

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SPACE

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**Abstract:** *Social protection issues, facing currently all countries is a special concern for transition countries in general and for our country in particular. This, in the context in which we are dealing with the lack of a transition model of society, from a socio-economic form based on a system of organizing and authoritative social and economic management to a system based on relations and staff empowerment and economy operation on principles of supply and demand. The protection system of citizens represents all social benefits consisting of universalistic benefits and the social security system. Social protection can be evaluated as a set of actions, decisions and measures taken in society in order to prevent, reduce or remove the consequences of certain events considered to be social risks on the living conditions of the population and it represents one of the definitions agreed by social scientists.*

**Key words:** *social protection; welfare services; rural space; development.*

### INTRODUCTION

The social assistance operates on a principle other than insurances: based only on funds from the State or volunteers and international institutions donations, the assistance does not require any previous financial contribution of the assisted person. Helping people in problematic situations is based on the principle of solidarity and involves the evaluation of assisted needs.

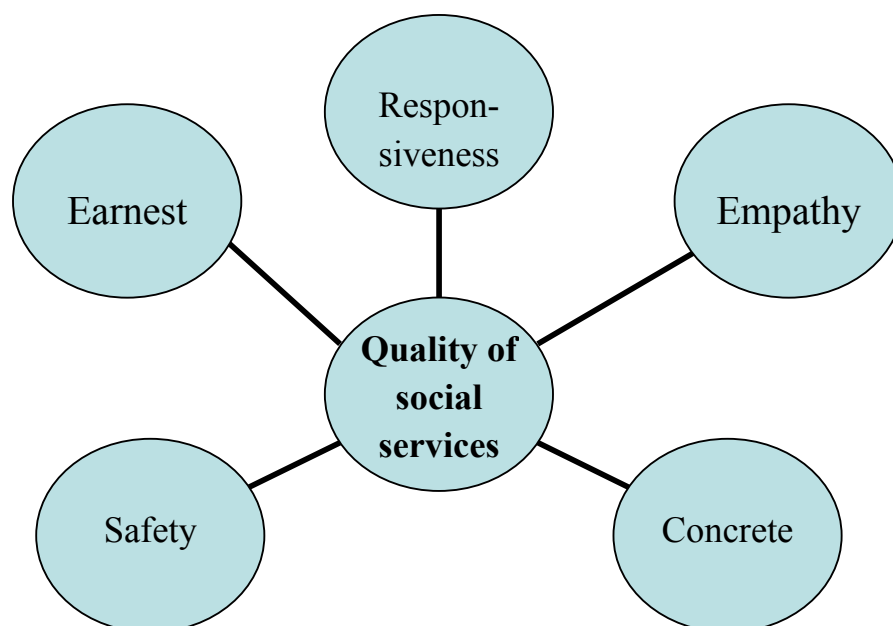
Social need with an economic etiology can be answered by interventions in which the social benefits covers the necessary amount required for a minimum standard of living. Social assistance services are specific to the needs caused by personal disability or addiction. When between social assistance and social change does not establish a close relationship, then serious problems can arise from users, from those who offer support from practitioners, managers from and organizations providing social services.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

It has been defined the issue and formulation of the main hypotheses in order to constitute an explanatory and convincing model, inducing the importance and activity of the researched subject. Then, it has been drawn up and completed by the collected information. The drafting of this paper was made in laboratory, based on the notes from the ground, the existing material and consulted bibliography.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In perceiving the quality of services, consumers use four key criteria, which are, in fact, elements of service quality:



**Figure 1. Defining elements of social service quality**

For consumers, the quality and accuracy are inseparable, a company of questionable fairness is a company providing poor quality services.

Seriousness of the company services provides credibility. Consumers appreciate credibility after the delivery process. All other dimensions of quality (responsiveness, reliability, empathy, tangibility) are evaluated during the providing process.

Measurement of service quality, as perceived by customers, allows the service company to understand how they estimate the services, namely: attributes important to customers, issues that require immediate improvement, impact of provider staff on customer satisfaction etc.

Through continuous service-oriented management of organizations in the knowledge and completely satisfying consumer demands, respectively a deep understanding of their behavior – in order to provide reliable service – can be assured services of a high level of social efficiency.

The essential quality of social assistance activity in rural areas represents the way this profession is practiced. In order to be efficient, the practice must be adapted to the specific needs of small communities by developing theories of social assistance. Those who developed these theories have concluded that the small communities received less

human resources compared to larger ones, especially in the social field, if we think of professional workers in social services. Social assistance offers significant reward for those who work in rural areas. These are some of them:

- *Independence*. Social assistants of big cities are most of the time responsible for different issues besides their basic occupation. In addition, they are held accountable by administrative and superior structures which come into contact or under whose jurisdiction it is. Their activity is closely monitored and they had to report what they do or have done in various organizations and answer to the requests of these organizations. Social assistants in rural areas are more autonomous simply because that these agencies have only few employed people and not hundreds as in big cities. The most ambitious prefer small communities.

- *tangible results*. In small communities, it often happens that social workers can notice tangible results of their work. Being independents, they can observe their personal impact on the lives of community. It is harder to see the impact in large communities.

- *personal reward*. Being independent, people personally thank social workers (often in public) and they consider them personally responsible for improvements to their lives. Sometimes, they become heroes of those communities.

- *recognition*. While some prefer the anonymity, others enjoy the acquired fame. In small communities, the social assistant is known by everyone, becoming a quite important person in the community. In big cities, the social worker would be lost in anonymity.

In rural areas, there is a social assistant for 76.615 inhabitants. Most of them are employed in Timis, Bihor, Mures, Satu Mare, Caras-Severin and Cluj Counties where a social assistant serves to 50.000 inhabitants and in Olt, Dolj, Teleorman, Ilfov, Vrancea, Suceava, Brasov, Bistrita-Nasaud and Tulcea Counties, there is a social assistant to more than 100,000 inhabitants. The deficiency of specialists in rural areas is doubled by the small number of staff with responsibilities for social assistance. Almost 50% of local councils have transferred the responsibilities of managing social benefits to one or more employees, usually to social employee, secretary or librarian. Regarding the formal establishment process of social assistance services, the data shows a low interest of local authority for social assistance activity. More than two thirds of all local council have not departments of social assistance but they have nominated one or more persons with attributions for social assistance.

Some form of solidarity which seemed to characterize the rural areas tends to change. The social difficulties, access to employment, development of individualism, isolation of persons, divisions between old and new inhabitants contribute to weaken the relationship between the inhabitants of rural areas. This evolution has been strengthened by the economic crisis, the disappearance of certain public and private services, places of conviviality and by reducing resources of community life actors which are all structural factors of the social bond.

The mobility, education, culture and health will be the most important topics to support the inhabitants, contribute to their life, promote the spirit of meeting, inform and reduce the insecurity and isolation. Protecting the population of a country by inflation, maintaining a certain price for basic products by awarding grants by the State, ensuring a minimum income to each family, finding measures to reduce the criminality, the impact natural disasters, the spread of diseases, developing national programs against corruption or national plans for employment and against poverty - are all examples to achieve the social protection of the entire society.

**Table 1.**

**Juridical form of social assistance services in rural areas at local councils in Romania**

Type juridical organization	Nr.	%
Department of social assistance	567	20,23
Local public institution (with legal personality)	84	5,4
The social assistance service is not established, but the responsibilities are delegated to one or more persons	1.723	71,3
Own department and institution with legal personality	16	0,57
Local councils with department and public institution(with legal personality)	56	2,35
The social assistance activities are performed by a committee but there is also an institution for social assistance with own legal personality	5	0,15

Source: baza de date a ICCV, Harta serviciilor sociale în România, 2009

The Social Assistance promotes social exchange, problem solving in human relationships and support people in order to live a decent life. Using the theories of human behavior and the network of social systems, social assistance occurs at the points where people face problems in their living environment. The main rules human and social rights are fundamental for social assistance. In some cases, the social assistant occurs even closer to the people and less to the environment, while in other cases, the intervention is within the environment and on the impact of lifestyle. In all cases, social assistants adopt a holistic view, focusing on many interactions between people and their environment. People are affected by their environment, having in the same time the ability to change the environment they live.

## CONCLUSIONS

Social services will remain one of the most important pillars in supporting the social inclusion of vulnerable groups. They will maintain and increase the role they have now, boosting the relationship between "needs - services" and "the needs of vulnerable groups - delivery of social services", with a comprehensive and integrated response in which the mission of social services is integrated under the umbrella of social inclusion. Currently, our country go through a difficult situation on financing the social assistance system. On this background, the question it arises how to share the budget for social benefits compared to social services and how to cover services and benefits in rural areas.

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