

The Healthy Community

As we work in Central America we have the goal of developing healthy, thriving communities and helping existing communities become healthier than when we found them. We believe God wants us to work toward the goal of helping to create communities that are more self-reliant and less dependent on outside resources. Such communities are in a process of becoming more mature. To help us move toward this ideal of healthy communities, CALMS' short-term teams and staff will want to avoid involvement that detracts from the development of healthy, thriving communities and to do everything possible to encourage the following characteristics of a healthy community. As an ideal desired outcome in our work of developing more healthy communities, we want to see communities with enough mature disciples who have a kingdom focus and who are able to influence the whole community in such a way that outsiders can observe the demonstration of Christian values such as love, peace, generosity, compassion, service etc.

A healthy community (is)...

Leadership and Self-determination

- led by its own leaders who are true servants who care about all their citizens and not by outsiders or by insiders who only want to use the community to serve their own family, clan or friends.
- makes its own decisions without having to refer them to an outside entity or organization.
- sets its own policies and develops its own appropriate structure and procedures.
- acts as a true partner--giving and receiving in a balanced way as it works with others in joint efforts.
- responds appropriately and creatively to new challenges without needing the guidance of outside experts.
- has leaders who are accountable and who work for the common good.

Resources and Support

- depends on God and prays continually for His guidance and help.
- finds resources for its needs from within the community and nearby communities.
- does not depend mainly on financial aid from foreign, national or outside organizations.
- finds and shares equipment and personnel from among its own people.
- does not develop an unhealthy dependency on outside aid in the form of equipment, donations or manpower.
- is not overly dependent on others, but seeks to be interdependent with outside partners.

Growth and Expansion

- develops and cares for its infrastructure (schools, roads, meeting spaces, waste management, water, housing).
- encourages cooperation among its citizens and builds new alliances with outside organizations for the benefit of all its people.
- cares for the environment in order to provide appropriate green space and a healthy life-style for all its citizens.
- identifies new leaders and gives the opportunities to others to develop as leaders and serve.
- provides incentives for economic development and promotes new businesses and cooperatives that benefit economically all who live there.
- promotes a cultural, social and spiritual environment that helps all its citizens develop and exercise their God-given gifts and talents.

Inclusiveness and Transparency

- has leaders who communicate and work transparently, who encourage open communication by others and promote harmony and good relationships within the community and with others outside their community.
- seeks the opinions and involvement of all its constituencies (women, youth, elderly, etc.)
- has leaders who respond to the people and work for the benefit of all--not just a few--or for themselves.
- encourages and expects all members of the community to demonstrate a concern for helping their whole community become a better place to live.
- makes decisions within its own culture that are relevant to the situation and circumstances of all its citizens.
- functions in ways that are transparent and that make sense in that culture.

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