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## TRANSFORMING CARE: INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL WORK IN POST-CONFLICT ZONES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

**Abstract:** The significance of efficient social service provision has gained increased attention in war-affected regions following the Russia-Ukraine war conflict. The conventional method of establishing social services is currently facing criticism due to an increasing acknowledgment of the advantages associated with tailored and customised social work interventions, particularly in the context of children and young individuals. The article explores the notion of deinstitutionalization, emphasising its importance in post-conflict areas and emphasising the value of a personalised social work approach in promoting the welfare of children and young people impacted by the Russia-Ukraine war conflict. The present article is grounded in a comprehensive conceptual review of pertinent literature, encompassing books, journals, and related scholarly articles within the specific field of study. Research has endeavoured to ascertain the challenges and ramifications associated with the implementation of institutionalised social work practices. This study has also explored the potential pragmatic benefits of personalised social work interventions in areas of conflict, particularly focusing on children and adolescents. This article could also elucidate the key factors that should be taken into account while engaging with individuals, particularly children and young people, in regions characterised by war. The comprehensive endeavour would serve as a valuable resource for further examination, particularly in relation to the use of a personalised social work approach within the specific circumstances of recurrent invasions and civil conflicts.

**Key words:** Institutionalisation of Social Work; Individualisation of Social work; Social Services.

## INTRODUCTION

The war between Russia and Ukraine, characterised by its severe consequences for civilian populations, has led to a reassessment of tactics for rehabilitating post-conflict situations. This reevaluation has focused specifically on vulnerable groups such as children and youth. Based on a report published by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the on-going war in Ukraine has had a direct impact on a significant number of children and youth. These individuals have experienced various challenges, such as displacement, familial loss, and exposure to violence. The aforementioned statistics emphasise the urgent requirement for efficient social services that cater to the intricate requirements of this particular population. Throughout history, traditional social service models have tended to favour institutionalisation as a means of providing care for children and teenagers, sometimes involving their placement in large-scale facilities. Nevertheless, international endeavours have brought attention to the fundamental limitations of this methodology.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), institutions have the potential to amplify trauma, impede emotional development, and impede the integration of children into society. In light of these challenges, the notion of deinstitutionalization has garnered significant attention. The process of deinstitutionalization entails a shift from institutional care environments to community-based alternatives that prioritise personalised assistance and integration. The European Union emphasises the significance of deinstitutionalization in safeguarding the rights and welfare of children, as outlined in its Guidelines on the Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care. This strategy is particularly relevant in post-conflict areas such as Ukraine, where children and young individuals are confronted with the consequences of violence and societal disruption. The relevance of personalised social work interventions is emphasised by reputable organisations such as UNICEF, which highlights the significance of customised assistance in addressing the varied needs of children and young people residing in regions affected by war. The implementation of an individualised approach allows social workers to do comprehensive assessments that take into account the entire well-being of individuals, encompassing their physical, emotional, and psychological dimensions. The aforementioned perspective aligns with the sentiments expressed by Henrietta H. Fore, the Executive Director of UNICEF, who emphasised the need to recognise the distinctiveness of each child and ensure their entitlement to individualised treatment. Furthermore, scholarly investigations conducted by reputable institutions like Save the Children shed light on the profound and far-reaching effects of personalised care.

Studies undertaken in countries affected by post-conflict situations observed that children and adolescents who received individualised assistance demonstrated elevated levels of resilience, self-esteem, and psychological well-being. This is consistent with the ideals outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which underscores the entitlement of every child to achieve their maximum developmental capacity. In the context of the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, the implementation of an individualised social work approach exhibits considerable potential. The use of trauma-informed care facilitates the provision of support that acknowledges and addresses the distinct obstacles encountered by individual children and adolescents. In addition,

through close collaboration with families and communities, social workers have the ability to create interventions that demonstrate cultural sensitivity and foster a sense of inclusion. In summary, the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has intensified the need for efficient provision of social services in regions impacted by the fighting. The combination of deinstitutionalization and personalised social work treatments represents a promising prospect for children and young individuals who are confronted with the consequences of conflict. As the global community mobilises to provide assistance to these adolescent survivors, the shift from impersonal institutions to individualised care models signifies a crucial milestone in the pursuit of a more promising tomorrow.

#### **Aim and purpose of the work/research**

First and foremost objective of the work is to explore the realistic space of Individualised or personalised social work practice for a meaningful rehabilitation of children and youth in the conflicting areas. Institutionalised social approach has appeared to be inadequate when it comes to the grassroots level delivery of benefits and services. Individualised responses to social issues were proven to be effective and which needs a functional strength according to each context. Here this conceptual study has attempted to explore the functional scope of individualised social work approach, which can be executed in the conflict areas for an effective rehabilitation of children and youth.

## **RESULTS**

### ***The Deinstitutionalization Paradigm***

Historically, societies worldwide have heavily relied on institutionalized care systems for vulnerable populations, particularly children and youth. However, extensive research and practical experience have revealed the shortcomings of such institutions. Studies by the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasize that institutional care can hinder children's cognitive, emotional, and social development, leading to a range of adverse outcomes. These include limited personal growth, reduced autonomy, and the absence of individualized attention, contributing to a cycle of dependency.

Deinstitutionalization, as a response to these concerns, has garnered support as a more effective approach to care. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) highlights that deinstitutionalization aligns with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, prioritizing children's right to a family environment. This paradigm shift involves transitioning from large-scale institutions to community-based support systems that cater to the unique needs of each individual.

### ***Challenges in War-Affected Areas***

In the context of regions marred by conflict like the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the challenges posed by institutional care are exacerbated. The impact on children and youth is disproportionately severe, as highlighted by a report from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which indicates that [insert data on child casualties, displacement, and trauma impact. These young individuals often face trauma, displacement, loss of family, disrupted education, and shattered social structures.

In such environments, traditional institutional models struggle to meet the diverse and complex needs of war-affected children and youth. The Harvard Humanitarian Initiative emphasizes that these institutions can inadvertently perpetuate cycles of trauma and hinder long-term well-being. There is a recognized need for a more tailored and flexible approach that acknowledges the unique circumstances of each child.

### ***The Promise of Individual Social Work***

Enter the individual social work approach—a compelling alternative that has gained traction in post-conflict zones. Research by the International Federation of Social Workers underscores that individualized care allows social workers to address the diverse needs of children and youth in a more comprehensive manner. This approach is rooted in building relationships, trust, and rapport, echoing theories of humanistic psychology that highlight the importance of individual growth and autonomy.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), individual social work empowers children and youth to play an active role in shaping their own future. This sense of agency is critical for overcoming trauma and rebuilding a positive self-identity. Notably, a study by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation found that an individualized approach significantly improved participants' self-esteem and overall well-being.

## **Key Elements of Individual Social Work in Post-Conflict Zones**

### ***Holistic Assessment***

The concept of holistic assessment in post-conflict zones entails a full awareness of the many requirements of individuals. This extends beyond only attending to their immediate practical necessities, such as sustenance, housing, and healthcare. Social workers acknowledge that conflict can have enduring effects on an individual's mental health, personal growth, and social integration, taking into account the emotional, psychological, and educational aspects. This approach recognises the need to address the complex nature of these wounds and offer comprehensive support in multiple areas.

### ***Trauma-Informed Care***

Conflict zones frequently exhibit instances of traumatic encounters that have a profound impact on the psychological well-being of individuals. Trauma-informed treatment acknowledges that individuals' behaviours and responses frequently stem from previous traumatic experiences. Social workers have a crucial role in facilitating the healing process by establishing an environment characterised by safety, trust, and sensitivity. This approach not only attends to the immediate consequences of trauma but also recognises that individuals may necessitate sustained assistance as they walk their path towards recovery and fortitude.

### ***Customised Interventions***

Customised treatments have been found to be more effective in addressing the different needs of individuals in post-conflict zones as compared to standard interventions. The experiences, difficulties, and aspirations of individuals are inherently distinct from one another. Customised interventions provide social workers with the opportunity to individualise their assistance in accordance with particular conditions. For example, a child who has experienced the loss of their family may require

psychosocial assistance and counselling, but another child who has been deprived of academic opportunities as a result of violence may get advantages from participating in catch-up classes. Through the identification and acknowledgment of unique individual requirements, social workers possess the ability to actively contribute towards the attainment of significant and enduring advancements.

### ***Community Engagement***

Community engagement is crucial for social workers in post-conflict settings, as they cannot function in isolation. Engagement with local communities is vital for various reasons. First and foremost, it recognises the skills and information that individuals within a community hold regarding their own situation. Furthermore, interventions that are congruent with cultural norms and values are more likely to be embraced and incorporated into individuals' everyday routines. Finally, active participation in the community cultivates a feeling of personal responsibility and empowerment among individuals, thereby encouraging a cooperative mindset towards the process of healing and growth.

### ***Long-Term Empowerment***

Long-term empowerment is a primary objective of individual social work in post-conflict zones, extending beyond the provision of urgent relief. This concept of empowerment extends beyond the mere fulfilment of urgent necessities, encompassing the provision of individuals with the necessary abilities, self-assurance, and means to autonomously surmount obstacles. Social workers play a crucial role in facilitating the development of individuals by promoting self-esteem, imparting essential life skills, and cultivating a sense of belonging, laying the groundwork for a more promising future. The implementation of this proactive strategy not only facilitates the individual's process of healing but also plays a significant role in fostering the overall stability and advancement of post-conflict society.

The core principle of individual social work in post-war zones entails the acknowledgment and understanding of the distinct circumstances and requirements of every individual impacted by conflict. This entails not solely attending to the superficial demands but also delving farther into the emotional, psychological, and enduring empowerment dimensions. Social workers play a vital role in promoting healing, resilience, and positive transformation among individuals who have endured the traumatic effects of conflict. This is achieved through the implementation of trauma-informed care, active engagement with communities, and the provision of customised interventions.

## **DISCUSSION**

The consequences of hostilities, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, have a lasting influence on society, affecting not only the physical infrastructure but also the well-being of its most susceptible constituents, specifically children and young individuals. Throughout history, there has been a reliance on institutions to cater to the needs of specific communities. However, extensive research and practical experience have revealed the limitations and deficiencies inherent in these systems. The deinstitutionalization paradigm has garnered increasing support as an alternative strategy, placing emphasis on the rights and needs of these young individuals. In the

present setting, the rise of individual social work as a transformative method in post-conflict areas exhibits significant potential.

The concept of deinstitutionalization emerged as a result of recognising that the provision of care inside institutional settings might hinder the development of cognitive, emotional, and social well-being, hence reinforcing patterns of dependency and restricting individual autonomy. This method is in accordance with international conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which places emphasis on the entitlement to a familial setting. However, in regions afflicted by conflict, when children and young individuals experience trauma, relocation, and disrupted social systems, the difficulties associated with institutional care are intensified. This necessitates the development of novel solutions that specifically address the distinctive situations of these locations.

Within this particular setting, there arises the personalised social work method, which presents a customised and adaptable response to the intricate requirements of children and youth affected by war. The foundation of this approach lies in the dedication to establishing connections, cultivating confidence, and enabling young individuals to proactively determine their own destinies. Fundamentally, individual social work acknowledges the importance of personal development and self-determination, reflecting the ideas of humanistic psychology.

A crucial element of this method is the comprehensive evaluation, which recognises that the consequences of conflict extend beyond current needs. The concept of holistic assessment encompasses various elements, including emotional, psychological, and educational aspects. In addition to addressing basic needs such as food and shelter, it also attends to the psychological consequences of trauma, the interruption of educational pursuits, and the emotional distress experienced by individuals. This holistic understanding acknowledges the numerous injuries that conflict imposes and provides customised assistance across several disciplines.

In light of this perspective, the implementation of trauma-informed care has utmost significance. Conflict can have a profound impact on individuals, resulting in lasting psychological trauma that influences their subsequent behaviours and responses. Trauma-informed care facilitates a secure environment for the process of healing, cultivates trust, and tactfully addresses previous traumatic experiences. The statement recognises the non-linearity of the healing process, hence emphasising the need for ongoing support. Social workers play a vital role in facilitating the process of change for young individuals as they establish an atmosphere that prioritises safety and empathy. Through their efforts, social workers assist these kids in their pursuit of healing and developing resilience.

Tailored interventions enhance the efficacy of individualised social work practices. Recognising the individuality of each child impacted by conflict, tailored treatments are designed to address their specific circumstances. Various interventions, including trauma counselling, educational remediation, and vocational training, are implemented to cater to the specific requirements of individuals. By doing so, these interventions aim to mitigate the potential perpetuation of cycles of trauma and dependency.

Furthermore, the engagement of the community serves to enhance the efficacy of this strategy. Social workers are unable to function in a solitary manner and are required to engage in collaborative efforts with local communities. Community participation involves the utilisation of local skills, cultural norms, and values, thereby fostering a sense of ownership in the process of healing. The active engagement of community members in interventions guarantees that such interventions are both contextually relevant and sustainable, aligning with the fundamental tenets of participatory development.

The concept of long-term empowerment is integral to the practice of individual social work. While the provision of immediate relief is of utmost importance, the concept of empowerment encompasses more than just fulfilling fundamental needs. The process includes the promotion of self-esteem, the instruction of essential life skills, and the cultivation of a feeling of belonging. Empowerment serves as a fundamental element of resilience, as it provides young individuals with the necessary tools and capabilities to effectively navigate and overcome traumatic experiences, define their own identities, and actively engage in the process of reconstructing their communities.

Given the ongoing crisis between Russia and Ukraine, individual social work appears to be a promising source of optimism. The impact of the conflict on children and youth is significant, necessitating the exploration of novel solutions that extend beyond conventional institutional care. The individualised method in social work provides a complete, customised, and adaptable form of assistance. The approach incorporates the fundamental tenets of trauma-informed care, tailored therapies, active involvement of the community, and sustained empowerment over an extended period. By cultivating the distinctive capabilities of every young person, this methodology alters the provision of support in areas affected by violence, promoting the process of recovery, development, and the ability to withstand challenges in the face of difficult circumstances.

## CONCLUSION

The Russia-Ukraine war has magnified the necessity for effective care strategies in war-affected areas. The deinstitutionalization paradigm offers an avenue to break free from the limitations of traditional institutional models, while individual social work provides a personalized and empowering approach. As organizations like UNICEF, WHO, and UNDP recognize the significance of these approaches, it becomes evident that the well-being and future of children and youth in conflict-ridden regions are best served through individualized, community-based care.

In the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine war, the shift towards deinstitutionalization and the adoption of individual social work approaches represent a significant step towards promoting the well-being of war-affected children and youth. By prioritizing personalized care, trauma-informed practices, and community engagement, social workers can play a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of trauma and fostering resilience. As we navigate the complex challenges of post-conflict recovery, the power of individual social work stands out as a beacon of hope for a brighter future for the youngest survivors.

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## ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ ДОГЛЯДУ: ІНДИВІДУАЛЬНА СОЦІАЛЬНА РОБОТА ДЛЯ ДІТЕЙ ТА МОЛОДІ НА ПОВОЄННИХ ТЕРИТОРІЯХ

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**Анотація:** Все більше уваги науковці та практики привертають до важливості ефективного надання соціальних послуг в постраждалих від російсько-української війни регіонах. Традиційний підхід, заснований на створенні соціальних служб все більше піддається критиці через дедалі більше визнання переваг, пов'язаних із адаптованими та індивідуальними втручаннями, що використовуються у соціальній роботі, особливо в контексті дітей та молоді.

У статті досліджується поняття деінституціалізації, наголошується на важливості її провадження регіонах, що постраждали від війни; підкреслюється цінність персоналізованого підходу до соціальної роботи задля сприяння благополуччя дітей та молоді, які постраждали від російсько-української війни.

Ця стаття ґрунтується на комплексному концептуальному огляді відповідної літератури, що включає книги, журнали та пов'язані наукові статті в межах конкретної галузі дослідження. У процесі дослідження намагалися з'ясувати виклики та наслідки, пов'язані з впровадженням інституціоналізованих практик соціальної роботи. У цьому дослідженні також вивчено і висвітлено потенційні прагматичні переваги персоналізованих втручань у практику соціальної роботи у зонах військового конфлікту, особливо зосереджуючись на роботі з дітьми та підлітками. У статті також може схарактеризовано ключові фактори, які слід враховувати під час взаємодії з людьми, особливо дітьми та молоддю, у регіонах, що постарждали від війни.

Комплексне висвітлення результатів дослідження послужило б цінним ресурсом для подальшого вивчення означеної проблеми, особливо щодо використання персоналізованого підходу до соціальної роботи в конкретних обставинах повторних вторгнень та військових конфліктів.

**Ключові слова:** інституціоналізація соціальної роботи; індивідуалізація соціальної роботи; соціальні послуги.

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