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Social Work Intervention on Preventing Substance Abusers on Urban Resettlement

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Abstract

People moving to cities and resettling in urban areas to obtain more opportunities and gain more benefits rapidly increased where the urban population increased with the land scarcity that led to having informal settlements in urban communities with many social issues.

Urban development authority (UDA) plays a major role in development projects by resettling the informal settlements into vertical settlements with the aim of providing better life standards parallelly considering the sustainable city development. However, there are many issues including lack of quality education, low-income level, lack of health and sanitation, environmental pollution, antisocial activities and behaviors including substance abusers, violence's etc. Before they have resettled to the new settlements. But it is still questionable whether these post-resettlements have mechanisms in holistic development, as there are many social issues still remaining, even though the resettlement has taken place with the purpose of providing a quality living standard for the people. The study carried out with the qualitative research method with the Focus group discussions and Key informant interview sessions. Study was conducted in Existing vertical settlement constructed by UDA.

The intervention of social workers in to prevent substance abusers is highly important to decrease the rate of social issues at the community level that affect the national crisis as well. Also the study explains the importance of social work intervention in such scenarios.

Key Words: Social Work Intervention, Substance Abuses and Urban Resettlement

1. Introduction

Most of the urban poor people live in slums. Slum settlements are often of high density, but can be located in all different areas of a city. Slum houses are usually permanent or semi-permanent structures built on government land. The residents' source of livelihood is usually near their homes in the city center, men often work as laborers in small and large industries, while most women serve as domestic help in nearby middle-class houses. Families living in slums typically make a significant contribution to the economic activities of the city. Since most slums are close to the middle class colonies, they have access to transport facilities, schools, electricity, and water. (Kothari, Miloon & Karmali, Sabrina & Chaudhry, Shivani. (2006). The Human Right to Adequate Housing)

Development is a process that creates growth, progress, positive change or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components. The purpose of development is a rise in the level and quality of life of the population, and the creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities, without damaging the resources of the environment. Development is visible and useful, not necessarily immediately, and includes an aspect of quality change and the creation of conditions for a continuation of that change (https://sid-israel.org/en/what-is-development/).

With relevance to the above explanation on development, it emphasized the improvement in the level and quality of life of the population is important in the process of development. Although the Colombo district is considered as the most developed city in Sri Lanka still there are urbanized settlements and there are many developmental projects which are undergoing aiming for the wellbeing of the people in such communities with the assistance of government, private sectors and non-government organizations. As one of the leading governmental organizations; UDA has engaged in Urban Community Development practices in Sri Lanka.

The relocated people in the housing complex belong to different slum and shanty areas. This area consisted of the people who migrated from several provinces from the country mainly from Western and Southern for the pulling and pushing factors of the local migration. Due to the migration, population density is high in the area that causes land scarcity which led to unauthorized settlements in the city of Colombo. Ultimately for better town planning and city development, the government has been involved in this process with the purpose of providing housing facilities with all the necessities by improving living conditions.

This study specially referred to the "Siri muthu uyana'' housing complex built by Urban Regeneration Project (URP), implemented by UDA in Mattakkuliya. This community is known as a planned community which was opened in 2014 with 546 housing units and around five thousand populations. Total cost of the housing complex is 1598.26 Rs million.

2. Problem Statement

People are being resettled from informal settlements to vertical housing projects by the government with the purpose of providing better living standards but still remaining as previously. It was highlighted that there are many substance abusers were there in these new settlements and many school dropouts are being victimized for this matter day by day.

3. Methodology

Qualitative method with key informant interviews, Focus Group Discussions with the youth groups, including semi structured interview questions.

4.   Literature Review
4.1   Urban resettlement

Slums are the most visible manifestation of poverty in Asia as it is in the other developing regions. It is in cities where one observes wealth and poverty in close proximity, rich and well-serviced neighborhoods located next to dense inner city or peri-urban slum settlements, lacking even the most basic services and living conditions. These shelter deprivations depict significant polarization in the distribution of city wealth and resources and deeper poverty for those living in slums. They have uncertain titles and tenures which impede investment in improving the level and quality of services. They are considered a grey zone where occupants have limited legal claims and rights over land or housing they occupy. Indeed, title or tenure for slum dwellers is one of the most debated and challenging issues that confront Asian countries and the one that holds the key to slum improvement and upgrading and urban poverty reduction. (Mathur, 2013). Sri Lanka's cities appear unattractive to potential migrants from rural areas. However, unlike the rest of the region, in Sri Lanka this is not so much because of poor urban living conditions as because of the country's impressive progress in achieving spatial equity between rural and urban areas in the provision of basic public services and living standards. As a result, the impetus for "push" migration – rural residents moving to a city more out of distress than, say, for higher wages – is generally

weaker in Sri Lanka than it is for other countries in the region, which may help explain the stability of the country's urban share (https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/srilanka/brief/leveraging-urbanization-sri-lanka).

It was taken for a discussion as well on upgrading the life standards of the people in informal settlements by resettling them into vertical settlements. Most of these communities are settling in the city of Colombo without having any land ownerships or deeds that ultimately they have to evacuate from those locations as they have identified as unauthorizedly settled communities that led to many social issues for them. By concerning all these matters, the government of Sri Lanka planned to have sustainable city development with the purpose of upgrading urban poor communities by providing adequate housing facilities and providing other social assistance for them as well. "A very important intervention, that critically conceptualizes the idea of urban resettlement, in order to understand the dual, ambivalent and dialectic process of displacement and relocation in all its complexities. Grounded in the lived experiences of city dwellers, richly woven and careful ethnographies account for the liminal conditions that resettled dwellers experience, their home- and place-making capacities. At the same time, this book offers a cutting-edge political analysis of the governing of everyday life, the production of unequal subjectivities and identities in the Global South, bringing together a truly international collective of researchers and fostering theory-generating connections between variegated sites. A precious, insightful read." Myriam Houssay-Holzschuch, Professor, Institut d'Urbanisme et de Géographie Alpine, Université Grenoble Alpes, France

"Urban Resettlements in the Global South is an engaging collection of 'lived experiences' of people and places going through often traumatic displacement and relocation induced by urban development projects. It goes far beyond conventionally prescriptive studies on getting resettlement right or critical literature on resettlement as a coercive mechanism. This book establishes a fresh insight into intricacies of resettlement through empirically-rich case studies on lifeworld's of resettled people as major weavers of urban fabrics across continents. It urges readers to think through meanings of uprootedness and continuous rebuilding of lives in our rapidly urbanizing world." Kei Otsuki, Associate Professor in International Development Studies, Utrecht University, The Netherlands According to the Sustainable Development Goals, Goal number 11 focuses on sustainable cities and communities with relevance to the "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable," https://www.hausvoneden.com/sustainability/un-sustainable-development-goals).

When it comes to the human settlements mainly in urban communities it was questionable whether they have a safe environment, access to clean water and sanitation (SDG Goal No 06) as it was lacking as many surveys, researchers and officers witnessed. It is visible that most of the people who live in these informal settlements are facing major social issues that cause them to have low levels of living standards that determine whether these sustainable development goals are achieved. Also it is important to have monitoring methods after resettling these communities into a new environment as most of the resettlements are lacking these phases that cost for the government as well as increases of the social issues remaining the same. Most of the drug related issues and crimes occurred in these new settlements as reported in many news reports.

4.2   Substance abuses

Household composition: hard drug addicts Heroin and other hard drug usage have been widespread in urban areas in Sri Lanka since the early 1980s due to the open economic policies after 1977. Relaxation of international trade restrictions has facilitated the inflow of hard drugs into the country and low-income settlements became the main distributional as well as marketing places for these drugs. As a result, the number of heroin addicts has increased particularly in the low-income settlements. With regard to the study location situation, the data show that there is a significant proportion of male heroin addicts compared to their female counterparts. Heroin addicts normally inhale at least three packets per day while some long-time addicts inhale up to ten packets per day. At the time of the fieldwork, the price of one packet of heroin had increased up to Rs.250 from the earlier price of Rs.50. The price increases particularly during periods when the police conduct raids. Heroin addicts devote a significant part of their earnings on this, some even the entire monthly earnings without any or very little contribution to their household expenses. On the other hand, they also disrupt household activities by stealing valuables from either other household members, neighbors or even outsiders in order to buy daily dosage of drugs. This type of behavior leads to arguments and violent activities, which disturbs family functions, and is also a disturbance for the whole neighborhood. Therefore, domestic violence, crime and problems with law enforcement agencies are common in these households, (Identifying the Urban Poor and Investigating Local Level Poverty Dynamics through CBMS: A Case of Colombo, Nishara Fernando) According to Justice Minister Ali Sabry, some 553,000 people — about 2.5% of the population — are addicted, which means one in every 40 people in the country is a drug addict. Authorities also say that nearly 60% of Sri Lanka's 30,000 inmates are in prison for drug-related offenses,

crowding facilities built to accommodate only 11,700. Drug-related court cases have gone up from 6,600 in 2015 to 16,000 last year (Mallawarachchi, 2020).

The STF recovered 1.638kg of heroin and over Rs. 600,000 in cash from a large scale drug peddler's apartment at Sirisara Uyana Housing Scheme in Wanatamulla, Borella.Police said the STF initially arrested a 59-year old woman with 32 grams of heroin near the said housing scheme yesterday. After questioning the suspect woman, the STF carried out a search on the 5th floor of the apartment building and found 1kg and 606g of heroin and Rs. 610,000 in cash. It was uncovered that the apartment is owned by drug kingpin Nanda Kumara Ranasingha alias "Wanathamulla Kumara" himself.
(https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Heroin--cash-recovered-from-drug-kingpin--%E2%80%99WanathamullaKumara%E2%80%99s%E2%80%99-apt-/108-203927

"Another issue that was highlighted is that of drugs and among the survey respondents, almost 60% said that people using drugs was a big problem in their apartment complex 17.4% said that it was not a problem. Issues with people using drugs is high in Methsara Uyana and Sirisara Uyana with around 73% stating that it is a big problem. 55.8% of respondents also stated that people selling drugs is a bit problem, with this figure being as high as 68.1% in Methsara Uyana and 74.1% in Sirisara Uyana" (https://www.cpalanka.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Living-it-down.pdf). Stated by Iromi Perera representative of a NGO sector and it emphasized that the drug related issues remaining even the resettlements are take place due to lack of proper mechanism in identifying, monitoring and evaluation in post resettlement period causes for remain these social issues that impact for the existing house holders as well as for those who identified to be resettled.

4.3 Social Work Intervention

Social work has always been concerned with the development of society as the basis for achieving the well-being of individuals, families and communities. Social work services have existed in our society for centuries. However, it became a systematic and scientific service only during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The objective of social work is to help people lead happy and comfortable lives. The primary mission of social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed and living in poverty' (Baker 1999 P.55). Social work has an important role to play in coordinating

determinations to support people, groups and communities that face many social issues.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) defines a substance use social worker's role External link:open_in_new as one that directly addresses the needs of people suffering from addiction by looking at two issues: the big picture of how drugs and alcohol affect one's life and the solution, coming up with an individualized treatment for that person.

Intervention of social workers differs from setting to setting as social work is a wide range practice base profession with the involvement of direct and indirect intervention methods. Social work intervention starts from the individual level with a person and his/her environment to the community level. also social research, administration, involving social policy changes and developments and Social Action is also considered as social work interventions. the area spreader to medical settings, educational settings, focusing on legal aspects, vulnerable groups including person with disabilities, LGBTQ categories with all the deprived parties for represent their issues with assisting them, institutional cares including elderly and child care, prisons etc. in each sectors social workers have many different roles such as educator, facilitator, mediator, advocator, researcher and guider etc.

Social workers also have their own values and code of ethics to be practiced in these settings by following the principle of social work. Fundamental of social work is to promote human rights, social justice and establish equality. "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. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels" (https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/)

5.   Findings

Findings of this study based on the qualitative method including focus group discussion, key informant interviews and Existing records. The targeted group for the focus group discussion included youth groups. A survey conducted at present by the Urban Development Authority has identified a total number of 68,812 families living in 1,499 community clusters (underserved settlements) which do not have a healthy environment for human habitation and access to basic infrastructure facilities such as clean water, electricity, sanitation etc. Relocation of these families in new housing schemes with acceptable standards will be one major step in the direction of transforming Colombo into a world recognized city with a clean and pleasing environment to cope up the city development plan objectives (https://www.uda.gov.lk/urban-regeneration-programme.html). During the focus group discussion, the term "Easy Money" was used regularly where it drew attention to what this term meant. By being a watcher, those who deal with drugs can earn money easily without any hard attempt and can obtain money more than two thousand rupees per day and mostly school dropouts were automatically engaged with this and they have this term 'Easy Money' as there is no any hard attempt to earn.   Not only that but also due to peer influences, interest in experimenting and imitating others are some of the reasons youth groups are involved in this. This is working as a cycle where the parent's involvement can be seen too and this is a high threat for the wellbeing and development of social, psychological and physical development of the children and Youths. Sirimuthu Uyana Housing project addresses one of the main needs which was identified through the focus group discussions with the key informants including manager of the housing project and Community Based Organization leaders. The community consists of 100% of daily wage workers and the community can be identified as a victim of drug usage. mostly the younger generation and youth groups are caught for this threat. School drop outs can be mainly seen within the area and not only them but also the children are involved in this drug usage as it is the easiest way to earn money. One of the highlighted questions these younger generations were asked during the FGD was, that "when we can earn through the process of "Easy money, why do we need to do a job?" It shows that they do not have much interest in engaging proper occupation as well as lacking a proper vision for their self-development. Through the observations identified that the term "Occupation/Job" is not a worthy matter for them. Some of them were really interested in education but due to family issues and lack of supporting environment for education caused them to leave or drop out from education as well. They do believe that their fate is the same as their parents to continue the same occupation which is passed through from generation to generation. With all these matters it was visible that these younger

generations have a huge impact on this environment with a blank future as they believe ultimately have been victimized in this threat. During the focus group discussion, the respondent explains that due to lack of financial capabilities in the household for day to day consumption they have become involved in this. They also identified that these community members usually consume on a daily basis where they need money daily for consumption as the daily routines are different with these community settings. Also lack of interest in education and lack of support for education from the family environment is highly represented in the discussion sessions. Mainly the people who are in this illegal business targeted youth groups to develop the drug dealing network as they are in favor of having money so these young generations are the easiest victimizations and later those who were caught for these situations it was hard for them to come out from this due to many threats. During the observations and the discussion with the identified community leaders in each block in the flat explained school dropouts were gambling around the flat premises and whenever a visitor was there similar faces were around the premises where the messages were passed for the certain people in second. Also as some key informants mentioned that there is no any gender based issue in this drug dealing issues as he shows some female figures who are involved in this as well. The key informant interview sessions with the CBO leader in the women's society of the housing project explains that children who are in grade 7-9 are also engaged with this due to peer influences, interest in experimenting, imitating and for finding money. Not only that lack parental attention for these children is highly influenced by this and it is highly affected to children physically, psychologically and socially. It was visible that it is hard to change the attitudes and behaviors of the adults and the easiest method to grasp the children and give proper awareness and continuous monitoring after relocating as these children are the future generation to be protected and to provide broader vision of the importance of life and healthy living pattern.

6.   Social Work Intervention

Social workers employ a systems theory approach ~n their work, which means that they consider all aspects of a client's life and that they view clients in their social environment. Social workers consider not only the immediate problem faced by a client, but also the "system" within which the client exists. In particular, social workers consider family, community, and other social and economic forces that affect the client, such as poverty, discrimination, and educational and employment opportunities (11 Wash. U. J.L. & Pol'y 63-82 (2003). With relevant to the above explanation, social workers consider not only the service user but also the person in

the environment as it directly as well as indirectly affects the person and for the whole community that social workers must address individual matters as well as community issues as well. identifying individual issues helps to reduce/mitigate/prevent social matters as well. Social workers have many roles and responsibilities when assisting from individual level to community level. Social workers as community workers can conduct Prevention programs designed to enhance "protective factors" and move toward reversing or reducing known "risk factors. "Prevention programs should target all forms of drug abuse, including the use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and inhalants. Not only that but also the awareness must include facts about drugs and their harmful effects and that opens opportunities for family discussions about use of legal and illegal substances and family policies about their use. Also social workers can link with the resources with regard to those who are in need of rehabilitation assistance and counselling sessions. These substance abuse leads to psychiatric issues and in need of medical assistance where social workers can be involved in assisting them to reach the resources. Also social workers as an educator must explain the legal procedures, law and rules and regulations, the punishments for these drug related matters to the community to prevent involvement from these issues as it led to many social issues including violence, crimes and unavoidable poverty. Assisting the justice system for those who struggle with the law relevant to these social issues is another important factor that social workers can be involved with as advocates. Social workers also can involve parents or caregivers in awareness sessions with regard to the impact of drug usages, and also when assisting the younger generation to have prevention mechanisms as well as when facilitating to the younger generation who already addicted to these drugs which helps to have supporting system in the family environment and later in the community level. Because mostly these substance abuse causes and impact for the social relationships of the family level to community level that led to dysfunction from the family system to the whole society where social worker's involvement as mediator is important to address this. Not only that but also due to the homelessness, gambling's and school dropouts causes for these substance abuses that social workers must address in the common platforms including community levels, school settings etc., to aware the people about the consequences and to support each other. Also during the resettlement phases it is important to identify these issues in the phase of pre resettlement as it helps to prevent the process of continuing these issues. Not only that but also it is important to implement the monitoring mechanism in resettlement to have a proper follow up method from the beginning as well. With all these factors another important role that social workers can take part is involving social researchers as it helps to empirically-validated intervention and treatment strategies. Also these

researchers will be helpful in policy making and policy changing process especially with regards to the urban resettlements.

7.   Conclusion

Social work is a profession that focuses on helping the people by reducing the dependency capacity, promoting human rights and social justice and also having equality. However, it is still not a very popular profession in Sri Lanka but identified as an important profession to be implemented to assist the many people in different settings with different issues yet to be addressed effectively and efficiently from the grass root level where it emphasizes the importance of the bottom to top approaches as well.

As discussed earlier in the documents, urban informal settlements are common to be seen in the city of Colombo due to rapid urbanization and scarce resources that identified mostly these informal settlements are unauthorized that affect for the personal life and for the community as well, because of the lack of safety, clean water and sanitation, poor hygiene, increases of anti-social activities etc. for having proper town planning and city development these informal settlements were involved in resettlement programs with the purpose of having adequate housing and improving the living condition with the social assistance.

However, questionnaire being raised that these resettlements are successful as there are many social issues can be seen. This paper focuses on the substance abuses in urban resettlement. Through the discussion and through gathered information it was identified that it is necessary to have an attitude and behavioral changing process for the younger generation as they do not have proper vision and aim for their lives and easily being victimized due to financial matters and lack of supporting system within the environment, also the implementing the monitoring and follow up mechanism is needed after resettling these communities unless the issues are increased gradually.

It is important to focus on the younger generation before being victimized for these substance abuses and on the other hand to develop a safe environment with supporting mechanisms for those who are already addicted and need assistance to re-start their life. These situations can be effectively addressed and assisted by the social workers as they are the professionals that are involved in the grassroot level. Social work is practice base profession that addresses and identifies the root causes and involve the service users resolving their issues by themselves by improving a consciousness of their own issue and the environment. this practice method is the

most effective service delivery system that reduces the dependency rate yet identifies own issues and resolves the issues by themselves where social workers are only involved in mediating, advocating or any other level that assistance is needed that service users are struggling with. Mostly social workers have wider range to focuses and when it come to the urban resettlement process involvement of social workers will be an huge support in this development process where the social issues can be mitigated easily which will be affected to the national development.

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