

**Social Development  
and  
Urban Poverty**

**Proceedings of a Workshop  
Held at the Kentucky Hotel,  
Harare, Zimbabwe**

**22 – 26 February, 1993**

**School of Social Work,  
Zimbabwe**

# **Social Development and Urban Poverty**

**Paper presentations and edited proceedings of a  
Workshop held in Harare, Zimbabwe  
22nd – 26th February, 1993**

**edited by Nigel Hall**

**Urban Poverty and Fieldwork**

**Social Development Training with Special Reference to Fieldwork  
(includes Panel Presentations)**

- Rethinking Fieldwork Education and Practice in Southern Africa:  
Lessons from Botswana  
Barbara N Ngwenya and Tracey Mudede..... 95
- Structural Poverty and Female Prisoners: Implications for Fieldwork –  
the Case of Lesotho  
Brenda Kipenzi-Joyce Crawley & Lea Molapo..... 103
- Urban Poverty and Implications for Social Work Training and Practice:  
the Malawi Scene  
E Kalemba..... 109
- The Place of Fieldwork and Social Work Training (Swaziland)  
Esther Kanduza..... 115
- Analysis of the Impact of the Structural Adjustment Programme on  
Urban Poverty and Social Work Fieldwork in Zambia  
Gilbert P C Masiye..... 123

**Group Discussions, Conclusions and Appendices**

- Small Group Discussions ..... 131
- General Conclusions and Summary ..... 139
- Closing Remarks  
Joe Hampson, SJ ..... 143
- Appendix One  
Workshop Programme..... 147
- Appendix Two  
List of Participants ..... 151

## **Aims and Focus of Workshop**

### **Workshop on Social Development and Urban Poverty**

**Dates:** February 22 – 26, 1993

**Venue:** Kentucky Airport Hotel, Harare, Zimbabwe

**Contact:** Editor, Journal of Social Development in Africa, School of Social Work, P Bag 66022, Kopje, Zimbabwe, Tel: 750815.

**Sponsors:** Overseas Development Administration (British Development Division Central Africa)

**Organisers:** Journal of Social Development in Africa, School of Social Work

**Participants:** To be drawn from Southern African countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Also participants from University College, Swansea.

#### **Aims of the Workshop:**

- a) To discuss issues of social development with specific reference to urban poverty.
- b) To facilitate an exchange of experiences on problems of poverty in southern Africa.
- c) To examine the social consequences of structural adjustment programmes, especially as they relate to urban poverty.
- d) To discuss the implications of urban poverty for social work education and practice, in particular, fieldwork.

#### **Focus of the Workshop:**

- The Workshop will focus on the problem of urban poverty, looking at issues such as definition of problems, intervention strategies, social policy, the way forward, analysis of students' experiences while on fieldwork, etc.
- Country structural adjustment and economic reform programmes will be reviewed.
- The Workshop will also address the issue of popular participation and accountability, with the objective of making central and local governments more accountable than they are.
- Specific services such as housing, health, community services, personal social services, social security, research, etc, will be evaluated in their relation to urban poverty.
- Fieldwork, with its implications for social work education and practice, will be examined.

#### **Papers will be two-pronged:**

- a) Focus on country with discussion of urban poverty, extent of problem, intervention strategies, etc.
- b) Focus on fieldwork regarding its role in training social workers and urban development; and social development training with special reference to fieldwork.

## **“Structural Poverty and Female Prisoners – Implications for Fieldwork – The Case of Lesotho”**

Brenda Kipenzi-Joyce Crawley & Lea Molapo \*

### **Introduction**

Limited attention has been given to female offenders and prisoners (Bartol and Bartol, 1986; Naude and Stevens, 1988). Where there has been some consideration of these groups, few original theoretical perspectives have been brought to bear on the cause of female criminality. Even though research and the literature have not progressed in providing much guidance in viewing female offenders and prisoners, it is necessary to give attention to this growing population.

This paper addresses the case of female prisoners incarcerated in the Female Prison in Maseru, Lesotho. Attention is given to the link between structural poverty and its impact on female prisoners. The increasingly negative impact of structural adjustment programmes in exacerbating the lives of women and children is cited. A brief overview of the literature’s current thinking of female criminals is used to introduce the section on the Maseru Female Prison’s study. The paper concludes with a discussion of the importance of work with this population.

### **Structural Poverty and its Impact on Social Development**

Definitions of poverty vary across time and location. For some, poverty is:

- a near total lack of life’s basics – food, clothing, and shelter
- an inadequate supply of these basics
- being politically powerless, or
- a lack of money (Bell, 1983; Zastrow, 1986).

Because poverty varies across different locations, it is important to examine how it is defined in Lesotho. According to Gay, et al (1991), most Basotho identify poverty as “... *the lack of life’s basic essentials: food and clothing*” (p7). Respondents in their study indicated, in addition to food and clothing, the following items which poor people lack: money, livestock, shelter, fields/farming inputs, employment, good health, water supply, education, and community co-operation.

In addition to consideration of definition variations, it is necessary to recognise that poverty as an experience varies between rural and urban areas. It is generally reported that those who live in rural areas have higher poverty rates than those who reside in urban areas (Dolgoft and Feldstein, 1984; Zastrow, 1986). It turns out that in Lesotho the highest poverty rates are found in the mountains and the remote foothill areas. Those in these areas and other rural isolated areas are more likely than urban dwellers to be poor by use of these various indicators, singly or in combination (Molapo, 1992).

### **Theoretical Explanations of Poverty**

Three theoretical explanatory categories are usually used to explore the causes of poverty: individual explanation, culture-based explanations, and structural explanations (Bell, 1983; Day, 1989). For example, structural explanations include understanding how institutions and economies operate in ways to produce unemployment, inflation, sex (gender) discrimination and job displacement by

---

\* Department of Social Anthropology/Sociology, National University of Lesotho

---

automation. Individual theoretical perspectives centre on the victim-blaming ideology of “*blaming the poor for their circumstances ...*” (Zastrow, 1986, p88). Laziness, alcoholism and having too many children frequently are offered as reasons people are to blame for being poor. The cultural explanation includes lack of communal cooperation, female-headed households with young children, where these represent second and third generations of such type families. These three theoretical categories help in sorting out social policy and social programmes/services for the poor. They apply across cultures, and each society, from its own ideological, political and social milieu, offers specific illustrations of each theoretical perspective.

### **The Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Women in Lesotho**

It may be useful to observe that structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) have had a major economic impact, ie, exacerbating the economic plight of women and children – especially producing conditions which deepen existing poverty among these groups (Dick, 1992). In Lesotho, the Ministry of Planning, Economic and Manpower Development (1991), for instance, cites several ways in which Lesotho women are disadvantaged by SAPs. First, women are only *specifically* considered in the area of agriculture. Second, the SAPs requirements for limited growth of the recurrent budget results in below-average rates of growth in: “... *the two ministries which have the greatest impact on children, Health and Education ...*” (p28). Third, reduction in wages and a “*freeze of posts*” will fall disproportionately on women “...*since a large proportion of this work force is women, they are likely to be affected by these cuts. This is compounded by the customary practices which favours a female worker rather than a male worker of the same grade being laid off*” (p 30).

### **Poverty and Female Criminality**

While there are to date no firm figures on the interactive effects of being poor and utilising crime as a way of coping with one's poverty, a scenario can be constructed from the information presented thus far to help understand a context which can contribute to *some* women in poverty turning to crime. First, rural poor women suffer *triple jeopardy* – that is, they are poor, female and rural. Rural areas do not generally supply sufficient employment for its able-bodied, work-age residents. Hence, high unemployment rates prevail in the rural areas. Rural residents of both genders experience a higher probability of being in poverty than do their urban counterparts. Second, women far more than men are traditionally disproportionately represented among the poor (Day, 1989). Third, most women “*share the economic status of the men on whom they depend, and without male support their economic options are limited*” (Day, 1989:15). This has been described as some women being one man away from poverty. Fourth, increasingly, structural adjustment programmes in “Third World”/least developed countries are serving the latent function of either creating new generations of women and children in poverty or deepening the poverty of women and children already poor (Dick, 1992). Thus, for these and other reasons, it should not be surprising that some women in poverty turn to crime as a way of coping.

### **Lesotho Pilot Study of Female Prisoners**

There are several theoretical frameworks used to explain female criminal behaviour. These include, but are not limited to, biological determinism, sex-role development, and Marxist feminism. The biological determinism perspective seeks to forge a link between female hormones and menstrual cycles. The sex-role development view posits that males and females are differentially socialised

and thus women tend to engage in less violent-type crimes, such as theft, shoplifting, and prostitution. The Marxist feminine view attributes women's social position as 'property' as a contributing factor to their marginalisation. None of these views, or the several others in the literature, adequately explain the causes or nature of female criminal behaviour, nor its increase (Bartol and Bartol, 1986; Ellis and Austin, 1971; Morris, 1987; Smart, 1976). The various and diverse theories do, however, force us to face the complex issues involved in female criminal behaviour.

The pilot study described below sought to identify the types of crimes and reasons for the crimes committed by females in the Maseru Female Prison. The persistent theme voiced by those interviewed related to the economic and (un)employment problems of women.

## **Methodology**

A structured questionnaire was administered at the Maseru Female Prison by the authors. Twenty-seven prisoner file records dating from 1990-1993 were used along with interviews of prison officials. Data was collected in the following areas: socio-demographic profile, offence profile and fieldwork.

## **Socio-demographic Profile**

The findings revealed that most of the female offenders were single or married rather than divorced, separated or widowed. They ranged from 14 to 49 years of age. Most had children. The major occupation reported was housewifery. Less than five of the females were employed. Most were literate and had attained primary education. Two-thirds were from rural areas. It was reported by prison officials that poverty with lack of employment options was the driving force for women to commit crime.

## **Offence Profile**

The common offence was theft and housebreaking. Poverty was identified as the source of these crimes. Women, it was stated, resorted to stealing in homes, shops, everywhere: "*trying to make ends meet*". Other offences included assault with intent to do bodily harm and child abandonment. The terms of imprisonment ran from six months to eight years. Female inmates engaged in several training programmes such as sewing, gardening, knitting, and rabbitry. It was acknowledged by prison officials that these activities would be unlikely to constitute viable employment for the women when they were released. Prison officials strongly stated that income and income-generating opportunities were needed critically by the females on their release.

## **Fieldwork Implications**

In addition to identifying the need for income for the female inmates, the officials were supportive of the use of fieldwork within the female prison setting. They identified five tasks and responsibilities in which social work students could engage:

1. interact with the families/relatives of female prisoners regarding communication and interpersonal issues
2. conduct home interviews
3. organise clubs in communities. The goals of the clubs would be to develop income generating opportunities for female ex-offenders
4. provide training for prison staff, and
5. provide follow-up services to the female prisoners.

## **Social Work Education for Fieldwork with Female Prisoners**

Each of these tasks and responsibilities can be ably performed by generically-trained social work students. (Zastrow, 1992) This means that one need not specialise in corrections as a field of practice. Rather, the knowledge, skills and value/ethics needed by social work students across various fields of practice will be sufficient. Hence, to do fieldwork with female prisoners requires the following knowledge, skills and value/ethics areas which are generic to the foundation of all social work practice and all client system sizes: knowledge and use of the problem-solving process; skills in assessment; development of contracts; skills in interviewing; knowledge and use of the professional relationship; knowledge and skills in forming and working with groups and communities; strategic selection and use of interventive roles; and social problem/social policy analysis and development.

## **Criteria for the Selection of Students for Fieldwork**

Because a solid generic social work education and a credible liberal arts background can prepare any social work student for field placement in a corrections setting (in this case working with female prisoners), it is important to identify two additional criteria necessary before any particular student is placed in such a setting. First a corrections field assignment must not be fostered on a student. Rather students designated for corrections fieldwork must have a modicum of interest, or at least be neutral and open to this client population. Second, a well-designed orientation must be provided by the corrections facility to introduce and integrate them into the particular system, and the role of the system in the students' field education must be articulated.

In sum, a well-designed fieldwork placement working in corrections with female prisoners will include the following: appropriately selected students for working with this population; assurance that students have the proper generic social work education (knowledge, skills value/ethics base) as well as a liberal arts educational foundation; provision of a thorough well-planned and implemented orientation training to the specific corrections/penal system; and guidance in performing the social change agent role in efforts to remediate the structural underpinnings of poverty and societal arrangements which disadvantage women.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has addressed in an abbreviated manner selected issues of female prisoners using a modest pilot study from Lesotho. Female criminals have been neglected in the literature, although this population, which is increasing across societies, needs to be carefully considered because women play such focal roles in the socialisation and maintenance of communities. Additionally, as the literature points out, many secondary and tertiary social problems are a consequence of crime in society (Bartol and Bartol, 1986).

This pilot study can serve as a stepping stone to further and more extensive research with this population. While this study focused on interviews with prison officials, due to time and constraints of confidentiality, future studies must be directed to the inmates. Also, the questionnaire should be modified to include items which specifically allow the female criminal to identify the reason and causes of *her* criminal behaviour. Finally, social work students should be given the opportunity to experience fieldwork in the correctional/penal settings where female prisoners reside. Schools of Social Work can assist prison staff in structuring a viable fieldwork setting.



**References**

- Bartol, C and Bartol, A (1986) **Criminal Behaviour: A 1986 Psychosocial Approach** (2nd ed) Prentice-Hall, New Jersey.
- Bell, W (1983) **Contemporary Social Welfare**, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York.
- Day, P J (1989) **A New History of Social Welfare** Prentice-Hall, New Jersey.
- Dick, M (1992) "Women and Debt", in **MCC Womens Concerns Report**, 102, pp 1-2.
- Dolgoft, R and Feldstein, D (1984) **Understanding Social Welfare** (2nd ed) Longman, New York.
- Ellis, D and Austin, P (1971) "Menstruation and Criminal Behaviour in a Correctional Centre for Women ", **Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science**, 62, pp 3-388.
- Gay, J; Gill, D; Green T; Hall, D; Mhlanga, M & Mohapi, M (1991) **Poverty in Lesotho: A Mapping Exercise**, Sechaba Consultants, Maseru.
- Ministry of Planning, Economic and Manpower Development (1991) **The Situation of Women and Children in Lesotho**, Maseru.
- Molapo, EL (1992) "Dynamics of Street Children in Informal Sector – The Case of Lesotho", a paper presented at the Conference on Informal Sector, Department of Economics, Faculty of Social Sciences, Maseru Sun Hotel, September.
- Morris, A (1987) **Women, Crime and Criminal Justice**, Basil Blackwell, New York.
- Naude, CMB & Stevens R (eds) (1988) **Crime Prevention Strategies**, Educational Publishers, Pretoria.
- Smart, C (1976) **Women Crime and Criminology: A Feminist Critique**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Zastrow, C (1986) **Introduction to Social Welfare Institutions**, Dorsey Press, Chicago.
- Zastrow, C (1992) **The Practice of Social Work** (4th ed), CA Wadworth Publishing Company, Belmont.



This work is licensed under a  
Creative Commons  
Attribution – NonCommercial - NoDerivs 3.0 License.

To view a copy of the license please see:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

This is a download from the BLDS Digital Library on OpenDocs  
<http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/>