

Emigration and Rural Development⁽¹⁾

Lebanese emigration has been a chronic problem to the country, draining its national potential. It is a last resort for the unemployed and is particularly luring for the underprivileged rural population. It has always taken a mercantile character. Instead of depending on agriculture and industry, emigrants depended on services and trade.

The wide gap between urban and rural areas has encouraged the emigration of rural people who are supposed to nurture strong ties with the soil and to constitute a main source of native culture and national character.

To counteract the tide of rural emigration, the first step is to help the development of the rural sector. For this purpose, four schools have been used on an international basis: First, **Extension Education**, originally developed in America, aimed at extending previous education, encouraging research and giving extension services in the form of agricultural information, domestic science and leadership training in youth. This school was deeply rooted in American culture which it tried to preserve and develop. Hence it obtained little success outside America.

A second school is that of **Social Centers**, which emphasized the creation of buildings as centers of development activity. Social centers flourished in Egypt where the most successful was the regional center of Sirs-el-Layyan. A center was built for every 10,000 inhabitants. Their number reached 172 in 1950. But the inability of the government to cover the necessary expenses and to extend the services to the whole population obliged those in charge to change the centers into concentrated units which were qualified to reach larger numbers of rural people.

A third school is one called **Fundamental Education** which aims at meeting the basic needs of individuals and providing the minimum education required for self-realization. To the teaching of basic knowledge, it adds the teaching of skills which help the individual earn his living and achieve economic independence.

The fourth school is the **Community Development Method** which differs from preceding schools in its emphasis on an intense study of local characteristics and needs, free from preconceived ideas. It insists on independent activity and rejects all outside help if people could have obtained the same result through their own efforts. It recommends cooperative work and mobilization of all possibilities. This last school seems to join together all the qualities of preceding ones and to polarize their influence.

(1) Abstract of a lecture presented by **Dr. Mounir Khoury** of BUC, at the Second National Conference for Demographic Policies, organized by the LFPA, 1-3 April 1982. See p. 11 of this issue.