

Selected Concepts of Community Development and Operational

Explanation from Islamic Context

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Abstract

Community development is being discussed in relates with its own concepts such as empowerment, participation and community potential. The concepts are often emphasized by scholars in describing the reality of community development. Islam is an extraneous in community development's discipline, but Islam actually has its own explanation in regards of those concepts. In fact, Islam gives a detailed description of how the concept should be practiced within community development. The describable concepts by Islamic context are actually more practicable with the guidance of operational based. To explore the reality, this paper is examining the verses of Quran, traditions of the Prophet and Islamic Civilization. This paper shows that Islam is a way of life and directly guides the community development regardless of differences among the community. This paper also shows that Islam has long been the principle and the practice of community development. No wonder, Islam is seen as a top way of life as compare to other systems.

Keywords: Selected concepts of community development, empowerment, community participation, community potential and operational explanation by Islamic context.

1. Introduction

Community development is not a new matter, but its existence is in line with human civilization (Ajayi & Otuya, 2006). However, according to Shirley (1979) in Chile (2006), community development began during the history of the social movement and the rise of the ancient Babylon societies since 5,000 years ago. Nevertheless, the process of community development is seen more organized in 1960s (Pitchford & Henderson, 2008). The scholars believe that community development is a combination effect of community built, strengthened and strong support (Matarrita-Cascante, Luloff, Krannich & Field, 2006). But during the industrial and post-industrial era, most community developments were implemented by the model of self-help, technical assistance and conflict (Green, 2008).

Nevertheless, the focus, strategy and approach of community development are uncertain, depending on the blocks of time as being discussed by Henderson (2008). He said that community development can be noticed in the late 1960s through writings and ideas by scholars such as Murray Ross and Eileen Younghusband. Community development within that era focused more on top-down approach, i.e. the development is fully implemented by the government. Thus, the community had to accept government's effort. In contrast, in the early 1970s, the demand of society well-being increases with a raise in social work, practiced by the outside society of a community. Both models of conflict and technical assistance in community development's approach are seen more often being used.

The changes again took place in 1980s, emphasizing community development based on the capacities of financial and economic. The previously used approach was unclear, as it just focused on maintaining a community development while they faced the economic constraints. 1990's is the positive expand of community development. Various policies in Western countries emphasized community development in accordance to community demands. This approach enables the transition towards self-help and implemented technical assistance. Last but not least,



according to Henderson (2008), the year of 2000 is known as the new millennium for community development. Scholars were gradually more aware that the community development is too depending on government, thus they started to focus on the community potential instead. It includes tracking both subsisted strengths and weaknesses in the community and strengthens the existing strengths.

Different focuses on the blocks can be interpreted by two extreme views. Firstly, current community development is still looking for the best approach to develop communities. Secondly, community development is a process in which the changes at each stage of community development are depending on the readiness of the community. Those changes have been existed in the community for such a long time and require a practicable different approach. Nevertheless, each approach has a different emphasis. But, a second opinion seems to bear out the differences and in a way to achieve the goals of community development. Thus, an alternative approach to community development requires more comprehensions and practical.

In discussing the issue, this paper attempts to examine the approach of Islam as an alternative to the vacancy of community development's approaches. Islamic approach is able to provide an alternative to the current approach only if its ability to develop the community is empirically verifiable. Islamic approach in developing a community is said to be ideal as proven by human history, since it could be achieving idyllic community development. Current human civilization does not have a structured charter to regulate the complex life of the progressed community development; however Islam already has its own charter. The Charter is known as the Charter of Medina and identified as the first charter of human civilization. Research on charter in which demonstrates the elements of community development, such as Clause 37 Charter of Medina in Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Al-Buti (2008) shows the following:

"That the Jews shall have financed the country as Muslims also must pay state and let them both helping the fight against anyone who sits on the Charter, and shall advise each other, whether -to make the welfare of sin ".

Medina Charter of Clause 37 illustrates the elements of community development that is finally discussed after a thousand years of existence. They are empowerment, participation and community potential. Ibn Khaldun (2000) in his famous book, the Muqaddimah, also indirectly discussed upon the community development. He detailed up that the phase of a civilization is built as a result of union community groups:

"The power of kings and power of a dynasty can only be upheld widely through the efforts of a group and a sense of belonging. The reason is the aggressive and defensive attitude can only be achieved through a sense of belonging, which means all its members are willing to love and mutual affection and willingly died fighting to protect the common good "(Ibn Khaldun, 2000: 138).

A great civilization is getting political, social and economic activities distinctly from the formerly potential in a first generation. Their potentials were exhibited by the spirit of the group asobiah or solidarity among group members which enables them to be involved in making changes to their groups. Besides, Ibn Khaldun detailed the range of knowledge and skills possessed by every group of people, and these potentials will be adding up values to change a group and the civilization. The view expressed by Ibn Khaldun is known as 'ilm al-'umran and later known as the sociology, as it means quite a lot to change the paradigm authors both before and contemporary times (Abdul Rahman, 2002).

In addition, Islam also triggered other civilizations through the golden age. The golden age begins with Prophet Muhammad Pbuh was chosen as a messenger and brought momentum to change a human civilization. To the sequence of that, many Muslim governments appeared as the Umayyad, Abbasid and Ottoman caliphate. The emergence of Islamic governments provided many benefits to the social world. For example, in the 8th to 15th century, Islam has developed a multi-disciplinary knowledge through the construction of the world's best universities which located in Spain (Sulaiman, 2001). On the other hand, 10th century was the Dark Age of Western civilization;



people suffered and lived in primitive conditions, including lack of intellectual activity, culture and humanity (Abdul Rahman, 2002). However, to get out from the Dark Age, Western civilization learned a lot from Islamic civilization. They concentrated and learned a lot of knowledge from the Islamic world. It became more vibrant through the establishment of universities in Spain, interaction with Muslims in the Island of Sicily (Southern Italy) and Crusaders expeditions (Sulaiman, 2001).

It shows that Islam has a lot of experiences in changing human civilization. Therefore, this paper considers that the disciplinary of Islamic perspective in community development could be effective and alternatively comprehensive to develop community. However, this study only discusses and examines the Islamic parallels with the development of existing communities by focusing on these three selected concepts, i.e. the concepts that are often discussed and emphasized in classical and contemporary community development, which are empowerment, participation and community potential.

2. The focus of concepts and definitions in community development

Community development is defined as the beneficial changes for all the community members (Kelly & Caputov, 2006). These changes were initiated by the community members themselves (Obibuaku, 1983 in Ajayi & Otuya, 2006), which according to the views by Diacon and Guimarães (2003) is an isolated community empowerment effort. In fact, according to the views by Turner (2009), community development focuses on the empowerment of individuals and communities that can prevent social injustice. Views from the scholars directly prove that an empowerment is a concept which hardly can be separated from the discipline of community development. However, empowerment can be considered as the goal and process which resulted by changes in the community.

Additionally, as quoted by the Standing Conference on Community Development (SCCD, 1994), Banks and Shenton (2001) defines community development as the active involvement of people that affects their lives. The main idea of this definition is community participation. Participation in community development was mentioned by Brennan and Barnett (2009) too. For them, community development refers to the manifestation of a variety of local capabilities to mobilize and manage resources to meet diverse local needs. This means, although resources subsist in the community, it can only be used when the members of community try to utilize them. Meanwhile, definition by Brennan and Barnett (2009) focuses on community development's process. Community development can be seen acting in concert along with the participation of community members solving local problems, improving quality of life and shaping their welfare futures (Theodori, 2008).

According to Brennan and Barnett (2009), community development should emphasize the potentials of existing communities. Capabilities and resources owned must be leveraged to develop the community. That potential in accordance to O'Leary (2006) refers to the skills and knowledge possessed by them. Potentials of the community are highlighted within the definition of community development as stated by Fey, Bregendahl and Flora (2006). According to them, the effort of emphasizing the process of community development involves in local community's decision-making and it encourages the community to become more independent by adjusting the local resources. This is consistently with the view of Fey et al. (2006) in which concluded that community development consists of participation, community potentials and empowerment concepts.

2.1 The Empowerment and Islamic Concept

Scholar such as Lincoln, Travers, Ackers and Wilkinson (2002) found that the empowerment concept is now accepted by various disciplines and they provide different interpretations. Generally, scholars view empowerment as both a process and an outcome (Rappaport, 1984; Carr, 2003). For Zimmerman (1995), empowerment is a process of describing how people, organizations and communities empowered. Meanwhile, those results will be the references of the process' effects. Concerned with the fact that empowerment is a process, White (2004) aware that empowerment serves as a central to the development process. Consequently, it will lead to social changes in a community (Bowen, 2008), serve as a positive change (Choudhury, 2009).

As for Jönsson (2010), the empowerment refers to the needs and efforts by the marginalized people to be free from



inequality which took place in their social environment, including in social, political and economic contexts. Thus, they can help themselves without any intervention of outsiders (Servaes, 1999 in White, 2004). From the various definitions of empowerment stated by the scholars, it can be concluded that empowerment is the process to bring positive changes to the aspects of individual and community. Not only that, it leads to an alteration in the community done by community members themselves without any intervention from the external features of the community.

The concept of empowerment is familiar in Islam, as it is being stressed out by the principal in order to make human life better. It has been expressed in a hadith the Prophet, namely:

"If you went out with a rope (the forest) and bring home with a bundles of firewood then sell them, he has obtained his honorable. The act is better than he begging, whether given or not". [HR Bukhari].

Extracted by this hadith, it is illustrated as a process, independent, change and empowerment. These processes are expressed through behaviors in accessing resources, and subsequently used them to fulfill necessities of life. Those attempts were the efforts to be independent and not depending on others to survive. Independency shows conscious efforts of individuals, without depending on others, and focuses on their own capabilities instead. Thus, one will appreciate them and next, they will not inferior to communicate with others. In respect of independency and changes, it is being stated in Islam through the holy Quran, namely:

"Because Allah will never change the grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls: and Verily Allah is He who heareth and knoweth (All things)." [Al-Anfal, 53].

The holy Quran emphasizes that changes take place only if the man himself tries to make a change. Two matters were discussed therein, which are both independence and adjustment. Changes that desired by the community can occur, if they seek to change. An effort to outdo the changes is not specifically being stated how, but people are free to choose and appropriately go with it in step to the potentials in them. However, in Islam, changes are meaningless if they do not benefit others. It is well explained by the Prophet Muhammad, namely:

"The best man is the greatest benefit for others" (HR Thabrani).

The occurring changes should beneficially for both individuals and their communities. This shows that the concept of community development in Islamic perspective is a continuous process.

2.2 The concept of participation and Islam

The other concept discussed by scholars within community development is participation. Participation is as much important as the effect of a development effort (Newman, 2008). Participation allows a change to occur within the community and later improves the weaknesses in the community (Matarrita-Cascante, Luloff, Krannich & Field, 2006). Mutually viewed by Kretzmann & McKnight (2005) and Laverack & Thangphet (2009), participation leads the development to survive within longer term.

In regards to participation, Newman (2008) stated that it is purely subjective and has varied meanings. According to Roth, Malone and Gunn (2010), participation means more than attending an activity. Instead it shows that a person participates in community activities (Barki & Hartwick, 1994; Cornwall, 2008). For White (2004), participation is an involvement in collectively decision-making process within all the levels of community. It is also completed through a voluntary basis in which individuals can influence and control their lives (White, 2004; Harvey & Reed, 2007). Individual's participation helps them to make a decision (Harvey & Reed, 2007) for themselves and their communities. As such, participation can be considered as an involvement that affects them through decision-making



and implementing processes, programs and projects (Thomas-Slayter, 2009).

Based on the description of the concept of participation, Islam has its own solution too. For example, as being expressed in the holy Quran, it means:

"You are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin for good and forbid Al-Munkar (all that Islam has forbidden), and you believe in Allah" [Ali Imran: 110].

The holy Quran was preceded by an ideal society, a society that is the finest in various aspects. However, its existence is conditional; it is built by the community through participation. The term 'enjoin for good and forbid Al-Munkar' is extensively beyond the context of society. It provides an opportunity for all the community members to contribute accordingly to their strengths. Participation causes a common action needs to be done in two different dimensions; to provide benefits, reform and improvement in the quality of life and to prevent the negative elements that threaten the positive efforts undertaken by the community. In addition, Islam also provides an opportunity for all the community members to engage in community development based on their own capacities and capabilities. It is well explained by the Prophet Muhammad Pbuh:

"If one of you sees something wrong, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; if he cannot, then with his heart and this is the weakest faith." [HR Muslim].

The participation in varied situations provides opportunities for the community members to participate in their own communities. That is, each member of the community has their own capability to engage with their communities. Still, Islam stresses out the need for them to contribute accordingly to their capabilities. Nevertheless, each of the participation should gain encouragement from other community members. It has been set up in the holy Quran, which reads:

"The believers, men and women, are Auliyâ' (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another, they Enjoin (on the people) Al-Ma'rûf, and forbid (people) from Al-Munkar (All that Islam has forbidden); they perform solat and give the Zakat, and obey Allah and his Messenger. [At-Taubah: 71].

Islam clearly encourages the community members to develop community participation. This shows that Islam takes into account the social factors to encourage their participations in community development. Islam is detailing the incentives of each participant in which can be improved by doing the same thing and setting clear goals.

2.3 The concept of potential and Islam

The recent approach of community development has been focusing more on the human potential in order to develop their communities. Among those arguments, there is Asset-Based Community Development Approach (ABCD), in which was popularized by John McKnight and John Kretzmann (Fisher, Geenen, Jurcevic, McClintock & Davis, 2009). Asset is also known as the capital. Phillips & Pittman (2009) explains that the term of capital applied within such approach does not refer to the term used in economic disciplines such as wealth, stocks, bonds and cash. Instead, capital is seen as talent, skills and capacity of individuals and institutions (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Phillips & Pittman, 2009).

ABCD is a practiced model approach to shift the existing capital in the community in order to attain changes (Boyd, Hayes, Wilson & Bearsley-Smith, 2008). ABCD's approach carries out the principle of detection and building, by using available capitals within the community to complete their needs or to solve problems (Phillips & Pittman, 2009). ABCD's approach also controls the local resources, by focusing on the usable potentials to empower and



mobilize the community while furthering the creation of positive changes (Bergdall, 2003; Byod et al., 2008).

ABCD's approach shows that the development community has to be driven (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003) and it emphasizes the strength and capacity of local communities in order to create sustainable development (Bergdall, 2003). It is a philosophy which believes that ABCD's approach is bringing out the capacity, ability and talent by everyone (Diacon & Guimarães, 2003; Fisher et al., 2009). Thus, community members should be given the opportunity to mobilize their own capitals in order to achieve their goals (Fisher et al., 2009).

The approach of ABCD towards both philosophy and principles of Islam are being detailed in a Qur'anic verse too; that says:

"O you who believe! let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former; nor let (some) women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former, nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames". [Al-Hujurat: 11].

Islam forbids any potential disparagement of other groups. This is because Islam recognizes the potentials of each group. These potentials are needed in every different context of communities as an effort to develop. The difference serves as strength for them to figure out a better approach. For example, hadith by Anas bin Malik narrates:

One day, a person from Ansar came to The Prophet and asked for something. The Prophet asked him: "Do you have anything at home?" "Yes, Allah's Messenger, we have a piece of cloth. We lay some of it beneath us, and with some of it we cover ourselves. We have a water pot; we drink water from it." "Then, get up immediately, bring both your cloth and water pot to me." The person fetched them both. The Prophet took the cloth and the water pot in his hand, and showing them to the people who were present, he asked, "Is there anybody who will buy these two articles?" One person among them said, "I will give one Dirham to both." The Prophet repeated a couple of times: "Is there not anybody who gives more than one Dirham?" Afterwards, someone else said, "I will buy them in return for two Dirhams." The Prophet sold the cloth and the water pot to that person. He took the two Dirhams and gave it to the possessor of the articles; then he said: "Buy food with one Dirham of this money and give it to your family; and with the other one Dirham, buy an axe and bring it to me." The man left, bought an axe and came back. The Prophet put a stick to the axe himself. Giving it to the man, he said: "Take this, go and cut some wood, gather it and sell. I should not see you for fifteen days." The man went away, cut wood, gathered and sold it. When he came to the presence of the Prophet, he had made fifteen Dirhams. With some of it, he bought clothes and with some, foods. Thereupon, The Prophet said: "Instead of coming to the Day of Resurrection as a black point because of begging, this state of yours is better. "Begging is permissible only for the following three kinds of people: 1. The one stricken by poverty which causes one 'to sprawl on the earth' (extreme poverty), 2. The one in insurmountable debt, 3. The one who took on blood money in order to reconcile people." In another narration, there is a fourth condition: "The one who suffers a very painful chronic illness can ask for as much money as he is in need of." (HR Abu Dawud).

They were concerning about the pedestal and vessel owned by men who requested to demonstrate the existing potential, but not knowing how to beggar. Afterward, the Messenger of Allah buzzes these two things to his companions who were about to be sold. The Prophet realized the potential in the form of social support and encouraged the man who possessed the other man to participate in the community. Thus, through the access towards economic resources, the sale proceeds to create deployed potential of this man to change his life.

The man participated in economic activity and did both sourcing and selling jobs all by himself. This shows that he had the potential of forming human capital, but not knowingly and appropriating the past. The effect of participation in economic activities increases the revenue, and therefore no longer depends on others. It indicates that the original empowerment disabled the disabilities of men.

3. Conclusion

Although the Islamic discipline in community development is barely well-known, its concepts and principles are not



odd. Although Islam is a guide for how to complete things operationally, it should be practiced for at least once. It aims to provide an opportunity of passing up the community-based changes within the context of their suitability. It shows that in time, it is openly for changes, as both knowledge and technology allow people to make adjustments in accordance to the reality of how they live. The Prophet once said:

"You better know about the business world you" [HR Muslims].

Nevertheless, Islam remains as a clear outline of how those key concepts and principles should be implemented. Participation from all members of the community is necessary. Man must do something good for the community and prevents any negative elements that might affect the community. In other way, it means that Islam generalizes the purpose of each concept, including the form of behavior which ultimately able to develop their communities by placing them as the best among other people.

Research done by this paper shows that those three selected concepts in community development are not extraneous in Islamic views. Instead, Islam has its own details in describing and implementing it. Hence, no doubt, as a way of life, Islam is an alternative of conventional community development, and being often considered as new even in the discipline of community development.

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