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Poverty Alleviation; Social Worker Intervention

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Abstract

Poverty has become a major issue in most developing countries in the world. Under this circumstance, governments in third-world countries perpetually endeavor to introduce many programs in order to control the obnoxious results of poverty. Even though the issue of poverty has been a severe crisis, authorities pay more attention to controlling poverty in society because poverty leads to create many issues not only for individuals but also for the community differently. Even if a government focuses to maintain sustainable development in society, poverty always makes an obstacle to the persistence of society. Even though many approaches have been applied to reduce poverty from society by governments around the world, poverty is a tremendous issue worldwide. Therefore, all governments must focus to find the most suitable and fruitful ways and means to help people in need. In the issue of poverty, a social worker can bear a huge responsibility to intervene for alleviating poverty in society.

Keywords: *Poverty, Poverty alleviation, Social worker intervention*

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1. Introduction

Poverty is described as a situation in which an individual or society lacks the financial resources and necessities for a basic standard of living. Poverty is described as having an income level from jobs that is so poor that basic human needs cannot be fulfilled. Poverty-stricken persons and households may be deprived of adequate shelter, safe drinking water, nutritious food, and medical treatment. Each country may have its threshold for determining how many of its citizens are poor (Chen, 2022).

Mainly there are two types of poverty which are called; absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty is known as a situation in which a household's income is inadequate to satisfy basic needs (food, shelter, housing). This state requires comparisons to be made between countries as well as over time. Relative poverty refers to a situation in which a household's income is a certain amount below the national median. e.g., a relative poverty level of 50% (or 60%) of median income may be created (Pettinger, 2016). Peter Townsend defines poverty as follows.

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Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diets, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary or at least widely encouraged or approved in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities. (Townsend; 1979)

Poverty is described as a lack of sufficient resources to meet basic human needs such as food, safe drinking water, housing, and clothes. However, access to health services, jobs, and even transportation can be expanded in today's world. Poverty is sometimes classified as "pure poverty" or "relative poverty" in government circles (World Vision, 2022)

2. Poverty in Global Context

It is very important to understand the global situation of poverty since it brings a clear picture of poverty. Thereby people would easily understand the importance of poverty reduction programs and also the intervention of social workers. The disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to compound the powers of war and climate change, which are already delaying poverty mitigation development, causing extreme poverty in global to increase for the first time in over 20 years in 2020, according to the World Bank. Depending on the magnitude of the economic downturn, the Covid-19 pandemic is expected to bring a further 88 million to 115 million people into deep poverty this year, with the number increasing to as much as 150 million by 2021. In 2020, between 9.1% and 9.4% of the world's population will be living in extreme poverty, described as living on less than \$1.90 a day (The World Bank, 2021). From 10.1% in 2015, the global extreme poverty rate dropped to 9.2% in 2017. This equates to 689 million individuals who live on less than \$1.90 a day. In 2017, 24.1% of the world's population lived on less than \$3.20 a day, and 43.6% on less than \$5.50 a day. Rural areas four out of every five residents living below the international poverty line in 2018 (The World Bank, 2022).

3. Poverty in Sri Lankan Context

According to the 2020 global report on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) entitled identifying solutions out of multifaceted poverty 4.1% of Sri Lankans live below the national poverty line, and 14.3% are susceptible to multidimensional poverty, according to the Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2020). "The urban/rural/ estate divide is a unique phenomenon in Sri Lanka. While poverty levels are higher in rural than in urban areas, they are highest in estate areas. The headcount ratio is 4.4% in urban areas, 16.6% in rural areas, and 51.3% in estate areas. The intensity is also highest in estate areas (46.1%), compared to rural areas (40.9%) and urban areas (40.6%). The National MPI is 0.018 in urban areas, 0.068 in rural areas, and 0.236 in estate areas. These highlights estate areas as pockets of poverty that require policy attention (Department of Census and Statistics, 2019).

The Bank has reported in its Spring Update on the South Asian area that around 11.7% of Sri Lankans earn less than USD3.20 per day, the international poverty level for lower-middle-income nations, up from 9.2% in 2019. The government's Samurdhi Program, which assists about 1.2 million low-income households, continued to fail, which was another factor contributing to the country's rising poverty rates (Business Standard, 2022). In Sri Lanka, the poverty rate in 2013 was 6.7%. Poverty throughout the entire nation decreased as a result of changes in the 1980s. However, poverty decreased more quickly in certain geographical locations and job sectors than in others. Living distant from a commercial center, working in agriculture, coming from a poor family, and having a deficient educational system are the primary contributors to poverty in Sri Lanka.

4. Social Worker Role in Poverty Alleviation

Poverty is one of the most striking factors in the world. It has created many unprecedented issues in society; therefore, authorities must work to eradicate poverty from society. It is imperative to cater for welfare facilities and provide job opportunities in order to uplift their living conditions. To what extent poverty eradicates from society is dependent on government involvement and economic policies. Otherwise, it is not an easy task to alleviate poverty in society. Many countries have executed various projects and have introduced different policies to control the level of poverty and uplift the people living conditions.

Social workers' concern for poverty has grown due to their extensive experience dealing with the underprivileged, excluded, people without resources, and conditions that force them into poverty. This concern is shared by social workers across the world. Social workers deal with poverty and risk assessment on a micro level in their everyday job. They employ creativity and innovation to assist people (individuals and communities) comprehend their circumstances and, where feasible, improving their behavior and surroundings. Community development is one of the roles that is receiving more attention. This function calls for expertise in community analysis, social planning, community organization, and social action ([International Federation of Social Workers, 2010](#)). Social workers are crucial in ensuring that everyone has access to the resources they need to achieve their fundamental human needs. This makes it feasible for everyone to live as well as they possibly can. When it comes to working at all levels (micro, meso, and macro), as well as being strengths-based and solution-focused, poverty calls for the best of what social work has to offer. It is obvious that social workers have an ethical obligation to act on behalf of clients and within our obligations to the larger society when considering the issue of growing poverty in our nation. Finding strategies to combat poverty that take into account the long-term and product improvements that are sustainable is more difficult. Social welfare programs have greatly helped to change downtrodden circumstances in society. Here, social workers can also interfere to enhance the condition of life by working with people in need. Social workers who deal with at-risk groups regularly. They are free to use whatever methods and strategies they choose, according to the IFSW, which may include:

4.1. Individual Intervention

Throughout the history of social work, the idea of a social worker serving as a caseworker or counsellor has emerged repeatedly and powerfully. It is strongly associated with some of the core beliefs of the profession, particularly the emphasis on the inherent worth of the individual and respect for him or her. Casework appeals to people who believe that helping clients change their behavior or appearance is the main purpose of social work in the individual intervention, the social worker can identify those who are poor and could be able to determine family-based intervention to execute the program. Individual intervention could possibly make solutions for identifying people who suffer from the problem. And also, this method directly works with needy people to replace their sinking energy.

4.2. Community Education Initiatives

Educating the community about poverty and associated issues is another crucial function of social workers. For instance, issues like gang violence, drug and alcohol misuse, a lack of childcare options, or scholastic challenges are frequently present in poor neighborhoods.

Social workers advise communities on how to work more effectively together, educate communities on how to avoid or lessen these difficulties, and assist communities in coming up with original or workable solutions to issues.

4.3. Community Development

Community development is one of the key ways social workers aid in the reduction or prevention of poverty. In other words, community development addresses poverty's effects on individuals, groups, communities, and society at large. Social workers may engage in community organizing, program creation, social planning, and social activism in this area of practice. For instance, they could assist in creating neighborhood employment training and placement programs or instruct underprivileged communities on subjects like violence prevention or drug addiction prevention.

4.4. Community Practice

Social workers can assist individuals in discovering their resources and abilities to affect and affect meaningful change. According to the IFSW, in this approach, the social worker combines engagement with people and families with community service, concentrating on strengthening services and opportunities along with personal capabilities as individuals emerge from adversity (<https://onlinemasters.ohio.edu/blog/social-workers-reducing-the-impact-of-poverty/>)

4.5. Social Policy Development

Social workers also help the poor at the macro or micro level by working to bring about changes in social policies. They achieve this goal in a variety of ways, such as through community organizations or political action.

Some social workers work directly in committees or with elected officials to discuss community needs or propose possible changes to specific social policies that affect the poor. They may also help influence social policy through other activities, such as organizing community protests or fundraising.

5. Conclusion

It is obvious fact that social workers can intervene to help poor people in different ways in order to keep justice in society. Thereby, social workers can contribute to catering their services to establish and build equity and equality in society. What sort of approaches should be applied to bring a constructive solution to people who expect to help from society? A social worker can apply different approaches to make a solution and practical way to relieve people who are willing to stand amid many difficulties. Therefore, individual intervention is one of the basic approaches that can be applied to make relief for marginalized people in society. Identifying the people's potential to make a concrete solution is important. By identifying what they need, and what they can do, then, a social worker could be possible to fulfil the gap made in the social system due to financial capacity. This approach is based on a personal point of view and it leads to a change of personal mindset to go ahead with a fresh look. The personal intervention approach is focused to change personal vision through the intervention of a social worker. Therefore, this approach is directly involved to reinforce people in need. Applying constructive application through individual intervention would lead to changing individual negative ideas and it may be a triggering factor to get the power to look forward in a new path. In this way, people who expect to achieve financial stability identify what they can do. They have the opportunity to be either entrepreneur or work in a team environment to achieve the expected level of living conditions through the new economic generating sources. This condition can be considered a community development approach that is discussed in the approaches used to empower people who need support.

The social worker can also contribute to alleviating society's poverty by applying a community practice approach. This approach also one of the approaches is discussed under the social worker intervention to alleviate poverty. Therefore, it is important to look over how this approach can be happened to achieve the optimum benefits for people in need. This approach is mainly focused on families and individuals to strengthen their capabilities to enhance their living patterns.

Accordingly, it is shown that social worker has many opportunities and potential to work on alleviating poverty in society. Therefore, Social worker's contribution should be taken to the development of society. Because the social worker's role is a practical approach to sustain social stability.

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