

Unit One: What is Rural Development?

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UNIT INFORMATION

Unit Overview

This unit provides an introduction to key themes in rural development, how they originated and the way they have been applied in practice. It begins by looking at some of the defining characteristics of 'rural development' and what distinguishes it from 'development' more generally. The unit then moves on to look at how mainstream approaches to rural development have evolved over time, beginning with the green revolution, integrated rural development and 'basic needs', before looking at more recent trends relating to participation, sustainability and livelihoods.

Unit Aims

- To present the scope and origins of rural development. (Section 1)
- To examine state intervention in the rural sector during the 1970s – the green revolution, integrated rural development and 'basic needs' – and the lessons these provide for rural development policy in the 21st century. (Section 2)
- To look at the response to top-down approaches to rural development and the importance attached to participation. (Section 3)
- To introduce the concepts of environmental, economic and social sustainability. (Section 4)

Unit Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- list the distinctive features of rural development and explain the origins of rural development in relation to the failure of past development policies to benefit the poor and stimulate growth (Section 1)
- explain how, in the 1970s, concerns for efficiency and equity were reflected in policies relating to the green revolution, integrated rural development and the 'basic needs' approach and to critically assess the relevance of these policies for the 21st century (Section 2)
- explain critically the role and origins of 'participation' in rural development (Section 3)
- outline the different dimensions of sustainability and their relevance to the problems of rural development (Section 4)

KEY READINGS

- ❖ Ellis F, Biggs S (2001) Evolving themes in rural development 1950s–2000s. *Development Policy Review* **19**(4) 437–448.

Provides a summary of the evolution of thinking and practice in rural development in the second half of the 20th century. It includes a number of themes that are examined in this unit, as well as some additional ones. It relates to the whole of the unit and could be read once you have finished reading through the unit. As you read make a note of the following:

- The rural development ideas and themes timelines in Figures 1 and 2. You are not expected to memorise each of the listed items, but do look out in particular for those that we cover in the unit.
- Discussion of the role of agriculture and of small farms in rural development, and in particular the point made about ‘rural growth linkages’ at the bottom of p. 441. What position do you think the authors take on the centrality of smallholder agriculture in rural development?
- The various strands of ‘process approaches to rural development’ (p. 443).
- The livelihoods approach to rural development and its relationship with other approaches (pp. 444–445).

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- ❖ IFAD (2010) Introduction. In: *Rural Poverty Report 2011*. International Fund for Agricultural Development, Rome, pp. 29–41

This short reading is the introduction from your textbook. It provides some background to the problems of rural poverty and the challenges that lie ahead. It also provides some background to the writing of the report itself and sources of data. As you read, consider the following questions:

- What have been the impacts of the 2007–2008 food price spike on hunger and on agricultural policies in different parts of the world?
- How do an increasing number of rural poor earn their living?
- What recent patterns of change (both global and local) have affected rural people, rural economies, and thinking about rural development?

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- ❖ Mohan G (2007) Participatory development: from epistemological reversals to active citizenship. *Geography Compass* **1**(4) 779–796.

Before reading this article, it is important to be clear what the author is writing about when he discusses epistemologies, epistemology, and epistemological. Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge (and hence its validity and use), while epistemologies are different theories or beliefs about the nature of knowledge. We all have epistemologies which we apply whenever we are using or generating knowledge. This article considers participatory development from an epistemological perspective, asking fundamental questions about participation in terms of the way that different approaches to participatory development, and to other development processes, are embedded in and concerned with different epistemologies. The epistemological reversal referred to in the article is the switch from top-down thinking that relies on expert knowledge to bottom-up participatory approaches that rely on local knowledge. You do not need to read the entire article, but should focus on parts that are particularly relevant to our interest in participatory development (although you may like to read the whole article – it is interesting).

Mohan continued:

First read the abstract and introduction on pp. 779–780. Do not worry too much about the details; these should become clear when you have read the whole article. However, note the objective of the paper, to critique the epistemological assumptions that underpin participatory development and to identify the need for complementary institutional change with differentiated accountability allowing for diversity between people in different areas.

Now read the section on ‘*The rise and reinvention of PD*’ from pp. 780–782. Note the different understandings of participation (pp. 780–781) and changing ideologies and themes (pp. 781–782).

How are types of participation (pp. 780–781) linked to themes, and how would you rank these as regards degree of participation?

You may have come up with something like this:

Types	Themes/goals	Degree of participation
Nominal	↓ Efficiency and effectiveness Mutual learning	Low ↓ High
Passive		
Consultative		
Empowering	Transformative	

Now read the section ‘*Critical responses to mainstream participation*’ from pp. 782–787. Here, Mohan identifies some of the contradictions that arise when different types of participatory development are applied with different goals. Note down these contradictions.

You may have noted the following:

- A process that is supposed to distribute power and voice can instead concentrate power – in the facilitator and in articulate sub-groups – while excluding others or restricting them to more passive engagement.
- Despite its group’s approaches, the individual, local and project focus in much participatory development (PD) has focused on (narrower) imminent development and, in so doing, has ignored the effects of, and people’s contributions to, wider underlying change (immanent development). These broader concerns are, however, basically to do with political and institutional issues of transparency, responsiveness and accountability, and the failure of PD to explicitly address these issues undermines its ability to deliver effectiveness, efficiency and empowerment even within its narrower more ‘imminent’ focus. The author argues that it tends to naively assume that these issues will emerge from and be addressed by PD.

(Note that ‘imminent development’ refers to processes of development that are actively promoted through specific action or intervention – what is normally covered by development activity. ‘Immanent development’, on the other hand, describes wider and more fundamental social, political and economic changes that arise as part of the processes of development.)

Mohan then argues that PD is adopted for a variety of wider political reasons (a recognition of the need for states to give their people a semblance of opportunities for engagement, as wider development processes lead to alienation, and as a response to neo-liberal globalism, as globalism weakens democracy and neo-liberalism uses participatory development to bypass and weaken the state). As a consequence, both its transformative and its more common limited efficiency/effectiveness achievements are undermined. He nevertheless recognises that there are situations where participatory development can be transformative. Note the conditions he identifies under which this occurs.

Mohan continued:

You may skip the next section (pp. 787–793) and end with the first part of the conclusions, on p. 793. Note Mohan’s emphasis on ‘places’, which resonates with one defining feature of rural development being the importance of its spatial characteristics in underpinning social and economic relations and conditions.

Conclude the reading by answering the following questions:

- Which of Mohan’s critiques of participatory development are valid in your opinion – and why?
- How can an understanding of these critiques be useful in rural development?

❖ Wiggins S, Proctor S (2001) How special are rural areas? The economic implications of location for rural development. *Development Policy Review* **19**(4) 427–436.

This reading provides a framework for understanding rural areas and the particular challenges that they face. It offers additional insights with respect to the learning outcome for Section 1, but also has broader relevance. It should help in gaining an understanding of the relative importance of agricultural and non-agricultural activities in the pursuit of rural development and poverty reduction. As you read, try to answer the following questions:

- What do the authors consider to be the distinguishing features of rural areas? (pp. 427–428)
 - What explanations are given for the formation of towns and what implications do these have for rural development? (pp. 428–430)
 - Under what conditions may rural non-farming activities develop? (pp. 430–431)
 - How do the authors classify rural areas? How realistic do you think these classifications are? (pp. 432–434). Try to relate these classifications to rural areas you are familiar with or have visited. What changes are likely to take place over time?
 - What conclusions do the authors draw in relation to the prospects for, and approaches to, reducing rural poverty? (p. 435)
-

FURTHER READINGS

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MULTIMEDIA

Millennium Villages Project (2010) *Thriving in the Drylands*. Video.

The Millennium Villages Project is an attempt to demonstrate the benefits of large scale investment in integrated rural development in selected sites in Africa. Three videos here showcase MVP activities and achievements in a village in Kenya and in Malawi. An evaluation of the MVP programme in 2008 by the UK Overseas Development Institute (ODI 2008) concluded that 'The Millennium Villages Project (MVP) has achieved remarkable results and has demonstrated the impact of greater investment in evidence-based, low-cost interventions at the village level to make progress on the Millennium Development Goals'. However, wider achievements are limited by the scale of resources required for wider rolling out of the approach. Proponents of the approach argue that this demands commitment of wider resources, whereas critics question if it is realistic to rely on such high investments, if achievements with intensive management of individual villages can be maintained with wider scaling up, and if this technical approach can address wider institutional and economic constraints. There are also wider questions about the role of external aid as raised by William Easterly.

This video is available on your e-study guide.

Aidwatch (2010) *Why the World Needs Independent Aid Critics: the Video*. Audio.

Easterly asks not only if there need to be independent aid critics, but if the model of large-scale external investment is appropriate, and if real progress really depends on bottom-up entrepreneurship. That then leads to questions about scale and speed of change, the conditions necessary for this to work, and the range of situations and people who can benefit.

This audio recording is available on your e-study guide.

Beattie A, Wade R (2009) *False Economy*. Episode 16, Development Drums, Audio.

A discussion by Alan Beattie and Robert Wade of different experiences with and views of development and development policy.

This audio recording is available on your e-study guide.

1.0 CONCEPTS AND CHALLENGES

Section Overview

Rural development is a particular and distinctive branch of development. It has been influenced by, and also influences, development thinking and practice. This section looks at what rural development is, what it has in common with other branches of development, as well as what sets it apart.

Section Learning Outcome

By the end of this section, students should be able to:

- list the distinctive features of rural development and explain the origins of rural development in relation to the failure of past development policies to benefit the poor and stimulate growth

1.1 Trends in development thinking

Many of you will already be working in the field called rural development. Perhaps you are someone with an applied economics background, such as agricultural economics. Perhaps you have a technical specialisation, for example, in irrigation or health care. Or perhaps you are a social scientist specialising in politics, anthropology, geography or demography. You may be a researcher, consultant, project manager or policy-maker – or you may be entirely new to this field. Whoever you are, this unit should equip you with a better understanding of some of the broad themes of rural development and, thus, provide a context within which to examine particular areas of rural development – such as those that you might be involved in.

Before looking at the rural dimensions of development it is worth taking a brief look at the concept of development itself. Outlined below are some very broad, and in some cases, overlapping, themes in development thinking. Although their influence on policy and analysis has changed over time, most remain influential to some degree.

Development as universal history

Karl Marx (writing in the last century) described development as progression through a series of socioeconomic stages – culminating in socialism – through which a society must inevitably pass during the course of its history. Each stage represents a different 'mode of production', in other words, a different type of relationship between people and resources in the production process. The agent of change is class conflict which eventually leads to the end of one stage and the start of another – such as the shift from capitalist to socialist modes of production. This model of change is often called 'historical' or 'evolutionary'. A significant body of modern development theory and practice has been influenced by Marxist and neo-Marxist analysis, especially before the global demise of centrally planned economies at the end of the 1980s.

Additionally, it is not uncommon, even outside the Marxist tradition, for analysts to view development as progress through a series of stages. Typically these relate to the structure of the economy – eg countries are seen to pass through various stages in moving from agrarian-based economies to urbanised, industrial ones.

Development as economic growth

In the **1950s**, in a climate of cold war with the Communist East, practical concern to promote growth in post-war Europe and the colonies and ex-colonies led to the emergence of an entirely different model of development. It was based on the definition of development as economic **growth** – that is, growth in national output, consumption and material living standards. Such growth would lead developing countries out of poverty and allow them to catch up with the developed world. Progress in this model was – and to a large extent, continues to be – measured in terms of growth in per capita income/GDP, which, although not a perfect indicator, was, and is, the most widely available one.

Development as economic growth was the earliest model in 'development theory', which in the 1950s was becoming a distinct body of academic research that was largely dominated by the work of economists and economic historians, such as W Arthur Lewis (1954) and Walt W Rostow (1960). Early development models reflected the belief that **capital accumulation** was the key to economic growth. Although the models of the 1950s and early 1960s varied in their analysis of precisely how growth in underdeveloped economies takes place, they were generally united in emphasising the need for large-scale investment in the modern sector. This was to be financed by domestic savings (ie that proportion of income which is not consumed) combined with foreign capital (in the form of aid and private sector investment). Domestic savings/capital could be mobilised by the state using various forms of taxation and directed towards investments in public infrastructure and modern industry.

Focusing on capital would, it was believed, fuel growth in the modern sector of the economy and lead to rapid industrialisation. This would entice labour out of the traditional sector of the economy – that was based primarily on subsistence agriculture – and into the growing modern sector where productivity was much higher. This, according to Lewis and other economists in the 1950s and 1960s, was the way to deal with poverty.

? Can you think of any potential problems with this approach to reducing poverty?

Answer.

One of the problems with these early growth models was that the ability of capital to induce labour away from low productivity activities and into high productivity ones depended upon how capital was invested. Capital would only generate the expected benefits if invested in labour-intensive technologies and not squandered on unproductive activities or consumption by urban elites.

Moreover, growth could only be sustained if there was a market demand for the increasing output of production. This depended on the level of domestic job and income creation, as well as upon access to foreign markets. Whilst poverty remained widespread then domestic demand would remain weak, and whilst productivity remained low the ability to compete in world markets would also remain weak.

Although economic growth and capital accumulation have always remained a central concern of development policy and research, attention in the 1960s began to move beyond such a narrow focus. Many writers pointed out that whilst capital accumulation is a necessary condition for growth and development, it is clearly not a sufficient condition. More attention needed to be given to the conditions under which capital accumulation takes place.

Various models for achieving economic growth have been formulated over the years. Some emphasise the role of the state, whilst more recent ones emphasise the role of markets.

Development as modernisation

Sociologists and political scientists from America in the **1960s** responded to some of the weaknesses of early development models by developing the concept of **modernisation**. They believed that traditional societies could be transformed structurally into modern societies through the active diffusion within developing countries of the modern values, institutions and technologies found in the developed countries. It is this structural transformation of society as a whole (its social as well as its economic dimensions) which constitutes 'development' in this model. Modernisation theory's goals could be achieved through education, technology transfer and technical assistance. Development policy has been, and remains, heavily influenced by this approach.

Development as world structural change

Gunder Frank and others challenged modernisation theory on the grounds that it ignored the external structural constraints to development that arose from the nature of the relationship between developed and developing countries. Writing in what is called the 'structuralist' tradition, and heavily influenced by Marx, these writers accounted for under development in terms of an international system of political and economic structures which favoured certain countries or regions (the core) against others (the periphery). **Dependency theory**, as this became known, enjoyed a brief period of popularity in the **1970s**, inspiring academic research and a concern for equitable development.

Dependency theory can be seen broadly as the left wing challenge to a more right wing modernisation theory. It is also an alternative theory of development, in which the key to development involves altering international political and economic structures. Yet, unlike modernisation theory, it was never fully translated into practical policy recommendations that could be followed by governments and international agencies, and within academic circles interest in dependency theory declined during the 1980s and 1990s.

However, many of the assertions and prescriptions of dependency theory resonate strongly with today's anti-globalisation movement, and at the start of the 21st century interest in some of its ideas has been rekindled.

Development as growth led by the free market

At the end of the 1970s, another school of thought rose to prominence, again led by economists. **Neo-liberalism**, as it has been called, promoted the free market and reduced government intervention as the agent of development. This marked a radical shift in thinking away from the notion of state-led intervention, and it proved massively influential in policy-making during the **1980s** and **1990s**. It justified itself, in part, on the grounds of corruption within the state institutions of many developing countries which clearly did not have development interests at their heart. However, it was also to a large extent ideologically inspired, reflecting the pro-market and small-government philosophy of the New Right, and driven by the vision of unified global capitalism.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank played a central role in promoting neo-liberal policies in developing countries. This was largely due to the 1980s debt crisis in which many developing countries found themselves unable to meet their international debt obligations and were struggling to finance essential imports. The IMF and World Bank stepped in to provide the necessary finance which was conditional upon the implementation of widespread economic reforms, known as **structural adjustment** programmes. These involved market liberalisation, privatisation and government spending cuts, and were considered necessary to restore the confidence of international lenders and place borrowing countries back on the path of sustainable economic growth (see 1.1.1).

1.1.1 The structural adjustment policies

The structural adjustment policies promoted by the World Bank and the IMF have tended to involve the following set of initiatives:

State withdrawal

- government spending cuts and reductions in public sector services
- privatisation of state-owned enterprises
- removing legal obstacles to private sector activity

Price liberalisation - to ensure that markets determine prices

- in the markets for goods and services
- in the markets for factors of production (land, labour and capital) including interest rates

International trade liberalisation

- removing quantitative restrictions on imports and exports
- reducing tariffs on trade
- devaluing exchange rates (which were often overvalued)

Source: unit author

Structural adjustment and liberalisation programmes were intended to simultaneously reduce unsustainable government expenditure and fiscal deficits (through privatisation and budget cuts), improve efficiency (through the replacement of inefficient government activity and resource allocation on the one hand, by more efficient private companies with competitive resource allocation on the other), and improve the supply of capital (by opening up financial markets).

The results? Growth rates have not been as high as expected and actually fell in some cases. In many parts of the developing world, but especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the outcome of market liberalisation has been disappointing. There is now a growing recognition amongst economists that the state may have withdrawn too far and that, without complementary state interventions, free markets are unlikely to lead to economic growth and development. The market-led approach to development associated with the **Washington Consensus** (as the ideas promoted by the Washington-based IMF and the World Bank have come to be known) still dominates mainstream development policy in the early 21st century. Nevertheless, the fundamentalist line on market liberalisation that was taken in the 1980s and early 1990s appears to have softened and many economists are looking for alternative models that strike an appropriate balance between the market, the state, and other forms of organisation. There are also arguments, however, that market liberalisation failed to meet expectations because governments continue to intervene in some critical markets (notably agricultural input and staple food markets) and that these increase risks for private investors and inhibit private investment in these markets. This raises important political economy questions – is it reasonable to expect governments to completely withdraw from these markets in poor rural economies. What sort of interventions could be acceptable to both governments and private companies, and how could these be achieved?

Focusing on poverty

In the 1990s the international community renewed its focus on poverty reduction and began to take a more holistic view of development. A similar change had taken place two decades earlier during the 1970s. On both occasions this was a response to the weaknesses of development strategies that focus exclusively on macroeconomic growth and assume that the benefits of growth will **trickle down** to the poor. Often poverty persists because of the absence of growth. At the same time growth itself can be inhibited by wide-scale poverty, suggesting that a more direct focus on poverty reduction may lead to a virtuous cycle of poverty reduction and growth. Also, even in countries that are enjoying growth, poverty often remains entrenched or is not reduced quickly enough.

Thus, both in the 1970s and again more recently, there was a growing sense that development strategies should focus more on the needs of the poor. In the 1970s state organisations, often financed by foreign aid, monopolised the implementation of pro-poor strategies. Since the 1990s the approaches have become more **heterogeneous**, reflecting lessons learnt during the 1970s, and involving a wider range of actors, including governments, NGOs, donors and the private sector. Today, there are fewer 'blueprints' for development than was the case in the past. This is partly because the developing world is itself more heterogeneous than it used to be, with some countries remaining very poor and others now relatively advanced. It is also because of greater recognition of the complexity of development and of the need to tailor policies and interventions to the particular needs and particular social, economic, and political circumstances of the country or place in question.

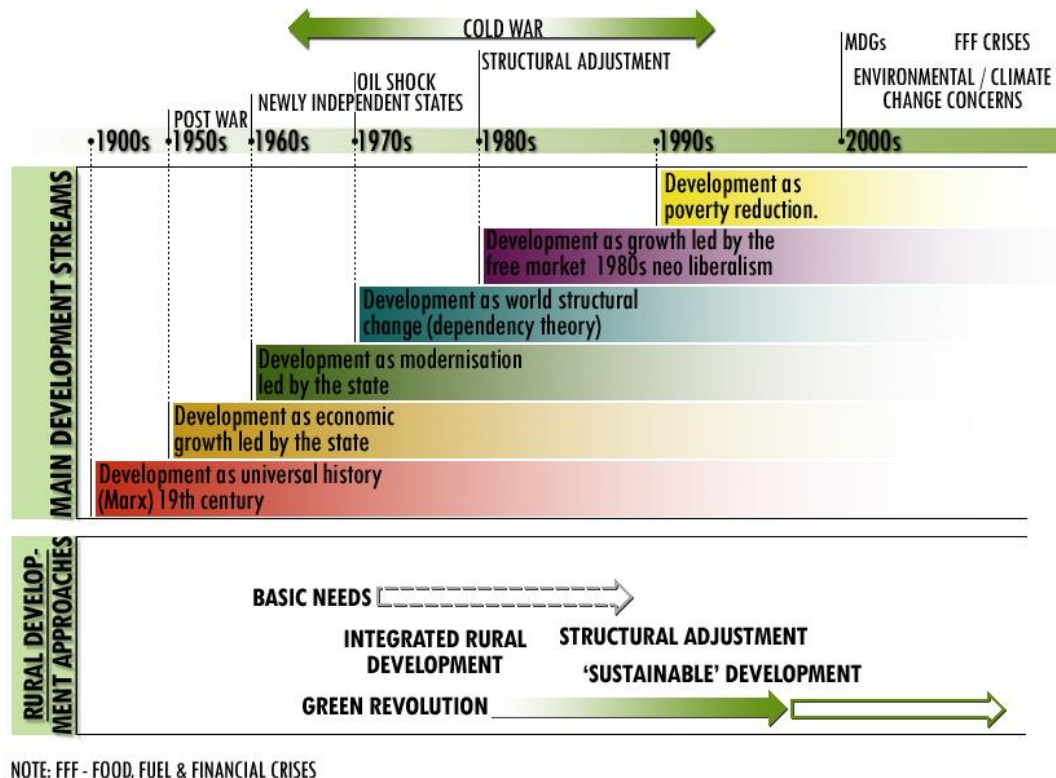
- Since the 1990s there has been more explicit recognition by economists of the importance of **human capital** and the role of people in development. Consequently, many contemporary development initiatives focus on improving health and education (giving special attention to the poor and the needs of women) rather than just focusing on the productive sectors of the economy.
- Additionally, an understanding of people's perspectives and **participation** by the poor in the development process are now widely acknowledged requirements for the design and implementation of appropriate development interventions. This people-centred approach to development has been partly driven by the so-called **livelihoods approach**, a multi-disciplinary approach that focuses above all on the local context (rather than national or sectoral strategies) and the opportunities and constraints that individuals face in their attempts to escape from poverty.
- In many development circles, discussions of market liberalisation and structural adjustment are now tempered with talk about **pro-poor markets** (ie enabling the poor to access markets more easily and on terms that will help them escape from poverty).
- The links between poverty and the **environment** are now also of central concern in contemporary development approaches, and there are few development interventions that do not make some reference to the concept of sustainability.

The best known expression of current development concerns can be found in the Millennium Development Goals which, although formulated in 2000, set targets for achieving change over 25 years from 1990 to 2015. The goals and targets were concerned with reducing extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development.

Within the IMF and World Bank, the renewed focus on poverty has also manifested itself in the form of **poverty reduction strategy papers** (PRSPs). Low-income countries seeking concessional financing or debt relief from these organisations are required to produce these in order to demonstrate their commitment to poverty reduction and outline strategies for achieving it. There is also increasing interest in the governance of aid – the relationships between aid donors and recipients, and the rules governing these relationships.

The diagram in 1.1.2, below, summarises the main streams of development and their links to rural development approaches as described above. Note that these are, of course, presented as very broad patterns and reality is never quite that simple.

1.1.2 Timeline



Source: unit author


An animated version of this diagram with voiceover is available on your e-study guide.

1.2 Defining rural development

By comparison with development, **rural** development is a much newer term. But how does it relate to 'development' and some of the ideas discussed above? Is it an alternative to existing theories of development or does it simply refer to development carried out in rural areas? Why does it warrant study as an independent discipline in its own right? These are some of the questions that we shall be addressing in the remainder of this unit. However, before we go further let us consider what is meant by the term 'rural'.

Defining 'rural'

Most people probably have a fairly clear idea what is meant by 'rural'. However, the definition of rural is not as clear-cut as one might think.

 How would you define 'rural'? Think about this for a few moments before continuing.


Probably the first thing that springs to mind is the contrast with urban areas and the image of open spaces, either in a relatively natural state or cultivated or grazed by livestock. But what about rural towns? And what about those areas on the edge of towns and cities where the space between buildings grows larger and where small plots of cultivated land may begin to appear between industrial estates and other features that we closely associate with the urban concept. In short, there is no precise distinction between rural and urban, although where countries do wish to identify a cut-off point between one and the other, it typically relates to the population size of human settlements – towns, villages etc. Official definitions often refer to settlements with less than 5000 people as being rural, whilst those with more than 5000 are considered urban. However, this threshold varies from one country to another, due in part to differences in the overall population density.

In the context of this module rural is defined fairly broadly. It relates primarily to areas that have a relatively **low population density** compared to cities, areas where **agriculture** and related activities usually dominate the landscape and economy, and places where transport and communications need to cover relatively **large distances** making travel and service provision relatively difficult and costly. However, our definition also includes the **towns** (as opposed to cities) that are located in these areas and which are linked to them culturally and economically by acting as a focal point for people living in the surrounding areas – places where they can meet, exchange goods and services, and find transport to larger urban centres. Finally, we are also interested to some extent in the **peri-urban** areas – the areas that lie on the fringes of the urban environment, including the edge of major cities.

Whilst the challenges facing urban and rural populations in developing countries have much in common, there are differences. The distinct challenges facing rural communities relate above all to the problems associated with natural resource-based livelihoods, low population densities, and poor communications. These problems are a recurring theme in the examination of different conditions, challenges and processes in rural development.

Rural development as policy and as process

Rural development emerged as a distinct focus of policy and research in the 1960s and gained full momentum in the 1970s, as observers increasingly realised that, whilst economic growth and industrialisation were important, rural areas and rural development had important and different roles to play in a country's development.

 What do you understand by the term 'rural development'? Spend a few minutes writing down your thoughts. Don't worry if you are not familiar with this field yet: try to answer the question anyway.

1.2.1 provides a short synopsis of one writer's understanding of rural development as it emerged as a major issue at the beginning of the 1980s.

1.2.1 Rural development as policy and as process

'Rural Development has emerged as a distinctive field of policy and practice and of research in the last decade, and particularly over the eight or nine years since the inception of the "new strategy" for development planning by the World Bank and UN agencies. This strategy came to be formulated as a result of the general disenchantment with previous approaches to development planning at national and sectoral levels, and it is defined by its concern with equity objectives of various kinds ...

The term "Rural Development" ... refers to a distinct approach to interventions by the state in the economies of underdeveloped countries, and one which is at once broader and more specific than 'agricultural development'. It is broader because it entails much more than the development of agricultural production – for it is in fact a distinct approach to the development of the economy as a whole. It is more specific in the sense that it focuses (in its rhetoric, and in principle) particularly on poverty and inequality. Although there is a substantial overlap between the field of conventional agricultural economics and the concerns of "Rural Development", the kinds of study required to understand the factors affecting "Rural Development" are not contained within the discipline of agricultural economics. Not only does "Rural Development" include attention to other aspects of rural economies as well as agriculture, but the analysis of distributional issues demands an inter-disciplinary approach in which the broader social and political factors interacting with economic processes are subjected to examination ...

The expression rural development may also be used, however, to refer to processes of change in rural societies, not all of which involve action by governments. In this case, the activity of "Rural Development" a form of state intervention, must be considered simply as one of the forces concerned – although it is one which has become of increasing importance.'

Source: Harriss (1982) pp. 14–15.

What do you notice about Harriss' understanding of this field compared to yours?

According to Harriss, rural development can be viewed as either of the following:

- a state-led activity and a focus for development **policy**
- a broader **process** of change in rural societies, which may or may not involve state intervention

These are two angles, if you like, from which we can consider rural development. Implicit in the first of these is the notion of government intervention of one sort or another. Admittedly, policy can be characterised by non-intervention or a laissez-faire attitude to rural development. The withdrawal of government from rural development activities can also be considered to be a policy. However, in this unit when we talk of rural development as policy we are referring to a policy of active state engagement with the rural development process.

An area-based approach

In relation to rural development policy, Harriss identifies a number of important characteristics, perhaps the most obvious of which is that it is an area-based approach to development. In other words, rural development policy targets particular **geographical areas** (rural areas) rather than an **economic sector** (eg agriculture, manufacturing, education) or a particular group of people (eg small farmers, female-

headed households, ethnic minorities) – even though individual sectors or groups of people may be targeted as part of a broader rural development strategy.

Given that the livelihoods of the majority of the world's rural population depend, either directly or indirectly, on the **agricultural sector**, agriculture is an obvious sector in which to concentrate efforts to promote growth. Indeed the promotion of agricultural development and **smallholder** agriculture, in particular, has always been a central feature of rural development policy.

Multi-sectoral

However, rural development is not just about agricultural growth and, whilst agricultural growth is a very important dimension of rural development, it is not enough on its own to ensure economic growth in rural areas. Other sectors or dimensions come into play in the process of rural growth, such as health, education and economic activities outside the agricultural sector. Rural development is multi-sectoral. It embraces a variety of different economic and social sectors. These are summarised below:

- agriculture and natural resources – crops, livestock, fishing, forestry
- the non-farm sector – services to agriculture (including input supply, marketing, transport, finance, agricultural processing), rural manufacturing, mining, and other rural services
- rural infrastructure – roads, transport, energy, water
- education
- health

The primacy of agriculture debate

Despite a multi-sectoral approach, current opinion is divided concerning the relative importance of different sectors and of agriculture in particular. On the one hand, there is the view that agricultural development, driven by growth in the **small farm sector**, is a pre-requisite for the wider development of the rural economy; that, in the poorest parts of the world, it needs to be the driving force in efforts to reduce poverty; and that rural development policies should focus on making small farmers more productive through improved access to technology and markets.

A contrasting view is that excessive focus on agriculture fails to take account of the complexity and increasing **diversity** of rural livelihoods, and the importance of income-generating activities located outside agriculture. Whilst not denying the role of agriculture in the development process, this view gives agriculture, and particularly small scale agriculture, less emphasis and calls for policies that are more tailored to individual circumstances within a very varied rural environment.

A third view plays down the importance of agriculture in local development processes and argues that while access to cheap food is important, this may be best obtained from imports or from large-scale agriculture rather than small-scale agriculture.

Superimposed upon this debate are questions about global food security and whether we are now moving into an era of food shortages. The optimism of recent decades is giving way to greater **pessimism** about the ability of supply to keep pace with demand, especially given the uncertainties surrounding climate change. We return to

these issues later, but for now it is worth noting that this has reinvigorated the debate about the role of agriculture in development.

The environment and sustainability

Another central concern in rural development is environmental sustainability. Although Harriss' definition does not make any mention of the environment, the subject is clearly of particular importance in rural development, since so much economic activity, notably **agriculture**, is both dependent on natural resources, as well as having a very direct impact upon them, through for example deforestation, soil degradation, and loss of biodiversity.

One of the biggest challenges, both now and into the future, relates to climate change. Global **climate change** is likely to have a major impact upon the climate and natural resources of rural areas, affecting both the productivity of rural resources as well as the livelihoods of people who are dependent upon them. Agriculture is also a major contributor to the greenhouse gases that cause climate change and may well be affected by future efforts to reduce carbon emissions. We shall examine these issues further in the final section of this unit.

Rural poverty

Most approaches to rural development, at least in terms of stated goals, have had, and continue to have a strong poverty focus. Many people, including Harriss in 1982, viewed this concern as a distinctive feature of the study and pursuit of rural development, setting it apart from traditional approaches to development – the latter were mostly concerned with macroeconomic growth and how to stimulate output in the productive sectors of the economy; they assumed that poverty would fall automatically once these issues had been addressed. Interventions in rural development have often focused more **directly** on the problem of poverty – eg by addressing the basic needs of the poor in terms of food, health and education etc and looking to improve the productivity of the activities that the poor themselves are engaged in.

The attention given to poverty in the field of rural development has much to do with the high prevalence of poverty in rural areas. Most of the world's poor live in rural areas and it is in the rural areas that poverty and associated deprivations are typically at their most extreme. However, the world, and poverty itself, is becoming increasingly **urbanised**. Indeed, the problem of urban poverty is now high on the international development agenda, so it would be wrong to say that poverty concerns are exclusive to the field of rural development. The Millennium Development Goal objective of halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015 highlights the mainstreaming of poverty as a focus of policy.

Nevertheless, the incidence and severity of poverty will for some time continue to be higher in rural areas as compared with urban areas, so that even though the number of urban people in the world overtook the number of rural people sometime in 2010, the number of poor rural people remained higher than the number of poor urban people (IFAD 2010). Furthermore, many of the urban poor originate from, and retain close links with, rural areas; and the ranks of the urban poor are often swelled by migration that is precipitated by a lack of opportunity in rural areas. What happens in rural areas is therefore important both for both rural and urban poverty.

Gender

Gender issues feature prominently in the field of rural development. Women are often the poorest and most vulnerable members of the rural community and female children are often subject to greater neglect than their male siblings. Like poverty, gender concerns are not exclusive to rural development; however, gender-related poverty is often hardest to tackle in rural areas. Firstly, the cultural norms governing the division of labour and resources between men and women (which often disadvantage women) are usually more deeply entrenched in rural areas. Secondly, the wider difficulties of rural transport and communications keep women isolated from the support that they might get from each other or outside agencies were they to live in a town or city.

Multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary

Because of the broad concerns and multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral, nature of rural development, the study and practice of rural development requires skills and insights from a wide range of disciplines. Agricultural, economic, environmental, sociological, political and institutional theories can usefully be drawn together to study rural change and the best ways to achieve desired objectives. Additionally, the specialist expertise of natural and biological scientists, engineers, as well as education and health professionals are clearly essential in dealing with the challenges of rural development.

1.2.2 The dimensions of rural development

The **natural environment** supplies one set of factors affecting agrarian systems - of more immediate and direct relevance than they are in the case of industrial societies; and these and the way in which they work are intimately related to the **technologies** employed by people in making use of natural resources.

Demographic factors, the density of population and the trends of population growth are also likely to affect these relationships. But an analysis which took into account only these environmental, technological and demographic processes would be seriously deficient, for the economics of farming and of other production activities and the way in which these are affected by **markets** and by the connections between the rural economy and the rest of the national economy, or with world markets, must also be included. We must also ask how these factors are affected by the **social structures** of rural producers and by their values or their '**culture**'. Satisfactory analyses of processes of change in rural societies have somehow to embrace all of these issues.

Source: Harriss (1982) pp. 16–17.

Both rural development and development more generally are about **change**. Understanding change and promoting desirable change requires good **co-ordination** between the various actors involved in rural development (farmers, rural residents, government organisations, NGOs and other civil society organisations, donors, rural development professionals, researchers, private firms and businesses etc). However, co-ordination in rural areas is a particularly tough challenge because of the relatively dispersed nature of rural populations, associated communications problems, and the uncertainties that are associated with dependence upon relatively unpredictable natural processes.

The characteristics outlined so far do not represent a comprehensive or definitive outline of rural development. Indeed, there is substantial disagreement over what 'rural development' actually encompasses. Nevertheless, these characteristics do provide a good starting point.

Section 1 Self Assessment Questions

Question 1

Which of the following are generally true statements?

- (a) In the early days of development theory the mobilisation of domestic savings combined with foreign capital was the main focus of development policy.
- (b) Modernisation theory and dependency theory both saw development as being the outcome of increasing dependence upon Western ideas and technologies.
- (c) The Washington Consensus is based upon market-led development and is associated with reduced State intervention in the economy.
- (d) From the 1960s growth was no longer viewed as critical to development.
- (e) Rural development did not feature strongly in development models of the 1950s.
- (f) The study of rural development seeks to understand the relationships between the different dimensions of rural life.
- (g) Rural development is an area-based approach to development.

Question 2

Match the following phrases:

- (i) A central concern in rural development because of its historical concentration in rural areas.
- (ii) Agriculture contributes to it and is affected by it.
- (iii) The multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral nature of rural development combined with transport and communications difficulties.

(a) Climate change	
(b) Rural poverty	
(c) Why development co-ordination is especially challenging in rural areas	

2.0 POLICY

Section Overview

This section explores how and why rural development became a focus of development policy. We first examine how development policy during the 1970s came to incorporate features such as a concern for equity, an emphasis on dual investment in the agricultural and industrial sectors, and an interest in how best to manage the multidimensional nature of rural change. These are all characteristics of 'rural development' as we have begun to define it.

Section Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, students should be able to:

- explain how, in the 1970s, concerns for efficiency and equity were reflected in policies relating to the green revolution, integrated rural development and the basic needs approach
- assess critically the relevance of these policies for the 21st century

2.1 Why an interest in rural development?

The failure of trickle-down

We saw that in the 1950s and much of the 1960s, the key to economic development was considered to be industrial growth and modernisation. The agricultural sector was hence relatively neglected by national policy, in favour of investment in industry. It was assumed that the benefits of growth would trickle down to the poor as they shifted into the modern sector of the economy, and that the agricultural sector could act as a reservoir of surplus resources and labour for industrial growth without requiring investment in its own right.

However, the poor, who lived primarily in rural areas, and were to varying extents dependent upon subsistence agriculture, failed to benefit from modernisation and industrial growth. The industrial sector in most cases did not expand rapidly enough to provide the necessary jobs, and the agricultural sector itself remained stagnant and unproductive.

At the same time, theories of economic growth, which had previously assumed that investment in the agricultural sector was not needed for industrial growth to take place, were discredited. It became clear to policy-makers that dual investment in both sectors was needed for industrial growth to take place. Additionally, the writings of a number of influential academics in the 1960s (Shultz 1964, Mellor 1966) pointed to the relative efficiency in developing countries of smallholder farming as compared to production on large farms.

Hence, for reasons of **efficiency** as well as **equity**, policy-makers began, from the end of the 1960s, to take a much more active interest in the role of the agricultural sector – and especially smallholder agriculture – in overall economic development. Supporting smallholder agriculture seemed to serve both efficiency and equity objectives and has been an enduring theme in both development and rural development policy.

Inefficiency and inequity of urban bias

Despite the increased interest in agriculture and rural development, and despite generally higher levels of investment in the sector than in previous decades, the rural sector continued to be neglected by comparison with the urban areas where a much smaller proportion of the population live. During the 1970s many agricultural economists spoke out strongly against this relative neglect. One of these was Michael Lipton who, in the late 1970s, published a highly influential statement on what he called the 'urban bias' in development policy. It was quite a straightforward plea for the reallocation or redistribution of resources to rural areas – again, for reasons of both efficiency and equity (see 2.1.1).

2.1.1 Lipton's statement of 'urban bias'

The urban bias comes about as a result of the economic and political dominance of a relatively small urban elite. This elite – comprising of businessmen, politicians, bureaucrats, trade-union leaders and a supporting staff of professionals, academics and intellectuals – effectively control the institutions of power – government, political parties, law, civil service, trade unions, education, business organisations etc – and are far better organised than the rural majority. The elites use their power to allocate resources – investments in doctors, teachers, infrastructure, clean water etc – in ways that are heavily biased towards urban needs. This bias is both inequitable and inefficient, since resources allocated to rural areas often generate greater benefits in terms of poverty reduction and economic returns. It is also self-reinforcing, as the more economic resources are devoted to urban areas, the more skills and human capital will concentrate in urban areas, and the more powerful and influential urban areas become (relative to rural areas) in the competition for scarce resources.

Source: unit author, adapted from Lipton (1982) pp. 66–69.

2.2 The 1970s – a decade of intervention

As discussed previously, an interest amongst policy-makers in rural development strengthened during the 1970s, as a strong backlash against

- theories of development which put emphasis on industrial growth whilst relatively neglecting the agricultural sector – an approach subsequently shown to be inefficient
- the fact that the benefits of growth did not generally trickle down to the poor

In this section we consider three ways in which these concerns have been reflected in **policy**, especially during the 1970s, the decade that is most strongly associated with government intervention in the rural sector.

- The **green revolution** is the nickname given to a technology and strategy for agricultural development which proved enormously successful at increasing wheat and rice yields in parts of the developing world.
- **Integrated Rural Development** (IRD) is an approach to poverty reduction which aims to reach the poor through better co-ordination of development interventions.
- **Basic needs** approaches involve the redistribution of resources to the poorest in order to satisfy the basic needs of as large a number of people as possible within a relatively short space of time.

The green revolution

During the late 1960s and 1970s, efforts were made to improve the productivity of small farmers in developing countries through the introduction of new **high-yielding crop varieties** (HYVs). Compared to other modern technologies, this technology was scale-neutral – that is, it was just as efficient to apply it on small plots as on large plots.

HYVs were widely introduced in the developing world, and although there were social and environmental costs associated with this innovation, it produced impressive increases in crop yield, inspiring the nickname, the green revolution. These improvements were especially dramatic for wheat and rice, and regions in which these crops were prominent food staples (eg many parts of Asia) benefited more from the green revolution than regions where other food staples were dominant (eg much of sub-Saharan Africa). Questions arose, however, on the impacts of the green revolution on income distribution and the welfare of the poor (both within and outside successful green revolution areas) and on the sustainability of the narrow genetic resource base and high external input and energy use it involved. These continue to be debated (Lipton and Longhurst 1989, Hazell and Rosegrant 2000, IFAD 2010).

Integrated rural development – rationale

Towards the late 1960s, donors looked back at the impact of national agriculture strategies in developing countries and found it to be disappointing in two ways. Firstly, it had seemingly had little impact on the productivity levels and incomes of subsistence and poor farmers; secondly, it had apparently failed to generate employment and incomes for the landless poor.

This failure was because an approach to raising productivity which focused exclusively on improving crop production technology (eg through the development of HYVs) was clearly inadequate. The productivity of poor farmers and the incomes of the landless poor depend on many factors and constraints both within and outside the agricultural sector, including access to a wide range of services and the quality of health, education and rural infrastructure. Given these constraints, inputs into the agricultural sector (eg credit and extension) tend to be hijacked by rich farmers. To counter these inadequacies, the IRD approach to rural development evolved and became popular with donors, governments and NGOs during the 1970s.

The ODI (1979) distinguished between two uses of the term IRD. In one, the prefix 'integrated' does not really add anything to what we already understand rural development to mean. It relates to the recognition by policy-makers and donors that rural development is multidimensional and requires intervention and support on a large number of different fronts that include health, education, rural infrastructure, as well as agriculture and rural non-agricultural industries. In its other use, 'integrated' refers to an emphasis on **improved administrative co-ordination** of rural development planning and service provision.

Integrated rural development – methods

The governments of developing countries applied the IRD approach to rural development in a number of different ways. Planning and co-ordination under IRD took the form of one or a combination of the following:

- multisectoral planning
- decentralised planning to local or regional level
- a shift away from planning around a function or a product towards planning for a specific geographical area
- setting up a special government ministry or department for co-ordinating rural development initiatives

The expected benefit of bringing development policy under a single administrative framework was to raise productivity and incomes in specific geographical areas by improving poor people's access to services and production inputs, which were made available by a host of state and parastatal agencies.

IRD has also been an approach to individual projects. Many types of project have called themselves IRD projects, ranging from projects which provide rural services and infrastructure, to agricultural development and employment generating projects. They often comprise a package of small initiatives generated by an area development plan.

Integrated rural development – results

Although IRD as a development strategy makes a lot of sense, it is difficult to implement in practice. Effective co-ordination is not easy to achieve, especially when traditional sector-based agencies continue to compete against each other, and with new co-ordinating agencies, for power, influence and, above all, funds. Where new agencies were introduced, there was a risk of unnecessary and costly duplication of activities. Moreover, where ministerial departments were set up with IRD responsibility, they did not, on the whole, operate very successfully.

For decentralisation to work, funds and control needed to be devolved to local level administration. However, this can be difficult when actors in central government are reluctant to relinquish authority.

In summary, common problems with the IRD approach, whether at the project level or at higher levels of government administration, were that it was

- difficult to manage
- costly to implement
- overambitious

As a result, successful IRD initiatives were rarely replicated and in the 1980s and 1990s the strategy fell out of favour within the mainstream, as the neo-liberal ideas of market liberalisation and state withdrawal increasingly began to shape development policy.

Basic needs approach – rationale

The basic needs approach to development became popular from around the mid-1970s and is described in detail by Streeten (1981). At the time it represented a new way of thinking about development policies. In previous decades the main focus for development initiatives had been macroeconomic growth. Focusing on growth was considered to be the best way of reducing poverty. The basic needs approach contested this view, arguing that development policies should focus directly on poverty by ensuring that the primary goal of policy interventions was to meet the basic needs of poor people. Such targeting

- would be a quicker, cheaper, and more efficient way of reducing poverty than policies focused purely on growth
- was attractive to foreign donors – it is easier to mobilise funds for providing poor people with food, shelter etc than for achieving more abstract goals such as economic growth

The basic needs approach was not directed exclusively at rural areas, but since rural people were those who were most lacking in basic needs it was inevitable that a large proportion of interventions aimed at meeting basic needs should take place in rural areas. 'Basic needs' provided justification for IRD policies and rural development policy more generally.

Also, since the aim of the approach was to meet basic needs within a relatively short period of time, significant redistribution of resources from rich to poor was implicit in the approach, although income equality itself was not the primary goal or target.

Defining and delivering basic needs

Broadly speaking, basic human needs can encompass both material needs (drinking water, nutrition, literacy, access to public services) and non-material needs, such as autonomy, political freedom and security. However, there was considerable controversy over precisely how they should be defined and how they should be met. Proposed approaches to meeting basic needs depended on who defines the needs, and whether the government plays an enabling or a providing role.

- If the government was seen as **provider**, then the 'count, cost and deliver' mode was adopted. This involved counting how much was needed (eg how many schools, teachers, health centres, doctors, nurses, roads, etc or how much seed, fertiliser etc); estimating the costs of providing these things and

seeking the necessary finance; and delivering them, either through government agencies or donor funded projects.

- Where the government has taken on the role of **enabler**, it has provided earning opportunities for the poor, increased their access to inputs and markets, and attempted to raise their productivity.
- Where political power has been seen as the main deliverable, meeting basic needs has involved participation of the poor in needs analysis, project design and management ie changing the **process** of development.

According to Streeten *et al* (1981), the basic needs approach has been variously understood as a redistribution of power from rich to poor; a form of empowerment; or the opposite, a welfare sop to keep the poor quiet; or as a cop-out by governments and agencies who foster self-help instead of taking on the responsibility of providing for the poor.

2.3 Implications for the 21st century

The green revolution, IRD and basic needs were at their height during the 1970s – their role in development policy diminished in the following decades. Their diminished role was due in large part to the introduction of **market liberalisation** and structural adjustment policies which reduced the role of the state and its capacity to implement these strategies. Nevertheless, the ideas and priorities that drove these approaches to development remain very much alive in development thinking today.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The Millennium Development Goals have much in common with the basic needs approach, and the challenge of how to meet the basic needs of the poor remains as urgent as ever. As with basic needs in the 1970s, achieving the MDGs is seen by many to depend at least in part on aid from rich countries. 2005 was a year in which aid and the MDGs gained a particularly high international profile, and spurred on by the UN's Millennium Development Project and the much-publicised 'Make Poverty History' campaign, rich countries committed themselves to substantial increases in development aid. Linked to the Millennium Development Project is the Millennium Villages project (see list of websites) that aims to demonstrate how people can escape from poverty by targeted investments in agriculture, health, education and infrastructure.

Co-ordination

Integrated Rural Development (IRD) is still an approach that many NGOs seek to apply in their projects and programmes, and IRD's concern for the effective co-ordination of rural services is one that is still shared by many economists. Moreover, the problem of how governments should effectively prioritise and co-ordinate their interventions in the rural sector has not gone away and the question of how much to decentralise public sector planning and intervention continues to be debated. With liberalisation, co-ordination issues have arguably become more complex, as the variety of actors involved in providing rural services has grown. These include government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector.

A new green revolution?

In those countries (or regions within countries) where the green revolution was successful the need to pursue it as a development strategy is less than it once was. However, in countries and regions that failed to experience a green revolution there is still considerable interest in how to do so. This is especially so in sub-Saharan Africa which did not experience the green revolution first time around, but where there remains an enormous need for the gains in agricultural productivity that a green revolution could bring. A renewed interest in how to create a green revolution in sub-Saharan Africa has gained additional momentum as a result of the global food shortages that developed towards the end of the first decade of the new century and in response to pessimism about further productivity growth in some of the world's more productive regions. Such calls are not, however, without controversy as both the benefits of the earlier green revolution for sustainable livelihoods for the poor and the potential for green revolutions in Africa are vigorously contested.

Conclusion

The problem with all of the approaches discussed so far has often not been the goals themselves, but how to achieve them in practice. From the early 1980s an increasingly popular strand of development thinking saw the answer to this problem as lying, not so much in direct policy interventions, but through altering the process of development itself. The process-orientated approach to development is the subject of the next section.

Section 2 Self Assessment Questions

Question 3

Which of the following are generally true statements?

- (a) Policy interventions in rural development became popular in the 1970s because the benefits of growth-orientated strategies pursued in previous decades had failed to trickle down to the poor.
- (b) Urban-biased development policy is said to be less efficient because a given sum of money invested in urban areas yields less benefit than the same amount of money invested in rural areas.
- (c) The green revolution failed to increase agricultural productivity in the countries in which it was implemented.
- (d) Basic needs are easy to define, but hard to deliver.
- (e) In theory, development strategies related to the green revolution, IRD and basic needs have mutually conflicting goals.

Question 4

Match the following phrases:

- (i) basic needs
- (ii) green revolution
- (iii) integrated rural development

(a) Co-ordinating in the provision of rural services was a central focus and required better management than it was often possible to achieve in practice.	
(b) There's renewed interest in this in sub-Saharan Africa which has not benefited from it in the way that many other parts of the developing world have done.	
(c) The Millennium Development Goals closely resemble the goals of this 1970s approach.	

3.0 PARTICIPATION

Section Overview

This section examines 'participation' as a rural development issue, looking at its origins and its roles in, and contributions to, rural development thinking and practice.

Section Learning Outcome

By the end of this section, students should be able to:

- explain critically the role and origins of participation in rural development

We saw in the last section that, from the 1970s on, as interest in the redistribution of resources to the poor and investment in the agricultural sector became increasingly widespread (for reasons of both efficiency and equity), this was reflected in policy shifts. By the end of the decade, these issues – equity, the importance of the agricultural sector, the multidimensional nature of development – were firmly on donors' and many governments' agendas.

At about this time attention was also being turned towards the **process** whereby development took place. Observers were becoming increasingly critical of state interventions in the rural sector (as well as in the economy at large). They pointed to a lack of progress in the achievement of development objectives, as well as to the high economic costs associated with many interventions. But, whereas some critics sought solutions to state failure in expanding the role of free markets (see Section 1.1), others saw the solution in a rather different place. It is to the latter that we now turn our attention.

3.1 Bottom-up development

A new paradigm was coined for agricultural and rural development in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is commonly known as the 'farmer first' approach, or '**bottom-up**' development and has greatly influenced the way that rural development is practised today. It put **participation** and **empowerment** firmly in the vocabulary of rural development (and, indeed, of development more generally).

A response to top-down agricultural development

One of the names associated with the new approach was Robert Chambers. He claimed that the top-down approach to setting agendas and developing agricultural technology, traditionally practised by the international research and development community, simply does not benefit the poor farmer. One of the arguments **against** this model of agricultural development is that the conditions that poor farmers operate within put limits on the extent to which they can benefit from the transfer of modern technologies, such as those associated with the green revolution. The green revolution did indeed raise productivity, but, arguably, not for the poor who farm under very different conditions from middle and rich farmers (see table in 3.1.1, below).

3.1.1 Three types of agriculture summarised

	Industrial	Green revolution	Third/‘CDR’*
Main locations	Industrialised countries and specialised enclaves in the Third World	Irrigated and stable rainfall, high potential areas in the Third World	Rainfed areas, hinterlands, most of sub-Saharan Africa, etc
Main climatic zone	Temperate	Tropical	Tropical
Major type of farmer	Highly capitalised family farms and plantations	Large and small farmers	Small and poor farm households
Use of purchase inputs	Very high	High	Low
Farming system, relatively	Simple	Simple	Complex
Environmental diversity, relatively	Uniform	Uniform	Diverse
Production stability	Moderate risk	Moderate risk	High risk
Current production as a percentage of sustainable production	Far too high	Near the limit	Low
Priority for production	Reduce production	Maintain production	Raise production

*Note: CDR in the final column is short for ‘complex, diverse, and risk-prone’.

Source: Chambers (1989) p. xvi.

The novelty of the farmer first approach to agricultural development lies in:

- stressing the differences between complex, diverse, and risk-prone (CDR) agriculture and other types of agriculture
- focusing mainly on CDR agriculture
- valuing indigenous knowledge (this term includes practices as well as knowledge)
- promoting farmer participation in agricultural research and technological innovation
- pursuing farmers’ own agendas for agricultural development

Reversals

Chambers has labelled the structures, practices and attitudes which traditionally predominate in the international development community as 'normal professionalism'. He appeals for the latter to be replaced by a new professionalism in which top-down, technology-driven agricultural development policies and their standardising package of practices take second place in resource-poor farming areas to 'the complementary farmer-first approach, which generates baskets of choices to enable farmers to vary, complicate and diversify their farming systems'. Note that in the new paradigm or new professionalism, a bottom-up approach is designed to be **complementary** to top-down approaches, which do have their uses in certain contexts.

Supporters of the farmer first approach argue that a series of reversals are needed

- reversals of scientists' attitudes towards farmers' ability to innovate
- reversals in research, planning and management structures so as to build on farmers' talents and knowledge
- reversals in the decision-making process to enable inclusion of farmers' agendas


By calling for reversals in structures, attitudes and practices, and for the **decentralisation** of decision-making, the new professionalism has significant implications for the **process** of agricultural development.

Implementation

Getting farmers to participate more fully in technology development is a useful guiding principle but achieving it in practice is not always very straightforward. A large variety of **participatory methods** has been designed to help engage farmers in this process. These allow farmers, who are often illiterate, to communicate their knowledge and preferences and are designed to empower them in their dealings with external agencies. They enable farmers to identify and analyse problems, set priorities and plan solutions.

Clearly, engaging farmers in this way is vastly more time-consuming than setting research agendas in a research station or donor agency. Reversals, then, carry time and resource costs which must be weighed against the benefits of increased productivity.

None of these reversals – letting farmers set the research agenda, building on local knowledge and skills – can be implemented in any systematic or sustainable way without accompanying **institutional changes**. Organisations and the incentives facing those working within them have to be restructured. There is inevitably resistance to such change.

 Who in your country sets the research agenda for agricultural development? If you don't know, go and find out if you can.

Alternatively, if you have experience of working with farmers in agenda-setting, make a note of the successes and difficulties of this process, and whether all concerned felt that the benefits of reversal outweighed the costs.

3.2 Social development

Another theme that was emerging at the same time as the farmer first approach and out of a similar set of concerns was that of social development. Social development refers both to a set of goals and to an analytical approach. The goals are broad and encompass both economic goals as well as social ones relating to the quality of life. Health, education, resolution of conflict, empowerment of women and the poor, poverty reduction, sustainable social structures, good governance etc are all important goals in social development.

As an **analytical approach** social development in the 1980s was a relatively new discipline – the result of a growing interest in the uses of social theory and methods for development planning and practice (in both urban and rural contexts). It can be defined as follows:

The use of theoretical insights and methods from a variety of social sciences to understand the development process and make it more equitable on the one hand and more effective, sustainable and efficient on the other.

Source: unit author

Since the 1980s, donors and governments have increasingly recruited non-economic social scientists (anthropologists and sociologists) to work alongside technical and economic experts on the design and management of development projects and, to a lesser extent, to advise on policy. It is thought that the methods and theoretical insights which these disciplines can bring are particularly apt to capture farmers' knowledge and agendas; redesign research, planning and management structures so as to increase farmer participation; and to uncover data which, though crucial to the success or failure of interventions, is often missed by experts from other disciplines.

Within aid agencies such as the World Bank, emphasis shifted from physical infrastructure projects to more people-centred and institution-building interventions, and much greater attention was given to the social impact of large injections of external finance – the risks associated with the socially disruptive effects of outside intervention and ways of reducing them.

Gender

Gender issues tend to receive a high profile in social development and associated analysis. Much of the attention given to gender revolves around trying to understand the position of women in society and the social norms that govern the division of labour and resources between men and women. Conventional approaches to development typically treated the household as a single decision-making unit. Interventions aimed at improving the livelihoods of poor rural households often fail to examine the complex **intra-household relations** that determine how benefits are distributed within the household.

In many societies the stereotypical household represented by the **nuclear family** (ie a man, a woman and their children living under the same roof, managing a joint budget, and pooling its resources in pursuit of common goals) simply does not exist. Often men and women control different resources and pursue different goals. It is impossible to make generalisations about this, since the structure of households

varies so greatly across cultures and societies. However, failing to fully appreciate the nature of gender relations and the internal dynamics of households can lead to false assumptions about how people will react to particular policies or development initiatives. The history of rural development is littered with examples of projects and programmes in which these mistaken assumptions have thwarted the achievement of development objectives – by excluding women from development benefits or making their lives harder, by stirring up domestic conflict, or by making incorrect assumptions about how the land or labour available within a household would be allocated in response to a particular development initiative.


It should also be noted that the detailed analysis needed to understand gender relations and their potential implications can be difficult and time-consuming. This is especially so in the more culturally diverse parts of the world where neighbouring communities often have very different gender relations.

3.3 Implications for the 21st century

The ideas associated with new professionalism and social development have spawned new departments in governments and donor agencies. They have led to the introduction of new procedures and structures designed to increase the equity and effectiveness of the development process by increasing the participation of people in it. Planners today express a genuine interest in harnessing local (or indigenous) knowledge as a means to improving rural livelihoods. In addition to farmers' knowledge of the natural resource environment, this encompasses many kinds of knowledge: health care practices, community management practices, decision-making strategies and communication practices.

Whilst much of the language of farmer first relates by definition to the agricultural sector, it also has wider applications within the rural sector and beyond. Most development programmes and projects now acknowledge the importance of greater **decentralisation** and the need for wider **participation** in the design, implementation and monitoring of initiatives to combat poverty.

Inevitably participation and associated ideas run the risk of being catchy but superficially implemented pieces of rhetoric. Moreover, there is a risk that too much participation and decentralisation can concentrate power in the hands of local elites and act against the interests of the poor. Nevertheless, the ideas do clearly have merit and can serve the ends of rural development and poverty reduction if applied with care.

 Sceptics say that despite widespread use of 'farmer first' and 'participation' rhetoric, in practice not much has changed in the way that institutions are structured and the way decisions are taken. In other words, the development process in the opening years of the 21st century is still characterised by a top-down approach.

What do you think? Jot down any experiences or knowledge that you have that confirms or refutes the views of the sceptics.

Smallholder agriculture versus diversity

Returning to a theme that we mentioned earlier, another effect of adopting a more bottom-up approach to rural development and research has been to draw attention to the diversity of rural livelihoods, the importance of non-agricultural incomes, and the need for interventions that enhance opportunities and incomes outside agriculture. Whilst relatively top-down agricultural development initiatives dominated rural development policy in the 1970s and 1980s, the 1990s saw a weakening of agriculture's dominant position within the rural development agenda. This can be partly attributed to a combination of the following:

- the view that **markets** (not the state) should be left to determine how resources should be allocated
- pessimism about the potential of smallholders (especially in less favourable agro-climatic regions) to compete in an increasingly integrated and competitive global market
- the increasingly diverse income portfolios of the rural poor and their limited access to the resources needed for successful farming (ie land, finance, technology, markets etc)
- despite green revolution successes, perceptions about the failure of past policies based on state intervention and, more recently, on market liberalisation, to remove the constraints to successful farming by the poor

Thus, considerable debate remains about the potential role for agriculture, especially smallholder agriculture, in rural development. For many observers, the development of smallholder agriculture, and policies to promote it, remains the key to poverty reduction, especially in places where rural economies have so far failed to take off. This is because in such areas (compared to more developed rural areas or urban areas) land is a relatively abundant resource that only agriculture and allied activities are capable of fully exploiting – focusing on smallholder farming ensures that the benefits go to the poor. Others emphasise the diversity and complexity of rural livelihoods, calling for a more varied set of policies. The livelihoods approach to rural development, which we shall be introducing in the next section, is greatly influenced by this view.

The relative merits of these divergent views depend to some extent on situation and context. The promotion of smallholder agriculture certainly offers greater opportunities for poverty reduction in some parts of the world than it does in others. Additionally, as we have already noted earlier, the global food crisis that developed in 2007–2008 has refocused the world's attention on the need to invest in agriculture.

Section 3 Self Assessment Questions

Question 5

The farmer first approach ...

- (a) evolved because top-down approaches to development failed to produce technologies that met the needs of resource-poor farmers
- (b) was not concerned with farmers living in complex, diverse and risk-prone agricultural systems
- (c) sought to empower resource-poor farmers in the search for technological solutions to poverty and low agricultural productivity
- (d) was designed to replace top-down approaches to development

Question 6

Implementation of a farmer first approach requires what in the way development agencies and agricultural research organisations are organised?

- (a) continuity
- (b) reversals
- (c) centralisation
- (d) authoritarianism

Question 7

True or false?

Social development is a discipline that uses insights from sociology and anthropology to understand the process of development, its socioeconomic impact, and the way it can be made more equitable.

Question 8

Which of the following are valid statements?

- (a) Participatory methods have little relevance outside the agricultural sector.
- (b) Participation is now part of the mainstream vocabulary of rural development.
- (c) Smallholder agriculture is no longer considered important as a strategy for reducing rural poverty.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY

Section Overview

This section considers the origins of sustainable development in rural development thinking and different dimensions of sustainability, and it introduces the sustainable livelihoods approach, an importance influence on rural development thinking.

Section Learning Outcome

By the end of this section, students should be able to:

- outline the different dimensions of sustainability and their relevance to the problems of rural development

One important aspect of rural development as it is practised today, which has not been mentioned so far is environmental sustainability. In this section we look briefly at the concept of sustainable development and its rural dimensions.

4.1 Sustainable development

Since the early 1970s, the extent to which rural and global environments are able to support development has been a growing area of debate. For a long time, it was assumed that the natural environment had the capacity to regenerate more or less indefinitely without specific measures to enable this process. Today, this optimism has largely been replaced by concerns over the effects of overpopulation and pollution on the environment's capacity to withstand and support economic development. **Climate change**, in particular, is now high on the international agenda with scientists trying to better understand climate change causes and effects and governments coming together to find ways of addressing them – with varied success.

Linking environment and development

Following publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 (see 4.1.1) the idea of 'sustainable development' became firmly embedded in the vocabulary of development.

4.1.1 The Brundtland Report

In 1983 the United Nations established a commission (The World Commission on Environment and Development) to investigate the relationship between the environment and the goals and processes of development. The Commission was headed by Gro Harlem Brundtland and in 1987 published its findings under the title of *Our Common Future**, which also came to be known as the Brundtland Report.

The report recognises that environmental and development concerns are closely interlinked. What this means is that

- policies aimed at fostering economic growth and development are not sustainable in the absence of efforts to protect and conserve the environment; and
- efforts to conserve the environment, especially in poorer countries, are unlikely to be sustainable without proper attention being given to the needs of the poor and their relationship with the environment.

How effective the Brundtland Report has been in bringing about real change is the subject of debate, as are its findings and recommendations. Nevertheless, the report was influential in drawing attention to the complex relationship between environment and development, and in highlighting the need for co-operation between environmentalists, on the one hand, and developmentalists, on the other. It also helped place the issue of sustainable development firmly on the international agenda, and few international statements on the environment or development are now made without reference to sustainability and the issues raised by the Brundtland Report.

¹World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) *Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press.

Source: unit author

Yet, the debate about what constitutes sustainable development and how to achieve it is highly contentious. The Brundtland Report defined sustainable development as development which

'... meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'

Source: WCED (1987) p. 8.

The Brundtland definition introduces the concept of **inter-generational equity** as an important guiding principle, although, not surprisingly, agreement upon what constitutes the needs of present and future generations, the trade-offs between them, and how they should be met, is difficult to achieve.

Sustainable development requires that the goals of inter- and intra-generational equity be addressed through a greater focus on the relationship between the economy and the environment.

- In developed countries this means focusing on the linkages between environmental degradation and excessive consumption.
- In poor countries much of the focus needs to be on the relationship between poverty and environmental degradation.

In rich countries, therefore, the focus of sustainable development is on changing patterns of consumption and finding technological solutions to mitigate or prevent the damage caused by existing patterns of consumption – above all the damage caused by anthropogenic (human-induced) climate change. In poor countries poverty contributes to environmental degradation, which in turn deepens poverty. The elimination of poverty therefore becomes a means of solving environmental problems, as well as a development goal in its own right.

Climate change

Economic development and poverty reduction are also necessary to help poor countries adapt to climate change. Current models of climate change suggest that it is in the tropical and subtropical zones – where the poor are concentrated – that global warming is likely to have the severest impact. To make matters worse, poor countries and poor people are the ones least able to cope with climate change. They do not have the resources to protect themselves from the risks of global warming, nor the resilience to recover from its harmful consequences. These include increased risks of:

- drought/water shortages
- crop failure and livestock losses
- malnutrition
- storms, flooding and soil erosion
- damage to physical infrastructure – homes, buildings, roads, bridges etc
- war and conflict – due to migration and pressure on increasingly scarce natural resources (especially water and land)
- disease and health problems – relating to all of the above

Climate-related natural disasters are expected to occur with increasing frequency as the earth's atmosphere warms. These, combined with long-term effects on agro-ecological conditions, pose a major threat to sustainable development.

Sustainable rural development

Environmental sustainability and climate are especially important in rural development. Poor people in rural areas rely heavily on natural resources to meet their basic needs, such as food, water, shelter, and energy. Moreover, they often live in areas where natural resources are especially vulnerable to degradation and global warming – eg in arid zones, or mountainous areas at risk from soil erosion. Because poor people are unable to invest in environmentally sustainable technologies, short-term necessity often forces them to degrade the resources upon which their long-term future depends – especially as population pressure on land and resources increases. This makes them even poorer and fuels a vicious cycle of escalating poverty and environmental degradation.

That is not to blame all rural environmental degradation on the poor. The rich also cause environmental damage – especially via global warming. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that poverty can exacerbate certain types of environmental damage (for example, soil erosion and the loss of soil fertility), and that reducing poverty can help solve some of these problems, as well as helping the poor to cope with climatic changes that are beyond their control.

Environmental sustainability is now a central concern in rural development and the search for technological and institutional solutions to poverty and environmental problems is a major part of rural development efforts. In the future, rural development will also be affected by global efforts to tackle climate change, not only in terms of how effective it is, but in other ways too. For example:

- The shift towards biofuels may create advantages for some farmers by increasing the demand and price of certain crops. However, the growing demand for biofuels also contributes to higher food prices and harms poor consumers.
- International aid is also being shaped by the challenges of climate change and could affect rural areas in various ways. For example, additional aid to help poor countries adapt to climate change may help rural areas. On the other hand, it might substitute for existing aid and leave rural areas with fewer resources than before, especially if the protection of major urban population centres becomes the political priority.

- Initiatives to protect forests, such as the United Nations programme for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD), are also likely to have an effect on rural development in some parts of the world.

The challenge

Operationalising the rhetoric of sustainable development represents a considerable challenge to governments and international agencies. One reason for this is the sheer number of players involved in implementing sustainable development strategies. Coherent action requires co-ordination, consensus and communication – all of which are costly in terms of time and resources.

Another reason is the difficulty of effectively addressing the links between the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability. A potential conflict of interest exists between these three perspectives, as they have different objectives and focus on different issues (see for example Serageldin and Steer 1994).

- Economists focus on the maximisation of human welfare and have tended to study the rational decision outcomes of actors within systems.
- Ecologists focus on understanding ecological systems, often with a goal of preserving and protecting them, and study physical, chemical and biological processes and relations within systems.
- Sociologists focus on understanding social relationships, organisations and their influences on behaviour and outcomes of players in systems.

However, the objectives, issues and insights of all three disciplines are crucially implicated in sustainability. With careful political management, it should be possible to secure an appropriate compromise between them, although in practice, economic objectives often overrule the other two.

Measures to promote sustainability in all its dimensions are now high on the agenda of international development agencies and many national governments, even though substantial disagreement exists over what those measures should be. Inevitably, the rhetoric of environmental concern often ignores the complex economic, social and ecological factors involved in implementing a more environmentally-friendly form of development. For these and other reasons, the degree to which sustainability issues are discussed at the international level has rarely been matched by the level of action taken.

Again, nowhere are these issues more evident than in relation to the challenges of tackling climate change, where the difficulties of finding the right path through a multitude of economic, ecological, social and political objectives and constraints are enormous. It needs to be done in the face of considerable uncertainty about the complex relationship between all the relevant variables of the global system and incomplete knowledge of how changes in one part of the system will affect other parts. Knowledge may improve with time, but most scientists agree that there is very little time left to reduce the risks of potentially catastrophic climate change. In other words, action on climate change needs to be pursued on the basis of the best information available rather than on the basis of perfect information.

4.2 The sustainable livelihoods approach

We conclude this unit by drawing your attention to the sustainable livelihoods (SL) approach to development. This approach is influenced by many of the themes that we have already looked at in this unit, including those of integrated rural development, basic needs, participation and sustainable development. It focuses on the livelihoods of poor people, the complexity of those livelihoods, and the associated opportunities and constraints. Analysis and intervention in the SL approach is holistic and cuts across individual sectors, reflecting diversity in the livelihoods of poor people.

'A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.'

Source: Ashley and Carney (1999) p. 4.

The Department for International Development's sustainable livelihoods approach

The SL approach has had a considerable influence upon the policies and strategies of a number of development agencies, notably the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and many non-governmental organisations (NGOs). 4.2.1 lists a set of guiding principles adopted by DFID in its support for sustainable livelihoods. Some of them may look familiar.

4.2.1 DFID core SL principles

Poverty-focused development activity should be:

- **People-centred:** sustainable poverty elimination will be achieved only if external support focuses on what matters to people, understands the differences between groups of people, and works with them in a way that is congruent with their current livelihood strategies, social environment and ability to adapt.
- **Responsive and participatory:** poor people themselves must be key actors in identifying and addressing livelihood priorities. Outsiders need processes that enable them to listen and respond to the poor.
- **Multi-level:** poverty elimination is an enormous challenge that will only be overcome by working at multiple levels, ensuring that micro-level activity informs the development of policy and an effective enabling environment, and that macro-level structures and processes support people to build upon their own strengths.
- **Conducted in partnership:** with both the public and the private sector.
- **Sustainable:** there are four key dimensions to sustainability – economic, institutional, social and environmental. All are important – a balance must be found between them.
- **Dynamic:** external support must recognise the dynamic nature of livelihood strategies, respond flexibly to changes in people's situations, and develop longer-term commitments.

SL approaches must be underpinned by a **commitment to poverty eradication**. Although they can, in theory, be applied to work with any stakeholder group, an implicit principle for DFID is that activities should be designed to maximise livelihood benefits for the poor.

Source: Ashley and Carney (1999) p. 5.

SL approaches to development offer frameworks for analysing livelihoods and identifying entry points for development interventions by donors and governments. They provide a way of conceptualising key influences on the livelihoods of poor people, including their vulnerability, their access to assets, and the various factors that influence what they can achieve with these assets. For example, they can be very helpful in looking at the vulnerability of the poor to climate change and high food prices, at their resilience and ability to adapt, and at ways in which policies can help reduce vulnerability. SL approaches have their **limitations** too, especially in terms of their ability to look at how livelihoods link together at the national or even global level and in identifying sector-wide or economy-wide solutions to poverty. SL approaches and frameworks attempting to operationalise these principles received considerable attention from donors (principally DFID) in the last decade of the 20th century, and their explicit use in guiding rural development has since declined. More recently such approaches have fallen out of favour, but the core principles have become part of much conventional development thinking and continue to be influential.

Section 4 Self Assessment Questions

Question 9

Which of the following is the most controversial statement?

- (a) Sustainable development brings the concept of inter-generational equity into the development debate.
- (b) In sustainable development, environmental conservation takes precedence over economic development.
- (c) Sustainable development explicitly recognises the link between poverty and environmental degradation.
- (d) Sustainable solutions to poverty need to be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

Question 10

True or false?

The sustainable livelihoods approach to development begins its analysis by focusing attention on the natural resources available within an economy.

Question 11

Match the following phrases.

- (i) environmental degradation
- (ii) sustainable development
- (iii) sustainable livelihoods approach

(a) designed to help identify appropriate entry points for donor assistance in the fight against poverty and cuts across sectors	
(b) focusing on changing patterns of consumption in rich countries and finding technological solutions to mitigate or prevent the damage caused by existing patterns of consumption	
(c) is addressed partly by elimination of poverty	

UNIT SUMMARY

Rural development is broader than agricultural development, encompassing many sectors and addressing links between the social, technical, economic, political, institutional and ecological dimensions of rural change. Its **goal** is essentially achieving equitable growth to benefit the poor in rural areas. The **means** include investment in agriculture, improved rural services and infrastructure, institutional reform, technological change, economic change, political reform – all combined with measures to ensure environmental sustainability. It requires a truly multi-disciplinary approach.

Rural development is an approach to development which stems from the relative neglect of the agricultural sector (the urban bias) and the failure of economic growth theories of development to benefit the poor. Recognition of this neglect reflected both equity concerns and an appreciation of the role of agricultural growth in overall development. These concerns had a significant effect on development **policy**, leading to investment in the agricultural sector (and the **green revolution**), measures to increase equity (the **basic needs** approach), and strategies to co-ordinate the many sectors involved in rural change (**Integrated Rural Development**). IRD sought to co-ordinate multifaceted initiatives more effectively and the basic needs approach promoted satisfaction of the essential needs of the poor before the non-essential needs of the rich.

Rural development interventions by the state were at their peak in the 1970s, but declined in subsequent decades as the **neo-liberal** ideas of the Washington Consensus led to market liberalisation and state withdrawal from many of the activities it had previously undertaken.

However, running parallel with the emergence of neo-liberalism was a very different way of looking at the development process. Like neo-liberalism, this bottom-up approach shared a distrust of top-down interventions by the state, but unlike neo-liberalism, it saw the solution to rural poverty as lying not so much in market forces, but in greater **participation** by the poor in defining and implementing the development agenda. Thus, the poor were not simply to be the beneficiaries of development, but partners in development. This new paradigm for rural development found expression in Chambers' **farmer first** approach to agricultural development and in the interest in applying social theory and methods (**social development**).

The message of farmer first is that farmers' knowledge is valuable for research and development (R&D) and that agricultural development can proceed more effectively if planners can be persuaded to recognise farmers' agendas and form research partnerships with them. Valuable knowledge about farming methods and conservation can be missed by a transfer of technology approach. Technology transfer often fails because farmers have their own ideas and priorities and often operate in complex, diverse and risky environments with very specific technological needs. In short, farmer participation is intended to make the development process more equitable and more effective. However, farmer participation is not straightforward to implement, for reasons to do with power and resistance. This approach is then concerned not only with agriculture but with every part of rural life.

The challenge to top-down approaches to development, both from the participation approach and the free market approach, has also provided a challenge to agriculture's primacy in rural development strategies and re-ignited an old debate about the potential that smallholder farming offers in the fight against rural poverty and the pursuit of economic development. This debate remains unresolved; however, growing pessimism about the ability of world food supplies to keep pace with growing demand and the uncertainties surrounding climate change have given renewed impetus to the argument for greater investment in agriculture.

Finally, environmental concerns (especially those relating to climate change), are now at the forefront of the rural development agenda, so that we rarely talk about 'rural development' but rather 'sustainable rural development'. Sustainability comprises interlocking economic, social and ecological dimensions; and the relationship between them must be addressed for sustainability to be effective. The **sustainable livelihoods** approach to development provides a holistic framework for analysing poverty and identifying potential solutions and became popular with many development agencies in the opening years of the 21st century.

UNIT SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Question 1

Which of the following are generally true statements?

- (a) Rural development as a focus for policy intervention drew inspiration from concerns about equity and efficiency.
- (b) Growth-orientated approaches to development have had little influence on development policy since the 1950s and 1960s.
- (c) Rural development is synonymous with agricultural development.
- (d) The idea of development as modernisation has played no role in rural development policy.
- (e) Environmental sustainability lay at the heart of the basic needs approach to development.

Question 2

Fill in the missing words/phrases (using the list of words provided).

integrated rural development (IRD), top-down, participatory

_____ often failed because it was difficult to manage and costly to implement. Interest in _____ approaches to development stemmed from the perceived failure of _____ approaches to development.

Question 3

True or false?

The livelihoods approach to dealing with rural poverty is opposed to supporting smallholder agriculture.

Question 4

True or false?

The sustainable livelihoods approach to development is the same as the farmer first approach.

Question 5

Three types of agriculture summarised. Complete each column of Chambers' (1989) table by selecting answers from the alternatives provided. (Note that an answer may be used more than once in a row).

	Industrial	Green revolution	Third/'CDR'*
Main locations	(a) Industrialised countries and specialised enclaves in the Third World	(b) Irrigated and stable rainfall, high potential areas in the Third World	(c) Rainfed areas, hinterlands, most of sub-Saharan Africa, etc
Main climatic zone	(a) Temperate	(b) Tropical	
Major type of farmer	(a) Highly capitalised family farms and plantations	(b) Large and small farmers	(c) Small and poor farm households
Use of purchase inputs	(a) High	(b) Low	(c) Very high
Farming system, relatively	(a) Complex	(b) Simple	
Environmental diversity, relatively	(a) Diverse	(b) Uniform	
Production stability	(a) High risk	(b) Moderate risk	
Current production as a percentage of sustainable production	(a) Far too high	(b) Low	(c) Near the limit
Priority for production	(a) Maintain production	(b) Raise production	(c) Reduce production

*Note: CDR in the final column is short for 'complex, diverse and risk-prone'.

Source: Chambers (1989) p. xvi.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

basic needs	promoted satisfaction of the essential needs of the poor before the non-essential needs of the rich
farmer first	emphasised the need for greater farmer participation in agricultural research
green revolution	technological revolution in agriculture that led to large increases in crop yields
integrated rural development	area-based approach to development involving co-ordinated action in the planning and implementation of development interventions
participation	where stakeholders in the development process, especially the poor, participate in some way in the design, implementation, and evaluation of development interventions
sustainable development	economic development with inter- and intra-generational equity
sustainable livelihoods	approach that focuses on livelihoods as a means of achieving sustainable poverty reduction
Washington consensus	market-based approach to development promoted by the Washington-based IMF and the World Bank