

## INTEGRATING SOCIAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INTO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

\* *Mr. Vikas Jadhav*

\* *Research Scholar, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad.*

### Abstract:

The concept of Social work education included critical thinking with develop the skills to improve the lives of people and communities. Social work education also aims to ensure social work students to understand the principles of social justice and human rights, and apply theory in to practice Social work is theory base training to apply skill, social work methods, tools and techniques into community interactions practice. Social work and sustainable development are closely linked, with social works and social workers playing a key role as a catalyst in helping to create sustainable solutions with people's participation. As such sustainable development refers to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This paper explores the integration of SSD into social work practice, examining its significance, challenges, and opportunities. A critical literature review and case studies illustrate the importance of SSD in social work, highlighting best practices and recommendations for effective implementation. Social workers need appropriate skills and knowledge to integrate social development with responsible and wise environmental management, coupled with sustainable economic progress and growth. These are the essential components of a holistic approach for sustainable social work practice in an ever-changing society. This research paper highlighted the broad theoretical framework of this research study. Included were the definitions of the main theoretical components use throughout the study.

**Key Words:** *Social work, Social Work Education, Social Work Principles, Social Justice, Human Rights, Theory, Practice Skill, Methods, Tools, Techniques Sustainable Solutions, Development, Economic, Social, Environment etc.*

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### Introduction:

Social work education is a practice-based profession and its engages with local communities to identify their needs, mobilize resources, and empower them towards active participation in the development and welfare process. Social workers help to create sustainable solutions that address issues such as poverty, inequality, and social injustice. Social Sustainability process is a human centric process which includes human rights, social justice in sustainable development processes. It promotes social inclusion of the poor and vulnerable by empowering people, building cohesive and resilient societies, and making institutions accessible and accountable to citizens. A social concept refers to an idea or understanding that is shaped by the sociocultural environment and considers the welfare of the group, whether it be the family, nation, or world at large. The most important objective of sustainable development is to balance our economic, environmental, and social needs, allowing prosperity for now and future generations.

Social work practice consists of the professional application of social work values, principles, and techniques to one or more of the following ends: helping people obtain tangible services; counseling and psychotherapy with individuals, families, and groups; helping communities or groups provide or improve social and health services; and participating in legislative processes. The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behavior; of social, economic, and cultural institutions; and of the interaction of all these factors.<sup>1</sup>

Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Brundtland Report 1987) This Report foresees 'the possibility of a new era of economic growth, based on policies that sustain and expand the natural environmental resource base Economic growth and modernization have historically been pursued aggressively by nation-states, as a means not only of satisfying basic material needs, but also of providing the resources necessary to improve quality of life more generally.

#### **SDGs and Social work:**

Social work is closely aligned with the values and principles of the SDGs, as both share a common vision of a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world. Social work can contribute to the SDGs by applying its knowledge, skills, and values to various levels of practice, from micro to macro. The SDGs are a set of 17 goals and 169 targets that were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to address the most pressing challenges facing humanity and the planet by 2030. The SDGs cover a wide range of issues, such as poverty, health, education, gender equality, climate change, peace, and justice.

#### **Definition of Sustainable Development:**

In 1987, the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development released the report *Our Common Future*, commonly called the Brundtland Report. The report included a definition of "sustainable development" which is now widely used<sup>2</sup> The idea of sustainability can guide decisions at the global, national, organizational, and individual levels. A related concept is that of sustainable development, and the terms are often used to mean the same thing.<sup>3</sup> UNESCO distinguishes the two like this: "Sustainability is often thought of as a long-term goal (i.e. a more sustainable world), while sustainable development refers to the many processes and pathways to achieve it."<sup>4</sup>

This research paper argues how social work practice may contribute to sustainable development, provided it includes the ecological environment in its contextual approach. To this end, a general model for social-ecological practice has been developed, centered on the concepts of empowerment, social capital formation and

<sup>1</sup>Website: NASW, National Association of Social Workers, The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world. NASW works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards for social workers, and to advance sound social policies. Retrieved on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2024

<sup>2</sup> Keeble, Brian R. (1988). "The Brundtland report: 'Our common future'". *Medicine and War*. 4 (1): 17–25. retrieved on, 26<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2024

<sup>3</sup> Sustainability Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved 11 October, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Sustainable Development". UNESCO. 3 August 2015. Retrieved 13 October, 2024

resilience building. The core concepts of the model are analyzed in order to create a coherent interpretation both in multilevel systems terms and in political terms. The social ecological practice model is thus presented as a political tool for social change.

**Purpose of the research study:**

The purpose of this research paper is to explore and construct a foundation of general perceptions and tentative theories with regard to sustainable development and the position and value of the social work profession within the sustainable development paradigm.

**Goal of the research study:**

The goal of this research study is to explore current social work practice with regard to sustainable development and identify new challenges and opportunities for sustainable social work practice in the changing scenario of Maharashtra.

**Objectives of the study:**

In the following discussion the respective objectives of the study will be given with a brief indication of how they have been achieved in this study.

1. To explore, through a literature study in social work profession and sustainable development.
2. To define social work in theoretical framework with sustainable development and its applicability in social work.
3. To explore the perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge base of social workers with the concept of sustainable development in social work practice.

**Definition of SSD and its relevance to social work:**

Social work is a profession that helps people and communities overcome challenges in their daily lives. Social workers aim to improve the well-being of people and communities, and help meet their basic and complex needs. Social work is based on principles of social justice, human rights, and respect for diversity. (Dictionary of Sociology, 2016)

The SDGs are a set of 17 goals and 169 targets that were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to address the most pressing challenges facing humanity and the planet by 2030. The SDGs cover a wide range of issues, such as poverty, health, education, gender equality, climate change, peace, and justice. Social work is closely aligned with the values and principles of the SDGs, as both share a common vision of a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world. Social work can contribute to the SDGs by applying its knowledge, skills, and values to various levels of practice, from micro to macro.

Social workers are dealing with people at community level with an approach for sustainable development for the betterment of human life. They use their social work methods, skills and principles in their social work practice with advocacy administration. Sustainable development is a part of social work education.

**Historical context: Evolution of SSD in social work:**

In the 1960s and 1970s, the environmental movement began to gain momentum, challenging the traditional growth-centric development model. Books such as Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" and the Club of Rome's report "The Limits to Growth" played pivotal roles in highlighting the consequences of ignoring environmental degradation and resource depletion. Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring": Published in 1962, it exposed the harmful effects of pesticides on the environment, particularly on birds. It is often credited with launching the modern environmental movement. (Rachel Carson's 1962)

The Club of Rome's "The Limits to Growth": This 1972 report used computer simulations to project the future consequences of continued economic and population growth. It concluded that if current trends persisted, the world would face environmental and economic collapse within a century. The growing awareness of environmental issues led to the establishment of international governance structures. One of the first major global environmental conferences, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, marked a turning point by placing environmental concerns on the international political agenda.

The evolution of sustainable development is a testament to our growing understanding of the interconnectedness of economic activity, environmental health, and social well-being. This historical perspective underscores the need for a holistic approach to development, one that ensures a thriving planet for future generations. As we continue to face global challenges, the principles of sustainability offer a blueprint for balancing our actions today with the needs of tomorrow.

#### **Literature Review:**

In 1983, the World Commission on Environment and Development, commonly known as the Brundtland Commission, was convened by the United Nations. Its mission was to address growing concerns about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development. The Brundtland Commission's 1987 report, "Our Common Future," introduced the term "sustainable development" and defined it as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This definition became a cornerstone in environmental policy and set the stage for future action.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The increasing debt burden faced by the most indebted developing countries presents one of the greatest obstacles to sustainable development and eradicating poverty. For many developing countries, debt servicing has limited their ability to create the conditions for realizing economic, social and cultural rights.

Social Work education is the process to produced train and professional social workers to intervene with community engagement, public affairs and manage to public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights. It helps to reduce violation, abuse and corruption. Social worker can also promote for the new law and

rule with their advocacy tool at administrative level.

### **Strengths Perspective in Social Work theories:**

The Strengths Perspective is an approach to social work that puts the strengths and resources of people, communities, and their environments, rather than their problems and pathologies, at the center of the helping process. It was created as a corrective and transformative challenge to predominant practices and policies that reduce people and their potential to deficits, pathologies, problems, and dysfunctions.

The Strengths Perspective emphasizes the human capacity for resilience, resistance, courage, thriving, and ingenuity, and it champions the rights of individuals and communities to form and achieve their own goals and aspirations. While acknowledging the difficulties that clients experience, the Strengths Perspective never limits people to their traumas, problems, obstacles, illness, or adversity; rather, it addresses them as challenges, opportunities, and motivators for change.<sup>5</sup> (Chapin, R. K. 2017).

Social workers are enjoined to collaborate with clients, their families, and communities to discover and generate hopes and opportunities, to mobilize inner and environmental strengths and resources, and to act for individual and collective empowerment and social justice. Thus, the helping relationship is characterized by alliance, empathy, collaboration, and focus on clients' and communities' aspirations and goals.

The main principles of the Strengths Perspective are for social workers is to recognize that every individual, group, family, and community has strengths and resources.<sup>6</sup> Social work educators engage in systematic assessment of strengths and resources. At community level they recognized the challenges of individuals, groups and communities with realization of trauma, abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious, they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity. Community setting field work allowed serving individual clients and communities as whole through their interests and collaboration with government institutions. (National Association of Social Workers and Oxford University Press USA, 2019).

Community social workers help to build an inclusive environment that makes residents feel integrated and empowered. They know that people can work together to improve circumstances, using their experience and knowledge solve problems and make change. There is a wide scope of opportunity for social workers in community development. Some work directly with individuals, couples and groups. Others work at the community level, while still others work for national and international organizations. They can work for social services agencies, non-profit organizations and grassroots organizations.

### **Community builders and organizers:**

At the community level, social workers may assess and address the needs of individuals, families and groups, advocating for their clients when needed. They may also rally community members around social movements and issues like poverty and homelessness. In this role, they work to build community awareness, identify and develop leaders, create strategic alliances, provide adult education, foster collaboration and build community

<sup>5</sup> The University of Kansas, School of Social Welfare, retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2024

<sup>6</sup> In The Encyclopedia of Social Work, accessed online. (c) National Association of Social Workers and Oxford University Press USA, 2019. Subject: Biographies Online Publication Date: Jun 2015, DOI:10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.118

capacity. Social Work practitioners are helps in policymaking, researchers and administration.

Some social workers take on more administrative roles to advance the social work profession or support an issue or social movement at the structural level. In these roles, they may analyze policy, develop programs and ensure the programs are implemented according to the vision. They may research the root causes of social issues and help develop programs and advocate for policy changes to better serve the community.

The role of social workers depending on the role and the organization, social workers in the community development field provide counseling to individuals, couples and families and also Develop and conduct support groups. Social work includes volunteers to support and enhance program goals to be an advocate on behalf of individuals, groups and communities to enact change at the structural level for sustainable development.

#### **Methodology:**

- Critical discourse analysis of SSD in social work literature
- Literature reviews with social work methods practice
- Case study analysis of successful SSD initiatives

In 2015, the UN introduced 17 SDGs to guide global sustainable development efforts by 2030. These goals include: Three Pillars of Sustainable Development<sup>7</sup>

#### **1. Economic Sustainability:**

Encourages economic growth, poverty reduction, and equitable resource distribution

#### **2. Social Sustainability:**

Promotes social justice, human rights, education, healthcare, and cultural preservation.

#### **3. Environmental Sustainability:**

Protects natural resources, biodiversity, and ecosystems, mitigating climate change and pollution.

Social Work practice dealing with individuals as well as group and communities initiatives with social action method through awareness, capacity building workshops and use folk media regarding Reduce energy consumption and waste, Choose sustainable products and services, Support renewable energy sources, Conserve water and protect biodiversity. Social worker also educates their self and others by their initiatives and self-motivated practice. Social workers are plays their roles in advocacy for sustainable policies in legal ways like through PIL, Writ and RTI. Every small action counts and collective efforts can drive significant positive change.

Social sustainable development is an integral part of social work intervention strategies, focusing on promoting social justice, human rights, and equitable relationships. Here's a framework for social sustainable development in social work intervention. Sustainable development to achieve Sustainable development goal social workers using the best practices with class room theories like, collaborate with stakeholders and communities, prioritize empowerment and capacity building, Address intersectionality and systemic inequalities, Foster inclusive,

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.casw-acts.ca/en/social-work-practice-community-development>



participatory decision-making, Monitor and evaluate interventions regularly, Stay updated on evidence-based practices for legal advocacy.

### **Conclusion:**

Social sustainable development is an integral part of social work, enhancing practice outcomes and promoting social justice. By addressing challenges and adopting best practices, social workers can effectively integrate SSD into their work, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable society. Social workers play a crucial role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN. This research paper explores how values, ethics, and principles within the social work profession are linked to the SDGs. To achieve the SDGs, the social work profession integrates diverse strategies and approaches in collaboration with national and international entities. The chapter also looks into how the global agenda for social work and social development supports SDGs. It emphasizes the need to adapt various teaching and training programs in social work education. Additionally, this chapter includes case studies from different regions worldwide to provide insights into the strategies and approaches that contribute to achieving the SDGs. Finally, it emphasises that the social work profession has the potential to address social problems and inequalities through collaborative efforts with various local, national, and international partners, facilitating the achievement of SDGs

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