



Special Issue | Social and development concerns in Africa (c)

Special Issue on Social Work During COVID-19: Editorial | March 2021

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## **Editorial**

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The flash of the current pandemic Covid-19 has been declared as a global crisis and the greatest challenge humanity has faced since World War II. It has taken a significant toll on people around the world. The COVID-19 outbreak affects all segments of the population and is particularly detrimental to members of those social groups in the most vulnerable situations be it, people living in poverty situations, older persons, persons with disabilities, youth, migrants and indigenous peoples. They stand to suffer disproportionately from the pandemic and its aftermath. Whether due to limited movement, fewer employment opportunities, social distancing, economic crisis, domestic violence; they are affected socially, economically and psychologically. The occurrence of a future pandemic also, cannot be denied fully.

Global Ravage of COVID'19 infected more than 7 million people and cost more than three hundred thousand lives. It affected all spheres of human living and all walks of life irrespective of cultural, social, political, economic and physical boundaries that constructed due to narrow perception of time-place-personal patronages. Social workers are challenged to respond constructively to restrain, restore and reconstruct human living in the pandemic period performing three essential role; Promotive, Preventive, and Responsive functions by the application of social work methods irrespective of specialized intervention challenges incorporating or inculcating spirit of professionalism, and becoming part of multi-disciplinary team (As Promotive: advocate,

coordinate, educate, train, manage, monitor; A preventive: identify vulnerable household, work with community leaders, provide remote psychosocial support, reinforce gatekeeping (family) carry out contact tracing; Responsive: provide protection and support, identify emergency alternatives care, carry out management process, provide or supervise psychosocial support, manage cash transfer, provide bereavement counselling).

The responses to COVID-19 crisis are varied with multipronged dimensions. Health workers responded addressing health emergencies but economic and social concerns clubbed with pandemic crisis initially ignored and later incorporated gradually. Considering pandemic challenges faced across globe it is identified that the social workers have pivotal role to play.

This poise challenge to social workers to drift away from some traditional practices and adapt new practices that address risks both at individual, family and community level preventing stigma and psychosocial disorders and distress with caseloads and bring normalcy in human living which is possible only when social workers decide the priority areas of intervention without setting aside the demands to address various emerging problems as a by-product of pandemic. Social workers are therefore challenged to make use of social work methods in the emerging scenario and decide future course of actions to cope up with or face new changing equations of human living and human relationship that demands an attitude that preserve social work values, principles and philosophy open to new personal and professional skills and knowledge.

At this juncture, professional social work has a greater duty and ethical responsibility to reach out to these vulnerabilities and step up for the vulnerable. The authentic professional base of the discipline provides us with a repertoire of methods, tools and techniques that could be applied remedially, restoratively, preventively and developmentally. A common platform to raise this concern and seek practical ideas and inputs was the need of the hour. Hence, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa in association with Bharata Mata School of Social Work, Kerala and Association of Schools of Social Work in Kerala organised an International Conference in the mode of webinar series from June 1<sup>st</sup> to June 4<sup>th</sup> 2020 to create a platform for academicians and practitioners across globe to discuss on the application of various social work methods during this global crisis – COVID'-19. This special issue of this journal is the outcome of the deliberations and discussions held in the international conference. It has sixteen articles discussing the application of social work methods during pandemic in Asia and Africa. Aiming to facilitate a

improved practice of social work and serve as reference to budding professionals we have brought forth this articles. The editors are grateful to Dr.Johnson Mavole who facilitated the publication of these articles. Wishing a pleasant reading to all

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