



BECOME A CHANGE-MAKER:
ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & YOU





WHERE DOES CHANGE BEGIN?

Have you ever looked at the state of the world and felt overwhelmed? The needs around us, on a global and local scale, are so great that we can find ourselves wondering if we can make a difference that matters. While it's crucial that we understand these needs, issues, and problems, we can easily become paralyzed if this becomes our only focus. What if instead we turn our attention to what is strong, both in ourselves and in our communities, and make this the starting point for solutions? What if we recognize just how much we each have to offer and how much more we can achieve when we work together?

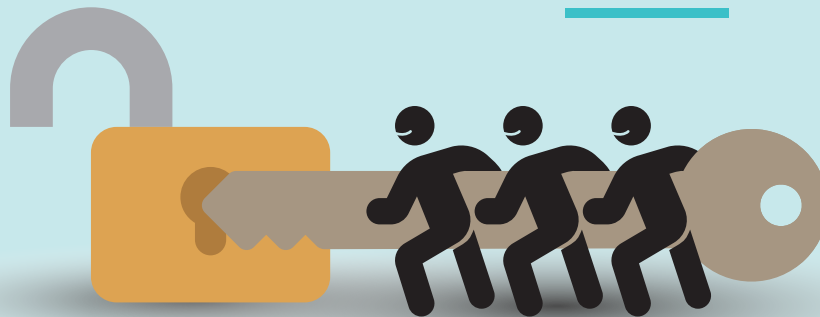
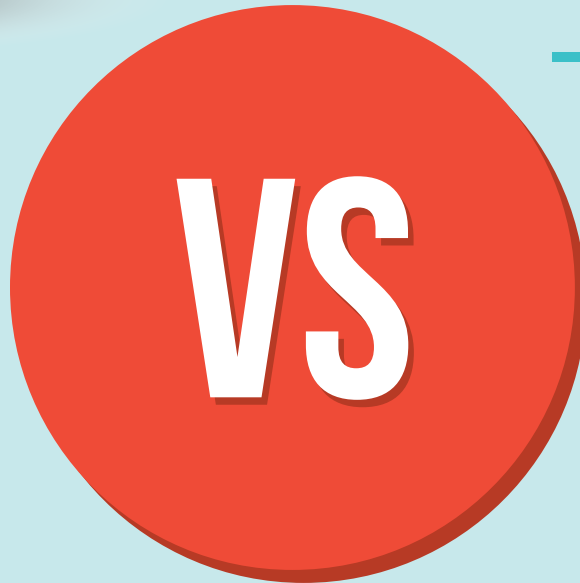
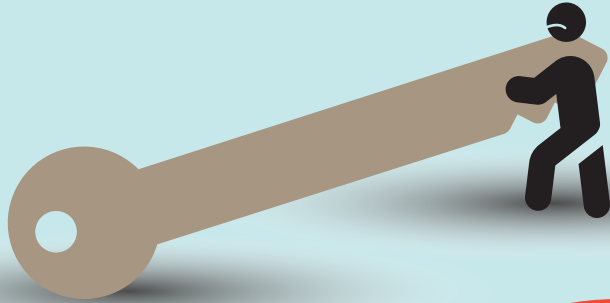
When communities come together as a whole instead of a group of individuals, lasting impact can be achieved on a phenomenal scale. The Wellspring Foundation for Education has seen this time and time again in Rwanda. Through our Asset-Based Community Development training, communities have learned to create their own solutions in response to the challenges they face. The lessons we've learned in Rwanda have only strengthened our belief that sustainable change comes from within communities. This principle applies no matter where you are in the world.

Whoever you are—a neighbour seeking ways to brighten your strata, a teacher considering new opportunities to build into students, a parent looking to engage your family in serving others—there is something that we can all do to connect with our community and build a stronger and brighter future.

In the following pages, you'll find strategies and actionable steps to help you understand how you can LEARN, CONNECT, EXPLORE, PLAN, AND START making a difference in your community.

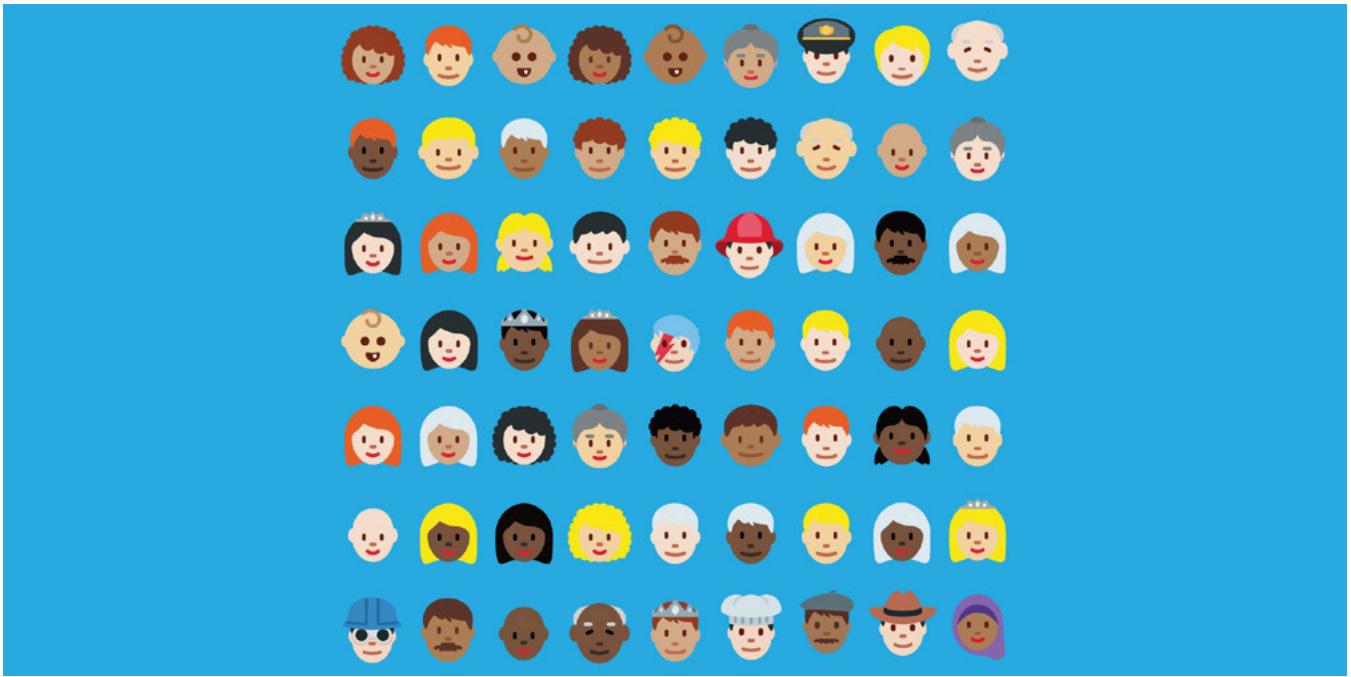


WORKING ALONE



WORKING IN COMMUNITY





STEP 1

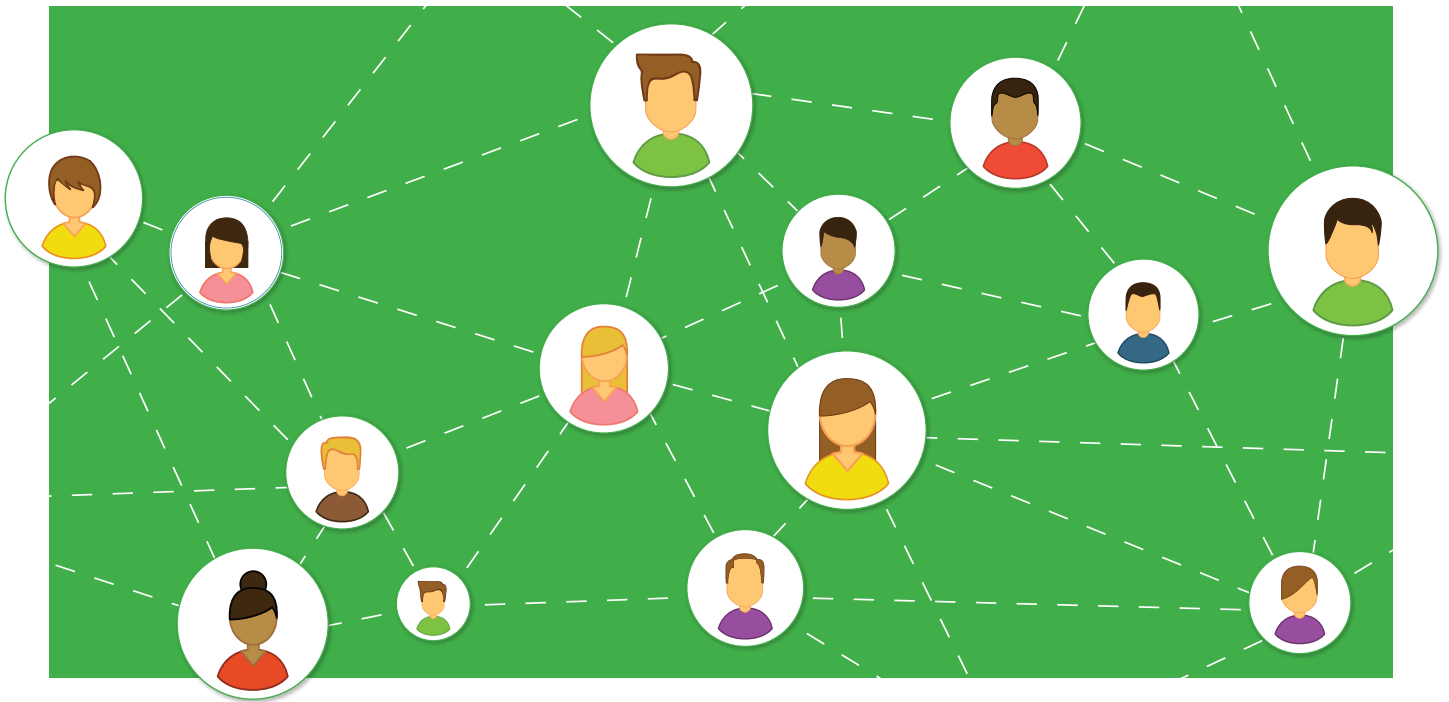
LISTEN – HEARING YOUR COMMUNITY’S STORIES

The first—and oftentimes, most important—step in any process is listening. When we listen to the stories of others, we grow in empathy and understanding, which provides the foundation for relationships. Through story, we move beyond labels and get to the heart of who people really are, not only what they can bring. We also create the opportunity to learn from and celebrate each other’s past successes, building confidence as we begin dreaming and working together. You and your neighbours know your community best, and when we learn from one another, we discover new paths and possibilities for the future that may have otherwise been hidden.

NEXT STEPS

- Identify someone or a group of people you’ve been wanting to connect with on a deeper level in your community. Extend an invitation to get to know one another.
- Create a comfortable space where your community can share and collect stories. This could be a physical book, a virtual coffee and story-time, an online sharing platform, or whatever works for your community.
- As you get to know each other, begin to explore questions like:
- Can you share some past experiences that have given you a sense of achievement or where you’ve learned something new?
- How did you feel in that situation?
- What support did you receive from others to help you reach your goals?





STEP 2

CONNECT – BRINGING YOUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER

As you begin to build relationships, be on the lookout for someone who everyone seems to know or someone who lights up anytime they have the opportunity to connect with others. Maybe this is you or perhaps it's someone else in your circle. These trusted community members have the gift of connectedness, and they play a key role in bringing people together.

NEXT STEPS

- Identify people who know your community inside and out and are excited to motivate others to work together for change.
- Share how a connector can use their talents to pour into the community by building bridges between people.
- As a connector, introduce people who might not otherwise meet. Spark conversations that showcase people's passions and strengths, as well as opportunities for collaboration.



STEP 3

EXPLORE – DISCOVERING YOUR COMMUNITY'S TALENTS

As relationships and trust develop, the focus can turn to each person's talents, skills, resources, and knowledge—because everyone is unique and everyone has something to offer. Think outside of the box as you examine the strengths of your community members, as often change can happen in the most unexpected of ways. When everybody's talents are recognized and people work together as a whole instead of as individuals, community needs can be matched to strengths, and a local response can begin!

NEXT STEPS

- Invite participants to identify their own strengths and what they believe they have to offer their community.
- Share what you have observed. Encourage and speak to your community's talents to help them identify their own gifts.
- Pay special attention to how to engage often-marginalized identities in your community. These individuals can contribute different perspectives, opinions, and unique strengths that lead to a stronger and more inclusive community for everyone.



STEP 4

PLAN – ENVISIONING YOUR COMMUNITY’S FUTURE

As you identify the giftings of your community members, you’re able to cast a vision for a future where these strengths are valued, utilized, and combined to see your community thrive. Perhaps your motivation to begin this process was related to solving a specific issue, or maybe you long to be part of building a brighter future for your community. Whatever’s driving you, it’s important to have a clear vision, set tangible goals, and map out a path for the future. When everyone is engaged in casting this vision and everyone understands their unique role, a sense of ownership is created that leads to lasting, sustainable change.

NEXT STEPS

- Create a welcoming space where everyone can share their dreams and ideas. Take time to listen to each person, as oftentimes the best ideas come through collaboration.
- Share the needs and corresponding strengths in your community, and consider how your group is best placed to respond. Have an open conversation to discuss everyone’s roles and set clear expectations moving forward.
- Get excited! Make sure to take a note of these plans for the future so you can celebrate your successes and learn from your setbacks.





STEP 5

START – TAKING ACTION WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Now that you're equipped with a plan for the future and goals to work towards, it's time to take action! Start using the skills, knowledge, and talents you've identified in yourself, and bring your very best as you work with your fellow community members to serve those around you. Whether you're cooking for people who are alone, giving of your time to support local causes, or advocating for improvements in your neighbourhood, the actions you take today—no matter how small they may seem—are defining the future of your community.

NEXT STEPS

- You have the vision and the tools—so trust your plan and get going! Don't be afraid to start small and ask for support when you need it.
- Stay connected. You could set up a WhatsApp or Facebook group for your community where you can share resources, needs, and solutions. Take every opportunity to invite new people to join in these efforts with you.
- Build in time for reflection and course adjustments. We are always learning and discovering new talents. Make sure you are flexible and adaptable to make the most of your community's strengths.



MOVING FORWARD

Whoever you are and wherever you are, you always have something to contribute to your community, and we hope that you have found inspiration and motivation in this eBook! If you're interested in learning more about how to build into your community through this Asset-Based Community Development approach, take a deeper dive with these resources:

- [Cormac Russel's TEDx Talk](#): Sustainable Community Development: From What's Wrong to What's Strong.
- [ABCD Canada](#): Explore principles and practices of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and other strengths-based approaches to community change.
- [Rwanda: Stories of Community Action, Nurture Development](#)
- Wellspring Impact Stories:
 - [ABCD: School Future in Parents' Hands](#)
 - [Empowered Parents Transform Kamugarura School](#)
 - [Cultivating Creativity in Teachers & Students](#)
 - [The Empty Water Bottle](#)

We want to hear from you! Did you find something helpful in these actionable steps? How have you applied these learnings to your own life and community? Can we support you in any way as you seek to develop your community? Please reach out to us at canada@thewellspringfoundation.org to share your story!





ABOUT WELLSPRING

Since 2004, Wellspring has been on the forefront of quality educational change in East Africa, working to see transition and transformation in the education sector, with a particular focus on Rwanda. Our intention has been to go deep rather than wide and to create models that enhance systemic change at both the grassroots and national levels.

This principle has been widely recognized as the world has understood the need for transformed educational practices, alongside the need for universal education. As such, Wellspring has been proactive in developing innovative models that address the issues on the front line.

Both in the classroom and at the highest levels, Wellspring has sought to develop transferable programs that model and share what good quality education can look like in a majority world context. Working throughout the whole educational ecosystem, Wellspring has empowered parents, teachers, school and community leaders, government officials, and many other stakeholders, providing training and resources that have allowed hundreds of thousands of children to have access to a far higher quality of education that provides the support they need to thrive.

Find out more at wellspring.ngo.

PHOTO CREDITS:

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