Steps/Phases of Community Development

Steps or phases in the community development process mean those different skills, techniques and methods which enable a professional social worker to solve various existing and arising problems of the community in a very planned and successful manner. They enable him/her to get up to date information about the community, to arrange programmes according to their expressed needs and problems and also to check their accuracy.

They are essential, important and necessary for a professional social worker during the course of community development process because their utilization has deep rooted meaning in this process and make it much more effective.

These steps of community development involve:

1) Study:

Study is the first step of the community development and most important in the sense that without having a picture of the community conditions it is difficult to formulate any programme of social development. Therefore, it is necessary for a professional community worker, who is appointed in a community where people are quite unaware or have no concept of community development, to study that community from different point of views or from different angles and corners.

But this study of the community is not possible without the cooperation of its local representatives and key persons. Because the worker is an outsider in the community and has no familiarity with its people and conditions. Therefore, first of all, he/she must have a meeting with its key persons and ask for their cooperation in getting different types of information about the community which may include what are the social, political, economic and religious conditions of the community? What types of people live in it? What is its rate of education? What are the traditions, values and customs of its people? What are their sources and resources and what are their major problems? etc.

However, the methods and techniques used in the community survey include observation, questionnaire, interview schedule, interview guide, study of any available relevant literature or journals, etc. It means that the first step of community development is designed to discover and present a broad picture of the community, which forms the foundation for planning and then execution.

2) Planning:

Planning constitutes the second step in the community development process. It is an important phase or stage in which proper planning of a programme or policy is done. It consists of the formulation of consistent ideas, policies and future course of action and absolutely depends upon the up-to-date data and true information collected by the community worker during the first phase or study of community.

However, the question arises why proper planning is necessary before the execution of any welfare programme. The answer is that it is necessary to avoid the wastage of energy, time,

resources and labour. It is essential to complete any programme or project accordingly and to assist the worker in the last stage of the community development process.

But while planning any programme of welfare, the community worker must keep in his/her mind the following important points:

1. Priority should be given to the felt and expressed needs and problems of the community people.

2. The programme should be multipurpose to meet the manifold needs of the community people.

3. The programme should be according to the customs, norms and cultural patterns of the community people.

4. The programme should take into consideration the availability of resources and technical services necessary for implementation.

5. The first programme started by the worker should have clear cut chances of success.

6. The programme should be completed within the limited time and resources.

7. The programme should be according to the overall national policies.

8. The programme should support and be supported by other projects of the community.

9. Readiness of the community people to accept the programme should also be considered.

10. The programme which will utilize the maximum labour power should be given priority.

11. The programme should have the flexibility.

3) Execution/Implementation:

It implies implementation of the plan or discipline in the practical field for the achievement of its objective. It is the stage where the actual labour force of the community can be involved in welfare activity or programme.

However, in the execution of the plan the existing administrative unit of the community should be consulted. Because formation of new administrative unit is costly. Rather in that case the achievement of main objective of community development or maximum benefit out of human resources, will not be possible. Secondly, it may create conflict between the old and new administrative units which may hinder the successful implementation of the programme. So it is better to adjust to the existing administrative set up as far as possible.

4) Evaluation:

The fourth and final stage of the community development process is evaluation. Through it a community worker observes different hurdles and difficulties which came into the way of the process and because of which he/she could not complete his/her project and programmes within the limited resources and time.

It consists in studying and assessing all the strengths and weaknesses of the programme e.g. how far the programme has met the felt and expressed needs of the people, whether it needs modification in view of the existing conditions of the community, how much response is given to it by the local people, to what extent they have shown their dignation and indignation towards it, how much time has been spent to complete it, etc.

But we should keep in mind that the evaluation does not mean to evaluate the programme in terms of its strengths and weaknesses just at the end of it rather it is a continuous process which starts with the implementation of the programme and remains continuing till the end.

So it must be conducted by every social worker otherwise he/she will have to face a number of difficulties or short comings in the next programme.