

MEANS OF SOCIAL WORK SUPPORT

TABLE 7
MEANS OF SOCIAL WORK SUPPORT HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVE AND WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE

STATEMENT	SUPPORT RECEIVED	WOULD WELCOME SUPPORT	TOTAL
Regular visits from the social worker.	3 (2,63%)	37 (97,37%)	40 (100%)
Counselling services.	1 (2,50%)	39 (97,50%)	40 (100%)
Providing life skills information, e.g. financial management.	6 (15,00%)	34 (85%)	40 (100%)
Linking the community with relevant resources, e.g. relevant and available departments.	0 (0%)	40 (100%)	40 (100%)
Forming support groups.	0 (0%)	40 (100%)	40 (100%)
Helping them to engage in or start community projects.	0 (0%)	40 (100%)	40 (100%)
Helping them to complete business plans for financial assistance.	0 (0%)	40 (100%)	40 (100%)
Referral system.	0 (0%)	40 (100%)	40 (100%)

According to the table above, the respondents presently receive little service from social workers. They would welcome all the services indicated in the table, as they felt that this would assist them in living a better life.

The Acting Deputy Director General of North West, K. Sehularo, said the North-West Province was in desperate need of skilled entrepreneurs to establish and run viable businesses. The importance of development of small business cannot be over-emphasised, and for historical reasons the majority of the people are not able to find employment in the market place. They live in hunger and poverty; therefore the development of thriving small businesses can go a long way towards alleviating these hardships (Sehularo, 2006:3). The social worker, with the necessary support from the government and private organisations, can help in this regard.

DISCUSSION

THE NATURE OF POVERTY

In terms of absolute and relative poverty, it is evident that most community members are poverty-stricken. Their level of education is very low and 50% of household heads never attended school.

Their houses are overcrowded and not up to standard. They have no running water or sanitation. There are almost no basic appliances in the houses such as stoves, fridges, televisions and radios.

The research findings indicate that most of the people are unemployed. They derive their income mainly from grants. Because of the small income, they always go hungry and there are signs of malnutrition.

EFFECT OF POVERTY

According to the research findings, it is evident that poverty causes problems. This is also supported by the literature of Schenck (2004:158-160) in which she asked social workers in the rural areas to name the problems. They mentioned HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, unemployment, ill health, malnutrition, alcohol and drug dependency, marital conflict, domestic violence and crime. HIV/AIDS makes them feel weak and isolated. Illiteracy leaves them uninformed, dependent and disadvantaged. Unemployment makes them feel depressed, worthless and helpless. Ill health and malnutrition make them prone to other diseases and unable to perform duties. Because they have no jobs and nothing to keep them busy, they end up abusing alcohol and drugs. Marital conflict and domestic violence are rife because they blame each other for their perilous circumstances. The crime rate is high because there are no recreational or entertainment facilities, and people have to steal to eat.

The families struggle to cope, because everything they get is from hand to mouth. They survive through handouts and grants. Children receive food from the feeding schemes at schools. Families are occasionally provided with food parcels from the government.

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At present the community receives very little help from social workers. It is clear from their comments that they realise that the social worker can play an important role in assisting the community in living a better life.

THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER

Social workers should identify those people who are especially vulnerable and ensure that their abilities and potential are developed and strengthened (Roux, 2002:116). In order to assist a client to reach his/her potential, while finding and implementing solutions to the problems, the social worker takes on a variety of interventive roles. The worker's interventive roles constitute the behaviour expected of the social worker by both the client and the social worker to accomplish objectives (Compton & Galaway, 1999:309). In other words, social workers' roles are determined by client needs (Hoffman & Sallee, 1994:76). Zastrow (2004:77-79) identifies the following social work roles:

TABLE 8
ROLES OF THE SOCIAL WORKER

Role	Description
Enabler	Articulates needs, clarifies and identifies problems
Broker	Links individuals and groups with the community
Advocate	An active, direct role, advocates for clients rights
Activist	Seeks change, shift in power, resources for disadvantaged groups
Mediator	Intervention in disputes, finds compromises, reconciles, reaches agreements: a neutral role
Negotiator	Conflict bargaining and compromise: mutually acceptable agreements
Teacher	Giving information, teaching adaptive skills, communicator
Initiator	Calls attention to a problem
Empowerer	Helps to increase strengths by improving circumstances
Coordinator	Brings components together in an organised manner
Researcher	Studies literature, evaluates outcome
Group facilitator	Leader of group activity
Public speaker	Informs regarding available resources, advocates new services

Zastrow (2004:77-79)

The roles indicated above specifically relate to service rendering in poverty issues. The roles of broker, enabler, teacher, mediator, advocate and healer are discussed in more detail, especially with regard to the practical situation.

Broker

A social broker links the client with other community resources in order to accomplish the objectives. This requires a broad knowledge of community resources, so that the social worker can help a client find and use a needed resource (Compton & Galaway, 1999:309). As a broker, the social worker must ensure that the community is provided with resources, mobilise communities and also identify and network in order to ensure that resources are responsive to the needs of the community (Spies, 2007:149). The social worker should liaise with relevant stakeholders, including the following departments and institutions:

- The Department of Water Affairs to assist with water supply for food gardens;
- The Department of Agriculture to provide seeds and advice in this respect;
- The Department of Labour to assist the youth to obtain job skills;
- The Department of Social Development to help the community members to develop business plans. People who are responsible for projects should be taught appropriate skills, such as fundraising, marketing, finance management and project management;
- The Department of Tourism to train members to become chefs, caterers or hotel managers;
- An institution that could initiate a needlework project. Articles could be made from old unused material such as a pillow case or an old shirt, a ball made from shopping bags, or patchwork. Men could make articles from wood or leather remnants;
- Flea markets in larger towns that could help the people sell their articles.

Enabler

In the enabler role, the social worker assists clients in finding the coping strengths and resources within themselves in order to produce the changes required by the objectives (Compton & Galaway, 1999:31). The enabler's work is built on a helping relationship with client systems (Hoffman & Sallee, 1994:86).

Anti-poverty strategies should involve the poor directly in finding solutions. The energy, creativity and assets of the poor are key human and social resources (Fraser-Moleketi, 1997). Together the members and the social worker look at the positive aspects in the community, such as intimacy and caring for each other, the awareness of each other's needs and the huge amount of time spent in each other's company because of a lack of job and recreational activities. The social worker should get the members to work collectively to achieve access to opportunities and entitlements (Gathiram, 2005:128). Efforts should be made with regard to improving the self-esteem of the members, strengthening leadership, and changing negative stereotypes such as "poor people are powerless and cannot do anything for themselves".

With the knowledge of community resources, social workers could assist religious and service groups with strategic plans. Plans must be closely tied to available resources (Hannah, 2006:15). Social workers also need to ensure that those people who are eligible for social security receive grants. But it is important that grants are not abused and that the money is spent wisely. The Minister of Social Development said that 500,000 people were currently being investigated for fraud with grants, 200,000 grants have been cancelled and 10,000 cases have been identified for prosecution (Du Toit, 2007:11).

Teacher

In the teacher role the social worker provides clients with new information necessary for coping with problem situations, assisting clients in practising new behaviours or skills, or model alternative behaviour patterns. The enabler helps clients to mobilise existing resources, whereas the teacher introduces additional resources into client systems (Compton & Galaway, 1999:311). Community members accept that social workers have more knowledge pertaining to possible solutions and are prepared to accept their advice (Simpson, 2003:157).

The social worker should present workshops during which the members are taught various skills and techniques, including life skills, surviving skills and values and norms. The workshops should also include sessions during which adults learn parenting skills and youths are taught to listen to and respect adults. Since many of the community members have no formal education, programmes will help them to feel better about themselves and enable them to do something more meaningful with their lives. Community members must be encouraged to engage in projects that are sustainable, such as market gardens and sewing groups. Some people felt that learning practical skills such as how to make patchwork blankets and design clothes would be useful, as people could apply them in income generating activities. Some representatives/delegation could be sent to attend courses, conferences or workshops on poverty in order to gain some knowledge so as to come and share ideas with other community members or to empower them with skills. Clubs for children and youth can also be initiated in order to keep them occupied and off the streets.

Mediator

Mediation involves efforts to resolve disputes between the client system and other persons or organisations. In the mediating role, the social worker assists clients and the other party to find common ground on which to resolve the conflict (Compton & Galaway, 1999:311). The social worker should be a peacemaker between different parties, especially concerning the misuse of funds such as grants from the government or donations from outside. Efforts should be made to ensure that people become aware of the wider socio-political and economic context in which they live. They should be given information on the various policies and pieces of legislation that have been adopted to promote social change and how they can be used to benefit the poor (Gathiram, 2005:123, 128). This will help them to know not only their rights, but also their responsibilities. It will give them the confidence to take action for the sake of their own liberation (Gathiram, 2005:127).

Advocate

As an advocate, the social worker presents and argues the client's cause, when necessary, in order to accomplish the objectives. In mediation the effort is to secure resolution to a dispute through give and take on both sides; in advocacy the effort is to win for the client (Compton & Galaway, 1999:312). This is especially true with regard to exemption of school fees, purchasing school uniforms and obtaining bursaries for studies.

The social worker should speak to the chief of the village on behalf of the community members concerning a small plot/land to develop a project. It is important for members to participate in committees in order for advocacy to be successful (Hannah, 2006:16).

Healer

It is the function of social work to identify needs and problems that affect the social functioning of people and facilitate actions that might resolve or minimise these. The purpose is to interrupt

and prevent the development of social dysfunction by discovering harmful conditions in time and to develop strategies that can control and eliminate problems (Spies, 2007:148). The danger of prostitution, child neglect, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse are some of the issues that need to be identified and addressed.

CONCLUSION

In this study one of the objectives was to examine the nature of poverty in a rural area. It was clear that the inhabitants of Modimola village were very poor, taking into account their low level of education, income and living conditions.

The second objective was to investigate the effect of poverty on the families. According to the research findings, it was evident that poverty causes problems from malnutrition and ill health to marital problems and violence. In the community, resources such as clinics and shops are lacking. Also, very few job opportunities are available in the area. Because of a lack of water, they are unable to cultivate vegetable gardens. They also have no means to look for better jobs in other areas. They do not have any projects in the area. In other words, the people are not coping with their perilous situation and are not doing anything to help themselves.

The people need someone to guide them, because they feel hopeless and powerless. The social worker can fulfil the roles of broker, enabler, teacher, mediator, advocate and healer to help alleviate the poverty in the area. Involving the poor directly will contribute to a culture of accountability and will ensure that anti-poverty strategies are appropriate, workable and sustainable. The third objective was to provide guidelines to social workers to help poverty-stricken families. Guidelines were compiled from the literature and research findings.

By meeting the three objectives, the aim of the research study was reached, and the theoretical assumption that social workers are able to help a community to improve its circumstances and thus alleviate its poverty was proven correct. Eradicating poverty is essential to consolidate the gains of a new democracy and a precondition for social justice, peace and security.

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