Assignment Six Discussion
Online Learning: OL 344 Adapting to Climate Change: Sustainable Implementation.
Center for Sustainable Development: https://csd-i.org/ol-344-adapting-climate-change/

Assignment Six. Community Empowerment: Project Handover
Our two years is up, our budget has been expended and it's time for our NGO to move on. Have we empowered the community to take full control at this point? At the end of the last course we set up project management committee. Their job was to partner with us during the implementation of the project, and then to oversee, manage, and maintain the program components that would continue after we've left.

An example would be that if we had reforested the hillside behind the village to reduce flooding caused by extreme weather events, they would have partnered with us in the planting of the trees—and perhaps some terracing or water channeling. They also would've helped us to write a management plan to conserve and maintain this forest.

After we leave they will need to continue their oversight and management of this aspect of the project; in other words they'll need to follow the management plan for decades, and protect and conserve the forest for decades. They'll also need to monitor the forest for theft or for insect damage and enforce or make adjustments to the plan to address these issues.

Part 1. We need to make sure that the community has a plan that fits their capacity for managing and maintaining the project for the long-term—such as collecting fees for water—and the long-term maintenance and repair of a water system.

The plan that we established with the committee when we launched the implementation phase of the project largely was a plan for implementation. But now as we near projects end, and the committee has been able to see the fruits of their labor, we will need to sit down with them and develop a simple management plan for them for the continuation of those elements of the project that will last into the future. In the example above we would need to work in a participatory manner with them to develop a long-term management plan for their forest.

The plan that we established earlier on this course was much more complex because it was how to implement the entire project. The outcomes of all that work will be a smaller number of easier to describe things; in other words this plan that we need to develop with the committee will be much simpler in scope.

Part 2. Do they have access to resources which they may need for repair, maintenance, or technical support in the future?

At the end of our two years we've probably had a wonderful time working with this community and have probably made many friends there. But unless your NGO has other projects in process in the same community, the stark reality is that without continued funding, you can't continue to keep working in the community. Plus, you may have received funding for working somewhere else. You may even get a job with a different organization altogether.

So what can you do before you leave this project to help connect this community to resources that they can access when they run into a problem? In the example above, it could be an insect invasion on a certain species of tree. This may not require financial resources to solve, but it may require technical assistance from a forester. Further, this may be a problem that arises 20 years down the road.

So we need to leave them with information on how they will be able to find technical support in the future. From our standpoint this might seem very simple, but if they're a remote, relatively uneducated community, they might not know how to get started looking. We need to provide them with some simple information on how to do this.

Perhaps a more challenging example is: what happens if an electrical water pump that we installed in their water system burns out in 20 years? This may not only require expert technical assistance, but it may require cash.

Part 3. We will also need to look into the future and identify key milestones that will make the community know if they're on track?

We need to make sure as part of the plans that we develop that they have some milestones that they can use to gauge the success of their project, or potential emergency looming ahead. These are slightly different than what you did in Assignment Five. These are tangible things that they can observe to make sure that they are protecting project outcomes and long-term impact. This is going to be a much simpler and shorter list than in assignment five.

Looking at the impact statement of their reforestation project– what were we trying to achieve in 5 years, or 10 years?

So what are the indicators that will let them know that things are going along well, and in what time frames? The trees have grown tall? There's been less damage from flooding? The spring behind the village has become recharged with water?

What are the negative indicators that there may be an emergency looming ahead? How will they know that an insect infestation is a serious, and permanent problem? At what stage during the development of a problem will they know that it is important and that they should contact an expert.

Please move on to assignment six—I look forward to seeing your work.

Sincerely,
Tim Magee