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COURSE TITLE: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND RURAL SOCIOLOGY.

QUESTION: Discuss the importance of settlement pattern to the security of the inhabitants of the place.

ANSWER:

**IMPORTANCE OF SETTLEMENT PATTERN TO THE SECURITY OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE PLACE.**

Anywhere human beings are found is a human settlement. Ofuoko and Ebewore (2012) see a settlement as a group of people living in buildings; and that it is a unit or organized group of men, women, and children making a living out of their surrounding environment. These units may vary in size, complexity and stage of development.

Security of inhabitants of a place is the safety of the individuals in the place. This involves protecting them from anything that seems like threat to them, their lives and their properties; be it climatic change or food insecurity.

Human Settlements could be **clustered**, as commonly seen in urban areas or **dispersed** as rural areas. These settlements have importance on the security of the inhabitants of the place and it will all be discussed.

1. **Food Security:** According to Food and Agriculture Organization, “Food security obtains when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 1996). The Wold Health Organization identified three pillars underpinning food security. These are food availability, food accessibility, and food utilization. Using Nigeria as a case study, with clustered urban areas and dispersed rural areas. The dispersion of rural areas gives land availability which enables the inhabitants to go in agriculture (particularly farming). This opens the floor for availability of food which could in most times be in excess due to inadequate storage facilities and also shows their accessibility to food as they have direct access to food. The urban areas unlike the rural areas are clustered and land is not as available as rural areas due to urbanization. This unavailability of land paves way for low availability of food and there are only few farmers in an urban settings because most lands are used for residence and industrialization. This leads to the transportation of excess food in the rural areas to the urban areas in which some will be wasted due to inadequate storage facilities and poor transportation system, leaving smaller for the inhabitants of clustered urban areas. This makes the pressure on food higher and the ratio of food to each inhabitants lower than that of rural areas as the demand for food is higher than the supply of food. Utilization of food depends on the accessibility to food, which is lower in clustered urban areas than dispersed rural areas and is caused by different factors such as high population. Therefore, security of food is higher in dispersed rural areas than in clustered urban areas.
2. **Security of the Environment:** The environment consists of the organisms (plants and animals) present in it. The impacts of settlements on the on vegetation, forest and animals could be inferred to the general activities of humans in the ecosystem. Among the multiplicity of impacts, we have deforestation, devegetation, desertification and drought. In the words of Hopkins and Williams (2012), the pressure of settlement nucleation has intensified the pressure to exploit the land to the maximum-around the world. Nucleated settlement is the same as clustered settlement. In scattered or dispersed rural areas where agriculture (farming) is the major occupation, deforestation is done in order to carry out agricultural practices and also in fetching firewood by felling trees. Hunting is also done by rural dwellers which leads to great reduction of the organisms in the areas by death and emigration. All these thereby degrade the original nature of the environment as the original organisms both plants and animals in that environment before gradually have become extinct and affects the normal processes in the environment. In clustered or nucleated settlements where most land is used for used for residence and industrialized, a lot of deforestation has taken place. Clustered settlements, formerly forests were deforested at a high rate due to urbanization. The deforestation not backed by regeneration leads to desertification and affects the environment and most importantly, food production. Climatic changes occur too and together with the environmental changes the production of food reduces and affects the availability of food for the inhabitants of the settlements. Since the quality of the environment has reduced, the comfortability of the inhabitants in the environment reduces too, thereby making the inhabitants of both dispersed and nucleated environmental insecure.
3. **Climatic Security:** Climate can be defined as the atmospheric condition of a particular place for a long period of time. Deforestation by human settlements has led to desertification which has affected the climate and caused climate change. The extent of trees which form a continuous canopy, integrating sunlight and rainfall etc. has an overriding influence on the vegetative structure, forest cover, their life cycle to maturity; natural decay and regeneration are destroyed because of continuous impacts from humans who settle in and around the ecosystems. This affects the amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the air, thereby affecting climate causing climate change. Greenhouse gases such as methane produced in industries in clustered urban areas also causes climatic change as it causes greenhouse effect and leads to global warming. This global warming leads to climatic changes as global warming causes irregularities such flooding, melting of ice of polar areas and so on. This climatic changes affect the inhabitants of the settlement, example is the wild fire in Australia, thereby making the inhabitants of both scattered and clustered settlements climatic insecure.
4. **Safety of lives and properties:** This is making sure lives and properties are safe. People living in dispersed areas are far apart unlike the clustered areas, because in dispersed or scattered areas, the population of the inhabitants are few and they know one another. They are prone to robberies and criminal attacks because the distance between houses is large and most times surrounded by bushes which makes them may not to be able to call for help and even if they do they may not be heard; this makes them suspicious of strangers. This is unlike clustered settlements where houses are close and help can be easily gotten from a nearby neighbour if attack occurs. So, the lives and properties of inhabitants in the clustered areas are more secured compared to those in scattered or dispersed areas.
5. **Social Amenities Security**: Water and other social amenities such as school, electricity, medical services, etc. cannot be supplied economically. When these are available, people have long distances to travel to avail themselves of such facilities. Due to this, most people in scattered settlements go to the nearby stream to fetch water. The water from the stream is used for different purposes such as washing and drinking. Contamination of the stream is very high as people also dispose wastes into the streams, and this puts the health of the inhabitants at risk. The clustered settlements unlike the scattered settlements are close together so they can easy make the best use of social amenities provided for them. Pipe borne water is treated which makes it safer to use than the streams used by the inhabitants of the scattered settlement. Therefore, inhabitants of clustered settlements are more secured compared to the inhabitants of scattered settlements.

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