of the assets that they already have and help them to leverage those assets toward accomplishing their goals?
* How can I ensure that the community owns the entirety of their project to ensure impact and sustainability?

**Human-Centered Design.** Trainees delve into HCD as a powerful set of tools for facilitating the collaborative development and implementation of projects. Successful and unsuccessful case studies of applied design from the field of development are explored. Some of the key HCD tools and concepts that Trainees learn to support their work as catalysts and facilitators include:

**Empathy Building.**

* Trainees learn the importance of empathy as a central mindset to all of their development work, what constitutes a true empathetic approach, and how to build understanding of the varying perspectives of community members.
* Practical skills for developing more empathetic relationships through conversation and hands-on activities are taught, as well as important concepts from behavioral science.

**Participatory Mapping.**

* Trainees learn the essential tools of participatory mapping through hands-on activities as well as the practice of facilitating the experience for community members.
* An emphasis on community resources and relationships, as well as opportunities for perspective taking and empathy building are developed through these activities.

**Project Scoping.**

* Trainees learn key tools—including the project matrix—to help them support proper scoping to ensure that the community’s project is feasible and sustainable.

**Experimentation & Prototyping**.

* Trainees learn the importance of testing ideas through experimentation, as well as how to develop a mindset of continuous learning that comes from embracing uncertainty, **learning from failure**, and being willing to adapt and iterate.
* Techniques such as hypothesis-based experimentation, parallel prototyping, and giving and receiving feedback are learned and practiced.

**Project Compass.**

* Trainees are taught how to develop a collective record and plan of the project detailing information, discussions, ideas, developments, and learnings through the project compass tool. This tool serves as the community’s “pool of shared understanding” and is the foundation for the collective ownership of the project.



**Facilitation & Group Dynamics.** Because the primary role of Trainees in the community is one of catalyst and facilitator, strengthening their understanding of group dynamics and applying the practical skills in facilitating teams are taught. Some of the key Facilitation & Group Dynamics tools that trainees learn to support their work include:

**Group Development and Function**

* Tuckman’s Model of Group Development and the Paradox of Group Life are explored as two models for understanding how groups develop and the inherent tensions in collaborative work.
* Issues of power and gender are explored, and examples from the field of development are analyzed.

**Facilitation of Groups**

* “The Meeting and the Mango Tree” is emphasized as an essential concept to help facilitators understand and shape the group process.
* Group communication, decision-making, group norms, expectation setting, goal setting, and group structures as well as other concepts are explored in detail.

**Psychological Safety**

* Trainees learn about the importance of building and maintaining psychological safety with the community, as well as practical techniques to accomplishing this.
* Trainees examine the critical relationship between risk and trust. And “The Pool of Shared Understanding” is taught as a foundational technique, along with key indicators for when psychological safety is at risk.

CorpsAfrica expects Volunteers to go to communities without preconceived ideas of how they will help. The communities need to own the project themselves, and so they must be the drivers of the development project with the CorpsAfrica Volunteers as the catalysts and facilitators. Asset-Based Community Development and Human-Centered Design give Volunteers the structure and confidence to successfully facilitate and collaborate with communities to help them identify solutions to their most pressing issues.

At CorpsAfrica, the ABCD/HCD training is built around the practical application of what the Trainees are learning. Thus it is crucial that at least one reliable community partner is established with CorpsAfrica as part of the training.  The community partners should allow Trainees to be immersed in their organization and the community they work in so that Trainees can get an in-depth understanding of the issues affecting the organization and community.

Procedures

1. SCHEDULE
2. LOGISTICS
3. FIELD GUIDE

Well ahead of pre-service training (PST) the CD collaborates with the CorpsAfrica headquarters to find an experienced ABCD/HCD trainer. When searching for potential trainers, the CD can also use his/her in-country contacts to locate potential trainers. Once you have identified a trainer, discuss with him/her the PST calendar and more specifically the dates for the training. Ideally you should budget two weeks for this training, which will include both theory and practice.

Once the trainer has been selected and signed a contract, he or she should coordinate with headquarters and other country offices to draft a schedule for the training. From there, the CD and trainer will discuss the logistics and the materials needed for the training. Some of the key logistics include identifying community partners (which, for example, may be a school, clinic, or the leaders of a small village) for the training. Once the community partner has been identified, the CD can contact local leaders to introduce CorpsAfrica, explain the purpose of the training and the suggested dates of the training. The CD creates a description sheet for each community partner that he/she will share with the trainer. The description sheet contains information such as transportation, key people in the community, partner organizations, cultural activities, etc.

The community partner must be open to sharing both the good things and the things that are not going well with the Trainees.  Access to the people and places associated with the community partner must be available throughout the training for Trainees to conduct interviews, make observations, show and get feedback on prototypes, etc.

****Trainees should be provided with materials to help facilitate their work during the training. These materials include:

* + - * The CorpsAfrica Field Guide
      * A notebook for Trainees to record their observations and notes
      * Post-it notes
      * Sharpies or other fine-tipped markers
      * Large sheets of poster paper.
      * Tape

Reminders

* The most valuable time that Trainees can spend once they have had the initial overview of Asset-Based Community Development and Human-Centered Design and the tools for conducting empathy research is in the community practicing those skills. (One doesn’t learn to swim by reading a book.)
* Central to the ABCD/HCD training is also the establishment and fostering of the correct mindsets for Trainees. Giving Trainees time to reflect on their experience in the community and to discuss the issues that arose as part of their training is essential to building these mindsets and correcting any misconceptions about how Volunteers should approach their work at their sites.

**HCD Training Format**

At CorpsAfrica, the HCD/ABCD training is two weeks long, and it involves both theory through interactive presentations and practical sessions with a partner organization in the community.

It is important to choose a community for the HCD/ABCD training that resembles the rural communities where Volunteers will be placed so that they can practice their skills in a setting that is appropriate to prepare them for their service. You can plan to have the theoretical sessions at a ****training center with adequate facilities such as dorms, a cafeteria, and a conference room with access to electricity, chairs, tables, and a video projector. When planning the ABCD/HCD training, the CD and the trainer (s) will discuss the format of the training. For instance, CD and the trainer can discuss the following:

* Who are the key contacts in the community and/or with the partner organization(s).
* When and where the Trainees will conduct interviewing community members.
* When and where Trainees will present their prototype projects.

**Example of an HCD Training Plan**

Below is one example of a possible training plan. You should work with the HCD Facilitator to formulate a specific training plan for PST.

**Week I**

**Monday:** The training will begin with an overview of Human-Centered Design and the overarching framework known as the Innovators’ Compass. The first day will emphasize designing with the community and the three primary modes of conducting empathy research: interviews, observation, and immersion. Trainees will learn techniques of active listening, and providing good feedback. They will examine various approaches to community development, including need-based and asset-based community development, and how HCD bridges the gap between these approaches. Trainees will also learn new mindsets and tools for digging deep in their research.

**Tuesday:** Trainees will be placed in the field to apply their new skills to conduct first hand research at a nearby clinic and school. They will brainstorm a list of key community members related to the clinic and school and then select one to shadow for the day. Upon returning from the field, Trainees will learn new tools for sharing and organizing the qualitative data they will have collected. The emphasis will be placed on empathy mapping as a key tool to build understanding of community members experience and to gain critical insights.

**Wednesday**: Trainees will learn new techniques in defining design principles, which they will use to further analyze their data and narrow their project focus to two topics. Trainees will also explore the concepts of decision making in groups.

**Thursday:** Trainees will learn a number of tools in the areas on brainstorming and prototyping to move their newly defined design principles into the realm of tangible prototypes. Design tools—specifically the ideation horizon and storyboarding—will be introduced and practiced by Trainees, and a group dynamics lesson exploring teams and how they develop will also be conducted.

**Friday:** Trainees will return to the field, back to clinic and school to share their prototypes, gather feedback, and conduct additional field research. They will also be introduced to two new tools—group interviewing and community mapping, which they will also apply in the field.

**Week II**

**Monday:** Trainees will take part in a mini engineering challenge as part of their training to teach important lessons in design around group dynamics and early-stage prototyping. Trainees will be shown the “Marshmallow Challenge” TED Talk, followed by a group discussion. Trainees will be given additional design tools around prototyping, including diagramming, drawing, modeling, performing, and experiencing design. The Trainees will apply their understanding of the community to create and perform skits to represent their identified community challenges. Additional lessons on progression prototyping, parallel prototyping, and hypothesis-based prototyping to examine the desirability, feasibility, and viability of Trainees’ project focus will be presented. Additional group dynamics training will be provided around conflict in groups—the types of conflict, underlying causes, and productive approaches to resolving conflict.

**Tuesday:** Trainees will return to the clinic and school to get additional feedback from their updated prototypes, continue their empathy research, and set up a community meeting around their issue. Through this work, they will continue to build relationships and to clarify their role in the community. A new tool will be introduced: the stakeholder matrix, which will allow Trainees to analyze the human resources of their communities and gather a quick snapshot of the people that they need to involve in their project. There will be a group dynamics training around giving and receiving feedback. Trainees will be able to quickly apply this training by offering feedback to one another to improve their group dynamics.

**Wednesday:** Trainees will focus on a series of self-reflection lessons around personal strengths and what each brings to the teams they are a part of. They will also explore what great leaders do through Simon Sinek’s TED Talk on psychological safety. Additional group dynamics training will consist of talking about building a pool of shared understanding in groups and the opening and closing that must occur in meetings. They will be shown a TED Talk by Alejandro Aravena around the importance of designing with the community. In the afternoon, Trainees will work in teams to prepare for their community meetings.

**Thursday:** Trainees will hold their community meetings with people attending the clinic and the school. The Trainees will be shown skills in navigating the community dynamics around sensitive issues and they will learn some important lessons around organizing community meetings and managing expectations.

**Friday:** Trainees will review the key mindsets that are vital to applying HCD in their communities. Additional training will focus on using the Innovators’ Compass design tool to address smaller challenges that Trainees will face.

**Saturday**: Trainees will participate in a written assessment of the HCD Training.

1. This section is adapted from http://www.nurturedevelopment.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)