



## Impact of social worker on community development: Mohamed Alusine Mansaray, Dr. Allieu Badara Kabia

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### Abstract

This study provides a review of the theoretical perspectives on the impact of social worker in community development. Community social workers help communities function. Some social workers work directly with individuals, administering needs appraisals and making referrals to resources in the community. Others assess needs on a larger scale. They may plan and administer programs. Community's individuals desire to stay safe, healthy and wealthy. Social services and social workers have an important function in helping people enhance their quality of life by building awareness and sustaining the community by creating employment opportunities on their effort. A vital community generates a participatory energy that makes residents feel integrated and empowered. A community social worker can play a significant role in creating this within the community they work in. This knowledge of community brings out the best in people, and motivate them to do more for themselves and those around them. This study provides a significant contribution to understanding social workers' impact on community development. The present study is to know the impact of social workers on community development.

**Keywords:** Community Development, Social work, Vulnerable, Social Services, Society, Awareness

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### Introduction

Social work practice consists of the professional application of social principles, and techniques to one or more of the following ends: helping people obtain tangible services; counseling and psychotherapy with individuals, families, and groups; helping communities or groups provide or improve social and health services, and participating in legislative processes. The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behavior; of social and economic, and cultural institutions; and the interaction of all these factors." –National Association of Social Workers. The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet basic and complex needs of all people, with a particular focus on those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. If you're looking for a career with meaning, action, diversity, satisfaction, and a variety of options, consider social work.

Community development is the core component of social work. It concentrates on increasing the literacy rate, creating and generating employment opportunities, poverty eradication, and eradicating acute hunger, gender equality and welfare of the vulnerable sections of the society by adopting social work methods. Social workers have a vital role in understanding the people's heritage to help them manage their daily lives with respect and dignity. Community Development is a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and fullest possible reliance upon the community's initiative. The United Nations defines community development as "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. It is a broad concept, applied to the practices of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens, and professionals to improve various aspects of communities, typically aiming to

build stronger and more resilient local communities.

Reynolds (1982) suggested that survival of the community depends on its ability to meet the social development and social welfare needs of its residents. It is social work's simultaneous focus on the interrelationship of the individual's and the community's development that sets it apart from other professions in the United States. Individuals in society desire to live a healthy, tolerant, safe, inclusive and fair life. Social work that has significant contribution to attaining that goal. Social work education has many challenges, but with the effort of educators, field practitioners, and social work trainees are turning towards meeting local needs and accepting local techniques to resolve issues of an individual, the group, and the community by adopting Community development skills. The development of strong communities has long been a tenet of the social work profession. A community where streets are safe to walk, the air and water are clean, housing is secure and affordable, human services and education are accessible, and community members work together toward common goals can be a source of strength and hope to its residents.

### **How Social Workers impact the community**

Social workers work with a variety of different issues that can greatly impact individuals, families, and communities. Some of these issues include: Poverty, Stress, Mental Health, Addiction, Abuse, Disability, Death, Physical Illness, and Discrimination.

The development of strong, vibrant, and healthy communities has long been a tenet of the social work profession. As facilitators, organizers, counselors, and advocates, community social workers have an important voice in helping communities overcome the barriers to necessary change. They also provide the energy for transformation — empowering residents with the knowledge, resources, and capacity to self-direct and self-govern their lives and circumstances.

### **The social worker model of community empowerment**

People and their communities have the best understanding of the required social services that may remedy their day-to-day challenges. This is why a holistic approach to the social worker role asks the people how they want to shape their solutions.

### **Encourage People to Be Involved With Shaping Their Social Services**

Barrantes says, “Communities identify their own solutions. This brings people together and they think beyond normal services. They want programs to end violence, [by providing] community-wide empowerment charters for women and girls, drug prevention clinics and basic schooling.”

### **Professional Roles in Social Work**

Social workers' roles have grown to include crisis management as well as roles of empowerment and advocacy. Social workers can empower communities by encouraging individuals to take an active role in shaping social services, providing education programs and enabling economic independence long-term. Social workers' efforts have the capacity to transform lives at the individual level while also creating a ripple effect at the community-level, to continue a wave of inspiration and motivation for generations.

“...most of us have a pretty good idea of what we what we

expect from a doctor or a teacher. For social work, the role expectations are not quite as clearly understood by the general public. Perhaps this is because there are so many professional roles in social work. The number and diversity of social work roles provide opportunity for a great deal of creativity in practice.” —Suppes, M., Cressey Wells, C. (2003) <sup>[3]</sup>

### **Broker**

The social worker is involved in the process of making referrals to link a family or person to needed resources. Social work professionals do not simply provide information. They also follow up to be sure the needed resources are attained. This requires knowing resources, eligibility requirements, fees and the location of services.

### **Advocate**

In this role, social workers fight for the rights of others and work to obtain needed resources by convincing others of the legitimate needs and rights of members of society. Social workers are particularly concerned for those who are vulnerable or are unable to speak up for themselves. Advocacy can occur on the local, county, state or national level. Some social workers are involved in international human rights and advocacy for those in need.

### **Case Manager**

Case managers are involved in locating services and assisting their clients to access those services. Case management is especially important for complex situations and for those who are homeless or elderly, have chronic physical or mental health issues, are disabled, victims of domestic or other violent crimes, or are vulnerable children.

### **Educator**

Social Workers are often involved in teaching people about resources and how to develop particular skills such as budgeting, the caring discipline of children, effective communication, the meaning of a medical diagnosis, and the prevention of violence.

### **Facilitator**

In this role, social workers are involved in gathering groups of people together for a variety of purposes including community development, self-advocacy, political organization, and policy change. Social workers are involved as group therapists and task group leaders.

### **Community Organizer**

Social Workers are involved in many levels of community organization and action including economic development, union organization, and research and policy specialists. As community organizers, social workers rally the community around various social issues and help align the community's resources and energies to address their most pressing needs. Community social workers who take on the role of organizers empower individual community members to take on a larger role in the development and continued improvement of their community.

### **Counsellor**

Every individual of the society has a unique character in nature, therefore individualising the people and fulfilling their needs is the most significant task before social workers.

Meaningful and scientific interaction between social workers and every individual of society is expected in the preview of counselling, which is the only solution to address the issues of community members and individuals whose behaviour is problematic. Such effort helps to improve tolerance among all, and it leads to community development.

### **Project Manager**

Social Workers, because of their expertise in a wide variety of applications, are well suited to work as managers and supervisors in almost any setting. As managers, they are better able to influence policy change and/or development, and to advocate, on a larger scale, for all underprivileged people.

Community social workers take on the role of project manager to ensure programs are implemented correctly and within their original scope. As they understand the pulse of individuals and groups within the community, and how to motivate them, they're uniquely positioned to prepare and administer projects. Active participation with the various communities' various groups can contribute exceptionally well to community development.

### **Researcher**

In order to drive community transformation and development, social workers need to research the root causes of a community's challenges. They use this research to help develop community programs and advocate for policy changes to better the individuals and families they serve.

### **According to the bureau of labor statistics the typical social worker role includes the following duties and social worker responsibility**

- "Identify people and communities in need of help"
- "Assess clients' needs, situations, strengths and support networks to determine their goals"
- "Help clients adjust to changes and challenges in their lives, such as illness, divorce or unemployment"
- "Research, refer and advocate for community resources, such as food stamps, childcare and health care to assist and improve a client's well-being"
- "Respond to crisis situations such as child abuse and mental health emergencies"
- "Follow up with clients to ensure that their situations have improved"
- "Maintain case files and records"
- "Develop and evaluate programs and services to ensure that basic client needs are met"
- "Provide psychotherapy services"

### **Who is a social worker?**

**Social workers are professionals who aim to enhance overall well-being and help meet basic and complex needs of communities and people.** Social workers work with many different populations and types of people, particularly focusing on those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty.

Depending on their specialty, job title and place of employment, a social worker may be required to participate in legislative processes that often result in the formation of social policies. They lean on social work values and principles, as well as academic research to carry out their work.

Social workers are educated and trained to address social

injustices and barriers to their client's overall wellbeing. Some of these include poverty, unemployment, discrimination and lack of housing. They also support clients and communities who are living with disabilities, substance abuse problems, or experience domestic conflicts.

Social workers often fine-tune their practice with a focus on a level of interventions and types of communities they wish to serve. A clinical social worker, for example, focuses on diagnoses, treatments and prevention of mental, emotional and behavioral issues. On the other hand, a social worker may focus on research and development for small or large scale programs to help the community, like Medicaid.

### **Social Worker Skills**

Each social worker employs a diverse set of skills to do their work. But as we discussed earlier, there are certain skills that can be particularly useful to those in the field. Below are some examples:

#### **1. Empathy**

Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand another person's experience and point of view. NASW defines it as "the act of perceiving, understanding, experiencing and responding to the emotional state and ideas of another person."<sup>1</sup>

"Stepping into someone else's shoes" and recognizing that experiences, perceptions and worldviews are unique to each individual enables social workers to better understand and build stronger relationships with clients. It is a vital skill that helps social workers to determine a client's needs based on his or her unique experiences in order to efficiently provide services.

#### **2. Communication**

Communication – both verbal and non-verbal – is a vital skill for social workers. The ability to communicate clearly with a wide range of people is essential. It is the duty of social workers to advocate for their clients – in order to do this, social workers must understand the client's needs. In addition to being cognizant of body language and other non-verbal cues, this means communicating appropriately and effectively with clients regardless of cultural background, age, gender, literacy skill level or disability. Social workers must also communicate with care providers, colleagues, and agencies, and must document and report information in a clear manner.

#### **3. Organization**

Social workers have busy schedules and a wide range of responsibilities in addition to managing and supporting multiple clients, including documentation, reporting, billing and collaboration. This requires social workers to be very organized and able to prioritize clients' needs in order to effectively manage cases. Disorganization and poor time management could cause a social worker to overlook a client's needs and result in negative outcomes.

#### **4. Critical Thinking**

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze information gathered from unbiased observation and communication. Social workers must be able to objectively evaluate each case by collecting information through observation, interviews and research. Thinking critically and without prejudice enables social workers to make informed decisions, identify the best

resources and formulate the best plan to help clients.

### 5. Active Listening

Active listening is necessary for social workers to understand and identify a client's needs. Listening carefully, concentrating, asking the right questions, and utilizing techniques such as paraphrasing and summarizing also helps social workers to engage and establish trust with clients.

### 6. Self-Care

Social work can be demanding and emotionally stressful, so it is important to engage in activities that help you to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Self-care refers to practices that help to reduce stress and improve health and well-being – engaging in these practices helps to prevent burnout and compassion fatigue and is crucial to having a sustainable career. By taking the time to care for themselves, social workers are better able to provide the best services for their clients. Learn more about self-care with our self-care starter kit.

### 7. Cultural competence

Working effectively with clients from diverse backgrounds requires social workers to be respectful and responsive to cultural beliefs and practices. Social workers must be knowledgeable and respectful of their clients' cultural backgrounds and must, as stated by NASW, "examine their own cultural backgrounds and identities while seeking out the necessary knowledge, skills, and values that can enhance the delivery of services to people with varying cultural experiences associated with their race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, age or disability." Possessing a non-judgmental attitude and an appreciation for diversity and the value of individual differences enables social worker to provide clients with what they need.

### 8. Patience

Social workers encounter an array of circumstances and individuals in their work. It is important to have patience to work through complex cases and with clients who need longer periods of time to make progress. This empowers social workers to understand the client's situation and avoid hasty decision-making and frustration that can lead to costly errors and poor outcomes for the client.

### 9. Professional Commitment

Being successful in social work requires lifelong learning. Social workers must have a professional commitment to social work values and ethics, and to continuously developing professional competence. This commitment is necessary for fulfilling the mission of social workers – "to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed and living in poverty."

### 10. Advocacy

Social workers promote social justice and empower clients and communities through advocacy. Advocacy skills enable social workers to represent and argue for their clients and to connect them with needed resources and opportunities, especially when clients are vulnerable or unable to advocate for themselves.

### Functions of social work

Function of social work refers to the natural activity of social work or the statements of how social work operates.

According to Proff. P.D. Mishra social work operates to assist individuals in adjusting to the institutional frame work of the society and attempts to modify the institutional frame work itself in appropriate areas. He classified the functions of social work into the following 4 major categories:

#### 1. Curative Function

The services provided under curative functions are—medical and health services, services relating to psychiatry, child guidance, child welfare services, services for the handicapped or disable in the form of protection and rehabilitation. These kinds of services aim to cure the physical, social, material, psychological sickness of individuals in the society.

#### 2. Correctional Function

The correctional function of social work has three broad areas, such as:

a) Individual reform service which includes prison reform, probation, parole and other related services. b) Services for improving social relationship which includes family welfare services, school social work, industrial social work etc. c) Services for social reform that includes employment services, prevention of commercial sex work, beggary prohibition services and removal of untouchability etc.

#### 3. Preventive Function

It includes life insurance services, public assistance, social legislation, adult education and prevention of diseases etc. This type of function basically deals with the services relating to the prevention of problems like insecurity, unlawfulness, ignorance, sickness etc. It is directed towards the elimination of those factors in the social environment or those deficiencies in the development of personality that prevents the individual from achieving a minimum desirable standard of socio-economic life.

#### 4. Developmental Function

Developmental function includes the tasks of socio-economic development activities such as: education, recreational services, urban and rural development programmes and programmes of integration etc which are primarily concerned with the development of individuals, families, groups and communities.

### Key definitions

#### Community

According to Shaffer and Anundsen (1993), "a community is a dynamic whole that emerges when a group of people participate in common practices, depend on one another, identify themselves as part of something larger than the sum of their individual relationships, and commit themselves for the long term to their own, one another's and the group's well-being" (p. 10).

#### Community Development

Spergel (1987) referred to community development as "a deliberate intervention into the social network or structure of relations among people and organizations in a local area or interest community to facilitate social problem solving and improve patterns of service delivery and sociopolitical functioning" (p. 300). Community Development:

"Community Development is a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and fullest possible reliance upon the community's initiative

### Community Building

Community building increases the community's capacity to effect positive change in community conditions by building, integrating, and connecting the community's social, human, physical, political, and economic resources through a planned and participatory process designed to meet community priorities and desired goals (Council on Accreditation of Services for Children and Families, 2001).

### Community Practice

Community practice encompasses a wide scope of practice, ranging from grassroots organization and development to human services planning and coordination (Weil & Gamble, 1995).

### The developmental social work services

#### Community Mobilisation and Mitigation of Impact

Utilizing strategies that are targeted at strengthening the capacities of families and communities in geographic areas have proven to be the most effective and sustainable way to address the crisis.

#### Education and Prevention

education pertaining to the forms of behaviour that increase the risk of HIV infection such as unprotected sex, engaging in sex with more than one partner, mother-to-child transmission and ways to prevent HIV infection. A lack of HIV and AIDS-related knowledge, such as modes of transmission, effective condom use, misconceptions and peer pressure increases the risk of contracting HIV.

#### Poverty Reduction and Livelihoods Strategies

HIV and AIDS can lead to the impoverishment of families as a result of the loss of income caused by illness; social workers should encourage community members to engage in poverty-reduction activities that could improve their livelihoods.

#### Gender-Sensitive and Non-Discriminatory Practice

Unequal gender relations and social, economic and cultural factors are directly connected to the high infection rates among women.

#### Social Planning

Social workers should conduct community-based research to design programmes that are appropriate, effective and sustainable.

#### Social Policy, Legislation Guidelines and Advocacy

Social workers should be involved in the development of policies and pieces of legislation that are responsive to the needs and rights of, amongst others, people living with and affected by HIV. They should also play an active role in advocating for legislative and policy reform and reviews.

### Research Objectives

**This study has the following objectives which are:**

1. To investigate the Impacts of social worker on community Development.
2. To understand the relationship between community

development and social work.

3. To examine the functions of social worker in a community.

### Research Methods

Research methods are the strategies, processes or techniques utilized in the collection of data or evidence for analysis in order to uncover new information or create better understanding of a topic. Secondary research includes research material published in research reports and similar documents. These documents can be made available by public libraries, websites, data obtained from already filled in surveys etc. Some government and non-government agencies also store data that can be used for research purposes and can be retrieved from them.

This study is developed with secondary sources (online journals, academic articles, expert's words, and self-observations).

### Conclusion

This study illustrates the importance of social work education. Social work education holds a significant role in the development of a society. There needs to be continuous provision of information which is up-to-date and appropriate to its target population. The social worker plays a vital role in educating all members of a community on community development. There needs to be continuous provision of information which is up-to-date and appropriate to its target communities. This study demonstrates the impacts of social worker on community development, as a contributing factor to community wellbeing.

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