



Introduction to **African Social Work**

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE



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Topics covered

History of African Social Services

Definitions

Process of Social Work

Domains of African Social Work

Methods

Key Principles

African Ethics for Social Work

Shortcomings of Western Social Work in Africa

Social Problems

Social Work Settings

Sources of Knowledge

Qualities of an African Social Worker

Qualifications

List of Jobs

Fields of Practice

Assessment/Assignment Questions

Reflection

These are text slides, readers should expect more words than usual per slide

HISTORY OF AFRICAN SOCIAL SERVICES

- African social work has a foundation in indigenous African social services and welfare.
- Each family and community has social services and social welfare methods that were developed across generations, and still in use today
- Family and extended family; village and community members; and spiritual institutions (monarchies, churches and mosques) provided needed services and social welfare.
- The environment was a natural source of many of life's needs, including income, resources etc
- These services were provided based on the philosophy that every human being deserve to live like a human being, and that every human being has a responsibility to serve others.
- These services ensured that everyone functioned socially, extreme poverty and riches were avoided, and cohesion was achieved.

PARTIAL DISRUPTION OF AFRICAN SOCIAL SERVICES

- Colonisation partially disrupted African social services
- First, the colonisers dispossessed Africans of the environments they used to fulfill their needs.
- They deposed or disempowered African leaders and their institutions, making them unable to provide social services
- Next, they created urban settlements where people lived without family.
- Then, they introduced colonial social services from their countries of origin, that only benefitted a minority
- However, most African social services survived this onslaught, especially in rural areas

EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL WORK

- In the midst of colonization, African philanthropists provided social services to the neglected majority
- Some western philanthropists joined African philanthropists in offering welfare programs
- As social problems increased, they realized the need for training to build capacity of social service workers
- Short training started for social welfare and social services workers
- Training became more organized and resulted in certificate, diploma and degree programs
- The result was training for Social Science degrees, followed by Social Work degrees, and now we also have Social Development degrees and Development degrees
- Today social work has spread to many countries of Africa

BEGINNING OF SOCIAL SERVICES TRAINING IN AFRICA

- **1924** Jan Hofmeyer College, South Africa
- **1936** Greek Community School in Alexandria, Egypt
- **1937** Egyptian Association for Social Studies, Egypt
- **1946** Higher Institute of Social Work, Cairo, Egypt
- **1946** School of Social Welfare Accra, Ghana
- **1949** School of Social Work, University of Khartoum, Sudan
- **1956** University of Ghana
- **1959** School of Social Work, Haile Selassie I University, Ethiopia
- **1961** Oppenheimer College of Social Sciences in Zambia
- **1964** School of Social Services (now School of Social Work), Zimbabwe
- **1985** Department of Social Work, University of Botswana

PHILOSOPHY OF PRESENT DAY AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK

- Present day African social work has its foundation in African indigenous social services, and it should continue to rest on this foundation
- Present day African social work was influenced by new problems brought by colonialism, and by colonialism itself, and it should discontinue colonial methods that are disempowering and devaluing
- Present day African social work responds to emerging local, continental and global needs and trends without devaluing itself
- Present day African social work promotes developmental approaches that seek to prevent social challenges and achieve social functioning for masses of poor people
- Present day social work promotes cohesion and total liberation at family, community, societal and global level to reduce inequality

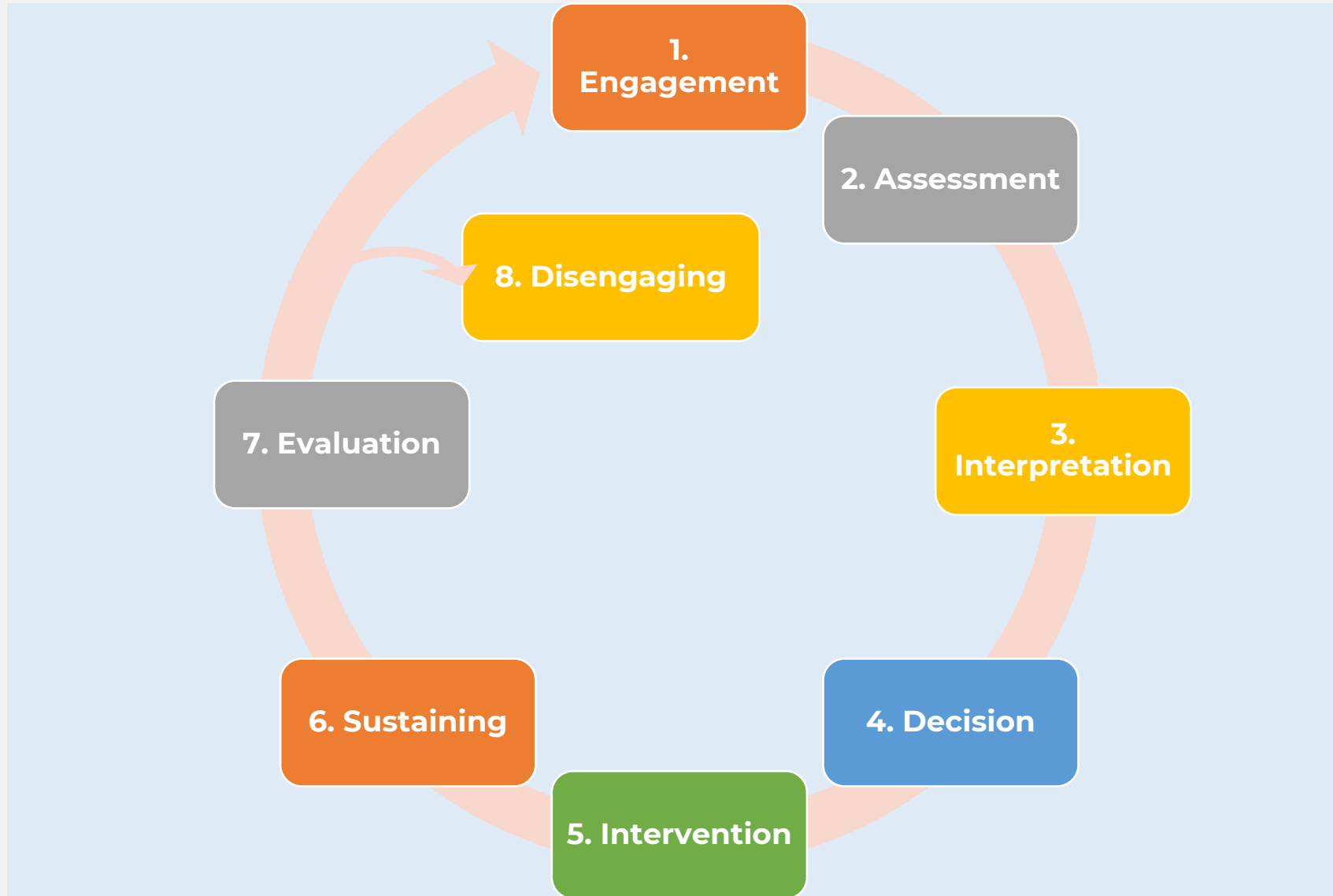
AFRICAN ETHICS FOR SOCIAL WORK

- Social workers are guided by ethics in their work, these are 'good ways of doing good things always'
- These ethics are:
 - Unhu/Ubuntu – being human always e.g. respecting, recognising African values, cohesion
 - Professionalism – doing best always e.g. innovation/creativity, competence
 - Justice - achieving good for everyone always e.g. liberating, decolonising
- These ethics contribute to the uniqueness of Social Work as a profession

PROCESS OF SOCIAL WORK

1. Engagement – this means starting a relationship or coming into contact with an individual, family or community that requires or could benefit from social work
2. Assessment – this means finding what their requirements, needs and capacities are. There are several assessment tools
3. Interpretation – understanding the presenting social problems or issues, gathering and studying past solutions, consulting
4. Decision – making decision to intervene, identifying options and methods and adopting a plan to use to intervene
5. Intervention – use relevant social work methods to implement the plan
6. Sustaining – ensure the intervention is safe, able to continue without social worker if need be, create sustainability plan
7. Evaluation – check to see that ‘everything is ok’, is sustainability plan working, did the intervention work. If social work intervention is continuing, evaluation should lead to re-assessment of new or unresolved needs, and the process starts all over. If the social work intervention is not continuing, then disengagement should follow.
8. Disengaging – avoid abrupt termination, end slowly and not deceptively, gear down slowly, activate sustainability plan

PROCESS OF SOCIAL WORK



DEFINITION OF AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK

ASWNet definition

Social work is an academic discipline and profession that embraces and enhances long-held methods of addressing life challenges in order to achieve social functioning, development, cohesion and liberation using diverse indigenous knowledges and values enshrined in the family, community, society, environment and in spirituality (ASWN, 2020).

GLOBAL DEFINITION OF SOCIAL WORK

Global definition in English

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels (IFSW and IASSW, 2014)

ZULU DEFINITION OF SOCIAL WORK

Global definition in isiZulu

INCAZELO YOMHLABA NGOMKHAKHA WEZENHLALAKAHLE

Ezenhlalakahle ziwumkhakha ombandakanya ukwenza umsebenzi ophathekayo, uqeqesho lwezemfundo olukhuthaza uguquko lwezenhlalo nokuthuthukiswa komphakathi, ubumbano lomphakathi, ukugqugquzela nokukhululeka kwabantu. Imigomo yobulungiswa, amalungelo esintu, ukubamba iqhaza, nokuhlonipha ukwehlukana kwezinhlanga kuseqhulwini emkhakheni wezenhlalakahle. Ngokusekelwa imibono ehlukahlukene yezenhlalakahle, ubuchwepheshe bezenhlalo, ubuntu, nolwazi loMdabu, ezenhlalakahle zixhumanisa abantu nezakhiwo ezilwisana nezingqinamba zempilo ziphinde zithuthukise nempilo jikelele.

Lencazelo engenhla ingaguquququlwa ngokwamazinga ezwe futhi/noma awezifunda.

Translated by students: Sibusiso Makhoba & Nompumelelo Ngubane (Students) & Mr M. S. Sithole (Lecturer)

GLOBAL DEFINITION COMMENT

Global definition comment

Part of the legacy of colonialism is that Western theories and knowledges have been exclusively valorised, and indigenous knowledges have been devalued, discounted, and hegemonised by Western theories and knowledge. The proposed definition attempts to halt and reverse that process by acknowledging that Indigenous peoples in each region, country or area carry their own values, ways of knowing, ways of transmitting their knowledges, and have made invaluable contributions to science. Social work seeks to redress historic Western scientific colonialism and hegemony by listening to and learning from Indigenous peoples around the world (IFSW, 2020).

THE FOUR DOMAINS AND TEN METHODS OF AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK

1. Understanding, Developing and Protecting Families and Individuals (Domain 1)

- i. Family Social Work (Social work with Families)
- ii. Social work with groups of people (Groupwork or Social Groupwork)
- iii. Social Work with Individuals (sometimes called Casework or Individual Social Work or Social Work with Individuals)

2. Understanding, Developing and Protecting Communities (Domain 2)

- v. Community Social Work (or Community Work in short or Social Work with Communities)

THE FOUR DOMAINS AND TEN METHODS OF AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK

3. Understanding, Developing and Protecting Society and Nations (Socially, Economically, Politically and Spiritually) (Domain 3)

v. Social Development*

vi. Economic Development**

*+**=Developmental Social Work or Socio-Economic Development

vii. Political Development (Political Social Work)

viii. Spiritual Development (Spiritual Social Work)

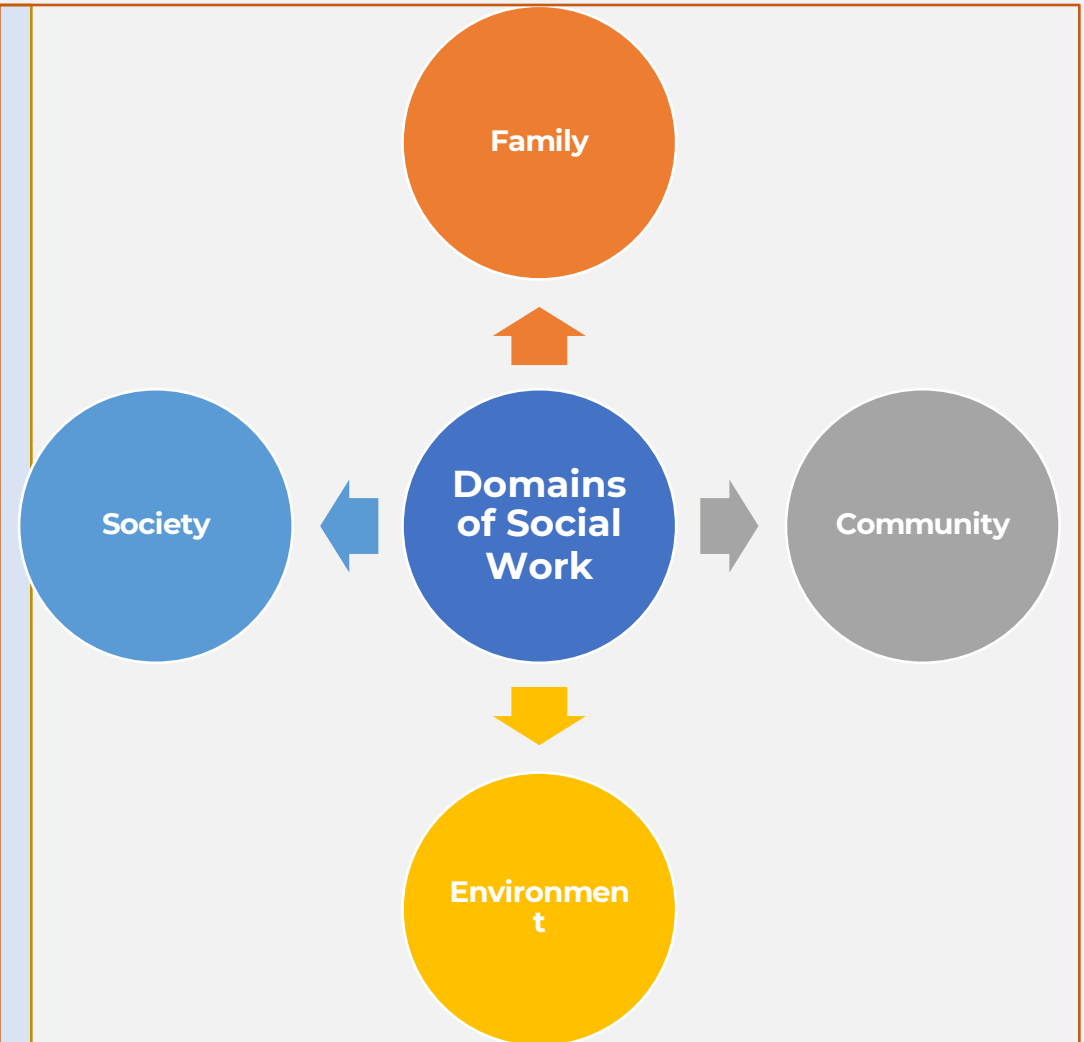
ix. International development (International Social Work)

4. Understanding, Utilising & Protecting the Environment (Domain 4)

x. Environmental Social Work

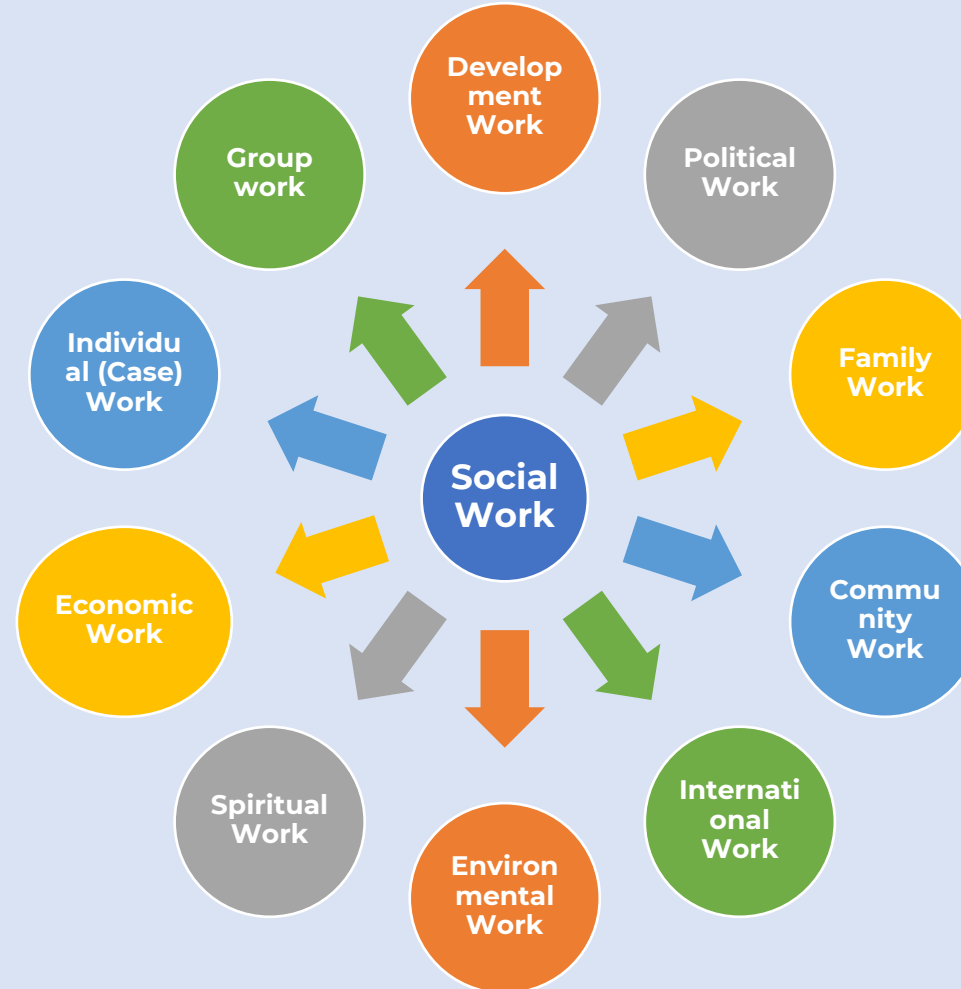
DOMAINS OF AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK

1. Understanding, Developing and Protecting Families and Individuals Communities
2. Understanding, Developing and Protecting Communities Spirituality
3. Understanding, Developing and Protecting Society and Nations (Socially, Economically, Politically and Spiritually)
4. Understanding, Utilising & Protecting the Environment (Domain 4)



METHODS OF SOCIAL WORK

1. Social Developmental Work
2. Economic Development Work
3. Community Social Work
4. Political Social Work
5. Family Social Work
6. Group Social Work
7. International Social Work
8. Environmental Social Work
9. Spiritual Social Work
10. Individual (Case) Social Work



EIGHT KEY PRINCIPLES OF AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK

- 1.A focus on families
- 2.A focus on communities
- 3.Developmental
- 4.Indigeneity
- 5.Spirituality
- 6.Focus on environment
- 7.Income Generation and Protection
- 8.Rural focus (where 75% of poor people live or come from)

SIX KEY SHORTCOMINGS OF COLONIAL OR WESTERN SOCIAL WORK IN AFRICA

1. Focus on the individual (casework)
2. Focus on welfare (curative)
3. Focus on urban populations
4. Focus on western knowledge (theories, research and case studies)
5. Focus on markets
6. Focus on deficits and dominance

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

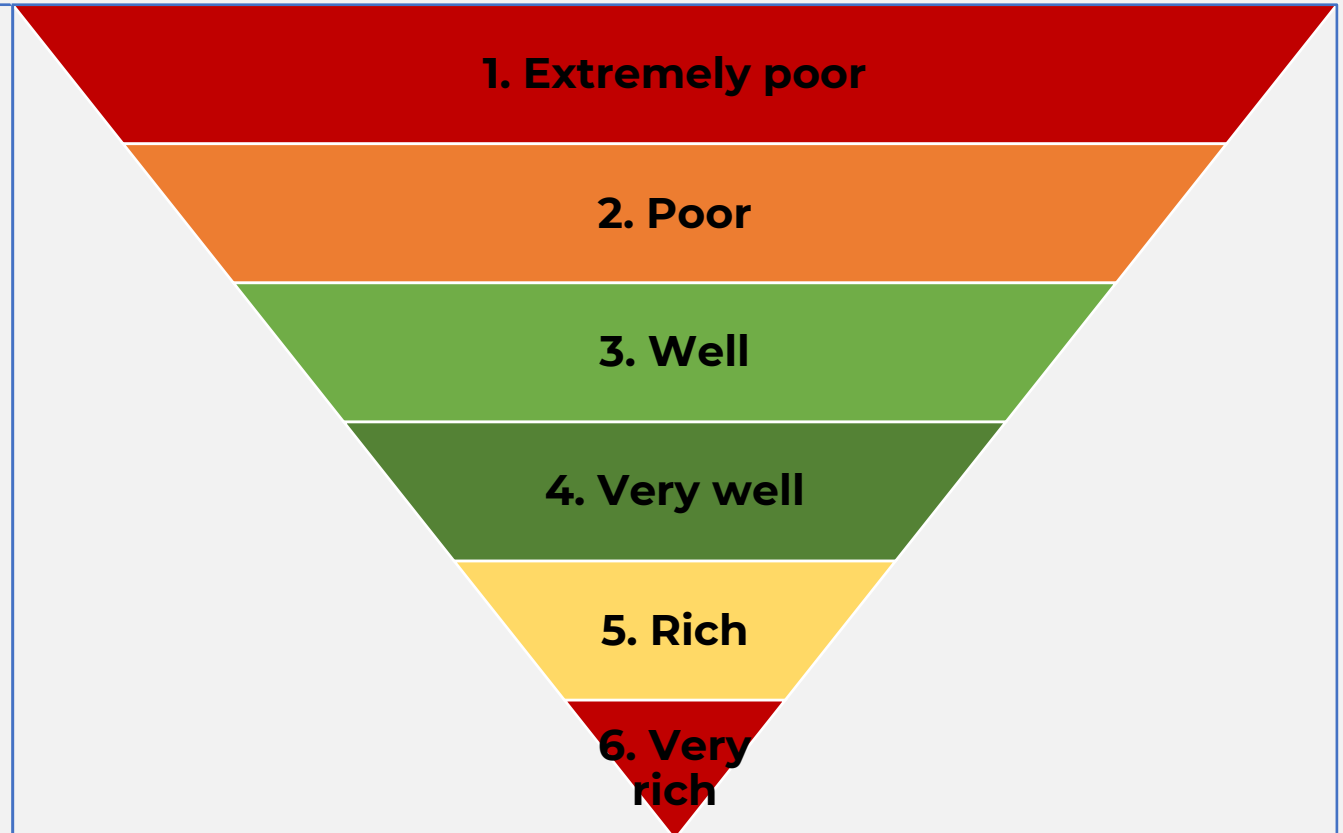
- To understand social work, we have to understand social problems first.
- Think of yourself, your family and community
- Have you noticed that:
 - Some people do not have enough food
 - Some do not have good houses or clothes
 - Some do not have a good education, health or protection
 - Some have enough or plenty of all these basic things that others are missing
- If you have noticed these differences, then you are ready to understand Social Work.

Classes of people in our society

- With the knowledge of communities that you now have, you are able to classify people into:
 1. People in extreme poverty who always struggle to survive (very poor people)
 2. People who are in poverty and struggling (poor people)
 3. People who are well, not in poverty, not struggling
 4. People who are very well, unlikely to struggle
 5. People who are rich, and will never struggle
 6. People who are very rich, and have far more than they need
- Which class are you are from 1-6 above?
- The best class to be in for everyone is Classes 3-4

What is the role of Social Work?

- Presently, in Africa, most people are poor or extremely poor (about 75%)
- The role of Social Work is to ensure that we are all **well** and **very well**, but how?

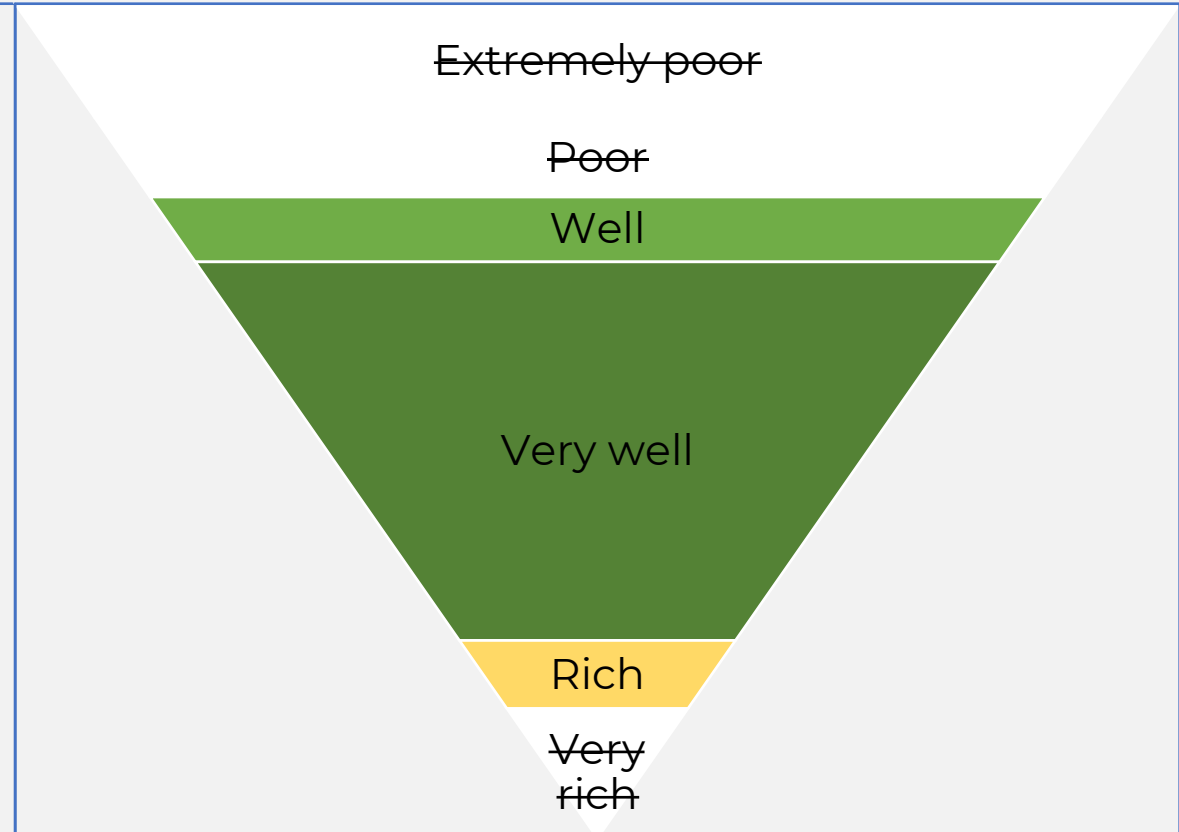


Why are people poor or extremely poor, rich or very rich?

- Social Work tries to answer these questions, but sadly there is no single answer?
- What do you think?
- Is it Colonization? Modernisation? Urbanization? Globalisation? Culture? Corruption? Climate? Environment? Spirituality?

Putting everyone above 'well'

- Social Work seeks to ensure that everyone is above well **very well** and that most people are **very well**
- It also seeks to ensure that the rich do not become too rich because usually when this happens others become too poor
- But, how is this achieved?



What do Social Workers do?

- Social Workers ensure that those things that result in people having social problems are addressed
- These include:
 - Individual needs: food, shelter, land, clothing, health education, justice and security
 - Family needs: belonging, blood family, extended family
 - Societal needs: political, gender, racism, apartheid, tribalism, economic,
 - Environmental needs
 - Spiritual needs
 - International/global needs: colonization, neo-colonialism, globalization

How to address social problems where you live?

- Where do you live: village, suburb, township, school, mission, mine, farm or town or two places?
- Identify the social problems where you live
- Identify what methods of social work are being used
- Identify the methods of social work you can use
- Identify specific activities being done to address the problems
- Identify people who are doing this work?
- Implement activities that can solve the problems
- However, you will probably need more knowledge, ethics, experience, collaboration, funding and skills to solve many of these problems

SOURCES OF SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE (KNOWLEDGE BASE)

- Teachings from family and community
- Personal experience
- Practice experience through field placements or work
- Professional knowledge gained through training
- Wisdom from Elders and Leaders
- Research reports or articles, empiricism
- Service users
- Policies, court orders, laws
- Theories – oral, written
- Books
- Artistic knowledge, creativity
- Internet – websites, blogs

You will learn more about African theories of social work in future lectures. You will also learn about decolonization and indigenization which both promote use of African knowledges.

What knowledge do you need before you study social work?

Knowledge	Example or explanation	✓/x
Languages	Know your own language. If you can speak other languages you will be a great social worker. You learn from your family, community, experience and school.	
Communication	Learn about the different ways people communicate. Be a good communicator. You learn from your family, community, experience and school.	
Culture	Start by understanding your own culture, family and community. You learn this from experience, family and community.	
Society	Understand society, how it is organized and how it works. How do we make things fair for everyone? Learn to identify social problems of yourself, family and others.	
Art	Learn to be creative. How do we solve society's challenges?	
Geography	Know things like housing, urbanization, health, poverty and development.	
Income	Understand how people survive. If people need support, where do they get it?	
Governance	Who are the leaders and institutions of government?	
Science	How do people get sick, how does our environment make us sick? A bit of mathematics is good for social work.	

What you will study for your Social Work degree

- Development
- Community work
- Families
- Sociology
- Psychology
- Decolonization
- Theories like Ubuntu
- Professionalism
- Government
- Ethics
- Practical social work (Fieldwork practice)
- Facilitating groups
- Government systems
- Policies and laws
- Management
- Research
- Protection
- Income
- Poverty
- Justice and equality
- Collaboration
- Counselling

8 QUALITIES OF AN AFRICAN SOCIAL WORKER

1. Be a family person, value families
2. Be a community person, value communities
3. Know your own culture
4. Like an equal and just world
5. Know other social workers and what they do
6. Know social problems
7. Think like an artist
8. Think like a scientist

SOCIAL WORK QUALIFICATIONS

Pre-graduate

- Certificate in Social Work (usually 1 year)
- Diploma (usually 2 years)
- Advanced/Higher Diploma (usually 3 years)

Under-graduate

- Bachelor's Degree General (usually 3-4 years)
- Bachelors Degree Honours by research (usually 4 years)
- Bachelors Degree Honours integrated (usually 4 years)

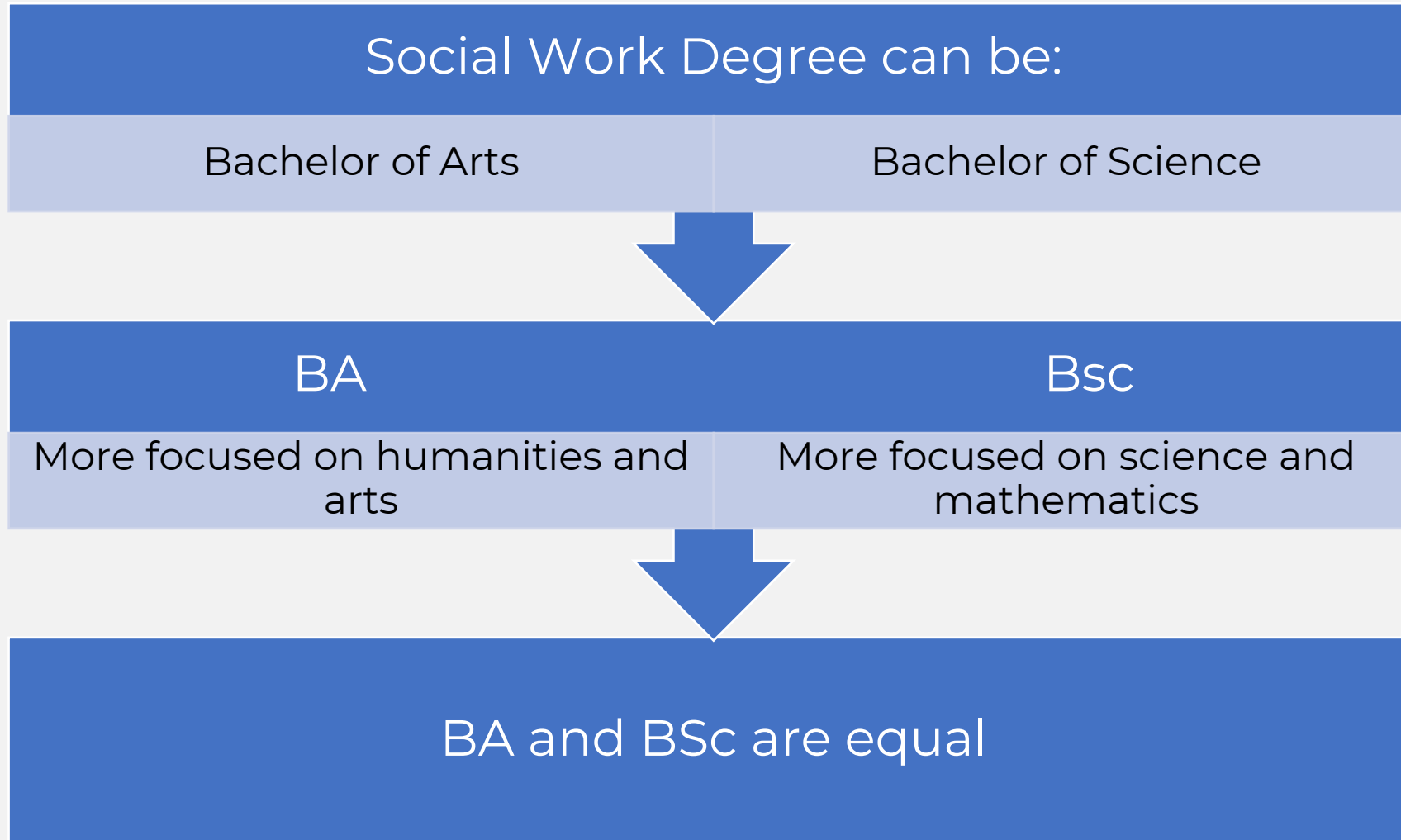
Post-graduate

- Graduate Diploma (1 year to 1 and half years)
- Masters Degree General (Advanced) (1 year to 2 years)
- Master's Degree – Specialty (Development; Education; Clinical; Mental Health; Social Welfare) (1-2 yrs)
- Master's Degree by Research (Master of Philosophy, Mphil) (1-2 years)
- Master's Degree (Qualifying, equivalent to Bachelor's degree) (1-2 years)

Post-graduate (higher)

- Doctor of Philosophy (Phd) – doctor degree by research (2-4 years)
- Doctorate – doctor degree by course work (2-3 years)

Science vs Arts



WHERE DO SOCIAL WORKERS WORK – WORK SETTINGS?

- Community
- Government social welfare
- Government development
- Hospital/Clinic
- Rehabilitation institution
- War zones and barracks !!
- Refugee camps
- NGOs
- Remote or Online
- Prisons
- Schools
- Councils or municipalities
- Industries

Where would you prefer to work?

FIELDS OF PRACTICE

- Development – ensuring basic needs for all, village, community and national development
- Income – formal or self-employment, small scale sector, large scale-employment, social welfare, consumer protection
- Food – nutrition, food relief, food production, land ownership, water
- Agriculture – land in rural and urban areas, land heritage
- Family work – identity, protection
- Politics – radical social work, advocacy, legal, human rights
- Specific groups: Youths, Women, Children, Disability, Prisoners, Refugees, Endangered, or Aged
- Housing – shelter, habitat in both rural and urban areas
- Spirituality – being, connectedness, belonging, identity, homeliness, ‘futureliness’, ‘pastliness’, wholeness, purposefulness
- Environment – protecting the environment, importance of permanent home
- Social Welfare and Social Security – supporting those in need
- Education – intellectual development, creativity, decolonize, research, training
- Health – prevention, longevity (long life expectancy), wellness, mental health
- Migration – settlement, refugees, protection, national identity
- Physical protection – safety, politics, security
- Global development - Regional and international cooperation
- Military – psychosocial support, mental health, family welfare

LIST OF JOBS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

- Development Worker
- Community Worker
- Group Worker
- Social Welfare Worker/Officer
- Medical Social Worker
- Clinical Social Worker
- Correctional Social Worker
- Military Social Worker
- Rehabilitation Social Worker
- Housing Officer
- Relief Officer
- Counsellor
- School Social Worker
- Disability Worker
- Child Protection Worker
- Psychiatric Social Worker
- Village Social Worker
- Political Social Worker
- Researcher
- Lecturer
- Consultant
- Human Rights Worker
- Social Advocate
- Manager
- Director
- Environmental Social Worker
- Spiritual Social Worker
- Consumer Protector

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Why is social work important for society or What are the practical roles of social work in society?
2. Write the history of social services in your country comparing with Egypt, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe.
3. Discuss any 4 principles of African social work?
4. Discuss the shortcomings of colonial social work?
5. Identify any 3 sources of knowledge for social work and show their advantages and disadvantages.
6. Write a memo, letter or briefing note to the leader of your community about how social work can contribute to the development of your community.
7. Create 8 slides to use for a career guidance session to promote social work at a local high school.
8. Identify social work settings near you. Visit one setting. Write a report about your visit and the contribution or potential contribution of social work to that setting?
9. Identify a real person whom you think requires social work services. Apply the social work process within the scope of your practice. You need consent from the person. We recommend a friend or family member.
10. Select one statement from the following and write your reflections (your thoughts after reading the statement).

Tesfaye, 1986

“Social Welfare services in Ethiopia began with traditional services provided by the extended family system and religious groups. Gradually organized welfare services by voluntary and public agencies started replacing traditional services since the 1920s. Now the government is trying to make use of newly created institutions such as farmers’ and urban dwellers’ associations to extend welfare services. ...the care of the indigent, the afflicted and the orphaned has always been the responsibility, first, of the extended family system and second, that of the community at large. Religion and social customs have always encouraged charity and almsgiving” (Tesfaye, 1986, p. 363).

Kebede, 2014

"Social work training, research and practice have to play dual roles. There has to be a focus on local realities in teaching, practice and research while at the same time adaptation to international standards. International experiences, research outcomes, theoretical perspectives and models of practice should be adapted to Ethiopian social, cultural, political and economic contexts. However, in a context where over 80% of the society is living in rural areas and in very poor conditions, and where there are long held values and traditions which may be specific to the Ethiopian societies, and where religions have strong influence to shape the attitude and perceptions of the society, indigenous social work perspectives and training models are of paramount importance", (Kebede, 2014, p.164).

Badran, 1971

“Professional social work in Egypt started only in 1936 when the first school of social work was established, but charity and social welfare services have been offered and known in Egypt since the Pharaohs ruled”, Badran (1971, p. 25).

“American programs and objectives were heavily imported, with minor adaptations. All through both stages, social work efforts were primarily concerned with reforming the individual, whereas the problem lay within the social institutions. The social work curriculum was a replica of the American schools with major emphasis on psychoanalytically-oriented casework. Graduates were not equipped for the real needs of society” (Badran, 1971, p. 32).

Community development should be emphasized, and other methods should be refashioned to meet the needs of the developing country (Badran, 1971, p. 33).

REFLECTION

- Before this lecture, what did you know already?
- After this lecture, what have you learned?
- What more do you still need to know?
- What you have learned in this lecture forms the very and inner core of social work, as you proceed you will learn more about the pillars of social work
 - You have been provided with the knowledge base or foundation knowledge to the social work profession
- You will learn more about each methods, each practice setting, each ethic, each source of knowledge and more in future lectures
- Enjoy your social work learning, we hope this will be a successful journey.

FURTHER READING

- Most of the content found in these slides is found on the website of ASWNet, www.africasocialwork.net unless otherwise indicated.

THE END

