



# 4-Volunteers A Toolkit for Volunteer Leaders

# **Skills For Educators in Community Programs**

A TOOL KIT FOR 4-H LEADERS, NEW COUNTY EXTENSION STAFF, STUDENTS, AND OTHER NONFORMAL EDUCATORS WORKING IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ADULT EDUCATION, FAMILY EDUCATION, HEALTH EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP, OR OTHER COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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#### THE MODULES

Below are the modules that comprise the curriculum. The organization and content of the curriculum is, and should be, in a constant state of change. For more information, or suggestions about improving the curriculum, contact Arlen Etling at aetling@unl.edu

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this set of materials is to prepare nonformal educators, professionals as well as volunteers, to work in educational programs in communities outside the school system. This is meant to be an "introductory" program that groups of individuals can use at their own pace and in their order of interest. It is not intended to exhaust the themes it introduces. For some nonformal educators the materials will not provide enough depth for their needs. We have given references for more information on most of the topics.

We originally developed the materials with certain groups in mind. We wanted to write a reference for community leaders (both formal and informal leaders) in rural areas who did not have access to the resources and expert trainers to provide workshops in their hometowns. We wanted to address the needs of Cooperative Extension Agents, particularly new workers, and volunteers recruited to work with 4-H, community development projects, master gardeners, and advisory committees. We also wanted to have a source that would help professionals and volunteers in a variety of community organizations including such groups as Little League, Kiwanis and the American Cancer Society.

After the materials were used in these programs we discovered a demand for a university course in community leadership skills. So a course was developed and the materials were used as the text.

As we taught courses and workshops we identified a demand for a Spanish version of the materials. We found fewer related resources for nonformal educators in Spanish than in English. Also fewer attempts had apparently been made to organize existing materials into a comprehensive curriculum.



#### How the Curriculum was Developed

As a result of "motivation" workshops offered to rural leaders in Arizona, the Cooperative Extension community development specialists decided to assemble a "self-study curriculum" of materials to be used in self-paced study groups. The specialists brainstormed a list of topics and Douglas Dunn and Arlen Etling agreed to write drafts of the chapters. Frank Williams, Extension family life specialist, agreed to write two chapters on conflict management and conflict resolution.

The preliminary drafts were ready for testing in 1986. Parts of the materials were used in Durango, Mexico, to organize a new youth development program, 4-C. Arlen was granted a sabbatical leave to work with the Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University, to evaluate the drafts and suggest refinements. Douglas begin testing the curriculum with client groups. Changes is format, emphasis and some content was changed.

In 1987 Arlen became a state 4-H specialist at Penn State. He offered workshops to 4-H agents and volunteer leaders while Douglas continued to use the materials with diverse groups of rural leaders in Arizona. In 1990 and 1991 Arlen used parts the materials with Beryl Burt (who was program director for community development and 4-H in Arizona when the materials were first developed) for inservice workshops to strengthen the skills of 4-S professional agents in Costa Rica. Results of all of these pilot tests and evaluations encouraged further use and refinement.

In 1993 and 1994 a Penn State course in community development skills was offered by Arlen using the materials as the principal text. In 1995 Arlen received a Fulbright fellowship to use the materials for a course at the University of Monterrey (UDEM) in Mexico and for workshops with Mexican nonformal educators. Intensive evaluations of the course at Penn State and UDEM, of the workshops for nonformal educators in Pennsylvania and Mexico, and of the materials (a written questionnaire on selected chapters) by both university students and nonformal educators, provided the final revisions and refinement of the materials.

Now this resource is offered through the University of Nebraska as a part of Arlen's work in 4-H curriculum development and his courses in extension in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications.

# Theoretical/Experiential Base for the Curriculum

The foundations for this curriculum come from four sources: 1. Cooperative Extension, 2. nonformal education, 3. Paulo Freire and 4. democracy. Each of those terms evokes a number of stereotypes and misconceptions. None of the terms are generally understood by academics because they cut across disciplines or fall between disciplines. Practitioners in any one of those areas seldom understand or appreciate the contribution of the other three; yet all four are related. Further explanation is therefore necessary.

The following page, <u>philosophical bases</u>, attempts to outline those bases without going into the detail needed for a full explanation.

# **PHILOSOPHICAL BASES**

| Cooperative Extension                         | Nonformal Education                                   | Paulo Freire                     | Democracy               |
|---|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Help people to help themselves.               | Create independence, not dependence.                  | Liberating action, empowerment.  | Individual freedom.     |
| People centered. Client makes decisions.      | Learner centeredUse local resources.                  | Responsibility on the learner.   | Human bias.             |
| Cooperation: county, state and federal levels | Local emphasis, sometimes cooperate with nat'l level. | Think globally, act locally.     | Citizen responsibility. |
| Research based, scientific method.            | Indigenous learning systems, alternatives to schools. | Critical observation of reality. | Act locally.            |
|   |   |                                  |                         |

| Professional agents work through volunteer leaders.          | Professional or non-<br>professional "facilitator."  | Ourside animatuer.   | Elected leadership and volunteers work together. |
|--|--|--|--|
| Practical, organized, learn from the past.                   | Practical, organized, immediate usefulness.          | Accept old and new.  | Given choices, people will make wise decisions.  |
| Uses adoption theory, diffusion theory. Give clients choices | Cafeteria curriculum of options, choices.            | Concientization.   | Focus on rights.                                 |
| Information based but teaches skills & attitudes             | Group problem solving.                               | Learners judge then try out approaches, reflect/act praxis | Values diversity.                                |
| Create a better future.                                      | Emphasizes skills, but uses attitudes and knowledge. | Focus on attitudes but uses skills & knowledge.            | Prudently optimistic, hopeful.                   |
|  | Create a better now.                                 | Future image of humanity.                                  | Debate and vote.                                 |
| Communication theory.  | Low level of structure.                              | Dialogue vs. polemic.                                      | Consensus vs. coercion                           |
| All are entitled to their own opinion.                       | Group discussion, action.                            | Solidarity.  |  |
| Informal human relationships.                                | Consensus decision making. much local flexibility.   | Group problem solving.                                     |  |
|  | Informal human relationships.                        | Informal human relationships.                              |  |
|  |  |  |  |

| Possible Limitations                          |                      |                          |   |  |  |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| Hierarchical Institution with much structure  | Not well understood. | Political stereotypes.   | Government structure expected to protect minority rights. |  |  |
| U.S. middle class values, work means success. | Anti-school bias.    | Not accepted everywhere. | Think nationally.   |  |  |
| Problem-solving by experts                    |                      | Unfamiliar to many.      | Majority rules. Vote determines winners/losers.           |  |  |
|   |                      |                          |   |  |  |

Cooperative Extension is an organization and a philosophy which is intended to extend knowledge from the research and teaching capabilities of the land grant university to the people of the state in the subject matter areas of agriculture, family living, youth development and community development. Simply stated the mission of Cooperative Extension is "to help people to help themselves." This implies an emphasis on skills and attitudes as well as knowledge. The educational role of Cooperative Extension is to respond to people's needs (to calm the agitated and to agitate the calmed). Political and academic pressures, over the years have obscured the vision of creating a better society through educational programs which emphasize self help. An educational methodology has evolved which is not not well understood by by those whose primary experience comes from formal education.

Within Cooperative Extension, 4-H youth development was introduced as "indirect education" (to reach adults through their children) and has involved into a powerful educational system for families which relies on volunteers and a cafeteria curriculum of printed materials and optional educational experiences. 4-H is focused on life skills (citizenship, leadership, interpersonal skills, communications skills, career development, working with groups, values development, and application of subject matter for overall personal development). Since most new hires come to 4-H from academic programs in agricultural science or family living, they often see 4-H primarily through their subject matter bias. They reflect Cooperative Extension's struggle to move from a subject matter approach to an interdisciplinary problem solving approach.

Through research on the attributes of youth development workers a "4-H professional research and knowledge taxonomy" was constructed. This curriculum was expanded to include the elements of that taxonomy.

Also within Cooperative Extension, "community development" emerged later to become a fourth "program area"1962. Its purpose is to help people in communities to clarify their problems and organize themselves to address those problems in order to improve their quality of life. Community development programs work through the cooperation of local officials, volunteer community leaders, and the general citizenry. Typical programs in community development include leadership training, assisting organizations to get started or revitalized, training volunteer managers (sometimes the volunteers themselves), community planning, and acquiring needed community resources.

Preparing university students for careers in Cooperative Extension has been attempted by a few universities. From 1975 through 1978 Arlen developed an undergraduate major in Extension at the University of Arizona. Research was conducted to identified the competencies needed by beginning extension agents. Then an academic program was developed which taught those competencies. Research on similar programs at land grant universities concluded that the curriculum was unique in its depth, breadth and focus. Much of that curriculum is incorporated into this curriculum.

Nonformal education (NFE) is any planned, intentional educational program which takes place outside the school system. In some ways NFE is similar with formal (school) education. In many ways NFE is quite different. When educators move from formal educational settings (i.e., the classroom) to nonformal educational settings (i.e., a camp or a job site). Research conducted on the skills of nonformal educators in one project in Ecuador was used as a base for the curriculum presented here. Nonformal educational philosophy is discussed in modules E-1 and E-3. Many nonformal learning/teaching techniques are described in the last section.

### Communitarianism/Democracy

#### **PRINCIPLES**

From the philosophical bases outlined on the previous page we can derive a list of principles (values) for this community based education curriculum.

It is people centered. It aims to help people build knowledge, skills, attitudes and aspirations to solve their problems. It therefore should serve to create independence in the learner.

Facilitator leadership (use of directive, democratic and indirect styles according to the situation) is valued for leaders whether they are paid or volunteers, whether they are elected or informal leaders.

Facilitator leaders should be community centered rather than self (ego) centered or sectarian.

Cooperation is valued over competition. Win-win situations are best. Consensus decision making is better than coercion or majority rules.

Community members must be involved in a process to determine their own needs, goals and activities. Citizen rights depend on citizen responsibilities. Skilled volunteers are essential to healthy communities. Educational programs should feature local resources, local relevance and local control. Citizens need to practice critical observation. They need a future orientation. They must accept both new ideas and old ideas based on their current merit.

Useful community projects are based on disciplined common sense, not magical solutions nor handouts.

Education for community action is based on motivation not manipulation. Effective communication skills are essential. Adoption and diffusion theory are useful.

Nonformal education and informal education compliment formal education. All three need to be understood (including their limitations) and used.

This curriculum is not a panacea. It is a beginning. It must be adapted and expanded by those who use it. It must be flexible and open.

Community is a term that includes families, organizations, neighborhoods, towns, cities, counties, states, nations and the world. There is a global community which is important to all individuals.

In community education, the educator needs to have a vision of the community as it currently (realistically) is and as it (ideally )can become.

Research and evaluation are important tools to the community educator. They are tools, not ends. Limitations of current quantitative and qualitative methods must be recognized.

#### **Characteristics of Effective Communities**

In order to understand community based education, we need to understand what constitutes a community. A geographical community (town, city, neighborhood) is usually defined by physical boundaries. Another concept of community is "community of interest." That community can be understood by the following characteristics:

- Everyone must share a common purpose.
- The common purpose must be authentic.
- A commitment must be made by each of the members and by the group.
- The commitment must be personal. Part of community is risking oneself.
- To make risk possible the community must provide for security.
- For a group to develop community, it must have significant responsibility and authority.
- The members must be able to distinguish the group's limits.
- Authority figures must give up assumed roles and status symbols.
- There must be communication among all members of the group.
- Each person must feel a calling to belong the group -- he must need the community.
- The members need to be alone at times.
- Each member must develop a faith in the community and open himself.
- There must be sufficient time for interaction among members.
- The community depends upon cooperative needs to survive.
- Members must be able to create their own laws and rules together; but human relations
  must be maintained on a personal plane, not by the imposition of rules.

#### Why Are Communities Important

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY IS IMPORTANT to individuals and to society.

In The Spirit of Community Amitai Etzioni (1993) discusses the state of increasing moral confusion and social anarchy in which we live. His solution is to strengthen communities which include towns and neighborhoods as well as families and "communities of interest" (groups with common interests) which may be local, state, national, or international in scope. Without individuals accepting their responsibilities to communities, individual rights cannot be preserved.

# COMMUNITIES PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN EDUCATION

To leave education only to the schools is irresponsible. Institutions of formal education can accept only a part of the educational role in society. In many countries, schools simply are not available for many youth and adults. Nonformal education is necessary to deal with some of societies' (and individuals') educational needs. Many educators say that we cannot teach ourselves anything in isolation; rather we learn "in community."

# COMMUNITIES BUILD LEADERSHIP. LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES

Historically authoritarian leadership has predominated. Democratic and nondirective leadership is sometimes needed in order to strengthen communities. I believe that we need fewer bosses and more facilitators (leaders who help groups to identify needs and organize to resolve those needs through democratic, nondirective and directive leadership according to the demands of the situation). Training materials are needed whereby potential community leaders (facilitators) can develop and practice leadership skills appropriate to the needs of their communities.

#### COMMUNITIES ARE NEEDED TO EMBRACE CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Awareness of one's own culture needs to be balanced by sensitivity to the other cultures in communities. This is true whether the community leader is native to the community or comes from the outside. Other leadership training materials available tend to neglect this need to nurture cross-cultural sensitivity.

#### SELF-RELIANCE IS NECESSARY WHEN RESOURCES ARE LIMITED

We (individuals and communities) often have needs that cannot be met by government or by available social services. Rather than complain or do nothing, we need to organize the needed resources ourselves and conserve our limited resources (including time).

#### FAMILIES ARE STRENGTHENED BY COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In her latest book, The Quickening of America, (1994) Frances Moore Lappé argues that our public and our private lives are not in conflict. Investing in our public responsibilities is a necessary step in strengthening families (the most basic community to which we all belong). Family awareness of their citizenship role in their communities, states, country, and world, is essential if we are to deal with global issues that continue to grow in complexity and importance to families.

#### COMMUNITIES ARE CRITICAL TO GLOBAL SURVIVAL

Increasingly global issues threaten the survival of our planet. Cynicism is not the answer. Apathy is not the answer. Isolated individual action is not enough. Only through community can we find the answers.

# COMMUNITIES MUST COMBINE VISION WITH PRACTICAL SKILLS

If we lack a vision, our efforts will be pointless. If we lack practical skills in community development our vision will result in nothing but good intentions.

#### SPECIFIC SKILLS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EDUCATORS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED.

In order to strengthen existing communities and to develop new communities, professionals and volunteers are needed. These individuals can be most effective if they possess needed skills which have been identified through research and through experience of community development workers around the world. Those skills can be grouped into topics which are the modules of this curriculum for training community educators.