

Multiplier effects of the ICD Program in Fiji

The APO Integrated Community Development Program has since 1998 attempted to promote balanced economic development through rural and social development activities in member countries. It is meant to enhance individual and collective initiatives at the local community level through socio-economic activities geared toward sustainable development. To create multiplier effects from APO projects, the Technical Expert Services (TES) Program deputes resource persons to local projects organized as a follow-up to APO international projects. A successful example of this cycle in Fiji is described below.

Rural community development in Fiji has improved infrastructure, agricultural production, and the provision of basic services in health and education. Key institutions involved in supporting community development efforts are the Ministry of Fijian Affairs and Regional Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Education. However, efforts were still not integrated and did not focus sufficiently on increasing the ability of communities to shape their own future. This led to a “recipient” mentality and expectations of government support. The behavior of indigenous communities is also influenced by the abundant availability of natural resources, which ensure an easy livelihood. The relatively short history of planned development efforts means that skills in rural planning are lacking. However, increased competition in the world market, a burgeoning population, and the struggle of the government to provide material support forced the authorities to find ways to resolve community development issues.

In July 2003, the Fijian Cabinet endorsed a new concept of community development revolving around the three components of a community capacity-building strategy: 1) social auditing; 2) community development planning; and 3) institutional support and networking. The participatory project cycle management (PPCM) methodology with the six steps of discovery, dream, direction, design, delivery, and driving (6-D) serves as the methodology for all three components.



Trainees interacting with villagers in the discovery phase of the PPCM cycle

The concept endorsed in 2003 was implemented gradually and is now being scaled up. The Ministry of Provincial Development and National Disaster Management thus organized an 11-day course to train 22 additional individuals in the PPCM methodology and 6-D, to which TES experts Dr. Ulrich Gaertner and Mohan Dhamotharan were dispatched. The training-of-trainers course focused on the community capacity building approach of the government; PPCM and 6-D; practice in using tools for community development planning; and documentation when applying PPCM and 6-D in communities. The 22 participants are expected to work with 20 villages until the end of 2006, and those performing well will become permanent employees from 2007. They will then face the huge task of supporting all 2000 villages and settlements throughout Fiji based on PPCM. 