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GEOG 370 Geography of Sustainable Development

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Q1 – Final exam

Self-help and People Participation is a Bottom-up Approach of Sustainable Development. Explain and give 4 examples from peer reviewed articles.

- Self-help is a form of a bottom-up development which contrasted the top-down approach.
- It is a social institution that deeply rooted in the culture and the values of the traditional societies in the developing countries.
- Self-help is a collective effort to help individuals and has been used as a strategy to develop villages.
- It is a labor-intensive kind of development.
- This, however, stems from the believe that communities in the developing nations live as a communal society that represent an extended family which respond to the socio-economic needs of its own individuals as well as that benefit the community.
- Self-help responds to the need of individual during the time of natural disasters such as droughts and floods.
- Hence, the community helps disaster victims with food, shelter, milk goat or help in building rooms (huts) .
- The other form of self-help is that which serves the development of the community through provision of social services such as building schools, provision of water supply and health services.
- This was the original methods of self-help before the intervention of government and non-governmental organization (NGOs).
- Such work is often guided by local traditional leadership or local committees formed of farmers, chiefs and religious men
- Self-help was practiced in most part of the Sub-Saharan Africa and it has different names such as Harambee in Kenya, Nafeer in Sudan.
- The efficiency and the high credibility of the leadership, whether an individual or a group of few people, stem from the fact that they are well respected in their societies and the small affordable projects that they carry in the villages.
- Self-help can be viewed as an important and integral part of strategies for rural development.

Self-help and Participatory approach

- Self-help has gained more popularity as a means of local development following the oil crisis of the 1970s, when the external aid and support from the developed countries to the developing nations decreased.

- As a result, for example many African countries rely on the local human and socio-economic resources to enhance development including the local tradition of self-help.
- In this way contribution and involvement of people in the large projects will reduce the cost of implementation.
- From a socio-economic view, self-help is a form of a labor-intensive project that ensures mobilization of all people of the village.
- It is in a sense that it is an early attempt of “participatory approach”, where development projects are implemented through a combined effort of both governments and residents.
- In other words, people are helping themselves by themselves which reflects an equal distribution of wealth and resources.
- A good example of this kind of projects from Africa is anti-thirsty program which implement by Sudanese government with help of local people in 1973 which benefited thousands of Sudanese in a wide extensive area, that suffered from the lack or shortage of safe water in western Sudan.
- People contributed significantly to the project whether in a form of financial support, or in kind (materials or providing food) and most people contributed through offering their own laborer.
- The outcome of this project was impressive. A large number of the local communities (villages) in Western Sudan have been provided with water supply.
- The government provided pumps and diesel engines.
- Another example was the “Harambee" self-help program that succeeded in constructing high schools Kenya.
- Self-help means self-reliance since these projects were implanted with little and often no government financial support.
- In general, self-help and participatory approach showed success in the fields of resource management, drinking water supply and sanitation, and forest management.
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