

Principles of Community Development

The most significant feature that distinguishes community development from other community work is its values and principles. Below are a list and a brief definition of the values and principles that are typically embodied in community development programs.

- **Democratic:** The will of the majority must be carried out, but only after all voices are heard and considered and minority rights are protected.
- **Participation:** There are many barriers to participation in society; poverty, disability, age, race and ethnicity are some other characteristics that often marginalize people. A healthy community embraces diversity and recognizes that all community members have a right to be heard and participate in processes that affect their lives.
- **Non-authoritarian:** Organizational structures are as flat as possible, with all participants being seen as equally important and having equal input.
- **Community self determination:** Community members come together to discuss their concerns, assess options and arrive at their own conclusions. They may seek advice from "experts", but consider it along with other sources of information and their own experience and make their own decisions that are right for them.
- **Community Ownership:** Communities thrive when they develop their own assets, but also when they "own" their problems and issues. When communities accept that it is "their" problem, then they are more likely to work together to develop a solution, and the solution will be better than one provided solely by an external "expert".
- **Enhance natural capacities and networks:** There are sources of strength in every community; for example, informal networks and social support systems, or certain individuals that have particular talents or are able to help others in need. A community developer identifies these existing community assets and works with them. It is important not to duplicate existing structures and functions as that may weaken rather than strengthen the community.
- **Social justice and equity:** This is fundamental to community development and is at least implicit in all CD work, if not an explicit goal of a CD program.

- **Universality:** Services provided in any development project are available to everyone, without requiring means or needs testing.
- **Service Integration:** Often services provided to persons in need are fragmented, so that one service provider doesn't know what other services are available or being used, resulting in gaps, duplications and sometimes conflicting advice or treatments. A community development approach would ensure that services are coordinated, that they enhance and strengthen natural community and family supports, that there is effective communication among all involved, and that services are directed by the individual receiving them, to the extent possible.
- **Resource Utilization:** Community workers and implementers make it possible to identify available resources and proper utilization of the financial, human and material resources.
- **Felt Needs:** Community workers and teams try to be focussed. They work on meeting felt needs rather working on all kinds of issues existing in the community. All projects are need based which require specific resources.
- **Programme Consistency with local cultural values:** All community development do not suite every community. Every community has its cultural values and traditions which could be different from other communities. Community workers/teams work very carefully respecting traditions and values of target community. They do not ignore community liking and disliking.