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**Title: Community Regeneration for Alternatives**

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The Word is experiencing unprecedented combination and interconnected crises. Some of them like the health crisis as result of COVID 19 are acute, causing loss of lives across the world in a short time, with no difference between developed and developing nations. Some others like climate change along with Food insecurity have been exacerbated by the health crisis and remain silent killers for most of the poorest living in developing countries.

It is indeed obvious that in countries whose medical systems are under-resourced, the health crisis is compounded with loss livelihoods and vulnerable communities are facing a high level of hunger due to pre-existing crises.

The vast majority live in rural areas, and depend on agricultural production, seasonal jobs in agriculture, fishing, or pastoralism. when they become ill or constrained by restrictions on movement or activity, they are prevented from working their land, caring for their animals, going fishing, or accessing markets to sell produce, buy food, or get seeds and supplies.

While the start of the year saw COVID-19 send panic across the globe, another crisis was brewing in East Africa. From December 2019 to spring 2020, a plague of locusts – the largest the region had seen in generations – swept across the region, from the Horn of Africa to the deserts of Kenya, decimating the crops that feed tens of millions of people. Kenya hadn’t faced a plague this severe in over 70 years, and Ethiopia and Somalia not in a quarter of a century.

In Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia nearly 12 million people already found themselves in dire circumstances as a result of extended severe droughts and back-to-back failed harvests all before hordes of desert locusts descended on their crops and pastures in late December/early January devouring their precious farmland.

In Africa, the Ebola outbreak is still rampant in some countries like the DRC, floods and land sliding as a result of climate change continue to disrupt agricultural production, leading to massive migration from rural to urban. Additionally, we are concerned about the Sahel, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan to name a few food crises.

Communities are powerless in front of the triple trap of climate change, pandemic and economic downturn, they are turning to family solidarity for the basic needs and depending on humanitarian assistance by Government and other institutions.

Our organization (Association for Cooperation and Research in Development -ACORD) has been working with communities for more than 50 years and keeps adjusting its programmatic strategies based on new challenges and needs.

In this critical period, to support communities’ resilience facing the triple trap of climate change, pandemic and economic downturn, ACORD is :

**Supporting social protection schemes and innovative income generation projects**: we are engaging with communities to scale up existing systems. First setting up a contingency plan consisting of increasing savings, post-harvest handling and storage. One way of stabilizing families’ purchasing power and creating jobs for young people, while protecting the environment is to support small scale off farming projects (fish farming, livestock, mushrooms growing etc.) This is done through injections of cash, so they can meet critical household needs without selling off their assets.

We are also working to ensure the continuity of the food supply chain -- including between rural, peri-urban and urban areas by using digital platform to link farmers with markets

**Enforcing health protection measures**: We make sure that farmers we are working with are not at risk of COVID-19 transmission, by raising awareness about food safety and the best health practices and providing the basic protection equipment.

**Enhancing environmental protection**: Specifically in the area of environmental protection, our organization is (1) introducing farmers to a new business model that integrate agroecological practices into the conventional agriculture and that builds their adaptation and resilience to impacts of climate change and the post covid-19 world; (2) Building farmers’ capacities to sustain appropriate measures to absorb covid-19 shocks and to prevent future natural or manmade disasters, including strategic storage of foods, post-harvest handling, processing and storage, and community contingency plan.

The overall goal being to (1) Address the long-term impacts of the massive use of agrochemicals and pesticides on land, water, ecosystems and biodiversity and how this in turn influences our food systems and health. This is through the intensive adoption of Agroecological Environmental Practices (AEP) and progressive reduction of industrial inputs including seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. (2) Make physical investment at the disposal of small holder farmers that enable them to absorb covid-19 shocks and to prevent future natural or manmade disasters.

As for community alternatives for regeneration, one might consider reshaping the relationship between rural and urban communities

While helping rural communities deal with the effects of climate change, the true battle with the phenomena will have to be fought in urban communities. Urban areas have the largest carbon, ecological footprint and energy usage which all lead back to effects from climate change in terms of irregular and extreme weather patterns. Building of this, it’s important to note that the people who suffer the worst from the effects from climate change are these communities (1) because they don’t have the infrastructure, support and planning to deal with natural disasters and (2) because they live and depend on the land for the food, livelihood and income. The true battle against climate change will have to do with the urban lifestyle.

It’s also important to note that all of us in Urban communities also depend on the local communities for our food systems something which cannot be understated. I think also one should acknowledge that these communities/indigenous peoples have a certain traditional knowledge about using land sustainably and that is something to really tap into.

Empowering local communities and giving them a say and an acting role in improving their situation is important. The answer is in community and urban partnership-the locals should have a say in how they would like to be helped.

Community regeneration should aim at enabling communities that have suffered from economic, social and environmental crises to be able to build and improve their living conditions and in more sustainable way.

If we let people lose their livelihoods as a result of this pandemic, once the human health crisis has eased, we will have major problems to deal with afterwards. It is both more humane and strategic to protect and sustain livelihoods now, rather than rebuild them after.

However, we should recognize that the farmers are at a cross road in a conflicting situation and the battle is more complex than one could think, because on one side, the need to adopt environmental friendly systems is very urgent in order to protect our mother earth for sustainable living but one the other hand, there is a pressing need to produce more to eat and make money, using chemicals.

The biggest constraint is that we live in a global capitalist world where the wish of the richest is the law , thus making poor community efforts insignificant in term of making sustainable and positive changes in their favor.

In the same vain communities’ efforts are not supported or embedded in a development model that put the people and the nature in the center of any development intervention. Their efforts remain isolated and insignificant to induce and sustain long-term change.

After experiencing a combination of crises, communities need a strong and sustainable regeneration plan. However, this seems almost impossible as they do not have the freedom and means for their self-determination.

Their only capital, which is land has been hijacked by the capitalist regime where powerful nations have taken over communities’ land to grow crops for exportation, transforming farmers into a workforce badly paid and with no security for the future.

In the current Development Paradigm, as stated by International institutions, the income of 2$ a day per habitant has become an indicator that people are getting lifted out of poverty. What is actually happening is that ‘the so-called development is stripping communities out of their conventional means of subsistence livelihoods and leaving them dependent on unsecured jobs most of the time in conditions of servitude.

Therefore, community are stranded in a survival mode that gets narrower as time goes.

It is clear, that no community regeneration system/mechanism can be conceptualized and implemented without the adhesion/approval of the powerful and capitalist nations.

Sustainable community regeneration is impossible unless there is a radical shift of the Development Paradigm led by a strong global movement that will provide a clear framework for community regeneration. As such communities’ initiatives will be endorsed and supported by global policies and agreements.

The Current Development Paradigm is based and measured by financial performances that attempt to reduce all values to a financial metric. Indicators are GDP and indices of stock market performance. People and nature are commodified and valued for their contribution to generating financial returns- people as investors, consumers and workers. Nature as a pool of free resources and convenient waste dump. No indicators based on people living health system, wellbeing and livelihood.

The COVID-19 has proved this reality as even developed nations with a high GDP have been hardly hit by the pandemic because the Development Paradigm in which we operate life, nature are just commodities to generate more wealth.

Community Regeneration can only happen within a Development Paradigm that put human life and nature in the center of the development.

In this Development Paradigm, life is the measure of value and the purpose of the economy and business. Maintaining, enhancing the health, vitality, resilience and creative potential of people and nature including strengthening relationships of caring, cooperation, and sense of attachment to nature and communities of place. Economic performance is evaluated against indicators of the health and well-being of people, nature, and living communities.

In this framework communities are shareholders in the global economy and have the capacity and freedom to use their resources in sustainable manner and make decision with regards to their current and future life.

Community Alternatives for Regeneration based on self-determination thatt has its roots in communities’ power can only take place in the context of a global Development Paradigm Change.

Because the New Development Paradigm frame supports social justice, community ownership and equitable distribution of wealth, the class distinction disappears. This gives space to rebuild social cohesion, social capital, collective values instead of capitalism.

The structures of the New Paradigm system support equitable, responsible ownership participation by people who have strong roots in the place where they live and a natural interest in the health of its air, water, soils, and other natural systems. They should be based on the following principles:

1. Organizing around diverse, self-governing living communities.
2. Using living indicators to assess system health and performance.
3. Supporting equitable, community-rooted development ownership.

If we put common values, common interest and people and the mother earth in the center of the global and shared development instead of money we can be confident to achieve **“A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL”.**