# **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

# **Introduction**

# ***Community Development***

*Like other terms we have come across earlier, Community Development does not have a simple definition because advancement in communities varies according to their specific needs and status. This means that what may be described as development in one community might not be considered as any advancement in another. For example, in one community using handcarts for transport could be considered as development while in another development means transporting goods by air. Nevertheless, Community Development may be described as a process that involves community participation in critically identifying and analyzing their needs, prioritizing those needs, setting goals and making decisions for suitable use of available resources to improve the quality of their lives.*

Community Development aims at empowering communities, strengthening their capacities and motivating them towards positive change of attitudes. Community Development approaches try to create self-reliance for self-sustaining development. In addition, Community Development operates within the following principles:

1. Active participation of people in matters that touch their lives
2. Empowerment of community members who are customarily dispossessed of power and control over their community affairs.
3. Involvement of all members of society in the process of social change.
4. Sharing of skills, power, experience and knowledge.
5. Inclusion of neighborhoods and interested communities, in identification of what is relevant to them.
6. A collective process that enhances integrity, skills, knowledge and experience.
7. Empowering individuals and communities to develop and change at their own pace, according to their own needs and priorities.

# **Background of Community Development Programmes**

Historically, human beings have always worked together to promote their welfare. Consequently, human beings have evolved from stone-age to hunting and gathering, and to the modern agriculture and industrialized development. Community development as a paradigm is prompted by the emerging needs of a people and the pressure to cope with the global technological advancement.

The history of Formal community development programs can be traced from 1930s. The formal welfare programs were geared towards poverty relieve in urban areas in USA and Britain. In African countries, formal development programs in the form of the social welfare program begun after the 2nd world war. The British colonial officers used the principles of community development to prepare the African communities for social-economic development. The Africans over-relied on foreign aid, and the withdrawal of the aid in 1960 when attention shifted to green revolution movement, the socio-economic development programs suffered a lot.

The Green Revolution Movement focused on the enhancement of the agricultural program by providing farmers with improved seeds, fertilizers, machines and other technological renovations. Poor farmers could not afford the input and as such never benefited from the movement. This led to failure of Green Revolution Movement and prompted re-emergence of Community Development Strategies. These included two approaches namely:

1. Basic Needs Approach. This approach sought to ensure that the basic needs of the majority poor were met
2. Rural Integrated Development. ` This sought to holistically address the problem of rural poverty

The two strategies emphasized on community members’ participation for community development. In the 1980s, it was found necessary to empower the community members to participate in their own development. This was based on the fact that outsiders do not transfer technology but they share methods which local people can utilize in their own context. The principles of community development can be used to address problems of poverty and under-development

# **Background & Works Of Paulo Freire**

One of the major personalities who have played a major role in community education and development strategies was Paulo Freire. In order to understand the reasons behind Paulo Freire’s contribution in community development it is necessary to look into his background.

In 1921, Freire was born in a middle-class economic family in Brazil. In 1929 Brazil was hit by serious economic depression and Freire’s family was not spared. The family moved to a lowly city where life could be manageable. Freire spent his social life with peer poor children, from whom he learned a lot. The economic situation exposed him to poverty and hunger that negatively impacted on his ability to learn to the extent that Freire ended up four grades behind.

Finally, their family's misfortunes turned around greatly improving their prospects. The painful experiences molded Freire’s concerns for poor people and aided him to construct specific educational viewpoint in which he dedicated his life to improving poor people’s lives. Freire enrolled at Law School and also studied philosophy. Although he did law, he never practiced law but instead taught as a teacher in secondary schools.

He realized that the people who were depressed needed self-awareness (conscientization). This led him to begin his work on the basis of setting the poor free in an attempt to create a new world.

In 1946, Freire was selected as Director of the Department of Education and Culture of the Social Service in one Brazilian state. In this capacity he worked mainly among the illiterate and poor people. In 1962 he applied his theories of teaching among 300 illiterate sugarcane farmers who learned ability to read and write in just 45 days. This made the government to embrace his methodology.

In 1964, the Brazilian government was overthrown in a military coup and Freire’s approach was mistaken for an underground movement. As a result, Freire was arrested and jailed for 70 days. Afterwards, he moved to Chile as apolitical exile. There he introduced his method and within 5 years it became widespread.

He was invited as a visiting professor to Harvard University, United States of America, where he taught at the Center for Studies in Education and Development. During this era, Freire wrote his best renowned work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, in which he considered to raise individuals' consciousness of oppression and transform oppressive social structures through community education.

In 1970, Freire left Harvard and went to Geneva, where he worked as assistant secretary of education for the World Council of Churches in Switzerland for a period of ten years. The position provided him an opportunity to travel around the world helping countries develop literacy reforms.

After fifteen years of exile, Freire went back to Brazil after an invitation from the government. There he commenced an institute that meant to bring scholars and critics of his pedagogy into "a permanent dialogue that would nurture the advancement of new educational theories and concrete interventions in reality. He came up with a number of principles that continue to positively impact on community education and development.

# **Freire’s Principles of Community Education and Development**

1. **No education is ever neutral**

This means that education results to something. It may encourage maintenance of an existing situation or trigger the need to change for the better. This implies that community education empowers people to assess their behavior in relation to the ideal situation. An individual who has been doing the right thing continues without some form of self-doubt. One who has been ignorant acquires a skill, knowledge or new values. This means that education sets people free thus facilitates room for creativity and creative thinking. It further creates awareness and liberates people from ignorance.

1. **Community education must be relevant**

This means that the topic for community education must be chosen in relation to the context of a particular community. People normally take action or become interested when they have strong feelings about a topic or project. In community education and mobilization, topics or projects should be chosen in relation to identification of gaps. This is in line with the bottom-up approach that emphasizes the importance of incorporating ordinary people’s ideas in projects meant for them. A community educator should ideally focus on ordinary people before consulting with the leaders.

1. **Community education poses a problem**

Freire called problem posing education prophetic. This is because this kind of education seeks to avert undesirable situation before it takes it becomes unmanageable. Community education also seeks to equip people with ideas on strategies that they could embark on to solve an identified problem. Problem posing education helps people to understand more clearly who they are, where they have come from and where they are, so that they can approach the future more wisely.

1. **Community education should be a mutual learning process**

The agent of change or animator must encourage participation of community members. Freire argues that the animator must have humility, coupled with love and respect for the community members. Humility enables one to listen even to those considered less competent. This is based on the fact that no-one knows it all and no one is ignorant of everything. This means that we all know something and at the same time we are all ignorant of something. This further implies that everyone can make some meaningful contribution without which full success may not be realized. Hence, in community education, everyone is either a teacher or a learner at some point.

1. **Community education should involve reflection and action**

Members of the community should be allowed to critically reflect on their situation and to think of ways in which existing gaps could be filled. When members of a community reflect critically on what they are doing, identifying new training and planning, they start addressing their issues. The first plan of action may solve some aspects of the problem, however, it may not fully tackle the main causes of the problem. This means that there is need to set up regular reflection and action sessions where the group celebrates their success, critically evaluates mistakes and failures. This helps the community members to become more skilled and focused. Ideally, community education should lead community members to yearn for more information. The most appropriate type of community education follows a pattern of actions that involves stopping**,** looking thinking and changing**.**

1. **Community education should lead to radical transformation**

This emphasizes the transformation of the whole world and the fact that everyone has a role to play. This is based on the knowledge that improvement of the world requires the joint effort of all community members.

**Freire stressed the following points:**

i) Getting community members actively involved.

 ii) Breaking through apathy, a state in which people are not interested.

 iii) Developing critical awareness of the roots of a problem: Freire says that the mobilization process is based on insights into different levels of consciousness and the relationship between emotions and motivation to act.

iv) The use of bottom-up approach in choice of topics/projects as opposed top-down approach. It is necessary to note that people in a community are the experts of their own problems.

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