

to understand these issues. She argues that the global economy has already altered human social structures in various irreversible ways, concomitantly altering social conditions.

The unique personal sacrifices and professional challenges social workers face when engaging in economic development activities emphasise the highly specialised attitude, vision, knowledge, competencies and skills required in this area of social work. Clearly not all social workers would wish, or have the capacity, to facilitate change in the lives of the vulnerable and the poor through economic development approaches and strategies. This conclusion is no different from that of the current practice reality that social workers choose the fields in which they want to engage and specialise, for example, mental health, disability or substance abuse. Not all social workers have the commitment and capacity to work in all specialised fields. The author therefore concludes that the engagement of social work in economic development should be recognised as a specialised field. This would not only be in line with the shift to a sustainable livelihood approach, but would also firmly position social work as a social partner contributing to achieving national social developmental goals. The developmental social welfare policy and in particular the social development approach and strategy paved the way for a specialised field in this area. As with all other specialised fields, it would be the prerogative of training institutions to choose whether they wished to include economic development training in their social work curriculum, as it would require more in-depth training, thus extending the minimum requirements of the BSW programme.

As indicated by the research findings, the road through this specialised field is steep and challenging. Even if more social workers and NGOs wished to take up the challenge, they would experience the ambivalence of uncertainty, on the one hand, and knowing the potential impact on sustainable livelihoods, on the other. It would take commitment, attitude and vision for social workers to make a shift to this specialised field in social work, as one respondent so aptly encapsulated it:

I don't know if they [social workers] can shift. But maybe if they start seeing the beauty and the importance of shifting it would be a great step [forward] in helping communities.

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