

What are the popular approaches to rural development? Critically discuss the “Community Development” approach to rural development.

The eradication of rural poverty has been a major concern of Third World governments and donor agencies for many decades. Various approaches have been used to eradicate rural poverty that leads to Rural Development. Popular approaches to RD among those are:

- **Community Development (CD) Approach;**
- **Animation Rurale (AR) Approach;**
- **Integrated Rural Development (IRD) Approach; and**
- **Basic Needs (BN) approach.**

Community Development (CD) Approach;

- The term "community development" (CD) was first used officially in 1948 at the British Colonial office's Cambridge Conference on the Development of African Initiative. CD was aimed at helping British colonies in Africa prepare for independence by improving local government and developing their economies (Holdcroft, 1984).
- Community development became a part of the Ujamaa Villages established in Tanzania by Julius Nyerere, where it had some success in assisting with the delivery of education services throughout rural areas, but has elsewhere met with mixed success. Thus, CD included economic, social and political development objectives.
- Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the skills they need to effect change within their communities.
- Community development as a term has taken off widely in Anglophone countries, i.e. the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, as well as other countries in the Commonwealth of Nations. It is also used in some countries in

Eastern Europe with active community development associations in Hungary and Romania.

- Community development approaches are recognized internationally. These methods and approaches have been acknowledged as significant for local social, economic, cultural, environmental and political development by such organizations as the UN, WHO, OECD, World Bank, Council of Europe and EU.

Objectives of CD

The objectives of CD were to be achieved through active participation by village members and, where possible, through local initiative. Great emphasis was placed on building grassroots democratic institutions and improvement of the well-being of rural people. CD objectives were to be realized "without revolutionary changes in the existing political and economic order" (Holdcroft, 1978:14). It was defined as "a process, method, program, institution, and/or movement which:

- (a) involves people on a community basis in the solution of their common problems,**
- (b) teaches and insists upon the use of democratic processes in the joint solution of community problems, and**
- (c) activates and/or facilitates the transfer of technology to the people of a community for more effective solution of their common problems".**

Failure of CD/ Criticism of CD

- The CD movement experienced rapid growth in the 1950s and by 1960 more than sixty countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America had launched national or regional CD programs (Holdcroft, 1978; Ruttan, 1984). However, the CD movement lost momentum in the late 1950s and by the 1960s some of these programs collapsed.
- Most of these programs had been terminated by 1965. By the mid-1960s CD was being de-emphasized by both donor agencies and national governments (Ruttan, 1984). The decline in support for CD was due to disillusionment with the effectiveness of CD programs in achieving their stated goals (Holdcroft, 1984; Ruttan, 1984).

- The CD approach was criticized for failing to build "grass roots" democratic institutions as well as to improve the economic and social well-being of rural people (Holdcroft, 1984; Ruttan, 1984).
- Benefits from CD programs did not accrue to the rural poor and very little progress was made to narrow the income gap between the poor and the elites. In fact, in some cases the social and economic position of the elites may have been strengthened by the alignment of CD workers with the elites.
- CD programs also failed to contribute to the alleviation of food shortages and poverty. Holdcroft (1978) contends that CD expanded social services more rapidly than it enlarged the production of rural incomes.