Poverty, Social Assistance, and Social Investment

Development Perspectives for Social Work
Chapter 6, J., Midgley & A., Conley

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Learning Outcomes

Knowledge:
- Understand the role of social work in social assistance
- Understand the “welfare-to-work approach”

Skill:
- Apply theoretical frameworks to understand poverty and social issues related to poverty

Attitude:
- Become an advocate for social assistance in communities affected by poverty
Outline

- Introduction
- Key concepts
- Social assistance timeline
- Economic development
- Social Work’s contribution
- Case study
- Conclusion
What is poverty?

Understanding key concepts
- **Income poverty** “when a family’s income fails to meet a federally established threshold that differs across countries.”

- **Extreme poverty** “less than $1 a day earnings.”

- **Absolute poverty** “poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter.”

- **Relative poverty** “poverty in relation to the economic status of other members of the society: people are poor if they fall below prevailing standards of living in a given societal context.”

[UNESCO, 2017] Poverty
What is poverty?

Youtube video
Defining Social assistance

- Selective, targeted programs
- Cash transfers
- Minimum income programs
- U.S social assistance = welfare
- Governmental incoming maintenance programs
  - social security
  - income protection
  - social protection

[Midgley & Conley, p.106]
Social Assistance Timeline

- **19th century**
  - churches, mosques, temples
  - [emergence of SW]

- **20th century**
  - poor relief
  - [social assistance programs]

- **21st century**
  - counseling, psychotherapeutic interventions
  - [child welfare, hospital SW, family welfare, psychiatric SW]

- **2001**
  - present
Putting a face on Social Welfare

Youtube video
Requirements for Social Assistance

- Means test
  (assess the income and assets of applicants)
- Citizenship
- Residence
- Age
- Disability
- Gender

- Cash payments
- Food rations
- Clothing
- Travel vouchers
- Prosthetics
- Access to housing
- Medical services
Social Assistance and Social Work

- In-kind benefits: vouchers exchanged for goods and services
- General assistance
  - Example: individuals and families with financial needs
- Particular groups/categories assistance for needy people
  - Example: the elderly, children, people with disabilities
- Right for those who meet eligibility requirements
- Stigmatizing (irresponsible, lazy, indolent, dependent of government)
- Immigrants and rural people
Social Work’s historic role in Social Assistance

- **Before 19th century:** churches, temples, mosques provided poor relief
- Elizabeth poor law of 1601 (deserving poor, undeserving poor)
- **19th century:** urbanization and social assistance increased
- **Early 20th century:** income maintenance programs
- **1956:** Social security act amended by congress
- **1960s and 1970s:** racism and social service assistance
- Disengagement of social work from social assistance
Social Assistance and Social Investment

Three types of developmental social assistance programs:

1. **Conditional cash transfer programs**
   (pay benefits to poor families, school-going children, immunization, health checks)

2. **Employment activation**
   (promote active participation in labor force, education, job training, employment referral, placement)

3. **Social assistance to subsidize incomes of poor families**
   (categorical programs)
Human Capital Investment

- Investment in education < investment in health and nutrition
- “An efficient and productive labor force is not only well-educated but healthy and well-nourished”

Persistence of poverty:
- ineffective planning
- inadequate investment
- limited access to global markets
- corruption
- conflict
- dictatorship
Human Capital Investment

- **Safety nets**: social funds and food programs
- Replaced governmental social assistance programs
- **Latin American social assistances**: Progressa (MEX), Opportunidades, Bolsa Familia (BRA), Red de Proteccion Social (NIC)
According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census:

- **34%** of the population are foreign born
  - Multicultural
  - Multilingual

107,557 Residents

**UNICEF, 2013**
“documented immigrants, have social security and health insurance; primary and secondary education are free; 97 per cent of the population 15 years and older are literate; and there is a pension programme that guarantees a minimum income for older adults”

- UNICEF, Executive Report Aruba, 2013 (p.4)
Social Welfare: Aruban Context

2009 – 2013 Ministry of Economic Affairs Priority:

- Development of children and adolescents
- Development of women
- Welfare of the economically disadvantaged population
- Special needs
- The elderly
- Production and analysis of data in the social affairs field

**ACTION TAKEN:** Payment for single mothers

UNICEF, 2013
Subsidizing the Incomes of Poor Families

- Child support
- Financial aid
- Housing
- Disability Grant Program
- .....?
TOGETHER WE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Thank you for your attention.
Are there any questions, feedback, comments?
References

