

Community Development

The starting point for the concept of 'community development' is to define 'community'.

Word 'community' is derived from a Latin word 'communis', which means 'shared by many or all'. The term 'community' is linked to both people and place. Community is defined as:

People who live within a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place they live.

The 'development' part of the term 'community development' gives a sense of increase, production and spreading. Development is a wider concept that includes socioeconomic, political and cultural betterment. UN has defined community development as:

The processes by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress.

Another definition is:

A process of socioeconomic uplift of the whole community and people in the community initiated by a government authority or organization or the community itself on the basis of its felt needs with maximum participation of the local people.

Characteristics of community development are:

- Centre of attention is a unit known as the 'community'.
- It involves a careful attempt to bring irreversible structural change.
- It involves employment of salaried professionals/workers.
- There is an emphasis on public participation.

- There is community participation with the purpose of self-help.
- There is a maximum dependency on democratic participation, thus making it a community decision-making approach.
- It involves the application of a holistic approach

Objectives of Community Development

Scholars and community development practitioners find that community development projects consider the following objectives.

Social Change

A major objective of community development is to bring about social **change**. Major objectives of community development include inducing social change for the balanced human welfare and material improvement. Social change is very important for improving the social structure of communities. It involves many changes such as changes in the social set-up, health services, education services, the environment and the physical infrastructure.

Welfare and Adjustment

At present, many community development programmes run by governments and civil society organizations focus on the welfare of people in communities at the grassroots level. The term ‘welfare’ may include child welfare, the welfare of women, young people and patients, as well as old age welfare.

Improving the Quality of Life

Community development aims at improving the quality of life and meeting specific, clear goals. The ‘quality of life’ concept is considered to be very important in the field of international development. Generally, poverty is considered to be a low quality of life. The improvement or promotion of quality of life includes promoting the economy, Community

development aims to enhance the standard of life by providing services to address the felt needs.

Capacity Building

The real meaning and aim of community development is not to focus on the development of individuals but rather to increase the capacities of communities and groups for promoting development. Community development process aims to develop the capacities of local people to control their lives, provide equity and predict upcoming problems.

Provision of Services

Community development objectives are multidimensional and depend on the nature of the project and the needs of the community. Community development should be appropriate to specific objectives, for example providing services for education, agriculture, soil conservation, credit and cooperative, youth care and many other social services, and should be adapted according to the specific situation and the motivation of the people involved.

Stability and Solidarity

Community development programmes are a way of producing stability and social solidarity. In using the word 'stability', he means consistency and permanence. Community development aims to bring solidarity, equality, grassroots democracy and participation.