

Keystone Paper

Keys of Local Development

An analysis of the documents from Rural Development Symposia held all over the world came up with a set of twelve common keys to effective local development. This set of twelve is a composite of shared approaches and learnings from a multitude of local projects participating in the International Exposition of Rural Development (IERD). The twelve keys of local development are as follows:

1. TOTAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

A bottom-up approach involves the whole community in its own development. Local people are the experts both in planning and activating the project, involving all ages and levels of the community in broad-based decision-making, using a consensus-based approach and team cooperation in implementation. We "Do-Our-Own-Project" is the motto of this keystone.

2. COMPREHENSIVE VILLAGE DEMONSTRATION

This keystone aims at recreating every aspect of the life of a particular community as a living manifestation of what is possible for other communities. It assumes that new programs in one community will have a "ripple" effect on other communities and institutions.

3. COMMITTED GRASSROOTS PLANNING

Planning and implementation of local development programs are done by the same set of people — the community itself. In this approach, the community analyzes its needs, identifies its problems and goals, commits itself to seeing the programs through, and regularly evaluates and monitors its own progress.

4. COHESIVE COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Project communities are aware that their future has to have continuity with their past, and that there has to be a rehearsal of community identity and intensification of community cohesiveness. This is done upholding the symbols and values the community lives before, and by

maintaining the local history and heritage through cultural festivals and regular celebrations to keep the community groupings cohesive through the healing of misunderstandings and bridging of divisions.

5. PROJECT LEADERSHIP CORES

Experience has shown that the process of development will not be sustained without the drive, motivation and accountability factor that leadership cores provide. Such leadership is made up of those who motivate the community to carry out the next stage of the plan when the people are weary or disillusioned; it uses broad-based community task forces. The women of the community are a vital element of this leadership core.

6. MOTIVATIONAL IMPLEMENTING MODE

It is not enough to do the first implementing steps with excitement and energy. The art of implementing the project plan requires that motivation be built in. Clear, focused objectives month-by-month and week-by-week permit the marking off and celebrating of a series of short-term successes which triggers group motivation.

7. INCLUSIVE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource use is foundational to the future of the community and a viable economy. Communities tend to look outside for resources before they see their own gifts. Projects have found that maximizing local resources is a necessity. The introduction of appropriate technology and the use of outside expertise have helped to unlock the economic power of resources. Key to unlocking all the other resources is optimizing the local human resources.

8. VIABLE LOCAL ECONOMICS

Allied to the management of resources is the viable local economic system. An element of viability is access to capital through credit unions, cooperative companies, and external and internal funding sources so that the community economy is self-sufficient and self-reliant. Projects have found that the key to production is assured marketing outlets for locally produced goods.

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9. COMMUNITY STRUCTURAL APPROACH

Projects have found that a structural approach is the way to deal effectively with their problems and people. The structural approach builds structural models, uses existing organizations, calls on the resources of institutions and works through them. It also sets up structures such as project leadership committees.

10. EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

This keystone is concerned with image education, general education, and with specific skills training. Image education equips people with winning images so the "impossible" can be turned into the "possible". General education is continuing adult education: academic, artistic and vocational training for all. Specific skills training is the transfer of technology and management skills. The emphasis is on drawing out the human quality of life as well as equipping for economic intensification.

11. SUPPORTIVE MULTI-SECTOR COALITIONS

Resources of the public, private and voluntary sectors can be involved in carrying through local projects, whether the resources are expertise, technology, or capital funding. When the public, private and voluntary sectors move together to enable the local sector, unusually successful team efforts in local development have been launched.

12. IMPROVED INTERCHANGE NETWORKS

Information is both a resource and a motivating factor. Regular interchange and communication is a critical key to the development effort. This can be informal communication sharing what is happening in the project, or regular news briefs that keep the community updated on the total effort. Regular meetings have been critical to rehearse common objectives and report on activities. Mass media (radio, TV and newspapers) keep an open system of interchange between the project and the world.