A social work programme for poverty stricken families in rural areas of the Northern Cape Province

Abstract
The study was conducted in Heuningvlei community in the Kgalagadi District Municipality in the Northern Cape Province. This study was part of the "Tshwaragano Project" with the general aim of empowering the disadvantaged communities in rural areas. The aim of this research was to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of a social group work empowerment programme for poverty stricken families in rural areas of the Northern Cape Province. To achieve this aim, the following objectives needed to be attained:
• To study the psycho-social effects of poverty on rural families. This objective was achieved by means of a critical review and analysis of the relevant literature. It is therefore concluded that poverty is the most problematic social problem facing the South African society today. It is a global problem that troubles many families in South Africa and affects people both psychologically and socially.
• To determine the fundamental causes of poverty on rural families and their strengths to survive. This investigation indicated that poverty in the SADC region is reflected in the low levels of income, and high levels of human deprivation. Unemployment is also the greatest single cause of deep poverty in rural areas. These factors can be traced back to education and illiteracy of Heuningvlei community members. There is close association between poverty and lack of education. Poor or non existent of agricultural practices also bears reference to the alarming rates of poverty in rural areas.
• To design and implement a social group work empowerment programme for poverty stricken rural families. This programme was presented successfully over a stretch of eight group sessions to sixteen community members and was exceptionally appropriate to improve their knowledge regarding poverty. They also received skills to start their own income generating projects. By means of this programme the members of the group also enhanced their social functioning.
• To evaluate the effectiveness of a social group work programme in empowering poverty stricken rural families. The evaluation of the programme was done by means of a measuring scale instrument called Personal Multi-screening Inventory (PMSI) scale developed by the Perspective Training College in Potchefstroom. The results obtained through this evaluation indicated that a social group work empowerment programme had brought a significant change in the lives of the members. It was therefore concluded that the programme was successful and effective in the sense that members felt that there was a transition in their lives. Group members indicated that the Tshwaragano social group work empowerment programme provided a positive growth in their lives and it was a learning opportunity that shifted their thinking, for instance the discouragement of the feeling of "apathy" and dependence on the government. In summary it can be stated that proof has emerged from this research that a scientifically founded, well-planned social group work empowerment programme can undoubtedly be applied to improve the social functioning of poverty stricken rural families.

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TVEs, etc during early 1980s, the government had also undertaken several initiatives with relief funds and development funds targeting of neglected areas where mass poverty existed. Development of poverty-stricken Areas in the Central and Western Regions was a priority. Of the 592 poverty-stricken counties named by the Chinese Government on its priority poverty relief list in 1994, 82 percent are situated in the central and western regions. The Food-for-Work Policy and Expansion of Rural Employment in Poor Areas in Western China. The social security system has been expanded over the past few years, particularly to children and the disability sectors. However, the social security system may become unsustainable in the future. Van der Berg, Burger, Burger, Louw & Yu (2005) suggest that social assistance is nearing the boundaries of its ability to alleviate poverty. Poverty and inequality have co-existed for generations both in developed and developing nations, and in spite of the multiple interventions, the progress in eliminating this problem remains elusive. Many writers have referred to the impact of globalisation and its concomitant and deleterious effects on nation’s labour markets and dismantling the welfare state (Dominelli, 2004; Mishra, 1999).