



## **SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

The classic paradigm “think globally and act locally” is discovering a new relevance in the context of social development, as it provides a useful perspective on addressing the needs of nations as complex and diverse as India. In order to understand a country’s motivation for change and social action, it is first necessary to understand the history of the people and their way of life.

Professions based on human relationship such as social work must have its knowledge base truly reflecting values, culture, problems of society in which it has to be taught and practiced. The roles and functions of social workers. Although many attempts have been made to define social work, there have been some disagreements in trying to come up with a universal definition of social work. Thus, without a general agreement on what constitutes social work, it is difficult to definitively delineate what the roles and functions of social work are or should be. The apparent failure to reach an agreement on what social work is partly accounts for the gap between what social workers say they want to achieve and what they are practically able to achieve. According to Cree (2003:3), “it is almost impossible to find a simple definition of social work with which everyone is likely to agree”. Be that as it may, various scholars have attempted to develop definitions of social work, ranging from the seemingly simple and straightforward ones to the relatively complex and comprehensive, including the following.

### **1.1 Definitions of Social Work**

According to Frank Itzin, Social Work is an art of bringing various resources to bear on individual, groups and communities to meet their needs and application of scientific methods and helping the people to help themselves. (“social work is an art, a science, a profession that helps people to solve personal, group (especially family), and community problems and to attain satisfying personal, group, and community relationships through social work practice”).

### **1.2 Direct Methods of Social Work**

#### **1.2.1 Social Casework**

Traditionally, this approach has focused on those individuals who could not achieve a fairly normal adjustment to life and needed outside attention. It is concerned with people who are in particular situations of need. Casework is done on a person-by-person basis, in situations where privacy is necessary in attending to individual problems, for instance, in a hospice, a women’s shelter, or a drug rehabilitation centre.

The idea of a social worker acting as a caseworker or a counselor is a recurrent and powerful notion in social work throughout its history, and has also been closely associated with some of the key values of social work and particularly recognizing the inherent worth of the individual and respecting him or her. Casework also appeals to those whose view of social work as a whole is one in which helping or supporting individuals is a key component. The method involves bringing change in the behavior or outlook of a client. According to Popple and Leighninger (2004), social work is a core technology in social welfare institution, the institution in society that deals with problem of dependency; that is every member of society has a number of social positions or statuses that go with specified roles, and if a member fails to perform his/her roles adequately or social institutions fail to extend help to them, then social stability is threatened and social work has to intervene.

The social work profession has two targets. The first target is that of helping individuals who are having difficulty meeting individual role expectations, which is referred to as micro practice or clinical social work (social casework). The other target of social work concerns those aspects of social institutions that fail to support individuals in their efforts to fulfill role expectations; this is referred to as macro practice. Social casework involves working with the client to: 1. Assess and identify individual and family strengths and needs; 2. Develop a case plan to provide appropriate supports and services; 3. Implement the case plan using community resources; 4. Coordinate and monitor the provision of services, and 5. Evaluate client progress and the case plan to determine continued need for services.

#### **1.2.2 Social Group Work**

Group work aims at the improved functioning of group members through greater ability for a mature relationship, self-awareness and a greater sense of belonging. Supportive treatments, such as clarification, suggestion, development of alternative solutions, and reflection, are used by social workers through group processes and interpersonal relationships.



Social group work utilizes the group as a tool to bring about desired changes in social functioning with troubled persons (Farley et al, 2006).

### **1.2.3 Community Organisation**

This method does not focus so much on the individual and his or her personal needs or the group and its viability as on the overall and general welfare needs of the community as a whole. Also known as community development, it is carried out by groups of people who agree to undertake projects and programmes, largely voluntarily, for the benefit of their communities. The basic aim is to enhance the self-reliance of the community and its ability to maintain its growth. By its nature, community organization creates changes in large groups and organizational units, mostly in situations or in environments which in turn affect personal well-being (DuBois and Miley, 2005).

Community organization entails bringing people together to deal with shared problems and to increase their say about decisions that affect their lives. This approach also entails engaging in a broad range of social change activities, including advocacy with and on behalf of the community for reform underlying social, political, and economic conditions that undermine human dignity, and social workers are normally the primary professional leaders of highly effective community welfare organization worldwide (Estes, 1997:43). Community organization addresses problem such as lack affordable housing, drug abuse, discrimination and lack of access to health care.

Apart from the above three principle methods, social work includes the ancillary, supportive or enabling processes of social administration and social work research.

## **1.3 Indirect Methods of Social Work**

### **1.3.1 Social Administration**

As modern social work becomes increasingly institutionalized, there is a need to know about the organization of the relevant institutions, such as schools, hospitals and the criminal justice system. Administrative skills and the ability to design administrative structures are highly desirable. Social administration is the area of social work concerned with the practicalities of service organization and delivery. In the United States, it is dealt with as 'public policy' or 'policy analysis'. "More specifically, social work administration is a practice intervention used by social workers to achieve service effectiveness and organizational change. As a client-centered intervention, social administration requires the systematic and purposeful application of skills, knowledge, and values. The skills and knowledge are required to improve a program's service effectiveness".

### **1.3.2 Social Work Research**

This is "the systematic, critical investigation of questions in the social welfare field with the purpose of yielding answers to problems of social work and of extending and generalizing social work knowledge and concepts (Friedlander, 1958). Apart from conducting their own research, social workers also document the scholarly work of and engage in collaborative research with other human service professionals such as doctors, nurses and psychologists.

Krysk and Finn (2007) observe that social workers are expected to use research to boost the profession's scientific status and as a tool for improving social conditions. These writers highlight four functions of social work research, notably: promoting the scientific method as a way of knowing; increasing accountability through program evaluation; facilitating information gathering and effective communication; and enhancing access to resources which can be used to help their clientele.

## **1.4 Social Development**

Social development is broad concept encompassing improvement in the social status of the people. Social development lays stress on provision of services health, education, housing, cultural, protection of children, a change in the status of woman, regulation of labour and improving the status of workers and reduction of disease, poverty and other social illness. According to T.K.N. Unnithan, "Social development may be seen as a process of entering in a new order of existence. The quality of life and quality of social relations which exist would indicate the level of the order of existence". Social development is more concerned with the investment in human beings. A unit of investment in education, health, social welfare, etc., is in the ultimate analysis, and as productive as a unit of investment in agriculture industry of trade. Social development deals with society and human resources whereas economic development deals with economic and industrial resources. Social justice and human welfare are key objectives of social development. For the fulfillment of these objectives it seems reasonably necessary that social development should proceed side by side with economic development. Social Development is the process in pursuit of social objectives and this development is achieved through the plans prepared from time to time by planning commission in India, which came into existence in 1950.



According to Walter Rodney (1972), at the level of the individual, development has the implications of increased skill and capacity, freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. At the level of society, he goes on, the concept connotes increasing capacity to regulate internal as well as external relations.

As for Todaro and Smith (2003), the term development may mean different things for different people and may be defined from different perspectives. From the economic perspective, development means the capacity of a national economy, whose initial economic status has been more or less static for a long time, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national product (GNP) at the rates of perhaps 5% to 7% or more.

Apart from the aforementioned economic views, there are some social indicators of development, including gains in literacy, schooling, health conditions and services, and provision of housing; development has, therefore, been redefined in terms of reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment within the context of growing economy in order to improve the quality of people's lives. That is, for any country, if poverty, inequality and unemployment have all declined from high levels, then that implies some level of development for that country (Todaro, and Smith, 2003). Additionally, Stutz and De Sousa (1998: 543) note that the United Nations has devised a Human Development Index (HDI) to measure national human development of both developing and developed countries; this HDI comprises demographic, social and economic factors such as life expectancy, literacy rate and per capita purchasing power, respectively.

### **1.5 Application of Social Work to Social Development**

All nations need both social and economic resources to achieve national development. In this regard, social work can generally mediate the process of development through enabling individuals and the society to reach out for each other through a mutual need for self-fulfillment. Thus, social workers are mandated to mobilize and deliver a wide range of services to their clientele (Bernstein, 1995:54). Bernstein further contends that social workers are expected to assist in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the social functioning of individuals and the society; this responsibility entails the development, procurement and/or delivery of resources and services to meet the many and varied needs of their clients. In this sense, social work can be seen to be playing a major role in national development through empowerment of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of people in many countries, both developed and less developed.

#### **1.5.1 Social Casework**

In modern societies where traditional norms and values have either broken, or are fast breaking down, situations, of what Durkheim refers to as "anomie" have become quite common. Though individual means of livelihood in many countries have generally improved, many people still face difficult existential conditions, for example in situations characterized by war, famine, poverty, crime, disease, and associated personal and familial traumas and maladjustments. Social workers (caseworkers) are required to mitigate the effects of these problems. Their role in providing support and a sense of belonging to maladjusted persons cannot be overestimated.

Using their professional skills and knowledge, social case workers help in assessing the clients' needs and applying agency, community and public welfare resources and programmes to address relevant social, health or economic problems. They help clients who become eligible for a variety of services designed to improve their economic, social and/or health functioning, thereby working toward improving the clients' quality of life or standard of living.

#### **1.5.2 Social Group Work**

Drug and alcohol addicts, unemployed school leavers, juvenile offenders, criminals, people with physical and mental disabilities, older adults, are among many groups that call for social work intervention in contemporary societies. No nation can be deemed to be developed where these health and social problems are rampant and do not receive appropriate attention from statutory and non-governmental welfare organizations. It is in the light of this that virtually all national governments throughout the world have established departments or ministries of social welfare. Hardly any nation exists in the world without such a department, if not a whole ministry. These institutions are responsible for formulating and implementing social policies and programmes for assisting such needy and vulnerable groups.

#### **1.5.3 Community Organization**

Community organization is currently one of the most popular methods of social work worldwide. This method or approach places much emphasis on self-help projects and programs which are undertaken by the people themselves to meet their own felt needs and advance their overall economic and social development. In some countries, the Department of Community Development is almost exclusively responsible for rural development. Apart from rural areas, community welfare programmes play an important part in urban development schemes. Slum clearance, rehabilitation of mental patients, vocational rehabilitation, provision of recreational facilities and low-income housing programmes are common examples.



According to Estes (1997), community development practice has always been at the conceptual center of social work practice in urban areas for the following three reasons: 1) community work seeks to unite previously unorganized people into effective groups and coalitions that work together in pursuit of a shared social agenda (e.g., improved schools, safer neighborhoods); 2) community work seeks to strengthen traditional family, kinship, and neighborhood ties in the community and to develop new social arrangements that are essential to the effective functioning of communities; and 3) community-based social services are among the most effective and cost-effective approaches for serving the poor.

#### **1.5.4 Social Administration**

Social administration is crucial in shaping institutional or organizational structures which facilitate the achievement of national goals. These goals are not restricted to welfare ones only, but extend over technical, economic, agricultural and whatever other desirables may be an integral part of national development. Social administrators provide services to a variety of clients to improve their quality of life. By fostering intensive interactions between themselves and their clientele or target groups, social administrators unleash those humane and emotional factors which might be impeded by scientific and pseudo-scientific, materialistic or administrative models. The importance of social administration is shown, among others, by its emergence as a distinct academic discipline in so many universities across the world.

In their role as administrators, social workers oversee national programs and systems that provide social, health and public welfare services, which are intended to enhance the people's quality of life and to help them achieve the desired standard of living. Based on their understanding of the mission of organizations for which they work, social workers administer the material and financial resources necessary to ensure that social programmes operate as effectively and efficiently as possible. They also engage in continuous evaluation of programmes to determine whether social services are being delivered effectively and humanely and institute corrective measures where necessary.

#### **1.5.5 Social Work Research**

Social work research facilitates the investigation and analysis of social needs and problems and provides directions to policies and actions that help to make remedial goals identifiable and achievable. It makes possible an inter-disciplinary usage of human knowledge by contributing to and utilizing existing knowledge. It is in recognition of the value of research to national development that universities throughout the world have established centres of research and development.

#### **1.6 The Contribution of Social Work to National Development Globally**

The evolution of social work and efforts to promote social development can be seen as closely linked to the primordial tendency of humans to help one another in all past human societies. In traditional, including African, societies, the concern for social welfare was reflected in activities within the family, the clan and ethnic group. The urge of man to help man in all societies was demonstrated by the great care accorded to, inter alia, children, orphans, widows, widowers and the invalid as well as the elderly. In such "gemmeinschaft" (Tonnies, 1887), social work was more or less a task for everyone instead of individuals and specialized agencies. As such, social work has always been geared towards improving the quality of life of each and everyone.

Social work as it is known today has relatively recent origins. It emerged at a time when feudalism was disintegrating and capitalism taking its place. The control of the family and the church was fast weakening too. According to Fink et al (1968), these fundamental social changes began occurring between 1834 and 1909 and ushered in the development in Britain of specialized care agencies for certain vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as dependent children and people living with physical or mental disabilities. Institutions such as district schools, foster homes, hospitals, infirmaries and special schools were provided for these groups.

In the United States within the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the country was undergoing transformation from an agricultural to an industrial economy. Social problems accompanying this social change necessitated intervention from the state and non-governmental organizations, thus attracting the attention of those who sought to alleviate the burdens of new conditions in a fast urbanizing and industrializing nation. In response to the vices of poverty, dependence, disease and others there were efforts to provide improved medical care, prevent child labour and abuse, apply safeguards to hazardous working conditions and improve the lives of the aged and those with disabilities. All these social welfare measures constitute a vital contribution to national development. In countries like USA, social work has grown so much that it is now regarded as the most important profession in that country. There are also suggestions that the profession should be vigorously exported to other parts of the world as a matter of American foreign policy (Farley et al, 2006).

At any rate, social work is increasingly becoming globalized, for it is being applied in a variety of settings and numerous agencies and people across the world are benefiting from its services. Among the social work services provided are: "psychiatry, medical, marriage and family counseling; the school; rehabilitation; corrections; public welfare; workplace; drug



abuse; and child welfare” (Farley et al, 2006: 13). Social work does not only address needs and problems at the personal or family level but also at the neighborhood, national and international level.

Social change occurs when new situations emerge alongside or over old ones. These situations bring with them certain conditions which may be defined by concerned people as “socially problematic” or as “social problems”. A social problem thus exists when a significant number of people or a number of influential people feel that a particular condition is harmful and that something has to be done to rectify it. The skills of social workers may be employed to alleviate adverse social conditions through their operational public, private, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The fact that social workers operate in so many and diverse settings are itself indicative of the significance of social work in national development. Through them social workers provide a wide variety of social services to meet social needs or mitigate social problems.

### 1.7 Suggestions for Social Development

In India, children constitute nearly 40 per cent of the population. The mental health and well being of children requires our attention. All young people today face significant stresses in their lives. Nearly one in five children and adolescents will have emotional and behavioural problems. Ten percent of the child population suffers from mental disturbances with serious learning problems, health problems and drug abuse, at any given time. At least 3 per cent of school age children suffer from serious emotional disturbances such as severe depression, and suicidal thoughts, psychoses, serious attention problems, or obsessive compulsive disorder.

The social worker must also have the skill in counseling of parents, and helping them to understand the problems of the growing child and the basic needs of his personality; (3) Skills in interpreting to the teachers the problems and limitations of the pupils; (4) ability to understand the effect of unfavorable social, cultural and economic conditions on the child and his parents; (5) Skill in mobilizing community resources and services for the benefit of the children; (6) the worker must have ability to maintain liaison between the school and the important social agencies in the community; (7) ability to provide leadership in the coordination of interdisciplinary skills of specialists like guidance counselors, psychologist, psychiatrists etc.

There is need for social study, individualizing needs and the broker, mobilize and coordinator role of social work in the school. In the schools, the role of social work is one of individualizing, bringing services to bear on problems, coordinating these services to get the best results, intervening directly for counseling and group treatment and addressing the elements of the system that produce the problem or contribute to it.

Both in theory and in practice, development is as inconsistent as it is complex. Because of the conceptual and process-related inconsistency and complexity associated with development, this author will limit the use of the term to its contemporary sense as defined by scholars engaged in revamping the concept to meet the needs of the people in the developing world.

### 1.8 Summary

In this article, the author has defined the terms of social work and national development. Within the context of these definitions an attempt was made to establish the relationship between the two concepts and found a strong and positive one. The contributions social work makes to development are many and varied. These contributions have been discussed through the presentation of the various approaches or strategies employed by social workers throughout the world and the role of social work in its totality in the history and present realities of development, in the developed and developing countries, the Global North and the Global South. The most important contribution of social work perhaps is the consideration it gives to the human and social sides of development. This is essential in order to avoid high material and economic standards without consequent matches in human and social standards.

Development is both material and social. Material in terms of economic growth and increased productivity, and social in terms of qualitative changes in peoples’ lives, attitudes, institutions and external relationships. “It is an ongoing, dynamic process by which individuals identify themselves as a community and are collectively empowered to use the necessary knowledge, values and organizational skills to sustainably share and enhance that community’s resources and to bring about positive change for the benefit of all its members; development is realization of rights, especially economic, cultural and social rights aimed at ending poverty, inequalities, suffering and injustice” (Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, 2001).

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