PROVIDING RURAL PUBLIC SERVICES:
Leadership and Organizational Considerations

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Related Publication

DELIVERY OF RURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES: SOME IMPLICATIONS AND PROBLEMS, by Garrey E. Carruthers, Eugene C. Enckson, and Kathryn Rennier, New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 635: Las Cruces, July 1975. This report presents a technical summary of the research results and abstracts of the individual state publications.

Ordering Publications

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Introduction

A principal characteristic of change in American society during the past half century has been the urbanization process. Urbanization, in its current phase, includes movement to the suburbs, thus creating serious public service problems in the urban core of our cities as well as across our vast rural areas. The focus of this publication is on problems of developing and sustaining public services in rural areas, specifically with regard to the organizational and leadership dimensions involved.

To quickly clarify, public services are those goods and services (i.e., education, medical care, roads, sewers, water systems, fire protection, law enforcement, etc.) which require some collective action to fund and/or to produce. As with private goods or services, there are technical problems in producing public services. However, the major additional problems in producing public services are the organizational and leadership requirements for collective action. Concerned people must find some way to work together, hence the need for an effective organizational structure and leadership capability. Unfortunately, development of an effective organizational structure is a time-consuming undertaking, often proceeding with inadequate attention given to the functions to be performed or the resources available. As a consequence, organizational structures often emerge that are ineffective in providing public services intended and, thus, are subject to continuous restructuring in an attempt to correct the situation. Moreover, existing organizations and their leadership, finding their resources and priorities changing from those which called them into being, often find adaptation to be extremely painful, if not impossible.

In this setting, Vincent Ostrom observed, "When the possible becomes impossible, we have reason to believe that problems of institutional failure have reached massive proportions." Thus, the problem we would like to address is how to create and maintain effective organizations and leadership structures to provide needed public services to rural areas. Primary attention will be given first to functional considerations involved in providing specific public services. Perhaps this orientation will offer some clues for developing workable public service organizations. Although we will not be able to ad-

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dresses all issues involved, we would like to stimulate discussion around the following concerns:

(1) How do rural communities cope with public services of both limited quantity and lower quality than those available in urban settings?

(2) How can rural organizations and leadership be developed and maintained which force accountability on state, local, and national governmental entities responsible for providing assistance to local units of government?

(3) How can the rural community development practitioner enhance his capacity to assist communities in obtaining adequate public services?

Objectives

The research project from which this publication stems, "Institutional Structures for Improving Rural Areas," was proposed to identify those leadership and organizational variables which might be altered to improve the institutional structures for providing public services to rural areas. Implicitly, the project proposal recognized that many declining rural communities will continue to decline. The objective was to identify means of promoting economic or industrial development in rural communities of the nation; rather, researchers attempted to identify means by which the quality and range of rural public services might be improved by manipulating or altering the institutions through which services are provided. Accordingly, the objective of this document is to discuss some of the weaknesses and decision-making considerations which influence the provision of rural public services.

The Setting

Census statistics document the dramatic redistribution of population which has been occurring in the United States over the last half of the century, people, in increasing numbers, have left the rural areas of our nation for residence in rapidly growing metropolitan areas. The forces contributing to this pattern of migration have been well documented. The adoption of modern agricultural technology has reduced the need for large numbers of agricultural workers. As a result of which, the United States Census reports a smaller and smaller proportion of the population engaged directly in agricultural employment as the years have passed. Agriculture, the backbone of American life, is becoming less and less dependent on the large numbers of workers it once employed. Urbanization has made possible the specialization of agricultural production in areas where adequate labor is available and the technological developments in agriculture have meant that less labor is required for the production of crops and livestock. This, in turn, has left many rural areas with excess labor capacity, which has led to increased migration to urban areas.

In the United States, urbanization has meant a great increase in the proportion of the population living in urban areas. This has resulted in a corresponding decrease in the proportion of the population living in rural areas. The decline in the rural population has been accompanied by a decrease in the number of rural workers. The rural labor force has declined in size and importance, and the proportion of the population living in rural areas has declined. The rural labor force has been replaced by jobs in urban areas, which has led to a decrease in the number of people living in rural areas.

In the recent past, many people have expressed their reactions to conditions in rural areas by moving out. While at the same time, however, some people have expressed their desire to remain in rural areas. This desire to remain has been attributed to the quality of life in rural areas, the availability of public services, and the sense of community that is often associated with rural life.

For example, the people left behind President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty (1967) "New Life for the Country: A Focus on Rural Development, USPPC, 1970; and The Quality of Rural Living, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C., 1971.


Abt, op. cit.

Anne S. Williams and Kitty K. Dick, "An Assessment of Public Services in Rural Kansas," Department of Agricultural Economics, Kansas State University, Manhattan, 1975.


Ibid., p. 1106.

Ibid., p. 15.
Characteristics of Public Goods and Services

The majority of existing economic knowledge relates to the decision-making process with private goods and services. The ownership of the product or service of private economic activity is relatively clear; the distribution of the benefits is fairly well understood. Many public services present another problem, however. In pure form, all of society can exercise a claim on the benefits resulting from production of a public service. So potential distribution is very broad and may cause considerable stress in determining production levels and the practical distribution pattern. It seems useful to examine this problem briefly before proceeding.

First, we do know something about public services. For the brief discussion that follows, we will refer to economic activitiesunder which goods and services are called "public goods." This conformst to existing practice of political scientists and economists working in this field. A public good is a product or service produced by a specific group in such a manner that the consumption by any member of the group does not reduce the access of any other group member to the good or service. A classic example is a light house. Here, some group provides a beam of light with publicized characteristics from a known location. Any individual in the group can use the "good" and not reduce the benefits available to others in the group. But here lies one of the most serious problems—any non-group member could likewise utilize the public good, hence, the total benefits may be underestimated and the sacrifices borne only by a subset of the population or economic agents.10

The non-exclusive nature of public goods surely does influence their means of production. Individuals are encouraged to be "free riders" by refraining from joining the group producing the public good and subsequently enjoying the benefits at no personal sacrifice. As a public good may be seriously under-produced and exploited because all benefits are not captured in a manner to provide sufficient incentive for adequate production, it should be noted here that public "basis" can also be under-produced. In this situation a group may produce a good or service which creates problems for non-group members. In this case, the producing group may appropriate the benefits in excess of their sacrifices by forcing sacrifices on outside groups; here the "public basis" will be over-produced since total sacrifices which accrue directly to the producing group are less than their total benefits. An example is water pollution generated by a city with no sewage treatment facilities. By polluting the river, one city keeps its treatment costs low, while a downstream community must incur the costs of a sewage treatment facility to clean up the problem. The upstream town may thrive due to lower costs, but the downstream town must and export their "bad" costs to the downstream city. In this case, the upstream city is a free rider enjoying benefits with little or no sacrifice. This type of situation can exist for many publicly provided goods, i.e., let another taxing district provide the parks, libraries, or hospitals, etc. This frequently results in less than adequate levels of service, because sacrifices are not equally borne by those benefiting. These problems also exist when the state or local governments are involved. Hirschman indicates that these non-market situations do not usually permit "exit" (voting with one's feet) or "voice" under the public sector in the last case—the downstream town. The most mobile individual may be able to walk away from the problem, but many are locked into the situation and "voice" may be the only mechanism open for expressing their needs.

The extent to which publicly provided goods and services are "pure public goods" varies considerably. A sewer and water system fair to all members who are connected to it and benefit from it. Those who are hooked to the system. Even here, however, pollution caused by those who are not connected to the system affects those who are. But streets and roads are generally open for all to use and others public services have characteristics. These characteristics of public goods surely do affect the jurisdictional domain, the organizational form, and the leadership structure of public service organizations.

Variables Which Influence Public Service Delivery Systems

A variety of institutional structures, serving a rather wide range of geographic areas and with a variety of functional purposes, have been organized to provide public service in states in which this research was conducted. In summary, variables which seem to influence the characteristics of public service delivery systems include: 1) population density; 2) geographic location; 3) presence to major metropolitan centers; 4) availability and source of financial resources to support given services; 5) participation of voluntary organizations in service delivery systems; 6) cooperative arrange-

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**Footnotes:**


2. We use the term "sacrifices" instead of "costs" to emphasize the fact that more than economic issues are involved.


ments among municipal, county, state, regional, and federal governmental agencies; 7) attitudes and ex-
periences of the public, particularly low-income persons, regarding levels of public services; and 8) unique requirements of the service being delivered. In each case, these factors, either alone or in combination, seem to have a dramatic influence on the form and struc-
ture of the services and the resulting access, quality and variety of locally available public serv-
ces.

Population Density. When populations are small and physically scattered over large geographic ex-
panse, necessary services cannot be provided at the same per capita cost as is possible in urban centers. Further, rural residents' access to services is reduced by the physical barrier of geographical space. In areas of sparse population and where there are no economic advantages between communities, per capita costs of providing services increase dramatically with the result that fewer and lower-quality services become (as judged by urban standards) available. The service delivery system, therefore, must be designed to provide services at lowest possible cost to local economic and physical barriers.

Economic Efficiency. It seems appropriate here to comment on the issue of economic efficiency. Economic efficiency is concerned with value of output per unit of input, hence oriented toward cost containment. Economic efficiency is not necessarily the single most important objective of people needing public services. Rather, people must first determine the quality and quantity of a given public service desired. For example, community residents may decide that their school system should provide a certain range of educational programs. A specialized quality, even though cost per pupil may well exceed that of the average school in urban areas. Initial attention is on the specification of the nature of the quality of the educational programs desired; then, and only then, on how to deliver them at the lowest cost. How then do we determine the way of providing that agreed upon public service. Efficiency should be considered a criterion in selecting among options, but should not become an end in itself.

Geographic Area. In addition to problems posed by vast geographic spaces, physical barriers such as rivers, lakes, and inclement weather conditions interfere with access to necessary services. In some cases, communication and/or transportation networks can be designed to reduce problems of geographic isolation from necessary services. In all cases, however, an effective service delivery system must take into consideration and be designed to overcome unique problems posed by physical or geographic barriers.

Distance to Urban Centers. Every community cannot expect to offer all varieties of public services and programs that are provided at the local level. Such services are not only expensive to provide, but only a very small proportion of the population will need to use such services. Specialized services are, therefore, most efficiently provided on a regional basis. An exception would be those specialized public services which are expensive to provide, not frequently used by the majority of the population, and thus are located in larger regional centers where the population and economic bases are large enough to support them. However, residents of surrounding hinterland communities who require such specialized services may be too distant from the regional center and thus not have adequate access to its services (and, in fact, may not even know the services exist). Therefore, these factors of citizen awareness and distance to service combined with the economics of service delivery are systematically incorporated into design of the service delivery system.

Financial Resources. Both the amount as well as the source of public funds affect the quality and variety of locally available public services. Clearly, if revenues diminish, some services will be eliminated and/or others will be curtailed. This has been a major problem for those rural communities that have been losing population, and perhaps a larger tax base, over the past two or three decades. However, many locally available public services have been financed in large part by state and federal revenues (hospital, schools, and other services are examples). Such funds are provided on an often formula-driven basis. Only specialized public services and conditions under which they may be used are also established primarily by the funding agency. The result is that the How can we determine the nature of the educational programs desired and the way of delivering them at the lowest cost? Efficiency should be considered a criterion in selecting among options, but should not become an end in itself.
Leadership and Organizational Considerations

The influence of diverse organizational and leadership structures on provision of high-quality rural public services is, perhaps, the critical research question for those concerned with improving conditions in rural communities. The inadequacy of local governmental and other institutions to cope with problems involving both the city and the countryside has been much discussed. For example, Williams and Lassey note that local government has not had the geographic breadth, legal power, or financial capability to deal with area-wide problems.82 State government has found it difficult to deal with the multiplicity of local jurisdictions originated for purposes of planning, administration, and economic or social development. Federal government lacks local support or productivity to adapt national programs and priorities to needs of sub-state areas. The inefficiencies and inequities at each level of government have greatly diluted the effectiveness of many well-meaning public service efforts. Local officials and citizens have often been immensely frustrated by inability of any single governmental jurisdiction to solve local problems or effectively influence current or new state and federal programs. However, local units of government provide communities with a significant voice, perhaps the only readily available one, to express their needs and concerns to the governments above them. As such, local governments have the opportunity to "fine-tune" the broader policies of state and federal programs as they relate to local conditions. In fact, there appears to be a growing desire among people at the local level to have more to say about what is coming down from higher levels of government and to want more direct control over how programs are developed.83

Leadership Considerations

Observers have often noted the reluctance of local governmental units to draw upon the greater resources available to them, at least in theory, from other levels of government. For example, Wikelin notes that: "The reluctance of local governmental units to become a part of integrated governmental structures on the basis of community innovations has hindered progress in the handling of the problems of education, health, recreation, and other services needed in rural areas."84 Such reluctance perhaps can be attributed in part to: 1) an unwillingness of local leaders to give up power and positions; 2) a conflict of interest among occupational and residential groups; 3) a lack of knowledge of problems and means for their solution; or 4) an inability of other levels of government to assist local communities on local terms. Outward bureaucratic dissonance threatens the power of local leaders, which may be only reluctantly given up due to their own self-interests. In addition, the local leader desires to resist the outsider bureaucracy to preserve, at least, the illusion of local control. As a result, leaders tend to distrust bureaucrats and tend to neutralize their effectiveness by co-opting bureaucratic program efforts. At times their resistance may even maintain their influence, but reduces real benefits that could be generated in the community. In any event, it appears that many local barriers are redundant, or perhaps for other reasons have not been able, to develop linkages to organizations and resources outside the local community.

In this respect it is important to comment upon Roland Warren's distinction between "horizontal" and "vertical" ties.85 The functioning of local community units (education, government, etc.) requires at least some minimum of local interaction and, to effectively provide local public services, local interorganizational linkages must be developed. The relationship of the local community units to one another and their pattern of local interaction are called the community's "horizontal pattern."86 In contrast, local community units are also tied directly to systems of interaction outside of the community. This latter pattern of interaction is called the community's "vertical pattern."

Warren makes the case that, as our society becomes more urban and bureaucratic in nature, horizontal ties among local community units become weaker while vertical ties of local community units to the extra-community systems of which they are a part, become increasingly stronger. If concurrent efforts are not made to maintain the strength of the horizontal community ties, the ability of local community leaders to provide public services at the local level is greatly diminished. In effect, fragmented provision of community services is encouraged by simultaneously weakening of horizontal community linkages. The effect of vertical ties on the local community is evident when one considers potential impacts of federal government programs on the functioning of service-
zations at the local community level. Indeed, slight changes in the dynamics of the mass migrations can have profound effects on the rural way of life and on its major social and economic institutions.  

As stronger vertical ties impose on local communities, dramatic changes in the functions and structure of these communities are experienced. For example, the growth of a small village or rural community (undergoing extensive change due to the growth of a nearby small city)Payne indicates that the community leaders anticipated changes in the function of their town and that the leaders had rather definite ideas concerning the form that change would take. However, these leaders preferred changes other than those they expected and thought of themselves as better prepared to assist in changes they preferred, rather than in changes they expected to take place. This case study points out that local community leaders do not necessarily influence over- outside forces which were fundamentally affecting the future of their community. Likewise, they considered themselves ill-prepared to assist their communities in adapting to changes that were likely to occur. Payne concludes that "... the very people who must guide the process are rural (not urban-or suburban) in background, training, and value orientation, and therefore their leadership must be exerted under unfamiliar and/or unfavorable conditions, with each being called upon to do things he does not know how to do and is too reluctant to do, even though he has accepted the responsibility of office or position."  

A separate study of leadership in small rural communities describes two communities in which the structure of leadership was identified. This condition of "amorphous" leadership was thought to be associated with the social and economic conditions prevalent in the community. The last study suggests implications of providing leadership functions within the community. The community".  

The reluctance of community-oriented local leaders to become involved with organizations and agencies from regional, state, and federal levels becomes apparent in many cases because of the myopic basis many leaders have. All too often local citizens have been manipulated by professionals at higher levels of government who view people as resources for serving the ends of the institutions they represent. Rural citizens have had too many such experiences and, hence, have become extremely wary of "experts" who promise much, but in the end, increasingly impose their solutions upon their "clients" as individuals and communities to exercise control over their destinies. Vertically oriented organizations tend to become increasingly self-serving, often forgetting their founding purpose was to serve people in their struggle to acquire public goods and services in order to enjoy an enriched quality of living. The local community development practitioner is in a unique position to reverse this trend by attempting to sensitize local organizations and agencies to the potentially stifling effects of such development practices.  

Mancur Olson's discussion of the incentives which motivate leadership involvement in group activities is instructive. Though all of the members of the group have a common interest in obtaining this collective benefit, they have no common interest in paying the cost (including the leadership) of providing that collective good.  

Olsen further argues:  

"In a very small world, where each member gets a substantial proportion of the total gain simply because there are few others in the group, a collective good can often be provided ... for the greater the interest in the collective good by any single member, the greater the likelihood that that member will get such a significant proportion of the total benefit from the collective good that he will gain from seeing that the good is provided, even if he has to pay all of the cost himself."  

If this thesis is correct, it provides an obvious clue for identifying potential leaders in a community. Local leaders are most likely to be those citizens who believe they will benefit most, perhaps enough to bear the sacrifice involved in leadership, from efforts to secure locally desired public goods or services. The community practitioner should keep in mind that local leadership is not always identified as a set of leaders who actually control most of what happens in a community. Rather, a pluralistic situation is more likely to prevail in which power distributions within the community are temporary and constantly shifting depending on the needs of various groups and their interests. Local leadership will tend to emerge in support of different kinds of public services. A group of citizens interested in a particular development program is likely to be the influential leaders in regard to that public service, whereas another group might provide leadership in acquiring health care facilities. Nevertheles, there may be some economically and politically accountable people who, because of their belief in the fact that meeting those needs will serve their own interests as well, join in some local social action programs which are formed as a single, predominant leadership group, and which are so familiar to many community development practitioners, are not appropriate when dealing with contemporary rural communities. The astute and cautious community developer will not be trapped by the notion that there is one set of influencers to whom he must respond. On the contrary, if he learns to listen effectively, he will be able to identify and nurture multiple leadership groups interested in working in a variety of specific community problems. However, well-trained, competent local leaders are not all that readily available.  

Montana researchers report that in a study of a seven-county area, agency representatives were the central development leaders. Montana, public acceptance and effectiveness of a multi-county federation were limited because the leadership of the organization was overly representative of rural, agricultural interests; 70 percent of the population of the multi-county area resided in a urban area. In a case of that kind of federation, leaders were from the surrounding hinterland communities. The researchers concluded that representative development of local community leaders is an important ingredient for successful development programs. Texas researchers concur with this statement in their recommendation that, since it is difficult for our society for citizens to participate effectively in the affairs of a community, it is imperative that at least the leadership be representative of citizens' interests. Furthermore, under-representation of one segment of the population can severely inhibit promising development efforts. Mississippi researchers found that the more successful local development programs involved a cross-section of leaders representative of the community.  

In a comparative study of three Mississippi communities, 'structural congruence' between the organizational and leadership structure would promote
development best when there is an effective relationship between the volunteer participant, the leader, and the agency specialist; the leadership of the development organization must be representative of citizens as well as relevant agencies and organizations within the community. The authors also recognized that leaders must be easily identifiable by fellow community leaders and that the larger and more active the leadership group, the more they are recognized by both leaders and other community residents. This finding was supported by research in New York where results indicated that those leaders judged to have high influence in the community were also those who were significantly more active both with citizens, volunteer organizations, and other groups within the community. However, the effective community development professional will be alert to emergence of potential leadership from competing interest groups having particular public service needs and will help them become a viable participant in community decision-making.

Organizational Considerations

Clearly, community organizations generally fall to represent all interest groups within the community, and one may raise the question of "how representative community organizations need to be to succeed in their objectives." As a general rule, community development organizations need to involve citizens who can change local views of groups likely to benefit as well as those expected to assume some sacrifices as a result of proposed action. If sacrifices benefit, benefits accrue equally to all members of the community, the question of "representativeness" is lifted (although this rarely, if ever, happens). If, not benefits are not positive, however, one needs to question reasonableness of the proposed activity.

In Montana, Williams and Lassey concluded that grass-roots efforts to improve community conditions were initiated in response to citizen dissatisfaction with existing local, state, and federal programs designed to meet areas. In the absence of such dissatisfaction, however, successful grass-roots organizational efforts did not develop. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that when regional organizations were locally initiated and controlled, citizens identified more readily with the organizations, participated more extensively, and were capable of developing programs more responsive to local needs.

The conclusions of research in Mississippi, Montana, New York, and Texas are consistent: organizations at the local community level, or at the regional level, will be effective only to the extent that they elicit enthusiastic involvement and cooperation of local influential citizens; if the leadership of the community is not involved or represented fully in the organizational structure, programs and proposals of that organization will not achieve their promised objectives.

Frequently, the field practitioner initiates his community development activities by identifying locally influential citizens or perhaps simply accomplishes a self-introduction to the prominent local leaders. The field practitioner then begins his process of assisting development by trying to facilitate public involvement in local decision-making. The definition of a problem, identification of alternatives and their consequences, taking action, and evaluation are familiar activities to the practitioner. However, definition of the specific public goods to be offered, organization of their service delivery systems, delineation of jurisdictional areas to be served, and so on, are decisions that frequently are made by bureaucratic agencies outside the community. The agencies that provide public services develop a tendency, along with other large, private, and public organizations, to develop programs consistent with internal organizational objectives. The general public, or in this case, the rural community, may have almost no effective influence upon established agency goals. Gordon Tullock argues this is the usual case and professionals within such agencies advance vested in involving the organization's internal objectives (management by objective) with little regard to the effectiveness of the program in terms of public service as evaluated by non-agency objectives. If Tullock is correct, the role and assertiveness of local community groups is of primary importance in forcing agencies to be responsive to non-agency objectives. Under these conditions, the challenge to the community development practitioner is to strengthen horizontal integration at the community level so that citizens can acquire the power to force accountability of public agencies at higher levels of government. On the basis of past performance it is difficult to be enthusiastic concerning the influence of local government programs of large outside organizations, public or private. But, there are enough solid examples to offer some encouragement for continued efforts. Block grants under revenue sharing could be a step in this direction. Some states have passed enabling legislation for increased local autonomy.

operation are known to most community development practitioners. Frequently, credit goes to a few very well informed and articulate leaders who have worked through the political or bureaucratic structure to reach policy people and there have presented overwhelming evidence in support of the local position. In modifying the organizational program, the outside organization gains "grass roots" support, too frequently missing, and may justifiably be proud of the turn of events. But inability to duplicate these situations is a real challenge for all interested in community development.
Providing Rural Public Services

The need for functional relationships between government organizations and voluntary citizens' organizations is being realized by Mississippi researchers. They found that organization and leadership structures are more likely to promote development when there is a balance in participation and cooperation between voluntary associations and government agencies. Their data suggest that strong and viable voluntary citizens' organizations are essential for sustained community development programs.4

Government programs designed and implemented "from the top down" have been notably unsuccessful. To effectively provide high-quality rural public services, regional, state, or county organizations must receive enthusiastic support of the local citizens or its representative leaders. In other words, regardless of the structure of the development organization, it can function only if it has grassroots support at the local community level. In practice, this usually means that the proposed activities of such organizations are expected to result in positive net benefits to the community. Essentially, local citizens must be involved or participating in these activities in meaningful ways.

McEntire asserts that development of regional organizations is a direct result of the inadequacy of existing structures of local government; mainly, local government and the staff are inactive in coping with modern problems (they lack both financial and technical resources); and, jurisdictional boundaries may not fit with the geographic regions of economic development or social needs.4 Montana researchers also conclude that there is an explicit recognition of inadequacies of the existing organizational units.4 Texas researchers report that multi-county organizations have formed in that state for the following reasons: 1) to comply with federal and state regulations; 2) to fulfill local interests; 3) to receive state and federal funding; 4) to facilitate administration; 5) to localize services (from a statewide to an area basis); 6) to overcome overlapping and independent efforts; and 7) to overcome outdated means of coping with many diverse problems.4 The rationale for regional organizations seems compelling. Fujimoto and Zone state that any feasible sized community must depend on the larger community for at least some of its needs.4 Present-day mobility makes the independent type of relationship commonplace and quite often desirable.4 So, we appear to be on the horns of a dilemma; on the one hand, existing service delivery arrangements, including financial, managerial-technical, and leadership capabilities, have not resulted in sufficiently high-quality rural public services. On the other hand, regional service delivery systems have been notably inadequate in accomplishing the goals set for them by the governments themselves. Local citizens generally have not responded enthusiastically to regional organizations which they regard as bureaucratic schemes (from the top down) imposed upon them by state or federal governments. They perhaps view these regional structures as further attempts at strengthening vertical integration (i.e., reorganizing vertical organization to increase efficiency in achieving bureaucratic goals at the expense of dealing effectively with local community needs and goals). One challenge to the community development practitioner is to assist local people in sensitizing policy-makers to the need to develop policies that will allow for strengthening horizontal organization. In his work with the community, the field practitioner can initiate and nourish the process whereby many more people of a community participate, perhaps through their representatives, in identifying and carrying out action with respect to their own problems. Emphasis might be placed upon developing linkages among the various community organizations so that their joint efforts might culminate in provision of needed community goods and services. The concern of the community development practitioner should be on the appropriate group for providing a particular public service ability and community integration to resolve the problem. The basis upon which horizontal integration is facilitated at the local community level is through effective communication between citizens and among their community organizations.

Conclusions

Although much of the research reported here offers compelling reasons for the failures of local government to successfully provide quality public services, the solution does not lie in the elimination of existing local governmental units. Rather, local units of government are going to have to be strengthened if the locus of political power is to begin shifting back to where local people exercise greater control over the provision of their public services. Local governmental units indeed provide a mechanism for "fine-tuning" plans developed at the regional, state, or national levels for implementation at the local community level, and also provide the single most important vehicle through which citizens can acquire more information as to what is happening at the local public service program. Nevertheless, local governmental units have not developed and many cannot develop sufficient organizational and leadership skills to provide services requested of them. Researchers in Montana, for example, document severe inadequacies in the training and expertise of local government personnel, severe shortages of funds to provide the kinds of rural services citizens request and expect, and inadequacies of existing jurisdictional boundaries for provision of services.4 However, local citizens in rural areas are often realistic, sympathetic, or unresponsive to problems of service delivery. They are highly concerned, although perhaps at times resigned to living with public service conditions inferior to those of their urban counterparts. Perhaps if local governments had more effective access to resources from state, regional, and federal sources, and if local governments were thereby encouraged to begin developing managerial and technical skills, provision of locally controlled and directed public service programs would proceed much more successfully. If we bring decision-making to the citizen or grass-roots level, perhaps these programs designed to alleviate problems of rural living would be more "fine-tuned" with the real problems of rural residents face, and the "fine-tuning" needed to adapt federal, regional, and state programs to local community needs would occur more naturally.

"Williams and Dick, op. cit.

However, bringing decision-making to the citizen level means more than merely "fine-tuning" existing public programs to meet local needs. It means that local citizens must be making meaningful inputs into the formulations of national social and economic policies and be involved in determining structure and processes through which these policies reach the community level. Roland Warren argues that the contests having major impact on local communities are fought and resolved in the national political arena. "Local communities need to take an active role in shaping the national future, rather than merely making purely local adaptations to that future. They are shaped by the national society, and they can exercise a greater voice in national policy-making than they have in the past. Without such influence in national policy, community development efforts will necessarily be confined to relatively superficial issues leaving untouched those major issues, policies, and actions which determine a large part of the fate of the local communities and local people."5 The challenge to the community development practitioner is quite clear.

The community development practitioner is in a unique position to help bring about some fairly radical changes in the economic and political structure of rural America by becoming an advocate of community interests and community control over the resources of development. By fostering strong horizontal patterns in the community, he will assist the community in mobilizing internal resources and in capturing outside resources by helping develop political sophistication among community citizens to force accountability and effect policy in both larger units of government and large private corporations. Only through strengthening local governmental units—by bolstering their administrative, organizational, and technical expertise, and by increasing their financial resources—can the quality of rural public services begin to satisfy needs and expectations of rural citizens.

Bibliography

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