

DAY-NRLM and Sensitive Support Structures: A Space for Professional Social Workers.

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ABSTRACT

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) was launched in the year 2011 by restructuring the earlier poverty alleviation program of Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY). This program has been pivotal in poverty eradication and livelihood generation. The program has a different approach by including the poor based on participatory identification rather than continuing with the BPL criteria. It envisages high end participation of people by creating sensitive support structures. The sensitive support structures refer to the dedicated, trained, experienced, empathetic resource full development practitioners working at grassroots level under DAY-NRLM. Looking at the experiences of the past programs, this sensitive Support Structure is considered crucial for implementation of the program. It can be found that various professional social workers who are working under DAY-NRLM act as Sensitive Support Structures. These Professional Social Workers act as Sensitive Support Structure with their manifold ability and training to work with poor. The Social Work Goals, Principles and Values are emerging out to be compatible with the DAY-NRLM goals and objectives with the presence of such Support Structures. Moreover, the ethical base of Professional Social Workers is helping to organise the poor on ethical lines and by respecting their worth and dignity. The understanding of poverty and vulnerability is helping the Professional Social Workers to mobilize more and more poor in it. Thus, these Professional Social Workers act as agents of Social Inclusion under the program. It is with this aim that this research paper tries to assess the dynamics related to Professional Social Workers acting as Sensitive Support Structures under DAY-NRLM. The present paper basis its discourse on field observations at State Mission Management Units (SMMUs), District Mission Management Units(DMMUs), Block Mission Management Units(BMMUs) and various community structures. The objective analysis of the paper is based on various Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with these units. The

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philosophy of the study shall reveal the essence of Social Work education and its implication during the practice level in the programs like DAY-NRLM.

Background of the Study

Over the time eradicating poverty as a concept has received worldwide attention. Various poverty alleviation programs and approaches have been introduced over the years, the livelihoods approach is one such approach which was introduced in the late nineties (Krantz, 2001). The livelihoods approach enables to provide people with livelihoods. It is considered as one of the most important strategy for eradicating poverty in India (Planning Commission, 2011). The DAY-NRLM is as such one program which adheres itself to the livelihoods approach. DAY-NRLM is a poverty alleviation program of the Government of India with the objective of eradicating poverty through the mobilisation of poor into institutions which are brought up and managed by them. The program is in mission mode and focuses on “to reduce poverty by enabling the poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities, resulting in appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong grassroots level institutions of the poor” (MoRD-GoI, n.d.,a). The program has a strong belief over the capabilities of the poor and focuses on creating the institutions of the poor which would help them to come out of poverty by empowering them to participate in the decisions that impact their lives. DAY-NRLM was officially launched on 3rd of June 2011 by restructuring the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) program under the MoRD. The need for restructuring the program as mentioned in the policy document was felt due to certain shortcomings that were present in the SGSY. These shortcomings were vast regional variations in mobilisation of rural poor, insufficient capacity building of beneficiaries, insufficient investment for building community institutions and weak linkages with banks leading to low credit mobilisation and repeating finances (MoRD,GoI, n.d.,b). Further, some states have not been able to fully utilize the funds received under SGSY due to lack of Dedicated Human Resources and inappropriate delivery system. (MoRD,GoI, n.d.,d). It was with this notion that a program like the DAY-NRLM came into existence and has been implemented across the country on a mission mode.

Drawing inferences from the experiences of implementation of SGSY, the DAY-NRLM has set a Dedicated Sensitive Support Structures at the grassroots level to usher its implementation in rural India. Thus, with the aim of creating and sustaining the institutions of the poor, the need of having a Sensitive Support Structure at all levels became imperative for the program (MoRD,GoI, n.d.,e).The program has initiated the inclusion of dedicated Human Resources to intensify the activities. It has set up Dedicated and Sensitive Support Structures at the National Mission

Management Unit (NMMU), State Mission Management Unit (SMMU), District Mission Management Unit (DMMU) and Sub-district level Block Mission Management Unit (BMMU). The various institutions of the poor, Community Cadre and other social capital at community level also provide the support in implementing and sustaining the program. These support structures are staffed with professionally competent and dedicated Human Resources through appropriate arrangements including partnerships and outsourcing of services (MoRD, GoI, n.d.,a).

Methodology:

The current study basis its discussion on the review of existing literature on DAY-NRLM like various national level policy papers, mission document, working papers and evaluation reports. A thorough review of Social Work practice Skills, Values, Ethics, Principle and Approaches has also been done. The nature of the study is qualitative and the discussion on relationship between Professional Social Work and Human Resource under DAY NRLM is drawn on the 12 interviews of SPM, DPM's, and BPM's who happen to be Professional Social Workers. Also 2 FGDs were conducted with them. The inclusion criteria for selecting the respondents was that s/he be a SPM/DPM/BPM who is also from the profession of Social Work and should have at least two years of working experience within the program. The discussion and conclusion was drawn on various themes that were related by respondents, these themes were organised and explained in order to conclude the relationship of Sensitive Support Structure with Professional Social Work Practice.

Discussion:

Sensitive Support Structures under DAY-NRLM:

The DAY-NRLM has put in place Support Structures at the National, State, District and Block levels. The support structures would be staffed by the professionally competent Dedicated Human Resource with the objective of catalyzing Social Mobilization, Building Institutions, Developing Capacities and Skills, Facilitating Financial Inclusion, access to Financial Services, Supporting Livelihoods, Convergence and Partnerships with various programs and stakeholders. The NRLM Support Structure is organized in the following order;



Fig.1 NRLM HR Architecture

National level Support Structures: The MoRD is liable to provide technical and professional support at the national level to the states for enabling the establishment of the mission societies, implementation of the architecture, guiding these societies and continuously monitoring their progress. NRLM Empowered Committee (EC) has been setup at the national level to review and approve the implementation and action plans and to release the funds to State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLMs). The joint secretary/additional secretary, rural livelihoods (RL), MoRD leads DAY-NRLM as Mission Director and as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of National Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (NRLPS). NRLPS comprise of a team of multidisciplinary team of professionals on contract basis and requisite staff to provide professional and technical support to the NRLM and SRLMs (MoRD, n.d-a).

- **State Level Support Structure:** SRLM's at the state level set up by the state government supervises the implementation of DAY-NRLM based activities within the state acting as an autonomous body under the state. SRLM would be integrated as a society, trust or a company. The SMMU unit is headed by a full time State Mission Director (SMD), comprising of experts in Social Inclusion, Financial Inclusion, Programme Management, Livelihoods, and Programme Support etc. These units shall support the SMD in the implementation of DAY-NRLM with in the state (MoRD, n.d-a).

- **District Level Support Structure:** At the district level, District Mission Management Unit (DMMU) is responsible for meeting the Programme Objectives and implementation of the programme. District Mission Manager (DMM) is in charge of all the DAY-NRLM activities at the district level. DMMU consists of the DMM and functional specialists in Social and Financial Inclusion, Capacity

Building, Livelihoods, Programme Management, Programme Support etc. and Support Staff as needed. These experts and staff are recruited from open market on contractor deputation (MoRD, n.d-a).

- **Support Structures at Sub-district level:** The Sub-district level Support Structure is either :
 - A Block Mission Management Unit (BMMU) led by a Block Mission Manager (BMM) and consisting of 3-5 spearhead teams; or
 - A Project Facilitation Team at cluster (sub-block) level (MoRD, n.d-a).

Need for Dedicated and Competent Human Resource (HR):

The failure of the past Poverty Alleviation Programs has been attributed to the lack of dedicated and competent staff within these programs at different levels. Analysing the programme of the SGSY it has been reported that “there was lack of dedicated Human Resource and appropriate delivery system”(MoRD,n.d-b). It is mandatory for the success any poverty alleviation program that it should have competent and need based HR, because it is the HR that acts as a link between the program and its target population. The HR of any organisation is considered the building block of that organisation and same is the case with any governmental program. In the HR Architecture of DAY-NRLM it becomes quite obvious that through different levels, the HR involved within it should be professional, expert, dedicated and sincere for its successful implementation. It refers that only professional and competent should be recruited, by competent and professional we mean only that HR which meets the program planning and implementation goals. The idea of having Support Structures within the HR Architecture is with the aim of: facilitating Financial Inclusion and Access to Financial Services catalyse Social Mobilisation, Building Institutions of the poor, Developing Capacities and Skills, Supporting Livelihoods and Initiating Convergence and Partnerships with various programs and stakeholders (MoRD,n.d-a). The need of having a Dedicated and Sensitive Support Structure within the program is also reflected from the guiding principles of the mission. Some of the Principles outlined refers that poor has a strong desire to come out of poverty and have innate capabilities to realise the same, Social Mobilization and building strong institutions of the poor are critical for unleashing the innate capabilities of the poor and the Dedicated Sensitive Support Structure would ultimately enable the upward mobility of the poor.(MoRD, n.d-c).

Professional Social Workers and Sensitive Support Structures:

Understanding the need and importance of the Support Structures for the overall success of the program it becomes imperative to find out how are Professional Social Workers competent enough for claiming that they are the best HR for the program.

This can be reflected by the policy of DAY-NRLM which creates a space for Professional Social Workers. One of the underlying assumptions created under the program is acceptance of poor in the form they are. The acceptance refers to the emphatic role of HR and Inclusion of poor in the program. The earlier experience of Rural Development programs have revealed that Staff Structure has been acting in typical bureaucratic manner, which has direct impact on efficiency of program. Thus, the new Support Structure was planned and was envisaged that this Support Structures must be available in three important areas of program implementation. These three important areas are Sensitive Support Structures for Creating Institutions of Poor, Technical Support Structure and Monitoring Support Structure.

1. Sensitive Support Structures for Creating Institutions of Poor: The Sensitive Support Structure refers to the inculcation of value philosophy among the HR, while working with the poor. The program visualizes various value parameters which are compatible to Social Work Profession. The Professional Social Workers act directly as Sensitive Support Structures within the Program. The inter-relationship of Sensitive Support Structures and Professional Social Workers in program is built upon the value philosophy of Social Work practice. The professional values, ethics, morals and principles of Social Work are permeating down in various processes of program implementation which are discussed as following;

1.1. Practicing Universal Social Mobilization of the Poor: The program is based on the universal mobilization of Poor based on Participatory Identification of Poor (PIP). The Professional Social Workers are acting as agents for PIP thereby, ensuring more and more participation of poor in the program. The PIP is a process generally used under PRA/PLA techniques, which ensures peoples participation. Besides it is infused within the value of individual morality under Social Work practice that poor people be included and given chance to come out of the poverty. Thus, it is the Professional Social Workers who base the Social Inclusion of poor under the program through these values and participatory approaches.

“The inclusion of poor is done by the HR through the process of participatory PIP. We have kept this process democratic for inclusion of the poorest of poor. There is a general belief within the former BPL criteria that some poor were left out. In the PIP process, we first identify poor and organize them into self-help groups, and then with the help of them we are able to mobilize more and more poor and this ensures social inclusion at community level. I personally feel the PIP process helps poor people helps to realize that those who mobilize them had also been poor and organized. The process of PIP is an example setting in the process of social mobilization” – DPM/SOCIAL WORKER.

1.2. Forming Institutions of the Poor: Within the mandate of the program there is an outlined mechanism for creation and promotion of the institutions. The institutional mechanism under program is generally created in following order: Self

Help Groups (SHGs)-Village Organizations (VOs)-Cluster Level Federations (CLFs)-Block Level Federation (BLFs). However, in some states there are variations in terms of the structure. It is value philosophy of the Professional Social Workers “to ensure that social institutions are humane and responsive to social needs”(CSWE,1994). Within this purview the role of the program is to create institutions which are responsive to human needs. The needs range from social, political, economic and personal. It is also very crucial that the people who are mobilized within these institutions should be having affiliations within neighbourhood. This affiliative character of forming the institutions is based on Social Group Work process. They need to be accepted within their limits and capabilities and their inclusion must be appreciated irrespective of their diversity. This aspect is based on the value of Social Work practice that is “to accept and appreciate diverse population” and also on the “principle of acceptance” (Biestek,1957).

1.3. Acting in Non-Bureaucratic Manner: The policy of programme clearly signifies that there should be non-bureaucratic approach among the HR at all levels. It is in this purview that the program HR is referred as Dedicated Sensitive Support Structure. The Professional Social Workers uphold the value philosophy of “respecting individual’s worth and dignity”(NASW, 1996) which helps them to be non-bureaucratic in nature while working with the poor.

There is a need of encouraging mutual participation among the poor while creating the institutions this is alone fulfilled by the Professional Social Workers by upholding core values like demonstrating acceptance, upholding confidentiality, expressing honestly and genuinely trying to be empathetic.

“Since I am a Professional Social Worker, I have realized the need of being non-bureaucratic. I often visit to the community, interact with SHG members. It is a very sensitive work, which requires not only the dedication but a clear adherence to ethics of Social Work Profession. I always find ethics of Social Work practice related to my work” BPM/Social Worker.

1.4. Helping Mobilizing Internal and External Resources: The program helps the poor to come out of the poverty by unleashing their potential. The unleashing of potential is done by assisting clients in securing resources needed to enhance their social functioning (Siddique, 1997.). This value philosophy of the program is contained within the core values of professional Social Work, whereby the professional Social Workers are helping the poor to identify their resources, mobilize these resources, and tap these resources and at the same time ensuring optimum utilization of these resources. The Professional Social Workers under the program are also assisting the poor through the linkage with the external resources such as various financial and non-financial resources earmarked under the program. The

external mobilization of resources is also initiated under the various conversion schemes of the department with its allied institutions. Helping the poor to identify the resources and linking the resources with them is also goal orientation of professional Social Work practice (Siddique, 1997.).

One of the key areas under the resource mobilization is the financial resources. The poor are linked with different financial resources like banks, community based institutions and cooperatives. It is based on the Self Sustenance Model where in Social Workers only link and capacitate the poor.

1.5. Capacity Building and Sustainability: The key component of the program is the “Capacity Building Architecture” which is designed in such a fashion that each institution under the program function with sustainability, therein adhering to the Social Work value of “Encouraging individual’s active participation in the helping relationship and upholding their right to make their own decisions” (NASW, 1996). Within such a philosophy, the poor under the program are mobilized and organized. Their organization is to be based on their self-reliance, so that they can decide upon their livelihoods keeping in view their skills and resources. The livelihoods opted based on their own decisions and resources become more pragmatic in nature, thereby helping them react to their vulnerabilities positively. The professional Social Work ensures the active participation of poor in various Capacity Building programs.

1.6. Ensuring Communitization: The Communitization in program refers to the gradual transfer of program hand holding from staff to community. It is the basic philosophy of Social Work “to assist individuals in order to attain individual independence” (Friedlander, 1955). This philosophy has enabled the program to keep Communitization process parallel with other activities. Although, there is architecture under the program for Communitization, but it is actually the HR who initiate the process. The process envisages creating a cadre at community level, which works with the community under the program. Initially, the cadre is capacitated through trainings and immersions and is directly paid under the program. However, for the Independence and Sustainability of the program, the community cadre is to be maintained by Community Institutions themselves.

2. Technical Support and Professional Social Workers: The Program has envisaged the use of Technical Support Structures. The technical Support Structure must be sensitive enough towards the community affairs so that, it may also be called as Dedicated, Sensitive Support Structure. This Support Structure also requires various immersions and trainings at field level. The purpose of immersion is to understand the community institutions, community’s viable relationships, technical aspects and orientation of existing community cadre with poor people in community. The technical Support Structure falls under two broader areas, one is the financial management, and another is the livelihoods generation.

2.1 Financial Management and Professional Social Workers:

In order to form the institutions and to organize poor within these institutions, the Financial Management system is considered as a blood of these institutions, it starts from developing the habit of savings, lending among the poor and minimizing their undue expenditure. It is within the ambit of Professional Social Workers that they develop these habits among the poor within their own spaces. It is the HR who visits to these institutions and ensure that people have understood the essence of savings and internal lending. The poor within these institutions are also helped to develop financial literacy required to run their institutions. It has been mostly the task of HR to develop the modules of financial literacy like managing savings, managing books of accounts, linking institutions with banks and developing financial literacy regarding how to transact with banks. If the HR is Professional Social Worker then it becomes easier to facilitate. There is also an active role of Professional Social Workers in the process of micro credit planning which enables the poor to properly utilize the funds by minimizing undue or unwarranted expenses. Thus, in the technical support, Professional Social Workers use “Principle of Optimum Utilization of Indigenous Resources” (Siddiqui, 1997.).

2.2 Income Generation Activities and Professional Social Workers:

The aim of creating institutions under program is to generate sustainable livelihood options for the poor. It is the professional Social Workers who have been sensitive enough in realizing the role of micro credit planning for income generation activities. They not only conduct the micro credit planning with the poor but also facilitate the poor in picking up new livelihoods or incrementing the existing livelihoods. Facilitation is being made to these poor by linking them with the needed resources like with banks.

Linking the people with needed resources has been one of the pivotal goals of Professional Social Workers as identified(NASW, 1981). The necessary resources (internal/external) required by poor are not only identified but poor are also linked with them.

“We ensure that SHG’s are picking up livelihoods keeping their capacities and resources in view. Many a times we ensure that people should opt for only those livelihoods in which they have some sort of expertise/ experience. In terms of financial resources, we link these SHG’s with banks and ensure that they are provided sufficient credit to sustain their livelihoods”- BPM MANAGER/ SOCIAL WORKER

3. Monitoring Support Structure and Professional Social Workers:

The institutions set up under the program not only require handholding support but also the continuous monitoring. The mechanism of monitoring is under two- tier, one

where a community cadre is created and made responsible for the effective monitoring of various institutions created under the program like SHGs, VOs, CLFs and training centres. The other is the staff recruited under programme. The Professional Social Workers who act as instruments of monitoring at the field frequently use various principles of Social Work like acceptance, objectivity, access to resources under Monitoring Support Structure. The monitoring visits to various institutions require that Professional Social Workers must uphold ethical philosophy while interacting or observing the people within their institutions. The ethical codes are derived from the profession's value base of Social Work practice. *The Professional Social Workers should be accountable for all the foreseeable results of the actions. However, it is also reiterated that ethical Social Work practice is not measured by practice outcomes; instead it transcends the requisites of competence*(Levy, 1973).

The competence of monitoring support is thus underlying within two spheres, one being the already trained professional Social Worker and another being the grassroots level immersion at community level. In the immersion the HR is made to realize the progression of coming out of poverty by poor. The immersion uses mainly the successful case studies.

*"The schedule of meeting of all SHGs, VOs is present and displayed at the BMMU. I often visit these institutions and first observe what they do in these meetings and then at the end I tried to facilitate them for better performance. The objective of visiting the meetings is not the surveillance but hand holding and training"*BPM/DPM, Social Worker

*"All the BPMs ensure that once the SHG members are graduating to upper level, they must opt for livelihoods. We try to ensure that all those members who opt for livelihoods should first take up existing livelihoods because we believe that people have more experience within these livelihood options and thus can excel in them"*BPM/DPM, Social Worker

Conclusion:

In the area of rural development various policies and programs have been implemented by Government of India, these policies and programs are by and large focusing on poverty eradication. Most of these policies and programs have not provided the desired results due to one or the other reason. Of late MoRD realized that one of the main reasons for inefficiency of these governmental initiatives is the presence of inadequate human resource within these policies and programs. To address this issue the program of DAY-NRLM inculcated within its framework to have a desired human resource for the overall effective implementation of the program. Thus, within the ambit of its objectives a Sensitive Support Structure was

given priority. It has been very challenging for the MoRD to get the desired Human Resource which will act as Sensitive Support Structure. This gap was thus filled by the inclusion of Professional Social Workers acting as human resource at all levels (NMMUs, SMMUs, DMMUS, BMMUS and Community Level). The Professional Social Workers who act as primary support structures require very less training and immersions from the department. They act as facilitators in creating the institutions of the poor, initiating the process of Social Mobilization, Social Inclusion of most vulnerable communities, and Financial Inclusion of the poor under the program. While abiding by the various policy guidelines it has emerged out that Professional Social Workers exhibit their value philosophy and ethical base of Social Work practice in implementation of program. Value philosophy and ethical base also help them to retain principle orientation of Social Work practice. The realization of treating the poor as potential population who have a capability to come out of the poverty is the purpose of the program and goal of the Social Work. It is assumed that these vulnerable populations have innate capacities within themselves which needs to be unleashed. The unleashing of the innate capacity under the program is directly correlated with the goal orientation of the Social Work practice, since Social Work being an empowering profession. Thus, it can be said that Professional Social Workers are better equipped with dedication that needs to be reflected at the grass root level in the program. It is the Professional Social Workers who not only act as Dedicated Sensitive Support Structures under DAY-NRLM but have been by and large able to take-up Technical Support Structure and Monitoring Support Structure as well. The value philosophy of the program and that of Social Work practice are also conjoined, which has enabled the Professional Social Workers working under the program to uphold the value philosophy like respecting worth and dignity of the vulnerable and poor. It is the competence of the Professional Social Workers that is yielding more results out of program. Thus in the direction of poverty eradication, self-employment and livelihoods promotion the Professional Social Workers have approach of cultivating participation, sustainability and efficiency for the program.

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