



MSW-009
Community Organization
Management for
Community Development

Block

3

SOCIAL ACTION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

UNIT 1

Social Action: Concept and Application	5
---	----------

UNIT 2

Integrated Approach to Social Work and Social Action	19
---	-----------

UNIT 3

Models of Social Action	34
--------------------------------	-----------

UNIT 4

Strategies and Skills in Social Action	48
---	-----------

UNIT 5

Social Action: A Method of Social Work	61
---	-----------

Expert Committee

Prof. Surendra Singh (Late)
Former Vice Chancellor
Kashi Vidhyapeeth, Varanasi

Prof. Thomas Kalam
St. John's Medical College
Bangalore

Dr. Mukul Srivastava
Dr. B. R. Ambedkar
University, Agra

Dr. Jyoti Kakkar
Jamia Millia Islamia
New Delhi

Prof. Gracious Thomas
IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. Sanjai Bhatt
University of Delhi
Delhi

Dr. Joseph Xavier
Indian Social Institute
Bangalore

Dr. Usha John
Loyala College
Trivandrum

Dr. Ranjana Sehgal
Indore School of Social
Work, Indore

Prof. Anjali Gandhi
Jamia Millia Islamia
New Delhi

Dr. Leena Mehta
M.S. University
Vadodara

Prof. Archana Dassi
Jamia Millia Islamia
New Delhi

Dr. Beena Antony
University of Delhi
Delhi

Expert Committee (Revision)

Prof. Gracious Thomas
School of Social Work
IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. D.K. Lal Das
R.M. College
Hyderabad

Prof. P.K. Ghosh
Department of Social Work
Visva Bharti University
Shantiniketan

Prof. C.P. Singh
Department of Social Work
Kurukshetra University

Mr. Joselyn Lobo
Roshni Nilaya
Mangalore

Prof. Ranjana Sehgal
Indore School of Social Work
Indore

Dr. Asiya Nasreen
Department of Social Work
Jamia Millia Islamia University
Delhi

Dr. Bishnu Mohan Dash
B.R. Ambedkar College
Delhi University

Dr. Rose Nembiakkim
School of Social Work
IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. Saumya
School of Social Work
IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. G. Mahesh
School of Social Work
IGNOU, New Delhi

Dr. N. Ramya
School of Social Work
IGNOU, New Delhi

COURSE PREPARATION TEAM

Unit Writer
Dr. Archana Kaushik

Block Editor
Prof. K.K. Jacob
Udaipur

**Course Editor &
Programme Coordinator**
Prof. Gracious Thomas

COURSE PREPARATION TEAM (Revision)

Unit Writer
Dr. Archana Kaushik

Course Editor
Prof. Neera Agnimitra
Delhi University, Delhi

Programme Coordinator
Dr. Saumya

Print Production

Mr. Kulwant Singh
Assistant Registrar (Publication)
School of Social Work

April, 2020 (Revised)

© Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2009

ISBN: 978-81-266-4022-5

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means, without permission in writing from the copyright holder.

Further information on the Indira Gandhi National Open University courses may be obtained from the University's office at Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110 068 or the official website of IGNOU at www.ignou.ac.in

Printed and published on behalf of Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi by Director, School of Social Work, IGNOU.

Lasertypesetted at Tessa Media & Computers, C-206,7 A.F.E-II, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-25

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Block three: “Social Action for Community Development” is one of the four blocks of the course MSW-009: Community Organization Management for Community Development. It has five units and deals with one of the secondary methods of social work, that is, social action. The **first unit** is on “Social Action: Concept and Application”. This unit deals with the concept and terms related to social actions. It presents how social action has been discussed by different scholars. You will also find discussion on the history, scope and relevance of social action in this unit.

The **second unit**: “Integrated Approach to Social Work and Social Action” deals with a detailed discussion on the integrated approach to social work and social action. This unit will help you in understanding the interplay, various social systems and the process of intervention under integrated approach to social work. You will also have an idea about the interrelationship between Social Action and Community Work.

Unit three is on “Models of Social Action” This unit elaborates on yet very important aspect of social action, that is, different models of social action namely the Elitist model, Institutional and Non-institutional models, Popular models, and Gandhian model of social action. After going through this unit you will know their application in the field situation.

In the **fourth unit**: “Strategies and Skills in Social Action” you will learn about the strategies and skills required for social action. It aims to acquaint you with different strategies at different stages like planning, mobilization, management, communication and networking in the context of Social action.

The **fifth unit** is on “Social Action: A Method of Social Work” In this unit we shall discuss on social action as a method of social work. You will learn about the values, ethics and principles of social action and how social action is related with other methods of social work and social movements.

These units will equip you to have a holistic understanding of social action as a secondary method of social work in the Indian Context.

UNIT 1 SOCIAL ACTION: CONCEPT AND APPLICATION

**Archana Kaushik*

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Social Action: Concept and Related Terms
- 1.3 History of Social Action
- 1.4 Scope and Relevance of Social Action
- 1.5 Social Action: Some Reflections
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Further Readings and References
- 1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Social Action is one of the auxiliary methods of working with people in professional social work. In this unit, you would be able to understand the meaning and concept of social action. It traces the history of evolution of social action in the Indian panorama. It also covers related terms having similar goals and processes. After going through this unit, you would be able to appraise the importance and significance of social action as a method of social work. This unit also chalks out unique characteristics of social action with relevant micro and macro level examples. Overall, this unit would give you comprehensive idea of social action and its applicability in critical issues that surround the contemporary world.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Social Action has been used to signify a wide range of primarily voluntary initiative to bring out change in social systems, processes and even structure. Social workers, more often than not, have divergent opinion about the scope and relevance of social action. This ambiguity has even accelerated the debate whether to recognize social action as a method of professional social work.

It may be reiterated that in professional social work, six methods of working with people have been identified — casework, group work and community organization are the primary methods while social action, social work research and social welfare administration are the auxiliary or secondary methods. You may recall that differential social situations led to emergence of case work and group work in the western countries, while social action was more popular in countries like India.

As trained social workers, our aim is to help distressed people remove their problems and resolve conflicts. Whatever method, we opt to use in a social situation, we seek to improve the barriers and divisions between people, promote

the bonds that cement social relationships and ensure well-being. At times, skewed power equations and resource accumulation in the hands of a few create hurdles in the way of ensuring well-being of the disadvantaged clients. And no option is left for social workers but to come in conflict with the current configuration of inequality and diswelfare. Through social action, we, the social workers address the basic issues causing inequalities and injustice within the social system and structure that push a particular population group on marginalization.

Social Action is one of the most controversial methods of social work practice that has brought about a lot of debate among the social work practitioners as it addresses and uses the conflict present in social system to realize the goal of social justice and empowerment. Social workers advocate for the rights of the marginalized sections of the society. They may have to employ strategies like hunger strike, sit-ins, protests and such other ways to demonstrate their discontent. It is the usage of such strategies that have made social action a debatable issue and a controversial method of social work.

There are situations in the social environment that precipitate inequality and injustice, adding to the vulnerabilities and impoverishment, hardship and misery to certain sections of society, which, even after much of efforts, are not resolved amicably — such circumstances call for social action. It is a method of social work by which rights and interests of marginalized people are protected by coming in conflict with systems and structures that perpetuate accumulation of resources and power to disburse those resources in the hands of a few who are insensitive to the needs of weaker sections of society. Through social action, skewed resources and power are redistributed to uplift the disadvantaged groups in the society. Added to this, scope of social action is also to build a democratic and just, transparent and harmonious social structure and efforts are directed towards achieving these objectives too.

In this unit, the meaning, process, relevance and scope of social action would be covered at length. You may realize that social action is one of the most applicable and appropriate methods in the India's context. *Narmada Bachao Andolan* and movement that led to realization of Right to Information Act, are some of the finest examples to show how pertinent social action is in the contemporary social environment. Let us look into the concept of social action in detail.

1.2 SOCIAL ACTION: CONCEPT AND RELATED TERMS

The term **Social Action** is being used to depict a spectrum of voluntary action or initiatives that aim to address relevant social, political, economic, ecological and ethical issues in the country. In the last few decades, the term has become increasingly ambivalent and ambiguous with interplay of varying meanings and contexts. A wide range of activities like; charity, relief work, service delivery, public policy initiatives, advocacy campaigns, social movements, socio-political mobilization, networking for desired social change have been clubbed under the gamut of the term – social action. In a layman's understanding, social action would cover whole rubric of activities directed towards desired social change for the benefit of masses. Varying meanings emerging out of different types and

contexts of problems and their interventions makes social action a complex and yet dynamic concept.

In the Indian context, social reform movement and following movement for political freedom and the tradition of Gandhian approach to social work and social action have played a crucial role in shaping the perspective of social action meant for the upliftment of downtrodden. Social action is taken as a transformational practice to meet the objective of promoting well-being by bringing change in the arrangements in social system that lead to inequality and injustice, preventing people from realizing their full potential as self-determining agents. Likewise, from Gandhian perspective, social action as a practice covers varying degrees of samrachana (reconstruction) and sangharsh (struggle).

Let us understand the concept of social action through some of the definitions in the social work literature.

Mary Richmond, for the first time, in 1922, made use of the term social action in social work. She has defined social action as “mass betterment through propaganda and social legislation”. This definition stresses on improving the condition of huge sections of population as an aim of social action with propaganda and social legislations as main strategies.

Lee (1937) stated, “social action seems to suggest efforts directed towards changes in law or social structure or towards the initiation of new movements for the modification of the current social practices”. Planned social change seems to be the aim of social action as per this definition.

Coyle (1937) noted, “social action is the attempt to change the social environment in ways, which will make life more satisfactory. It aims to affect not individuals but social institutions, laws, customs, communities”. This definition stresses on collectivistic approach of social action rather than individualistic.

Fitch (1940) maintained that social action is legally permissible action by a group (or by an individual trying to promote group action) for the purpose of furthering objectives that are both legal and socially desirable. This definition focuses on inclusion of those strategies that are legally permissible in the process of social action.

Further, Sydney Maslin (1947) presented limited scope of social action by regarding it as a process of social work mainly concerned with securing legislation to meet mass problems. This definition confines the scope of social action in securing social legislations.

Hill (1951) described social action as “organized group effort to solve mass social problems or to further socially desirable objectives by attempting to influence basic social and economic conditions or practices”. Here, influencing basic social and economic conditions has been highlighted as the function of social action.

Wickendon (1956) applied the term social action to that aspect of organized social welfare actively directed towards shaping, modifying or maintaining the social institution and policies that collectively constitute the social environment. Desirable change in social structure is the key element in this definition.

Similarly, Solender (1957) maintained that social action in the field of social

work is a process of individual, group or inter-group endeavour, within the context of social work philosophy, knowledge and skill. Its objective is to enhance the welfare of society through modifying social policy and the functioning of social structure, working to obtain new progress and services.

Likewise, Baldwin (1966) defined social action as “an organized effort to change social and economic institutions as distinguished from social work or social service, the fields of which do not characteristically cover essential changes in established institutions. Social action covers movements of political reforms, industrial democracy, social legislation, racial and social justice, religious freedom and civic liberty, its techniques include propaganda, research and lobbying”. This is a comprehensive definition of social action, noting its uniqueness in relation to other social work methods, strategies and techniques being used and dimensions covered.

Friedlander (1977) stated that social action is an individual, group or community effort within the framework of social work philosophy and practice that aims to achieve social progress, to modify social policies and to improve social legislation and health and welfare services. Modifying social policies and improving legislations are significant aspects of this definition.

All these definitions give different viewpoints of social action and yet share many common features. To some, its scope is broad while others limit its relevance and significance in their definitions. Similarly, differential opinions are expressed regarding the usage of strategies and tactics of social action. Let us look at some more definitions of social action, especially those by Indian social work authors.

Nanawati (1965) considered social action as “a process of bringing about the desired changes by deliberate group and community efforts. Social action does not end with the enactment and signing of social legislation, but that the execution of the policies was the real test of success or failure of social action”. This definition focuses on long term impact of social action as indicator of its success.

Moorthy (1966) stated that “the scope of social action includes work during catastrophic situations such as fires, floods, epidemics, famines, etc., besides securing social legislation”. Work during calamities and disasters have been highlighted in this definition.

The Institute of Gandhian Studies defines social action as the term commonly applied to “social welfare activity, which is directed towards shaping or modifying social institutions and policies that constitute the social environment in which we live.”

Singh (1986) maintained that “social action is a process in which conscious, systematic and organized efforts are made by some elite(s) and/or people themselves to bring about change in the system which is instrumental in solving problems and improving conditions which limit the social functioning of weaker and vulnerable sections. It is, on the practical plane, nearer to social reform than to social revolution, which aims at smashing the entire existing social structure and to build up a new social set-up. It is conflictual in nature but at the same time non-violent”. This broad definition covers many shades of social action – clarifying the process, goal, target groups, nature, resemblance with social reform and ethical base of non-violence.

Thus, we observe that social action is considered a method of social work practice that aims at bringing about structural changes in the social and economic systems largely through social legislation and alterations in social policy. Disadvantaged section is the target population and mass mobilization is crucial, yet, target group may or may not actively participate in the planned intervention. It is planned and conscious effort with specific strategies and techniques to be implemented to achieve the goals of equality, social justice and empowerment.

Now, attention may be diverted to some of the social interventions and processes that share similar aims and objectives as social action. One such term is **Advocacy**. A Latin word, advocacy means — raising voice on behalf of others [ad- on behalf of others and voca-raising voice]. It is an activity that influences, motivates and encourages democratic powers to take decisions on various social issues and problems in favour of downtrodden and marginalized population. Advocacy may be defined as the process of influencing and persuading those people who have social, political and economic powers so that they can bring desired changes in the policies with the aim to ensure equitable resource distribution in the social system.

Advocacy, in its aim and even usage of strategies is very similar to social action. They share same values and ethics as their belief in equitable distribution of resources, human rights and social justice. In fact, many of the social workers consider advocacy as one of the strategies of social action, the latter being broader and more complex.

Another term that shares similarity with social action is **Social Movement**. Wilkinson (1971) defined social movement as “a deliberate collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence, illegality, revolution or withdrawal into ‘utopian’ community”. In another definition, Blumer (1957) says, “social movements are collective enterprises to establish a new order of life”. Peasant movement, tribal movement, dalit movement, women’s movement, students’ movement, etc., are a few examples of social movement. The downtrodden and the marginalized communities have mobilized themselves and raised their voice against the failure of state and society to safeguard their livelihood and Rights. Social action and social movement share same ideological beliefs and values, but social movements have been, more often than not, unplanned and sporadic while social action is a well-defined process initiated and guided by social work professionals in the light of theoretical and conceptual basis. However, you may recall that Narmada Bachao Movement is led by a social work professional, Ms. Medha Patekar.

Social action is taken as an auxiliary method of professional social work. It is an organized effort to change or improve social and economic institutions. Some of the social problems like dowry system, depletion of natural resources, alcoholism, housing, health, etc., can be and have been tackled through social action. The objective of social action is the proper shaping and development of socio-cultural environment in which a richer and fuller life may be possible for all the citizens. From the above discussion, certain peculiar features of social action may well be delineated. It is essentially, an intervention directed for solution of mass problem(s) and aimed at improvement of mass conditions. It talks about influencing institutions, policies and practices. The goal of social action is redistribution of power, resources, human and material. It aims to do

advocacy on behalf of, or along with, mobilized sections of disadvantaged client population. It tends to influence the decision-making process at the political and social levels.

Thus, we see that social action is seen as a method of professional social work to be used to bring about or prevent change in the social system through a process of making people aware of the socio-political and economic realities that influence or condition their lives and by mobilizing them to organize themselves for bringing about the desired results through the use of appropriately worked out strategies, with the exception of violence. Let us take a look at the historical processes related to emergence of social action as method of professional social work practice.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Enlist five peculiar features of social action as given in the definitions above.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

1.3 HISTORY OF SOCIAL ACTION

India has a long tradition and history of reform movements, voluntary actions and philanthropic initiatives with the aim to seek welfare of masses, which you have read in your other blocks covering history and philosophy of social work. This must have given you an idea that in the light of social situations, that were mainly social problems affecting the masses, reform movements took place in India. Even during Bhakti movement, Kabir, Nanak, and other religious reformers in their preaching addressed the removal or abolition of social evils in the name of traditional practices that were creating hurdles in the well-being of common people.

It may be noted that in the West, problems were mainly psychosocial in nature, more focused to individual behaviour and social interactions. This resulted in development of methods of social work practice like casework and group work, which was further substantiated with Freudian psychoanalytical theories and Erickson's psychosocial theories that were developed during that period only.

In India, problems were of different nature — illiteracy, poverty, exploitation of lower caste people, untouchability, abuse and exploitation of women and inherent practices of gender discrimination and the like. These social evils

prevented a large section of the society from getting equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for development and thereby enjoying a dignified life. Social reform movement led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswarchandar Vidhyasagar resulted in abolition of sati pratha, measures for permitting widow remarriage among Hindus, entry of women in the formal education system and so on. Dwarkanath Tagore, Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen and others worked for founding educational institutions for women and emancipation of women in West Bengal. In western part of the country like Maharashtra, Prarthana Samaj established in 1867 in Bombay clamoured for caste reform. Justice Ranade considered the Father of the Renaissance in Western India, founded Widow Marriage Association. Similarly, Jyotiba Phule established orphanages and schools for girls. In the same way, Ramakrishana Mission founded by Swami Vivekananda did a lot of social service like starting dispensaries and orphanages, running schools, etc.

All these initiatives set the stage for more concrete form of social action. Certain benefits of these social reform movements were passage of social legislations like abolition of sati custom, widow remarriage Act, mobilization of masses and awareness about social evils. Further, historical evidences reflect that though there have been history of social reform and social movements for more than two thousand years in India, a more formalized and coherent form of social action emerged in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This formalized social action which emerged as a political response to the colonial state by the British in India. As the social base for political freedom broadened, the dividing line between social movement for abolition of social evils in the country and political movement as freedom struggle almost disappeared. Movements led by socially enlightened individuals, particularly, in the last half of the nineteenth century, helped in creating social and political spaces for social action.

Freedom movement, especially led by Mahatma Gandhi laid foundation of a strong culture of social action. It may be noted that the legacy of the Gandhian social action has played a crucial role in laying the foundation of social action in India. Gandhian social action includes a combination of samrachana (that is, reconstruction) and satyagraha (insistence on truth). He practiced and preached for imbibing values of non-violence, stressed on ideas of swadeshi (of one's own country) and swaraj (self-rule). Gandhian ideology of peaceful protest in the freedom struggle has made the whole world bow down in front of his ideology, conviction and belief. Alongside, he also stressed on reconstruction — The Tolstoy farm was set up by Gandhi, with the funding support of his German friend Kallenbach, Sir Ratan Tata, Nizam of Hyderabad, Indian National Congress and Muslim League. These led to formation of various kinds of institutions to strengthen social action.

Further, Gandhian activism to protect the rights of peasants in Champaran and Kheda and the rights of mill workers in Ahmedabad demonstrated the effectiveness of micro-level social action in influencing the larger political arenas and action. The Gandhian praxis of grassroots political struggle along with macro-level policy initiatives and broader interventions for social reform further set the guidelines for social action. The ideas of satyagrah and swadeshi served both as ethical principles as well as political strategies. The cumulative social action at the socio-political arena helped in the emergence of a more radical stream in the freedom movement in the first decades of the twentieth

century. Inspired by Gandhiji, the political movement, infused with the spirit of social reform, became a national movement participated by all, irrespective of caste, creed or community.

After 1920, for about three decades, many other instances of social action emerged at the center-stage. Prominent ones are communist movements, Dalit movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar, the Hindutva movement propounded by Hindu Mahasabha and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh. In consonance, the social reform movement against the hegemonical Brahmanism, led by Mahatma Phule in Maharashtra, Narayana Guru in Kerala and Periyar Ramaswamy Naykkar in Tamil Nadu were other important social justice initiatives. The reformist initiatives for the welfare and equality of women by Pandita Ramabai and Savitribai Phule also played significant role in the endeavours of political freedom. Likewise, Ramakrishna Mission initiated a number of charitable, reformist, educational, welfare and development activities.

All these small scale and large, regional and national level social action initiatives propagated mass mobilization, mass awareness and action, provided ample opportunity to practice skills, techniques of social action, encouraged leadership among few and ability to question surroundings among the masses that hamper their social functioning. This in turn, strengthened the historical background of social action in India and courage and confidence to fight for freedom against colonialism.

After Independence, many young idealists expressed their dissent to the apathy of the state and to the cynical manipulation by the dominant political parties. Social action by JaiPrakash Narayan, social movement led by Medha Patekar, Aruna Roy and Arvind Kejriwal's initiatives for Right to Information Act and many more are some fine examples of relatively recent social action interventions.

Worldwide trend: Likewise, the world history is also full of examples of social action that were expressed in the form of Civil Rights Movement, Student Unrest in the USA against the Vietnam War, the revolt in Prague against the authoritarian State, the Naxalite movement in India and the neo-left movements in different parts of the world. Many of these movements were a reaction to an increasingly authoritarian and oppressive state and associated insensitive socio-political processes. Emergence of Liberation theology was an expression of dissent to the oppressive power structures of the state. Feminist movement sought to question the structure of patriarchy. The two aspects common in various kinds of movement were the sense of dissent (to traditional state, power structures, culture and ideologies) and a mass mobilization to bring about change in the existing structure and system. These social movements, reform initiatives and social action activities formed the background for social action as a method of social work practice.

1.4 SCOPE AND RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL ACTION

Being one of the methods of professional social work, social action, undoubtedly shares a striking similarity with the former term. As the approach of social work practice has shifted from charity to empowerment, the scope of social

work has expanded enormously. With emergence of rights based approach, relevance of social work practice has become almost omnipresent. Ensuring rights of the child would mean that we have to tackle problems like child labour, processes causing street children, education of children (drop out, retention, quality of education), discrimination against girl child in family and community, child trafficking and child prostitution, poverty, malnutrition, health problems, disability among children, delinquency, child abuse, exploitation, and the like. This would also include provision of optimum opportunity to all the children for growth, development and participation. The social work professionals may have to work at preventive, rehabilitative, ameliorative, curative and promotive levels. Further, if the causative factors are looked into and social work professionals decide not to opt for softer approaches, then dealing with most of the above-mentioned problems would require practice of social action. For instance, abolition of child labour would demand policy and legislation initiatives at the macro-level along with mass mobilization that would discourage remunerative child work in all forms.

The scope of social action is very vast and it is one of the most apt methods of social work practice even in today's context. The innovative approaches, participatory techniques, outreach, and holistic thinking are critically important in creating a better world, which is indeed the vision of social work profession. In fact, it is due to social action by some of the socially enlightened people and voluntary sector, that various basic Rights- the Right to Health, the Right to Water and Food, the Right to Shelter and Work, the Right to Knowledge, the Right to a Dignified and Just life, the Right to one's Entitlements, etc., have been put on the table. Recently, the successes made in terms of legislation like as Right To Information Act and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act are because of concerted efforts and constant pressure exerted on the government by civil society organizations.

Apparently, you may think that if government of our country that has committed itself to be welfare-state, takes adequate measures for the welfare and development of the weaker section of the society, then, what is the scope left for social action. Hypothetically you may be right but despite the pro-active face of the government, socio-demographic indicators give us a dismal picture of the country. Nearly 40 percent of the country's population is living below poverty line. Poverty levels continue to be high even though every year newer schemes and approaches for poverty alleviation are designed and implemented. Even after nearly 60 years of Independence, there are places like Kalahandi where still people die of hunger. At many places like in Orissa, people sell off their offspring for 10-20 rupees because of poverty. Crores and crores of rupees are allocated for combating poverty, and statistics reflect that numbers of people below poverty line are increasing every year.

Further, Female literacy rate in the country is still nearly 50%. According to one estimate, close to 50% of students in the age group of 6-11 years are not able to read, write and do simple arithmetic. Similarly with respect to health, the situation is very bleak if not worse — 80% people opt for private health care system when need arises as government health care system lays behind both in quality and quantity. It is estimated that about 3% of the population are pushed below poverty line every year because of health expenditure. Social security system in the country lags behind even those nations that are economically quite poor off compared to us.

Nonetheless, taking the broader and optimistic view of India's fast progress and booming economy would not let us (the social work professionals) to pay attention to problems like poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, gender discrimination, female foeticide, child labour, accessibility and affordability of adequate health care system, provision of social security system and so on and so forth. Social action is meant to bring about necessary changes in the policy and legislation for well-being of disadvantaged sections of society. Further, if policies and social legislations are in place, then focus should be shifted to implementation stage. Social workers may have to deal with problems like corruption, red-tapism, insincerity, lack of accountability and transparency that hamper formation of egalitarian social structure. Thus, despite innumerable schemes and programmes, policies and legislations, if things at grassroots are not right, then, social action may be carried out to set the systems right, which indeed is the need of the hour in the present Indian context. It may be affirmed again that there is a need to bring out necessary changes in the system — fixing people who are not performing their duties sincerely, people who are corrupt and eat up money meant for the welfare of the poor, politicians involved in various scams — all these situations call for social action as milder approaches would not work in such cases.

There have been innumerable instances of successful work accomplishments through social action. Trainee students of social work during their fieldwork have demonstrated excellent use of social action in various situations — in urban resettlement colonies, students have taken up issues like preparation of ration cards for poor, improving bad roads, unhygienic and unsanitary conditions prevailing in the surroundings, non-availability of teachers in government run schools, and the like. They mobilized community people and confronted the responsible authorities like Municipal Corporations, Public Works Department, local MLAs/MPs of the area and other elected leaders, created pressures through signature campaigns, sit-ins, hunger strikes, morchas, involved media to create pressure and have got the work done.

Thus, social action is a powerful tool that becomes much more effective if the primary stakeholders (beneficiaries) are mobilized to create the pressure. Now-a-days, even media is playing a vital and pro-active role — justice in Jussica Lal Murder case, Priadarshini Mattoo case were resolved after media's social action. Even Indian cinema has projected potential of social action in excellent manner through movies like Lage Raho Munna Bhai, Rang De Basanti that have triggered successful social action and advocacy in different parts of the country. In this and other units of the block, you would come across many examples of social action that have been carried out in recent past in various parts of the country that would again project the scope of relevance of this method of social work.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Discuss briefly the scope of social action with elderly with special reference to India.

.....
.....

1.5 SOCIAL ACTION: SOME REFLECTIONS

In spite of being a very powerful tool of social change, social action, for decades together, has not been able to attain adequate attention in social work teachings as well as practice. It is only in mid-1970s that social work educators began to visualize social action as an important instrument in social development. As the empowerment approach gained momentum, the relevance of social action increased further. There was a paradigm shift in the way planning and implementation of socially relevant projects and programmes were taken up. Initially social planners and policy makers planned for the people at grassroots 'assuming' their problems and needs (Trickle down theory). Then, gradually there was shift in the focus and primary beneficiaries are now involved in the process of planning and implementation which is bottom up approach. With 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments people at grassroots are enabled to take active part in social auditing through gram sabha and ensure accountability, transparency and judicious use of their resources. Though many evaluation studies have shown that panchayati raj system is a paper tiger, it may be visualized as a solid system, at least anatomically, that needs social action intervention and people's active participation may be sought to make the system function effectively.

The radical social work approach could not gain ground strongly, despite a rich historical and cultural background because of several reasons. One, fieldwork training, in majority of educational institutions, is not designed in such a way that trainee students spend substantial time in the community and develop a rapport strong enough to mobilize resources. Such restrictions often drive students not to take up hardcore issues. Therefore, skills needed for social action are not inculcated adequately among the trainees. Second, many of the voluntary agencies have to depend for funds either on government or international agencies. They were coming in conflict with the system that comprise of government control. International agencies or foreign funding too have their own guidelines and they may not fund for the hard pressing issues requiring social action. Third, social work professionals may not feel motivated enough to contribute required time and energy resources in the community, which may not be part of their job (employment). Voluntarism has its own limitations, which is, at times, internally driven. Lastly, social action is very difficult, requiring proficiency in communication, analysis of social situation, perseverance, ability to mobilize people, adequate usage of strategies like signature campaign, sit-ins, hunger strike, persuasive skills, which is not everyone's cup of tea. Medha Patekar, during her Narmada Bachao Andolan, was often threatened for life. Resisting such crisis is not easy for most of the social work professionals.

In most of the Third World countries, welfaristic approach dominates due to charity and religious obligations being the starting point of social work. In that context, adopting an empowerment perspective, largely through consensus, is not an easy task. Facilitating increased access for maximum number of people to the essential social service needed for their development, obviously, would call for social action as a primary method of social work. Unfortunately enough literature is not developed on social action. The use of the process of social action requires far greater clarity on the part of trained social workers of its

goals and objectives, conceptual framework, ideological and belief system. There is a need to build up a new theoretical discourse and perspective on social action, based on a fresh look at the various social action practices and institutionalization process, in the context of the paradigm shift in the production of knowledge, communication and political process.

Thus, we can consider social action as the most ‘controversial’ and yet the most challenging method of social work profession. The process of social action is often moulded by the larger socio-political contexts and cultural ethos. Social action encompasses both moral and political undercurrents. Unfortunately, social work practice in India has not depicted any significant changes in the social structure or in major problems like poverty, child labour, women exploitation, illiteracy, unemployment, etc., and to a large extent, social work professionals have confined themselves to service delivery roles. Becoming a change agent was taken up by a handful of social work professionals.

However, there are some slippery patches while practicing social action, avoidance of which requires a great deal of maturity on the part of the social work practitioners. Oftentimes, when one gets lot of recognition and support from the public while mobilizing people, it becomes difficult to control temptation to ‘enjoy’ power. As seen in several recent mobilizations (disguised as social action), political parties approach the leaders for collaborations for their petty gains. While political platform gives power to bring about the desired change in the social structure and systems quite rapidly, more often than not, people get caught in the clutches of vote politics and lose out their actual goal for which the mission and the movement began. On the flipside, public support fizzles out soon if the desired results are not achieved in a limited time. Thus, a social worker practicing social action needs to be very careful of the dynamics of this powerful method of working with people.

One of the interesting facts that you may realize is that while there is no dearth of interventions through social action in the country, before or after independence, often, change agents have been the non-social workers. Stated otherwise, social action was done by various people in many parts of the country and most of them never had social work background, understanding of theoretical frameworks and professional skills and expertise. It just required commitment, understanding of the issue at hand and conviction and courage. In the next unit, you would be able to understand various facets of social action in a better way when we will deal with principles, values and ethical considerations in social action as a method of social work.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Mention very briefly any social action intervention that you have initiated/ experienced/observed in your surroundings.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

1.6 LET US SUM UP

Social action is one of the very challenging and powerful methods of social work practice. It is used for mobilizing masses in order to bring about structural changes in the social system or to prevent negative changes. It is based on human rights perspective and adopts the process of empowerment through redistributive justice. Certain social problems like poverty, exploitation, abuse, stigmatization, ecological issues, bonded labour, child labour, women empowerment, substance abuse, etc., can be tackled through social action. The main objective of social action is to bring solution of mass problems, improve in mass conditions and redistribution of power, resources (human, material and moral). Other similar terms like advocacy and social movement were also mentioned. We discussed the historical evolution of social action tracing bhakti movement, social reform movements and political struggle led by Gandhiji. Gandhian ideology plays a crucial role in social action.

While discussing scope and relevance of social action, we explored that majority of developmental issues in the contemporary world may be resolved through social action. If we want to have long term solutions and believe in human rights and empowerment perspective, then social action becomes apt for us.

Certain problems were also discussed in the light of the fact that social action, though relevant, is not very popular. Constraints in social work training, our personal value system, dependence on the state machinery (who may be the perpetrator of injustice) are some of the issues that create hurdles in the usage of social action as a method of social work practice.

1.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

- 1) Britto, G.A.A., (1984): Social Action and Social Work Education in the Eighties, in *Social Work and Social Action* (ed) H.Y. Siddiqui, Harnam Publications.
- 2) Britto, G.A.A., (1984): Some Principles of Social Action, in *Social Work and Social Action* (ed) H.Y. Siddiqui, Harnam Publications.
- 3) Samuel, J. (2000): *Social Action: An Indian Panorama*, (ed.), Pune: Voluntary Action Network India.
- 4) Chowdhry, D. Paul, (1992): *Introduction to Social Work*, Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi.
- 5) Davis, Martin, (2000): *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Social Work*, (eds.) Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, pp.317-318.
- 6) Friedlander, W.A. (1977): *Introduction to Social Welfare*, Prentice Hill, New Delhi.
- 7) Moorthy, M.V., (1966): *Social Action*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay.
- 8) Nanavati, M.C., (1965): Social Action and The Professional Social Work” *social work forum*, vol.III, no.2, pp.26-29.
- 9) Pathak, S.H., (1971): *Social Welfare, Health and Family Planning*, New Delhi.

- 10) Siddiqui, H.Y., (1984): *Social Work and Social Action* (ed.), Harnam Publications
- 11) Singh, Surender (1986): Social Action in *Horizons of Social Work* (ed). By Surender Singh & K.S. Soodan, op. cit. p. 161.
- 12) Foran, J. (2003): *The Future of Revolutions*. Landon: Zed Books.



UNIT 2 INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL ACTION

**Archana Kaushik*

Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Understanding Various Systems
- 2.3 Process of Change Effort
- 2.4 Roles of Social Worker
- 2.5 Social Action in Relation to Community Work
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Further Readings and References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to describe the meaning, scope, relevance, process and stages of Integrated Approach to Social Work with particular reference to Systems approach. First section would deal with purpose of integrated approach to social work and underlying assumptions. In the next section, you would gain understanding about interplay of various systems. The third section describes in detail the process of intervention under the integrated approach to social work. Role of social work has been delineated in the next section.

The unit also describes the interrelationship between social action and community work. Thus, after carefully going through this unit, you would acquire a comprehensive idea of the framework of integrated approach to social work that would be applicable in most of the social situations, which would also broaden your perspective of social work intervention and application of knowledge and skills in various social situations.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work is an evolving discipline where interventions are geared up towards initiating, exploring, retaining and modifying the ways and means by which persons, individually and/or collectively are helped in resolving disruptions in their social functioning. Like other disciplines touching social life of human beings, social work too needs to design and re-design conceptual frameworks, theories and models related to interventions. As social situations change, the outlook to analyze and measure various social situations should also change. Theories and concepts guiding us through our social interventions also need to be revised, updated, improved and evolved. It is in this context, that Integrated Approach to Social Work was developed that would provide you a comprehensive framework of social intervention based on system's theory, fitting in most of the social situations requiring planned, guided social change.

Pincus and Minahan have given this framework with a view that social work interventions are not unilateral and 'people's participation' is needed in almost all situations. In this approach, social worker enters into a system, thereby consciously altering its previous state and balance as a means of attaining explicit goals. The underlying assumption in developing the unitary method or integrated approach to social work intervention was that regardless of the many forms social work practice can take, there is a common core of concepts, skills, tasks and activities which are essential to the practice of social work and represent a base from which the practitioner can build. The traditional social work theories and methods have been woven around dichotomous terms (person and environment, clinical practice or social action, micro-system and/or macro-system) that, in some way, provided a myopic perspective of viewing social reality. Pincus and Minahan have suggested the following criteria for developing a unitary or integrated model for social work practice:

- 1) This unitary model should provide an all-encompassing framework, avoiding conceptualizing social work practice in dichotomous terms like either case work or social action, individualist or collective approach. It is believed that the strength of the profession lies in recognizing and working with the connections between these elements.
- 2) The social worker has tasks to develop and maintain relationships with a variety of people in any planned change effort (and not with the clients and his/her family only).
- 3) The social worker is required to work with and through many different sizes and types of systems (one to one relationships, families, community groups) in helping a client.
- 4) There should be selective and judicious use of theories (ego, learning, communication, etc.) in understanding social situations.
- 5) The Model should be applicable in variety of situations and settings.

In the subsequent sections of the unit, you would study at length about this integrated approach based on system's theory, substantiated with enough field examples. You are also advised to make use of this model in your field work practicum.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING VARIOUS SYSTEMS

Social work practice based on system's approach primarily focuses on the interaction between people and various systems in social environment. People are dependent on systems (say, ethnic and cultural system, economic system, health system, workplace system) for obtaining the material and non-material resources, services and opportunities to growth and development. In this regard, three types of resources have been described, from the clients' perspective:

- 1) Natural or informal system (family, relatives, friends, neighbours, etc.),
- 2) Formal system (membership organizations, - labour unions, support groups, PTA), and
- 3) Societal resource system (hospital, legal services, schools, work place).

It is assumed that people are dependent or rather interdependent on these systems for accomplishment of their life tasks (Life tasks are activities relating to daily living such as growing up in the family, learning in schools, entering into work force, marriage, bearing and rearing children). At times, despite the help potentially available from the network of informal, formal, societal systems, in certain situations people may not be able to obtain resources, services or opportunities they need to cope with their life tasks and realize their goals. The role of social worker, here, is to look at the inadequacies in the interaction between these systems (or any one system) and the people that may cause distress, problems and mal-functioning. Let us analyze this point in some more detail for better understanding:

Inadequacies at informal resource system may be **lack of informal helping system** (there may be no friends or neighbours, people of a particular social group not included in social intercourse) or **reluctance to turn to informal system** (hesitation to ask for help from friends, relatives, etc., past experience, fear of loss of face may add to these inhibitions) or **inability of the system** to meet the needs of the people. For instance, in a village in India, a particular socially marginalized group, may be geographically staying at secluded place or may be shy in putting their needs across to people in the neighbourhood. Further, informal system may be responsive but not well-equipped to solve the problems of the people in distress.

Likewise, inadequacies of formal resource system may be as follows — Groups may not exist (say, labourers being exploited and no labour unions exist to protect their rights) or people may be reluctant to join (HIV positive people may be fearful of their identity being disclosed on joining HIV support group) or are unaware of their existence or the system may be unable to meet needs, that is, lack of necessary resources and influence to provide services to its members or to negotiate on their behalf with a societal resource system.

Further, there may be inadequacies of societal resource system – one, needed resources or services may not exist in sufficient quantity (e.g., inadequate quality and quantity of food grains for Public Distribution System available to poor families). Else, needed resources or services may exist but not geographically, psychologically or culturally available to those who need it (e.g., mental health services not available in rural areas and needy people not seeking mental health services because of fear of being labeled as ‘mentally ill’) or no information about existing resources or usage of resources may lead to further problem (say, hospitals labeling patients as HIV positive and discriminating them).

Added to this, there may be conflict between various systems which may affect resources/service utilization (health care system exists but may not be affordable or may be far off and with poor transportation connectivity). At times, there may be other inadequacies like intra-system problems hampering its effective service delivery (say, in a hospital, doctors on strike or no funds to buy equipment for treatment of patients). Thus, you may realize that there may be many problems in the functioning of various systems in a social environment requiring social work intervention.

The purpose of social work, in above mentioned cases, is to enhance the problem solving or coping capabilities of people and link people with systems that provide them with resources, services and opportunities. The aim of social

work is also to promote the effectiveness of operative systems through improvement of social policy about which you would study at length in subsequent sections. Let us understand the systems from the perspective of social work intervention.

From the viewpoint of social work intervention, four basic systems have been laid down – Change Agent System, Client System, Target System and Action System. Detailed description of these systems is as follows:

- a) **Change Agent System:** Change Agent may be any person or group, professional or non-professional, inside or outside a system, who is attempting to bring about change in that system. A change agent is a helper who is specifically employed for the purpose of creating planned change. It may be an agency, NGO or social worker.
- b) **Client System:** It is the 'specific system that is being helped'. Client system may be the individual, family, group, organization or community which, in addition to being the expected beneficiary of services, is a system that asks for help and engages the services of social worker as a change agent.
- c) **Target System:** This system includes the people the change agent needs to change or influence in order to accomplish his/her goals from the target system.
- d) **Action System:** It is used to describe those with whom social worker deals in his efforts to accomplish the tasks and achieve the goals of the change efforts. An action system can be used to obtain sanctions and a working agreement or contract, in order to identify and study a problem, establish goals for change or influence the major targets of change.

Now, let us take an example: a woman (client system) approaches the social worker (change agent system) with the problem that her alcoholic husband (target system) beats her up daily. Social worker, as a part of intervention may counsel the husband and get him rehabilitated with the help of de-addiction centre. Here, all those persons - doctors, NGO officials, staff at de-addiction centre – who took part in the rehabilitation process would be the action system. The change agent may like to study the gravity and extent of problem of alcoholism in the community, may take up a research study intending to find the root cause of the problem with alcoholism only as a behavioural manifestation. He/she may find that under-employment and unemployment among youth and adults, poor economic condition and easy availability of liquor coupled with cultural consent to males for alcoholism is the prime cause behind the rampant problem, which is affecting the health status of, say, 80% of youth in the community.

The intervention by change agent may include working at various levels – state to ensure Income generating programmes, shops selling alcohol in the community to be banned, creating awareness about harmful effects of alcoholism, knowledge creation about Prevention of Domestic Violence Act. In this case, target system would be the state (reluctance on the part of administrators to run income generating programmes, red tapism, corruption), shops selling alcohol, all alcoholics in the community and all the people believing that alcoholism is associated with masculinity and it is right on the part of men to 'drink'.

The action system would be everybody taking part in the process of intervention (researchers doing study, media propagating messages about anti-alcoholism,

domestic violence, NGO functionaries, field workers and so on). So, we understand that client system would be any person approaching change agent with a problem. Action system would be persons participating in the process of intervention and target system would be those persons who need to alter their behaviours and attitudes so that an egalitarian and just social system would be created.

Further, you may realize that one problem situation may call for many action systems, as reflected in the above example. Depending upon the situation, an action system could be an existing system already in operation (family, peer groups, schools, etc.) or a new system developed by the change agent as a part of intervention (say opening VCTC at hospital, self help group of terminally ill patients). The change agent may not be directly interacting with all the people in an action system but may have indirect contact at various points in the time span of intervention, say, first researchers, then NGO workers involved in rehabilitation of alcoholic clients, then media persons, and so on. The change agent may require their services only once or regularly. These services may be paid or unpaid.

Next, change agent's status (as independent citizen, volunteer, honorary or paid staff of NGO), career aspirations, job security, promotion, his/her own value system, conviction to the ethics and principles of social work profession, knowledge level, ability to mobilize, convince people, enthusiasm, creativity — all would have a bearing on the intervention. Added to this, the change agent (social worker) may also attempt to enlarge action system by involving other members of a larger system, (say, elected leaders, policy makers, coalition of NGOs, free-lancers, media persons) or he/she may reduce the client system (for example, work with alcoholic and his family; work with neighbourhood and then reduce some members).

An important diagnostic task of the social worker, usually in collaboration with the client system, is to establish the goals for change and then determine the specific people- the targets – that will have to be changed if the goals are to be reached. Let us look at the process of intervention under integrated social work approach.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1) Give an example of situation when:

- a) action system becomes target system
- b) client system becomes target system
- c) client system becomes action system.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2.3 PROCESS OF CHANGE EFFORT

The process of intervention in social work can be categorized in eight phases, details of which are as follows:

A word of caution: though process has been categorized into various phases, the activities may often be overlapping.

a) **Assessing Problem**

In first phase, the social worker (change agent) identifies the problem area (say, news reports of weavers committing suicide in Banaras of Uttar Pradesh) and collects more information about the nature of problem, social situation, life-style of people, contingent and precipitating factors causing the problem at hand [community of *Julahe* (weavers) in Banaras are traditionally involved in making famous hand woven Banarasi saris as a small scale family enterprise. Since, hand weaving consumes lots of time and in the advent of technological advancement, industrialization and globalization, people have options for cheaper electronic machine made banarasi sarees. Added to this, middlemen take heavy commission for hand woven sarees while giving the weavers meager amount. With no other livelihood options, no social capital, no backward and forward linkages, weavers spend weeks together in perpetual hunger and with least hope of any improvement in the system, are committing suicide. They are mostly from traditionally marginalized community of Muslims, illiterate, with no financial backup, no exposure to market needs and situations, no contacts with business persons who control marketing of Banarasi sarees].

b) **Collecting Data**

It is the second phase, where the social worker collects data about the problem at hand in an objective, scientific manner. She (let us assume social worker is female) may use research tools like questioning (direct verbal, direct written, projective verbal, projective written), observations (participative, non participative) and analyzes in order to find the root cause(s) of the problem. In the situation discussed above, the change agent collects all the details of number of weavers, their proportion, their family background, their work details like time taken in weaving a sari, designs adopted, knowledge about government's schemes for loans, options of selling to co-operatives, coping patterns and so on. She finds that informal resource system (family, friends, neighbourhood) is unable to take any ameliorative action; the weavers are not aware of Formal system (cooperative groups, self-help groups, NGOs) that may provide some respite; and they have no say in the societal resource system, that is, work-place and as a result in utter frustration, they are committing suicides.

c) **Making initial contacts**

In this third phase, the change agent gathers information about the systems (other than client system) and tries to develop initial contacts. Stated differently, the social worker gains more insight about the functioning and transactions of other systems in the social environment vis-à-vis client system. It is stakeholders' analysis that you have read in previous units of this block. With the information collected about various systems, the change

agent develops action plan for intervention. This would answer the questions as to which part of the system to contact, and method of initiating contact that may include direct approach or asking somebody to influence target system, one to one or group approach and usage of mass media.

Continuing with the above example, the change agent during stakeholders' analysis notes that the middlemen are the unfavourable stakeholders, government functionaries implementing schemes like Swarn Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SJGSY), providing financial and technical inputs are in 'unknown' category in terms of favourability of stakeholders. Further, probe into the system provided the information that corruption, lethargy, red-tapism etc. is rampant in the government and state is apathetic towards the dismal conditions of weavers. The change agent chalked out the strategy to involve media at suitable time in the intervention as a part of action system.

d) Negotiating contracts (means joint agreement on action system)

In this fourth phase, operating procedures are laid down with respect to client system, action system and target system. More clarity is gained in terms of tasks performed by each party to achieve the goals. In this strategies are explicitly laid down in terms of dealing with resistance to change in relation to various systems in the social environment. These would include involvement of other systems or replacing the services of one system from the other, upsetting equilibrium, providing hope, motivating, negotiating with the system on behalf of or with client system (see the similarity with social action).

In the above example, the employing NGO, its networks with other organizations would be the constituents of action system. In this phase, contractual agreements, if desired so, would be made between various NGOs and Community Based Organizations regarding sharing of responsibilities to achieve the goal(s). The middlemen would show reluctance to the idea to provide due share to weavers. The intervention strategy may be to negotiate with them amicably and if they do not agree, then may be to develop direct contacts between weavers and the market. It would also include simultaneously developing the non-existent services like self-help groups of weavers who would be associated with local NGOs to facilitate their linkages with cooperatives and marketers.

e) Forming Action System

In this fifth phase, the change agent concretizes the action system by chalking out all the details of who all would constitute action system, what roles they would perform and what would be their entry points and period of exit, duration of their intervention and the probable impact. In any one change effort, the worker may form many different action systems to collect data, assess the problem, make an initial contact, negotiate a contract, or influence the major targets to help achieve the outcome goal.

In continuation with the above example, the change agent includes the counselors (for helping weavers for counseling to prevent suicides), social work professionals (to form self-help groups of weavers and establishing contacts with banks), trainers from other organizations working in the area of poverty alleviation and income generating programmes (to provide

necessary inputs in formation of self help groups and informing about its functioning and utility to the client system) market researchers (to explore direct contacts with shop owners, traders and wholesalers, cooperatives and government controlled shops; to look for other innovating linkages with neighbouring countries, NRI and similar groups) mediators/negotiators (to reduce resistance from middlemen and facilitating government officials for implementation of poverty alleviation schemes in the community; legislators and elected leaders at various levels for necessary policy intervention), media (for putting up the case before the public in a right perspective through special bulletins, talk shows, etc., and if any stakeholders fail to cooperate after much persuasion, then defamation through media may form part of intervention). These would be the vital components of the action system and in the expected roles in the intervention process has been described.

f) Maintaining and coordinating an action system

It is the sixth phase, when focus is on the coordination between various components of action system. It would also involve looking at the problems in the development of relationships between members of action system, if any, may, differ in levels of motivation, commitment among members, job turnover, knowledge and skill enhancement, etc. Likewise, there may be problems in functioning that may result from absence of clarity about role distribution, communication gaps, rapport formation by action system, conflicting values and attitudes. The worker or change agent is required to deal with conflicts within the action system and finally prepare the system for ACTION.

In the case of above example, worker may encounter many knotty issues as when some counsellors may have biased attitudes about some religious members that may hamper their effectiveness in counseling. The employing agency may not want to come in conflict with the local goons working as middlemen and negotiators may not have perseverance to fight till the end in dealing with corruption and red tapism. With consistent motivation, persuasion, giving the factual information about the apathetic condition of weavers, shaking conscience and using similar other strategies, the change agent may be able to deal with conflicting issues and gear the action system for the intervention.

g) Exercising influence

In the seventh phase, the actual intervention to bring about desired change is put into action. The change agent, through the use of relevant knowledge, expertise, and legitimate or charismatic authority, status and reputation, personal attractiveness, control over flow of information and established relationship with the client group brings out desired changes. The process, specifically includes change in behaviour, attitude, belief in target system by providing positive or negative inducement, (influencing a target system by providing rewards for complying, with an influence effort, or punishing it for not complying), persuasion and use of relationships to achieve desired goals.

With regard to the above example, the change agent motivates the government officials, middlemen for desired behaviour by praising their previous works,

shaking their conscience by telling them the vulnerabilities of weavers (positive inducement) and if still they do not 'change', then threatens them to defame, disciplinary action (negative inducement). Further, the power of mobilized community people, media usage, value of relationship of change agent with clients would also have weightage in the intervention. Fear of defame, isolation, social boycott, changes in the target system (here, government officials and middlemen).

h) Terminating the change effort

This eighth phase is the last one in the process of intervention. It necessarily does not merely indicate a point reached at the end of planned change, rather is the integral part of the whole process. Specifically, it includes — evaluation of the change effect (means assessment of success-failure in terms of planned change and foresight gained for future action which is self-sustained) and disengaging from relationships (means that formal separation from client system so that they are no more dependent on change agent system for 'help' and dealing with reactions like denial, regression, expression of needs, flight and so on) and lastly, stabilization of change effort (creating systems, institutionalizing people's participation, developing coping skills towards self-reliance).

In the above example, the change agent develops self-help groups, develops formal linkages with NGOs, Banks, Marketers, Shop Owners, Dealers, Customers and the like (creating informal resource system and institutionalizing community participation) and trains the client system to develop leadership, cooperation and collaboration and gradually reduces their dependence. All patiently deal with reactions showing emotional dependence of client system. With regular feedback one analyzes the success of change effort.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Enlist the eight phases of intervention as described in integrated social work approach by Pincus and Minahan.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2.4 ROLES OF SOCIAL WORKER

After comprehending the systems and process of intervention, let us look at the roles, functions, qualities of social worker or change agent in the change effort, to which you can identify yourself.

Specific functions of social worker/change agent may well be described as:

- 1) **Help client system enhance and effectively utilize their own problem solving and coping capacities:** Change agent may identify and contact people who need help, provide information, develop understanding, give support, encourage to examine alternative ways of linking with the needed system.
- 2) **Establish initial linkages between people and resource systems:** Change agent may locate target clients (starving community with 'Meals on Wheels'); provide information about resource systems; help overcoming hurdles in resource utilization (crèche facilities so that mothers can work); referrals to resource system and follow up; advocacy to negotiate with resource system (e.g., patient discharged from mental hospital- persuading his employer to keep him back); forming new resource systems (terminally ill cancer patients' support groups).
- 3) **Facilitate favourable interaction between people and societal resource system:** It is one of the important functions of the social worker or change agent to make societal response system aware of the problem that its operating procedures are causing problems for its consumers (e.g., girls not allowed to go to school in neighbouring village). Change agent acts as consultant helping societal resource system improve its functioning and assist in developing new services (say, conscientize parents and community people on needs of girl child education and facilitate opening a school within the village premises). He/she may coordinate between various resource systems, organize consumers to advocate on their own behalf, do advocacy, mediation and resolve conflicts between natural, formal and societal resource systems.
- 4) **Facilitate favourable interaction within resource systems:** This function of social worker is aimed at changing interactions of people within informal, formal or societal resource systems. Social worker acts as a liaison between various sub-parts of the system, transmits information from one part to another and decreases hostility and conflict between subparts. The worker may advocate for the interest of one part of the system which lacks access to resources and power to make decisions or prepares sub parts to advocate for their own rights and interests. He/she acts as a consultant to members of a system and helps improve their internal functioning, role assignment, communication, etc. The worker may help the members towards empowerment and self reliance.
- 5) **Policy Change:** It is one of the most difficult yet vital functions of change agent. It includes collecting and analyzing information related to problems or issues that demand policy change, mobilizing primary and secondary stakeholders for social action and chalking down the strategies and tactics as mentioned in the preceding units.

Let us now pay attention to characteristics and types of social work relationships. Social work relationships are the sustained interactions between client system and change agent system that are established with certain purpose. About this relationship, you had read at length in units on casework and counseling. Briefly, three major characteristics of social work relationship are – one, these relationships are formed for professional purpose related to planned change

work; two, worker works for the interest and needs of clients and not for his/her own interest in a professional relationship and three, the relationship is based on the objectivity and self awareness where the personal troubles, opinions, beliefs of the worker should not enter or hamper the change effort.

According to Pincus and Minahan, there are three types of relationships between client system and change agent system – collaboration, bargaining and conflictual. It may be noted that one type of relationship may be changed to another – say, conflictual relationship may turn to collaboration and *vice-versa*. Details of each of these are as follows:

Collaboration: It is considered the ‘ideal’ type of relationship where there is agreement on the goals and operative procedures between client system and change agent system. Commonly, in this type of relationship decisions are made democratically and worker practices client self- determination. You would find processes and relationships in community organization very near to this one. The client system shows trust and confidence in the worker. This relationship is feasible when the clients view the goals of change as desirable and in their self interest. Further, in this relationship, client system believes that demands placed upon it will not require major changes in its existing power and status.

Bargaining: This is the typical relationship that connotes the beginning of client-change agent relationship. The initial contacts with target or client system are defined by ‘testing’ each other and then bargaining takes place with regard to existing resources and powers which is followed by collaboration. Further, if no consensus between goals and ways to achieve goals occurs between the two parties (change agent and client/target system) bargaining continues. Bargaining occurs when client/target system perceives that it may not be entirely in its self interest to work for the goals delineated by change agent. Added to this, differences in socio-cultural values, perception of power change, perceived difference between shared goals between the two parties also leads to bargaining. Also, you may have read in psychology that people tend to maintain their old pattern of values and working style and are apprehensive in trying out newer ways and processes. All these factors lead to bargaining relationship between clients and change agent.

Conflict: Conflictual relationship occurs when the shared goals as proposed by the change agent appears to be threatening to the self-interest of the target system. For example, upper caste people in a village oppressing the lower caste would not like the idea of land reform (land re-distribution) and would have conflictual relationship with the change agent. Here, the target system, the land owners, perceive that the demands laid down by the change agent would snatch away their existing prestige, power and status and hence would resist redistribution of resources and power. In this case, social workers may not operate with expected social work values, ethics of openness, mutual trust and honesty with target system.

It may be reiterated that the relationship between client/target system and change agent is quite dynamic and liable to change during the course of time. Target system may initially have conflictual relationship which can turn into bargaining and later to collaborative one.

Let us now briefly comprehend the skills and qualities change agent must have in order to bring about desired change in various systems. The obvious expectation would be that the worker inherently believes in the worth and dignity of human beings and sees problems in the functioning with various sub-systems and perceives client/target system as 'diseased'. Firm conviction in the values and ethics of social work is a must. Regarding skills, social worker is not expected to be dexterous in all the faculties (communication, programme media, ability to mobilize people, counseling, research and the like), rather he/she should be able to network with different people having differential proficiencies and get the work done to achieve the desired goals [skills of a social work have been at length covered in Unit 4].

2.5 SOCIAL ACTION IN RELATION TO COMMUNITY WORK

The term 'community development' refers to a process aimed at economic and social progress of the whole community with active participation of the community people. Community development is an amalgamation of two vital components — first, people's participation and second, the technical and financial assistance provided from the government agencies and both these components complement each other. Community development is not possible if any one of the aspects is missing. People's participation, their ability to cooperate and assimilate, along with the technical know-how from government agencies is a must for realizing the goal of community development. Initiating and implementing community development programmes on a large scale, say, at the national level, would require adoption of consistent policies, motivating and enabling administrative arrangements, recruitment and training of dexterous professionals in various related fields, mobilization of local and national resources, research, experimentation and evaluation and involvement of community people in the process of their own development. How it is linked to social action?

Community development as well as social action, have the same inherent goal — overall development of the community. They both correspond to the basic needs of the community and all their activities are initiated in response to the expressed needs of the community people. Both these processes adhere to concerted action and the establishment of multi-purpose programmes for achieving the goal of long-term, sustainable and well-balanced community development, where all sections of the society get their equitable share of resources and power. In fact, social action is taken as one of the models of community organization and community development.

Looking at the programme aspect, both the processes, i.e., community development and social action share similarity in terms of tasks that include problem identification and focus on felt needs, identification, encouragement and training of local leadership, involving community people in resource identification, discussing various alternative action strategies and picking up the most suitable ones, bringing about desirable change in attitudes and behaviours of the community people, creating a conducive environment where values like interdependence, sharing, cooperating and coordinating, are encouraged and thereby ensuring people's participation. Social action as well

as community development share the basic belief that greater participation of women and youth in the process of social change and development would not only lead to their empowerment but would also ensure long term sustainability of the desired results.

Community development aims at increased and better participation of the people in community affairs, revitalization of existing forms of local government and transition towards effective local administration where it is not yet functioning. Social action works for re-distribution of power and resources to achieve social justice. In fact, in communities where there is inequality and injustice, community development has to first rely on social action and once resources and powers are reallocated, then only constructive work has any meaning.

Sometimes, in order to achieve the objective of overall community development, some changes in the social system and institutions, that is social action, are required. To exemplify, poverty has remained one of the most pressing problems of our country. For more than two decades, many piece meal programmes were planned and implemented in a number of poverty-affected communities in the country to reduce the poverty problem. Still, the situation kept on worsening as the number of people living below poverty line rose. During late 60s and early 70s, a rethinking was done on the whole concept and strategies of development, highlighting the need for structural changes in society, to bring about a substantial change in the standards of living of the masses which means greater access to essential services such as education, health, housing and employment. As a result, 'Structural Adjustment Programmes', Land Reforms, 20-point poverty alleviation programmes, etc., were evolved. These strategies of radical change emphasized a more equitable distribution of resources and the organization of people to strengthen their capacity for claiming a better deal in society.

However, to be fully effective, communities' self-help projects require both intensive and extensive assistance from the government whereas social action is anti-authoritarian. Community development is done at the micro-level whereas the social cause for which social action is required, most often, has wider range. Lastly, the most basic factor in social action is a method of working with people in professional social work while community development is the process and a goal to do constructive and developmental work with people's participation and government assistance.

Further, integrated approach to social work practice has the potential to play significant role in community work as well as social action. As delineated earlier, this integrated approach has vast applicability in diverse situations of community action and work. It has uniqueness in its areas of interventions, which extends from individual contexts to families, groups and communities. It can be used in both problem solving and capacity building as it utilizes the human potentialities for enhanced social functioning. The practice of social work has a marked difference from country to country and integrated approach to social work has still not been able to gain wide popularity among the practitioners.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Describe two similarities and differences between social action and community development.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Briefly describe role of social worker as described in the light of general system's approach?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you studied about integrated social work approach that rests on general system's theory. There are four systems – client system (who approaches with a problem to) the change agent (social worker, any person committed to the cause) for help; change agent studies the situation in a holistic manner and develops plan for change effort; all the people who participate in the change effort would constitute the action system while the system requiring change is termed as target system.

Three types of resource systems were described in the unit. They are — Informal resource system like family, peers, friends; formal resource system like self help groups, counseling centre, formal clubs, institutions, etc.; societal resource system would be the workplace system, legal system, political environment and so on. Social worker studies the linkages between these systems and plans intervention after studying the systems in a holistic manner.

Following this, eight phases of intervention are dealt with at length. These eight phases are — assessing problem, collecting data, making initial contacts, negotiating contracts, forming action system, maintaining and coordinating an action system, exercising influence and terminating the change effort. All these phases have been described with relevant field examples.

Roles of social worker in order to enhance positive interaction between various systems were also described in detail in the unit. Roles are at various levels – micro, meso and macro levels. This apart, a commentary on the skills required

by social workers was given. All these components of integrated social work approach have been covered with pertinent examples.

It is hoped that this would give you a broad perspective of integrated social work approach that has wide applicability in most of the field situations.

Lastly, relation between social action and community development was covered, specifying the unifying and differentiating trends between the two.

2.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

- 1) Chakraborty, Somen, (1999): *A Critique of Social Movements in India*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.
- 2) Moorthy, M.V., (1966): *Social Action*, Asia Publishing House, Mumbai.
- 3) Parker, Jonathan and Bradley Greta: *Social Work Practice: Assessment, Planning, Intervention and Review*, UK: Learning Matters Ltd., 2003.
- 4) Pincus, Allen & Minahan, Anne: *Social Work Practice: Model and method*. Itasca, F.E. Feacock Publishers, 1973.
- 5) Shah, Ghanshayam, (1990): *Social Movements in India*, Sage publications, Delhi.
- 6) Siddiqui, H.Y., (1984): *Social Work and Social Action* (ed.), Harnam Publications.
- 7) Singh, Surender (1986): Social Action in *Horizons of Social Work* (ed). By Surender Singh & K.S. Soodan, op. cit. p. 161.
- 8) The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (!992): Volume 27, University of Chicago.

UNIT 3 MODELS OF SOCIAL ACTION

**Archana Kaushik*

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Elitist Social Action Model
- 3.3 Popular Social Action Model
- 3.4 Institutional and Non-institutional Models
- 3.5 Gandhian Model of Social Action
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Further Reading and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

Social Action, as a method of social work profession, holds high potential for desired social change. This unit describes various models of social action and their characteristics. After going through this unit carefully, you would develop an insight into different approaches to carry out social action. These models have been substantiated with suitable examples. You would also know the unifying and differentiating aspects of these models and their application in the field situations. An attempt has been made to give comprehensive information about these traditional and contemporary models of social action.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding units have discussed myriad of areas where social action can make a dent in the restricting conditions that do not allow some people to live their lives to the full. There are many 'ways' in which social action is carried out — progressive persons or group of people may raise voice on behalf of people living on margins, or may mobilize people to take action to bring about desired changes in the social system. There are many models of social action. The literal meaning of 'Model' is the modality or style or pattern of doing a particular thing, which is replicable. A 'model' of social action means a peculiar way or process of achieving set goals with certain identifiable stages and characteristics. Stated differently, social action, in its process of achieving its objectives, adopts certain manner or modality, which is termed as 'model of social action'.

Historical evidences bring out that social action can be initiated and carried forward by the elites exclusively without the participation of those section(s) of population for whom it is being undertaken. Classical example is Raja Ram Mohan Roy playing vital role in enactment of social legislation against 'Sati-pratha'. Models in which elites, play pivotal role in social action, with or without involvement of marginalized sections of population comes under the category of 'elitist' models. Playing a facilitative role in mobilization of the masses, preparing them to take action and in that process empowering them to take charge of own life would categorize social action into 'Popular' model of

action. In this, marginalized population takes up the total charge of the social movement in its own hands, though social actionist/activist provides necessary guidance. Freedom movement under the leadership of Gandhiji is a fine example of popular social action model.

In this unit, models given by various social work educators have been presented. Some theorists have categorized social action into Institutional (social action initiated by some institution like government or non-governmental agency) and non-institutional models (those initiated by people). Various sub-groups have been described based on the stakeholder who initiates social action and then who follows. Gandhian model of social action has also been described with all its sub categories and relevant examples.

3.2 ELITIST SOCIAL ACTION MODEL

Broadly, Britto (1984) has categorized social action into two models — Elitist Social Action and Popular Social Action. It may be reiterated that when certain motivated, progressive and sensitive people raise voice on behalf of the marginalized section of the population, primarily without active participation of that population group, it is termed as elitist model of social action. On the other hand, when marginalized people themselves carry forward the task of liberation from exploitation, may or may not be with the leadership/guidance of social actionist/activist/worker, it comes in the category of popular social action. Three sub-models can be identified in each type of social action. In this section, we would focus on Elitist model of social action.

Elitist Social Action

It is the action initiated and conducted by the elites for the benefit of the masses, either exclusively or with marginal participation of masses. There are three sub-models of elitist social action — legislative social action model, economic sanction model and direct physical model — as described below:

- i) **Legislative Social Action Model:** In this model, group of elites undertake social action for bringing about social change. This process generally includes understanding the magnitude, extent and urgency of the problem at hand (may be undertaking full fledged research work), creating public opinion (say, involvement of electronic, print media) and designing intervention with the aim to bring about desired change in the social legislation or social policy. The differential aspect of this model lies in the fact that the general population or the target group is not involved directly in the process. Some elites either themselves or along with like-minded individuals take-up the social issues, which they think is a pressing problem. Strategies and tactics like media advocacy, legislative advocacy, judicial advocacy, lobbying, networking, coalition and the like are used (about these you would study in detail in the next unit). It may be noted that essential pre-requisites for this model of social action is extensive and intensive knowledge of social situation, social processes, micro-macro linkages, excellent analytical abilities and communication and persuasive skills.

Key terms, here, are **elitist** and **social legislation**. Change is brought by liberal minded people (elites) through social legislation. In general, these

people belong to intelligentsia of the society, are of radical outlook, believe in social justice and empowerment and have strong motivation to eradicate causes of exploitation and oppression. Another potent variable that acts like a catalyst in the process of elitist model of social action is the strength of social capital (i.e., linkage with those people who have resources, who are decision-makers, social planners, policy makers). The elites carrying out social action have the knowledge about and access to the people and systems that have the power to influence the lives of marginalized sections of the society. To exemplify, Raja Ram Mohan Roy had the relevant legal knowledge, perspective defined by social justice and access to decision-makers when he persuaded the then state to enact legislation against Sati-system. Likewise, socialists like Aruna Roy, Arvind Kejriwal who played pivotal role in enactment of Right to Information Act also, more or less, adhered to elitist model of social action. In fact, majority of contemporary social legislations like National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Juvenile Justice Act, 2006, The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 have been tabled because of socially enlightened people who undertook elitist social action model and tried bringing change through social legislations.

- ii) **Economic Sanction Model:** In this model of social action, the elites make use of their power to influence economic condition/position or profits or financial transactions of the 'oppressors', who are denying the rightful share to labour class. Social workers/activists/actionists (elites) have control over some economic resources, which is used as a weapon to obtain benefits for their clientele. There have been many instances when the labour officers have bargained for economic benefits (pay hikes), medical insurance, community development programmes (education of children of labourers, provision of electricity, safe drinking water) to the Management making profit on the hard work of labour class. Many social work students undertook social action during their fieldwork when Delhi Government tried to 'rehabilitate' the poor people staying in slums to the outskirts and remote areas, quite far from the places of their work. Protests by civil society organizations (social action groups, advocacy groups, NGOs, CBOs, etc.) against World Trade Organization, Liberalization policy of the Government and at some places against the Special Economic Zones, have been social action initiatives under this category.
- iii) **Direct Physical Model:** It is a process where elites tend to punish those responsible for the cause of injustice and thus try to bring about benefits to their clientele. It is quite debatable issue as Britto has maintained that under this model, elites take the law in their hands to penalize the oppressors. Media initiating social action and joining together of students, women's groups all across the country for justice for Jussica Lal followed by Priyadarshini Mattoo can be included in this type of model. Rang De Basanti movie also tried to portray this Direct Physical model of social action. We may exclude bloodshed and violent means of registering protest in any model of social action. Other strategies like taking out processions, candle light marches, sit-ins, dharnas, may well be taken into account by the social activists engaged in this model of social action.

Let us now pay attention to Popular Social Action Model.

3.3 POPULAR SOCIAL ACTION MODEL

Popular Social Action

In contrast to elitist model of social action, whenever the elite incorporate the clientele in the process or whenever the oppressed groups themselves carry it out, such social action is termed, 'popular social action'. Stated differently, in popular social action model, a large section of people from marginalized section of population, with or without elite participation, carry out the process of social action. In this, when threshold of tolerance of exploitation is crossed, people come out and rebel against the oppressing system and people. It is the feeling against injustice, dehumanizing situations that trigger agitation for social action, elites (social actionists/social activists) may guide, facilitate, provide adequate information, help oppressed group understand skewed socio-political equations, or may not play any role in the process. The oppressed and marginalized community aims its confrontational/conflictive action against the unjust and dehumanizing structures, agencies, policies, procedures or oppressive agents. Popular social action has three sub-types — Direct mobilization model, Dialectical model and the Conscientization model. Unifying and unique features of these subtypes have been described below.

- i) **Conscientization Model:** It is firmly grounded on Paulo Friere's concept and ideology of conscientization, i.e., creating awareness among masses through education. Paulo Friere developed the concept of conscientization, which means educating the people about the oppression, oppressed and the oppressor (their own position in the two groups), their inter-relationship, the power structure and ways to liberate from the oppressed or oppressor class. Friere maintains that the situation when the oppressed and/or oppressor are conscientized, there exists motivating possibilities for the true liberation of mankind as well as for the most efficient domestication of man. He believed that education could be a tool for re-education and social action. Conscientization process results not merely in learning of literary skills, but it is intended to assist the participants to liberate themselves from all structures, which inhibit the realization of their full humanity through action-reflection-action. This form of social action involves maximum participation of the concerned population. People are given opportunity to analyze and understand the social structures, which circumscribe their life. To know is to change; and so they are invited to transform the structures through the means of their choice. As a result of humanization, it is hoped that the oppressed do not become oppressors in their turn. In the present situation, this model of social action is being extensively used in several countries.

Field example: An NGO working in a resettlement colony in Kolkata has taken up the issue of discriminatory treatment done against the girl child at the familial, community and society level. The gender prejudices and biases in our patriarchal social structure have most often given lesser share than due in the distribution of family resources, be it nutrition, education or other opportunities for development. The NGO made use of street plays, emotional speeches, debates, documentary films, etc., to conscientize the people towards the vulnerability and exploitation of female children. Issues of female infanticide/foeticide, poor health and malnutrition, school

dropouts, low wages, torture of dowry victims, rape, molestation and so on were taken up. With the usage of conscientization model of social action, the NGO was able to make a little difference in the negative and indifferent attitudes of general public towards girl child.

- ii) **Dialectical Mobilization Model:** This model of social action is based on the dialectical approach of conflict theory of social change as given by Marxist school of thought. According to dialectical approach, 'conflict' in any system is considered natural in the sense that any settlement of conflict is temporary and each reconstructed system carries within itself the seed of its own transformation. Thus, 'conflict' can be taken as the engine of social change. So, dialectical mobilization model of popular action helps in promoting conflict to exploit the contradictions in a system, with the belief that a better system will emerge as a result. The meaning of 'Dialectic' is the art of logical disputation. When individuals or groups take up extreme positions and argue, the position of one may be taken as the thesis and that of the other as antithesis. The result of their argumentation, a certain conclusion acceptable to both, may be termed synthesis. Thus, the positing of contradictory positions and arriving at a better conclusion is termed dialectics in logic. Actionists who follow a dialectical process take the conflict in a positive sense as they assume that all forces in nature and human institutions, clash and develop. Every institution and every social force contains in itself the element of its own disintegration. They expose the contradictions within a system, promote conflicts and expect a higher-order-result in the social-economic-political structures.

Field Examples: A group of human rights activists have organized 'Jan Sunwai' with the aim of raising voice against torture by police on innocent people in Bihar where the local SHO and higher rank officials of police department, representatives from Nation Human Rights Commission and district magistrate were called and police were questioned about the custodial deaths of two minors who were in lock up for petty theft and many other such cases were taken up. Both the parties (perpetrators, here, the police and the victims, families of accused) presented their point of view.

An NGO in West Bengal is creating awareness among the general public about electoral reforms so that money and muscle power should not be the criteria for giving votes to any candidate. Just a fortnight before Assembly elections, the NGO organized group discussions with the aspiring candidates and sitting MLAs in various constituencies. The perception of people's problems and their probable solutions were discussed. The general public attended the discussions with NGO people mediated the discussions, which often lead of huge arguments and conflicts. Through logical disputation, the general public was made aware of the credibility of the candidates and an appeal was made to give their vote to the deserving candidates and not to get lured away by any temporary favours offered to them by these candidates. Usage of dialectical mobilization model of social action for electoral reform proved quite useful in enabling the people to establish a clean democratic political institution in their respective areas.

- iii) **Direct Mobilization Model of Popular Social Action:** In direct mobilization model, specific issues are taken up by the social actionists and the masses are mobilized to resort to protests and strikes to achieve the objectives. In this process, the leaders or elites pick up specific grievances or issues that are affecting the people at large. They analyze the causal factors, which are at the root of the injustice. They formulate the alternative policies and procedures and mobilize the masses for protest activities for the purpose of achieving the set objectives.

One fine example of this model would be the fishermen's movement. During post independence period, a large number of trawlers and mechanized boats entered in the fishing sector. This led to massive over fishing to capture lucrative foreign markets. Their fishing method destroyed several species of fish. The imbalance, thus created in the eco-system, led to lowering of the stock available for traditional fishermen. Mechanization in the fishing sector had put poor fishermen at the mercy of moneylenders, merchants, exporters and multinationals. The government was apathetic.

The fish workers united together and raised their voice against the issue. They developed a well-structured organization and started their protest. As the movement started spreading from blocks to districts, the leaders formed union to bargain their demands with the government. The movement expanded to the coastal areas of Kerala, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Goa and Maharashtra and later in other states also. The union forced the governments to make suitable policies and programmes to secure their livelihood and eco-balance.

The above mentioned models (elitist and popular) have been described by Britto. He has mentioned a loophole in the elitist social action — the elitist concept of the problems of the weaker sections and the solutions offered would inevitably be determined by their own value system, which may not be in conformity with how the weaker sections themselves perceive their problems and how they went to solve them. Let us now look at other models of Social Action.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Briefly enlist the models with their sub-types as given by Britto.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

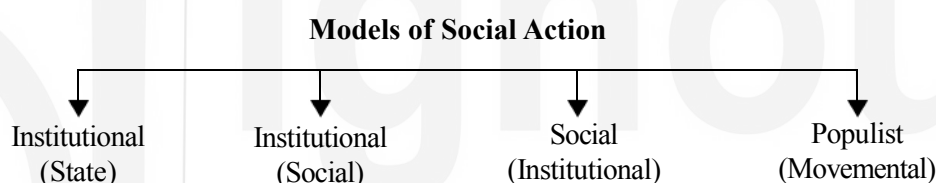
.....

.....

.....

3.4 INSTITUTIONAL AND NON- INSTITUTIONAL MODELS

Apart from the above mentioned models of social action, Singh (1984) has also delineated certain other models of social action based on the locus of action and the initiators. He has described two models — **Institutional and Non-institutional or Social**, with sub models. In Institutional models, social action is initiated either by State or non-government organizations while in non-institutional or social or populist model, common people or the disadvantaged sections of the society make the first move. It may, however, be noted that the approaches taken in all these models of social action might be overlapping. Let us study these models in some detail. The Schemata below shows the models of social action as propounded by Singh. Institutional model has two sub-types — Institutional (state) and Institutional (social). Institution, here, means any formal organization with legal and social entity like State, voluntary organizations, etc. Likewise, Non-institutional model too has sub-types — Social (institutional) and Populist (Movemental). By non-institutional, we mean any informal group socially active in the community, say, self-help group, pressure group of women, etc.



Institutional (state) model of social action: It is the social action initiated by the state or government. Social action by the state generally takes an indirect form, and its aim is to benefit the people with or without their participation. The approach is commonly parliamentary, representational, bureaucratic and elitist. The action is organized or sponsored within the framework of law, or may be legalized subsequently. For instance, government passing orders for regularization of unauthorized settlements of poor in urban settings and also implementing programmes for community reconstruction, say, proper sewage, availability of safe drinking water, free immunization and health check-ups. Especially, in the context of India, the State has, through the Constitution, committed itself to be a ‘welfare-state’ and therefore, is obligatory to provide all the services needed for the development and well-being of all sections of the population.

Institutional-social model of social action: In this type of model social action is initiated by voluntary organizations, whether or not getting financial support from the government. In this model, action is initiated either directly or with the support of the people. People’s participation may be sought at the beginning or in between the process. Stated otherwise, in the beginning the action may be initiated by leaders of the voluntary organization for the disadvantaged section of population group but subsequently it progresses with and through them (the marginalized group). The inherent theme behind such type of social action is primarily ‘welfarist’ or providing relief and services to the needy. The action often takes place within the framework of law. To exemplify, social action

taken up by NGOs, say, fixing the allocating sweepers by the municipal corporation of that area during sanitation drive in the slums or a initiating a movement to re-admit school drop out girls and boys in a community.

In the above two models, social action is initiated by formal agency like State or NGO and in the second sub-type (i.e., institutional-social model), people are involved subsequent to initiation of social action. The next two models – social institutional model and populist model are initiated and carried out by the marginalized groups themselves. Let us see the differential aspects of these models.

Social institutional model of social action: This type of social action may be organized by the citizens, self-help groups, elites, the deprived and others for their benefit but in its progression and development may seek support from formal groups and institution(s) which may like to espouse its causes. It may be direct, participatory and even radical. Depending upon its success it may institutionalize itself formally or remain in the character of a spontaneous and sporadic effort with an informed and critically aware social base and power. The nature of such action may be constitutional or extra-constitutional. The social institutional model can be distinguished from the institutional social model in that in the latter one action is initiated by the institution, say an NGO, and at some stage people are mobilized to participate. On the other hand, in social institutional model people initiate social action and may collaborate with some institution working for the similar cause.

Field Example: In a middle class residential colony in Delhi, the elderly united themselves to provide better security services for them like initiating a telephone help-line for the elderly people connected to the nearest police-chowki, day and night patrolling to the area by police, giving space in the community centre for starting a club for the aged to spend their free time together with friends and neighbours. The sitting MLA didn't pay much attention to their demands. The elderly people mobilized other people too to show their protest. They approached two NGOs working for the care and support to the elderly for participating in the social action. This is an example of social institutional model of social action.

Populist/ movemental model of social action: The fourth model rests entirely on popular social base and power, rejects dependency and stresses self-reliance through collective effort, active participation, and continuing education. This is an ideal form of social action in the sense that participants join hands together out of their own experience, take decisions in collaboration and consensus with each other, and while thinking, deciding and working together in helping themselves strengthen their collaborative attitude, mutual trust, shared dreams and aspirations. This type of social action is, indeed, an action of the people, for the people and by the people. This type of action may take of some of the characteristics of a movement and may both be constitutional and extra-constitutional. It may be routinizing or self-terminating.

Field example: In a village of Rajasthan, water scarcity was affecting the life of people badly. Women folk had to walk miles away to fetch some water. In the last summer, more than 500 cattle died in need of water. The village people got united to solve the problem. They approached the Area Development Officer (ADO) and talked to the authorities. The ADO promised to sanction some money

for constructing wells and hand-pumps but did not keep his promise even after several follow-ups by the villagers. The village people thought about other alternatives along with persuasion for money to the ADO. They decided to build check-dams to conserve rain-water. The village people collaborated and cooperated and constructed two check dams. Some people approached the district collector and requested him to intervene. With persistent persuasion the authorities also released money for building wells and hand-pumps. Their success story motivated people of other villages too.

In this type of model, people learn to cooperate and collaborate with their fellow-beings, and a conducive atmosphere defined by mutual trust, sharing, tolerance and inter-dependence, learning to accept diverse views, reaching at mutually agreed goals and the like is created which institutionalize people's participation.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Describe differentiating features of institutional and non-institutional models of social action as described by Singh.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3.5 GANDHIAN MODEL OF SOCIAL ACTION

As you have read in Unit 1 of this block, the history of social action in India is highly influenced by the Gandhian ideology and principles of non-violence and constructive work. In this section, we would be studying Gandhian model of social action in some detail.

The ideas and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, have indirectly and directly contributed to the development of Social Work as a profession and a discipline in India. It is in the panorama of Gandhian social work, that the true spirit and value alignment of social action lies. Gandhiji made significant contribution to the world by his revolutionary ideas and concepts such as satyagraha (truthful force), Sarvodaya (welfare of all) and Shantisena (peace brigade). He has also developed other key concepts such as trust, non-violence (Ahimsa), ends and means, non-possession, trusteeship, vows, lifestyle, constructive work, basic education, swadeshi and gram swaraj. Gandhian social work is basically concerned with the reconstruction of society based on truth and non-violence and welfare of all the last and the lowliest, the poorest of the poor (Antyodaya). The vulnerable sections of the society are the worst sufferers in the catastrophic situations such as fires, epidemics, famine, wars, not to speak about the welfare needs of the disadvantaged sections and the problems relating to social injustice,

economic exploitation, social discrimination, inequality and the related problems which are the outcome of the discrepancies in the social system. The basic objective of Gandhian social work was to locate and address basic causes and conditions resulting in the problems and human sufferings. Here is the coinciding point of social action and Gandhian social work as both focus on bringing about social justice and empowering the downtrodden with sustainable solutions. Both advocate the necessity to bring about fundamental changes in the institutional framework and the values of the society. Social action aims at collective effort and involvement of the people directing collective energies towards combating social problems.

Social action of the Gandhian tradition emerges as a class in itself because of its emphasis on spirituality, purity of means and ends, non-violence as a creed, austerity (limitation of want), and moral re-armament of people. Constructive thinking, mobilization, organization and action are the essential ingredients. People's power remains the basis in all types of social action of this tradition. This model has following sub-types:

Militant non-violent tradition: With non-violence still the base, this tradition or approach calls for political and revolutionary character of the social action. It aims at forceful intervention to bring radical changes in the social system. It does not totally rely on peaceful measures and mere confinement to constructive work done at the grass-roots level and rather it believes in re-distribution of power and resources through mass mobilization for action. For example, *chipko* movement emerged out of the protest against rampant deforestation in the Himalayan hills caused by indiscriminate deforestation for commercial consumption.

Gentle non-violent tradition: The works done by Vinoba Bhave for satyagraha and village and community reconstruction are fine examples of gentle non-violent form of Gandhian social action. *Bhu-daan* (donation of land) and *gram-daan* (donation of villages) for reconstruction of the Gandhian socialist community formed the vital components of this tradition.

Citizenship model of constructive work: This type of social action concentrates mainly on the grass-root level of social action (citizenship) through education. It rests on constructive work and believes that necessary changes in the social system would happen in due course of time. It rejects coming in conflict with the authorities, protests and boycotts to achieve the desired objective of social change. It prefers consensus (*Lok-sammati*), citizenships role (model) and through it visualizes a revolution in thought and method (*Bichar kranti* and *paddhati kranti*).

Gandhian approach further maintains that the government depends upon the people and not vice-versa. All the exploitation is based on cooperation — willing or forced — of the exploited and therefore there is a need to generate social power, a capacity to control the resources and power through action by groups of people. In all the three traditions of Gandhian social action, people's base is considered primary. While gentle non-violent and citizenship models concentrate on the solution of social and economic problems, through people building and action, militant non-violent tradition model also adds political dimensions to them.

Another model that encompasses all the characteristics of the above three types of traditions of Gandhian social action is Lok-Shakti, details of which are as follows:

Lok-Sakti Model of social action: From Gandhian perspective of social work, this is the classic model of mass mobilization to bring about the desired change in social structure. There are two major view-points or approaches in the tradition of Gandhian Constructive work: One group believes that constructive social work can gradually bring about the desired change within the existing legal and constitutional framework. It focuses on educating people and appealing to the conscience of those who possess property and power to sacrifice it. Constructive work, along with awareness generation, undertakes programmes with state support for community reconstruction. The other group of Gandhians maintain that the need of radical activism or massive changes in the social institutions arises when the state machinery or constitutional means fail to deliver services to the community adequately. As a result there is a need for mass action. Their conception of Gandhian socialism aims at eliminating exploitation and poverty, provision of equal opportunity to all for self-development and full development of the material and moral resources of the society and their adequate appropriation. They believe that in a socialist society, people are voluntarily prepared to give in their own interests and wishes to the larger interests of the society. Such a kind of socialism cannot be achieved only through political action, social action is also needed. Sarvodaya is taken as a social movement aimed at individual and social action. Emphasis is laid on revolution in thought and method, the role of citizen, the need for *lok-shakti* (people's power) and *lok sammati* (people's consent) for building up *sw-raj* (self-governance) and *su-raj* (good-governance).

The concept of *lok-shakti* is very significant in Gandhian Constructive work tradition. *Lok-shakti* refers to the collective capacity or power of the people, expressed or latent, to deliberate, decide and act together. *Lok-shakti*, in order to be effective, must have the quality of ethical virtues and appeal, and it must use non-violent methods for social change. The underlying thought behind the concept of *lok shakti* is that unless the energies and capacities of the community people are mobilized, and they become self-reliant and capable of taking initiative collectively and voluntarily, their development would undoubtedly be slow especially in a democracy. *Lok-shakti* is the essence of democracy. The state power (*rajya-shakti*) cannot fulfill its objectives without *lok-shakti*.

In the Indian context, the sarvodaya movement is one of the finest examples of social action. The process used by Sarvodaya workers is quite similar to the process of social action, with following stages:

Parichaya (first introduction): This is a stage of introduction to the clientele and their social needs and problems. In this stage social issues and strategies are introduced to the masses.

Adhyayan (survey or study): Information is gathered from the population on the burning issues and its impact on the socio-economic and cultural aspects of life are seen.

Prachar (propaganda): It involves creating awareness at the mass level. The propaganda is meant for mass mobilization for taking action at the integrated level.

Sahavasa (association): Cooperation is sought from different people and organizations working in the same geographical field and or on the similar issues.

Seva (service): Welfare and developmental services are offered to the target population.

Pratihar (resistance): It involves coercive measures against the existing authority, which require change of power, structure and/or functioning.

Construction work or community service: Emphasis is on the constructive activities carried out at the community level. This enhances the credibility of the movement.

Building the climate of change: Social environment is made conducive to positive change.

However, if the emphasis is in rendering of service, then it becomes more akin to community organization than social action. Nonetheless, the concept of *lok shakti* in *sarvodaya* clearly indicates that the emphasis is on change. Common methods used in Gandhian social action are — parades, vigils, posters, teachings, mourning, protest meetings, etc. All these methods are peaceful demonstration of discontent and dissatisfaction.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1) Below are given certain key terms of various types of social action. Identify and write the name of that type of social action in the space given against it.

- Gandhian social action.
.....
- Social Action carried out by elites.
.....
- People initiate action and take help of the institution.
.....
- People's conscience awakened.
.....
- Promote conflict through logical disputation.
.....
- Elite take law in their hands.
.....
- Government initiated social action.
.....
- Non government institution initiate social action and mobilize masses.
.....
- Legislation kept in place.
.....

3.6 LET US SUM UP

Model of social action is a particular manner or modality used in the process of social action for achieving its objectives. Britto gives two models of social action as:

Elitist Social Action: The elite carry out social action exclusively by themselves or with marginal participation of the masses. It has three sub-types. Legislative social action model is a process in which elite groups conduct studies on the gravity of the problems, create public opinion and lobby to try to modify the social policy. In economic sanction model the elites, by gaining control over some economic, social, political or religious weapon try to obtain benefits for the clientele. Direct physical model is a process where elites take the law in their own hands and punish those responsible for the cause of injustice and thus try to bring about benefits to their clientele.

Popular Social Action: A large section of people with or without elite participation take confrontational/conflictive action against the injustice. It also has three sub types. Conscientization model is based on Paulo Friere's concept of creating awareness among masses through education. Dialectical mobilization model helps in promoting conflict to exploit the contradictions in a system, with the belief that a better system will emerge as a result. In direct mobilization model, specific issues are taken up by the social actionists and the masses are mobilized to resort to protests and strikes to achieve the objectives.

There are some other models of social action as given by Singh. In institutional (state) model social action initiated by the state or government. In institutional-social model social action is initiated by non-governmental institutions which are aided or unaided by government and later people's active support is sought. In social institutional model social action may be organized by the people for their benefit and they may seek support from formal institutions working in similar field. Populist/ movemental model is an action of the people, for the people and by the people. Gandhian model of social action has three sub types: Militant non-violent tradition, Gentle non-violent tradition and Citizenship model of constructive work. Lok shakti is the inherent theme behind Gandhian social action.

3.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

- 1) Britto, G.A.A., (1984): Social Action and Social Work Education in the Eighties, in *Social Work and Social Action* (ed) H.Y. Siddiqui, Harnam Publications.
- 2) Britto, G.A.A., (1984): Some Principles of Social Action, in *Social Work and Social Action* (ed) H.Y. Siddiqui, Harnam Publications.
- 3) Samuel, J. (2000): *Social Action: An Indian Panorama*, (ed.), Pune: Voluntary Action Network India.
- 4) Chowdhry, D. Paul, (1992): *Introduction to Social Work*, Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi.
- 5) Davis, Martin, (2000): *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Social Work*, (eds.) Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, pp.317-318.

- 6) Friedlander, W.A. (1977): *Introduction to Social Welfare*, Prentice Hill, New Delhi.
- 7) Moorthy, M.V., (1966): *Social Action*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay.
- 8) Nanavati, M.C., (1965): Social Action and The Professional Social Work” *social work forum*, vol.III, no.2, pp.26-29.
- 9) Pathak, S.H., (1971): *Social Welfare, Health and Family Planning*, New Delhi.
- 10) Siddiqui, H.Y., (1984): *Social Work and Social Action* (ed.), Harnam Publications.
- 11) Singh, Surender (1986): Social Action in *Horizons of Social Work* (ed). By Surender Singh & K.S. Soodan, op. cit. p. 161.
- 12) Foran, J. (2003): *The Future of Revolutions*. Landon: Zed Books.



UNIT 4 STRATEGIES AND SKILLS IN SOCIAL ACTION

**Archana Kaushik*

Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Strategies and Tactics in Social Action
- 4.3 Planning Strategies
- 4.4 Managerial/Mobilization Strategies
- 4.5 Skills in Social Action
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit focuses on the strategies and tactics applied during the process of social action. With ample field examples, it describes skills required by social actionists at various stages of social action. More specifically, the unit would cover:

- a) Meaning, importance and relevance of strategies, tactics and skills in social action.
- b) Specific strategies and skills required at different stages of planning, mass mobilization, management and evaluation.
- c) Strategies and skills in communication and networking.

After reading the unit, you would be able to comprehend various skills needed in social action and would gain insight into appropriate usage of strategies and tactics in the process.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The process of social action involves usage of a wide range of strategies, tactics and skills by the social activists/actionists to achieve the desired objectives. These strategies, tactics and skills differ while dealing with different stakeholders or target audience like affected community people, policy makers, bureaucrats and officials, change agents, general public, media and the like. For instance, in the first stage of analysis of the social situation, the social actionist relies on skills to find answers to key questions like — what are the problems and key concerns of the marginalized group; existing gaps in the policy layout and implementation of policy objectives; what changes are required at the policy and programmatic levels and how these changes would influence the reference public (marginalized group); types of changes required at legislation, proclamation, regulation, legal decision, institutional practice and other forums — specific instruments for analysis like problem tree, resource (material, human and financial) analysis, PRA/PLA techniques, SWOC (Strength Weakness

Opportunities and Challenges) analysis, etc., become quite handy at this stage.

Likewise for mobilization, carefully and consciously, specific strategies are adopted for coalition building, strengthening partnerships, reaching consensus/ agreement for resource distribution, building networks, communication for motivation, conflict resolution, dealing with internal dissents and other aspects. There is a clear connecting thread between one stage to the other and success of each stage subsequently helps in forming strategies and tactics at the other stage.

Keeping all partners together with persistence in making the cases are both essential, in carrying out social action. Effectively used communication strategies, at this stage, go a long way in defining the success of social action. Developing and maintaining media support with personal contacts, press release, press conferences and dealing with controversy, holding policy makers accountable for commitments, monitoring public opinion and publicizing positive changes along with time to time public acknowledgement of the roles of various coalition partners are some of the dynamic features of the stage of 'Action'. All these areas of operation require specific expertise and judicious use of strategies. The social actionist/activist must be skillful enough to get all these tasks accomplished effectively. Evaluating the intervention and ensuring sustainability of desired changes would call for different types of skills and strategies. In this unit you would be studying about these aspects of social action at length. A word of caution— merely reading about skills and strategies does not make a person acquire dexterity in these areas. Practice in the field is a must along with critical and analytical thinking abilities.

4.2 STRATEGIES AND TACTICS IN SOCIAL ACTION

Social action involves collaboration, motivation, negotiation, mediation, persuasion, confrontation and conflict resolution in its process and, in order to show its dissent against the authority, may adhere to sit-ins, hunger strike, protest march, boycott, slogan display, and other such strategies and tactics. Strategies and tactics form the core of social action practice. A look at the meaning of strategies and tactics, which, more often than not, are used interchangeably, may be beneficial to understand the concept better.

The dictionary meaning of strategy is plan/ policy/ approach/ stratagem. Likewise, tactic means method/ approach/ course/ ploy/ policy/ device/ scheme/ way/ trick/ maneuver. It may be noted that, though both terms appear quite similar, 'strategy' is a larger term equivalent to form or model of social action while 'tactic' would cater to specific, pinpointed action. Let us examine various strategies and tactics delineated by academicians and researchers being used in the process of social action.

Strategies and tactics provide dynamism to the process of social action. Therefore, forming a consensus on the strategies that are possible and available is quite difficult as newer strategies and tactics are being used with changing times in various stages of social action. Lees has described following main strategies:

- 1) **Collaboration:** In this, the underlying assumption is that to bring about change in power equation, resorting to conflictive strategies are not always

necessary. The authority may be responsive and bring out necessary changes to provide equitable resource sharing to the marginalized groups too. In this, social workers collaborate with the local authority and other authorities or agencies with the aim to bring about needed improvements in the existing social policy. This strategy is based on homogeneity of values and interests, through which substantive agreement on proposed interventions is obtainable. In collaborative strategy, the change in the social structure or institution is brought through peaceful means. Such means are education, persuasion, demonstration, and experimentation.

- 2) **Competition or bargaining, negotiation, advocacy:** The second set of strategies are based on the premise that one anticipates some resistance to change, and the activity of the change agent may have to be accompanied by tactics which are not exclusively persuasive but rather seek to affect change through pressure. In this strategy, contending parties utilize commonly accepted campaign tactics to persuade, to negotiate and to bargain, with the willingness to arrive at a working agreement.
- 3) **Disruption or conflict/confrontation:** Third set of techniques are based on the premise that in the struggle between those who are pro status quo and those who are pro change, resistance is an aspect of the change effort and therefore the dynamic of conflict is inherent in the social action effort. This strategy signifies a more militant approach and it may include strikes, boycotts, fasts, tax-refusal, 'sit-ins' etc. Lees also includes riots and guerilla warfare though these may be omitted by many other social workers as any use of violence will be unacceptable to values and ethics of professional social work.

Likewise, Lees has suggested nine tactics used by social actionists/activists in various stages of social action. These tactics generally overlap across various stages in the process of social action. They are:

1. Research
2. Education
3. Co-operation and
4. Organization
5. Arbitration
6. Negotiation
7. Mild coercion
8. Violation of legal norms
9. Joint action.

Both the overall strategies and tactics suggested by Lees seem to follow a sequence, which may mean that one should begin from a collaboration approach and may resort to a disruption strategy for the achievement of the desired objective if the earlier strategies do not produce the desired results. The use of strategy or the tactics would also depend on the goals selected and the socio-cultural milieu.

Richard Bryant has also postulated two sets of strategies: **Bargaining** and **Confrontation**. Bargaining includes lobbying, submitting petitions, information and publicity campaigns, etc. Similarly, confrontation contains strikes, demonstrations and sit-ins. To this, Singh adds another strategy — **Administrative approach**. He mentioned that “most often than not, any struggle or effort towards drastic or radical change is viewed by the establishment as a law and order problem and therefore, an administrative approach or strategy is adopted to deal with the situation”. It includes persuasion, bargaining, pressure, coercion, infiltration, concession, co-option, splitting, etc.

Further, Hornstein lists certain strategies for social intervention — individual change, techno-structural, data-based, organizational development and culture change, violence and coercion, and non-violent direct action, accommodation, exposures, living examples, public support, presentation of proposals, competition, lobbying, agitation and subversion. Hornstein has classified these strategies or tactics of social action as:

- 1) **Direct action tactics:** Picketing, marches, fraternization, haunting, leafleting and renouncing honours.
- 2) **Non-cooperation:** Strikes, boycott, tax-refusal.
- 3) **Intervention:** Sit in, reversal strike, obstruction.

Next, in the Gandhian tradition, **non-violent protest and persuasion, non-cooperation** and **non-violent intervention** have been included as the three broad categories of strategies or methods of social action. In fact these three characteristics of Gandhian social action shares striking similarity with the ethics, values and philosophy of professional social work. It may be noted that though social action requires confrontation, negotiation or persuasion, it does not approve of any violence, or hostility, cruelty and blood shedding. It means that even the discontent is shown in a peaceful manner.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) What strategies can you use to record your discontent peacefully against government's move on Special Economic Zone at Nandigram?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.3 PLANNING STRATEGIES

Planning is one of the most crucial aspects of the process of social action. It is developing a blue print of the action to be taken. It is often said that good planning is half the work accomplished. In social action, at the planning stage, enough information about the causes of the problem at hand is collected and analyzed. There are certain newer techniques and strategies being used in social action, as we observe in other fields wherever management of people and administration of programmes are involved.

The planning process starts with collection of basic background information about the problem. Identification of causal and precipitating factors, gravity and extent of the problem, socio-economic and cultural background of the marginalized community or section of people, their felt, unfelt needs and aspirations are looked into. Certain strategies becoming handy in this planning stage are as follows:

Situational analysis: This strategy gives a clear and comprehensive view of problematic environment and justifies social action. Depending upon the problem at hand, through research or other objective methods, information is collected about **political factors** (favourable/ unfavourable national and regional policies and programmes; political decision-makers and decision-making mechanisms; relevant local reform policies and strategies; and related legislations and regulations), **Institutional factors** (responsible administrative system and their efficacy related to handling the 'problem'), **economic and financial resources and factors** (economic policy and economic reform and their impact on common people in general and poor in particular; system of micro-credit and loan, etc.), **infrastructure and civic amenities** (any differential, implicit or explicit service delivery system in civic amenities and infrastructure), **social and cultural conditions** (social and ethnic groups, linguistic groups, gender roles, religious and caste system, social values and attitudes and their impact), **environment factors** (natural resources, geographical and climatic conditions and their impact on living conditions of habitants). This would give an overview of the situation that needs to be changed.

Problem Analysis: It is more specific and confined approach where not only the root cause of the problem is analyzed but also its multifarious effects. Analysis should be based on objectively identified facts and apparent reasoning of the problem. For instance, in a village of Thakurs and dalits, the latter not getting access to safe drinking water, may be due to political rivalry at the panchayat level and seemingly obvious reason of Thakurs oppressing dalits may not be the real case. It is always useful that this analysis should be participatory and not merely the academic exercise undertaken by the agency taking lead or an intellectual exercise by social work professionals. Participatory Rural Appraisals are quite popular as well as effective not only as important research tools but also helps in developing good rapport and mobilizing people as it involves affected people in the analysis of their own problems.

Resource Analysis: This includes appraising the availability/non-availability of human, material, financial, technical, social and political resources. It also involves identifying stakeholders who have resources which are deficit in the case of marginalized community and strategic planning of redistribution of the same needed for development of disadvantaged group for whom social action is initiated.

Stakeholder Analysis: This is a dominant strategy to sharpen the intervention focus and design appropriate strategies ahead for action. Stakeholder analysis provides the social actionist/activist with information about all the stakeholder groups like target groups, direct beneficiaries and final beneficiaries and whether they are favourable or unfavourable. The analysis starts with identifying the various players who are affected by the problem (mainly the marginalized group) or who affect the situation (the oppressor group like state, elite, etc.), might become useful partner (like electronic or print media) or might become conflict partners or threats to the intervention (say, administrators or elected representatives at various levels). Categorizing them according to levels of favourability or unfavourability (for instance, highly favourable, favourable, uncertain, unfavourable or highly unfavourable) would be the next step. Identifying the interest and expectations of various stakeholders and accessing their strengths and potential contributions would be the subsequent step.

SWOC (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Challenges) Analysis: This goes hand in hand with stakeholders' analysis. It gives an insight into the intervention designed for achieving goals. The main actors/leaders/facilitators analyze what are their strengths and weaknesses and well as that of their opponents', what are the opportunities available to them and what are their challenges or constraints. This is basically cost benefit analysis after which intervention strategies are designed.

After understanding the concept and principles of social action, let us take a look at the skills needed by social workers for social action. These skills are no different from the general skills the social worker possesses by imbibing the ethics and principles of professional social work. A social worker using social action, as a method of social work requires certain skills, main among them are dealt with below in brief.

Planning strategies are quite crucial as they lay foundation for success or failure of the intervention. Chances of successful social action are least, if problem is wrongly identified at the initial stage or real cause is not looked into or strengths and weaknesses of partners and opponents are not realized properly. Objectivity, observation, analytical skills, skills to use strategies like SWOC analysis, stakeholders analysis, skills to analyze and present qualitative and quantitative data, skills in research, skills to help people identify their problems and probable solutions, skills to communicate results of baseline study for problem analysis to the target audience are some of the vital skills needed in the planning stage. Planning helps in setting realistic objectives that in turn would help in monitoring and evaluating the intervention. Let us now pay attention to managerial strategies.

4.4 MANAGERIAL/MOBILIZATION STRATEGIES

Managerial/mobilization strategies would aim at influencing those people who have social, political and economic power so as to facilitate re-distribution of resources and power with the aim of improving the life of disadvantaged sections of society. It includes — lobbying, public mobilization, mediation, civil disobedience, strikes, dharnas, protests, signature campaigns and legislative efforts ways, to mention a few. Mobilization strategies are meant to facilitate marginalized group raise their voice regarding the oppression and exploitation against them.

Advocacy is considered the key strategy in social action, which in fact, is a combination of various strategies aimed at bringing about change in social systems and influence power and political relations between various social agencies. It is the process of raising the voice on behalf of the weaker sections of the population who lack political powers and economic resources, whose voice die out before reaching the top officials and who depend on the mercy of bureaucracy. Success of advocacy is dependent on the strategy, tactics, capability of leaders and workers, knowledge about the problem, related legislations, policies and appropriate use of media. Advocacy is a powerful tool for intervention. Advocacy may be initiated by anybody, and many successful advocacy campaigns have been initiated by common but knowledgeable and committed people.

Advocacy begins by providing opportunity to people to unite. In this, various groups and communities can be motivated to create public opinion through discussions. Through this process concerning issues, their solutions emerge, and people learn to develop an insight into the solution of problems that affect them. Many a times, advocacy is done simultaneously at various levels. Therefore knowledge about various systems is important. There can be formal as well as informal structure of a system. Only knowledge about the system is not enough, strategies and tactics to influence the system are also required. One should be able to anticipate how the opposition can counteract your agreement and then what should be your move.

Advocacy may be done at various levels — **personal** level (raising issues concerning daily life), **family** level (gender discrimination, age related issues like child abuse, elderly abuse; not letting a member live life in his/her own terms; unequal distribution of family resources, etc.), **community** level (issues related to community well-being, any section of community not getting equitable share and discriminated against on account of ethnicity, religious, caste bases), **area** (basic amenities and services like water, sanitation, health facilities, school, and other infrastructure not made available by the responsible administrative authorities), **state** (schemes, programmes, implementing policies, political representation, land rights, etc., are not in consonance with equality and social justice), **nation** (influencing policy intervention, human rights, basic rights, interventional conventions, ties and relations for the benefit of poor and disadvantaged) and **International** (issues related to world trade treaties, international loan, Arms deals, illegal trade, global warming, etc.)

Decisions taken at one level may influence people at other levels. Therefore, for long term and sustainable change, advocacy should be done simultaneously at various levels. For example, if a nation has taken a lot of international loan, it would be difficult to provide primary education to all. Therefore, if we are fighting for the right to education to all, we must also raise the issue of international debt.

Active participation of people in the process of social action would build trust and credibility that are important for mobilization of people. For mobilization, disadvantaged sections of society or reference targets are informed that people are given equal rights in democracy and it is the duty of the state to protect the rights of its citizens. As a responsible citizen, it is our duty that we too remain alert regarding our rights and related issues. It is known to us that in today's world, violation of rights are not uncommon especially among those who are socially, economically and politically backward. Merely helping people think about their problems in human rights perspective, facilitates mobilization process. Consistent communication with the affected group to keep their spirits high for fighting for their rights would be vital strategy for mobilization.

Mainly three types of advocacy have been identified — Legislative, Bureaucracy and Judiciary advocacy. **Legislative advocacy** aims to influence the legislative process and recommend new legislations, to amend legislations or raise voice against proposed and accepted ordinance or record dissent against implementation of legislations. Legislative processes are held in parliament or Vidhan Sabha. Policies are passed through legislatures, new legislations are made and amendments are made to older ones. For this legislative procedures

like question hour (first one hour of the (Parliament) House, lower or upper, is reserved for asking and answering questions, Zero hour (time period between question hour and parliament's next session), adjournment motion, violation of parliamentary privilege, call attention notice, Half-an-hour discussion, no confidence motion, petition, etc., may be used for advocacy purposes. These are some of the procedures, under certain code of conduct and rules and regulations that are maintained in parliament and Vidhan Sabha. Knowledge about these procedures and their functioning can become a powerful advocacy tool for pressure and advocacy groups.

Bureaucracy advocacy: At times, rigid bureaucratic structure, red-tapism causes much hurdle in the process of implementation of pro-poor policies and programmes, which calls for social action against the system. At present, Right to Information Act has become a strong tool to fight against negative aspects of bureaucratic system and ensure transparency and accountability. There have been many success stories after the advent of this RTI Act.

Judicial advocacy mainly aims to protect public interest, challenge state's anti-poor policies and programmes, enforcing constitutional and legal rights and bringing forward desired changes in the existing legislations. Public interest litigations are filed, participation as Amicus Curie and knocking doors of Supreme Court under Right to Constitutional Remedies are some of the measures advocacy groups can make use of.

This apart, **coalitions and networks** are formed which are groups that come together for a common cause and fulfillment of shared objectives. They are powerful tools for furtherance of advocacy objectives. Any advocacy can be successful only if it involves more and more people, that is why coalitions and networks are developed. The chances of success of an advocacy strategy become higher if it involves many different types of groups (religious, social, youth, women, etc.) as these groups have their own influence reach and public acceptance. A coalition becomes very strong if such groups come together whose association or coming together was considered unexpected. Various groups in coalition possess diverse and multi-dimensional qualities and capabilities, which is shared when these groups come together for a collective reason, making the coalition very strong. These coalitions may be permanent (initially they are temporary but later become permanent, they are structured, have rules, Board that work under specific well defined regulations, e.g., trade unions, etc.) or temporary (after fulfillment of objective, it is dissolved), formal (membership is specific and paid) or informal, geographic, multi-goal, single goal centred.

Media advocacy: It is the most popular strategy in the contemporary scenario. Usage of media for fulfillment of objectives of social action is called media advocacy. Radio, Television, newspapers, street plays, stories, the Internet, and such others, may be used for advocacy. Media advocacy is used not only to create pressure on policy makers and bureaucratic system but also for creating public opinion, mobilizing and involving common man for the cause.

It may be noted that perception of the situation by the leaders or decision-makers and their experience counts much more in the selection of the strategy. To exemplify, in the backward classes or peasant movements, strategies like withdrawal, self-organization, conversion, combining of caste with class, mobilization, division of labour, attacking the monopoly of elite groups by the

deprived, use of secular and religious themes, participation in or shunning of elections (democratic political processes), emulation, propaganda, mass-appeal, articulation, of deprivation, sensitization, protest, demonstration, etc. have been used.

Thus, we see that many strategies and tactics are used by the social workers in the process of social action. Here, it may again be reminded that though social action may use strategies such as confrontation and tactics like boycott, sit-ins, rallies, blockades, marches, tax-refusals and other forms of showing disobedience and discontent to the authorities having power and resources, stress is on equitable distribution of resources and power and social justice through a peaceful process.

Let us now talk about a different set of strategies that form the heart of social action. These strategies are 'omnipresent' in the process of social action and are grouped as **Communication strategies**. These communication strategies are used in seeking information, convincing, mobilizing, advocating, motivating, discussing, persuading and negotiating with various stakeholders. Success of social action depends on how well the issue is communicated with stakeholders.

Usage of appropriate strategies ensures mobilization of marginalized sections of the community. In fact, social worker makes use of different communication strategies throughout the process of social action right from rapport formation, in exploring various dimensions, causes, implications of problem at hand, informing marginalized community about problem and its alternative solutions, motivating them to raise their voice against injustice, resolve conflicts, encourage people's participation, negotiate, confront authority, engage in logical disputation and withdraw after the objectives of social action are achieved.

Communication is defined as a process of sending a message through a channel to receiver. The process of communication means sharing information, sending and spreading, receiving and giving message. A message can be verbal or non-verbal or a combination of two. Skills lie in the treatment of the message, which may be used to motivate and mobilize people or argue with the oppressive system. Social workers who have the nick of using appropriate words according to the situation often lead the social action to success. For sending the message across, many channels like posters and banners, street plays, even one-to-one or group meetings, radio, television, newspapers, emails and the internet, etc., can be used.

It is important to take into account the socio-economic background, differential linguistic characteristics, perception, cultural milieu, literacy and educational levels of the stakeholders before conceiving the message to get the desired results. Adequate selection of channel of communication depends on various parameters like capacity of medium to reach to the poor, capacity to seek cooperation, capacity to reach to the common people, cost effectiveness and so on. A good message is the one that is simple, focused on main point, can be easily remembered and can be repeated. Slogans, rhymes, parody of songs often catch attention of the people and explicitly and implicitly help in mobilization.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Briefly describe different types of advocacy.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.5 SKILLS IN SOCIAL ACTION

Look at specific skills needed by social actionist would be beneficial, especially at the planning stage. These can be broadly identified as follows:

Relational skills: Social workers (or social actionists or social activists) should have skills for building rapport with individuals and groups and skills for maintaining these relations. They should be able to develop and maintain professional relationship with the clients. The social workers should have the ability to identify the leadership qualities among the clientele and should be skillful to harness these qualities for social action. Along with this, working harmoniously with the established local leaders is needed. They should be able to deal with intra-group and inter-group conflicts effectively. Also ability to diagnose problematic behaviour among the clients and providing counseling is needed to develop and maintain integration within the community people. The social workers should identify tension-producing situations and diffuse them before they become serious. Developing and maintaining cordial relations with other agencies and NGOs working in the same geographical area and those working for similar causes is also required.

Critical thinking skills: The seed of Social Action lies in the critical thinking approach. When a social worker looks at the social situation from Rights based perspective and observes that poverty, discriminations based on gender, caste age, religion, region, colour, creed, are based on unequal power distribution signifying injustice and inequality, he/she sets the mission to create a just and egalitarian society. So, firstly, critical thinking skills are required by social work practitioners to locate issues and then enabling the disadvantaged or oppressed groups to glance their situation from this framework of critical thinking in the paradigm of Rights based Approach. From a critical perspective, assessment should also be translated into some kind of social action (Freire, 2006). Social workers need to develop their understanding of the human condition taking its socio-economic elements into account. This involves developing a broad understanding of power and oppression in society and contemplating transformation from this perspective. Within a critical approach social action is a way of making use of conscientization and reflection using the Freirean praxis.

Analytical and research skills: Social workers, engaged in social action, should have the ability to objectively study the socio-cultural and economic characteristics of the community. They should be able to find out the pressing problems and needs of the clientele. They should be able to analyze the social problems, contributing factors and its ramifications on the social, economic, political, ideological, cultural, ecological aspects of life. They should be able to conduct research and/or understand the likely impact of research studies in a functional sense. Added to this, the social workers should be able to facilitate the community people to speak out their own felt needs and prioritize them. They should never try to impose their own understanding of the social situation and problems to the community people.

Intervention skills: After need identification, the social workers should have the ability to help the clientele chalk out practical intervention strategies to deal with the problem. They should provide various options to the clientele and help them in analyzing pros and cons of each option for taking up proper steps. Social action requires 'confrontation' with authorities. The social workers must inform the community about the consequences of taking up hard steps like sit-ins, boycotts, strikes, etc. They should be able to maintain the desired level of feeling of discontent and emotional surcharge to bring about the necessary change, enthusiasm and courage among the community people for a fairly long time so as to minimize the scope of failure of mass mobilization before the set objectives are achieved. The social workers should be able to maintain patience and composed behaviour, as they have to deal with emotional tranquil of the clientele in a rational way.

Added to this, the social worker should have the ability to create the environment wherein individuals and groups can actively participate. The interventions should be developed keeping in mind the pressing need, resources (human and material) and socio-cultural milieu of the community. They should be able to improvise situations for targeted interventions.

Managerial skills: The social workers also need the knowledge and ability to handle organization, which may be the outcome of the institutionalization of people's participation. They should be able to coordinate and collaborate with various groups and local leaders so as to unite the clientele for the required intervention. They should be skillful to make policies and programmes, programme planning, coordinating, recording, budgeting and elementary accounting and maintenance of various records. They should be able to mobilize internal/external resources in terms of money, men, materials, equipment, etc. The social workers also require the skills of supervising human and material resources and their effective utilization for the welfare and development of the targeted community.

Communication skills: These skills are highly crucial for social action. The social worker should have the ability to develop effective public relations with local organizations and leaders. They should be able to effectively communicate verbally (including public speaking) and in writing as well. The social workers should be able to deliver or identify adequate people to deliver powerful speeches. They should be able to devise programme media for effectively communicating with the target audiences. The social worker should be able to evaluate and use folk and mass media suited to diverse groups. These skills are

used for developing slogans and motivational songs, speeches and IEC materials for mass mobilization. The social workers should have skills to educate, facilitate, negotiate and persuade for necessary actions at needed places.

Training skills: The social workers should be able to train local leaders and identified leaders for taking up the charge of mass mobilization and confrontation with the authorities. They should be able to train selected people at the local level aimed at imparting knowledge about the social issue taken up for action and the modalities of carrying out the intervention including the 'confrontation process'. These people should be trained for creating public opinion for or against the social issue taken up and identify and involve people in social action. They should also be trained to utilize social action strategies and tactics (confrontation, persuasion, negotiation, boycott, etc.) without the use of violence.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Enlist skills required by social workers at various stages of social action.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have studied various strategies and tactics that are used in the social action. In the background of various stages through the process of social action, strategies and tactics have been described. In the planning stage, strategies like stakeholder analysis, SWOC analysis, resource analysis and problem analysis have been described at length. For mobilization and management of social action process, various types of advocacy strategies like legislative advocacy, judicial advocacy, bureaucratic advocacy, network and coalition, media advocacy have been delineated. Importance of communication and communication strategies at various stages of social action have also been dealt with. In the end, skills needed for successful social action have been given in detail.

The key words given below also are a source of substantial information on this aspect.

Competition: In this strategy contending parties utilize commonly accepted campaign tactics to persuade, to negotiate and to bargain, with the willingness to arrive at a working agreement.

Disruption: This strategy signifies more militant approach and it may include strikes, boycotts, fasts, tax-refusal, sit-ins, etc.

Tactics used in social action are strikes, boycott, tax-refusal, persuasion, picketing, marches, fraternization, haunting, leafleting, sit in, reversal strike, obstruction, renouncing honours, etc.

4.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

- 1) Chowdhry, D. Paul, (1992): *Introduction to Social Work*, Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi.
- 2) Davis, Martin, (2000): *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Social Work*, (eds.) Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, pp.317-318.
- 3) Samuel, J. (2000): *Social Action: An Indian Panorama*, (ed.), Pune: Voluntary Action Network India.
- 4) Foran, J. (2003): *The Future of Revolutions*. Landon: Zed Books.
- 5) Lees, R., (1972): *Politics and Social Work*, Routledge and Keegan Paul, London.
- 6) Moorthy, M.V., (1966): *Social Action*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay.
- 7) Siddiqui, H.Y., (1984): *Social Work and Social Action* (ed.), Harnam Publications.
- 8) Singh, Surender (1986): Social Action in *Horizons of Social Work* (ed). By Surender Singh & K.S. Soodan, op. cit. p. 161.

UNIT 5 SOCIAL ACTION: A METHOD OF SOCIAL WORK

**Archana Kaushik*

Contents

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Social Action: A Method of Social Work
- 5.3 Values and Ethics of Social Action
- 5.4 Principles of Social Action
- 5.5 Relation with Other Methods of Social Work
- 5.6 Relation with Social Movement
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Further Readings and References

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit would help you gain better understanding of social action as a method of social work. It would cover values and ethics of social action and describe at length the application of principles of social action with relevant examples. Further, the unit would also help you to understand the relation of social action with other methods of social work like case work, group work, community organization, social welfare administration and social work research. After going through this unit you would be able to identify how the knowledge and skills of other methods of social work are required in social action. In sum, this unit would give you a comprehensive knowledge about the intricacies of social action as a method of social work profession.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Social Action as a method of social work profession has attracted much of debate and discussion. The reason for this may be attributed to the origin of social work concept and practice as charity and religious and moral obligation. Social workers are, more often than not, expected to take a softer approach and provide ameliorative and welfaristic measures to the down-trodden and marginalized. Paradoxically, emergence of social work in India can be traced back to struggle for equality and social justice (i.e., social action) while in the western world, case work and group work were more prominent. In the western countries, mental health movements gained momentum and case work and group work as methods of social work practice became more popular. In India, burning issues have been pathetic condition of peasants, sub-human treatment of people belonging to lower caste, marginalization of women, illiteracy, poverty, denial of access to developmental opportunities to certain sections of population etc. Merely providing relief work to downtrodden and marginalized sections of the society could not have ameliorated such conditions, and only structural adjustments and re-distribution of power and resources would have made an impact into the situation.

Social action has a great historical relevance. At the same time, in the present context too, its significance can in no way be undermined. India is still facing immense challenges in terms of poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, child labour, trafficking of women and children and the like. These problems demand advocacy and social action. Rampant corruption and red-tapism often pose hurdles in reaching the benefits at the grassroots.

After independence, the Constitution of India endowed the responsibility to uplift the downtrodden and marginalized to the 'welfare-state'. In the beginning, government initiated many programmes for the poor but these programmes did not make any change in the situation as 'no structural changes' were done. Planning was done by the top officials who 'assumed the problems of the poor', which, more often than not, did not prove right. Poor themselves were mere passive recipients of benefits.

With empowerment perspective, social action has become all the more relevant as a method of social work practice. In this unit, we would be learning about the ethical and value base of social action and the principles employed by social workers practicing social action. Let us first understand why social action is and should be considered a method of social work in the professional arena.

5.2 SOCIAL ACTION: A METHOD OF SOCIAL WORK

It may be noted that every profession has a tested body of knowledge, which includes principles, techniques, methods, procedures, tools and terminology and theories of its own. This is applicable for social work profession too. Though social work is interdisciplinary in nature borrowing a lot of concepts from psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other social sciences, there are certain core concepts, theories and principles that are exclusive to social work profession. In this, methods of working with people (case work, group work, community organization, social action, social welfare administration and social work research) and related values, ethics and principles are involved. These methods are the approaches and techniques of enabling the people to improve their life-conditions and enhance their social functioning.

Why is social action considered a method of professional social work? A method of professional social work is an approach based on the philosophy of social work, with value base, having an established process with easily recognizable stages, principles, theoretical framework, guidelines and well recognized skills, techniques and strategies. Siddiqui (1984) has maintained that social action, as a method of professional social work practice, is an organized effort to change or improve social and economic institutions through organization and mobilization of the community people. Unlike other social work methods, social action emphasizes on essential changes in established social institutions, which are long term. In a broader sense, social action covers movements of social, religious and political reform, social legislation, racial and social justice, human rights, freedom and civic liberty. When seen in the context of empowerment and human rights, social action is the most apt method that helps a large section of the population to benefit from its efforts. It is directed for long-term changes, finding and ameliorating the root cause of problems affecting the masses and hence tend to ensure sustainability.

Further, like any other method of social work, social action, too, follows a process with recognizable and systematic stages. Initially, critical analysis with scientific methods of research, minimizing the biases, are undertaken to find out the real cause(s) of the problem at hand along with enlisting contingent and precipitating factors. In this regard, new scientific strategies like problem analysis, stakeholder analysis, SWOC analysis and the like are taken up, details of which would be delineated in the next unit. This is followed by communicating the causes of problem at hand to the community people, which requires careful designing of message, channels of communication keeping in mind the socio-cultural background of the people (receivers) with the aim to ensure collective and collaborative action to solve the problem. Third stage is of organizing people for coordinated and directed intervention and designing appropriate strategies and techniques for action to achieve the goals and lastly, take the action. Social work professionals or actionists are well-equipped with knowledge and skills, process, strategies, theoretical base required in different stages.

Despite the fact that social action is likely to come in conflict with existing social institutions, systems and structure, it still has a strong adherence to values, ethics and philosophy of social work profession. Believing in the worth and dignity of every human being, it strongly idealizes with democracy and social justice. It does not blame people for the deficiencies or problems that they are encountering. It strongly believes that human beings have capabilities to solve the problems that affect them. Social action rejects the doctrine of laissez faire and survival of the fittest and maintains that the unfit person has the same fundamental rights as does the more fit or the rich or the powerful. People's participation in their own development is an important assumption in social action. Details of values, ethics and principles would be given in the next sections of this unit.

Social action has well-defined sets of goals and objectives. Prime aim of social action is redistribution of resources and power to provide social justice to all sections of the population. Its objective is the proper shaping and development of socio-cultural environment in which a richer and fuller life may be possible for all the citizens. Social action intends for real solutions of the mass problems. For instance, from social action perspective, poverty is taken as not merely lack of income but the denial of availability of opportunities for growth and development, of leading a meaningful quality life — a derivative of human right to life and liberty. In that context, casework, group work would become irrelevant to achieve the goal of giving decent standards of life to masses living below poverty line. Social action would call for participation of affected citizens (say, poor people) in the planning and execution of intervention for their own upliftment and bringing about necessary changes in the social institutions aimed at more equitable resource distribution and share in decision-making process.

The uniqueness of social action, as a method, lies in the fact that it is likely to employ certain strategies and tactics like competition, disruption, strikes, boycotts, fasts, tax-refusal, sit-ins, picketing, marches, fraternization, haunting, leafleting, reversal strike, obstruction, renouncing honours, etc. to attain its goals, which makes it different from other social work methods. Here, it may be stressed that violence and blood-shedding are not at all included in strategies

used to confront the authorities, rather peaceful protests and non-violent ways to record dissent form the key thread of social action.

Social action is a method of social work, which is, used for/with/by unprivileged sections of the society. It is an organized effort to change or improve social and economic institutions, as distinguished from other methods of social work, which do not characteristically cover essential changes in established institutions through confrontation with the authorities. It may be described as organized group effort to solve mass problems or to further socially desirable objectives by attempting to influence or change basic social and economic conditions or practices. It aims to bring about necessary changes in the social legislations and policy initiatives for mass betterment. Thus, social action, as a method of social work profession, is a powerful tool of bringing about positive changes in the social system for the betterment of large sections of deprived population.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) “Social action is most apt in solving mass problems like poverty, child labour and female infanticide” Comment.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5.3 VALUES AND ETHICS OF SOCIAL ACTION

Though social action comes in conflict with the existing social institutions, systems and even social structure, deals with power equation in the political arena, it strongly roots itself to the ideology, values and ethics of social work profession. It commits itself to the cause and has complete faith in democratic processes and dignity and worth of human beings.

The prime goal of social worker is to reduce suffering and enhance social functioning. As stated earlier, social action does not believe in social Darwinism or survival of the fittest. You may recall that overall goal of social work profession is to facilitate increase in social functioning by solving conflicting issues, enhancing the capacity of the clients to resolve their problems themselves and establish an egalitarian social system. Establishing an egalitarian system is also the goal of social action. In fact, social action as a method of social work is used where inequality in terms of resource distribution is seen in the social system that puts a section of population to marginalization. For instance, country is recording high economic growth but at the same time nearly a half of the population is living below poverty line or in poor economic condition. This means that resources and opportunities for development are in the hands of a few and there is hardly any representation from weaker sections of the population in the decision-making process. In this context, social action is aimed at

influencing and modifying policies and social legislations so that people from all sections of the society are represented in the decision-making process regarding distribution of resources. Enactment of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments that provided one-third reservation to women and proportionate reservation (as per the configuration in general population) to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is one such effort directed to provide equitable share in decision-making process.

Values of social work profession are described as equality, social justice, equity, liberty and dignity of human beings, social action also indeed rests on these values. It addresses inequality that leads to vulnerability, marginalization, destitution, oppression and exploitation. Ensuring human rights in every individual is the basic goal of social action as well as social work (Empowerment perspective). A look at Human Rights as per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) would be quite beneficial in understanding the value and ideological base of social work in general and social action in particular as these Rights form the backbone of social action and provide conceptual framework for intervention. These include:

- Right to freedom and inequality (no discrimination on the basis of caste, class, race, etc.)
- Right to Live (life, liberty, security)
- Right to Health
- Right to live without being subject to torture
- Right to Marry and Found a family
- Right to Education
- Right to Cultural Practices
- Right to Religion
- Equality and Protection of Law
- Right to Vote, Citizenship
- Right to Expression
- Right to Property
- Right to Work

You would see a link between Human Rights and values on which social action rests. This also derives the tasks of social worker who aims to protect and ensure human rights to all individuals — any violation of the above mentioned Human Rights calls for the intervention of social actionists. So, gender discrimination, stigmatization and oppression based on caste, class, exploitations with people belonging to specific regions, religion, etc., demand advocacy and social action.

Social action believes in the inherent worth, dignity and integrity of individuals. It has strong conviction in democratic functioning and equal opportunities for all. Social action is based on the assumption that it is the duty of the state to ensure distributive justice and fairly equitable social change. The state should be accountable and transparent for protection of human rights of common man. The social change, in real sense, is initiated from the grassroots and policies are just the medium of that social change. People and civil society should be

united to raise their concerns against violations of human rights. It is the duty of the state to ensure human rights of each and every citizen. General public is not the receptive beneficiary of state's doles and obligations.

Social justice and Human rights form the moral fiber of social action. It commits itself to protect the rights of marginalized sections of the society. Fully believing in democratic values and inherent dignity and rights of each and every individual, it envisages preparing downtrodden to raise voices for their own self. Social action has a vision of creating a just society where all the people get equal opportunity for optimum growth and development. Social Action believes in creating a social environment where common man's political, economic, social and cultural rights are realized. Social action believes in promotion of democracy and empowerment of civil society.

Let us now pay attention to ethics of social workers/social actionists. First, they should have complete trust and faith in basic human dignity (social action is initiated where a particular group/community is denied of rights and opportunity of dignified life and entire focus is on restoring/providing/ensuring/protecting dignity and rights to disadvantaged people). Second, social workers/activists have responsibility towards clients and community (this binds the social workers with a moral/ethical obligation to work for the cause of downtrodden; social workers, ethically, cannot close eyes from any form of exploitation, deprivation, marginalization of masses). Third, ethical consideration is social workers' responsibility towards employing agency (though social workers are expected to adhere to the aims and objectives of the employing agency, this, sometimes, may put them into dilemma if the agency opts to keep away from raising the voice against injustice done to downtrodden). Fourth and last, the responsibility towards profession of social work (the social worker is morally and ethically indebted to abide by the values and ideologies of social work profession).

From the above discussion, let us derive the goals and objectives of social work professionals engaged in social action. Objectives of social action can be described as —

- To introduce structural changes for equitable redistribution of resources available in society,
- To promote the realization of potentials of the target population,
- To eradicate social evils as against human dignity,
- Curb abuse and exploitation,
- Conserve physical, social mental and moral health, and
- Strengthen the existing social institutions conducive for promoting people's well being.

5.4 PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL ACTION

The efforts of desired social change and political action are important ingredients of social action. Social action deals with power equations and decision-making process that results in skewed or equitable resource distribution. Though social action has a wide canvas and may include entire gamut of activities from relief, charity and welfare to reform, the term has a clear socio-political connotation.

This feature of social action has been well articulated by Sharma (1991) as “Social action is a conscious collective action against exploitation and oppression at a local level. It is at once critical and constructive. It is critical in that it offers a critique of the structures of exploitation and oppression, their micro mechanisms and operative forms in a local situation. It is constructive in that it involves positive strategies of alternate development for the poor and the deprived. It is social in the sense that it is a joint action as also in that it is aimed at transforming the situations of the underprivileged...” (1991:2). After understanding the values and ethics of social action, let us pay attention to the principles that act as guidelines in the process of social action. These principles are given by Britto (1984) and are well grounded to Gandhian ideology of social action. Following principles of social action have been delineated:

The Principle of Credibility Building: Building credibility is most important factor for mobilizing people and initiating social action. It is a very crucial task of creating positive public image regarding the leadership, ability to stand firm for the cause, reliability of worker’s efforts and the organization. People should have trust and confidence in the participants of the movement as champions of justice, rectitude and truth. It helps in securing due recognition not only from the primary stakeholders or disadvantaged people (the reference public) for/ with whom social action is initiated but also from opponents and the peripheral participants of the movement.

Credibility can be built through one or many of the following ways:

- 1) **Gestures of goodwill towards the opponent:** For instance, when Gandhiji was in England, World War I broke out. He recruited students for service in a British Ambulance Corps on the Western Front. These gestures of goodwill towards the opponents built up the image of Gandhiji as a true humanitarian personality. His philosophy of non-violence facilitated the credibility-building process among his opponents, the British.
- 2) **Example setting:** Example setting is important to show to reference public as well as all the stakeholders that conviction and commitment, values and ethics for which you are raising voice are not utopian and can be practiced in real life. It ensures credibility of your message and action. Gandhiji’s entire life was the reflection of what he preached — non-violence, tolerance and insistence on truth. There was no difference in practice and praxis. This has set the example that a life of non-violence, truth can be lived successfully. Similarly, Dr. Rajendra Singh, the Magsaysay award winner of 2001, had set examples of water conservation in many villages of Rajasthan, by making check-dams, through mobilization of village resources (manpower, cash and kind) before starting water-conservation movement on a much larger scale.
- 3) **Selection of typical, urgently felt problems for struggles:** The leader/ social actionist gains credibility if s/he focuses on the felt-needs of the people. Scarcity of water has remained one of the pressing problems for the people of Rajasthan. When Dr. R. Singh initiated his intervention on this issue, his credibility was automatically established. You can very well imagine if Dr. Singh would have taken any other problem like women exploitation or illiteracy, then generating the felt need for these would have taken ample time slowing down the process of credibility building.

- 4) **Success:** Successful interventions help in setting up credibility of the leader as well as the philosophy he/she is preaching. Seeing the successful work of Dr. R. Singh in certain villages of Rajasthan, State government also came forward to extend its support. Local leaders from various other villages and NGO professionals also approached him for help.

Principle of Legitimization: Legitimization is the process of convincing the target group and the general public that the movement-objectives are morally and ethically right. If leaders present the cause they are fighting for as a moral imperative, it legitimizes the movement or social action initiative. Social actionists may give justification with theological, philosophical, legal-technical base to legitimize the goal of social action. The example of **theological and religious approach** to legitimization is reflected when Gandhiji, during freedom movement, appealed to serve *dharma* by revolting against injustice of British. **Moral approach** to legitimization would be when you, as social actionist, try to create a public opinion that a particular behaviour is morally right or wrong. For instance, people in the Campaign Against Child Labour, have through peaceful rallies, persuasive speeches, media usage, have made efforts in creating an environment in the country where employing children in any occupation is considered morally wrong. There was an appeal made to public for awakening their moral conscience, to make sure that all children below the age of 14 years go to school instead of earning a livelihood. Thirdly, **Legal-technical approach** to legitimization is seen when Ms Aruna Roy and later on Mr. Arvind Kejriwal initiated campaign for Right to Information that resulted in RTI Act of 2005. This was based on the argument that it is our fundamental right to get the information on matters, affecting us and transparency and accountability are pillars of efficient democratic functioning.

It may be noted that legitimization is a continuous process. Before launching the programme, the leaders justify their action. Subsequently, as the conflict exhilarates to higher stages and as the leader adds new dimension to their programme, further justification is added and fresh arguments are put forth. Such justification is not done by leaders alone, but followers also contribute to the legitimization process in the course of their participation.

Principle of Dramatization: Principle of Dramatization is directed for mass mobilization by which the leaders of a movement galvanize the population into action by emotional appeals to heroism, sensational news-management, novel procedures, pungent slogans and such other techniques. Almost every leader mobilizing the masses, uses this principle of dramatization. Gandhiji, Vinoba Bhave, Subhash Chandra Bose, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and other leaders resorted to this principle.

- 1) **Use of songs:** Catchy songs, which put forth the cause of a movement, create a dramatic effect. In a village of West Bengal, child-activists have made parody songs and rhymes giving messages on girl child education, on keeping houses and surroundings clean, anti-alcoholism and the like, which they would collectively sing. Also, during freedom struggle, at Bardoli, local talent was tapped to compose songs to stimulate the enthusiasm of the people. Several choirs were trained and they traveled from village to village in a bullock cart to sing satyagrahic hymns at numerous meetings.

- 2) **Slogans:** *do boond zindagi ki* (for pulse polio campaign) *ho HIV avastha ka gyan toh bani rahe muskan* (for HIV testing), *sab padhen sab badhen* (for Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan), etc., are some of the slogans used to give dramatic effect to various social movements. In the next unit, concept and strategies of social marketing would be described, that are newer strategies and approaches to draft appropriate messages and chose relevant channels of communication.
- 3) **Powerful speeches:** This is also a crucial way of motivating the masses and creating dramatic-effect. Gandhiji's appeal to sacrifice and martyrdom was thrilling and it had a special appeal for the youth to work for the cause.
- 4) **Role of women:** Making prominent women lead marchers was a technique, which gave a dramatic effect to the movement. At Rajkot, Kasturba Gandhi herself inaugurated the civil disobedience movement by courting arrest first.
- 5) **Boycott:** Boycott is a dramatic way of influencing public opinion both when the effort is successful and when it is crushed. It means excluding a particular group from enjoying the privilege of social interaction, status and social prestige. Picketing and '*hartals*' – voluntary closure of shops and other organizations, were used by Gandhiji to dramatize the issue.

Principle of Multiple Strategies: Also known as basket principle, this indicates the adoption of a multiple strategy, using combined approaches and also a combination of different types of programmes. So, conflictual and non-conflictual approaches can be simultaneously used. Based on the main thrust of programmes, they can be classified as political, economic or social. Zeltman and Duncan have identified four development strategies from their experience of community development, which are:

- 1) **Educational strategy:** As one of the basic requirements of social action, this strategy is used to educate/inform the prospective participants about various relevant dimensions of the issue(s) at hand at the individual, group and mass level. People or target groups are given information about the issue, awareness is created and people are motivated, persuaded to participate in the action/movement. During campaign for Right to Information, NGOs, civil society organizations, teachers, students at university level, media and others were educated about the required details who in turn created awareness in their respective areas through educational strategy. Education by demonstration is an important aspect of this principle. Demonstration has proved its impact on the knowledge retention of the target population.
- 2) **Persuasive strategy:** Persuasive strategy is the adoption of a set of actions/procedures to bring about change by reasoning, urging and inducing others to accept a viewpoint. Students of social work, in their field work at one of the resettlement colonies of Delhi used this strategy with the opinion leaders, officials at Municipal Corporation of Delhi at various levels, to ensure that the designated sweepers collect garbage regularly and cleanliness is maintained in the community. In fact in every rally, protest demonstrations focus is laid on winning new converts by oratory and gentle presentation of arguments.

- 3) **Facilitative strategy:** This refers to a set of procedures and activities to facilitate the participation of all sections of society in the mass movement. The programme Gandhians devised was often so simple and devoid of any risk that even illiterate children could do them and participate in the National Liberation Movement. In salt-satyagraha, Gandhiji did not go to the technicalities of salt making. He simply asked the followers to make consumable salt by boiling the sea-water. Its simplicity did facilitate greater participation.
- 4) **Power strategy:** It involves the use of coercion to obtain the objectives of social action. The forms of coercion may vary ranging from social exclusion or ostracism, denial of opportunity to smooth functioning to defaming, protests, moral pressure by hunger strike and sit-ins. Medha Patkar's hunger strike unto death during Narmada Bachao Andolan was one of the techniques of power strategy. Media's role in defaming top-shot personalities and police during Campaign: Justice for Jyoti (Jyoti Lal Murder Case) is another example of usage of this power strategy. In a village of West Bengal, Gauri, a nine years old girl, locked her father in the room despite repeated requests and persuasions he would not give up alcohol. After two days, when she opened the door, her friends, the child activists, sang songs on devastating effects of alcoholism. Her father knew that he should give in as social situation has changed along with power equation in his family.

Principle of Dual Approach: In social action, it is important for activist to develop counter-systems or revive some moribund system, meeting some of the felt needs of the reference group. Since, in social action, there is an attempt to destroy the established/maintained system, it is important that simultaneously constructive systems may be developed. Gandhian constructive work programme performed such a function, in a small measure, together with conflictual programmes of satyagrahis. This cooperative effort indicates that Gandhians adopted or attempted a dual approach in their mobilization. In villages of West Bengal, child activists, through their bal vahinis, balika vahinis, initiated social action against a number of social evils present in their community like alcoholism, denial of right to education of girl child, corruption, apathetic attitude of panchayat to carry out any developmental work in the village, to mention a few. Simultaneously, they built approach road for their village through shram daan where small and elder children collectively, in scorching sun built the road brick by brick, showing to their elders that dependence on others (including government) for their own development is not at all required.

Principle of Manifold Programmes: It denotes developing a variety of programmes with the ultimate objective of mass mobilization. These can be broadly categorized into three parts: Social, Economic and Political programme. Dr. Rajendra Singh has taken up the issue of water conservation as a composite of Manifold Programmes. His conservation helped the villagers, particularly women, who had to go miles to fetch water. It helped in better development of crops, better animal husbandry, implying the economic benefits. During the movement, there were direct and indirect conflict resolutions with the local leaders, panchayat bodies and state government.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Briefly explain why is it important to build credibility and legitimacy in social action?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) With example, describe how Human Rights form the conceptual base for social action?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5.5 RELATION WITH OTHER METHODS OF SOCIAL WORK

Social Action being one of the methods of social work practice shares striking similarities with other methods. Added to this, it does utilize other social work methods in the process of attaining its goal of community empowerment. In fact, we observe that social workers/activists, in the process of social action, make use of other methods of social work so much so that at times social action is considered the amalgamation of different methods of social work. This section is intended to increase your understanding of the relation of other methods of social work with that of social action. Let us first pay attention to social casework.

It may be reiterated that social casework is a method of social work to help individuals to cope more effectively with their social problems. There is a strong interdependence between the society and issues influencing individuals, so is the micro-macro relation between social matters. Ecological approach looks at problems or issues at hand as dysfunctional interaction between family or individual in the family and the social system like neighbourhood, workplace, legal system, education system in the society. Social activists may come across a social problem affecting a client during casework process and may realize that the most apt way of intervention would be social action. Psycho-social problem, say, acute anxiety or depression, identified during casework, may have links with communal riots in the community followed by insensitive

measures of rehabilitation adopted by the state. Similarly, casework with an unemployed rural man, where National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is functional, may drive caseworker to take up social action to resolve the problem. Also, the client may be having the same social problem, which the social worker is addressing, at the macro level through social action. In such a situation, caseworker needs to build confidence and faith among the client and prepare him/her to be a part of social action process.

Further, during initial process of credibility building in the community, the social worker may take up casework in dealing with those members of the clientele group or may use this method later on if some opinion leader/leader/core member is showing deviant behaviour adversely affecting the process of social action. Added to this, the skills a social worker uses for social investigation and diagnosis during casework process, learning human behaviour, psycho-social problems, using case-worker-client relationship for building confidence and courage in the client for solving his/her problems becomes quite handy in the process of social action when the social worker has to deal with not only one individual but many types of personalities simultaneously and keep them integrated for the targeted social goals.

Let us study relation between social action and social group work, which is a method through which the individuals develop the ability of establishing constructive relationships with each other through group activities. Group experiences are the essential needs of human beings. Social group work helps build in the process of social action. Group members learn organization, cooperation, coordination, interdependence and democratic values and working together for specific goals, through participation in activities of group process. Further, group work process provides a learning ground to take criticisms positively, respecting each other's views, emotional control and tolerance, empathy and sympathy, shedding away prejudices and biases thereby enhancing capacity of problem solving. It teaches members to keep their personal likes-dislikes, aspirations, perceptions, ego-hassles aside and work towards the goals planned by the group as a whole. Such a learning opportunity prepares the individuals for a social change and chances of failure of a movement due to internal conflicts are substantially minimized. Social group work also explores leadership qualities among its members. These leaders, in turn, take up the responsibility of mass mobilization and targeted activities in social action process. All this learning becomes handy in social action process when community is mobilized for a social cause.

Added to this, social group work also helps the social worker to refine his/her skills of dealing with different personalities to work for common goals, resolving intra-group conflicts and personality clashes. These skills and experiences become handy while dealing with conflicting situations between different groups during the process of social action. The group worker makes use of programme media in social group work. It contributes to programme planning and management in a better way while dealing with many groups during social action process. Experiences of social group work with one group help a lot in managing many groups when the whole community is mobilized for a common social cause.

In the same way, social action shares many similarities with community organization. In fact, many social workers consider social action a model of community organization itself. The debate has connecting threads in differential usage of term — community — to some it is merely a geographical one, to others, it may have functional connotation. Community organization is an integral part of social action. It is the precursor or pre-requirement to social action. In fact, many of the social work professionals consider social action as an extension of community organization. This implies that organizing community is backbone of social action. This makes many strategies and techniques in common especially those related to mass mobilization.

Thus, we observe that ‘organizing people or community or target population’ is the common thread between community organization and social action. In both the methods of social work, people are helped to realize their needs or problems and in finding out the solutions to their felt needs. People organize themselves, collaborate and cooperate and work together for a commonly accepted goal. An environment is created in which the community people feel confidence and gain faith that together they would be able to solve their pressing problems or meet their needs.

So, we see that social action is community organization with the aim of bringing about or preventing long lasting social problems where confrontation with the existing authority is involved. When merely mobilizing the community to work together by identifying required resources, the development is not sufficient for achieving the set goals, as resources or power to use resources are in the hands of a few people. Social action comes into play when people’s participation is the key term common in both the methods of social work.

A brief look at social welfare administration as a method of social work would now be essential. It is the process by which professional competence is applied for transforming social policy into social action. Ingredients of administration are planning, implementing, direction, monitoring, organization, coordination and evaluation. It is the process of service delivery meant for welfare and development of weaker and marginalized sections of population. If the agency is working for abolition of child labour system and rehabilitation of working children, then social worker has to opt for social action to achieve this organizational goal. Similarly, social problems like female foeticide, exploitation and abuse of women, alcoholism and drug addiction, poverty, require adequate change at the policy level along with complimentary social legislations and supportive programmes, which, at times, may require advocacy at various levels — micro, meso and macro, if we intend to have long term sustainable impact of our intervention, which is undoubtedly social action.

Skills learnt as an administrator also becomes handy in social action. Adequate conscious planning is almost half the battle won. Nowadays, newer techniques like stakeholders’ analysis, problem analysis, SWOC analysis, creative search of options and such others are used for social action too. Managerial skills are a must — the ability to place right person for the right job, conflict management, effective use of authority and power, training and dealing with burnouts — are a few skills of administrator/manager that go a long way in ensuring success of social action. Social action requires whole gamut of activities like identification and adequate representation of problem at hand, maintaining motivation,

delegating responsibilities and taking feedback, dealing with deviants and opponents, management of diverse personalities in the process of mass mobilization, framing adequate workable strategies at various stages that require communication with various stakeholders, handling human, financial and material resources and many more — managerial/administrative skills go a long way in realizing the goals of social action.

Next, social work research is the systematic study of social problems, and its objective is to produce knowledge that can be used in planning and carrying out social work programmes including social action. Social work research is a very powerful tool in social action. It helps in ‘knowing’ the social problem, its intensity and extensiveness, its causal factors, its impact on the target population and its repercussions on social life of the people. It also gives understanding of the factual ground realities (and not mere perceptions) of the social situations, which in turn helps in conceptualizing the pros and cons of various possible social interventions. So, a systematic study of a social problem, and looking for remedies through social work intervention, is a must for the attainment of goals through social action.

Social planning and social action would be ineffective without proper research. Social work research enables social workers to satisfactorily assess the needs of the community and make their interventions and programmes very effective, useful and worthwhile. The social worker shares the findings of social work research with the community people through groups and then with people’s participation, careful and meticulous interventions are chalked out for social action. It helps the social worker to observe and record the relationship of individuals and groups in actual operating situations. Through social work research, the social worker or social activist gets the right perspective or picture of the social problem, which is so very essential for the success of social action in attaining its goal.

Nowadays, social workers/activists are increasingly making use of integrated approach to social work, details of which are discussed in this unit of this block.

5.6 RELATION WITH SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Indian history has a rich heritage of inspiring social movements. It shares strong resemblance with social action, in terms of its goal as well as process. Marginalized communities have mobilized themselves to raise their voice against exploitation and violation of their rights, whenever the state has failed to safeguard their livelihood and rights. Blumer (1957) defines social movement as collective enterprises to establish a new order of life. This definition reflects that social action and social movement, both have similar goal — that of bringing change in the existing system/structure to ensure equality and social justice. Both the processes focus on equity or fair play, social justice and empowerment of the downtrodden/marginalized/exploited sections of the society. Mass mobilization forms the crux of both the processes under review. Women’s movement, tribal movement, dalit movement, students’ movement, and the like are some of the examples of social movement.

Prominent social movements can be traced back to Bhakti movement when Kabir, Nanak, in their preaching condemned a lot of the then existing social evils. Social reform movement made efforts to bring improvement in status of women and downtrodden communities, as they addressed sati abolition, widow remarriage, women's education, caste discrimination, untouchability, rigidity of practicing profession based on caste and many more. Gradually social reform movements, during that period, merged into freedom movement. After Independence too, many social activists have taken up various issues related to injustice and exploitation on specific sections of population and initiated movements. Chipko movement, in 1968, in Tehri Garhwal, the then Uttar Pradesh, was recorded as the first environmental movement in India. There were certain issues like rampant commercial exploitation of timber in that area and state policy seemed to be hostile and indifferent towards the needs of poor hilly habitants whose subsistence was dependent on forest products. Private contractors, individual businessmen, wood merchants and owners of forest based industries exploited forests for decades. This excess deforestation resulted in overflow of Alaknanda river in 1970, washing away of fields, crops, property and human settlements, massive devastation in hills. This led to protests against timber contractors where hill women saved large numbers of trees from felling by physically embracing them with a slogan, 'Chop me before you chop my tree', saving them from the axe of contractors.

Other notable movements have been fishermen's movement in Kerala, students' movement after Mandal Commission, Medha Patkar's initiative to stand by the villagers affected by building dam on Narmada river in Gujarat, when in the name of development villagers inhabiting near the banks of Narmada were evacuated without proper rehabilitation. She sat on fast unto death for the cause of people affected by Narmada.

Let us now look at some of the common factors, differentiating between social movement and social action. Though social movement appears to be quite similar to social action, it has many differentiating features. Wilkinson (1971) has stated that a social movement is a deliberate collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence, illegality, revolution or withdrawal into 'utopian' community. This gives the differentiating point between social action and social movement. Social action, strictly denies usage of any illegal, violent means in their strategies. Despite the fact that social action comes in conflict with the existing configuration and functioning of social system/institution/structure, it rejects violence and blood-shed and resorts to peaceful means of expressing protest and dissent. The professional social worker acts as a facilitator rather than leader and shows firm conviction in the values, ethics and principles of social work. Contrarily, social movement, more often than not, led by local leaders who may or may not route their movement to violent and unlawful activities to achieve the goal. Personal ego clashes in a disguised way in ideological fights which may hamper social movement as we see in the case of Chipko movement between two leaders, Sunderlal Bahuguna and Chandi Prasad Bhat. Social worker has expertise to mobilize the public and maintain sustainability, which leaders (often non-social work professionals) in social movement do not have.

The relationship of social action with other related terms may well be highlighted. Social reform is closely related to social action. According to Gore (1987)

Social reform is “a deliberate effort to bring about a change in social attitudes, culturally defined role expectations and actual patterns of behavior of people in a desired direction through processes of persuasion and public education”. In fact, social action can be taken as the means to achieve social reform. Both, social action and social reform try to fight against human rights violation using social justice and equality as principles and use common strategies and tactics to serve the underprivileged people. Another closely related concept is social development – unlike economic development, it is the integrated and holistic notion of development with social justice. It shares its goal of an egalitarian society with social action. Millennium Development Goals and now the Sustainable Development Goals emphasize that development has to be holistic and should address inequalities and human rights violations existing in the society, rather than making economic progress blindly at the cost of marginalized and excluded communities.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Enlist three similarities and three differences between social action and social movement.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we gained better understanding of social action as a method of social work. Its objective is to achieve social justice and empowerment of the community, particularly the marginalized sections of the society. It rests on values of social justice, equality and fair play and aims to protect the rights of disadvantaged sections of the society.

In this unit, principles of social action (the principle of credibility building, principle of legitimization, principle of dramatization, principle of multiple strategies, principle of dual approach and principle of manifold programmes) have been described at length with suitable examples indicating the relevance and specificities of principles.

Being one of the methods of social work, social action shares similarities with other methods of social work as well as makes use of these methods at various stages in the process of action. Social case work and group work can be taken as the base to social action where people are mobilized to confront authorities. Social action is considered to be a step forward to community organization. Social work research helps in objective and critical perception of the social problem. Social welfare administration prepares the ground to social workers

to launch the community for social action. Social workers utilize skills of other methods of social work in the process of social action.

Social action also shares striking similarities with social movement. The unit also describes the areas of differences between the two processes. The unit portrays a comprehensive picture of social action as a method of social work practice.

5.8 FURTHER READING AND REFERENCES

- 1) Chowdhry, D. Paul, (1992): *Introduction to Social Work*, Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi.
- 2) Davis, Martin, (2000): *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Social Work*, (eds.) Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, pp.317-318.
- 3) Lees, R., (1972): *Politics and Social Work*, Routledge and Keegan Paul, London.
- 4) Moorthy, M.V., (1966): *Social Action*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay.
- 5) Siddiqui, H.Y., (1984): *Social Work and Social Action* (ed.), Harnam Publications.
- 6) Singh, Surender (1986): Social Action in *Horizons of Social Work* (ed). By Surender Singh & K.S. Soodan, op. cit. p. 161.
- 7) Samuel, J. (2000): *Social Action: An Indian Panorama*, (ed.), Pune: Voluntary Action Network India.