



Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction

Evdokiya Kholostova

Doctor of History, Professor, Director of Institute for Additional Professional Education of Workers for Social Services of Moscow Department of Labour and Social Protection of Population

Address: Moscow, The Russian Federation 105066, 1-y Basmanniy lane, 10

Email: ipk@mos.ru

Website: www.soc-education.ru

The current year in Russia is marked by the 25th anniversary of profession of "social work". Social work is on the first line of realization of state social policy aimed to decrease poverty.

The poverty is a serious social problem and each society finds the capable methods of impact on coping with this issue. At the same time the solution of this problem substantially depends on understanding of the definition of "poverty".

Such values as extreme deficiency of resources, absence or critical lack of means of livelihood are usually recognized as absolute poverty. On the other hand it is a comparison of the income of the certain person or a household with a median income and with the average level of the income in this society. In many countries the poor people are whom per capita incomes are lower than a half or two thirds of this average, median value.

Quarter of the century back in Russia the radical social and economic transformations aimed at transition from directive to market economy have been started. This process was followed by serious shocks, sharp social stratification and impoverishment of considerable group of the population. So, only according to official statistics, by the beginning of 1992 every third Russian citizen belonged to the group of poor people. During this period in Russia the network of the services developing programs of social support for the population have been formed. In comparison with the specified period now slightly less than 20 million people belong to the poor group that means more than 13% of all population. Thus, poverty indicators, after spasmodic growth in the early nineties, have decreased almost in two and a half times.

It is possible to note that these indicators became worse in comparison with indicators of previous year due to the influence of the next stage of social and economic crisis. (See Table 1.)

	Number of population with money income lower than minimum subsistence level	
	Million people	% of general number of population
1992	49,3	33,5
2014	16,1	11,2
2015	19,1	13,3

Table 1. Number of population with money income lower than minimum subsistence level.

On the other hand, if median approach is applied, that means to include in the poor group those citizens and households which per capita income isn't higher than a half of a median rate, that is average income level for all population, then the poor person is not every tenth, but every fifth resident of the country.

Changes in structure of poverty are caused not only the general positive development of economy, but also purposeful policy of social support of citizens with a low income level. Today in our country the standard basis for receiving the guaranteed social help is the condition of low-security, that means average per capita income of the individual which is lower than the minimum subsistence level or equal to it.

The subsistence level is the cumulative cost of the minimum set of food, non-food products and services, obligatory payments and charges necessary for ensuring of human activity.

People whose average per capita income doesn't reach minimum subsistence are called needy and enjoy the right for measures of the state social support.

It should be noted that regions of Russia are very much differ at life expenses and the level of the income. Therefore scale of the state social support is considerably differentiated in certain subjects of the Russian Federation.

Needy families, needy citizens who are living alone owing due to circumstances the average per capita income lower than the size of a subsistence level can be beneficiaries of the state social support.

The STATE SOCIAL HELP – granting to needy families, needy and lonely citizens: social benefits, additional social payments to pension, subsidies, social services, essential goods (including fuel, food, clothes, footwear, medicines and other types of the natural help).

Additional social payments to pension – transfer a sum of money to the pensioner's account to raise pension up to the subsistence level of the pensioner (or up to the level of the social standard of the pensioner exceeding the subsistence level as in Moscow).

It is one of the most mass payments as it infringes on essential interests of nearly 5 million 300 thousand people – non-working pensioners. Mass character of such payment gives a good illustration

to process of reforming of the structure of pension system of the Russian Federation: every seventh citizen who has been granted with any type of pension receives monthly additional social payments in order to raise the level of his pension to subsistence level.

The considerable scale displays the payments to a family child (children) allowance. The sizes of monthly allowances depend even more on decisions of regional legislative authorities than payments to elderly people.

Today recipients of such allowance are more than 8 million (8.056057) children that equal to about 29% of all children's population of the corresponding age. It is slightly lower, than was 5 years ago (36.5%).

On a number of regions decrease can be even more considerable. So, the number of recipients of child allowance in Moscow has decreased in 5 years by 3 times – from 45% of all children to 15% of children. It is connected not with the fact that the standard of living for short term has considerably increased in the capital. Just annual assessment needs procedure was introduced in the mechanism of registration of the right for allowance, and now families which really don't belong to needy group lose the right for the child allowance. It should be noted that the requirement to provide documents confirming the needs is introduced by the Federal Law for all regions of Russia since the beginning of the current year.

At the same time, there is a considerable problem connected with the fact that even allowance eligibility and timely transfer of children's grants not always bring families out of poverty condition. On the contrary, families with children are the majority part of the main social poor group.

Families with single child have one and half times more chances to become needy, than families without children; with two children – twice more, families with 3 and more children – 4 times more often are needy, than families without children.

One more problem is complexity of management of granting social benefits to families with children. For example, in France one family allowance is paid. In Russia - tens of grants. In the city of Moscow, for example, 41 types of benefits are among payments to families with children. Payments are made in connection with the birth of a child or a child foster care (lump-sum allowance), for stimulation of the family care for orphans and labour compensation of adoptive parents, for increasing of a standard of living of families with children in the context of price increase for food or school range goods, etc. Such divisibility is connected with the fact that separate grants were entered serially, with the purpose to solve these or those problems of families with children, and weren't reconsidered, not systematized subsequently. It results in complexity of process of appointment and payment of benefits, in lack of feedback between rendering the social help and improvement of life situation of citizens.

Housing subsidies – compensation of part of expenses paid for utilities, or decrease in utility costs for disabled people, veterans of the Great Patriotic War or other privilege groups of people – are among measures of social support.

Existence of extensive system of social support leads to the fact that number of recipients has installation on a dependence, on receiving undeserved payments, on refusal of labor employment.

In order to overcome dependence, encourage motivation to labor employment the state social contract or the contract of social adaptation is entered – provides payments, help with startup business services, employment assistance, etc.

The second direction of combating poverty is social care of elderly people and disabled people provided at home or in residential care establishments. It allows the elderly and depended citizens to support autonomy, to receive free or on very preferential terms care, leaving, household, social and medical, hygienic services. Under the circumstances of demographic aging of population when the share of persons of the senior generation has exceeded a quarter of number of all population, then more and more elderly people reach age of eighty, ninety, hundred years, development of social service, available to all citizens regardless of income level, is an urgent need.

"Strategy of Europe 2020" stipulates that in the course of application of measures for overcoming poverty and social exception, it is necessary to achieve of such target indicator as decrease of the share of young people (age from 18 till 24 years) who don't complete education and vocational training. Similar measures are implemented also in Russia.

The system of social service conducts work with conflict families, trying to restore their social wellbeing and to help children to cope with school difficulties. Specialists of social institutions help graduates of establishments for orphan children and children without parental support (with the same age range from 18 to 24 years), to get access to professional education, to find a job, to have an opportunity to achieve social stability in their lives, to be able to sustain themselves.

Finally, the direction of overcoming of consequences of poverty is CHARITY & SPONSORSHIP which experiences renaissance in recent years and becomes more active mainly for overcoming of any emergency situations – for example, when it is necessary to raise funds for ensuring expensive treatment or surgical operations for disabled children. It is noticeable that public support of such activity steadily increases and that trend is considered like "fashion on charity".

Combating poverty – long, probably, even infinite process in system of implementation of social protection policy. Its contents and the applied measures considerably depend on resources available in society and character of purposes is put in front of it.

In Russia under unconditional recognition of need to provide social support to the weakest, vulnerable and helpless individuals, the focus is to encourage and stimulate people, who are able to work, to overcome weakness and dependence, to provide an access to self-reliance, to maintain worthy standard of living on their own. The significant contribution to this activity is made by nearly 600 thousand social workers of system of social protection of population.