

Community Development

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Community development (CD) is a broad term applied to the practices and academic disciplines of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens and professionals to improve various aspects of local communities.

Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing these groups with the skills they need to affect change in their own communities. These skills are often concentrated around building political power through the formation of large social groups working for a common agenda. Community developers must understand both how to work with individuals and how to affect communities' positions within the context of larger social institutions.

Definitions

There are complementary definitions of community development. The Community Development Challenge report, which was produced by a working party comprising leading UK organizations in the field (including (Foundation Builders) Community Development Foundation, Community Development Exchange and the Federation of Community Development Learning) defines community development as:

"A set of values and practices which plays a special role in overcoming poverty and disadvantage, knitting society together at the grass roots and deepening democracy. There is a CD profession, defined by national occupational standards and a body of theory and experience going back the best part of a century. There are active citizens who use CD techniques on a voluntary basis, and there are also other professions and agencies which use a CD approach or some aspects of it."

Community Development Exchange defines community development as:

"both an occupation (such as a community development worker in a local authority) and a way of working with communities. Its key purpose is to build communities based on justice, equality and mutual respect.

Community development involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It starts from the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, can be channeled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals.

Community development practitioners work alongside people in communities to help build relationships with key people and organizations and to identify common concerns. They create opportunities for the community to learn new skills and, by enabling people to act together, community development practitioners help to foster social inclusion and equality.

A number of different approaches to community development can be recognized, including: community economic development (CED); community capacity building; Social capital formation;

political participatory development; nonviolent direct action; ecologically sustainable development; asset-based community development; faith-based community development; community practice social work; community-based participatory research (CBPR); Community Mobilization; community empowerment; community participation; participatory planning including community-based planning (CBP); community-driven development (CDD); and approaches to funding communities directly.

Education and the community-wide empowerment that increased educational opportunity creates, form a crucial component of community development and certainly for under-served communities that have limited general educational and professional training resources. Workforce development and the issues and challenges of crossing the Digital divide, and increasing community-wide levels of Digital inclusion have become crucially important in this and both for affordable access to computers and the Internet, and for training in how to use and maintain these resources.

Local communities that cannot connect and participate in the larger and increasingly global Online community are becoming increasingly marginalized because of that. So where Urban development with its focus on buildings and physical infrastructure was once viewed as a primary path forward to community development, development of computer and online infrastructure and access, and the community enablement they support have to become central areas of focus moving forward. This has become an area of active involvement for both public and private sector organizations including foundations and nonprofit organizations. In the United States, nonprofit organizations such as Per scholas seek to "break the cycle of poverty by providing education, technology and economic opportunities to individuals, families and communities" as a path to development for the communities they serve.

The history of community development

Community development has been a sometimes explicit and implicit goal of community people, aiming to achieve, through collective effort, a better life, that has occurred throughout history.

In the global North

In the 19th century, the work of the early socialist thinker Robert Owen (1771-1851), sought to create a more perfect community. At New Lanark and at later communities such as Oneida in the USA and the New Australia Movement in Australia, groups of people came together to create utopian or intentional utopian communities, with mixed success.

In the United States in the 1960s, the term "community development" began to complement and generally replace the idea of urban renewal, which typically focused on physical development projects often at the expense of working-class communities. In the late 1960s, philanthropies such

as the Ford Foundation and government officials such as Senator Robert F. Kennedy took an interest in local nonprofit organizations--a pioneer was the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation in Brooklyn--that attempted to apply business and management skills to the social mission of uplifting low-income residents and their neighborhoods. Eventually such groups became known as "Community Development Corporations" or CDCs. Federal laws beginning with the 1974 Housing and Community Development Act provided a way for state and municipal governments to channel funds to CDCs and other nonprofit organizations. National organizations such as the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (founded in 1978 and now known as NeighborWorks America), the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (founded in 1980 and known as LISC), and the Enterprise Foundation (founded in 1981) have built extensive networks of affiliated local nonprofit organizations to which they help provide financing for countless physical and social development programs in urban and rural communities. The CDCs and similar organizations have been credited with starting the process that stabilized and revived seemingly hopeless inner city areas such as the South Bronx in New York City.

Community development in Canada has roots in the development of co-operatives, credit unions and caisses populaires. The Antigonish Movement which started in the 1920s in Nova Scotia, through the work of Doctor Moses Coady and Father James Tompkins, has been particularly influential in the subsequent expansion of community economic development work across Canada.

In the global South

Community planning techniques drawing on the history of utopian movements became important in the 1920s and 1930s in East Africa, where Community Development proposals were seen as a way of helping local people improve their own lives with indirect assistance from colonial authorities.

Mohandas K. Gandhi adopted African community development ideals as a basis of his South African Ashram, and then introduced it as a part of the Indian Swaraj movement, aiming at establishing economic interdependence at village level throughout India. With Indian independence, despite the continuing work of Vinoba Bhave in encouraging grassroots land reform, India under its first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru adopted a mixed-economy approach, mixing elements of socialism and capitalism. During the fifties and sixties, India ran a massive community development programme with focus on rural development activities through government support. This was later expanded in scope and was called integrated rural development scheme . A large number of initiatives that can come under the community development umbrella have come up in recent years.

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. In the 1970s and 1980s, Community Development became a part of "Integrated Rural Development", a strategy promoted by United Nations Agencies and the World Bank. Central to these policies of community development were

Adult Literacy Programs, drawing on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and the "Each One Teach One" adult literacy teaching method conceived by Frank Laubach.

Youth and Women's Groups, following the work of the Serowe Brigades of Botswana, of Patrick van Rensburg.

Development of Community Business Ventures and particularly cooperatives, in part drawn on the examples of José María Arizmendiarieta and the Mondragon Cooperatives of the Basque Region of Spain

Compensatory Education for those missing out in the formal education system, drawing on the work of Open Education as pioneered by Michael Young.

Dissemination of Alternative Technologies, based upon the work of E. F. Schumacher as advocated in his book *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if people really mattered*

Village Nutrition Programs and Permaculture Projects, based upon the work of Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren.

Village Water Supply Programs

In the 1990s, following critiques of the mixed success of "top down" government programs, and drawing on the work of Robert Putnam, in the rediscovery of Social Capital, community development internationally became concerned with social capital formation. In particular the outstanding success of the work of Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh with the Grameen Bank, has led to the attempts to spread microenterprise credit schemes around the world. This work was honoured by the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize.

The "Human Scale Development" work of Right Livelihood Award winning Chilean economist Manfred Max Neef promotes the idea of development based upon fundamental human needs, which are considered to be limited, universal and invariant to all human beings (being a part of our human condition). He considers that poverty results from the failure to satisfy a particular human need, it is not just an absence of money. Whilst human needs are limited, Max Neef shows that the ways of satisfying human needs is potentially unlimited. Satisfiers also have different characteristics: they can be violators or destroyers, pseudosatisfiers, inhibiting satisfiers, singular satisfiers, or synergic satisfiers. Max-Neef shows that certain satisfiers, promoted as satisfying a particular need, in fact inhibit or destroy the possibility of satisfying other needs: eg, the arms race, while ostensibly satisfying the need for protection, in fact then destroys subsistence, participation, affection and freedom; formal democracy, which is supposed to meet the need for participation often disempowers and alienates; commercial television, while used to satisfy the need for recreation, interferes with understanding, creativity and identity. Synergic satisfiers, on the other hand, not only satisfy one particular need, but also lead to satisfaction in other areas: some

examples are breast-feeding; self-managed production; popular education; democratic community organizations; preventative medicine; meditation; educational games. '

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