CHAPTER 6

Maintaining Momentum

Seven Tasks

An Afghan boy called to a man working in the field, "Your wife fell into the river!" The farmer raced to where she'd gone to fill her water jug—then started running up the bank. "No!" shouted the boy. "The current carried her downriver!" The frantic farmer turned, "Boy, you don't know Afghan women. Always, they must swim against the stream."

Modern Afghan joke

Consider a modern city: a person wants a dozen oranges and takes a taxi to a store where a dozen oranges wait—a simple human desire satisfied by a global supply chain. No mayor or central office gave a directive that people should eat oranges or put in place a funding stream to have oranges or taxi positioned. The shopkeeper did not know who would come looking for oranges but assumed that someone would; the taxi driver guessed his probabilities and went down a certain street. A city in which oranges from South America and taxis built in Japan spontaneously show up, where children go to school with a high likelihood of surviving because they are getting adequate vitamins, is considered "developed."

Now consider another city, one where the shop shelves are sparsely laden, where travel is by foot, where only rich children go to school and a third of all children die—such a city is considered "undeveloped." Both cities are evolving an emerging order out of seemingly chaotic movements, and both are operating the best that each can using what they have. The parts of these two cities are very different, but the process by which order emerges out of the relationships among those parts is almost identical. Both cities are developed and always developing. SEED-SCALE guides that process more effectively. It is equally applicable in both situations, but in the "developed" city with all its wealth the necessity of utilizing the alternative currency of human energy is

less immediately apparent, but can still be beneficial for social goals like lowering crime or raising community cohesion.

Pondering the complexities of nature two and a half millennia ago, Heraclitus gave the following aphorism: "You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are flowing onto you."[1] As Heraclitus observed, rivers are not simple lines of repeating drops. Time may move with ticks, money may flow dollar-after-dollar, but with rivers, as with life, there is constant change: step in one time and be enveloped in water, step in again, and other waters are flowing onto you. The processes of life that we step into are always changing. The imperative for successful crossings is learning how to adapt to the flows that come: not control them, but adapt to them. Successful engagement with the always-changing parts coming at one is a process of readjusting relationships to the parts.

This is the reality of complex systems. The reality of actions by development experts is strikingly different. That is control-based, even in a context where control is difficult and where resources are inadequate to satisfy rising aspirations. For a city to move out of inefficiency and absence of safety and toward the ends it seeks, it must learn to use the operating procedures it has more effectively. These have emerged sporadically over time, but they can also be intentionally shaped. Communities need not wait. Many actors are ready.

Three dynamics operate to shape complex systems: *principles, tasks*, and *criteria*. Principles establish the values, the tasks set out what to do, and the criteria provide a way to monitor progress. In the prior chapter, four principles

Figure 6.1. On the streets of an Afghan settlement, a boy adapts by setting up his cigarette and egg business. *(Photo credit: Daniel Taylor)*

were presented (build from success, three-way partnerships, evidence-based decisionmaking, and focusing on behavior change). These principles guide community members in how to interact with each other and how to respond to forces acting on their system. This chapter outlines seven tasks to operationalize the four principles. The next chapter presents five criteria by which social change can be monitored. What results is a structure for actions wherein each action fits other actions, adapting into new relationships among the constituents. This approach, where order emerges from the inside, based on principles, tasks, and criteria, contrasts with social change where order is prescribed from the outside and actions follow in a linear direction.[2] Here is an example of how such emerging order occurred through application of the seven SEED-SCALE tasks in the rubble of Kabul, Afghanistan.[3]

One night in the spring of 2002, Abdullah Barat sat by the samovar with a group of hardened ex-combatants, veterans of wars and a variety of armies, drinking tea, eating flatbread and kabobs, telling war stories. As the night wore on, the talk turned to the gifts flowing in, and how long and to whom the flow of good would last. Some of the men, worried that nothing was coming to them, turned to the option of poppies. This was the moment for which Abdullah had been waiting.

"I am part of a new movement," he said. "We call ourselves the *Pagals*." (*Pagal* is the Persian word for "mad"—not merely loopy, but full-throated mad, as with rabies.) "I've heard enough now to know I am sitting around this samovar with more *Pagals*. Our purpose is simple: If you are crazy enough to believe a better world is possible, join the *Pagals*. Membership dues are two hundred handmade bricks." Soon those ex-combatants were making bricks. Like Gandhi's homespun cloth, their mud bricks, made through their own energy, symbolized self-reliance and brought people together. Perhaps most importantly, 200 sun-dried bricks by themselves have little value; value is gained only when combined with the bricks of others. So, this group joined the *Pagals*, made their bricks, and joining with others they rebuilt the village mosque, then they rebuilt the school. Winter was approaching, so the *Pagals*, a group now organized and starting to set a new type of target to aim at, got permission to use a coal mine, and with their donkeys transported the coal back to the villages. While much of Afghanistan waited for gifts from outside, here, a day's walk from the valleys of Rostam and Saya Dara mentioned earlier, the empowerment process had also begun, this time among the men.

The joke in the epigraph, popular in post-Taliban Kabul, reveals a strikingly different view of Afghan women from the image in popular media, the powerless figures behind *burqas*.[4] Afghan men are not blind to their women's burdens. As life's currents push on families, both men and women struggle to swim against victimization. The people seek to advance in an Afghan way, growing the aspirations and values inside—this internal energy is what waits to move and can connect with the energies of others so hopes that might have

seemed impossible assemble into mosques, schools, a way of life put together despite life's vicissitudes, despite the burdens they carry.

Abdullah's mobilization did not stop with the Pagal Party in the remote province of Bamyan. He taught the process wherever he went. Prior to September 11, 2001, two decades of war following four years of crushing drought had taken away the traditional uses of land. People cut fruit trees for fuel and killed their sheep for food. With liberation from the Taliban, refugees from the countryside walked or rode on trucks into Kabul by the hundreds of thousands for new opportunities. But the Kabul they came to had been destroyed. Still, believing that a better life was possible, the migrants packed into rubbled buildings and put up shelters with scavenged materials. Settlements grew without plan or services.

Abdullah regularly came from Bamyan (where the famous Buddha statues had been destroyed by the Taliban) to Kabul for staff meetings as part of his job for Future Generations Afghanistan. On these visits he often stayed with relatives. One such community had been started a decade earlier by prior refugees during the Afghan civil war; it was to this community that Abdullah came. They asked what he did back home, and he explained that every person has a few extra calories of energy, and that while most people invest most of their energy holding their place in life, there is a margin of energy that can be redirected. This can be used to drink tea and talk—or people can move from talk to actions that change lives. Indeed, he said, it does not require much energy to create change if one person joins his or her contribution with those from others.

Those gathered around nodded. Life had always been this way: Allah willing, life was shaped by what you did, here also in this war-scarred settlement. Abdullah said people working together could overcome most problems, as they had done in ousting the Soviet Union, Allah willing. Usually, though, individuals worked alone, seizing opportunities that benefited only them; then the industrious ones moved on, leaving the rest where they were. With this point Abdullah made clear a problem of many entrepreneurship models. There are among the poor, individuals eager to help themselves (microcredit, education, or other ways), but if they rise, how will those who lack the entrepreneurial drive fare? Advancement has come for some, but those left behind, they have lost the leaders they need who can help advance the whole group. What transforms the community is the whole moving forward, a point that is particularly telling in contexts such as Afghanistan, fraught with ethnic tensions and histories of violence.

"Who among us Hazaras really trusts the Pushtun, or the Tajiks?" Abdullah asked. The group was silent—then descriptions followed of outrages other groups had done to their group in the civil war, or even a century before to their people. "But now we're together in the city we must trust them," Abdullah went on. "Do you want to walk down the streets worried, as you were before,

that with every step you may be attacked? We need to bring together our energies instead of having them isolated in fear." The people nodded; that day there had been a theft in their community, and all had been certain it had been by a Tajik, they had gone to the Tajiks and made the accusation, but then a Hazara boy had been found with the stolen item.

Long speeches followed as each affirmed his intent. "We need to learn more." So, without investing a dollar, without setting up a program, without staff, Abdullah taught SEED-SCALE. "Imagine a donkey," he explained, "a willful, stubborn beast as everyone knows. As donkeys you can continue to be ridden with a steel bit in your teeth with government or some warlord directing you. Or, you can stop being so stubborn and learn how to care for yourselves." The first task, he said, was that "you must learn to work with your neighbors, create shared leadership."

"Not so fast," all around him said; "we're not going share leadership with the Pushtun," and a familiar lament started. "We've been discriminated against for centuries; they made us slaves." Abdullah listened, but then repeated, "You must learn to share leadership. The Pushtun will never follow your leadership, you cannot conquer them, but for at least this community where we've been packed together you must create a committee amid this rubble, and share leadership."

Outrage was again the reaction. "After centuries of oppression, we deserve now compensation. We deserve. . . ." Drought these last years had taken what little they had, forced them to Kabul; they were not about to forget who had oppressed them. Rather than asking them to work with such oppressors, Abdullah should use his foreign contacts, forget the Pushtun, and get them resources. They had already made it clear in their earlier speeches that they would work hard, but to ask that they work with those whom they could not trust, who he had just admitted would try to control them, that was asking too much!

Abdullah repeated the positive point, that security would grow in their jammed-together cluster of makeshift homes only if they learned to work from collective resources. They had to learn to shape the new community they were now a part of, and within which their neighbors were their most important resource. There was no way international resources would help them—what might come today would not be there tomorrow. To create a future, the people must work together, there was no alternative: talking would get them nowhere; fighting, they would lose. If they wanted a voice in decisionmaking, they had to cooperate in leadership. Seven tasks could guide their actions.

Rather than figure out who would be the leader among them, an action that would immediately create competition, Abdullah advised a different approach. There were many groups in their neighborhood, they could select a couple of leaders from each. In this way they could move together; indeed, they would create a community by doing so, gathering the strength of all groups. The first task was to create a local coordinating committee.

The second task was to build from what they had. “We have nothing,” the people replied. “We’re poor—so if we do create a committee, your job is to go out and get international help; the international people bombed us, they are giving away wheat and even bottled water.” But Abdullah answered, “You have survived—that’s a major success. What are your other successes? Treat each as a seed that you can grow. Don’t expect gifts of outside resources because, unless you start killing each other and bring the ‘war on terror’ here, the outside resources will not come here.”

“Conducting our first survey,” the committee secretary, Akbar, later informed us, “showed strength we never imagined. That task of learning about ourselves, how many had survived, what had happened to each of us, brought stories between ethnic groups that were much the same, with more in common than we had differences. We had known we were from four ethnic groups, but we had no idea we were 41,000 people.”

The community undertook the third task: determining what successes had they seen in other places; then bringing those in, adeptly adapting them to adopt them. The local coordinating committee sent out the word: Keep your eyes and ideas open when you travel. Each person must be learning good ideas. The committee gathered funds and sent a group to Bamyan to see the work with the *Pagals*. Returning, they told everyone that their first survey had been only a head-count. Instead of just asking people with generalizations who they were and how many, whether literate or illiterate, or with adequate housing, a real survey would provide specifics.

So they engaged in the fourth task: gathering data about their community. Geographic boundaries were established for their community, using features such as hill slopes and ponds, and within these they gave a name to each winding, dusty alley. On each home they painted a number. What had seemed to be chaos began to be ordered.[5] Volunteers went house-to-house with a better-designed questionnaire; Abdullah had trained them how to ask their questions more objectively. It turned out the people crowded into these alleyways had come from eleven provinces and totaled 65,000, not 41,000 people.

With their data, the fifth task was to make more effective decisions. Wards were created, groups held meetings, designated buildings became neighborhood centers, and in three of them classes started (one was a mosque). Dialogue began among the wards, and an overall plan was drawn up. The first plan was basic, a few objectives and who would lead. Abdullah stressed the importance of plans that they could implement; a plan that required resources they did not have was a wish list, not a plan.

The sixth task was to implement the plans. One objective they had identified was getting out the vote in the upcoming elections, and on voting day, 90 percent of the community turned out behind their agreed-to agenda. Their candidates won and were told what they were now expected to deliver. A further objective was latrine building, because in studying other successes they

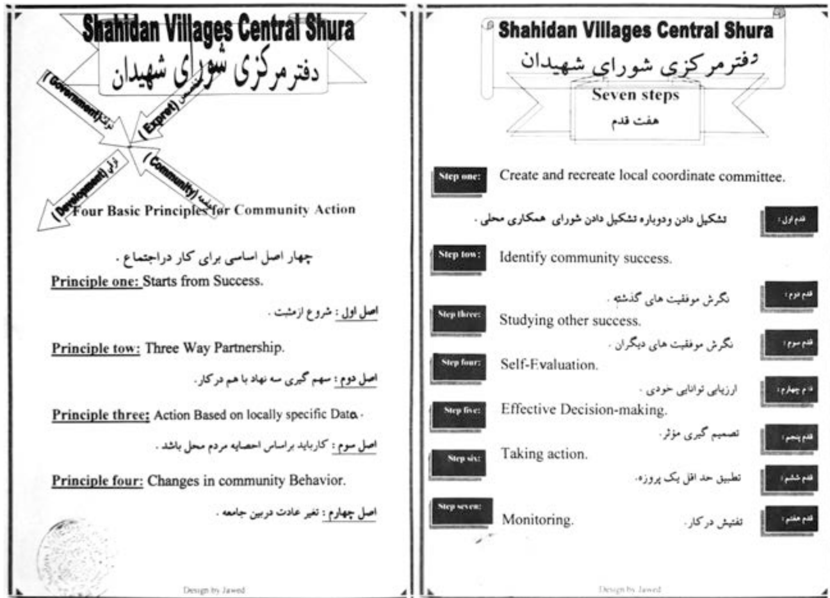

Figure 6.2. SEED-SCALE posters at the community center in Shaidan, Bamyan Province, Afghanistan. *(Photo credit: Daniel Taylor)*

had learned how street filth, particularly human feces, was causing many illnesses. A third objective was to add more classes beyond the reading and writing at their three learning centers, and in a matter of months, 150 students of both genders, mostly adults, were studying photography, computers, art, poetry, and Islam.

The seventh and final task was mid-course corrections—adjusting their actions should strengthen the four principles: Building from success, engaging a three-way partnership, deciding using evidence, and focusing on behavior changes they could accomplish. When one cycle of the seven tasks was completed, it started over. To this meeting more people came, speeches started, and members felt compelled to catalogue their problems, but the committee cajoled the group to focus on what could they strengthen. A breakthrough was identifying individuals who in the first round had shown leadership and inviting them to lead the group, and as a result sixty people were identified. Clearly, sixty was too many for one local coordinating committee, so rather than sending people away, subcommittees formed in the ten wards of their settlement.[6] As skill levels rose and people brought back ideas, more sophisticated workplans resulted. Diversification unfolded in the ten wards.

Progress was palpable in the dusty streets. Learning centers added more subjects: Dari and Pushtun language classes, English classes, more computers came as gifts (at times five people on a computer, coaching each other),

instruction in calligraphy, residents lent personal cameras to support the photography classes, a youth theater led to drama performances. One center tried an idea, and if it was popular, another adapted it. As people learned to read, the community wanted a library. With no budget for books, requests went to all households; people searched their homes, then the city. A borrowing rotation was set up. More books came in. With prescience for their future, priority in borrowing books was given to children.

The political clout during the election started to produce results. At first, elected officials had done little, but the community did not let them forget who had put them into office. Soon, electrification partially lighted once-dark streets, and waste-collection began. With aspirations rising, the people started exploring ways to go back and forth to the city. A member was identified with a car, and he began episodic taxi service for a fee. The learning centers started jobs-training programs. With more people going out for jobs, more paychecks started coming in. Awareness grew, and they contacted a French NGO to open a clinic. Health worker training started so each neighborhood had basic skills, and a focus began on educating mothers and placing emphasis on health habits in homes.

Though they had extraordinary initial successes, their organization was still informal, so the coordinating committee formalized into a *shura* (governing council) and registered themselves with the government. Now they were legally authorized, but to give voice to both halves of their community, they registered a separate *shura* for women. (It was in this discussion that we first heard the joke at the top of this chapter about women swimming upstream.) What was important to them? What did they stand for? New questions were coming forward. A community-wide meeting was called. Afghans love grand speeches; rhetoric soars. They wanted a symbol of their achievements. After more meetings it was decided their symbol should be an eagle, wings outstretched. While eagles are symbols in many places across Afghanistan, almost always they are sitting, wings folded. The eagle chosen by the community that named itself *DehKudaidad* (place that is a gift from God) is flying directly at anyone looking at it, wings spread wide. DehKudaidad was a people on the move.

People who seek to help others are fond of Lao Tzu's parable, "give a man a fish and you feed him for a day—teach a man to fish and you feed him for life." And yet the do-gooders often seem to feel the need to hand out a few fish to whet the appetite, and then, when learning lags or action veers, they give a few more bites to help nourish the process. Such feeding has long been used to train wild animals (including eagles), but the core intention in that process is to take control over the life of another by making the individual dependent. Furthermore, even when they get around to the lessons, they are likely to import the proverbial hook, line, and sinker from abroad. The parable is easy to misread as being about fish—teach a man to fish and he gets more fish.

But that might not be the case: anyone who has spent an afternoon by a stream with a fishing pole knows that knowing how to fish does not guarantee a meal. The real point is that if you teach a man to fish, you have given him a series of actions he can perform to give himself a better shot at catching something to eat. This means that not only are any fish he catches *his* fish, but he has something to teach his sons and daughters.

Two years were required to accomplish the tasks described above, linking together unconnected individuals living in what had been a slum that changed into a vibrant community. An army could not have done that, nor a million dollars. Progress continued in the five years that followed. Visits today to DehKudaidad show statistics on the walls with charts of rising health, economic growth, community literacy, and pictures of government officials visiting and seeking community support. But, more powerfully, the results are visible in the homes. DehKudaidad is far from the hypothetical "developed" city suggested at the beginning of this chapter, but neither is it the slum. In a context of war, with no donated material assistance except discarded computers and books, using primarily learning that they accessed, in an insecure situation where everyone had good reason to remain in their homes, the people went out to their neighbors, applied the seven tasks, and created community. Ordered settlement emerged from a slum.

Following is a more specific discussion of the cycle of seven tasks DehKudaidad started.

A CYCLE OF TASKS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The seven tasks of SEED-SCALE are a cycle of growth. An analogy is found in one of the most universal human activities, the cycle of agriculture. In agriculture, the cycle is: clear fields, plow, plant, water, fertilize, weed, protect, and harvest. Each task is integral to the whole. If these tasks are separated, they do not grow a crop. What brings shoots out and takes them to harvest is doing *all* of them. Certain activities dominate at specific times, and they are completed in many different ways around the world, but ultimately, some version of each must be performed.

Not only is that which is produced far more than the sum of the parts—when done, the procedure self-replicates, and through mutation it can even improve in each cycle. Crops and technology differ around the world, but the basic activities do not. That is, the tasks are invariant, but what comes out of them changes according to system. What is operating is a huge nested system: one field, a unit unto itself, but also production within other fields around the world, creating an adapting global food system, each autonomous but also each connected, the global food supply—and each following the identical cycle of process regardless of ecology and regardless of financial capacity. The seven SEED-SCALE tasks advance an analogous cycle to grow social energy.[7]

Table 6.1 SEVEN TASKS OF SEED-SCALE (OBJECTIVES AND PROCESS)

Task	Objective	How
#1	Develop leadership	Create a Local Coordinating Committee
#2	Find a Starting Point & Resources	Identify Successes in the Committee
#3	Obtain a Relevant Education	Visit Other Successes Elsewhere
#4	Fit situation-ecol, econ, values	Conduct Self Evaluation Survey
#5	Determine direction & partners	Make Effective Decisions=>Create Plans
#6	Coordinate people, resources & time	Implement Plans, Gathering the Community
#7	Keep momentum on track	Correct to strengthen four principles

In earlier writing, we called the tasks "steps," but that implied sequential steps that needed to be completed in the specified order. Each task should done when appropriate, at its time, and each task must adapt to the conditions of that moment as a farmer adjusts to drought, locusts, or broken equipment. Giving to people a process they could do that advanced their lives (rather than a product to take) is what the Taliban and Al-Qaeda did; a cycle of tasks each year grew stronger as people became addicted to the profits from poppy crops. When people invest their energies, they are investing part of themselves; it is much more substantial than stepping forward to take something. *It is essential to complete the full cycle—do not fret about the quality of the cycle just completed, for the next cycle tasks can be improved*. Focusing on excellence in one task is like a farmer who spends too much time plowing and so will not reap a harvest. This does not mean excellence is unimportant, but what defines excellence is doing the full cycle and then repeating it.

Before presenting the specific tasks, it is useful to turn again to emergence. As is true with procedures in an emergent system, the procedures of social change do not resemble the larger system. Procedures must be simple or their application will not come spontaneously in order to address the larger complexity. Applying these procedures not only executes, but also anticipates and predicts, changes in the evolving larger complex system.

The business of international development has encumbered what is actually simple. In the wonderfully diverse nexus of people, place, and time, the contributing dynamics of world economics are complex—it is hard to get more complex—but in fact, actions do not need to engage such massive interactions. Build from the fact that all actions are site- and time-specific. The advantage of using a complex adaptive system mode, rather than the command-control (or multilinear) mode, is that actions to resolve the complexity can be simple procedures: a nested set of principles, tasks, and values that tell people how to adapt. From their implementation, complex answers come out of simple process.

TASK: CREATE (OR RESHAPE) A LOCAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Social change is best managed by a team representing all groups. Note the cohesion in DehKudaidad when leadership expanded to include wider circles among those who had worked in earlier cycles. To achieve effective leadership in a complex system, it is important to include as many factions as possible. Doing so coordinates the complexity. But if people are not working, they need to be pushed to the periphery of leadership, as leadership is a privilege that is earned by work.

Unfortunately, it is customary to look for the strong leader. Moreover, usually a charismatic leader is sought. We say "unfortunately" because such leaders are rare, difficult to keep, too busy to train, almost impossible to replace, and seldom inclined to be inclusive of others. For short periods, though, such charismatic leaders can make dramatic forward progress, and sometimes (Gandhi being a preeminent example) they can be wonderfully participatory. When a charismatic leader is in place, the person's first responsibility is to build a team confident and strong enough to be constantly challenging that strong leadership. Communities are likely to find such people too rarely for action to be predicated upon them. It is more reliable to start from the outset to create a collective. Size and composition of the committee will differ depending on local traditions and the stage of the project. However, it is hard to imagine a coordinating committee with fewer than seven members, perhaps four from the community, two officials, and one change agent. The committee can be larger, but efficient functioning requires preventing the committee from growing so large that it behaves like a congress. And, as was done in DehKudaidad, creating subcommittees starts the process of scaling up and also the activities of action learning and experimentation of SCALE Squared (discussed in Chapter 8).

The first coordinating group can be self-selected. As the cycle of tasks repeats, membership should bring in the marginalized, especially women. A term often used to identify the pioneers who start such change is *social entrepreneurs*. Our experience shows it is better when such pioneers motivate others in committee; to create community-wide energy, it is important that the community see itself as leading. Top-down or Outside-in partners may not join at first. For example, Abdullah's *Pagals* had to struggle until they involved the warlord of a local militia, Abdul Rahman. First, the general came as an observer. As he saw the group's effectiveness, his participation increased. Ultimately, he ran for district office, worked hard, and rose to be a deputy provincial governor, moving into being an even more helpful Top-down partner. The general's shift was mostly due to his motivation; however, such individuals join coordinating committees because they see such committees as giving them community bases.

TASK: IDENTIFY LOCAL SUCCESSES IN THE COMMUNITY

Stories in the war-torn land of Afghanistan are powerful; the tales bring laughter to lift burdens of the moment, and the memories often make people feel strong again or give them focus. A winning football team, a son or daughter who has become famous, how Afghanistan defeated the mighty Soviet Empire, or empires before—stories are the day-to-day ways of passing on the skills, resourcefulness, and determination needed to survive. Stories are the capsules of a past memory line that points to what the people can do in the future. Every community, even the most destitute, has its stories that trumpet its successes. These successes are part of their evidence to build with, just like bricks can be used to build.

The challenge is deciding what successes to select as social building blocks. Change agents are helpful in this, accenting successes that are especially relevant because they know what other communities are doing and they may see innovations in a community. Care must be taken to identify successes actually done by the community and not successes brought in by outsiders. In a culture that values politeness, a frequent tendency is to ascribe a community success to a leader or a donor (often with the hope of getting something). And equally frequently, if a donor has paid for a building or something else now in the community, that object that came in from outside can be incorrectly seen as a community success (unless it was community initiative that brought the outside object in). Revisit the experience of the Palin women: their success was *lobbying* to repair the broken waterlines; the waterlines themselves were a success brought in by the government. Politeness or pragmatics aside, for community energy to grow, the people must take credit: that is what grows their empowerment

The experience of Mahmood Jaghori, in central Afghanistan, illustrates how when people own a success it can grow to scale. In one village, Mahmood identified a woman with an eighth-grade education who wanted to contribute to her community, and using the local mosque as a place to meet, he helped her start a literacy class for women and girls. Men came to a parallel class run for a while by his cousin, but the men dropped out. The women's class continued, and news of it spread to nearby villages. A second group started in another mosque. News spread that it was now possible for women to learn to read and write, and that they could do so in the cultural safety of their mosques. Other communities offered their mosques, buildings that were empty except on Fridays and holy days. Mahmood's cousin Hashim started going from village to village to train and supervise the volunteer women in each site. Twelve mosque-based schools became eighty-four, within a year expanding to more than 200, then 260.

The idea was self-assembling as it went from village to village. While the concept was self-assembling by communities who acted, what kept it relevant

to each locale was each community's owning the process with their energies and resources; it did not happen on its own, a team worked with the communities, helping them fit the concept to their situations. Action learning and experimentation creates the adaptation in a complex system. Procedures were being taught to assemble the mosque-based schools, similar to procedures when people lay bricks; the procedures are the same but the product differs. The differences in design that emerge come out of the community and outside.

Such going to scale seldom replicates first trials—adaptation is essential, a standard blueprint will probably not fit all situations. Modifications are needed, and with the mosque-based schools sometimes that meant moving the site to someone's house when a conservative mullah did not want to open the mosque doors, but the community wanted a school. More complicated modifications were needed when the volunteer schoolteacher wanted to use a different set of curricula, as the government now had its expectations. But what brought the women to class was their hunger to learn—responding to that brought more women. Classes soon had women who asked for manuals on mothers' and children's health, financial management, and even family planning. From the district of Jaghori, mosque-based schools spread to neighboring Malistan District, then jumped the mountain ranges to Dai Kundi Province. Within two years there were 438 mosque-based schools. Often classes covered in one year the two years of standard school instruction.

During the same time, in many parts of Afghanistan, other organizations were starting literacy programs, but in these programs after an equivalent two

Figure 6.3. Women meeting for a literacy class in a mosque. *(Photo credit: Daniel Taylor)*

years of work, the best of these, with roughly parallel investments, had only a dozen or so programs going. Why did the mosque-based initiative take off? The reason is partly that it was in the culturally acceptable, community-owned mosques, but even more it was that Mahmood and Hashim were not starting schools. Local groups in each instance were starting their own schools; communities that when they heard the concept then owned the concept and implemented it. Outsiders did not try to control the extension but focused on enabling local ownership. For example, they did not pick target villages and go to these. Rather, they waited; communities came to them, at which time they helped them through the process.

Meanwhile, across Afghanistan a variety of government agencies and nongovernmental organizations were pouring in resources: sending books, training teachers, paying salaries, offering supplies, and very often building the buildings. These programs were spending in some cases millions of dollars. In some instances they got villagers to contribute their labors to the building, but in trying to help, they were taking away ownership, for these outsiders owned the curricula, owned the teachers, owned the buildings—even if they were technically giving these to the communities. Mahmood and Hashim, always emphasizing the local engagement, spent a total of half a million dollars over three years in salaries, transport, and schoolbooks while enabling the creation of 438 schools.

Every momentum has points of vulnerability. To promote building from successes to be a sustained process it is useful to strengthen it with a *vulnerability assessment*. This differs from a "needs assessment," which makes communities feel incapable. For example, in the above program, one vulnerability was to mullahs who felt threatened by the literacy and empowerment of women. Another was to the growth causing too rapid a demand for simple commodities such as textbooks and leaving communities frustrated rather than empowered. A third was ineffective teaching. An additional vulnerability not worried about was whether the Taliban were coming to class; on the contrary, this was desired as a chance to build partnership. Continuing vulnerability assessment connects to the functional analysis, causal analysis, and role reallocation that are part of the Task of Effective Decision Making (or creating a plan) described two tasks later.

TASK: ADAPT SUCCESSES FROM ELSEWHERE

Mahmood's experience transferring success was not his success—although that is what many in the NGO world would claim—the success was adaptive growth, one community learning from another. People adapt ideas in order to adopt them; this simple step is at the core of ownership. When it occurs through formal extension by government or NGOs, the program is typically

led by the external group and is standardized. But what happened in this project was enabling community adaptation. This promoted both ownership and a steadily better product. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, the process has two aspects and is termed *action learning and experimentation*.

Today, with the Internet, news, and trade, people constantly extend good ideas, everywhere. Global scanning is underway even in Afghanistan—the process can be termed "Surveillance for Success" if a formal term is wanted—it is the constant taking of ideas and trying them. It is a step in appreciative inquiry (part of asset-based community development) and also the positive-deviance approach, but what SEED-SCALE does is link this step to a larger process. The task of *studying successes elsewhere* formalizes this learning; it is most effective when hands-on and not taught theoretically. To promote it, sometimes what might seem expensive becomes cost-effective. For example, in 2004 forty-five leaders from Mahmood's schools and Abdullah's *Pagal* group made a month-long trip to India. At Jamkhed in Maharashtra State[8] and also the State of Uttaranchal, they saw projects of community governance developed in compliance with the 73rd Amendment to India's Constitution, which mandates participation by women and all caste groups. As a result of the trip, all forty-five leaders became more effective; it was this exposure visit that made General Abdul Rahman understand the process.

TASK: GATHER LOCAL EVIDENCE (SELF-EVALUATION)

An early project of the *Pagal* movement was planting trees, for much of Afghanistan had been deforested. After two and a half decades of war, communities were desperate for wood, so the *Pagals* decided to plant trees. They knew it would take years for the trees to grow; nevertheless, they traveled a day's distance leading a long donkey train to acquire saplings. As people on the route saw the loaded donkeys returning, interest rose. That group of madmen planted 150,000 poplar and willow trees; a few months later the *Pagals* surveyed them. Roughly one-half had been eaten by wandering donkeys.

The survey launched a hot debate, one that this time differed from earlier ones. In the oratory that followed in which the straying donkeys and their errant owners (who were often conflated) were called many colorful names, the *shura* took a decision that would earlier have been unlikely but was supported by the organized body of *Pagal* men: all donkeys in the valley should be confined, and any donkey found loose would be tied up until a fine was paid. Amusing scenes then unfolded of donkeys running across the land, pursued from one direction by a *Pagal* member with a rope so he could tie it up and by the frantic donkey owner from the other direction. Building on this success, the *shura* passed a regulation that *any* animal wandering into fields would result in its owner's being fined. In addition to protecting saplings,

getting vagrant animals under control reduced a cause of violence in a violent society.

Another example of evidence's leading to action comes from Dr. Shukria, who led the project in Rostam and Saya Dara Valleys summarized in Chapter 4 that produced the dramatic reduction of child mortality by empowered women. In a five-day workshop, women shared their pregnancy histories with Dr. Shukria. Tabulation of each pregnancy (miscarriages, deaths of infants, children killed in war, and so on) provided not just the baseline numbers already mentioned but more important, narratives in the lives of women of the causes of child mortality. Using their narratives, Dr. Shukria in turn explained to the women how they could prevent most of these deaths (through preventive and home care as did the women of Bameng and those of Palin). A new form of health education had been stumbled upon—instead of teaching health science through all the body systems, this education occurred through explaining the life narratives of the women. Ownership of their family health was given to them through new knowledge that came from their own lives. With this understanding, the women could bring improved health into their homes; they understood health based on their narratives of children who had died, events of violence, and fears they had heard. Chapter 7 details how to conduct such community-based assessments. As with the *Pagals* measuring their tree loss, women's having evidence about their child loss made a foundation for behavior changes. Important in both examples is that the evidence was brought forward either by the people on their own, or, when professional help was needed, in a manner that was in a local (contrasted to scientific) narrative, leading to the same end of local ownership.

TASK: CREATE NEXT-ACTION PLAN (EFFECTIVE DECISIONMAKING)

Even when conditions are difficult, surveys can be conducted—having evidence makes tough decisions easier to make. The decision to fine owners of loose donkeys was possible because of a survey. This fact-based process led to greater participation in the community process. The next year, knowing how to keep saplings from being eaten, more than seventy village *shuras* surrounding the first site planted half a million trees, and the survival rate, which now they carefully tabulated, was 70 percent. Similarly, the pregnancy histories of women, with data of lives, births, and deaths, allowed Dr. Shukria to discover what was causing children and women to die, and this evidence base grew into the larger national program described in Chapter 4.

Good local data helps project work scale up. Such action grows through starting a systematic process fitted to people's objectives, fitted to their resources, and focused on a pragmatic future; that is, building on the Task of Identifying Local Successes, the Task of Adapting Successes from Elsewhere, the Task of

Table 6.2 SAMPLE OF WORKPLAN FRAMEWORK.

Objective	What to do	Where to do	When to start	When to finish	Who inside	Who outside	How to do	Needed training	Needed supplies	Remarks
#1										
#2										
2.a										
2.b										
2.c										
#3										

Gathering Local Evidence (Self-Evaluation), and the Task of Creating Next-Action Plan (Evidence-Based Decision Making.)

Making the connections is not difficult. A logical framework can put this together, one that gathers all the "*W's*": Who will do what, when, where, and with what. Table 6.2 provides such a planning matrix, a single page that gives the whole action plan. This simple workplan sometimes is usefully painted on the side of a house or put up as a community signboard to inform all in the community what needs to be done and who is supposed to be doing it. As skill levels rise or complex tasks are taken on, further pages of details need to be added to give schedules for each of the *W's*. Plans should be simple so they can be read by community members in a hurry, the marginally literate, or the politicians who make promises but "forget" to act.

Such a simple plan sets targets and outlines the process to achieve them. With momentum established, it is then helpful for the community to connect these to long-term goals, but the workplan is not the long-term plan. But as skill levels rise and long-term, realistic goals are in place, then better-thought-out goals will be put into place in the above plan. Time and again, people propose objectives for which they do not begin to have the training or resources to accomplish. *A workplan is not a wish list; rather, it outlines what is achievable with the resources that are available*. (In Palin, after their huge initial successes from 1997 to 2001, five of the seven items on the 2003 to 2007 workplans remained unaltered and unachieved throughout these five years.) With iterative growth, plans can grow sophisticated, as indicated above, but the plan should not begin as a complex one. It is not the product of a technical expert, but rather of the local coordinating committee, on which the expert might be a representative. The plans can start in different ways with simple life-changing actions as the women in Bameng did, or with a community census as DehKudaidad did. As people realize the results that are possible, they bring forward the deeper goals. Complex planning involves three functions: causal analysis, functional analysis, and role reallocation, and these can indeed become quite sophisticated.

Causal analysis focuses on the transition from defining priorities to determining next steps. A range of techniques is available: nominal group methods, participatory research and action (PRAs); situational analyses; planning, learning, action (PLAs); positive deviance, and asset mapping. All begin with agreement on priorities, and, with expert facilitation, community members engage to understand causes. Participatory dialogue moves from blaming outside forces to changes people can do themselves.[9] The causal analysis that then follows helps Outside-in and Top-down partners share ownership. A structured process is needed that includes local people, utilizes data, and focuses on behavior change, otherwise dialogue will be random and will not consistently lead to plans that move the community forward.[10]

Functional analysis helps communities identify better ways to get a job done. It looks at essential functions to achieve the agreed-to objectives, then

tests alternatives. The iterative criterion that is discussed in the next chapter says: Next time do it better, don't just do it the same way again. Improving an aspect with each iterative cycle stops the common practice of letting past practices continue when still only partly working. Catch issues before they are broken; it is not necessary that they be totally fixed in any cycle, just improved.

If babies are dying, for example, a common response has been to improve the clinic or seek a better doctor. Such actions would certainly be improving the situation, but a functional analysis casts the search net wider—for example, finding out whether deaths can be prevented by care outside the clinic in the community. Functional analysis does not just try to fix the immediate problem, but steps back to see if functions can be more effective with less waste. It starts with focusing on the goal, then looks at all options to get to that goal.[11] Getting people to see functions in a new way is hard; it may be especially hard for professionals who realize that the changes will cause them to lose recognition or income.

Role reallocation identifies new ways to fulfill a function by focusing on who can best and most reliably do the job. It avoids traumatic change by promoting incremental identification of actions, then assigns to each partner more effective roles.[12] With evidence gathered, options identified, community priorities agreed to, causal and functional analyses completed, and role reallocation done, it is possible for communities to take on sophisticated objectives.

Monitoring the workplan is as crucial as bookkeeping is in financial management. Workplans monitor community energy the way a budget assigns money or an audit assesses whether a budget was followed. It is a good practice for communities to keep past workplans for evidence of progress—they become a community's self-portrait of their progress, with each plan like a dot on a graph, and collectively they chart the curve of change the community has experienced. Because they show results achieved, these can be used as a base of advocacy to government and agencies to bring outside resources.

TASK: PARTNERS EACH IMPLEMENT ACTIONS

Mobilizing action around the workplan does two things: it accomplishes priorities that were identified, but more important, implementation reshapes the community around this forward-looking, *always adapting* workplan,. This is why the committee is termed a "coordinating committee," for it is not a "controlling committee." The distinction is central; coordination engages people rather than directing them. Indeed, control is impossible in any sustainable manner in a complex system—various parties, both external and internal, will inevitably attempt to control the process, but the goal must always be to create balance. To nurture the growth of empowerment, the objective that is more

important than any listed target is growing local ownership. This increases when members together learn how to complete their duties.

As many people as possible should be involved. To start, a few achievable tasks should be attempted. Emphasis must be on getting every cycle completed so that for the next cycle of tasks, understanding and skill levels are greater; the partnership strengthens. As energy increases, attention also needs to paid to shifting the roles of professionals. They tend to seek to keep themselves in leadership roles for a process that should be devolving them of leadership and turning them to teaching and coaching. They tend to be looking from external perspectives (and biases) while the vectors of determinative pressure in complex systems are mostly internal. When the roles of professionals can be altered toward internal control with professionals as partners (not excluded), then momentum becomes more rapid and comprehensive. In our efforts over the years, the most frequent obstacle to community work (more significant than any lack of money) has been some professional group who uses their power position to take control from that of partnership. Coordinating committees must be able to lead. Differences in social stratification, education, wealth, and opportunities for mobility will of course vary, but within the context of the committee itself, outsiders and officials must not outrank community members.

Politicians talk about partnership during election cycles, then between elections, this group seldom supports actions. Similarly, donors and NGOs talk—indeed they now require themselves to engage in the talk of community participation—but what they mean is community as the *setting* for work, or as the *free labor* for their priorities, or a *target group* to which to deliver their services.[13] What the SEED-SCALE partnership action task seeks is a fourth role, to have the *community as the agent of change*. To achieve this, the solution is muscular community committees.

TASK: MIDCOURSE CORRECTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE FOUR PRINCIPLES

As the momentum of change grows, obstacles will emerge that no plan can prepare for. Midcourse corrections redirect the momentum. *Effectiveness in SEED-SCALE is the degree to which action strengthens the four principles, not the degree to which workplan objectives are met.* Midcourse corrections are times for learning as much as redirecting. The mindset of improvement, the recognition that there is always the next time, so this time does not need to be perfect, creates cohesion and creativity; it differs from the mindset of following orders. Robert Chambers uses the phrase of "embracing error" to reflect the needed open attitude. A simple way to frame this is that *effective social change avoids big mistakes; little mistakes are no problem if momentum is going forward and learning is taking place*.

Complex systems can adapt in a manner with a high probability of emergent success only when they have reasonably detected impacting forces. For this to occur, it is essential to have both sensitivity and scope in the detection process—all such detection requires a standard of values against which to measure. Hence, as those values, the primacy of making midcourse corrections against the four principles, not against workplans.

When people know midcourse corrections are part of the process, planning does not need many details. A process-driven mode is simple, guided by the principles: Start; then as momentum builds, make corrections according to those principles. The workplan is organic, not a fixed blueprint. Changes to the plan, though, must be recorded and paid attention to for learning to occur; in that way a chart of direction is created that is both evidence of the past and points the way forward.

THE TASKS OF COMMUNITY CHANGE AS A CYCLE

The process of moving gives stability in social change, like a bicycle gains stability as it gathers momentum, wobbly when first ridden, falling over a couple

Figure 6.4. Cycle of seven tasks.

times perhaps, but when the locus of control is with those riding it, then it is easily picked up, handlebars straightened, and the way forward continued. Critical to note here is that the point of control is within the community. When control is distant, a message needs to be sent outside, the corrective directions waited for; but by the time they come back, probably the situation has changed. (Bicycles are not ridden by someone running alongside and shouting what to do next —if the rider is truly unskilled, hold onto the seat, but let the rider learn.) In social change, keep momentum going, and, like riding a bicycle, when momentum is going, skill levels are growing. With steady movement, hope rises, confidence increases, and as speed increases, further stability is gained.

Mahmood's older brother, Ahmad, took the momentum started with women to engage their husbands in the 438 mosques. Under his guidance, with the now-moving momentum, the seven tasks fed community workplans. In one place, rammed-earth brick-making was started, greenhouses in another. Check dams were put across low places to hold water to promote seepage back into the ground that allowed fruit trees to come again to denuded fields. Classes were started to teach canning and fruit preservation. A room was rented in town and a line of sewing machines installed for sewing classes; in the room next-door a parallel training course began in computer skills using discarded computers from the American military. To extend the lessons, a community radio station opened. Noteworthy about each initiative is that five years after external funding ended, each of the above programs was still running (in 2010). While each of these initiatives has its specific value, what is more important is their diversity, and that they created a sense of comprehensive change within the complex system—and for Afghanistan comprehensive change creates the vital feature of stability. Their community was not moving forward in a wobbly manner, but had hope rising, confidence increasing—and those energies prompting further momentum.

The Seven Tasks stated in another way are: *Develop leadership* (reshape a local coordinating committee), *find a starting point and resources* (identify local successes), *obtain a relevant education* (adapt successes from elsewhere), *fit your economic, environmental, and cultural situation* (conduct self-evaluation), *determine direction and partners*, (make effective decisions), *coordinate people, resources and time* (partners each implementing actions), and *keep momentum on track* (make midcourse corrections to strengthen the four principles).

This cycle is effective for two reasons. Focused on local realities, it avoids impractical levels of expectation and flexes as each step is completed, with results improving each cycle. Success comes, not from getting the process "right" at the beginning, but from making things better as they go along. The second reason is that each cycle is defined by functions, not by outcomes. Like the agricultural cycle, this process can be applied anywhere. It becomes a universal process for site-specific solutions. A cycle composed of functions

emphasizes the processes that need to be done, not the outcomes; this is why it can evolve local solutions fitted to time, place, and culture.

Return to the DehKudaidad case. Repeating the seven tasks caused a community whose homes appeared dilapidated and people inside to be fearful seemingly to self-assemble. Visibly, as the process went forward the community looked different, not only naming streets, collecting garbage, and installing water and electricity, but also in the sense of community as well as hope. People were talking to and working with each other in new ways. These are actions that take follow-through to grow. They are not ends but a process. And on a larger level, the process shaped a vision, catalyzed under a symbol they created for themselves with outstretched wings. Such momentum draws in outside assistance that otherwise would not come. The DehKudaidad people wanted help from outside—every community wants external help, SEED-SCALE does not deny that. But it is a question of what comes first: local energy or outside resources. When the local energy was created, then the outside resources came.

The experience of DehKudaidad is important: once momentum became established where the people started helping themselves, then external help started to come to them. Donors want to be part of ongoing success, they look for communities taking initiative; these are the conditions that suggest to donors their assistance will be a beneficial contribution. Today, many children of DehKudaidad know how to read, and they go to their local library. People go into Kabul for employment. It is the people who brought about the changes; they know that, and the fact that they know that is very important.

In Bamyan Province where Abdullah started his *Pagal* movement, several hundred women walked to a meeting where a large international contractor was talking of this meeting being their chance for "people's participation." The women were upset because assistance from a variety of donor groups had started projects but not finished them. The women had done a quick survey—the contractor had not come expecting to be confronted with data. (Afghan village women doing a survey, putting the numbers forward?) The data showed wells were built, but had not gone down deep enough to reach water, yet the well casings had nice contract-mandated cement tops. The new schools and health centers had passed the bookkeeping exam of the NGO that had built them with paper receipts, but the women's pictures showed cracks in the buildings' walls and detailed reports reflecting how much of the funds reflected in those receipts had actually reached the community. Other survey data showed high mortality among the children whom other NGOs had received funds to come to help.

Afghan women were putting pressure on one of the most powerful foreign aid contractors. The response from that contractor was "All those projects are of other NGOs, not ours." The new contractor had planned a routine "community participation" meeting, then going forward with the project they had

received funding for under the donor's terms. But suddenly their paperwork had a crack running through it. Women who had been presumed illiterate came forward with a written letter of objection to their assumption of the new contract. Empowerment had grown. The contractor had to go back to the donor to renegotiate—and in that instance the contractor never came back.