LEADING TRANSFORMATION #30:
BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

What does it really take to build healthy and effective communities? The following are 10 practical steps that can be taken toward the building of healthy and effective communities.

1. CLARIFY SOVEREIGNTY BOUNDARIES
The boundaries of the community need to be settled for stability and identity. The authority of the community to operate and pursue its interests within the specified boundaries also need to be negotiated, clarified and settled.

2. CLARIFY CONDITIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP OR CITIZENSHIP
Who qualify to be members or citizens of the community? What does it take to secure and maintain membership? The answers to these questions clarify the conditions for membership.

3. AGREE ON COMMON LANGUAGES
Every community needs at least one common language to coordinate everyday actions and mediate transactions. This also strengthens identity.

4. ENGAGE CORE LEADERSHIP OF COMMUNITY OF CHANGE LEADERS IN SHAPING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE
The ownership of a common Vision for the future has incredible power to inspire hope and unite communities. The more stakeholders that are engaged in shaping the Vision, the higher the level of ownership.

5. IDENTIFY AND EMBED COMMON VALUES
Healthy communities are held together by intentionally embraced common values like integrity, justice for all, equal opportunities for all, and excellence. No community can develop when its people are living and operating by competing values.

6. DEVELOP A PHILOSOPHY FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION
A philosophy for social integration needs to be well articulated, popularized and utilized by leaders to promote a common sense of identity, belonging, and unity. Former President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia used what Jesus Christ referred to as the Greatest Commandments of God—Love the LORD your God with all your heart, mind, might and soul; and love your neighbor as you love yourself—as cardinal principles for social integration in Zambia. In an interview with him, he explained that when he meets someone he first thinks of meeting a fellow human being before he considers meeting an American, Zambian or Jew. This was the principle behind the “One Zambia One Nation” slogan.

7. CREATE A PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT
There cannot be meaningful and lasting development in any community without a clear philosophy and framework for development. The International Leadership Foundation promotes a framework for holistic development—spiritual, material and social—that has Moral Vision as its foundation. The Moral Vision is based on intentionally and carefully selected moral values. The vision for what people want to become should be the foundation for what they want to have in any society.

8. DEVELOP AND EXECUTE A GENERATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT
Communities need to think generationally (thirty to forty-year time frames) in order to realize lasting transformation and development. This minimizes being driven by unpredictable circumstances, and other peoples’ interests.

9. ESTABLISH A FAIR REWARD SYSTEM
Establishing laws for communities promote order. In addition to this, there needs to be reward systems that encourage and incentivize those who are taking actions that benefit the community and punish those whose actions are detrimental to the wellbeing of other members of the community.

10. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A SYSTEM FOR LEADERSHIP SELECTION AND SUCCESSION
A potential source of conflict and instability in communities is the struggle for power, especially as it relates to leadership positions and benefits. A clear system and culture of leadership succession promotes a “leader-rich” culture as well as stability in leadership transitions and successions.

REFLECTION:
Think of a community that you are engaged in building. Which of these steps do you need to give more attention to in order to ensure the most excellent health and the highest level of effectiveness in your community?