

Rural Community Development

Authored by
mohammad looti

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Rural community development encompasses a range of approaches and activities that aim to improve the welfare and livelihoods of people living in rural areas. As a branch of community development, these approaches pay attention to social issues particularly community organizing. This is in contrast to other forms of rural development that focus on public works (e.g. rural roads and electrification) and technology (e.g. tools and techniques for improving agricultural production).

Rural community development is important in developing countries where a large part of the population is engaged in farming. Consequently, a range of community development methods have been created and used by organisations involved in international development. Most of these efforts to promote rural community development are led by 'experts' from outside the community such as government officials, staff of Non-governmental organizations and foreign advisers. This has led to a long debate about the issue of participation, in which questions have been raised about the sustainability of these efforts and the extent to which rural people are - or are not - being empowered to make decisions for themselves.

Rural Community Development in the United Kingdom

In the UK rural community development is seen as very important. Rural areas are often some of the most deprived in the country. Rural Community Councils around the country support local rural communities in securing sustainable futures. The local rural communities are supported by experienced community development workers.

Rural Community Development in the United States

In the United States, rural community development is an essential tool in keeping rural areas economically viable in a competitive global arena. Under the United States Department of Agriculture, this is addressed through the Rural Development mission area, comprising the Rural Housing Service, Rural Utilities Service, and Rural Business-Cooperative Service. Research and data sources for rural areas of the United States is also addressed by the United States Department of Agriculture through the Economic Research Service and the National Agricultural Library's Rural Information Center.

Part of the United States Department of Commerce, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) is tasked within its mission "to generate jobs, help retain existing jobs, and stimulate industrial and commercial growth in economically distressed areas of the United States. EDA assistance is available to rural and urban areas of the Nation experiencing high unemployment, low income, or other severe economic distress."

There are four Regional Rural Development Centers in the United States that coordinate "rural development research and extension (education) programs cooperatively with the land-grant

institutions regionally and nationally. The Centers support and strengthen individual state efforts in rural areas by developing networks of university research and extension faculty from a variety of disciplines to address rural issues."

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