The Role of Social Work in Engendering a Disability-Inclusive Agenda Toward Sustainable Development in Kenya’s Devolved Governance System.

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of Social Work in engendering a disability-inclusive agenda toward sustainable development. It locates its discussion in Kenya’s new political dispensation of a devolved system of governance. The paper is divided into three sections. Section one examines the philosophical and value underpinnings of social work as an academic and helping profession and how it lays the building blocks for a disability-inclusive development narrative. Section two discusses the major methods of social work practice and how they can be applied to mobilizing and organizing disability, marginalization and vulnerability programming. Section three locates the theory and practice of social work in a devolved system of governance.

The paper highlights social work’s distinguishing characteristics namely, its emphasis on the person-in-environment model and its focus on social justice and human rights, to show that it stands it in good stead not only to address the internal struggles of individuals with disability but also work with people to examine their relationships, family history, work environment and the structures and policies that impact them in order to identify ways to help mitigate problems and challenges. Furthermore, being a strength-based discipline, social work provides opportunities to help individuals, groups and communities identify their problems, determine their skills and capacities and analyze ways that those strengths might be applied to the identified problems.

Lastly, the paper invites national and county governments to tap into the rich and broad knowledge of social work theory and practice to develop proactive policies and programs that are disability-inclusive. County governments are entreated to strengthen the teaching and training of social workers, target them for employment and utilize social work as well as other social science based research findings in policy and development programming.

Key words: Social work, methods, practice, disability-inclusivity, governance.