



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

AN AFRICANIST PERSPECTIVE

Edited by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

SOCIAL WORKERS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Abdussalam Abdulhameed

Community development (CD) is an eclectic social work practice and intervention which involves individuals (micro level), families and groups (mezzo level) and communities and organisations (macro level). It is, thus, an important area of specialisation in Social Work (Kirst- Ashman, 2010; Zastrow, 2008). In this chapter, the importance of CD to social work is examined. The chapter also examines the historical development of CD and highlights the role of social workers in this important field and thematic area. The chapter delves into conceptual clarification of important terms in community development. The basic principles that guide CD are also discussed. The chapter also examines the categories of models in CD. It also discusses steps in initiating CD and identifies ways of becoming a successful CD worker. The partnership principles in CD as well as the components of CD are also highlighted.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

- **Community**

A community is a group of people who share some things in common. These things include belief systems, culture, identification, ideology, location and interest. It is these things that connect them in different ways and also distinguish them from other groups in so many ways (Fellin, 1995, Homan, 2008). According to Martinez-Brawley (1995), community can be of two forms; the first has to do with geographical setting or location and the second is mainly based on allegiance, interests, general ideas, shared history and a sense of belonging. There are also those called locality-based communities, which could be small portions of big cities. Non-geographic communities are based on some similarities other than location. Examples are university communities, associations of professional social workers based on values, belief and code of ethics, gay communities and the contemporary trend which is global community.

- **Community Organisation**

William, Larry, Smith, & Boyle (2010) see a community organisation as an intervention whereby individuals, groups, and organisations engage in planned action to ameliorate social problems. It is concerned with the enrichment, development, and change of social institutions and involves two major related

processes: planning (that is identifying problem areas, diagnosing causes and formulating solutions) and organising (that is developing the constituencies and devising the strategies necessary to effect action).

- **Community Development**

Community development is defined as collective efforts by members of a community to identify and address community problems and needs that promote social cohesion, social justice, self-reliance and self-determination such effort may also exert influence on the people at the helm of affairs (Aimers, 2011).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As noted earlier, community development is an important thematic area in social work practice. CD was linked to the establishment of the Charity Organisation Movement (COM) in England and the settlement house movement in London in the 1800s. This was followed by private philanthropy which bore the major responsibility of ameliorating peoples' suffering and relieve of poverty in the United State (Zastrow, 2008). However, over the years, the concept of community development has undergone drastic transformation because of the ever-changing needs of communities. At least, four different historical transformations have been identified in the literature. They include the primitive era, the pre-industrial era, the industrial epoch as well as contemporary time. During the primitive era, the purpose of community development was to safeguard communities from external attack. Taboos, customs and traditions were the major guiding principles in community development at the time. In the pre-industrial epoch, the major means of resources mobilisation were through the invasion of other community's resources. Community development during this period was focused on manpower development through conquering other communities for resource mobilisation. During the industrial era of the 19th century, the goal of community development was infrastructural development and resources mobilisation for industrial growth.

However, in contemporary society, community development is focused on the involvement and participation of people in the planning and implementation of community development programmes (State Resource Centre, 2015). More so, from the primitive to contemporary times, the bottom line in community development programmes is an effort to improve all facets of peoples' well-being such as social, cultural, economic and environmental (Frank & Smith, 1999). Community development aims at providing qualitative standards of living to all and sundry in the community. It may be small empowerment affecting small groups to large empowerment projects or programmes that cut across all

sectors of the community and, in turn, affect all members of the community (Frank & Smith, 1999). Community practice, therefore, requires social workers to have the basic skills needed and the ability to work effectively with people. Social workers are expected to be involved in coordinating community projects such as the formation of digging of wells, construction of roads, building of market places, and neighbourhood-watch groups such as vigilante groups to curb delinquency. Community development occupies an important space in social work practice. It is, therefore, imperative that social work practitioners and students be acquainted with the basic knowledge and skills of CD.

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

According to William, Larry, Smith, & Boyle (2010), the following are the basic principles that guide CD practice.

- * **Social Control:** This is the mechanism put in place by the community to check on socially acceptable and acceptable behavior. This law revolves around the community's worthwhile and important values.
- * **Socialisation:** This is a way of inculcating the community's values, culture, folkways, mores and beliefs into its new members.
- * **Production, distribution and consumption of goods:** In a community, there should be cordial relationship in terms of the production and distribution of goods. Efforts must be made to have the necessities of life such as food, clothing, transportation, and other services that will make life meaningful and comfortable for the members of the community. The provision of all these is guided by codes and ordinances called bye-laws meant to regulate the activities of members to a certain extent to avoid exploitation and monopoly (William, Larry, Smith, & Boyle 2010).
- * **Mutual Support:** This involves an individual helping his/her neighbour in critical periods such as food shortage, fire outbreak, bereavement and armed attack.
- * **Participation of residents:** Members of the community usually organise various events (and services) that allow them to interact with one another. These include recreational programmes such as football, traditional games, table tennis, basketball and so on. They are also involved in festivals like the New Yam festival in Enugu State, Argungu festival in Kebbi State, Osun-Osogbo festival in Osun State and Anama and Ijakadi festivals in Offa Local Government area of Kwara State.

ROLES OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As it is found in other forms of generalist practice, social workers have great and unique roles to play in community development. Zastrow (2008) and Dhavaleshwar (2016) identified the roles of social workers in community development as follows:

- **Community organiser:** Community social workers in this aspect perform the major role of organising the community on critical issues by trying to harness available resources in order to accomplish desired goals of the community (Rothman, 2001).
- **Case Worker:** Social workers as case workers perform a key role in CD by attempting to proffer solutions to individual problems in a holistic manner or using a holistic approach. It is a micro-type intervention in which attention is focused on individual problems in order to enhance their social functioning within the community so that such individual may in turn contribute meaningfully to the overall development of the community (Dhavaleshwar, 2016).
- **Group work:** CD focuses on the psychosocial needs of the problematic groups of the community. It involves the constitution of committees which will be saddled with the responsibility of fulfilling the major tasks of meeting the psychosocial needs of group members. They strive to develop leadership style and quality, create and increase awareness in group members of various issues.
- **Brokering:** This is a fundamental role of the community social worker in which he/she endeavours to link the community to resources needed for accomplishing specific tasks or projects. This may be through the provision of information that will enable members of the community to know where they can access the required resources, and create effective structures for problem solving. The community social worker equally assists the community to facilitate benefits provided by the government, international agencies like United States for International Development(USAID),United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund(UNICEF), the World Health Organisation(WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Canadian International Development Agency(CIDA) and non-governmental organisations, among others, to help ameliorate the condition of the disadvantaged and marginalised members of the community. For example, CIDA is known in Africa for many developmental programmes such as interventions supportive of CD programming, identifying urgent peace building requirements and responding rapidly to them, provision of useful resources at a critical turning point in the

process and helping people find lasting solutions to disputes (CIDA, 2001). In the same vein, USAID has supported the Nigerian government in the bid to privatise its unproductive and unreliable energy sector. During the process, USAID served as a valued partner to Nigeria in capacity building in rural communities and in the provision of fund to private entities (USAID, 2015).

- **Project Manager:** Social workers serve as project managers. Project management is a unique aspect of CD. It is usually spearheaded by professional community social workers who help in analysing, implementing and managing the projects.
- **Needs Analysis:** Another important function that community social workers perform is carrying out assessments on the needs of the community. In this regard, needs are prioritised and the most critical ones are addressed first. However, the opinions and interests of the members of the community must be sought in terms of public opinion to ascertain needs that are of utmost importance to the people. Social workers and community development organisations do not impose projects and programmes on the people. Similarly, the community social worker is expected to work out modalities for meeting such needs for the overall benefit of the community.
- **Middle manager:** This is also a paramount role of the community social worker because he/she helps the community by serving as middleman between it and government to access services such as the provision of general insurance and security so as to safeguard the lives and properties of community members. Furthermore, community social workers can also serve as middle-men between employers and employees as well as many other related roles.
- **Counseling:** This is a talk therapy which can be applied at all levels of social work. It occupies a sensitive place in CD, simply because each individual in the community needs this therapy to tackle both personal and social problems that may hinder their social functioning in the community. A social worker becomes the key player in identifying members whose behaviours are problematic and making effort to improve tolerance among all and sundry in order to enhance sustainable community development.
- **Research:** Research is another key role played by the worker. It involves a logical, systematic and scientific investigation of social problems. It also identifies individual and societal issues or problems and proffer solutions. Each community has its own peculiarity in terms of problems, community social worker should therefore be able to diagnose the problem and provide necessary prognosis.

MODELS IN COMMUNITY PRACTICE

A significant number of approaches have been developed to bring about changes in the community. Rothman (2001) categorised them into three broad models, namely; locality model, social planning model, and social action model.

- **Locality model**

This model is of the opinion that, community can only experience changes when there is holistic and inclusive participation of all members of the community. According to Rothman (2001), this involves all categories of groups that make up such community: able-bodied, disadvantaged, oppressed, downtrodden, alienated, and physically challenged groups. These groups need to come together as an indivisible entity to identify and solve community problems. At this stage, social workers are involved. The roles of community social workers in this context include coordinator, catalyst, enabler, and teacher of ethical values and problem-solving skills. The basic slogan or theme of this model is "Together we can figure out what to do and do it" (Rothman, 2001: p29). Communication and discussion among members of the community are the basic tools employed by this model to reach consensus on which problem and programme to focus on and which actions or strategies to use to resolve those problems or achieve the programmes.

- **Social Planning Model**

This model assumes that the quest to achieve a complex industrial transformation and environment requires highly trained and skilled planners who can facilitate and guide complex change processes (Kirst-Ashman, 2010). These experts include city planning departments, planning agencies, and community welfare councils which could form local government. The role of community planner known as community social worker includes gathering of facts, synthesising, and analysing data to provide a concise picture of the community problems, serving as a programme designer, implementer, and facilitator (Hopworth & Colleague, 2006). Community participation in this approach or model varies from micro to macro, little to substantial, depending on the community attitudes towards the problems being addressed. It focuses on identifying needs and arranging goods and services to people who need them. Social planning model deals with more industrial change of resources and setting up services for the solution of social problems. This model is less sensitive to process than other areas of practice in CD (Checkoway, 2011).

- **Social Action Model**

This model recognises that, in every community, there are those who are oppressed and disadvantaged and, who therefore need to be organised, probably

in solidarity with others, to check the excesses of those in power so as to ensure social justice, equality and equity and resources distribution. The rationale behind this model is to seek changes in the socio-cultural arrangement or in the status quo of the major institutions of the community. Equally, it also seeks to influence, modify, or change any policy that has adverse effects on particular groups of people in the community.

STEPS FOR INITIATING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The State Resource Centre in India (2015) identified the following major steps for initiating community development.

- **Goal Setting:** This is the first step in CD and involves the community social worker to be sensitive in aspects such as culture, socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the community. During this period, the practitioner should consider resources at the disposal of the community such as human and material resources planners and implementers.
- **Understanding the People in the Community:** The social worker involved in community development projects, requires adequate knowledge about the people of the community in terms of their needs, and the problem they face, political structure and leadership style, socio-economic situation, their knowledge and world view.
- **Identify the Problems and Issues on CD:** Information gathered during the first stage will enable the practitioner to identify the issues, problems, and available opportunities in the community. It is therefore, imperative to figure out all these problems and issues before planning and implementing.
- **Prioritise Problems and Issues:** Having identified the problems and issues in the community, the professional social worker is expected to prioritise these problems and issues. Thus, he/she begins with the most critical problem and issue that requires immediate response and attention.
- **Resource Mapping:** Resource mapping means identifying all available resources, in terms of materials, manpower and the fund required for the particular programme.
- **Plan and Prepare the Activity:** Following resource mapping, the next step is planning. Kirst-Ashman (2010) identified important areas of planning which include working with clients and creating the treatment plan.
- **Prepare the Design for Implementation:** This is the arrangement for implementation, where all the aforementioned steps are ready for execution through strategies of implementation. Thus, members of the community in collaboration with the practitioner will become part and parcel of the design.

- **Prepare Time and Cost Estimate:** The time frame and cost estimates are key components in CD activities. An appropriate and reasonable time frame should be considered and given to each sub-activity. Similarly, careful attention should be given to cost estimates and assistance should be sought from practitioner and expert in this context.
- **Implementing of Community Development Activities and Programmes:** This is the process of solving the identified problem and issue in the first step of assessment process in terms of priority. However, implementation needs to be logical, sequential, systematic and scientific.
- **Documentation of the Activities:** All the activities from the beginning to the end should be documented. The documentation will contain both the successes and challenges encountered during the programme or project. It will also serve as feedback to the members of the community and experts. It will also serve as a point of reference for future use.
- **Monitoring:** This is the process of tracking and following up the progress of the activities that have actually been implemented so as to ascertain whether the programme is progressing according to plan. This enables the practitioner to synthesise and analyse the prospects and setback of the program.
- **Evaluation:** This has to do with the appraisal of all the steps that have been taken, from the beginning to this stage in order to be able to justify achievements in respect of programme or project. This measures whether the programme has actually met the goal, aims and objectives it was established for.
- **Recycle the Planning and Implementation process:** Through the data collected from the people and the expert, the social worker will be able to improve on the challenges and design and get ready for planning and implementing subsequent projects or programmes.

BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SOCIAL WORKER

According to Maleka, Monene, Browne, Kgomo, Ledwaba, & Dlamini (2007), the following are some of the ways of becoming a successful community development social worker.

- **Endeavour to live in the community in which he or she works.** This will assist the practitioner to know much about members of the community in terms of their needs, problems and pressing issues that require urgent attention.
- **Show respect towards the community.** It is imperative to respect and understand the community's norms, culture and perspective on critical issues.

The worker is to have adequate knowledge about the client's cultural background and world view in order to know how to approach issues presented by the client (Okoye, 2013). Gray (2005) is of the opinion that the social work curriculum should address the historical and cultural experiences and realities of the people and be respectful of the cultural beliefs and practices of a community.

The social worker should always **be conscious of the fact that he or she is**

- **dealing with people and not "things"**. The community social worker should not in any circumstance, humiliate members of the community in order to be able to win their hearts in terms of cooperation. Dealing with people in CD requires special skills because human beings are dynamic and workers should always put their dynamism into consideration when dealing with them.
- **Be passionate about community development**. All the efforts and activities of the community social worker should be geared towards CD. Therefore, any programme or project introduced in a community by the worker should be meant for the community's progress. The worker should not be involved in any programme or project that will impede CD.
- **Acknowledge the accepted leaders**. The practitioner is expected to accept those people at the helm of affairs (constituted authority) by giving them appropriate support.
- **Be open about your tasks**. It is ethical for the worker to carry members of the community along in the performance of his/he roles/tasks with all sense of transparency and accountability. This is important because community members will not have doubts in their minds such roles/tasks because they are all aware of the programme that is going on in their domain.
- **Get to know people and their circumstance**. The practitioner should always strive to know members of the community and their circumstances. This will enable him or her to know what each and every member of the community is going through at particular periods in time.
- **Deepen their insight into people's needs and resources**. Efforts must be made by the social worker to know people's needs. People's needs might differ in one way or the other. So the social worker should link members of the community to where they can get needed resources to meet their needs. This implies that he or she (practitioner) should serve as broker who links the clients to the needed resources.
- **Identify the local structure within which you will work**. There is the need for the social worker to identify the local structures within which he or she will work. The community is always structured into various segments, ranging from the local government, wards, districts and compounds to households. Depending

on the vision and mission of the practitioner, there is need for him or her to identify one or more of these structures within which he or she will work.

- **Promote partnership between self and local structures.** There must be concerted efforts by the practitioner to collaborate with local structure in order to achieve robust outcomes. Kirst-Ashman (2010) highlights the following five partnership principles that are of tremendous benefits to community social workers.

- i) Recognise and accept the need for partnership.
- ii) Develop clarity and realism of purpose.
- iii) Ensure commitment and ownership.
- iv) Develop and maintain trust.
- v) Create clear and robust partnership arrangement.

- **Exchange information, give guidance, provide expertise, enable people, advocate and bring about action.** In community development, the social worker should always exchange information with appropriate stakeholders. Similarly, he or she should always guide members in the community not to go astray, using his or her expertise. In addition, he or she should play the roles of both advocate and enabler in the bid to achieve CD.

- **Communicate effectively:** Communication occupies a very sensitive position in CD. Both verbal and non-verbal communication can assist others in the community development process. Non-verbal communication comprises body language and sounds that convey information about how a person feels without saying so in words (Kirst- Ashman, 2010).

- **Have good interpersonal skills to interact easily with people of all ages and from various cultural backgrounds.** In the community, the social worker can meet people of different ages and from different cultural backgrounds. In this regard, the CSW must be well acquainted with these differences and interact with all categories of people effectively to reduce disparity among them. The ability of the worker to easily interact with people of different ages and from different cultural backgrounds determines the extent to which he achieves success in CD.

- **Be sensitive to different cultures:** The need to take cognisance of the cultural milieu in which people live has been suggested as one of the major issues hindrances to achieving greater CD (Okoye, 2013).

- **Plan, develop and manage operational programmes.** The CSW cannot achieve meaningful results without effective planning to guide the realization of the aims and objectives of the community. Similarly, without developing and

managing operational programmes, (which communities will be built upon), community development cannot record unprecedented achievement.

- **Self-motivation and flexibility:** In a bid to achieve greater success in a CD, the practitioner should be self-motivated. Motivation should be reflected in all his or her activities. He or she should relate with people with a flexibility that will not prevent him from achieving his desired aims and objectives.

- **Work well in a team.** In community development, team work is encouraged because it always fosters cooperation that will ensure greater success in a community project. Therefore, all the stakeholders should work together in order to promote sustainable community development.

COMPONENTS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development one of the field of study in social work, covers a wide range of areas and programmes. These areas differ from one locality to another, depending on their priority, problems, issues and plans. Maleka *et al.* (2007) identified the following as the major components of community development.

- i. Family life education
- ii. Child development programme
- iii. Youth development programme
- iv. Welfare of senior citizens
- v. Women development programme
- vi. Agriculture and allied activities
- vii. Health and family welfare programme
- viii. Communication
- ix. Education
- x. Cooperative service society

Each of these components will be considered one by one.

- **Family Life Education (FLE):** This refers to group learning experiences for the purpose of increasing people's knowledge, developing skills or enhancing self-awareness concerning issues and crises relevant at some point during one's lifespan (Mizrahi & Davis, 2008; Riley, 1995). FLE can be categorised into four major groups. These include normal development, crisis groups, personal growth groups and life adjustment groups. Normal development groups help to provide information about various normal life stages. Also, the help parents of newborns, pre-school playgroups, groups preparing for marriage and retirement groups (Riley, 1995). Crisis groups are trained to help people facing serious life turning points or mayhem or disorder. These include those with serious illnesses, those who recently lost a loved one, or

a job. The group leader is expected to give emotional support to members, in addition to information. Personal growth groups assist members develop specified social skills. These differ from crisis groups because there is no sudden disorder involved. Life-adjustment groups focus on helping members who are experiencing difficult situations (Kirst-Ashman, 2010).

- **Child Development Programme:** This deals with how to develop children intellectually, morally and emotionally so that they become future assets and the wealth of the community. Thus, services start right from birth to age four (Maleka *et al.*, 2007). The ability of the parents to assist and nurture the children is supported by the provision of initial intervention resources.
- **Youth Development Programme:** This programme is geared towards making the youths contribute to the development of the community. Youths refer to those in an active and productive age in any community and investing in them in a comprehensive and holistic manner will enhance or pave way for sustainable community development.
- **Welfare of Senior Citizens:** The contributions of the aged to community development during their active years, cannot be over-emphasised because their wealth of experience and expertise are still required in the contemporary community development. The community, should in turn, take responsibility for their care, acceptance and reorganisation as priority area in community development.
- **Women Development Programmes:** The contributions of the women to community development are very crucial. This is because they are involved in both domestic and non-domestic aspects of community development. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the community to take adequate care and enhance the total development of women.
- **Agricultural and Allied Activities:** As part of community development, mechanism/strategies that will make food available for sustainable community development should be put in place. This can mainly be done by promoting agriculture in the community. One of the ways this can be done is by promoting mechanized farming.
- **Health and Family Welfare Programme:** This is also a significant component of CD. It covers child and reproductive health as well as the mental, social and physical well-being of members of the community.
- **Communication:** Communication as a nexus of social relationships, will unify members of the community together in one way or the other. This calls for such projects as construction of roads and the provision of transportation and communication facilities. Availability of these projects will qualify the community to be among global villages.

- **Education:** Education is very crucial to CD. The three types of education are formal, informal and non-formal. Education helps to inculcate national consciousness and national unity and it is instrumental to CD. Similarly, it involves the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the community as a whole. Hence, education is the acquisition of the appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both natural and physical, as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his/her community (Olowa, 1987).
- **Cooperative Service Society:** Cooperative societies contribute immensely to CD. They assist contributors to mobilise, harness and appropriately use the resources for community development.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the roles of social workers in CD have been discussed. It is argued that CD is an important area of specialisation in social work and that it has great potential for preventing and solving social problems. It is an intergroup process that attempts to help communities understand social problems and utilise resources to bring about solutions that will strengthen the community and empower and enrich the lives of its members. It is therefore, the responsibility of community social worker to work in collaboration with all stakeholders in the community to achieve sustainable CD that will affect the lives of all and sundry.

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