UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK

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1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to -

- comprehend the basic concepts of social work;
- identify the basic values and principles of social work profession;
- decipher the functions of social work profession;
- differentiate the primary and secondary methods of social work

1.2. INTRODUCTION - MEANING OF SOCIAL WORK

Social Work is a discipline as well as a profession that involves the application of social theories to have a better understanding of the society

and people; and to apply therapeutic processes and methods to deal with social problems. It is concerned with the causes of social problems, its impact on individuals, groups, communities and society at large and to deploy social work methods for its solution. It comprises of a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding society and its problems. Thus, it draws heavily from the disciplines of sociology, psychology, philosophy, economics, political science, law and others to have an all-round understanding of the society. Social work differs from other disciplines of social sciences as it is considered as a profession. The word 'profession' connotes skill or artistry. Though it is grounded on the ideas of the social sciences, it goes beyond that to the the next level of application of therapeutic models to deal with social issues. The profession of social work uses knowledge, skills, techniques and related methods to address human needs and and modifying human behaviour and hence it is also considered as an applied science. .

1.3 DEFINITIONS

The Indian Conference of Social Work (1957) defined social work as "a welfare activity based on humanitarian philosophy, scientific knowledge and technical skills for helping individuals or groups or community, to live a rich and full life". This definition indicates that social work involves a humanitarian approach to help people with the use of scientific understanding and skills.

Marshall and Scott define social work as the generic term applied to the various organized methods for promoting human welfare through the prevention and relief of suffering.

"Social work is that process which deals directly and differentially with persons who have problems relating primarily to their social situation and which endeavours, individual to individual to understand what help is needed and to assist the individual to find and utilize the help indicated". (Friedlander, 1951). This definition says social work is a process that links resources that an individual can utilize to solve the issues relating to the social situation that surrounds us.

Social work is a professional service, based on scientific knowledge and skill in human relations, which assists individuals, alone or in groups, to obtain social and personal satisfactioin and independence (Friedlander, 1955)

"Social work is an entity representing three clearly distinguished but inter-related parts: a network of social services, carefully developed methods and processes and social policy expressed through social institutions and individuals. All three are based on a view of human being, their interrelationships and the ethical demands made on them" (Konopka, 1958).



Social Work : is a process that links resources that an individual can utilize to solve the issues relating to the social situation that surrounds us

The International Federation of Social Work (2014) defines social work as "a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing" This definition is an inclusive one that provides a comprehensive understanding of social work which can be interpreted at the national, regional or local context. .

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL WORK

The profession of social work has certain objectives. Objectives are statements or formulations of what we are trying to do in social work. Some of the most important ones are:

- To solve psycho-social problems
- To fight against social evils
- To fulfil humanitarian needs
- To solve adjustmental problems
- To create self- sufficiency
- To integrate and coordinate the means and resources of social development
- To develop democratic values, make provision for corrective and recreation services

- To change the environment in favour of individual's growth and development
- To bring change in social system
- To provide socio-legal help

The main motto of social work is: Helping people to help themselves!

It implies that social work profession functions in the underlying belief that through the use of methods, techniques and skills, the clients have to be empowered to help themselves. Rather than making the client dependent on the social worker for solving his/her problems, the client should be empowered to take his/her own decisions. The social worker assists the client in showing the path and in decision-making by building self confidence of the client and helping in procuring resources.

1.5 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK

Clarke (1947) has given six major assumptions of social work. They are:

i. Social Work is a novice profession which necessitates intellectual activities accompanied by great individual responsibilities. It is not just academic but also practical in its aims.

ii. Understanding of human personality is one of the basis of functioning of a professional social worker.

iii. Social work and social welfare are not the same thing. Social welfare comprises of social institutions and the field of practice, while social work comprises of a body of practices which can be employed at many places in the large social welfare field.

iv. Social work has its own processes, techniques and skills. It has a point of view and a philosophy.

v. The social worker by nature his/ her activities must use many types of services. Therefore, the social worker must have extensive knowledge about the resources of the community in which he/ she is working.

vi. The social worker is concerned with the needs of individuals and with the environment that cause personal problems. The interaction of person and situation is the focus of the social worker.

1.6 PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL WORK:

Principles are the guiding assertions of statements which is guiding force for social work practice. These basic rules enable a practitioner to be competent in his/her profession. The objectives of social work can be fulfilled only within the framework of principles.

Friedlander discusses four generic principles of social work that applies to all the primary methods of social work namely: Social Casework, Social Group Work and Community Organization. These principles are derived from the democratic values.

1. Conviction of the inherent worth, integrity and dignity of the individual The social worker's relationship with client, group or community in the helping process and overall approach to them is driven by this conviction. All individuals, groups and communities in all context need to be recognised, respected and given due consideration. The social worker needs to respect their worth and dignity and this is of prime importance. Social research and social welfare administration is also motivated by this belief in worth and dignity.
2. Conviction that the individual who is in economic, personal or social need has the right to determine himself what his needs are and how they should be met.

   This conviction drives the belief that people are capable of bringing changes to their attitude and behaviour. Individuals, groups and communities have the right of self-determination. The changes, be it economic or psychological condition, will take place only when the client is helped to help himself or herself. All those seeking social work services have the right to determine for themselves their goals, means and objectives of what they want to change and achieve.
3. The conviction of decisive importance of social work in a democratic society in the firm belief in equal opportunity for all limited only by

the innate capacity of the individual.

Social work services should be made irrespective of race, religion or political affiliation of those seeking it. Discriminating clients/ groups members/communities on the basis of their race, religion, political affiliation, caste or community defeats the fundamental conviction of human dignity and self-determination.

4. Conviction that man's individual rights to self-respect, dignity, self-determination and equal opportunities are connected with his social responsibilities towards himself, his family and his society.

The social worker must create a clear understanding that just as the individual, group members and communities are accepted, respected and treated with dignity and worth, they in turn have the social responsibility towards other individuals, groups and communities. The rights and needs of others need to be recognised and no one individual, group or community should act in a manner that could injure the health and welfare of others.

1.7 FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK

Social work is a profession that assists individuals in adjusting to the social environment and also to modify the environment in favour of the client as per the context. Social work operates to assist individuals in adjusting to the institutional framework of society, and attempts to modify the institutional framework itself in appropriate areas.

Social work functions are broadly divided into three: Remedial, provision of resources and prevention of social dysfunction.

1. Remedial /Restoration: The activities of social worker that helps individuals/groups or communities to recognize and limit or overcome their problems that arise out of the disequilibrium between themselves and environment are the restorative functions. This function has two aspects- curative and rehabilitative -

- The curative function of social work seeks to eliminate or minimize factors that influence or cause social dysfunction of individual, groups or communities.

- The rehabilitative function assist in restoring the normal or health social functioning. This aspect of the function helps individuals and groups organize and reconstruct interactions

  Social work intervention comes into play at the interface between individual and his/her environment. This means that the individual or groups is in constant interaction with each other. The environmental factors such as social, economic, political or cultural could create a barrier for the effective functioning of a person/group. Through problem solving, the psycho social environment is modified and at the same time, it aims to bring about attitudinal changes in those who receive the services. The factors responsible for the disturbance in the interpersonal relations or dysfunctioning are eliminated and the individual/group is helped to make changes and thereby adjust to the needs of the new situation. This helps place them back into the mainstream. A simple example of this function could be suggesting a hearing aid for a child who has hearing impairment (partial). This is a curative aspect. By using the hearing aid the child is able overcome his/her social dysfunctions which was caused by this impairment. Helping the child getting adjusted to the hearing aid will be the rehabilitative aspect of this function.

Social Work Intervention : comes into play at the interface between individual and his/her environment. This means that the individual or groups is in constant interaction with each other.

2. Provision of resources: This function is divided into two aspects- developmental and educational. The developmental aspects are designed to further the effectiveness of existing social resources or to maximize personal capacity. For example, marital counselling at a family therapy centre helps couples with marital problems to communicate effectively. The educational aspect is designed to acquaint the public with specific conditions and needs for new or changing resources. Public talks on the advantages of utilizing counselling services would be an example of the educational aspect.

3. Prevention of social dysfunction: This is also an important function of social work which involves early discovery, control and removal of conditions and situations that could possibly hinder effective functioning. The main

divisions of these functions are a) prevention of problems in the area of interaction between individuals and groups (premarital counselling) and b) prevention of social ills (community organization).The preventive function of social work is often neglected. Organizing youth club for young boys could prevent criminal acts and providing life skills training for adolescents can help prevent mental health issues.

Social work lays a lot of emphasis on curative and rehabilitative functions and focuses on the problem solving model. In the ever changing context of the society, it should be kept in mind that preventive function of social work has an important role to play. Hence preventive approach to social work needs more attention. Social work profession should work towards sensitizing, building awareness, capacity building and helping people organize themselves to prevent the emergence of social dysfunctions. System changes need to be encouraged in order to develop favourable environment for development. Social work as a profession needs to shift from a purely status quo service oriented approach to a change oriented developmental approach.

Misra has categorized functions of social work into the following:

Curative/ Remedial Function: Under the curative function, the following services are provided: Medical services, health services, services relating to psycho- social and mental health, psychiatric service, child guidance, child welfare services, services for the handicapped and disabled and rehabilitative services.

Correctional Function: Correctional social work has 3 broad areas. They are-

i) individual reform services which include prison reform, probation, parole, other related services

ii) services for strengthening and improving relationship - family welfare services, school social work, industrial social work,

iii) services for social reform - employment services, prevention of prostitution, beggary, prohibition services and removal of untouchability.

Preventive Function: Prevention services include life insurance, public assistance, social legislation, labour welfare, adult education and prevention of diseases.

Developmental Function: Developmental tasks are socio-economic developmental activities, education and recreational services, urban and rural development programmes and the programme for integration.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-I

1. State some of the objectives of social work.

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2. What are the main functions of social work?

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1.8 METHODS OF SOCIAL WORK

A method can be defined as an orderly way of procedure which is always carried out towards the attainment of a particular aim. Social work profession has certain methods which are employed for the benefit of the clients or the specific target groups. They are six in total, each of which uses different techniques. They are:

1. Social Case Work
2. Social Group Work
3. Community Organization
4. Social Action
5. Social Welfare Administration
6. Social Work Research

The first three are the primary methods of social work. They are - social work practice with individuals i.e. Social Case Work, Social Group

Work and Community Organization. The remaining three, i.e. Social Action, Social Welfare Administration and Social Work Research are the secondary methods of social work. Now, let us discuss the methods of social work in detail.

1.8.1. Social Case Work

Social case work i.e. social work practice with individuals is one of the primary methods of social work which is being practiced by social workers universally. This method enables the social functioning of individuals which focuses on one to one relationship. Mary Richmond is the most important profounder of social case work. Her book titled 'Social Diagnosis' elaborately discussed the method of case work and its significance. Richmond (1922) defined case work as: 'Social case work consists of those processes which develop personality through adjustments consciously effected, individual by individual, between men and their social environment'. It can be defined as 'the art of doing different things for and with different people by cooperating with them to achieve at one and the same time their own and society's betterment'. Case work is identifiable, according to Richmond, by its aim of social betterment and its method of differential treatment. Case work is concerned with the utilization of available resources in the immediate environment and capacities in the individual, which may give him/her a fuller and more satisfying life, both economic and personal. The case worker deals with people and situations one by one. The four 'P' components s of Social Case Work are: Person, Problem, Place and Process.



'Social Case Work: consists of those processes which develop personality through adjustments consciously effected, individual by individual, between men and their social environment'.

Individuals are part of society and every person performs different social roles and duties. During this process, individual usually struggles with several problems in one or other form, which deter his performance as a social being. Every individual is distinctive with different nature, personality, several circumstances, needs and has a distinct approach of handling his / her life situations. To understand the distinctiveness of human behavior and the individual differences, one needs to understand human being in diverse social environment and life experiences. As said, man is a

social animal, each individual experiences interaction between biological, psychological and environmental factors. Unresolved problems that an individual faces would affect his/her social functioning in turn causing stress to the person. This might affect the family, community life and all the social roles that one performs in the society. Social case work method tries to resolve individual issues mainly by restoring, maintaining or improving the person's social functioning by using the knowledge of human behaviour, communication, skills, relationship tool and the available resources. Case work method is used by social workers to help people across age, gender and various sections of society to develop their functioning socially.

1.8.2 Social Group Work

Group work is another significant primary method of social work profession. The purpose of group work is to enhance social functioning of an individual. It is accomplished through groups which have the 'power to enhance problem-solving capacity, prevent the development of serious social problems, and restore and maintain the social functioning of members. Group work is applicable in all settings of social work practice. It is a method that uses groups as a medium of therapy to modify and enhance social behaviour. Group work is applied to assist individuals to enhance their social functioning in a group setting and to cope more effectively with social environment. Social workers also work in clinical as well as non-clinical settings in which they work for social cohesiveness and integration. For example - group work can be carried out with groups of children, patients with similar health issues or life-threatening diseases, vulnerable groups, the aged, youth in a community and many more.

Group workers continuously facilitate members evaluate their own behaviour and respect the individuality of other members. Whenever required, the group worker has to clarify their ideals, behaviour and resolve conflicts. Conflict among group members is a common phenomenon because of the variance of personalities of each of the members. Individuals with similar problems are constituted into a group for group therapy. One reason why forming groups can work effectively is because a positive group

climate can be created based on the personal relations. Group members develop a feeling of mutuality and belongingness. They can relate to each other's problems, form a support system, help in resolving adjustment problems and enhance the social functioning.

1.8.3 Community Organization

Community Organization is one of the primary methods of social work that involves mobilizing and empowering communities through their groups, leaders, advocates, volunteers, institutions, and organizations. It is a long-term process whereby people who are marginalized or living in poverty work together to identify their needs, create change, exert more influence in the decisions which affect their lives and work to improve the quality of their lives and the communities in which they live. Community organization is a method of intervention whereby a professional change agent helps a community action system composed of individuals, groups or organizations to engage in planned collective action in order to deal with special problems within the democratic system of values. This involves two major interrelated concerns: (a) the interactional process of working with an action system, which includes identifying, recruiting and working with members and developing organizational and interpersonal relationships among them which facilitates their efforts; and (b) The technical tasks involved in identifying problem areas, analyzing causes, formulating plans, developing strategies and mobilizing the resources necessary to effect action.

Community Organization : is a method of intervention whereby a professional change agent helps a community action system composed of individuals, groups or organizations to engage in planned collective action in order to deal with special problems within the democratic system of values.

Gangrade (2001) defined community organization as the process by which the social system of the community provides for integration and adaptation within the community. This is a process that continues regardless of the work of the community organizer whose function is to initiate, nourish and develop the process. In participating in this process the community organizer will have regard for certain values relating to the forms of social change and the means by which they may be brought about. The community organizer has to be an expertise in human relationships who can hold the members together under difficult conditions to attain the goal of development.

1.8.4 Social Action

Social action is an organized group process that aims to deal with general social problems and enhancing social welfare by legislative, social or economic progress. It is a secondary method of social work that refers to organized and legally permitted activities designed to mobilize public opinion, legislation and administration in favour of socially desired objectives. Arthur Dunham (1958) defines social action "as efforts to bring about change or prevent change in current social practices or situations, through education, propaganda, persuasion or pressure, on behalf of objectives believed by the social actionists to be socially desirable". In a revised edition, he refers to situations of conflict and allows for goals of change and methods to deal with them. It implies potential conflict situations and promotion of a cause, measure or objective. In a developing country, social work ought to go beyond the role of social welfare services or a therapeutic process. Kulkarni (year) asserted- "Social action creates the necessary conditions and climate in which social work could be done more effectively." According to Siddiqui (year), welfare approach is gradually losing its significance and the inconsistency as democratic system demands the rights-based approach. According to him, social action is the most controversial and most challenging method of social work as a profession which has its core values as social justice and equality. Social action method advocated the achievement of this objective.

1.8.5 Social Welfare Administration

Social welfare administration is another secondary method of social work that has twin concepts of social welfare and administration implanted in it. Thus it requires an understanding of welfare as well as administration as a tool for achieving welfare. Social welfare has its roots in charity and social service. People in a society have inherently tried to take care of destitute and underprivileged individuals either because of kindness, philanthropy or religious and customary obligations. As governance systems evolved, with the changing political and social systems, there was an effort

to institutionalize welfare. The welfare discourse has seen changing dimensions from charity to needs, to rights based approaches. Social work dictionary defines social welfare administration as a 'method used by those who have administrative responsibility to determine organizational goals for a social agency or other unit; acquire resources and allocate them to carry out a program; coordinate activities towards achieving selected goals; and monitor, assess and make necessary changes in processes and structure to improve effectiveness and efficiency. Development planning is an integral part of social welfare and its administration. By social administration we mean that process which is used in the organisation and administration of public and private services. It includes those activities which are undertaken for the benefit of individuals, groups and communities. Under social welfare and administration of such services, process of organisation and direction is necessary to decide on how the available resources are to be utilized. Social welfare administration may be carried out by the government, an individual, a group or any association. Welfare provisions are a fundamental part of governance system and administration.The ultimate goal is to achieve welfare for the people through proper utilization of resources - human, capital and natural. Thus, welfare administration requires planning, organising, staffing, directing, co-ordination, recording and budgeting. Fund-raising is also an integral part of social welfare administration.

By social administration we mean that process which is used in the organisation and administration of public and private services. It includes those activities which are undertaken for the benefit of individuals, groups and communities.

1.8.6 Social Work Research

Social work research is an indispensable method that enhances the scope of social work practice. Social research according to Fanshel (1980) every profession must systematically carry out high quality research if its performance in the service of clientele is to remain effective and up to date. Research provides an in-depth understanding of a particular problem identified and thus contributes to the knowledge system. Research consists of numerous tools to describe, define, measure and evaluate their work. In social work profession, research skills are important since it is both a science and an art. As social workers, there is a lot of dependence on data

base that provides information about the client's situations, a group or community problem. Empirical data base is an important pre-requisite for social work intervention. When knowledge on various social situations cannot be found in prevailing literature or when there is a need to study the effectiveness of interventions, social workers conduct their own research. Social work research is an important stream of research as it not only strives to penetrate into deep rooted social issues, but also strives to find solving techniques for such issues. Social workers continuously access data from multiple sources, file the progress of clients in individual or group interactions and write reports. These are documented and recorded. Social work research draws heavily from such primary data as well as secondary data.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- II

3. Discuss social action as a method of social work.

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What is the difference between case work and group work?

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1.9 LET US SUM UP

- Social Work is a discipline as well as a profession that involves the application of social theories to have a better understanding of the society and people; and to apply therapeutic processes and methods to deal with social problems.
- Group workers continuously facilitate members evaluate their own behaviour and respect the individuality of other members. Whenever required, the group worker has to clarify their ideals, behaviour and resolve conflicts.

- The community organizer has to be an expertise in human relationships who can hold the members together under difficult conditions to attain the goal of development.
- The ultimate goal is to achieve welfare for the people through proper utilization of resources - human, capital and natural. Thus, welfare administration requires planning, organising, staffing, directing, co-ordination, recording and budgeting. Fund-raising is also an integral part of social welfare administration.



1.10 FURTHER READING

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- Bhattacharya, Sanjay (2003) Social Work: An Integrated Approach. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications
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- http ://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work

1.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Some of the objectives of social work are :
   - To solve psycho-social problems
   - To fight against social evils
   - To fulfil humanitarian needs
   - To solve adjustmental problems
   - To create self- sufficiency
   - To integrate and coordinate the means and resources of social development

2. The functions of social work are:

Curative/ Remedial Function: Under the curative function, the following services are provided: Medical services, health services, services relating to psycho- social and mental health, psychiatric service, child guidance, child welfare services, services for the handicapped and disabled and rehabilitative services.

Correctional Function: Correctional social work has 3 broad areas. They are-

i) individual reform services which include prison reform, probation, parole, other related services

ii) services for strengthening and improving relationship - family welfare services, school social work, industrial social work,

iii) services for social reform - employment services, prevention of prostitution, beggary, prohibition services and removal of untouchability.

Preventive Function: Prevention services include life insurance, public assistance, social legislation, labour welfare, adult education and prevention of diseases.

Developmental Function: Developmental tasks are socio-economic developmental activities, education and recreational services, urban and rural development programmes and the programme for integration.

3. In a developing country, social work ought to go beyond the role of social welfare services or a therapeutic process. Social action creates the necessary conditions and climate in which social work could be done more effectively. According to Siddiqui, social action is the most controversial and most challenging method of social work as a profession which has its core values as social justice and equality. Social action method advocated the achievement of this objective.

4. Case work is concerned with the utilization of available resources in the immediate environment and capacities in the individual, which may give him/her a fuller and more satisfying life, both economic

and personal. The case worker deals with people and situations one by one. The four 'P' components s of Social Case Work are: Person, Problem, Place and Process. Whereas group work is another significant primary method of social work profession. The purpose of group work is to enhance social functioning of an individual. It is accomplished through groups which have the 'power to enhance problem-solving capacity, prevent the development of serious social problems, and restore and maintain the social functioning of members. Group work is applicable in all settings of social work practice. It is a method that uses groups as a medium of therapy to modify and enhance social behaviour.



1.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Define social work.
2. What are the basic values of social work?
3. How does social work research contribute to the knowledge system?
4. Describe the principle of confidentiality of social work.
5. Explain with appropriate examples, the primary methods of social work.
6. Describe the method of social action and its significance in dealing with social problems in India.

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