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Social Work Intervention on Resettlement Process in Informal Settlements

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Abstract

This journal draws the attention on the importance of giving priority for the social segment in the urban resettlements process to mitigate the social issues specially in resettling the underserved communities in the city of Colombo. It reviews the settlement strategies currently following and the loop holes of resettlement process during last years that led government to be endure with inevitable social issues with the cost that hard to be recover. Further this paper discusses the importance of giving more weightage for social segment as for the technical/economical/physical aspects in resettlement process as it causes for inevitable conflicts, violations, antisocial activities, urban poverty and poor living standards which will be linked for collapsed of the successful urban development. Not only that but also paper highlighted issues with relevant to income generation/

livelihood developments, sanitation, social cohesion, spiritual and cultural development and equal accessibilities for all the resources in the process of resettlement. Moreover, explains in need of monitoring and evaluation of the resettlement process to have successful resettlement planning mechanism rather than the impression of moving people involuntary, compensated and believe in accomplishing the resettlement. Also, paper emphasize that the resettlement is a very broad aspect to be concern in the view of social segment that all other aspects are depended on which can't be excluded from the area of urban development and also in need of having equal consideration for the social segments same as in other prioritized areas. The article is based on the qualitative method with key informant interviews.

Key Words: Resettlement, Social Work and Urban Slum communities

1. Introduction

Population growth is inevitable and it is visible that with the population growth the resources will be limited with the unlimited needs and wants of the people. During the rapid urbanization People will be adopting to Vertical settlements by and by which was already started to full fill their basic need of having housing. Because of this rapid urbanization land degradation will be increased where the resettlement stepped out for obtained valuable lands for the development purposes by concerning the urban development.

Urban development does not only mean the structural developments including the housing development, road and city development but also the concerns of the ecological aspects as well as the human development with the better living standards by accessing all the resources to enjoy the equal benefits mostly with the theme of uplift the living condition of the underserved settlements in urban sectors. Relevant authorities have identified economically valuable lands for the development purposes but giving priority for the social aspect is also need to be concern equally as economic factors. Most of the social issues including, drug dealings, gambling's, criminal and other anti-social activities are mostly arising within these vertical settlements that emphasize the collapsed of the social supporting system. Authorities will be obtaining, loans and grants for the development purposes from multi-lateral banks for national development but it is questionable whether the equal weightage has given for the social arm as in economical and physical development when practicing the resettlement in real situations or else importance of focusing the social aspects is only limited for the documentation part. Practicing this method will be definitely lead for the national crisis in various aspects. Development won't be last long by including economic variables and structural development only and excluding the human/social factors. Therefore, the resettlement needs to be conduct systematically with transparency by giving major attention for the social segment if not only the social issues will be remaining as a heavy burden to the nation.

In the process of resettlement identifying economically valuable lands, land acquisitions, planning and designing with the technical consideration has more priority than the social aspects. Minimum consideration in social aspects in the resettlement process been causes for increase social issues mostly in high rising apartments. Resettlement as a novel area in urban settlement process the previous resettlements in urban settings lead to have many issues that is still remaining due to lack of mechanism in resettlement process with the consideration of social backgrounds.

Urban Development Authority (UDA) is one of the leading organizations that involves in urban resettlements process. When concerning the previous resettlement to current situation, it is a plus point that social segments has taken to be consideration in present resettlement process because the social segment is the most important factor that can't be avoid in the process of development.

2. Problem statement

Lack of social concern in resettlement process in urban city development that causes for increase more social issues in vertical settlements.

3. Methodology:

Qualitative method with 10 key informant interviews including semi structured interview questions. For the interview session Planning officers, Technical officers, Architectures, Environment officers and social officers involved.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Resettlement

“Resettlement is the process of moving people to a different place to live, because they are no longer allowed to stay in the area where they used to live” (collinsdictionary.com).

With the industrialization people moved to cities by better life with the seeking job opportunities where ultimately the urbanization can be seen. With the unlimited needs and the limited resources, the competence, power, the anti-social behaviors and diseases were spreader rapidly as well that lead some of the people to be survive hardly where some couldn't make it out and others may be to have lifelong disabilities.

Low-income groups are often settled in barely urbanized areas, landfills, isolated spaces disconnected from adequate urban infrastructure or often in areas with high disaster risk such as mountain slopes with landslides threat, flooding, earthquake or tsunami prone zones. These areas normally present problems with drainage, open sewers, lack of public lighting and signaling, unpaved and narrow paths, irregular surfaces and no sidewalks. Under these circumstances, housing is frequently built informally or inadequately, below any minimum building standards, made of inappropriate building materials that do not create permanent housing conditions.

Resettlement can be happened Involuntary and voluntary where mainly with the development projects in the Colombo city the resettlement will mainly take part as involuntary. Resettlements happens in various aspects: Land acquisitions for development, road development, displacement etc. and however these human settlements should be socially enhancing and environmentally friendly.

National Involuntary Resettlement Policy (NIRP-2001) is a protective framework for people who are displaced due to development projects, to ensure their rights are respected and that they are not impoverished or do not suffer unduly because of public or private project implementation that used in relocating process and also Resettlement Policy Frameworks will be considered during the resettlement process as well. However, the Resettlement will be conducted according to the Resettlement Action Plan by addressing the issues and ensure their lives are improved after resettlement with the quality life standard.

4.2 Urban Slum communities

According to The United Nations, definition of slum dwellers is someone who lacks at least three of the basic requirements among "durable walls, a secure lease or title, adequate living space, and access to safe drinking water and toilets" (https://mirror.unhabitat.org/documents/media_centre/sowcr2006/SOWCR%205.pdf).

Slums in urban areas are usually created by the burdens of extensive migration into cities from rural areas, high living costs making city life unaffordable for many. The rural poor typically migrate into industrial cities for labor opportunities and better living facilities. Even though slum dwellers [change in lifestyle](#) may positively impact on them, but not usually viewed positively by the public.

Around 900 acres' valuable government lands of the city of Colombo being inhabited by the low-income families as stated by the Urban Development Authority (www.uda.gov.lk) and they were providing housing facilities for people in those areas in vertical living structures by obtaining the government land where the resettlement process of those people has started.

According to the recordings, facts and Data of Urban Development Authority (UDA) in Sri Lanka has identified 68,812 families living in 1,499 community clusters (underserved settlements spread over an area of 900 acres) (www.uda.gov.lk) and with the relocation projects they concerned to provide affordable housing for these informal sectors to provide better life standards.

4.3 Social Work

The International Federation of Social Workers has defined contemporary social work as “Social work is 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. (<https://www.ifsw.org/>)

The growth of professional social work in Sri Lanka has been very slow due to many reasons including political backgrounds, religious and traditional influences which has that the religious groups such as in Sri Lanka who have their own tradition, culture and belief of giving alms or helping the poor or service to mankind is considered as a good deed in all with also link with the charitable involvements and a part of day-to-day life. Not only that but also the family group caring system from the ancient times can be seen in Sri Lanka which used to provide care and support to the women and children, disabled, aged, poor, etc. As a result of strong bond or caring attitude of the family members. The discipline of social work or the social work education never came to a discussion platform. Commonly, ‘social welfare refers to government support to provide all citizens with a minimum level of well-being, whether free or subsidized, generally in the form of health and education services’ (Jayasuriya, 2004). Sri Lanka has a long history of providing social welfare services. Universal health care and pensions for public-sector workers were established during the colonial era. Free education, agricultural subsidies, land grants and housing were also provided in the years following independence. The benefits of these early provisions contributed to the population’s well-being that lead to have good Human Development Index as well.

Professional social workers work in a variety of settings, including: non-profit or public social service agencies, grassroots advocacy organizations, hospitals, community health agencies, schools, faith-based organizations, and even the military. Some social workers work as psychotherapists, counselors, or mental health practitioners, often working in collaboration with psychiatrists, psychologists, or other medical professionals. Additionally, some social workers have chosen to focus their efforts on social policy or academic research into the practice or ethics of social work.

5. Findings

Findings of this journal article is based on the qualitative method, through the key informant interviews with semi structured interview questions.

The main questions were focused about that the relevant officer's knowledge on whether the resettlement process is currently happening in Sri Lanka with all the considerations including Physical, economic and social development that easily responded by agreeing to the statement.

the methodologies that these resettlement processes are following taken in to consideration in During the interview sessions and all the interviewees explains that resettlement has been carried out in urban settings from more than 10 years and by following the housing policies of UDA and by following National Involuntary Resettlement Policy. Mostly the housing policy that UDA has been using in past few years mainly focusing on the housing allocation and it do address the upliftment of the living standard of the people those who resettling in to vertical housing settlements. Also 60% of the respondents explains that for current resettlements they have been develop the Resettlement Action Plans, Resettlement Policy Frame works and Environment and Social Management plans apart from the NIRP and UDA policies which is another positive improvement of present resettlement backgrounds that shows the gradual improvement.

Even though that equal weightage needs to be given for the social segment in the resettlement phase as in physical development, during the interview sessions it was visible that 50% of the respondents have only narrow ideologies which related to the social development. They believe that the consideration on social aspect is linking social services with the affected parties to uplift their living condition.

Also, respondents are not satisfied with the resettlement carried out previously where there are many social issues has raised in the housing settlements including those criminal activities as well as that government is in a struggle in resolving those. Mostly they have highlighted that due to lack of follow up process after resettlement these issues were raised and people have the hatred towards the authorities due to lack of sense of belongingness. 70% of the respondents explained that monitoring and evaluation process be there to change the attitudes and behaviors of the people as this process not to be wasted. Also, they have highlighted that current resettlement policies been in the process of changing with more consideration on social segment and resettlement need to be done with the well experienced social specialist and officers where currently there is only few of

officers to handle these wide range of social segment and it was visible that only two executive level social officers were there for the interview with 04 social officers involve in the project basis not in the authority.

During these interview sessions most highlighted and emphasized point is that previous resettlement hasn't done with the officers who are specialized in social segments and some believe that social consideration is not a difficult task to be accomplished as they believe that it is only to conduct awareness programs and providing some welfare. But the real scenario behind this is social segment is one of the main part to be in need of consideration through out the resettlement process starting from the base line survey to provide maximum benefits for the affected parties, protect their rights and promote social justice by mitigating the social issues.

All most all the respondents highlighted that resettlement policies need to be revised and explained that it is in the progressive level currently which is a positive point for the upcoming resettlements in city of Colombo.

6. Intervention on Social Work in Resettlement

Social work and involvement in social work is often taken in to consideration with relent to the health sectors, education sectors, child care, elderly care and in a very broader aspect, including the rural communities, urban communities and estate communities as well.

Working for urban communities does not only need to be considered the Slum and Shanties, but for the all the people who living in Urban Communities regardless their class or status going through the hardships as well in their lives. However as mainly the attention goes to the Urban poor communities is there any considerations for those who are resettling in to a new setting with the involvement of the government is the concept where my attention focuses on specially with relevant to the field of social work

Social work involvement in Sri Lanka is gradually developing with the minimum attention on that where the social workers in different sectors need to be stepped out. When it comes to the resettlement mainly it considered the two phases of Pre-resettlement and Post Re-settlement where the social work intervention needed very well.

Mainly the resettlement will be conducted by the involvement of the government where they identified the government lands that obtained by the communities to full fill their basic needs of having shelters. These people may move from the rural areas to urban sectors for better opportunities that rapid urbanizations can be seen. With the unlimited needs and the limited resources make people to have hardships on settlings and full filling their most important needs. They may usually have settled in the lands with or without any idea of that these lands may belong to the government because there are no any choices that left behind. Not only that but also for the political agendas and the power of the authorities may have directed them to continue their process by making them ultimate victims in future purposes. However, these people started to live and inhabited in those areas for a long period of time by developing the surviving environment around them with the positive as well as negative aspects too.

With the development and with the purpose of urban planning's of time to time with the political changes the changes started to happen. With the target of achieving sustainable development goals with eradicating poverty and sustainable city development the development projects may take place in Sri Lanka. With the target on having proper and planned city environment and uplift the living standard of the urban slum communities the resettlement takes places and it is always need to keep in mind that development does not consider only about the physical and economic development yet the social, psychological, spiritual and cultural development as well.

We know that the social work is consist with the case work, group work, community work, social action, social research and social administration that involvement of them in Micro level to the Macro levels. As social workers in these resettlement process it is important to have their involvement in the first place on wards where the pre-resettlement periods take place.

Social worker as a researcher can involve and assist for conduct the base line surveys to find out the data that need to be identify the nature of the community and the background. Social worker's involvement in field levels from pre resettlement to post re-settlement helps in find the real needs/ root cause of the particular community to address the issues and develop the documents with regards to that. With that involvement social workers can directly involve in policy making/changing process by addressing the real issues on the behalf of the communities.

During the Pre-resettlement period social workers can identify the individual issues before the settlements where they can assist to adopted to the new settlements. Settling to a new environment take huge courage that we always need to be appreciated because these resettlements are taking as an involuntary settlement. Even though the government provide the better housing with all other necessities with the compensations and other services, resettlement is a turning point of the life when considering the view of the affected populations. Therefore, social worker's involvement will be indeed essential to facilitate these communities to be adjust with psychologically as well.

When it comes to the elderly and the person with disabilities providing compensations will not only resolve the hardships of resettlements. Aged groups need care and attention with their attitude and the routines that practices for a long period of time in their inhabitant places. Loss of friendly neighborhood and the spaces that they used freely (not knowing that those are belongs to the government) psychologically affect them by letting the social isolations in vertical structures. Social workers should be capable of reducing these issues through developing age friendly groups with them in new settlements to share their experiences, linking with resources, awareness on care taking with relevant parties will be helpful to have elderly involvement that reduce the isolations.

Social worker's approaches need to be always bottom to top where that reach the people and living with them to have effective solutions with them. social workers should be able to develop consciousness of the people to identify their own issues and find the solutions by themselves by respecting to the self determination of the people. By focusing the economic development of the communities, identifying potential of the individual by conducting need assessments will help to find the relevant resources to be coordinated with for further assistance for the people to develop their skills and knowledge. Providing better and equal opportunities led to stop the vicious cycle of poverty gradually in these sectors.

Not only that but also with regarding to the health, safety, harassments etc. social workers can conduct the awareness programs as well, because the crimes, anti-social activities, gambling's, harassments and suicidal attempts can be seen in this vertical settlements. Mostly as these vertical structures are been taken care of the government and people need to be adopted to the rules and regulations where they feel like the freedom of their lives been extract will lend to have the hateful feelings, depressed specially among the youth groups. Social worker as a change agent can involve in such case scenarios to facilitate the youth groups to cope with this situation through developing youth groups as well. leadership and authority

need to be given for them to conduct the activities where social worker will be only involving as mediator that helps youth groups to be feel that they are worth in the communities as well.

Of course social workers can be an advocator to represent the voice of the voiceless people in the community. When stepping out to the reality these communities (some of the communities) are scared of expressing of their feelings, objections and interest for the authorities. On the behalf of them by promoting social Justice forwarding their grievances for top level helps them to deliver their issues effectively.

Case managers are involved in locating services and assisting the 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. In current situation social workers need to be involve in prevention and protecting mechanisms from grassroots for national levels by considering all including vulnerable categories. Social workers will be able to develop the case management plans for client and for their environment

As above diagram shows that the social workers can be act from tier 1-4 by involving as social workers involving in contributing to prevention and capacity building in community level with the community and volunteer supports, tier 2



support with other professional bodies for collaborative approaches, social workers interventions in early phases for the vulnerable assistance for the people in highly risk points and also to be a part of the clients and with their environment.

7. Recommendation and Conclusion

Resettling in a housing apartment provide them a basic facility and also them to be adopted and follow the rules and regulations as well. The management cost of the building apartment is additional amount for them to be paid on time which they usually, willingly or unwillingly refused to pay that causes to have poor management in the building premises which may negatively affect for the People as well as for the government in long term. Lack of sense of belonging in the new settings, Unity among the people, lack of feeling that they are the owners of these houses are some of the reasons of these communities for these issues. The policies have been changing constantly with the changes of the governments yet there are many gaps to addressed to full fill the housing needs of all the citizens in Sri Lanka. Equality and the equity need to be concern as well as the gender need to be concerns as those can be pointed out by the involvement of social work. Policies need to be implemented by involving all the persons that representing each and every section in the society without any biases.

It is important to develop more social work education in Sri Lanka with relevant to the Sri Lankan context. Social work is a practice-based profession that really need the essence of practical involvements in grassroots levels. Importance of social work is need to be emphasize and promote widely by addressing about all the people without any gender biases, discriminations, status, class and cast differences etc.

People do have different ideologies where the principle of Individualization is take place and their self-determination, social workers with respect to the all those aspects by following the ethical relationships with the social work values will bring a change in the society. Promoting and protecting human rights, social justice and the equality the fundamental of social work need to be addressed where necessary that emphasize the importance of social workers voice to be heard in the outer world.

Therefore, it is important to establish and emphasize the importance of social work specially among the country like Sri Lanka that suffer from many social issues and need of close attention to re-solve with the people in individual to community level. In many professions mostly the involvement in monitoring and evaluation process is very low even after the recovery phase that may causes for raise the social issues where in social work profession that the monitoring and evaluation process is well take place until the person or the community can be stand by themselves by recovering.

Social work and social service is two different aspects where social work reducing the dependency by improving the consciousness level of people to identify their own issues and to find the solutions by themselves where social workers involve in guiding and assisting them to find the right path. In these resettlement processes as well with or without knowing that we are involving in more in to practice base of social work but many couldn't understand due to lack of understanding of the sociology and social work. It is important to have proper mechanism to establish the profession of social work in these sections that every aspect of the involvement of social practices are visualized the importance of social work

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