



Sustainability and sustainable development

Magdalena Stefańska
Editor



eISBN 978-83-8211-074-6

<https://doi.org/10.18559/978-83-8211-074-6>



© Copyright by Poznań University of Economics and Business
Poznań 2021



This textbook is available under the Creative Commons 4.0 license – Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works

2.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION SECTOR



Agnieszka Chomiuk

Poznań University of Economics and Business

Abstract: The described project assumes the development of a new method for solving the problem of homelessness, in particular, with regard to the field of supporting people in an exceptionally difficult situation or those suffering from mental disorders and/or addictions to achieve independence and overcome problems.

The aforementioned project is the first attempt at implementing this method in Poland. The basic assumption of the method is to solve the main problem of a person in the homelessness crisis, which is the lack of housing, and only then to provide support in solving other problems.

The aim of the chapter is to give rise to discussion on the innovative solutions implemented by one of the local government to remedy the problems of homeless people. The issue is based on SDGs.

The second described case study is the “Safe Future of People with Intellectual Disability”—implemented by the Polish Association for People with Intellectual Disability—reflecting the tested model based on support circles, i.e. social support networks in order to empower people with intellectual disabilities.

The main objective of the “Safe Future” model is to develop and implement solutions that ensure legal, financial and social security of people with intellectual disabilities in situations where they have lost the support of the family. The concept of the support circles tested in this model is based on built networks of connections rooted in the social capital generated among the local community.

The last example of sustainable development in the non-governmental sector is Social Cooperative Sunny Hill—as a social enterprise it is a unique entity on the market. It conducts economic activity, the main goal of which is not profit, but social and professional re-integration of people at risk of social exclusion. Contrary to a traditional enterprises, it does not distribute the profit among shareholders, but allocates it to social purposes.

Keywords: Housing First method, innovations in solving the problem of homelessness, social capital, support circles, social cooperative, social enterprise.

2.1. From basic human rights to economic and social profit: solving the problem of homelessness based on the “Housing First” method

Providing shelter is a compulsory task of the commune, regulated in the act on social assistance (Article 17.(1) (3) of the Act on In the Polish social welfare system). Helping people in the homelessness crisis is largely implemented according to the so-called “ladder model”. This model assumes that, firstly, all problems of persons in the homelessness crisis, related to their health, functioning, obligations, addictions and professional activity, should be solved. Only after these problems are resolved, can a homeless person count on aid in the form of housing. Until receiving assistance in the latter, a person in a homelessness crisis may benefit from assistance in the form of shelter at shelters or night shelters. Many years of Polish experience in work on solving the problem of homelessness show that the institutional form of assistance based on shelters and night shelters does not bring the expected results and the percentage of people able to come out of homelessness is low. The process of beating homelessness based on the “ladder model” is often spread out over many years, and the distant perspective of providing housing assistance is demotivating for people in a homelessness situation.

Working with people in a homelessness crisis also proves that the ladder model and institutional help are forms of aid that not every homeless person will be able to use. Such people, for example, are those with mental disorders or addicts who either cannot or are unable to take advantage of the available institutional offer. Due to the lack of alternative methods, such people are exposed to many years of staying in non-residential places, and thus, to death from hypothermia in winter. Homeless individuals who do not take advantage of shelter at institutions generate the need to provide support through frequent visits to emergency medicine facilities, sobering-up stations, seeking food or material assistance. In the autumn and winter months, monitoring municipal services is intensified in the case of these people because the threat to their health and life, and in the summer period, due to the notification of asking for donations.

The Housing First method and its foundations were formulated by Dr. Sam Tsemberis in the 90s of the previous century in New York, at the “Pathways to Housing” organisation (Cendrowicz, 2017). In its first assumptions, the work model was aimed towards people with mental disorders who did not find themselves the help provided by traditional methods and/or used this form of help for many years without the effect of becoming independent. The innovation in this method is reversal of the order in providing help. First, the basic problem is solved, which is the lack of “shelter”, and then, intensive support in solving the problems behind long-term homelessness, e.g. mental disorders, addictions, debt, unemployment, social maladjustment, etc.

The idea of Housing First allows to address the fundamental human right to exit homelessness, in particular, through access to housing-based solutions. It is not something a person has to earn or prove deserving by treatment. The Housing First method also recognises that all people, even those experiencing a homeless crisis, are able to decide for themselves and take responsibility for their lives.

The basic principles of the method include:

- housing is a human right, flats are independent and the rental safety is guaranteed by law;
- support services focus on mental and physical health as well as education, employment, interpersonal skills and are offered for as long as the person needs them;
- the programme's flats are independent and dispersed in the local community;
- client's choice and self-determination are fundamental in therapy;
- recovery orientation;
- a harm reduction approach is used, which assumes that tackling addiction is a long-term process and reducing harm to human well-being is a priority (Pleace, 2014).

The Housing First method has been implemented in Gdańsk, Warsaw and Wrocław as part of the project. The leader of this project is Towarzystwo Pomocy [Eng. Society for Aid] named after St. Brother Albert's Board of Directors (https://www.bratalbert.org/czym_sie_zajmujemy.html).

The project partners are:

- Associao para o Estudo e IntegraoPsicossocial (Portugal);
- National Federation for Solving the Problem of Homelessness;
- Warsaw City Hall;
- Wrocław City Hall;
- Gdańsk City Hall.

The problem of homelessness is experienced by about 5,000 people in Warsaw, Wrocław and Gdańsk (<https://www.bratalbert.org/projekt-housing-first-najpierw-mieszkanie.html>). The main goal of the project is to implement a new work model—"Flat First", in cooperation with a foreign partner, the Associao para o Estudo e IntegraoPsicossocial organisation from Portugal, which has many years of experience in using this method (*ibidem*). The Housing First programme is a method of work addressed to people in a homelessness crisis, in a special situation: suffering from mental disorders and/or addictions, i.e. with so-called double diagnosis and experiencing chronic homelessness manifested by many years (at least 6) of staying in non-residential places, such as: on streets, plots of land, empty spaces, etc. Many years of experience working with people in a homelessness crisis are devoted to people who, for various reasons, were unable to benefit from traditional forms of assistance.

Questions / tasks

1. With regard to international human rights treaties and their underlying values, in the Housing First method, the need to respect the rights of people experiencing homelessness are highlighted, including the right to housing. Do you think it is correct to assume that housing assistance is a fundamental right that should be provided in the first instance to a person who needs it?
2. From an economic point of view, investing in the Housing First method is expensive, as it involves providing housing and equipment as well as therapeutic and social support. Being homeless, however, causes long-term costs related to the hospitalisation of people on the streets, work of social services, costs of stay in sobering-up stations, prisons and detention centers, and providing food aid. Thus, what is your approach to the cost of the Housing First method?
3. What are the social costs of the lack of effective methods to overcome homelessness, apart from those economic?
4. What are the conditions for the effectiveness of Housing First?

2.2. Social capital in building a safe future for people with intellectual disabilities

Traditionally, disability has been narrowly defined as a strictly medical problem, to which the response is appropriate treatment and rehabilitation. Nowadays, the field of understanding disability has changed significantly. Currently, the functioning of a disabled person, including functioning in society, is at its centre (Antczak, Grabowska, & Polańska, 2018).

The independent functioning of people with intellectual disability in society is not possible without a built-in, permanent local support system. In Poland, there are various models and forms of assistance for people with intellectual disabilities, under which health, rehabilitation and social services are provided. However, this assistance does not provide conditions for independent functioning of people with intellectual disabilities, which becomes a particularly difficult problem in the event of the death of their legal guardians. This often results in the situation that a person with an intellectual disability must use 24-hour forms of institutional assistance, even though with such support, she/he could function in his/her natural environment.

The “Safe future of people with intellectual disabilities” model is a comprehensive concept of community support for people with intellectual disabilities in the local community, at their place of residence. The model assumes the preparation of a person with disabilities and their closest local environment to function independently, based on the concept of support circles, i.e. networks of connections between people and institutions.

The project is implemented in the form of a partnership among nationwide organisations and institutions: the Polish Association for People with Intellectual Disability (Leader), the BORIS Social Initiative Movement Service Office, the “Tęcza” Association and the University of Warsaw. At the local level, in 8 communities, the partners are: Horyzont Association, Gmina and City of Goleniów, Jarosław, Olsztyn and Ostróda poviats, as well as the districts of Nidzica, Elbląg, Suwałki, Gdańsk (<https://psoni.org.pl/>; <https://boris.org.pl/>; <https://teczka.org>).

The Polish support system for people with intellectual disabilities was dominated by a model which assigned responsibility for their care to the family, and in the event of loss of family support, to institutional help. Apart from the difficult availability of places in specialised institutions, this solution causes the marginalisation of people with intellectual disabilities by “shutting” them out for many years in institutions and trauma related not only to the loss of family members, but their entire life.

Provision of support in their natural local environment would be a much lower economic cost for the state, social for the environment and individual for a disabled person. This would be possible in a local environment with high social capital, created networks of institutional connections and social ties as well as trust, on the basis of which the support system could be built. Due to the low level of social capital in Poland, measures should be taken in the direction of its increase, enabling the creation of support circles around people with intellectual disabilities in their local community.

The model assumes the creation of support circles in each local community, formed around a person with intellectual disability. Each person and family would develop their own plan for the future, including that financial, with regard to housing, health and functioning in the local community. Additionally, in each of the tested environments, a Coalition of Allies would be created and social as well as educational campaigns carried out to raise the social awareness of inhabitants (<https://kregiwsparcia.pl/model-bezpieczna-przyszlosc-2/>).

The model is based on the potential of local social services and infrastructure, as well as social capital. Building social capital in the local community of people with intellectual disabilities is like weaving a strong network around them. Mutual ties, trust, activity and cooperation can create circles of support that will ensure the safe functioning of people with disabilities, with maximum commitment and decision-making based on a strong social support from the family, municipal institutions, neighbours, services and organisations.

Questions / tasks

1. Can social capital be the foundation for building support circles around people with intellectual disabilities?

2. How can we multiply social capital in the local environment?
3. Is the community support model the right direction to help people with intellectual disabilities?

2.3. Profit plus or about the social and economic value of social entrepreneurship on a concrete example

The Słoneczne Wzgórze Foundation [Eng. Sunny Hill Foundation] was established in 2012 to provide comprehensive assistance to people with disabilities and their families in the area of personal development and social and professional activation through, *inter alia*, education, rehabilitation and integration. This assumption was implemented over the years, primarily as part of Occupational Therapy Workshops (OTW).

Wielobranżowa Spółdzielnia Socjalna Słoneczne Wzgórze [Eng. Sunny Hill Multi-sector Social Cooperative] was established in 2014 as a place of professional activation for participants of OTW and other people at risk of social exclusion (<http://sunnyhill.pl/>).

Profit in a social cooperative is important. Its generation allows for investment in the social and professional reintegration of members and the implementation of public benefit objectives. At the same time, profit in the cooperative is of secondary nature, because the gainful activity is not an end in itself, it is only intended to pursue a social mission.

The main goal of the Cooperative's activity is to restore people at risk of social exclusion from the labour market.

The economic activity of the Cooperative includes (<http://sunnyhill.pl/>):

- catering and catering services;
- educational and artistic workshops;
- service of training and study visits;
- production of hand-made art products;
- service of special events for children;
- providing accommodation.

For socially-responsible activities, including the area of relations with employees and the local community, respect for the environment, principles of fair relations with stakeholders, the Cooperative was awarded the title: "Responsible and Socially Sensitive Entrepreneur".

The establishment of the Sunny Hill Multi-sector Social Cooperative was a response to the pressing problem regarding the low level of employability of the Foundation's charges. People with disabilities are treated in a discriminatory manner on the labour market, and company policies are rarely aimed at equality and adapting workplaces to the needs of people.

The Cooperative conducts extensive activities in the field of professional integration, creating workplaces adapted to the needs of people with disabilities (<http://sunnyhill.pl/>). It mainly employs people at risk of social exclusion, including those with disabilities. Employment in the cooperative is constantly increasing—from 5 people employed in 2014 to 13 in 2017.

The cooperative invests in the development of employees by improving their skills through a system of courses and training. It creates the possibility of social and professional activation among OTW participants. The cooperative also prepares people with disabilities to enter the open labour market, who receive the comprehensive service of social and professional reintegration through the cooperation of the cooperative and OTW. The cooperative supports its employees and members comprehensively through recreational, cultural and environmental activities. The members of the cooperative have the opportunity to participate in the Teatr Poza Sztuką [Eng. Theatre Beyond Art] programme, a project that promotes culture among children and youth through various theater forms, popularising vocal art, author's songs, etc.

The cooperative takes an active part in partnership projects based on permanent cooperation, thus, spreading good practices in the area of socio-professional reintegration among people at risk of social exclusion. It cooperates with social economy entities, local government units, social welfare institutions, reintegration entities and organisations dealing with people experiencing disabilities (Chomiuk & Gabryelewicz, 2017).

Questions / tasks

1. Is it possible to subordinate the economic activity to a social mission?
2. Social enterprises often operate on the verge of profitability, and are sometimes subsidised by public institutions. Is such activity justified from an economic point of view?
3. What added value do social enterprises generate?
4. Is the social enterprise a significant employer on the labour market considering the group of people employed there?

References

- Antczak, R., Grabowska, I., & Polańska, Z. (2018). Podstawy i źródła danych statystyki osób niepełnosprawnych. *Statystyka w Praktyce*, 2(681) 2018, 21-43.
- Cendrowicz, D. (2017). Ograniczanie występowania zjawiska bezdomności na przykładzie programu Housing-First. *Ekonomia Społeczna*, 2(2017), 37–47.
- Chomiuk, A., & Gabryelewicz, K. (2017). Efektywność przedsiębiorstw społecznych w realizacji celów społecznych i biznesowych. In M. Frączek (Ed.), *Ekonomia Społeczna*, 1(2017). Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Krakowie, Małopolska Szkoła Administracji Publicznej.

<http://sunnyhill.pl/>
<https://kregiwsparcia.pl/idea-projektu/>
<https://kregiwsparcia.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Model-BEZPIECZNA-PRZYSZ%C5%81OS%CC%81C%CC%81.pdf>
https://kregiwsparcia.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ABC_W-kierunku-udanego-z%CC%87ycia-doros%C5%82ych-oso%CC%81b_PORADNIK.pdf
http://www.ostoja.org.pl/pliki/Cytowska_B.pdf
https://www.bratalbert.org/czym_sie_zajmujemy.html
<https://www.bratalbert.org/projekt-housing-first-najpierw-mieszkanie.html>
[https://psoni.org.pl/;](https://psoni.org.pl/)
[https://boris.org.pl/;](https://boris.org.pl/)
<https://tecza.org>
 Pleace, N. (2014). The case for Housing First in the European Union: A critical evaluation of concerns about effectiveness. *European Journal of Homelessness*, 7(2).

Links to websites and publications in which the topics presented are more widely described:
<https://www.czynajpierwmieszkanie.pl/najpierw-mieszkanie/>
<http://bazekon.icm.edu.pl/bazekon/element/bwmeta1.element.ekon-element-000171530790>
<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/housing-first/>
<https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/housing-accommodation-and-supports/housing-first>
https://www.feantsaresearch.org/public/user/Observatory/12-3_EJH_2018_v04.pdf
<https://msap.uek.krakow.pl/publikacje/>
<https://www.ekonomiaspoleczna.gov.pl/Lista,przedsiębiorstw,społecznych,4069.html>
<https://przedsiębiorstvospołeczne.pl/dlaczego-i-kiedy-przedsiębiorstwo-jest-społeczne/>
<https://www.ekonomiaspoleczna.gov.pl/Ekonomia,Społeczna,i,Solidarna,4016.html>
<http://www.revesnetwork.eu/index.php>
https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy_en
<https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/>
<https://www.socialplatform.org/service/social-economy-and-entrepreneurship/>
<https://plan.ca/>
<https://planinstitute.ca/>
<http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/>
<https://inclusive-solutions.com/>
<https://www.community-circles.co.uk/>
<https://sharedlivesplus.org.uk/>
<https://www.rytmus.org/>
<https://www.livesthroughfriends.org/index.php>
<https://www.petagma.gr/>
<https://arcwestchester.org/>
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/>