**THE RURAL COMMUNITIES**

**The Concept of a Community**

A community is an aggregation of families habitually living together within a definite geographical location, more or less rooted on the soil they occupy, living in a state of mutual interdependence, supporting some basic social institutions and having some measures of political autonomy in relation to other communities. The term “community” has been used equally to denote something both psychological and geographical. Psychologically, it implies shared interests, characteristics or association as in the expression “Community of interests”, “the business community”, “the academic community” or “a farming community”. Geographically, it denotes a specific area where people cluster. However, the sociological definition of a community combines the two meanings and denotes a people within a common locality having shared interests and behavioural patterns. Such shared interests and behavioural patterns show mainly in the areas of:

1. Production, distribution and consumption of good

2. Socialisation

3. Social control

4. Social participation and

5. Mutual support (Warren 1996).

The community is particularly characterised by the organisation of these functions on a locality basis. A locality group, the community is made up of families living together within a definite location and interacting on a face-to-face basis. However, in large communities, all members may not know each other to interact on a face-to-face and effective manner, but members interact in the use of common institutions and facilities, and maintain a consciousness of oneness through the sharing of common values, norms, traditions, prejudices and sentiments. Farm people live in village communities; some of these are small while others are large. In either case, they interact and affect each other’s behaviour in a manner which is different from the way they affect those who do not belong to these communities.

**Community Life Process** This is the process in the life of a community, by which the people plan and act together for the satisfaction of their felt needs. Its primary purpose is to bring about change for better living, through the willing cooperation of the people. Its aims are:

1. To educate and motivate people for self-help;

2. To develop responsible local leadership;

3. To inculcate a sense of citizenship and a spirit of civic consciousness;

4. To initiate self-generative, self-sustaining and enduring process of growth;

5. To introduce and strengthen democracy at the grassroots level;

6. To enable people to establish and maintain cooperative relationships;

7. To bring about gradual and self-chosen changes in the life of a community. Its significant components are:

 1. Agriculture;

2. Irrigation;

3. Education-including literacy;

4. Rural industries;

5. Health programmes;

6. Housing programmes;

7. Social welfare programmes;

8. Youth programmes;

9. Women’s programmes;

10.Cooperative;

11.Training of village leaders and

12.Employment programmes.

**Characteristics of a Community**

1. **Shared Bonds of Fellowship** This is a feature that distinguishes some people from others. It may be typified by the demand of obligations from citizens and the conferment of benefits upon them.

2. **Set Standards or Patterns of Behaviour** This refers to the psycho-social situation that arises when people perform mutual actions and reactions upon one another. Such interaction is incessant, and no citizen can wholly cut himself off from such social relations.

3. **A Common Culture** This is the aggregate of the social, ethnical, intellectual, artistic, governmental and industrial attainments of a community, and by which it can be distinguished from any other community.

4. **Shared Territory** A community occupies a territorial area, within which its members live and develop the ways of life that give the community the different features that tend to make its identity easily recognisable.

5. **Shared Beliefs** Shared beliefs are nurtured and cherished by the people in the development of their common ideals, objectives, attitudes and values.