Change agent

Evidence suggests that technological advancements have improved access to health care services in the contemporary societies around the world by utilizing limited resources to provide quality, evidence-based, and cost-effective services. Yet, many people in the society, particularly the poor and the most vulnerable groups, find it difficult to access even minimal health care services. Accordingly, studies indicate that the major barriers to health care access among the poor and other vulnerable people include the high cost of access, cultural barriers, and lack of information (Ensor & Cooper, 2004). Cultural barriers are of particular interest in this case because they have an historical and self-governing origin, which makes it difficult for change managers to initiate meaningful change along this perspective (Schabracq, 2007). This essay highlights various approaches to initiating change in the community with the aim of helping the poor and other vulnerable groups to overcome challenges that deter their access to treatment and other health care services.

First and foremost, the main objective as a change agent in a community where the poor and other vulnerable groups lack access to minimal health care services is to broaden the social and cultural capacity of community members to enable them overcome various challenges to health care access. Simply put, the work of a change agent entails initiating change locally, organizing and utilizing local resources (both human and material capital) to induce change in the community, and evaluating the effectiveness of the change process. Therefore, in order to deepen and broaden socio-cultural capital in the community, there is the need to address a number of issues. Here, the first thing to do is to diagnose problems and share the

findings with all the stakeholders. This will entail understanding the culture of the people living in the community and identifying various issues whose change can produce community-wide results (Dhingra & Hagiwara, 1997).

Secondly, it is imperative for a change agent to maintain close ties with all the people affected by the change process. This should include forming partnerships with the stakeholders to ensure that everyone in the community is involved in the change efforts. In most cases, partnerships with mutual responsibility are founded on trust, and hence, the change agent should emphasize trust in building relationships with clients. Thirdly, before initiating any form of change, experts recommend that it is important for the change agent to articulate the hopes and motivations of the community members through the planned change. This will allow the members to feel that they are included in the change efforts and it will become easier for them to own and partake in the change process (Schabracq, 2007). After planning, the change agent should set an agenda in which every stakeholder should have a defined role to play in the change efforts. Here, the change agent plays the role of a change manager, which entails setting leadership roles for team leaders who in this case should include church leaders and community elders. It is also important for the change agent to solve any problems, which might arise in the process of setting leadership roles by reinforcing the desired behaviors among the participants (Dhingra & Hagiwara, 1997).

Subsequently, the change process should move to implementation of plans to achieve the set goals and objectives. At this stage, the change agent should ensure that the right strategy and appropriate change goals with

respective to cultural change are in place. Furthermore, it is the work of the change agent to align supportive, people-oriented policies and processes with the change goals and objectives. Most importantly, the change process in relation to cultural change in the community can be best implemented through dialogue-based group sessions in which the change agent or any other community member plays the role of the group leader (Schabracq, 2007). The group leader should in turn ensure that other group members are aware of the cultural assumptions that play into the factors, which deter the community from accessing available healthcare resources. Ultimately, careful implementation of the change plan as described in the foregoing discussions can go a long way in terms of promoting socio-cultural change, which should translate into better lives for the community members.