

**Social Capital, Community Driven Development, and Empowerment:
A Short Note on Concepts and Operations**

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Definitions

Social capital is understood as features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

Community Driven Development is understood as a methodology of undertaking development enterprises that gives control of decisions and resources to community groups.

Empowerment is understood as increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make effective development and life choices and to transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes

Social capital, community driven development (CDD), and empowerment are related but not equivalent concepts. Success in enhancing the level of any one of these concepts will have the tendency as well of improving the prospects for the other two concepts. There is, however, nothing determinate or automatic about any of these relationships.

High social capital helps to make community driven development more effective, but it is not the only factor that matters for success. Similarly, experience with CDD can help to empower communities, but CDD is not the only means for raising the status of empowerment. Facilitative and mutually supportive links flow in both directions among these concepts. The concepts, however, are not equivalent or part of any one-to-one relationship.

This short paper will explore the relationships among these concepts further. There are, indeed, some important mutually supportive links among social capital, CDD and empowerment, it will be seen, but these links are more accurately viewed as tendencies rather than deterministic relationships. Working on just one of these three objectives will not suffice to achieve the other two. Take empowerment, for example. More empowered communities are more likely to take up CDD tasks more effectively, for example, and their experience of working together in productive and mutually beneficial ways is likely to add to their stock of social capital. There is, however, nothing automatic or necessary about any of these relationships. Empowered communities may still lack mutual trust, so their levels of social capital might continue to remain low.

Social capital, CDD and empowerment are nested concepts, but they are hardly the same thing or achievable through similar means. Social capital is the most elemental among these three concepts. It is a stock by nature, a propensity for mutually beneficial

collective action that some communities possess to a higher extent than others (Krishna, 2001; Uphoff 2000). The origins of social capital are shrouded in uncertainty; no one knows as yet for sure why some communities have a higher stock of social capital than other communities. But investigations carried out in different contexts and diverse countries show clearly that communities with high levels of social capital act collectively to achieve superior development results over multiple sectors and diverse activities (Grootaert 1998; Krishna 2001; Narayan and Pritchett 1997; Putnam 1993).

However, while having high social capital helps with performance with respect to different shared objectives, social capital is not enough to achieve superior results by itself. Other complementary inputs – including, for example, human, physical and financial capital – will also be required usually, and high social capital will not by itself compensate for the shortage of these other inputs. It is important, in particular, that communities are well connected with the state and with markets and that they are well informed about opportunities available in both these arenas (Krishna 2002). When such opportunities are unavailable or complementary resources are scarce, even very high levels of social capital can yield relatively little by way of development results.

Here is where CDD can come in to make a positive contribution. By providing communities with complementary resources and with additional opportunities for self development, CDD can help to mobilize and enrich their stocks of social capital. Other means can also be employed for this purpose, for instance, more regular and reliable market-related information can be made available to these communities, and more effective decentralization can bring closer to their doors the opportunity to interact with the state and its numerous agencies. There is, therefore, no direct or one-to-one relationship between social capital and CDD.

The links between social capital and CDD are facilitative but not exclusive or determinative. While social capital is a stock, a resource possessed by different communities to different extents, CDD is an activity that they undertake, which employs social capital together with other resources. Different resources are required in order to make this activity successful in terms of its aims. Social capital is important in this regard, but it is not the only or even the most important resource. Given roughly equal levels of other resources, communities with higher levels of social capital can achieve appreciably better outcomes, but social capital in the absence of complementary resources is unlikely to help communities go very far. CDD is assisted by high social capital, but success in CDD does not hinge only or even primarily upon high pre-existing levels of social capital.

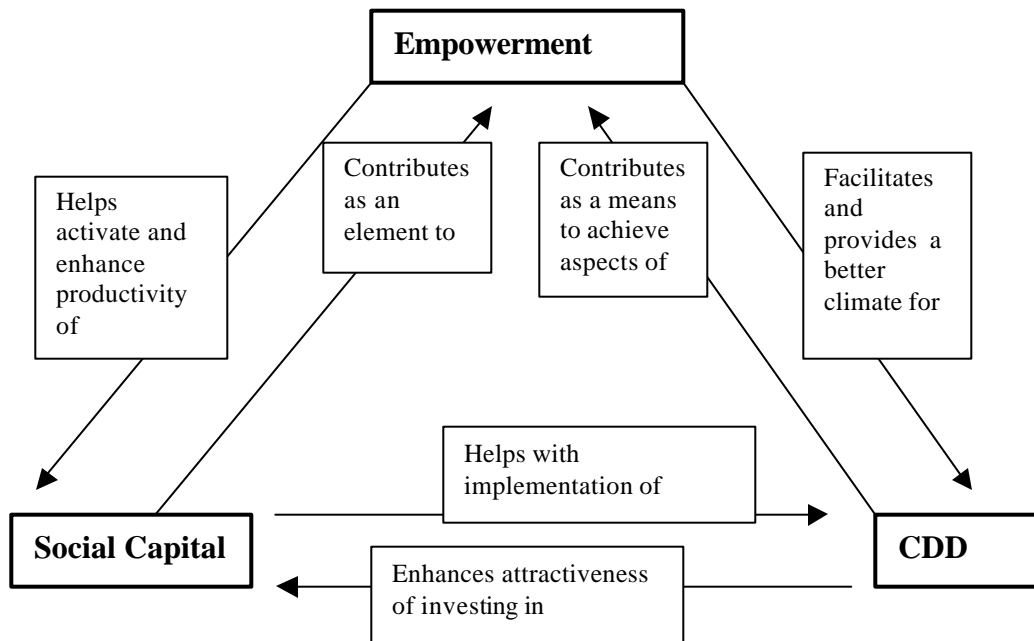
CDD enables social capital to be mobilized more productively, thereby sustaining people's investment in social capital, and high social capital helps achieve the objectives of CDD more effectively and cheaply. But other and different things are required in addition to make CDD more effective, and other and different elements go into the constitution of high social capital.

Social capital and CDD are both productively linked with empowerment, and mutually supportive links flow both ways among these concepts, but there is still no determinative or one-to-one relation between any of them. Empowerment, as understood above, has different dimensions and elements in addition to social capital and CDD. Communities' stocks of social capital and their experience with CDD helps empower them, no doubt, but the opportunity structures of state and markets – in terms of laws, rules, norms and practices – also make a difference for this goal.⁺ These structural factors will continue to make a difference, no matter how high the level of social capital that some community possesses or how vast is its experience with CDD.

Empowerment can be regarded thus as a larger and longer-term goal toward which both social capital and CDD can make relevant contributions. In turn, empowerment can also contribute toward both of these agendas. When communities are more empowered, their social capital can be more productively employed, and this combination of productive social capital together with more enabling opportunity structure can help them implement CDD activities more effectively. There is synergy thus among the three concepts we are considering, but there is no direct or one-to-one relationship. Diagram 1 illustrates these synergistic linkages. It is important to reiterate that the arrows in this diagram represent tendencies more than causation, potential more than predictability .

⁺ By providing greater access to some individuals and groups and by simultaneously denying access to other individuals and groups, the prevailing laws, rules, norms and practices can work to empower different individuals and groups differently. High social capital can compensate to some extent for a disabling opportunity structure. In the calculus of empowerment, however, opportunity structure must be reckoned with separately together with assets, including social capital, that are possessed by different individuals and groups.

Diagram 1: Social Capital, CDD and Empowerment: Potential for Synergy



In terms of operations also, these three different concepts will need to be pursued separately as objectives. The presence of synergy makes it likely that investment in any one of these areas will have spillover benefits in the other two areas. However, the scope of such positive externalities is not determinate, and it cannot be foretold accurately for any given situation.

Different means exist for pursuing each of these objectives. Building stronger cognitive and structural links among members of a community is the suggested way to enhancing their stock of social capital. Building more and closer networks, both formal and informal, that are supported by relations of greater trust and higher reciprocity helps to enhance the potential for mutually beneficial collective action that inheres with any group.

Making complementary resources and formal authority available to communities is the way forward in terms of implementing CDD. Helping form community organizations, delegating authority to such organizations, and providing them with complementary resources, including training and finances, will help achieve better the goals of CDD.

Improving governance and making individuals and communities better agents of their own development are tasks to be undertaken in order to facilitate empowerment. Dealing with diverse aspects of opportunity structure, for example, reforming laws and administrative practices that limit citizens' rights to free speech, will constitute an important part of the empowerment agenda.

There are some overlaps among the tasks that support each of the three separate agendas, and there are likely to be synergies among the results that they help to produce. But essentially, they are tasks that must be separately pursued. Table 1 below indicates some of the tasks that need to be performed in support of each of these three related though separate objectives .

Table 1: Objectives and Tasks

	Nature	Unit of Observation and Action	Intended Result	Tasks in support (examples)	Time Horizon for tasks
Social Capital	Stock	Communities	Mutually beneficial collective action among community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building stronger cognitive and structural links (to increase the stock of social capital) - Building better link between communities and states/markets (to increase the productivity of social capital) 	- Short to medium term
CDD	Activity	Community organizations,* facilitated by and interacting with outsiders	Better physical and social infrastructure for communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decentralization - Authorize and inform communities, and link them better with local governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Short to medium term - Short to medium term
Empowerment	Process and/or Outcome	Various: individual, groups, communities, society	Very broad: enhanced capacity to make effective development and life choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing norms, mores, and values in society - Changing structures and process of government - Enhancing education and information - Strengthening organizations and leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long term - Medium to long term - Short to medium term - Short to medium term

There are some overlaps among these tasks, e.g., strengthening organizations for the empowerment objective will most likely also help with the other two objectives. Decentralization in support of CDD is likely to help also with empowerment and with mobilizing social capital. And better flows of information are likely to assist with all three of these objectives: they will add to empowerment, enhance the possibility and

* It is important to point out that it is not “communities” in some general sense but organized communities and community organizations that plan and implement various activities associated with CDD.

effectiveness of CDD, and improve the productivity of existing social capital. However, the list of tasks related to each of these three objectives also contains some specific elements that are not common to the other two objectives – and ignoring or belittling these non-common elements will not help in the end to achieve any objective effectively.

All three objectives are valuable differently for development and for democracy building. Social capital and CDD help enhance the capacity of specific communities, and empowerment works to improve the overall climate for action by communities and individuals. Social capital relates to communities' innate capacity for action, CDD helps provide them with complementary resources and opportunities for self development, and empowerment is concerned with improving both the internal capacity of groups and also the external environment in which they function. These are complementary agendas, but they are not related hierarchically in the sense that implementing any one is tantamount to implementing the others. They must be simultaneously and separately pursued.

References

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