

COMMUNITY LEAD DEVELOPMENT WITH MARY KATE COSTELLO



Mary Kate Costello, senior policy analyst at The Hunger Project, (THP) shared her knowledge of THP's successful Epicenter Strategy with KETU.

The strategy is an integrated approach created by Africans, for Africans, which over 20 years has mobilised 122 communities into Community Lead Development, reaching over 1.6 million people in eight countries across the continent.

"THE FIRST STEP THAT THE HUNGER PROJECT TAKES TO MOBILIZE THE POPULATION FOR THE EPICENTER STRATEGY IS TO EMBARK ON A PROCESS THAT EMPHASIZES THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP, CREATES A CLEAR VISION FOR THE FUTURE, AND GENERATES COMMITMENT AND ACTION AT THE INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY LEVEL TO ACHIEVE THE ERADICATION OF HUNGER AND POVERTY ON A SUSTAINABLE BASIS. "

The Epicenter Strategy is a journey to self-reliance, whereby a community mobilise to build their own "epicenter," or a dynamic center of their community, purposefully built for their to achieve their own communities needs. This holistic strategy takes them on a path to sustainable self-reliance through four distinct phases over a period of about eight years. During this time, individuals build the confidence to become leaders of their own development, and communities come together to unlock a local capacity for change. This journey is highlighted by four key stages, explained below. The Mobilization stage in Phase 1 makes us of THP's Vision, Commitment, Action (VCA) Model, which combines leadership training enabling a community to create its own vision for the future, with a public commitment to achieve it and the identification of a set of actions necessary to achieve the vision.

	Phase I		Phase II	Phase III			Phase IV	
Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
EPICENTER'S JOURNEY TO SELF-RELIANCE	MOBILIZATION		CONSTRUCTION	PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION			TRANSITION TO SELF-RELIANCE	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• VCA workshops• Animators• Community-initiated projects• Leadership• Microfinance		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contributed land, materials, labor• L-shaped building• Demonstration farm• SACCO/Bank recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food and nutrition security• Health• Education• Sanitation• Adult literacy			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Epicenter income generation• Epicenter committee leadership of continuing development	

.The community uses a combination of workshop committees set up from the VCA workshops, including a Finance Committee, Water and Sanitation Committee, Education Committee, Food Security Committee, Food Processing Committee; and Health Committee.

Vision, Commitment and Action Workshops are repeated in a succession of trainings throughout the course of the epicenter's timeline. With each workshop, new members of the community are engaged, the vision for the community is further developed and new openings for action are identified. This process builds solidarity beyond traditional community borders and inspires confidence in local leaders.

To physically construct the epicenter building, The Hunger Project hires an experienced local contractor to train community members in construction. The Epicenter Committee mobilizes voluntary labor to pull together the materials (stones, sand), clear the land, construct the bricks and begin laying the foundation. People begin to work together across village lines, constructing the facility, brick-by-brick. The building becomes a symbol of partnership, self-reliance and unity.



ALL IMAGE AND INFORMATION CREDIT: Mary Kate Costello & THP Epicenter Strategy