

International Korner

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Administration

The importance of social work in an administration position is key, especially when working in the realm of international social welfare. It is first important to understand the objectives of the administrative role. The administrative management objectives include data, fiscal, resource and image management:

- ◆ **Data management** involves tracking the number of clients served and/or services used to be used in reporting and funding searches.
- ◆ **Fiscal management** includes grant writing and finance organization.
- ◆ **Resource management** focuses on putting the money earned through grants and other sources to work by employing staff and providing needed materials and equipment.
- ◆ **Image management** aims to promote a positive image of an agency or program so as to continue future funding and service delivery.

Each of these categories are linked together to create an effective service agency or program. Other functions of the administrative role include participating and coordinating in professional exchanges, creating models for social service delivery, policy development and research/assessment to determine the needs of a population and what a successful service program or policy might include. In the international arena, administration becomes a key player in the development and up-keep of international NGO's (non-governmental organizations), governmental agencies focused on international development and other international organizations such as the United Nations.

Real World Application...

The role of NGO's, government agencies and international development organizations is paramount in the promotion of social work as an international profession. In order for these organizations to be effective and sustainable there must be a system of service in place. The administrative role in international social work does its best to develop and support the presence of international organizations throughout the world. The following are illustrations of this role:

NGO (Non-governmental Organization)

Most NGO's focus their efforts on relief and development work in developing countries and poverty-stricken areas of industrialized countries. One of the models used by NGO's is referred to as *sustainable systems development*. This approach incorporates "...more interventions, target policy and institutional changes at the regional or national level to create an environment in which sustainable people-centered development is feasible"(p.143). This is a switch from a predominantly relief focused

system that is based on providing vulnerable populations with basic necessities (food, water, shelter, health care).

Social Work

The reality of a systems change includes management adjustments such as policy development, staff training considerations, funding sources, etc... These are the tasks of an administrator and specifically within international social welfare it would be useful to have a social work perspective. The combination of social work and administration can provide a holistic approach to these types of changes.

Government Agencies

Government agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services have offices that focus specifically on international affairs including the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The ACF organizes U.S. participation in “...*intergovernmental international meetings and organizations, administers several bilateral programs in social welfare, is involved in comparative research and arranges the programs of international visitors in social welfare...has periodically made grants to support the transfer of international innovations in social services to the United States*” (p.140).

Social Work

The administrative portion of social services is visible in the international social welfare community. The knowledge and perspective of a social worker with administrative know-how would enhance administration of bilateral programs involving social welfare. The social work profession has the insight needed to administer effective social service programs and to represent the values of the profession in intergovernmental meetings. The role of social work in government agencies is instrumental, but often overlooked.

International Agencies (i.e. United Nations)

Within the United Nations there are numerous sub-agencies that address specific issues, such as UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund), WHO (World Health Organization) and UNDP (United Nations Development Program). These sub-agencies are overseen by the Economic and Social Council. The Economic and Social Council coordinates the sub-agencies that promote “...*solutions to international economic, social, health and related problems.*” The duties of the Council include facilitating intergovernmental meetings/conferences that focus on social welfare programs and policies. In 1987, a meeting took place entitled the Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programs. Participants of the meeting included representatives from 91 countries and from UN agencies. The meeting produced and adopted *Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programs in the Near Future.*

Social Work

The development of programs and policies often includes a system in which services will be provided. The creation of this system incorporates the skills of an administration professional with a foundation in social work values. Being a part of intergovernmental meetings that result in the adoption of guiding principles is an illustration of how the profession of social work can participate in the international arena.

References: Healy, L. (2001). *International Social Work: Professional Action in an Interdependent World.* New York: Oxford University Press.

