A brief introduction to

Signposts to Identity-Based Community Development (IBCD)

Based on reflections from the LEAD Community of Practice.

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Challenges

Over recent decades rapid development has spread across Asia, with even the remotest corners becoming part of the connected 'globalized' world. However, the impact of this development has not spread equally, both in terms of quantitative and qualitative change. Minority ethnolinguistic communities are frequently excluded from both the benefits and the process, with many groups actually being adversely affected by changes. While change is a natural part of community and culture, the speed with which it has been brought about through globalization and modernization poses a threat to the unique culture and identities of ethnolinguistic communities, their environments and even their livelihoods.

One of the key challenges faced by community development practitioners as they consider how to overcome inequalities and integrate culture into development, is how to reconcile local and globalizing cultures. How can development processes support the desired future of minority ethnolinguistic communities, both in terms of the change they want to see in their communities and the sustainability of their own unique cultures?
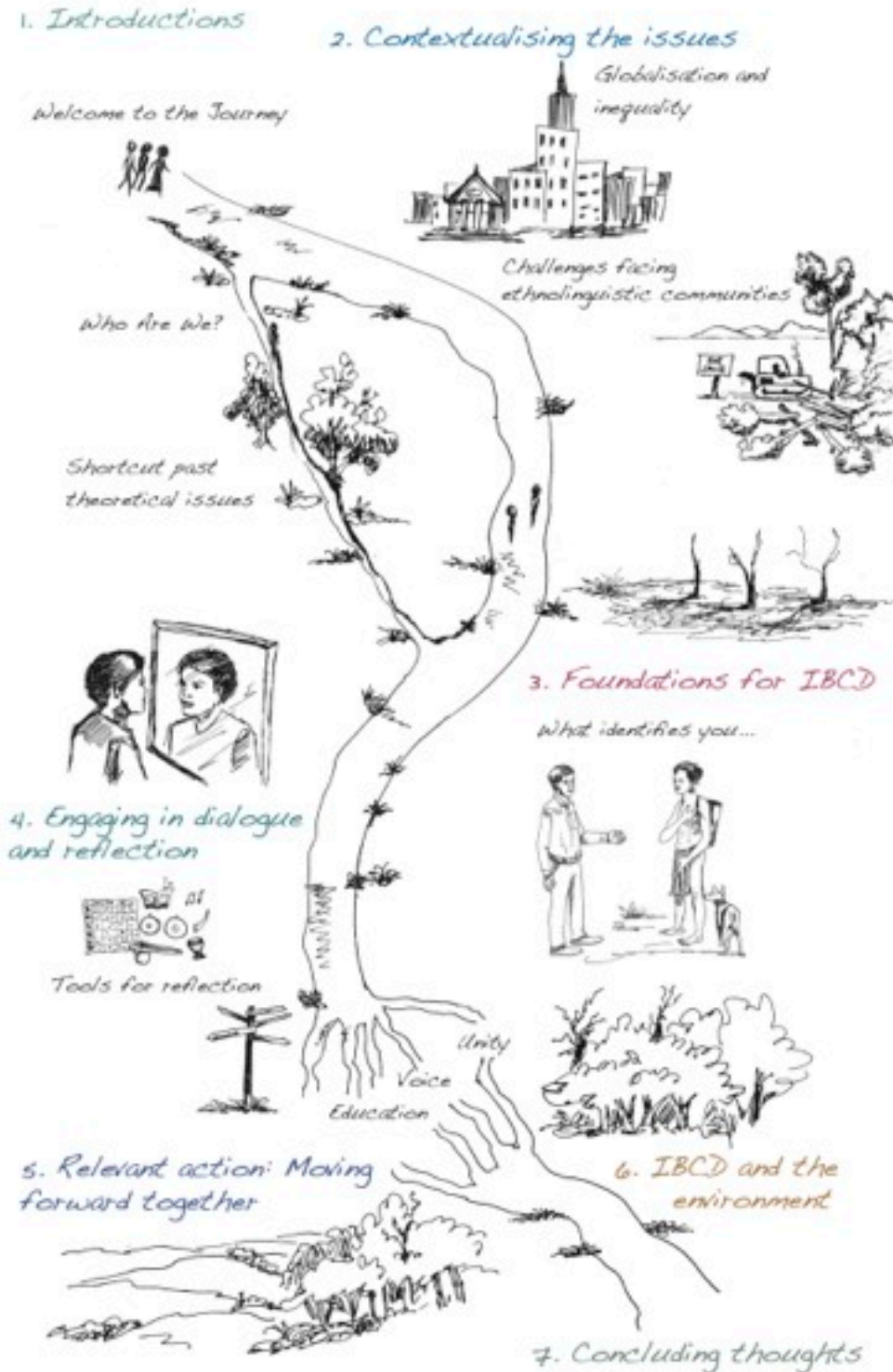
Values and Foundations

Ultimately, identity-based community development (IBCD) is based upon the premise that for real sustainable development to take place there is a need for practitioners and minority ethnolinguistic communities to understand themselves and each other better. To allow this to happen both parties must take steps to reflect on their own separate journeys, to dialogue openly and honestly together as they work out (and walk out) their shared experiences together, and then be prepared for their paths to once more diverge at an appropriate time. Continuing this traveling metaphor, IBCD is therefore as much about the journey as it is the destination. It is about ensuring that in any interaction with minority ethnolinguistic communities we, as practitioners, are positioning everything that we are and do in a way that fosters dialogue and encourages reflexivity. It is about creating space to help these communities explore their identity in light of their history and in the face of new challenges and changes, so that they can step into the future confident of who they are. It is about supporting communities to find a place of cultural sustainability within vibrant multicultural societies.

Setting a Course

As a practitioners Guide, Signposts to Identity-Based Community Development (IBCD) seeks to open a dialogue around the challenges, opportunities and tools available for those working in community development. As such, it is been structured around the metaphor of a journey, as shown by this image:

1. Introductions

Welcome to the Journey

Who Are We?

Shortcut past theoretical issues

2. Contextualising the issues

Globalisation and inequality

Challenges facing ethnolinguistic communities

3. Foundations for IBCD

What identifies you...

4. Engaging in dialogue and reflection

Tools for reflection

Unity
Voice
Education

5. Relevant action: Moving forward together

6. IBCD and the environment

7. Concluding thoughts

Chapter Summaries

Chapter One: Introductions

Central to IBCD is a high level of self-awareness and honesty. As such, Signposts to Identity-Based Community Development (IBCD) begins by outlining who we the authors are, where the information in the Guide comes from, and some of our underlying values. We believe that starting in this open way is important, since these factors clearly shape the content that follows and the relative emphasis each topic receives. We then go on to address some foundational questions, including:

- Who do we mean by 'the community'?

- What are our different roles within the context we work in?

- What do we mean by 'cultural relativity'?

Chapter Two: Contextualizing the Issues

In this chapter we start by looking at some of the current global changes, exploring how international policy and globalization are creating new opportunities but also new threats for minority ethnolinguistic communities. We look at the challenges cultural brokers face when working with these communities and whether or not we, as 'outsiders', can legitimately act in this context. We also explore how culture in particular is taking an increasingly important role in the idea of 'sustainable development' - an idea we return to throughout the Guide. From there, we look in more detail at some of the specific challenges that ethnolinguistic communities are facing, including land degradation and rights, discrimination and psychological challenges, access to basic services, political difficulties, economic development, conflict and the increasing movement of people.

We recognize that Chapter 2 explores some more theoretical issues. While we only touch on these, some readers might want to initially skip on to Chapter 3 to first learn more about the actual practice of IBCD. However, we do encourage readers at a later stage to familiarize themselves with the theoretical issues that we have highlighted in Chapter 2 as these provide part of the context in which the practice of IBCD has been developed.

Chapter Three: Foundations of Identity-Based Community Development (IBCD)

Chapter 3 introduces the key concepts of IBCD. We start by exploring what we mean by identity and community, suggesting that identity is 'who we are' but that this is made up of many different factors, including our history, environment, relationships and cultural context. In the section entitled 'The myth of community' we explore how, in reality, communities are made up of many sub-cultures, who have different perspectives and agendas. This often calls for processes which 'develop community', with intergenerational connections being especially important in regards to understanding identity. Recognizing that these cultural interactions are highly complex, working with minority ethnolinguistic communities requires a position of learning with communities in growing action and reflection cycles. The goal of this process is to build confidence and self-esteem within minority ethnolinguistic communities. In turn enabling community-directed and culturally appropriate development which brings communities towards cultural sustainability.

Chapter Four: Engaging in dialogue and reflection with communities

In this chapter we explore the different ways that it is possible to work with communities to develop the kind of reflection and dialogue we encourage in Chapter 3. The first step of this process is to start by looking at ourselves: are we individually and organizationally ready to work with ethnolinguistic communities? We explore how we can prepare ourselves better and therefore mitigate against our own biases and prejudices, considering topics such as the community's language, culture, history and power and belief systems. We also introduce some specific tools that can help to enable communities to explore their own history of cultural change and to reflect on the impact that can have on their own lives. We highlight the importance of the arts in many minority ethnolinguistic communities and the key part this can play in encouraging reflection and dialogue. This chapter is particularly important as we believe this process provides a springboard for eventually enabling relevant action by the community.

Chapter Five: Relevant action: moving forward together

Chapter 5 expands on the reflective processes explained in previous chapters by outlining some examples of what relevant action with ethnolinguistic communities can look like once a communities' interests and demand has been identified. It is broken down into three broad categories: Identity strengthening education, Voicing our identity, and Unity through identity. Each section contains short descriptions of effective approaches that have been used across Asia including, where appropriate, case studies of specific examples where the tools have found to be useful. Our aim in this chapter is to link you to further resources which can provide more in-depth explanations of these approaches and help you to get started using them. This is quite a lengthy chapter and so we encourage you to consider it more as a tool kit to enable you to respond to community interests. Take a look through the list of resources at the start of the chapter and pick one or two of these tools/approaches as a starting point before potentially exploring the rest.

Chapter Six: IBCD and the environment: a pressing issue

In Chapter 6 we take the opportunity to highlight a key issue that, as yet, has not been well addressed through the LEAD community of practice, the environment and a sense of space and place. We begin to explore this issue by outlining some of the major challenges facing ethnolinguistic communities today and some of the approaches that are being taken by organizations to address them. We explain that for many communities language, culture, identity, environment and their sense of place are all inextricably linked. By exploring this area in the context of IBCD we suggest that it should help inspire action and organization within communities, raise awareness of environmental issues and facilitate the passing on of local knowledge between generations, and encourage collaborative initiatives between education and cultural organizations allowing these issues to be incorporated more effectively.

Chapter Seven: Concluding Thoughts

In this final chapter we emphasize the importance of continued sharing and collaborative learning as a way to incorporate and develop the concept of IBCD. We reiterate that this Guide, and indeed IBCD itself, is a work in progress and that as such we warmly welcome comments, suggestions and additional ideas and experiences. The approaches that we have highlighted in the Guide continue to be used, adapted and improved, and we hope that the results of our continued dialogue will lead to a greater refinement of 'Signposts to Identity-Based Community Development' and, ultimately improved practice with minority ethnolinguistic groups. Finally, we extend an invitation to the reader to join with us in continuing this learning process by participating in the LEAD CoP at **http://lead-impact.org/cop.**

Implications of IBCD

IBCD emphasizes a process of community reflection on cultural change narratives as a starting point for exploring the unique rights, responsibilities and opportunities of their situation and the corresponding development actions available to them. From this foundation, it is our hope that communities can choose and implement activities that enable them to become increasingly empowered and participative within their national societies. Through dialogue, both dominant and minority groups can develop mutual understanding and respect for the variety of languages and cultures in their context, creating an environment to forge harmonious relationships. In turn, marginalization and disenfranchisement can also be reduced, enabling more inclusive multi-cultural societies and vibrant democracy building throughout the region.

In an increasingly interconnected world these knock-on effects, whilst lofty, have implications for us all. As such we all have a responsibility to engage in the process, reflecting on our own part and the impact it has on those we interact with.

To download the full version of this guide,
please visit www.leadimpact.org/cop/ibcd