

**Community Development Case Studies in Asia, Shashidar Channappa and Nagaraj Naik, SUVVI Publications, ISBN: 978-81-953397-2-3, INR 550, Ebook: VIVIDLIPI**

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# Community Development Case Studies in Asia

**A Collection of Contemporary Cases From Social Work Perspective**



Editors

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Against the incessant cries of West and Eurocentric hegemony in social work education, research and practice, this book, edited by Shashidar Channappa and Nagaraj Naik, adds to the body of literature reflecting decolonised approaches to community based, social work practices. The book consists of twelve carefully crafted chapters describing research and practice approaches across eight Asian countries, four of which reflect the South Asian contexts of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka with others including Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam. As decolonisation is high on the international and many national agendas in social work, this is a timely book.

The book begins with a compelling chapter by Naoki Nakamura, who briefly discusses community development broadly in Japan. It then hones in on community-based services for children and youth in difficult circumstances, highlighting the importance of strengthening the capacities of frontline social services workers in community-based approaches. The “Kodomo-shokudo”— children’s cafeteria has evolved into a national grassroots movement, with 3, 718 now existing across the country, and “Colabo” – a street-based service for runaway teenage girls, were established because of the growing poverty and its associated socio-economic challenges. By providing the empirical data that contributed to the conceptualisation of the community-based approaches, the author succeeds in engendering a non-judgmental approach to working with families and children. Interestingly, the 2020 International Association of Community Development’s definition of community development is modelled on that of the global definition of social work that was adopted by the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers in 2014.

The second chapter by Fernandes and colleagues, which focuses on the work of the Parents’ Association of Deaf Children (PADC), is a reminder that deafness, like other concerns, is not an individual affair. It describes a comprehensive mother-centric model designed

to build mothers' skills and confidence to deal with the multiple challenges that they experience in raising children with deafness and working with mother-child dyads in developing language and comprehension skills. The detailed descriptions of the incremental benefits of each of the stages of work are useful, as they lend themselves to replication. Notwithstanding the excellent work of the PADC, there is a chance that the organisation, with its focus on mothers, reinforces gender stereotypes about child-rearing responsibilities. What are the roles of fathers in relation to child-rearing? In discussing the limitations of PADC, it would have been good if the authors included the lack of inclusion of fathers as a possible limitation. A distinctive advantage is the consideration of mothers of deaf children, as experts by experience, their inclusion as service providers in PADC and as co-authors of this chapter.

Bhuiyan and Islam, in chapter three, discuss the rural-urban discrepancies in Bangladesh and they then focus on the results of a qualitative, in-depth study of two rural villages. The results of the study challenge dominant constructions of rural villages as they evolve into small towns, with increased access to resources, expansion of entrepreneurship and modernisation of agriculture, improved living standards, changes from extended to nuclear family structures, shifts away from patriarchal authoritarianism, and a decrease in the incidence of gender based violence and child marriages. Yet, the authors note the introduction of dowry, which can disadvantage women, and an unfortunate concomitant – the decrease in the use of indigenous practices. It is, in many ways, a story of hope, and it would have been interesting to have some understanding of how the two villages reported on compare with other villages in Bangladesh, given that rural poverty remains a significant problem.

Chapter 4 takes the reader to India, where Hemlatha discusses displacements and loss of jobs and livelihoods induced by large scale infra-structural dam development in India. The case study describes a participatory action model of

University-community collaboration to achieve economic and social empowerment of women involved in the project, aligned with national development imperatives. The theme of participatory development is continued in Chapter 5, where Hussain discusses the role of NGOs in achieving national development goals through participatory approaches in rural communities in Pakistan, taking into account contextual realities and gender dynamics. Chapter 6 tells the sad stories of child labourers in Bangladesh who are not given sufficient legal protection in the tea garden industry. By combining quantitative and qualitative research, Islam and Raham lend voice to children in detailing the causes and consequences of child labour, including sexual exploitation on the job and hazardous working conditions.

In Chapter 7, Rahmawati and Fahrudin discuss asset assessment as a model for empowerment in fulfilling the government's *Remote Indigenous Community Welfare Development Program* in Indonesia, with a focus on utilising the strengths, resources and wisdom of isolated traditional communities, characterised by geographic remoteness, poverty and resource constraints, to engender development. They also underscore the relationship between the State and NGOs in promoting asset assessment, rather than a deficit, need-based approach in development.

Somananda, in chapter 8, details the contribution of what is called Buddhist social work and the impressive and much-needed community development programs run by Buddhist centres in Sri Lanka. The close relationship between social work and Buddhism is evident. My readings on the life and teachings of Buddha reflect that He was deeply moved by human suffering, as seen in the Four Noble Truths, which educate about witnessing the existence of suffering; recognising the causes of suffering; having the goal of ending suffering; and ways of ending suffering. The prominent Vietnamese monk and social activist Thich Nhat Hanh asserted that if those causes rest in violating socio-economic and political structures, then our efforts at ending suffering must be located there. People of all religious

faiths and those who are agnostic theists, and atheists bear the seeds of the *Bodhisattva*. All religions can liberate or subjugate, and with subjugation comes oppression and violations of human rights. To talk of Buddhism in social work is different from the claim to a Buddhist social work. We must see the positive and liberating values of Buddhism in social work, as we must see the values of Bahaim, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and the myriad of other existing religions of the world in social work.

Reflecting a shift from the other case studies in this book, Singh and colleagues describe, in Chapter 9, the content of and participants' responses to a train the trainer workshop for parents and caregivers in behaviour modification and self-management in caring for children with disabilities. While it seemed to be a once-off event, the authors recognise the importance of ongoing training. Similar to the work of Rahmawati and Fahrudin, Nhung and Hai, in chapter 10 also focus on asset-based community development in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic in Vietnam. They highlight the importance of leadership, public administration, and community mobilisation, with multi-pronged, multiple system-level responses that "link micro-assets to the micro-environment" (p. 173) to cope with the consequences of a virus that has been wreaking havoc across the world.

Pandey and Yu discuss the experiences of 15 Indian women living in Taiwan, reflecting stories of hope. The macro context of Taiwan with its secular beliefs, generous public benefits, access to resources, and safe environment make daily life adjustment easier, as the women's narratives reveal. The final chapter by Silva provides an excellent example of a holistic and organic approach to community development, taking as a starting point the problem of water scarcity and environmental disasters in people's lives. The roles of social workers as coordinators, brokers and facilitators, using existing indigenous community assets in development, and working with people in such ways that they

become their own advocates, are all commendable.

The strength of many of the chapters is that they do not merely provide critiques and abstract suggestions but describe the details of locally specific or indigenous practices that can be drawn upon and replicated, not only in Asia but

in other parts of the world. It is heartening to note the shift away from narrow, case-management, pathology-based approaches to group and community approaches that consider the structural dimensions of people's lives. It is, indeed, a resource book for people across many disciplines interested in community-based practices.