

Chapter 20 – Community Development

Community Development means reviving and developing local areas and communities by encouraging local community initiatives and the development of locally owned and run business.

- Local businesses have a high chance of success due to loyalty and support locally.
- They tend to be small and remain so.

Disadvantaged Communities

- Locally based development is **needed** in these areas.
- Many areas of the country **missed out on the benefits** of the country's **economic boom** because:
 - o They did not have the local features needed to attract industry.
 - o The Govt. encouraged businesses to locate in certain areas and neglect others.

Result: Local Communities face many problems such as:

- **No job opportunities and unemployment.**
- Many **communities in rural Ireland are dying** due to the lack of employment which forces young people to leave as soon as they finished school – Age profile of the areas rises, school attendance drops and local activities e.g.GAA etc decline.
- In deprived Urban areas – young people may not be forced to leave homes but may turn to **anti-social behaviour** i.e. crime and drugs due to boredom. This leads to some districts getting a bad reputation. In turn it is hard to attract investment and youth may find it hard to get jobs (Address). This leads to a sense of hopelessness.
- The **infrastructure** in some towns/villages has become **run down** due to lack of economic development which acts as a deterrent to further development.
- **High unemployment has knock on effects** – E.g. Some local shops may even close down due to lack of business.

Importance of Local Development:

- During recession, problems got worse in these districts and they don't reap the benefit of property booms from economic growth.
- It is essential for those districts to regenerate and develop from the bottom up (slow process/take initiative).
- Community development fosters and encourages a local spirit of enterprise rather than bringing in outside firms to provide goods and services.

It is important for a number of reasons:

- It is a way of **empowering the local community** to take the responsibility for identifying and using its own talent and resources for its own future. Locals are given a say in the future of their districts and a sense of pride is restored to communities which had formerly been neglected (No transnationals!!).
- **Spirit of Enterprise is encouraged through the community** in every way possible. The unemployed and local enterprises are people who get finance, help and advice. Previously they didn't!
- **A feeling of self reliance arises** amongst members of the community as they feel they can do things for themselves.
- **Social Cohesion** – Community begins to work together to deal with and solve the problems that result from social deprivation.

Benefits of Developing Local Communities

- **Spin Off Industries** – Each new venture in a local community supports other businesses by purchasing raw materials and supplies from them.
- **People and Projects** – Now access to banks. This creates new businesses and provides job opportunities.
- Success of local communities **encourages others to be enterprising**.
- Local Businesses create a flow of money in a district which benefits – i.e. school, pubs etc, - **Domino Effect**.
- As Business flourishes, the need for new infrastructure become important and local communities have **stronger arguments to put forward** in support of their claims for better roads and services.
- Number of young family's living in Community increases – more jobs create more schools and openings for professional people e.g. doctors, auctioneers, solicitors. This results in a **better standard of living**.
- Local business tends to sponsor local festivals and teams which adds to the vibrancy and renewal of the district.

Overall, by having a large number of vibrant and active communities, there will be a better population spread and better use made of natural resources and land for living space.

Developing Local Communities

- People in the area must take the initiative.
- Individuals can find it difficult to change community attitudes – but a local group has a better chance of success.
- If they can form themselves into an organisation, they have a better chance of being heard.
- They must prepare a development plan- This is like a business plan – It outlines who is involved, what they wish to do etc....
- Finance must be raised to carry out the plan.

Initiatives to Help Community Development

- Setting up a **Credit Union or Co-op** may ensure money earned in the area is spent there.
- Schemes have been put in place also to help Urban and Rural local communities combat unemployment and decline.

1. Leader Plus

- EU's community initiative for rural development.
- **EU funded scheme** to help rural communities to implement business plans for the development of their areas according to their own priorities.
- To get funding a local community **must** have a local partnership group made up of local interests, the private sector and state agencies.
- Any project to be entitled to funding must be **innovative, suitable to act as a model for other areas and Transferable(respectable elsewhere)**.
- It **provides funding** for areas such as Preservation and improvement of the local environment, IT projects and small food projects.

2. Area Partnership Companies

- They try to solve the critical problem of long-term unemployment by **encouraging the development of local enterprise which can then create jobs in a particular disadvantaged urban area**.

- Has **representatives** from local community and voluntary groups, state bodies, local employers and trade unions.
- Projects – **any type considered** but cannot put existing enterprises out of business.
- Funded by the EU and Irish Govt.
- **Funds** are distributed to **provide a full range of** services for disadvantaged people in the area including access to further education, grants and mentoring services for start up businesses etc.
- **Examples** of the partnership – The Ballymun and Tallagh Partnerships.
- **Mentors** that guide the new business people through the start up process are very important.

Benefits of local partnerships:

- **Collective response** to problems.
- **Empowers disadvantaged persons** to develop skills, knowledge, confidence and influence.
- Funds a **range of services for disadvantaged people** e.g. training, affordable childcare etc.

3. SOLAS Schemes

- **The states training and employment agency.**
- Provides skills training and reduces unemployment through schemes it runs.
- Scheme which focuses most clearly on community development is the **Community Enterprise Scheme.**
 - FAS helps **local community groups set up enterprises in their local areas through** training, advising on business start-ups, helping with recruitment and selection of staff and preparing a business plan and feasibility studies.

4. LOCAL Enterprise Boards (LEO)

- **Give advice and provide grants for small enterprises in their county.**
- Maintain **close links with all state agencies** and **the various groups** throughout the local community so they can co-ordinate local development efforts in the county.
- Will help an entrepreneur starting a small enterprise provided the evaluation committee can be convinced that:
 1. There is a market for the business.
 2. Adequate finance can be obtained.
 3. Management skills are available to run the business.
 4. The business will create some new jobs and help maintain existing ones.
- **The range of services they provide include** – ready made business ideas, help with market research and training, grants for feasibility studies (**Commercially viable projects and sustainable jobs**), finance for the purchase of fixed assets etc.

All schemes provide similar services (grants and advice), only difference is the area which the concentrated their efforts and their requirements which must be met before the release of funds.