Community organizing

The concept of community organising:

Henry Ross defines community organising as the process by which society is able to identify its needs and goals, arrange those needs and goals in order of importance, then develop the confidence and desire to act to meet those needs and goals, identify the internal and external resources that relate to them and then take action on them, thus developing and strengthening the attitudes of cooperation and solidarity in the community.

In another definition, Ahmed Kamal Ahmed says that it is another method of social service used by social workers and public volunteers who cooperate with them to organise joint governmental or civil efforts at various levels to mobilise existing or potential resources to meet the necessary needs according to the plans drawn up and within the limits of the social policy of the society.

Therefore, the characteristics of this type of social service can be identified in the following points:

- It is one of the methods of social service practised by specialists in specialised institutions and may be assisted by some volunteers.

- This method seeks to achieve community self-sufficiency by relying on community resources to meet the needs of individuals.

- This method seeks to develop the spirit of cooperation and solidarity among community members, which emphasises the importance of the participation of community members in this process in order to make it successful.

- The method of community organisation follows a specific strategy that is consistent with the ideological orientation of the community.

- Community organisation is linked to the development planning that the community draws or adopts.

Objectives of community organising:

There are different categorisations of the objectives of community organising, one based on the principle of priority in intervention and another based on the level of intervention as a principle. They can be summarised as follows:

* The principle of prioritising intervention:

This principle includes:

A- General objective of helping the community (individuals, groups and organisations) to bring about the intended and desired social change that leads to the improvement of its conditions by working to find a balance between the community's resources and existing needs.

B- Secondary objectives are:

- Studying society as a complete social study so that the social work policy is based on correct information based on numbers, statistics and facts.

- Preparing the plan for new programmes and modifying the existing ones so that the required integration in the plan can be achieved.

- Improving the technical level of programmes and raising the level of their efficiency, thus achieving a high return on services.

- Developing the spirit of cooperation and team spirit among individuals, groups and bodies associated with the implementation of programmes.

- Raising awareness to mobilise the community and arouse the interest of all its sectors in the community's problems.

* The principle of level of intervention:

This principle includes the following:

A- Planning objectives that include studying the community to know its needs and resources and prioritising them according to their priority and importance in preparation for drawing up an intervention plan.

B-Coordination objectives include coordination between different civil and governmental organisations at different levels and categories to ensure that there is no duplication or overlap between services and levels.

c. Supportive objectives include encouraging individuals and governmental bodies to raise the level of existing services and achieve cooperation between them.

Principles of community organising:

Muhammad Bahgat Jadallah Kishk summarised the principles of the community organising method in the following points:

- Acceptance: This means accepting the community as it is with its issues, values, culture, customs and traditions in order to deepen trust between the specialist and the individuals.

- The principle of arousal: The principle of arousing community members to create a spirit of dissatisfaction with the existing situation with the aim of researching and achieving the desired change.

- The principle of participation: Community organisation, and therefore change, can only be achieved if individuals participate in it. Participation varies according to abilities, it may be by word, deed or money, so it is not limited to one group without the other.

- The principle of self-determination: Members of society should choose their own destiny and make the decisions they deem appropriate to their abilities, capabilities and issues, within a comprehensive social policy adopted by society.

- The principle of objectivity: This means addressing the issues of society objectively and avoiding bias and personal or sectarian interests, and this will only be possible if the scientific method is adopted in identifying the issues and their solutions.

- The principle of utilising community resources: The various material and human resources of society must be utilised to address social issues, so the social worker must be aware of these resources and how to use them to solve social issues.

- The principle of professional relationship: The success of social work cannot be achieved in the absence of a serious professional relationship between the social worker and members of the community.

- The principle of evaluation: The evaluation process takes place at different levels and for all variables and actors, including experts, leaders, resources, plans and programmes. This is done with the participation of community members.

Ways of organising a community:

The method of community organising is based on three main stages:

A- The planning phase: This stage includes the following steps

1- Identifying the Problem or Need: This is the process of determining the exact type of problem or need of the community by determining its type and the extent to which individuals feel and realise its existence. It also includes the extent to which leaders are interested and preoccupied with it and their expression of it. It

also focuses on the extent to which the organisation to which the specialist belongs is concerned with this need or issue. The organisation of society is a response to a social need that expresses the existence of a problem that needs to be solved, so the specialist had to identify this problem accurately.

2- Study: Social intervention plans cannot be developed at this level unless there is a systematic and in-depth scientific study of the community, the type of need or issue, and especially the nature of the resources available to fulfil this need or solve the issue. The study seeks to provide the following information The history of the issue, its causes and prevalence in the community, the extent to which community groups are affected by it, the effects of the issue and its continuity, the cause of other issues, and the resources available in the community to address the issue.

3- Diagnosis: This is where the social worker's professional opinion is determined, where the relationship between the problem and the factors that led to its emergence (identifying the most influential factors), the availability of possibilities for solving it, especially the readiness of individuals to participate in solving it, and the most important obstacles or challenges expected to achieve the desired change.

4- Developing an action plan: In this step, the change policy, its objectives, methods and available resources to achieve it, as well as the timetable for achieving this change are determined. This means drawing the future picture that the community wishes to achieve. This means that the goals should be realistic and in line with the values of the society and especially its development policy. In this step, the most appropriate means and methods to achieve the goals are also selected, and this is done with the participation of community members in all these steps.

B - Implementation Phase: This stage includes the process of implementing the plan approved by the community within the framework of the specific programme. It relies on several pillars, the most important of which are:

- Providing an opportunity for all subgroups of the community to participate in the implementation process rather than limiting it to one group only.

- Defining the responsibilities to be carried out that are commensurate with the responsibilities, inclinations, and abilities of each individual or group participating in order to achieve benefit and enthusiasm in performance and work.

- Knowledge and experience of the role of each party and its relationship to the roles of the other participants.

- Organise and coordinate the work between the parties involved in implementation and avoid duplication of programmes.

- Each party should carry out its responsibilities in accordance with the set programme, and the social worker should provide them with assistance in overcoming the obstacles that may be encountered.

C. Follow-up and evaluation phase: By follow-up, we mean making sure that the programmes are implemented according to the previously agreed upon method in light of the previously prepared plan and available resources. The aim of this process is to uncover the obstacles facing the implementation process and think about finding solutions to them. Evaluation aims at measuring the results and effects of implementing the plan or programme, then comparing these results with the desired objectives and judging the success or failure of the programme.

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