

Social Work Practice in Buddhism for the Caring of Elder Community

Rev. Sangabopura Akhila¹

Introduction

It is clear that demography and social science research prove that the elder community is rapidly grow up globally and become a social issue. United Nations Human Rights Council, the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, regional treaties of HR and specific NGOs are addressing the issues of elder community for protecting their rights. But, most of elders are helpless, marginalized and isolate at their old age. Developed countries they have found some solutions for caring elders than developing countries. Elder care centers, community care centers, and care givers are used to overcome the some issues of elder community. As a developing country, Sri Lanka is still unable to fully address the caring elder community. Elder care centers “VEDIHITI NIWASA” is the most common and famous solution for elders at present time in Sri Lanka but unfortunately Elder care centers are unable to fulfill the emergence trend of elder population. The aim of this research paper is to propose the establishing a community based elder care center within the resident area using the key concept of Social Work and Buddhism. “Community Based Elder Care Centers” can be identifies as a new concept for caring elders and which is already implemented by most of developed countries. Sri Lankan government also has implemented this concept covering few areas in Sri Lanka but it has not performed well due to budget allocation. Anyhow, it is time to setting up this method covering all divisional areas because rapid emergence of elder population in Sri Lanka.

Objective

The main objective of this research is to examine the probability of establish the community based elder care centers in Sri Lanka covering all divisional areas with the application of Dāna Concept in Buddhism.

¹. Assistant lecturer, Department of Pāli and Buddhist, University of Kelaniya.
akhilathero@gmail.com

Methodology and data collections

Mixed method has been implemented to conduct the research; qualitative and quantitative. Primary and secondary data were used and for the data collecting; focus group discussions, questioners, key formant interviews were conducted. Accordingly, there were 3 focus group discussions and five questioners were design to collect the primary data. And researcher collected secondary data from government and Non-Government organizations which were related to elder care in Sri Lanka.

Results and discussion

A major demographic transition is taking place in the world as numbers of older persons are increasing considerably. Decreasing fertility rates and increasing longevity will lead to the continued ageing of the global population (Community-Based Home Care for Older People, 2012). Sri Lanka is one of the fastest ageing countries whilst ageing is a universal phenomenon (Nisha & Malin, 2008). Population aging is a universal phenomenon, but it looms particularly large for Sri Lanka: not only is its population among the oldest in the non-developed world, but Sri Lanka is also one of the fastest aging countries in the world. Sri Lanka's share of population over 60 years old in 2000 was 9.2 percent and over 16.7 per cent in 2021 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2018). This trend is rapidly grow and demographers cite that there will be a one elder person out of total population in Sri Lanka by 2025. As a country Sri Lanka has to overcome and find the solution for rapid emergence of elder population. It is clear that there are many elder care centers but number of centers which are already established unable to provide enough service for the elders. There for majority of elders are helpless. Elders were protected by the extended family in traditional family system. But, extended family became the nuclear family as the results of urbanization, industrialization and complexity of the world.

In Sri Lanka, according to traditional culture, families always take major responsibility for caring for their older relatives and society expects them to do this. The long-established principle of filial piety in the key element in the Sri Lankan system of care. Generally, "older people are expected to live with their families rather than by themselves or in a residential care facility". (Chou, 1997). Community Based Elder Care centers are success to fulfill the requirement elder community.

“Community Based Elder Care” (CBEC) is a concept which is design to help community dwelling adults remain safely in their community and delay or prevent institutionalization” (Burau, V., & Kroger,T. , 2004). The concept of Community Based Elder Care is most important to elder community to live in the community of their rest of life.

Sri Lankan government is not strong to set up community based elder care centers because of the budget allocation. There for, the researcher has designed to check the probability of Dana concept in Buddhism to establish the community based elder care center. For the establishment of center material and human resources are essential.

As the material resource, piece of land, building materials, financial supports, foods, and other resources can be mentioned. Care givers, center manager, volunteer participation are the human resources.

Collected data proved that the Dana Concept can be used to establish the center. There were 110 participants who responded to questionnaire. Data indicated how elder like to be a service user of CBECC and how they can give contribution to progress it. The Concept of Dana can be adopted find meals, financial support for necessaries, medicine, and piece of land for establish a center. Participants have responded each factor except piece of land. 60 responses for meals, 25 responses for financial supports, 10 responses for medicine (pharmaceuticals) out of 110 responses. As the result of key informant interviews with chief incumbent of Buddhist temples, piece of land can be allocated from the temple. Volunteer participation for various programs such as psychological, educational, and counselling programs can be fulfilled by the qualified volunteers.

Social work implementation for CBECC

Social worker has many roles for this task; plan and schedules can be implemented by him. He has to play his role from beginning to end the task, further he has to supervise all the procedures of the center. As a mediator he can find the link from government to register and all duties of government side. Fund raising program, resource finding programs and human resource

management, organizing programs can be implemented by the social worker. People should be informed about this concept from grassroots level otherwise it will be very difficult to fulfill.

Conclusion

As afore said elders wish to spend their rest of life with children and grandchildren than to be institutionalized. This concept is more important and each and every elders can be service users within the familiar community. Villagers can help and participate with various meritorious deeds within the framework of Dana. Finally, it should be mentioned here that the Dana concept in Buddhism can be applied to set up a Community Based Elder Care Center for the enhancing wellbeing of elder community.

Keywords: Social Work, Buddhism, Caring, Elder Community

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