IASSW AIETS

# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK (IASSW)

# Innovations and Best Practices in Social WorkEducation

## REPORT

## PARTNERING INSTITUTIONS



**Madras Christian College**
Department of Social Work
Chennai, India



**University of Michigan**
School of Social Work
Ann Arbor, Michigan,
United States of America



**Makerere University**
School of Social Sciences
Kampala, Uganda

Funded by

International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW)

IASSW

# Executive Summary

Innovative teaching pedagogies and effective learning practices are essential to preparing social workers to address social challenges in an increasingly internationalized world. The project, Innovations and Best Practices in Social Work Education, was developed as a collaboration between Madras Christian College (India), the University of Michigan (United States), and Makerere University (Uganda), with support from the International Association of Schools of Social Work. The project created a platform for social work educators, students, and fieldwork practitioners to share, explore, and document innovative practices across diverse cultural and academic contexts. Focused on curriculum development, teaching methodologies, fieldwork instruction, and research, the initiative invited participants to submit abstracts highlighting social work innovations and best practices. Selected contributors recorded 6–7-minute video presentations, creating an accessible format for international knowledge exchange. The project resulted in 30 abstracts and 29 video presentations from India, the United States, and Uganda, a digital video archive, and a printed book of abstracts. By documenting and disseminating context-specific innovations, the initiative fosters reflective learning, strengthens international collaborations, and encourages social workers worldwide to learn from diverse approaches. Ultimately, the project contributes to ongoing efforts to advance the quality, relevance, and global exchange of social work education and practice.

# Project Rationale & Purpose

Social work education plays a vital role in preparing competent, ethical, and socially responsible professionals to address emerging social challenges. Innovative teaching pedagogies and effective learning practices are essential to enhancing the quality of social work education. Sharing experiences and best practices across institutions and countries provides valuable opportunities for knowledge exchange, professional development, and academic collaboration.

The project **"Innovations in Best Practices of Teaching Pedagogy in Social Work Education"** is an international collaborative initiative involving Madras Christian College, India; the University of Michigan, United States of America; and Makerere University, Uganda, with support from the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). **The project aimed to identify, showcase, and document Innovative & Best practices in Social Work education across diverse cultural and academic contexts.**

As part of this initiative, faculty members, students, and fieldwork practitioners were invited to submit abstracts highlighting their innovations and best practices in social work education. Selected contributors shared their work through 6-7-minute video presentations of the innovative approaches, experiences, and practices in a concise and accessible format. The project focused on innovations in curriculum development, teaching methodologies, fieldwork instruction and supervision, and evaluation practices.

This documentation brings together the innovative practices and contributions shared by participants from the collaborating institutions. It seeks to facilitate knowledge exchange, encourage reflective learning, and promote the wider dissemination of effective pedagogical approaches in social work education. The contributions support the vision of developing a digital repository of best practices that can serve as a valuable resource for social work educators and institutions worldwide.

We sincerely acknowledge the support of IASSW and extend our appreciation to all three partner institutions, faculty members, students, fieldwork practitioners, researchers, and contributors for their valuable participation in this collaborative initiative. We hope this documentation will inspire further innovation, strengthen international academic partnerships, and contribute to the continuous advancement of social work education globally.

# Acknowledgement

We, the three partnering institutions Madras Christian College, India; the University of Michigan, United States of America; and Makerere University, Uganda express our sincere gratitude to the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) for its support and encouragement towards the project "Innovations in Best Practices of Teaching Pedagogy in Social Work Education." This collaborative initiative has provided a valuable opportunity for the three institutions to share knowledge, experiences, and innovative practices in social work education across different cultural and academic contexts. The project focuses on identifying and documenting innovative approaches in curriculum development, teaching methodologies, fieldwork instruction and supervision, and evaluation practices. It also aims to strengthen international collaboration and promote knowledge exchange between social work educators across the Global North and the Global South.

We gratefully acknowledge IASSW for supporting this initiative, which contributes to the advancement of social work education through the documentation and dissemination of effective teaching practices. The collaborative efforts of the three institutions have enabled the sharing of faculty, student, and fieldwork innovations, creating opportunities for mutual learning and professional development.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all the faculty members, researchers, and participants who contributed their knowledge, experiences, and expertise to this project. Their valuable contributions have helped enrich the documentation of innovative practices and support the broader objective of strengthening social work education globally. We look forward to continuing our collective efforts to promote innovation, international collaboration, and excellence in social work education. We sincerely thank IASSW for its continued commitment to advancing social work education and fostering meaningful partnerships among institutions worldwide.

*With sincere appreciation and gratitude, On behalf of the three partnering institutions:*
School of Social Work, University of Michigan, United States of America
Department of Social Work, Madras Christian College, India
School of Social Sciences, Makerere University, Uganda

# About the Project

The project “Innovations and Best Practices in Social Work Education” is an international collaborative initiative involving three institutions: the Department of Social Work, Madras Christian College, India; the School of Social Work, University of Michigan, United States of America; and the School of Social Sciences, Makerere University, Uganda.

The project aims to provide a platform for social work educators across India, Uganda, and the United States of America to share, explore, and document innovative teaching practices in social work education. It focuses on innovations in curriculum development, teaching methodologies, fieldwork instruction and supervision, and evaluation practices. The initiative recognises the importance of sharing diverse educational experiences and approaches across cultural and academic contexts.

The project identifies three categories of innovation: incremental innovation, which builds upon existing practices over time; radical innovation, which addresses current issues through significant changes; and disruptive innovation, which challenges established theories, methods, and pedagogical approaches.

As part of the project, the partnering institutions developed an online gallery to showcase innovative practices in social work education. Faculty members and other participants contributed through presentations and documentation of successful practices under three categories: faculty innovation, student innovation, and fieldwork innovation. Abstracts from each presentation are compiled in this document.

An important outcome of the project is the development of a digital library of innovative teaching practices in social work education. The documented practices are available to educational institutions and social work educators worldwide, encouraging knowledge exchange, interdisciplinary learning, and the continuous improvement of social work teaching and learning. Through this international collaboration, the project worked to strengthen social work education by promoting innovation, sharing context-specific experiences, and fostering meaningful academic partnerships between institutions in the Global North and the Global South.

# Process of Implementation

## School of Social Work, University of Michigan, USA

Initially, we proposed an in-person forum or symposium where selected participants would share their innovations or best practices via lightning talks. However, after navigating the pandemic, the project team determined that many US partners were likely unwilling or unable to travel for an in-person gathering. Given this, we modified our original plan to instead have accepted participants record 6-7 minute lightning-talk style videos that could be compiled and shared online.

We determined this modified approach would allow us to share the results more broadly than only with folks who could attend a less accessible in-person symposium. Additionally, this approach made it easier to include participants from institutions located further away from the University of Michigan. Without this modification, we were concerned we would likely only have participation from the state of Michigan or surrounding states, which would limit the richness of the collected innovations and best practices.

To recruit participants, we developed an email that included a Google Form for participants to submit their abstracts. The recruitment email was sent to a few large US social work email listservs. Additionally, to increase the likelihood of participation, personal email invitations were sent to selected participants. We did have to extend the submission deadline twice, as initial submissions were lower than expected. We determined the original deadline was not ideal given its overlap with the end of the US academic semester.

Our team reviewed the submitted abstracts and then communicated with accepted participants. Follow-up information included detailed guidelines on the best way to record and submit their videos. Authors of accepted abstracts also received a small gift card honorarium for their participation. The project team then worked with the University of Michigan audiovisual team to develop an accessible format for the digital archive that would allow us to disseminate the videos broadly.

# Process of Implementation

## Department of Social Work, Madras Christian College, India

**1. Preparatory Phase-** The Project Director and Project Assistant discussed the project objectives, planned the implementation strategy, and prepared brochures and communication materials.

**2. First Notification and Outreach-** The first notification was circulated to colleges and institutions through courier and email, inviting faculty members to submit abstracts on innovations and best practices through a Google Form.

**3. Selection Process-** The submitted abstracts were reviewed jointly by the Project Director and Project Assistant. Relevant abstracts highlighting innovative practices in social work education were shortlisted.

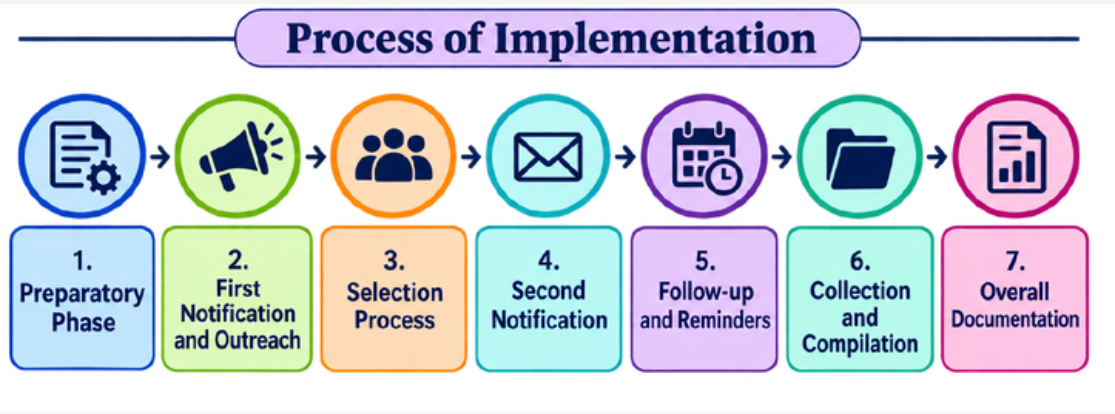
**4. Second Notification-** Selected participants received a communication requesting:

- Submission of detailed abstracts.
- Preparation of a 5–6-minute video presentation showcasing their innovations and best practices.

**5. Follow-up and Reminders-** Three rounds of reminders were sent to selected participants to ensure timely submission of the required abstracts and video presentations.

**6. Collection and Compilation-** The detailed abstracts and video presentations were collected from the selected participants and organised systematically.

**7. Overall Documentation-** All collected materials, including abstracts, video presentations, and related project information, were compiled and organised for the final project documentation.



# Outcomes & Feedback

Ultimately, this project resulted in 30 abstracts and 29 recorded lightning talk videos. The submitted abstracts are from a variety of social workers who come from different institutional types and geographical regions. The US videos have already been added to a YouTube Channel, which will make for easy dissemination and broad sharing. By the end of 2026, the audiovisual team from the University of Michigan will add the remaining videos from India and Uganda to the YouTube channel so all 29 videos will be in a permanent, accessible video archive. In addition, Madras Christian College has compiled a printed abstract book that will be printed and shared with all of the contributing social work institutions. A copy of the final report will also be shared with all contributors to this project.

Our partners in Uganda were unable to complete their portion of the project as planned. They received at least one abstract, which is included below. However, at the time of the completion of this report, we have not received videos from Uganda. We plan to reach out to them again to see how they plan to proceed. If they are able to collect abstracts and videos, we will add them to the digital archive.

During this project, we encountered some challenges, including adjusting our original project concept to a post-pandemic reality where in-person convenings have become less common. We also found that working across three different countries, contexts, and time zones was more challenging than we initially anticipated. However, the final video archive represents a diverse set of social work innovations and best practices from diverse and geographic and cultural contexts.

# Conclusion

The project “Innovations and Best Practices in Social Work Education” created an opportunity for social work educators across India and the United States to share, explore, and document innovations in social work curriculum development, teaching methodologies, fieldwork instruction & supervision, and research. The initiative recognises the importance of sharing diverse educational experiences and approaches across cultural and academic contexts. We hope that the resulting video archive will help inspire the social work profession to learn from the practices of those in different geographic and cultural contexts. While projects like these are challenging, we ultimately feel they are worthwhile and important opportunities for exchange.

# About

## MADRAS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Madras Christian College is situated on a 365-acre campus at Tambaram, Chennai. Established in 1837, the institution is one of India's premier higher educational institutions committed to academic excellence, social responsibility, and holistic development. The college has consistently been recognized among the top institutions in the country and continues to promote values of inclusion, leadership, and community engagement.

## About the Department

The Department of Social Work (Aided) was founded in 1989 with two specializations: Medical and Psychiatric Social Work and Community Development. The Department focuses on the relevance of the emerging Social concerns and human rights value education and service learning; it aims at an Egalitarian, just Society, the building of character, transformational development of students, and helping them acquire critical consciousness for empowering people. Our Department has been conducting National and International study conferences from its inception on various relevant themes. The Department has been ranked among the top 10 colleges in India by India Today (2025).

# About

## SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

### UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The University of Michigan is a public research university founded in 1817 in Detroit and relocated to Ann Arbor in 1837. With its main campus in Ann Arbor and additional campuses in Dearborn and Flint, the university is recognised for its contributions to higher education, research, and public service. It offers a wide range of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programmes across diverse academic disciplines.

The university's mission is to serve the people of Michigan and the world through the advancement and application of knowledge, arts, and academic values, while developing leaders and citizens who contribute to society. Through its commitment to academic excellence, interdisciplinary research, innovation, and community engagement, the university seeks to address societal challenges and create a lasting impact locally and globally.

## About the School of Social Work

The University of Michigan School of Social Work has a history of social work education dating back to 1921, when a formal curriculum in social work was introduced at the university. The School was officially established in 1951 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. For more than a century, it has contributed to social work education through teaching, research, innovation, and community engagement. Its mission is to advance the social work profession and promote a more equitable, caring, and socially just society. The School focuses on preparing students for professional practice, generating knowledge through interdisciplinary research, and collaborating with communities to address social issues. Through its commitment to social and economic justice, empowerment, and public service, the School seeks to foster positive change at local, national, and global levels.

# About

## SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, MAKERERE UNIVERSITY, UGANDA

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

## MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

Makerere University is a public university located on Makerere Hill in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. Established in 1922 as a technical school with 14 students, it has grown into one of Africa's oldest and most prominent institutions of higher education. The institution became an independent national university in 1970 and has since developed into a centre for higher education, research, and innovation. Makerere University offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across diverse academic disciplines through its colleges and schools. Guided by its motto, “We Build for the Future,” the university is committed to advancing knowledge, promoting innovation, and contributing to societal transformation through teaching, research, and community engagement. Its work extends beyond Uganda, contributing to academic and developmental initiatives across Africa and internationally.

## ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

The School of Social Sciences is part of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Makerere University. It comprises three departments: the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and the Department of Political Science and Public Administration. The School focuses on advancing critical inquiry, transformative research, and community-oriented education. Through its academic programmes and research activities, it seeks to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to understand and address complex social challenges. Its interdisciplinary approach contributes to understanding social issues, governance, and community development, supporting efforts to create meaningful and sustainable change in society.

# *Abstracts*

## OF INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION



SCHOOL OF
SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

# Expanding Access to Social Work Education

*Brittany Turner,Social Work Director,University of Olivet*
*Jennifer Klauth,University of Olivet*

UNIVERSITY OF OLIVET

## Abstract

**Social work is committed to expanding well-being for all people, including equitable access to financial resources and education. However, students must often first overcome significant financial barriers themselves to obtain a degree in social work. While we do not have control over tuition costs, we can implement significant solutions to costs specific to the social work program. First, we are transitioning the entire BSW curriculum from standard textbooks to Open Educational Resources. Based on current costs of existing textbooks, this will save students up to $2,000. The vast majority of our students choose to use private discounted book sources to get their textbooks instead of using financial aid at our university's bookstore, which means that this savings will most likely come directly from their out-of-pocket costs. The second significant financial barrier to social work students is taking on an unpaid internship as a requirement for graduation. While our university doesn't have the funds to pay students directly, we have implemented an important Employment-Based Internship policy. This allows students to upskill and professionalize roles they recently accepted or already hold at relevant non-profit and government agencies, all while continuing to pay the bills. By entirely eliminating the cost of textbooks and providing pathways for paid full-time internships, the barriers unique to social work education are significantly reduced. Our hope is that this will assist in diversifying the social work profession and allow vital leaders to keep up the great work in their communities**



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Category: INNOVATION | Subcategory: Community engagement / field instruction / service learning

# Global Self-Care Accountability Buddies Project: A Collaboration Across the Pacific Ocean

*Aimee B Chung, MSW, LSW,Faculty, Field Education Coordinator*
*Wendy J. Lum, MSW, M.Ed.*
*Dr Jacqueline McNamara PhD, MHlthSc, BSW CQUniversity Australia, Social Work /School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Sciences*

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI AT MĀNOA, THOMPSON SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK & PUBLIC HEALTH

## Abstract

**The NASW (US) recently amended the Code of Ethics to address the critical nature of professional self-care as a, "key component of ethical and professional excellence." NASW specifically includes educational institutions in their encouragement to promote policies, practices, and materials that support self-care. In light of best-practice standards, there is an undeniable need for a proactive approach to guide students in establishing sustainable self-care practices. Research also tells us that social work students have a higher likelihood of having a personal trauma history, which, if not addressed, could impact their ability to be an effective social worker. This importance is spotlighted in the field education experience, as students face new and often stressful learning experiences in the community and with clients.**

**To address this, the Self-Care Accountability Buddies Project was created in 2020, allowing field students to count up to one hour of self-care per week toward their field hours. In 2025, recognizing that student wellness was at jeopardy regardless of nationality, the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa social work field education office expanded this initiative by collaborating with CQUniversity Australia to launch the Global Self-Care Accountability Buddies Project. Through this partnership, field students in Hawaiʻi and Australia are paired to hold each other accountable for their self-care practice. This collaboration fosters a sustainable wellness practice and allows students to gain valuable cross-cultural perspectives, grounding themselves in place-based values regarding social work practice and personal well-being - which contributes to an environment that is supportive of the student, practitioner, and client.**

IASSW

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# Practice with Refugees and Immigrants: A Practice-Based Social Work Course that Combines Intensive Learning with Community-Based Instruction

*Mitra Naseh,Fcaulty (Assistant Professor)*
*Saria Bechara,Fcaulty (Assistant Professor)*

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

## Abstract

**Practice with Refugees and Immigrants is a practice-based social work course that combines intensive learning, community-based instruction, and direct practice with refugee families. The course begins with a five-day intensive format that intentionally disrupts traditional classroom boundaries. Students participate in a collective syllabus design session, selecting from possible assignments, class policies, and evaluation approaches. Additional course activities include choosing from real-life accounts of immigrants and refugees to review, an introduction to modern US immigration policies, debates about migration policies and relevant ethical issues, visits to community partner organizations serving refugee- and immigrants, home visits in the community, and reflective sessions.**



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Category: INNOVATION | Subcategory: Teaching / curriculum development

# Using Forum Theatre as a Teaching Tool to Engage in Themes around Power, Privilege, and Oppression

*Ashley Cureton, Assistant Professor,University of Michigan-- Ann Arbor, School of Social Work*

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-- ANN ARBOR, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

## Abstract

**Social workers must engage in difficult conversations, yet many feel ill-prepared to initiate these critical dialogues. This teaching initiative demonstrates how Forum Theatre (FT)—an applied, arts-based technique founded by Augusto Boal—serves as an effective intervention in a graduate social work program. Specifically, Forum Theatre addresses student anxieties surrounding "the isms" (e.g., racism, sexism, classism) and communication regarding power, privilege, and oppression. Through collective rehearsal of oppressive situations, the FT workshop provides experiential, embodied learning that helps students navigate uncertainty and build concrete group facilitation skills. Evaluation of the workshop indicates increased student comfort in leading productive dialogues on anti-Black racism, classroom alienation, and oppressive academic dynamics. Ultimately, this work highlights the relevance of arts-based pedagogy in global social work education while addressing the inherent limitations and practical implications of implementing FT in academic settings.**



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Category: INNOVATION | Subcategory: Teaching / curriculum development

# Innovations & Best Practices in Social Work Non-Profit Board Management

*John E. Tropman, Henry J. Meyer Collegiate Professor Emeritus, University of Michigan-- Ann Arbor, School of Social Work*

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-- ANN ARBOR, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

## Abstract

**This project describes three key recommendations for education and training of Nonprofit Boards to improve their effectiveness and governance. Guidelines for effective board work and structure are sparse, and social work education and training can play an important role in making these improvements. One key recommendation is implementing an Advisory Board model that circles the legal board and provides a step-in to trusteeship as well as a step-up opportunity for retiring board trustees. Another recommendation is for social work programs to provide training, courses, and certificates around professional behavior and expectations for board members or trustees.**



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# Education that heals, Learning with hope, Acting on Knowledge

*Diane McEachern, Faculty, University of Alaska/College of Indigenous Studies*
*Deborah Michael, Faculty,University of Alaska/College of Indigenous Studies*
*Esther Green,Faculty,University of Alaska/College of Indigenous Studies*

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA/COLLEGE OF INDIGENOUS STUDIES

## Abstract

**Western pedagogical praxis has not proven adequate in term of Indigenous people's success in education including university settings. In 1990 at the annual Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) conference a group of Elders, native leaders, and university faculty gathered to create a new model of social work education. The goal of the co-created curriculum construction was to develop a program grounded in an Indigenous epistemology and pedagogy while meeting University accreditation.**

**The Rural Human Service (RHS) university certificate program was thus designed as a community model (20-24 students in each cohort) of education delivery. The instructional team for each RHS course includes a lead faculty and Alaska Native Elders. Most of the adult students have not been in an educational setting for between 10 and 25 years. Due to colonization's consequence of educational trauma, many enter the classroom with reservation, fear, and low confidence about "school." Yet most will graduate with a 34-credit University certificate in RHS after two years of monthly weeklong intensives. Over 700 have graduated from this program from over 150 rural villages in Alaska.**

**This transformative program intentionally integrates Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum to bring cultural strengths and practices of Native learners into sharp focus. This presentation will share the experiences of the lead faculty, a student graduate, and an Elder of this innovative model of social work education. We will also share the expansion of this model via a linked academic pathway leading to higher degrees in social work (bachelor and master degrees).**



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# From Community to Classroom: Bridging Theory and Praxis in Social Work Education

*Fatima Salman,adjunct LEO faculty,University of Michigan*

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

## Abstract

**As a community organizer who entered academia after more than a decade of practice, I have intentionally developed a teaching approach that helps students bridge the gap between social work theory and the realities of community practice. While theoretical foundations are essential, students often struggle to understand how concepts such as systems thinking, power, advocacy, leadership, and community engagement are enacted in everyday social work. My pedagogy addresses this challenge by intentionally integrating experiential learning, structured reflection, and practitioner engagement throughout the learning process.**

**Across macro practice and global social work courses, students engage with communities, practitioners, and organizations through immersive learning experiences that are paired with guided reflection and facilitated dialogue. Rather than simply describing what they observe, students critically analyze community strengths, structural barriers, leadership practices, and the interconnected roles of micro, mezzo, and macro social work. This approach encourages students to examine their own assumptions, develop cultural humility, and recognize theory as a practical framework for understanding and responding to complex social issues.**

**By drawing upon both professional community practice and social work scholarship, this pedagogical model transforms community experiences into intentional learning opportunities that deepen critical thinking and professional identity. Because the framework emphasizes reflection, dialogue, and connection between classroom concepts and lived experience, it is readily adaptable across a variety of social work courses and educational settings, offering educators a practical model for preparing students to become reflective, community-engaged practitioners.**



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Category: INNOVATION | Subcategory: Teaching / curriculum development

# Study Abroad in Social Work: Mental Heathcare and Suicide Prevention in India

*Shahnaz Savani, Faculty, University of Texas at Arlington*

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

## Abstract

**Study Abroad in Social Work: Experiential Learning in India. This course, offered to Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) students, incorporates a two-week experiential learning component in India. During the trip, students examine how social work is practiced, mental health services are delivered, and community-based suicide prevention initiatives are implemented within the Indian context. Students also engage with social work students at Madras Christian College, learn about local field education practices, and visit a tribal community in southern India. These experiences provide opportunities to examine social work practice across diverse sociocultural contexts and critically consider the influence of local systems, resources, and community structures on service delivery.**

**2. Photovoice Presentation: Critical Reflection on Global Social Work Practice. Upon returning to the United States, students develop a Photovoice presentation featuring three photographs they captured during their time in India. Through these images and accompanying critical reflections, students explore their experiences of engaging with social work practice in a lower-income country, interacting with Indian social work students working with tribal populations, and observing local approaches to social services and mental health care. The assignment also encourages students to critically examine their own positionality, power, and privilege as North American social work students and to reflect on how these factors shape their understanding of international social work practice.**



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# Abstracts

## OF INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

MADRAS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE, INDIA

# Community Engagement and Service Learning "Community Engagement & Empowerment Initiative"

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*Ms. Sreeja P S – Asst Professor, Department of Social Work, Nehru Arts and Science College , Coimbatore, India*

**Nehru Arts and Science College , Coimbatore, India**

## Abstract

***"Community Engagement & Empowerment Initiative" This research examines the Holistic Community Development Program, implemented through the Nehru Civic Charitable Trust, which aims to promote inclusive growth, social participation, and sustainable transformation within the community. The initiative prioritises strengthening civic engagement by fostering participatory activities that encourage community members to actively contribute to local development processes. By integrating infrastructure enhancement, educational support, livelihood opportunities, and social welfare services, the program aims to empower marginalised groups, particularly transgender persons, women, and youth. Through collaborative planning, resource mobilisation, and continuous capacity-building efforts, the Nehru Civic Charitable Trust has contributed to the creation of self-reliant communities equipped with the skills, confidence, and institutional backing necessary for long-term socio- economic advancement.***

**Keywords: Sustainable Development, Empowerment of Transgender, Department NGO**

## 1. Introduction

**The Department of Social Work has established the Nehru Civic Charitable Trust, an NGO dedicated to promoting an inclusive and healthy society.**

**The Trust aims to empower marginalized communities and foster holistic well-being through initiatives focusing on:**

1. **Social justice**
2. **Health awareness**
3. **Educational development**

**It works toward reducing social inequalities and creating opportunities for community growth, ultimately strengthening civic participation. The initiative promotes awareness on:**

1. **Critical social issues 2. Human rights 3. Public health concerns**

**The Trust provides mental health support and counselling services to vulnerable groups to ensure emotional and psychological well-being. It empowers transgender individuals through:**

1. **Skill development programs 2. Educational support 3. Employment opportunities**

**The Trust also facilitates public awareness of government schemes to ensure equitable access for underserved communities.**

**• It promotes research, development, and intervention programs addressing major social issues such as:**

1. **Drug addiction 2. Child abuse 3. Women's safety 4. Gender-based violence**

**Overall, the Trust plays an integral role in building equitable, participatory, and self-reliant communities.**

# Community Engagement and Service Learning "Community Engagement & Empowerment Initiative"

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**Nehru Arts and Science College , Coimbatore, India**

## 2. Methodology

A distinctive feature of the Nehru Civic Charitable Trust (NCCT) is that it operates directly under the Department of Social Work at Nehru Arts and Science College. It is the only college in Coimbatore offering a Social Work program with its own NGO established, managed, and operated by the department. This innovative model provides students with hands-on learning opportunities, enabling them to participate in real-time NGO operations, respond to community needs, and implement development initiatives under the guidance and supervision of faculty members. NCCT stands as the only department-owned NGO within an educational institution in the Coimbatore district, making it a unique and practice-oriented model for social work education. The primary aim of NCCT is to empower transgender communities and extend services to unreached and marginalized populations. Its major focus areas include mental and physical health promotion, awareness and prevention of social issues, counselling and guidance, research and developmental activities, and addressing a wide range of social problems. NCCT also collaborates with various partner organizations to enhance its capacity and strengthen community empowerment through collective action.

## 3. Findings

The implementation of the Nehru Civic Charitable Trust (NCCT) as a community engagement initiative has created a significant and measurable impact on marginalized and vulnerable populations, while simultaneously enriching the academic experience
of Social Work students.

1. Empowerment of Transgender Communities

• More than 25 transgender individuals benefitted from the seven-day tailoring and skill development program.
• Distribution of free tailoring machines created pathways for sustainable income generation and financial independence.
• Improved self-confidence, social acceptance, and vocational readiness amongparticipants.

2 . Awareness and Social Sensitization

• Over 2,000 community members reached through MIME performances and street plays on HIV/AIDS, POSH, POCSO, and mental health.
• Enhanced public understanding of human rights, gender equity, and protection- related issues.
• Increased reporting and awareness of workplace harassment and child protection concerns.

3. Strengthening Community Health and Safety Skills

• Capacity-building programs in first aid and CPR trained several students and community volunteers.
• Improved ability of participants to respond to emergency situations, thereby strengthening community resilience.

4. Support for Vulnerable Families

• Under the "Joy of Giving" program, grocery kits were provided to more than 56 families, including persons with disabilities and households affected by HIV/AIDS.
• Enhanced nutritional security and emotional relief to families experiencing hardship.



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# Community Engagement and Service Learning "Community Engagement & Empowerment Initiative"

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**Nehru Arts and Science College , Coimbatore, India**

5. Livelihood Promotion and Economic Upliftment

• Initiatives such as Rural Flavours and Urban Income created opportunities for self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship.

• Improved visibility and income prospects for rural artisans and low-income urban individuals.

6. Student Learning and Professional Development

• Social Work students gained hands-on experience in NGO management, field planning, program execution, and community outreach.

• Strengthened competencies in counseling, community mobilization, and project coordination.

• Created a real-time learning environment that bridges curriculum and field practice.

7. Strengthened Institutional Social Responsibility

• NCCT has positioned the Department of Social Work as a leader in community-focused initiatives within the Coimbatore district.

• The college has become the only institution with a department-owned NGO, increasing visibility and credibility in the academic and social sectors.



## 4 Outcomes

As part of its best practices, the Department of Social Work aims to further expand the impact of the Nehru Civic Charitable Trust by reaching out to unreached and marginalised populations, particularly prisoners and their families, with a focus on enhancing their mental health and overall well-being. The Trust seeks to develop structured rehabilitation and counselling programs that promote emotional stability, social reintegration, and family strengthening among this underserved group. The Trust will also continue to advance the empowerment of transgender communities by providing essential resources, comprehensive skill-based training, and livelihood support. These initiatives aim to promote equality and inclusivity by equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills required for meaningful employment and long-term financial independence. Additionally, NCCT plans to organise collaborative, community-driven programs involving government agencies, NGOs, and local stakeholders to build a more inclusive and supportive environment for vulnerable sections of society. Through these future initiatives, the Trust envisions expanding its reach, enhancing community engagement, and strengthening its role as a transformative force in social development.

## 5 Future Sustainability

Additionally, NCCT plans to organize collaborative, community-driven programs involving government agencies, NGOs, and local stakeholders to build a more inclusive and supportive environment for vulnerable sections of society. Through these future initiatives, the Trust envisions expanding its reach, enhancing community engagement, and strengthening its role as a transformative force in social development



# INTEGRATING A DIGITAL CASE MANAGEMENT & REFLECTION SYSTEM FOR STRENGTHENING FIELD EDUCATION

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## Abstract

***This proposal strengthens Social Work education by integrating a Digital Case Management and Reflection System directly into classroom teaching, ensuring that theoretical concepts are continuously reinforced through structured practice-based learning. Faculty incorporate the system as part of subject-wise instruction, allowing students to use discipline-specific templates during lectures—for instance, psychosocial assessment forms in counselling modules, resource-mapping tools in community development classes, and policy-analysis matrices in administrative coursework. This integrated approach ensures that classroom engagement becomes a preparation ground for field realities rather than functioning in isolation. A key advancement within this model is the use of geo-location–based case study allocation. Students access neighbourhood-specific demographic data, community profiles, and local service networks, which allows them to analyse social issues emerging from their immediate contexts. This supports place-based learning, strengthens cultural sensitivity, and enhances students' ability to contextualize interventions.***

***List Of Methods And Tools***

- ***Digital Case Management & Reflection System***
- ***Geo-location–based Case Study Allocation***
- ***Standardized Assessment Templates (subject-specific)***
- ***Community Resource & Stakeholder Mapping Tools***
- ***Macro-Level Project Tools (needs assessment sheets, policy grids)***
- ***Risk Assessment Checklists*** ***Field Documentation Quality Indicators***
- ***Structured Reflective Question Banks***

**Keywords: Digital Case Management,Community Profiling, Technology-Enhanced Social Work Education, Field Education**

## 1. Introduction

Field education is the signature pedagogy of Social Work education, serving as the primary link between theoretical instruction and professional practice. However, existing studies report persistent challenges such as fragmented documentation, limited classroom– field integration, and inadequate opportunities for structured reflection. With the growing relevance of digital technologies in social service delivery, there is an increasing demand for technology-enhanced pedagogical models. This paper proposes an integrated Digital Case Management and Reflection System designed to strengthen field education by aligning theory practice, and reflective learning within a unified digital framework.



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# INTEGRATING A DIGITAL CASE MANAGEMENT & REFLECTION SYSTEM FOR STRENGTHENING FIELD EDUCATION

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## 2. Methodology

This abstract and the proposed practice model are developed exclusively through secondary data analysis. Data sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and scholarly publications related to social work field education, digital case management, reflective practice, and technology-enhanced learning. Ten key academic sources from journals such as the Journal of Social Work Education, Clinical Social Work Journal, Social Work, and the British Journal of Social Work were systematically reviewed. The analysis focused on identifying recurring themes related to challenges in field education, the effectiveness of digital documentation systems, the role of structured reflection in professional learning, and innovations integrating classroom teaching with field practice. Thematic synthesis of these sources informed the conceptual design of the proposed system, including subject-specific digital templates, standardized assessment tools, geo-location-based learning components, and structured reflective question banks. The study aims to synthesize existing evidence and propose a theoretically grounded educational innovation.

## 3. Findings

The reviewed literature consistently highlights the benefits of integrating digital tools into social work education. Findings indicate that digital case management improves documentation quality, accountability, and continuity in learning. Structured reflective practices are shown to enhance critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and professional identity development. Additionally, place-based and contextual learning approaches supported by demographic and policy data strengthen students' understanding of community realities and service systems.

## 4. Outcome

Based on secondary evidence, the proposed model is expected to strengthen classroom–field integration and support outcome-based education. It enhances student competencies in digital documentation, contextual analysis, and reflective practice while improving supervision effectiveness. Field agencies may benefit from improved case records and systematic assessments, contributing to more informed and community-responsive interventions.



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# INTEGRATING A DIGITAL CASE MANAGEMENT & REFLECTION SYSTEM FOR STRENGTHENING FIELD EDUCATION

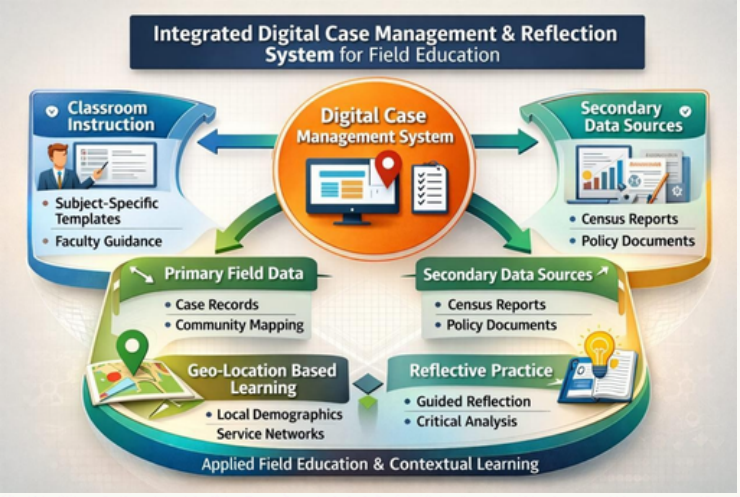
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## 5 Future Sustainability

The literature supports the scalability and institutionalization of digital innovations in education. The model can be embedded within curricula through faculty training and collaboration with field agencies. Its adaptable digital structure allows replication across institutions and regions, with scope for future empirical validation through primary research. 6. Picture / Model

## 6 Picture/ Model




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**Category:** BEST PRACTICE | **Subcategory:** Community Engagement / Field Instruction / Service Learning

# "Participation in Professional Forum Activities" – A curricular component to initiate learners into the social work profession

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Madras School of Social Work

## Abstract

***The Master of Social Work (MSW) curriculum at Madras School of Social Work (MSSW) provides a curricular component – "Participation in Professional Forum Activities" – to facilitate the formation of social work trainees and to initiate them into the social work profession.***

***"Participation in Professional Forum Activities" is a course completion requirement spread across two semesters when the final year MSW students are required to be associated with any professional forum and participate in any three activities during a semester. A faculty member is assigned to oversee the compliance. The component helps students become aware of professionals forums and identify the ones that best represents their career interests. Through this component students become aware of trending topics or burning issues in their field of interest. The component provides ample opportunity to network with senior practitioners. The component supplements existing theoretical and field work inputs and bridges the gap between theory and practice thereby building the knowledge quotient of the students. Future sustainability can be ensured through recognition of students who surpass expectations, documenting the takeaways for students, discussions with the academic community, creating awareness of professional forums and facilitating the setting up of student chapters of the professional forums as required.***

## 1. Introduction

The Master of Social Work (MSW) curriculum at Madras School of Social Work (MSSW) provides a curricular component – "Participation in Professional Forum Activities" – to facilitate the formation of social work trainees and to initiate them into the social work profession. Professional forums are associations of practitioners belonging to the social work profession, as well as to specific fields or specializations within social work. These forums organize various events throughout the year that facilitate knowledge sharing and networking among members. Participation in such events helps individuals remain updated on domain-specific developments and emerging practices in the field. Students, in particular, benefit immensely from engaging in forum activities, as these exposures enhance their professional understanding, industry awareness, and career preparedness.

## 2. Methodology

"Participation in Professional Forum Activities" is a course completion requirement for the final year MSW students requiring them to be associated with a professional forum of their choice and participate in any three activities each during the third and fourth semesters. Students are encouraged to become a member (optional) and participate in activities organized by the forum including events like conference, seminar, workshop and so on. A faculty member is assigned to oversee the compliance. At the end of the year, students have to present evidence of their participation to fulfill the requirement.



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# "Participation in Professional Forum Activities" – A curricular component to initiate learners into the social work profession

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## 3. Outcomes

The outcomes of the best practice in social work education are:

1. Awareness of the Professional Forums: The curricular mandate to participate in professional forums prompts the students to become aware of the various professional forums and identify the forum that best represents their career interests.
2. Participation in the activities of Professional Forums: The component requiring the students to participate in professional forums enables them to be associated with any professional forum, attend their routine events (ex: monthly lectures) or actively engage in their mega events (ex: campaigns).
3. Awareness about trending topics: Professional forums often deliberate about trending topics or burning issues. Participation in such events provides opportunities to learn from the experts themselves.
4. Networking opportunity: The component provides ample opportunity to network with senior practitioners. Such contacts could facilitate academic pursuits or job referrals.
5. Knowledge quotient: This component supplements existing theoretical and field work inputs and bridges the gap between theory and practice thereby building the knowledge quotient of the students.
6. Institutional brand building: Students representation in professional forums also helps improve the public perception of the educational institution.

## 4. Future Sustainability

The details of the plans to develop the best practice further are given below.

1. Student recognition: Students who surpass expectations may be recognized based on the quality of participation and extent of contribution to the professional forum.
2. Documenting the takeaways for the students: Students could reflect on the extrinsic and intrinsic learning.
3. Discussions with the academic community: MSSW could share about the curricular component to fellow Social Work Educational institutions.
4. Creating awareness of professional forums: The importance of professional forums and participation in professional forums has to be highlighted to the students.
5. Facilitating the setting up of professional forums as required: Academic support to initiate professional forums on niche areas may be explored.



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# Teaching and Curriculum Development in Social Work " Creating Model Village – a Holistic Development"

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## Abstract

***This study focuses on designing an inclusive sustainable, and community-centred development model through a Rural Transformation Framework that integrates social, economic, and technological dimensions.***

***It emphasizes improving livelihoods through social development, skill enhancement, modern infrastructure, and strengthened access to essential services such as education, healthcare, sanitation, and traditional knowledge systems, while simultaneously preserving cultural identity.***

***By positioning community participation as the central driving force, the study ensures that development initiatives align with local needs, aspirations, and ecological realities. Ultimately, this work seeks to establish a replicable blueprint for creating self-reliant, resilient, and empowered rural communities capable of sustaining long-term holistic sustainable development.***

**Keywords: Rural Transformation, Livelihood, Sustainable Development, Model Village**

## 1. Introduction

Social Work curriculum is based on experiential learning, based on the concept Department of Social Work at Nehru Arts and Science College ahs adopted a village and working to make it as Model Village in Coimbatore City. Through this process the students are getting exposure to make a change in the society through various
transformation activity.

## 2. Methodology

As part of the social work curriculum, the department has adopted the village of Rottigoundanur, located under the Thirumalayam Palayam Panchayat in Coimbatore, to monitor and enhance the overall well-being of the community.
This initiative aims:

• Implementation of structured activities focusing on health, education, livelihood, infrastructure, and empowerment.

• Creation of a living laboratory model, enabling students to engage in participatory rural appraisal and field-based problem-solving.

•Strengthening students' professional competencies, including assessment, intervention planning, documentation, and community mobilization.

# Teaching and Curriculum Development in Social Work
# " Creating Model Village – a Holistic Development"

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• Promoting community participation and ownership in all initiatives to ensure sustainability.

• Facilitating the development of self-reliant and empowered community structures through capacity-building programs.

• Encouraging continuous monitoring and evaluation to support evidence-based social work practice.

• Enhancing community well-being by linking local needs with government schemes and welfare services.

## 3. Findings

Adopting a village by an institution or industry is a common practice, but the Department of Social Work at Nehru Arts and Science College has undertaken this initiative with a distinct focus on empowering the community toward sustainable development. Through this process, students gain hands-on expertise in addressing community needs and implementing social development interventions under the guidance of faculty members. Both faculty and students are well-versed in the procedures involved in village adoption, including obtaining permissions, submitting applications, meetingrelevant authorities, and understanding the administrative processes.

This experiential approach enables students to organize programmes, implement welfare schemes, and follow the hierarchy of village administration effectively.

Overall, the initiative strengthens the students' ability to translate theoretical knowledge into practical application during the course of their academic training.

## 4. Outcomes

The Department of Social Work has adopted this village and has been implementing various innovative initiatives to promote sustainable development within the community. The following were the activities undertaken by the department:

• Health and Welfare Camps:

Free dental and eye check-up camps.

Distribution of spectacles at no cost to individuals with vision problems.

• Government Service Facilitation:

Camps to correct errors in Aadhaar cards and voter ID lists.

Enabled villagers to access government services more easily.

• Water and Infrastructure Development:

Installation of a 2-lakh-litre capacity water tank to address water scarcity.

•Skill Development and Livelihood Promotion:

Launch of the programme "Rural Flavors to Urban Income" to encourage low-investment businesses.

# Teaching and Curriculum Development in Social Work
# " Creating Model Village – a Holistic Development"

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• Community Engagement and Social Cohesion:

Village clean-up drives.

Recreational activities to reduce loneliness and enhance community interaction.

Evidence-Based Approach:

All initiatives guided by surveys conducted over four years using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques.

Helped villagers identify actual needs, understand gaps, and recognize changes required for development.

## 5. Future Sustainability

The future plan of this innovative initiative is to enhance infrastructure development within the community and ensure long-term sustainability. A key objective is to construct new roads to connect the currently inaccessible tribal colony in the village, thereby improving mobility and access to essential services.

The initiative also aims to strengthen educational opportunities by establishing a high school within the village. Additionally, the department is committed to ensuring access to clean drinking water by extending pipelines from Athikadavu and providing toilet facilities for every household.

The over all goal is to achieve holistic development by integrating the tribal community and equipping them with the benefits of basic literacy, education, and improved living standards. It is hoped that these future initiatives will support the Department of Social Work in realizing its vision of transforming the adopted village into a true model village.

## 6. Photos



# A road less taken: A Qualitative Analysis of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 using a custom built ONDAS Framework

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## Abstract

***The ONDAS Framework is a bold Innovation in the field of Social Work Research. For decades Qualitative Research has drawn towards itself criticisms on its structure, and validity of the analyses and results produced and devalued largely by quantitative research enthusiasts. This Framework is one step to changing the narrative.***

***The SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 one of the powerful acts ever brought into legislation has been subjected to judicial misfortunes and stands tall with deficiencies that have gone by unnoticed for ages. This Framework aims to capture the voices of the community involved incorporating a humanistic, phenomenological and empowerment-based philosophy aimed at policy reform.***

***The custom built ONDAS Framework follows a three dimensional approach steered by ontological and axiological assumptions, validated through Eisner's method of triangulation.***

***The framework was put to test with a class action verdict from the Supreme Court of India and was successful in identifying the implementation gaps within the Act.***

***The framework is currently used to qualitatively analyse 663 cases filed under the Act, using legal documents retrieved from the Supreme Court of India. While effective, it's being improved to suit participatory, intervention-directed qualitative analyses for global structural policy change. As the legal system constantly evolves, the framework will be adjusted to accommodate diverse legal systems across the Globe. A comprehensive report of framework and its applications in Social Work Policy Research will be submitted to the Supreme Court of India to be included as a standardised Qualitative Analysis tool within the legal system for transparent and effective policy advocacy.***

**Keywords: Innovation, ONDAS, Policy Research, Social Work Research, Qualitative.**

## 1. Introduction

The proposed ONDAS Framework encapsulates the many questions being thrown at Qualitative Research on its Structure, Logical arrangements and Validity. The entire framework is crafted with the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 as the inspiration and foundation. This act is considered to be one of the powerful legislations ever brought into existence all over the world and yet was identified to be plagued with gaps in the implementation isle and this framework seeks to identify these gaps and inform future policy advocacy.



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# A road less taken: A Qualitative Analysis of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 using a custom built ONDAS Framework

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## 2. Methodology

The ONDAS framework operates in three stages. The First Stage is a Review of Literature using the Scoping Method. This will include Government issued documents, Research Articles and Judgement Copies obtained from the Supreme Court of India. The Review of Literature stage is split into four small segments to understand the Reasons for Conceptions and the Implementation Phase efficiently.

The Second Stage is a Content Analysis of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 under the guidance of metrics derived from the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) Framework. Stage Three is the combination of stages one and two adding a few In - depth Interviews from Experts to better understand the emerging results. A Thematic

Analysis will be employed to bring together all acquired information and postulate results i.e. Identification of Implementation Gaps within the Act and understand the reasons for the same. Eisner's Method of Data Triangulation will be used to validate the postulated results.

## 3. Findings

The Framework was put to test by using it to analyze one Class Action verdict passed by the Supreme Court of India. The Framework identified and pin pointed 6 major areas of implementation deficiencies such as Falsification of Evidence, Presumption of Offence, Neglect of Duty, Investigating Officer, Misuse of Powers and Government Duty whilst also stating also the exact reasons for the identified deficiencies clearly. The framework identified exactly where the act failed to protect the very people it was created to protect and identified areas that can be modified to strengthen the act for better future implementation. The results whilst alarming is found to be rectifiable with a few improvements guided by the ONDAS framework.

## 4. Outcomes

The framework proved successful in identifying the Implementation Gaps within the Act based on the data extracted from the copy of the verdict obtained from the Supreme Court of India. The framework has emerged as an effective tool in understanding and analyzing government policies that can help improve policy design and aid in improved policy advocacy initiatives.

## 5. Future Sustainability

A comprehensive report of the Framework and its applications is being prepared and will be submitted to the Supreme Court of India on the hopes of it being institutionalized as a standardized framework to identify implementation gaps in government policies in and around the world. The framework can be applied to analyze any government policy worldwide making it a Global Policy Analysis Tool aiding policy makers in effective and sustainable policy advocacy initiatives.

IASSW

# Exploring Photovoice Method for Social Work Students' Personal and Professional Growth

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## Abstract

***Contemporary teaching ideologies emphasize student centered pedagogies, recognising the role of guided student mentoring in shaping students' knowledge, attitudes and skills alongside promotion of their holistic well-being. An unconventional approach through the photovoice method engaged first-year social work students in an experiential learning process to develop personally and professionally. Underpinning the social work learning philosophy of constructivist learning theory and transformative learning, the method creatively envisioned students and teachers as active co –creators of knowledge, through critical reflections on personal biases, value-based judgements and assumptions at field work. Harnessing the current generation's affinity to technology, ten first-year social work students from diverse ethnic, educational and socio-cultural backgrounds were encouraged to take four to five photographs best representing their insights, struggles and achievements at the field work. Discussions with respective faculty supervisors were initiated to derive insights into the reasons for choosing their photographs and the thought process involved. Thematic analysis of the photographs revealed students' struggles with culture shock, homesickness, networking, coping with misaligned assumptions and fulfilment of academic requirements amidst personal crises. The method enabled effective connection between faculty and students, bridging the generation gap and situating their struggles that can otherwise get lost in translation. It enabled creative visualisation of students' struggles through safe and empathetic spaces. This innovation offers scope to research further with a larger student base to equip students as co-researchers in identifying sustainable solutions in their adaptation journeys.***

## 1. Introduction

In response to growing calls in academia for 'empathic student mentoring', the Department of Social Work has integrated the concept of mentoring within its teaching and learning pedagogies. A closer examination of student profiles over the years reveals a marked shift in their expectations and engagements with learning institutions. These changes necessitate innovation within learning and teaching methods alongside addressing personal challenges and fulfilling skill readiness needs of students, to meet contemporary realities and expectations of changing times. Faculty members face the risk of being restricted within their own perceptions and prior experiences. Such limitations impact student engagement owing to pre-conceived notions, biases and assumptions on both sides. As mentoring practices gain momentum across institutions, academia stresses the need for a deeper connection between students and faculty in shaping students' perceptions, knowledge and capabilities. In response, an innovative approach harnessing students' affinity for technology was adopted, through the Photovoice method, to initiate a connection with students and offer them a safe space for



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# Exploring Photovoice Method for Social Work Students' Personal and Professional Growth

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purposeful expression of their feelings. Through reflection and dialogue, students were supported to build their capacities to cope with everyday challenges and demands arising from their academic and personal lives. Employing digital methods to explore emotions and verbalising them through visuals helped gain in-depth insights into the invisible, the unsaid and unresolved struggles students face regularly. Such an approach made mentoring effective and context-specific.

## 2. Methodology

Ten first-year MSW students were encouraged to take 2-3 photographs over two weeks, depicting self-representation of their life as student social work trainees in Bangalore. Minimal instructions were provided to preserve authenticity and to stay true to the study's purpose. In-depth conversations lasting over 30 minutes explored multiple dimensions of their student life through a reflective discussion on the photographs. The conversations explored their daily interactions, experiences and engagements with varied systems and their coping mechanisms.

## 3. Results & Discussion

***The process revealed challenges students faced on an ongoing basis. These ranged from commuting difficulties, managing field work tasks, homesickness, cultural adjustments, juggling multiple responsibilities, and interpersonal challenges with family members. Visual representation of their emotions, fears, and struggles situated these challenges in a specific context. Faculty were able to empathise deeply with students' realities, form deeper connections with them and view perspectives from their lenses and discern if professional help was deemed necessary. The innovation supports improving student-faculty relations, leading to desirable student outcomes. The students felt heard and valued as they navigated through multiple psycho-social challenges. Mutual discussions offered students a space to share their deepest fears and challenges, and initiated reflections to devise sustainable solutions to develop their resilience.***

## 4. Future Sustainability

This innovation offers scope to research further with a larger student base in the college community. Expanding the practice can creatively delve into deeper discussions on various dimensions of students every day realities. Researching the impact of Photovoice on student outcomes shall help streamline the practice as a best practice model to identify sustainable solutions in students' adaptation journeys and develop a more responsible, supportive and contextually relevant connection between students and faculty.



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# PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING IN SOCIAL WORK CAMPS

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## Abstract

***Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) functions in social work education as an experiential pedagogical approach that integrates participatory ethics, practice-based learning, and community-centred knowledge production. Conceptually grounded in the participatory paradigm articulated by Robert Chambers, PRA reorients conventional field education by positioning social worker students as facilitators of collective inquiry and communities as active knowledge holders rather than passive recipients. Its use in rural and community education camps enables classroom theory to be translated into lived, situated practice.***

***During rural camp engagements, students reside within villages and engage with everyday social rhythms. PRA unfolds through informal conversations, participatory mapping, and group discussions on livelihoods, vulnerabilities, and local priorities. Social work students often note that moments of intentional silence, allowing women, elders, and informal workers to deliberate among themselves, are more instructive than direct questioning. Such experiences challenge hierarchical assumptions of expertise and foreground participation as an ethical, relational, and reflective process.***

***As a formative learning experience, PRA reshapes how social work students engage with communities and practice. Learning emerges through sustained immersion, listening, observing, and facilitating collective reflection rather than directing outcomes. Anchored in a bottom-up approach, students recognise community members as the starting point for analysis and action. This engagement deepens awareness of power, voice, and inclusion, strengthens ethical reasoning, and cultivates professional maturity and confidence. PRA produces practitioners committed to collaboration, humility, and community-led social work practice, while simultaneously enabling communities to experience recognition, participation, and ownership of their narratives, reinforcing its status as a best practice in social work education.***

## 1. Introduction

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) is used in social work education as an experimental learning approach. Within field education, PRA enables students to connect theoretical learning with community realities. Its value lies in preparing future social workers to work with communities rather than on them, emphasizing facilitation, attentive listening, and collective enquiry over directive or expert-led interventions. Through PRA, students learn to appreciate how social realities are built and understood by communities themselves, reinforcing social work's foundational commitments to participation, inclusion, and social justice.



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# PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING IN SOCIAL WORK CAMPS

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## 2. Methodology

PRA was applied during rural and community educational camps where students lived within villages and engaged with everyday social life over a period. This approach allowed students to observe, experience, and reflect on social processes as they unfolded in real time. PRA was implemented through a various participatory tools and processes designed to encourage shared analysis, dialogue, and reflection.

Social and Research mapping supported exploration of patterns of settlement, infrastructure, environmental conditions, and local resources. Seasonal calendar to examine livelihood cycles, employment patterns, health concerns, and periods of vulnerability. Trend analysis, cropping pattern analysis, and timeline facilitated discussion on economic activities, agricultural patterns, historical development, and social change over time.

These tools were supported by informal conversations, Focus Group discussions, and group interactions with women, elders, youth, and informal workers. Students are assumed to take up a facilitator role, intentionally creating space for community participants to engage with one another and lead the discussion. Intentional pauses and attentive listening were key to the process, allowing communication to emerge organically. The PRA process was guided by key principles of community development, including valuing local knowledge, resources, skills, processes, and culture. Tools were applied on a base that recognised community members as knowledge holders and built on existing capacities, ensuring that participation remained conceptually grounded and community-led. Learning emerged through immersion, observation, and the facilitation of collective reflection rather than structured questioning or directive methods.

## 3. Findings

The PRA process revealed that meaningful participation emerged when community members both directed and interpreted the analysis. Visual and interactive methods, such as mapping timelines and seasonal representation, supported inclusive participation, particularly among individuals with limited literacy. Students observed that moments of silence enable reflection and richer dialogue than direct questions. The process challenged students' assumptions about expertise and reinforced participation as an ethical, relational, and reflective practice. Students demonstrated growing sensitivity to issues of voice, representation, and inclusion.



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# PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING IN SOCIAL WORK CAMPS

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## 4. Outcome

The use of PRA positively influences both education and fieldwork outcomes. Students develop greater confidence in a facilitative role and adopt a collaborative approach to community engagement. Field education shifted towards a bottom-up approach, recognising the community as its starting point for analysis and action. Community participants reported the essence of recognition and ownership over their narrators, contributing to mutual learning and trust between students and communities.

## 5. Future sustainability

The continued integration of PRA within rural and community education camps offers a sustainable model for participatory learning in social work education. It's a flexible, low-cost tool, and emphasis on facilitation, immersion, and reflective engagement makes it adaptable across diverse community contexts. Sustained institutional commitment, faculty mentorship, and reflective supervision can further consolidate PRA as a core approach, supporting the development of ethically grounded and community-responsive social work practitioners.

**Pictures**



Figure 1 Inflow & Outflow Chart



Figure 2 Transect Walk



Figure 3 Resource mapping

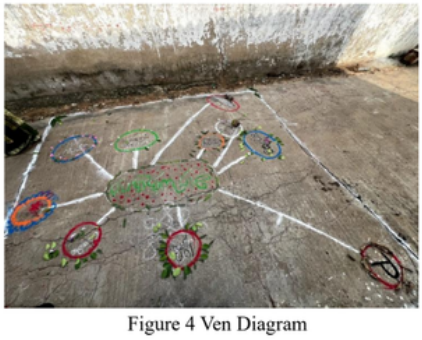


Figure 4 Ven Diagram

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# FROM EXCLUSION TO ACCESS: TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

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## Abstract

***The Master of Social Work (MSW) programme is designed to prepare socially responsive professionals equipped with critical, ethical, and rights-based competencies to address complex social issues. Social work students pursuing a Master's degree in Social Work who specialise in Disability and Empowerment develop a transformative perspective that reframes disability from an individual limitation to a socially produced experience shaped by structures, attitudes, and environments. Through this specialisation, they gain the capacity to critically examine how exclusion operates across education, workplaces, public spaces, governance, and digital ecosystems, while exploring strategies to embed inclusion across these domains.***

***Engagement with inclusive education, work, and livelihood contexts, and public infrastructure cultivates attention to equitable participation, universal design, reasonable accommodation, and non-discrimination. Awareness of built and digital environments highlights how accessibility can either enable or restrict full social participation. Anchored in the Community- Based Rehabilitation (CBR) framework, students learn to approach disability inclusion as a coordinated process spanning health, education, livelihood, social engagement, and empowerment rather than as fragmented interventions.***

***Graduates of this specialisation emerge as professionals capable of linking lived experience with rights-based frameworks, translating policy into practice, and situating disability within broader social justice discourses. By embedding inclusion into mainstream social, economic, and institutional systems, their work contributes directly to SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 11(Sustainable Cities and Communities), providing adaptable models that advance participation, equity, and universally accessible environments across institutions and society.***

## 1. Introduction

Master of Social Work (MSW) program with a specialisation in disability and empowerment at Madras School of Social Work prepares professionals to address disability through ethical, right-based, and socially responsive practice. The program advances a structural understandingof disability, recognising it as a socially produced experience shaped by attitude, environment, and institutional systems. Students are trained to critically examine exclusion across education, employment, public infrastructure, governance, and digital space, processing disability inclusion as integral to equitable and sustainable development.



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## 2. Methodology

The program and practice-intensive and interdisciplinary pedagogy. Fieldwork placements are exclusively aligned with the disability sector, enabling students to engage with rehabilitation services, inclusive education settings, organisations, and community-based initiatives. Summer internship extends exposure to government agencies, corporate inclusion programs, and rights-based institutions.

Students receive training in counselling practices, exposure to legal framework, and law enforcement systems relevant to disability rights, and a dedicated paper on gender perspective for persons with disability rights their understanding of intersectional vulnerabilities.

Instruction on assessment, rehabilitation, therapies, and medical conditions is delivered through a social and rights-based framework, supported by the Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) model integrating health, education, livelihood, social participation, and empowerment. In addition to practice-based learning, students are trained in social work Research, enabling evidence-based analysis and policy-oriented inquiry. The department also maintains a memorandum of understanding (MOUs) with disability related organisations, facilitating academic collaboration, field exposure, research engagement, and reciprocal knowledge exchange.

## 3. Findings

Sustained engagement with disability- focused practice enhances students' understanding of structural and attitudinal barriers faced by persons with disabilities. Exposure to counselling, legal frameworks, and accessibility practices strengthens ethical reasoning, professional confidence, and the ability to work across multidisciplinary contexts. Students demonstrate increased capacity to translate theory into content-sensitive practice.

## 4. Outcome

The program is strengthened by value-added courses and department-led initiatives that deepen applied competencies. Training in access audit equips students to assess physical and digital environments and propose inclusive design interventions. Courses in creative and expressive therapies, including art-based approaches, expand psychosocial engagement skills. The department's annual flagship initiatives, Vishwas, function as a national-level inclusive platform bringing together organisations, professionals, and persons with disabilities. Each addition introduces innovative themes, including assistive device exhibitions that provide hands-on exposure to functionality and application.



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Inclusive art initiative further reinforces collaboration, participation, and dignity. Graduates are equipped to design development projects centred on persons with disabilities and to embed Disability, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles within mainstream organisational frameworks.

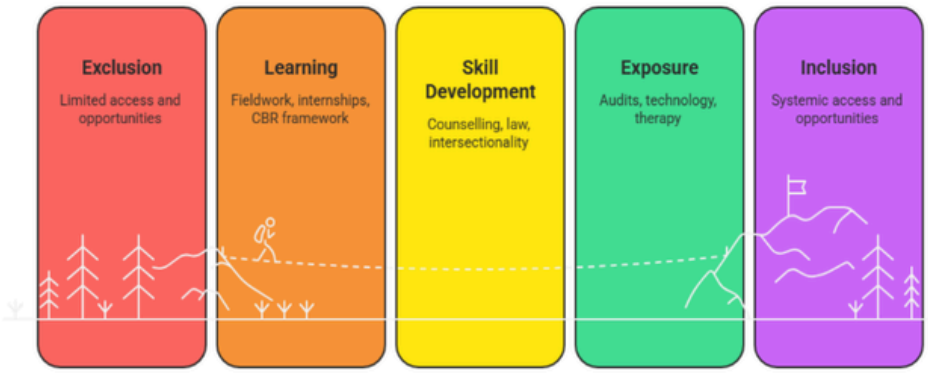



*Figure 1: Journey of Exclusion to Inclusion*

## 5. Future sustainability

Growing policy emphasis on disability inclusion and the establishment of the dedicated Ministry of Persons with Disabilities in Tamil Nadu have expanded opportunities in the public and private sectors. Strong institutional partnership supports ongoing learning and social impact. By continuously aligning its curriculum with value-added courses and initiatives within evolving sectoral needs. The disability and empowerment specialisation offers a sustainable model for advancing accessibility, participation, and inclusive development. Aligning with a global framework strengthens relevance, including:

SDG 4 - Quality Education, SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities, SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities.



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Innovations and Best Practices in Social Work Education

Category: Best Practice | Subcategory: Community Engagement / Field Instruction / Service Learning

# Advancing Social Work Education Through Rural Immersion, Global Connections, and Student-Centred Practice Models

*Mr. Alister Shaun Dsouza, Ms. Neeradha Sheen & Dr. Roshan Monteiro*

St Aloysius (Deemed to be University), Mangalore

## Abstract

*Advancing social work education requires innovative pedagogical approaches that bridge theory with real-world practice (Lemieux & Allen, 2007). In this context, our Social Work Department has developed a distinctive field education model that integrates community engagement, rural immersion, international collaboration, and student-led initiatives. This best practice emerged from a simple conviction, meaningful learning happens when students step into real communities, build relationships and become part of ongoing change. The core of this model lies in village adoption, where students and faculty work with rural communities over extended periods. Through rural immersion camps, learners gain lived experience, observing local realities, engaging in dialogue, and understanding community strengths and challenges first-hand.*

*A major highlight of our practice is the international internship in Tanzania, established through an official Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Two successful batches have completed this cross-cultural field placement, gaining exposure to community development, grassroots programmes and global perspectives on social work practice. This partnership has strengthened the department's commitment to preparing students for culturally responsive, internationally aware practice.*

*Equally significant are our need-based interventions with marginalised groups, particularly civic workers and vulnerable families. Students design and deliver capacity building workshops, awareness sessions, school engagements and community programmes with complete ownership, from planning to facilitation. This student-driven approach nurtures leadership, confidence and professional social work competencies.*

*Moving forward, the department plans to expand its community partnerships, increase student participation across semesters and introduce structured tools to track social impact and learning outcomes. Further international collaborations, especially in community-based research and field practice, are being explored.*

*This evolving model stands as an innovative, empowerment-oriented practice, one that enables students not only to study communities, but to learn with them, work alongside them and contribute meaningfully to social change.*

**Key words: Community Engagement, Rural Immersion, International Collaboration and Student Led Initiatives**



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# Advancing Social Work Education Through Rural Immersion, Global Connections, and Student-Centred Practice Models

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## 1. Introduction

Community engagement forms the foundation of effective social work education, as it enables students to connect theoretical knowledge with lived social realities. The best practice documented in this study positions community engagement as a central pedagogical approach, wherein students actively work with communities rather than merely studying them. By integrating rural immersion, international field exposure, and student-led initiatives within community settings, the practice nurtures experiential learning, ethical sensitivity, and professional competence. Such an approach is particularly relevant in social work education, as it fosters mutual learning, social responsibility, and long-term commitment to community-based change.

## 2. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical design to document student perceptions of community-engaged learning practices. Primary data were collected using a structured Google Form questionnaire administered to postgraduate social work students who had participated in community engagement activities, including village adoption, rural immersion camps, international internships, and need-based community interventions. The sample consisted of 52 students selected through purposive sampling, as they had direct exposure to the practice. The tool included Likert-scale and closed-ended questions focusing on student involvement, learning outcomes, skill development, and perceived impact of community engagement on professional growth. Data were analysed narratively, with responses thematically interpreted to capture key trends and patterns.

## 3. Findings

The findings indicate strong student support for community engagement as an effective learning practice. Nearly 88% of respondents reported that fieldwork and rural immersion enhanced their understanding of grassroots realities and community dynamics. About 84% felt that sustained community engagement improved their ability to build rapport, apply participatory approaches, and respect community knowledge systems.

International community-based exposure was viewed positively, with students stating that it broadened their cultural understanding and perspective on social work practice. Student-led community initiatives were identified as a major strength, as over 90% of respondents agreed that independently planning and implementing programmes strengthened leadership, confidence, and professional accountability.



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## 4. Outcomes

The community-engaged approach has positively influenced educational outcomes by improving students' field readiness and application of theory to practice. Students demonstrated enhanced competence in community assessment, programme planning, facilitation, and reflective practice. The approach also benefited communities through awareness programmes, capacity-building initiatives, and sustained institutional partnerships. Academically, the practice contributed to deeper learning, ethical sensitivity, and increased interest in community-based research and practice-oriented careers.

## 5. Future Sustainability

The practice shows strong potential for sustainability and replication. Institutionalising community engagement through curriculum integration, long-term community partnerships, and structured field supervision can ensure continuity. Expanding international collaborations and developing tools to systematically track social impact and student learning outcomes will further strengthen the model. With sustained institutional support, this community-engaged approach can serve as a scalable and replicable framework for social work education committed to social justice and participatory development.

## 6. Photos






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Category: INNOVATION| Subcategory: 1. Teaching & Curriculum Development 2. Community Engagement / Field Instruction / Service Learning

# Inbavanam Resource Centre as an Innovative Social Work Practice in Education and Development

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## Abstract

***Inbavanam Resource Centre, situated at the foothills of the Nilgiris in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, stands as an innovative practice in social work education and sustainable community development. This centre addresses the critical issue of school dropout among rural and tribal children by providing holistic support, including compassionate counseling for families, supplementary education, life skills training, and leadership development. Starting as an after school activity centre, it offered guided study sessions and extracurricular activities after children's household chores. The local schools opposed the initiative. Yet, it led to children starting their own library—repainting donated cupboards, stocking 300 books, and hosting daily reading classes that sparked village awareness programs. During COVID-19 pandemic, these children adapted by downloading Tamil Nadu Government textbooks and studying under trees, forming a resilient "model school" that was later encouraged by the local schools. Focusing on first-generation learners, the centre has successfully guided ten young girls through the college application process, securing their admissions, providing mentorship, and offering scholarships to make higher education accessible. School abandonment is often rooted in socio-economic challenges such as debt, discrimination, and lack of hope, and Inbavanam works to dismantle these barriers through targeted interventions. Volunteers engage with villages, supporting children, youth, adults, farmers, and Panchayat leaders to foster empowerment and break cycles of disadvantage. This project highlights the transformative potential of integrating social work education with grassroots action, offering a replicable model for sustainable development in rural and tribal regions.***

## 1. Introduction

Inbavanam Resource Centre's core practice involves partnering with local schools to deliver compassionate counseling, supplementary education, life skills, leadership training, and scholarship support, targeting first-generation learners to combat dropout causes like debt and bias and enable college access.



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# Inbavanam Resource Centre as an Innovative Social Work Practice in Education and Development

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## 2. Methodology

Inbavanam employs a community-driven, participatory approach. It began with an after-school center where children, after completing chores like cooking and fetching water, gathered at 6 p.m. for guided study, extracurricular activities, and life skills under the guidance of social workers. Children initiated a self-sustained library, repainting donated cupboards and stocking books from community donors, followed by daily reading classes. During COVID-19 school closures, sessions shifted outdoors under trees, with textbooks downloaded from the Tamil Nadu Government Education website.

The process integrates deep counseling for students and families, targeting dropout root causes Volunteers engage villages, collaborating with local schools, Panchayat leaders, farmers, women, and youth. Monthly community organizations unite diverse castes and religions. Tools include supplementary education, leadership training, mentorship, scholarship facilitation, and awareness programs.

## 3. Findings

Key observations reveal children's proactive agency: they formed a "model school" under trees during quarantines, boosting reading awareness and community programs. Initial school opposition, mistaking it for a rival institution, evolved into endorsement post-COVID. Families showed reduced dropout tendencies. Student outcomes were transformative—ten girls transitioned to college after school, with Inbavanam aiding applications, admissions, mentors, and scholarships. Improvements included heightened study habits, library usage, and leadership skills, evident in children's self-organized initiatives and communal unity events.

## 4. Outcomes

Inbavanam's impact reverberates across education, fieldwork, and community. Educationally, it reduces dropouts, enabling college access for first-generation rural and tribal girls and sustaining learning amid disruptions. In fieldwork, it redefines social work as a collaborative, volunteer-led intervention, partnering with local schools and Panchayat leaders for holistic support. Community-wide, it dismantles disadvantage cycles, fostering empowerment, and equity via community organisations. Monthly community organizations brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds, promoting collective development. Rural-tribal villages now envision knowledgeable futures, replacing despair with development—one student, family, and awareness drive at a time.



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# Inbavanam Resource Centre as an Innovative Social Work Practice in Education and Development

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## 5. Future Sustainability

- People from the community should be made to lead the 'after-school activity centre', making supplementary education sustainable.
- Enabling college education can be made sustainable by making the alumni donate funds, which can be used to provide scholarships for the next batch of students going to college.
- Localization through government partnership to replicate the model across block panchayats.
- Gather support from individual donors.
- Advocate for accessing Government scholarships.
- Formalize volunteer training programs.
- Standardize protocols for community libraries and mentorship, and integrate with existing local school systems to ensure support and institutional longevity.

## 6. Model

***Mutual Capacity Building (MCB) Model***




## Conclusion

Inbavanam's model exemplifies how social work education can be transformed into actionable, community-driven change. By combining academic support with social empowerment, the centre is creating a knowledgeable and equitable society where every individual, regardless of background, has the opportunity to thrive. This replicable model demonstrates how participatory social work education transforms rural-tribal communities, fostering equitable development and sustainable empowerment across generations.

### References

https://inbavanam.org/



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# REFUGEE REINTEGRATION: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING in SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION

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## Abstract

*OfERR (Organisation for Eelam Refugees' Rehabilitation) is a non-profit humanitarian organization founded in 1984 to support Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India, providing crucial services like education, healthcare, counselling, income generation, and advocacy for their rights, dignity, and eventual safe return home. One of their major focus in recent years is the reintegration of returnees into the post-war Sri Lanka. Reintegrating the lives of the returned refugees to the social, cultural and ethnic heritage and rebuilding it from where they had left it years ago, requires lot of effort but also opens up diverse opportunities for a social worker in experiential learning, problems solving and social responsibility. Spanning multiple social work principles and methods, this reintegration addresses an extensive range of needs through targeted roles. Social workers facilitate civil legal documentation, such as securing National Identity Cards, while advocating for rights and linking returnees to government resources. In relief work, they coordinate temporary shelters, progressing to semi-permanent and permanent housing based on needs, alongside community infrastructure like halls, common wells, renovated markets, and public interaction spaces.*

*Social workers promote health via public awareness, water and sanitation construction, PTSD counselling for trauma recovery, and advocacy services. For livelihoods, they drive multifaceted actions including asset development, skill enhancement, self-help group reinforcement, social network building, and resource access like land allocation. They also mitigate migration impact on children's education by bridging schools and support programs, fostering long-term resilience. This reintegration program provides rich scope for innovative social work education, enabling students to co-design and implement real-time interventions—from PTSD*

*counselling and rights advocacy to housing coordination, livelihood training, and child education bridging—while integrating core competencies like ethical decision-making, trauma-informed care, and community organization. It transforms conventional field instruction into reciprocal service learning, where students engage in hands-on problem- solving alongside returnees, linking empowerment theory, strengths-based practice, and human rights frameworks to post-conflict realities.*

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# REFUGEE REINTEGRATION: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING in SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION

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## 1. Introduction

Forced displacement and refugee crises continue to dominate global humanitarian responses. Returnee reintegration remains rare, occurring primarily when the original conflict or displacement cause has ended and refugees wants to return to their country. Founded in 1984, by the refugees themselves, OfERR (Organisation for Eelam Refugees' Rehabilitation) supports Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India through education, healthcare, counselling, income generation, and advocacy. Recent efforts focus on reintegrating returnees into post-war Sri Lanka, restoring social, cultural, and ethnic ties disrupted by decades of displacement. These interventions reduce vulnerability and foster resilience for the returnees and offer rich opportunities for experiential field instruction in social work education.

## 2. Methodology

The OfERR reintegration program follows a participatory, phased methodology in post-war Sri Lanka's Tamil communities, starting with comprehensive needs assessments among returnees. Interventions progress from securing civil documents like National Identity Cards and providing temporary relief housing to constructing permanent structures, community halls, wells, and markets. Social workers employ casework for PTSD counselling, group work to strengthen self-help networks, community organization for infrastructure and sanitation projects, and advocacy for rights and resource linkages, alongside livelihood skills training and child education bridging. Participants include social workers, returnees, field instruction students, local leaders, and government agencies, all collaborating in a trauma-informed context of cultural restoration and resource scarcity to build sustainable resilience

## 3. Findings

The returnees gained civil documents fast, and new community halls and spaces improved daily interactions and cohesion. Improvements feature lower trauma levels after counselling. Families are earning more through skills groups and land access, eventually leading to higher quality of life. Efforts in the educational sector helped in ensuring uninterrupted continuation of students education during migrations between India and Sri Lanka. Student volunteers or fieldwork trainees are working along with the practitioners starting from the grassroot level. As this is a multifaceted programme, they get the chance to know and play different roles within the same project. This practical model that connect class theory to real work, comes out as a strong example for teaching social work in conflict areas.

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## 4. Outcomes

Students actively co-designed and was a big part of reintegration components. Through this process, students learned to integrate casework, group work, and community organization methods in real-time, sharpening trauma-informed care, ethical decision-making, and cross-cultural assessment skills under supervision. They gained practical insights into empowerment theory and human rights application amid post-conflict scarcity. Developing knowledge and skill base via field journals that linked theory to dilemmas like resource allocation and cultural restoration. This hands-on engagement fostered critical consciousness about displacement, building confidence in problem-solving, advocacy, and sustainable intervention design for global social work practice.

## 5. Future Sustainability

Expand by partnering with additional NGOs and universities across South Asia and in the future as a global model. Training more social work students via field placements in multiple reintegration sites will be an investment for the future as well. If the refugees in different parts of the world gets a chance to go back to their homeland, we have a tested successful model for their reintegration. We can also advocate for policy inclusion in national refugee frameworks, ensuring sustained faculty oversight and alumni networks for program continuity.



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# Social Work Intervention in the field of Pediatric Palliative Care: Celebrating A Decade of Field Work Training and Practice

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## Abstract

***Over the last decade, placements for concurrent and block field work in settings providing Pediatric Palliative Care has ensured Social Work trainees structured, experiential learning opportunities to provide holistic care and support to children with special needs, chronic/ life limiting illness and their families. Guided by a multi-locale, family-centred and multi-disciplinary team approach, field work in this area has strengthened partnerships of the Department of Social Work, Stella Maris College (Autonomous), Chennai with organisations and hospitals resulting in collective engagement, enhanced care, innovations in service delivery and employment in this area of work.***

## 1. Introduction

As an emerging area of practice, concurrent and block field work in Medical Social Work was explored within private, tertiary health-care settings and in community contexts, with a specific focus on Paediatric Palliative Care (PPC). Student trainees are equipped with specialised skills and competencies to respond to the unique and complex needs of children requiring palliative care and their families. Denial, shock, distress and helplessness experienced by parents at the time of diagnosis and during treatment have been persistent concerns. Professional networks were expanded and field work is established with several agencies. Over the past decade, outcomes have included meaningful learning experiences for students, enhanced care and support for children and their families, effective service delivery outcomes, strong institutional networking and employment opportunities for students.

## 2. Methodology Process, tools, participants, context

Field experiences and supervision in this area have been deeply impactful. Methodology included training experiences in pediatric clinics, volunteering at Camp Rainbow (a two-week residential camp for children), workshops to strengthen patient–caregiver relationships, use of socio-drama as an effective learning tool. As a pilot academic initiative, a one-credit (30-hour) Certificate Course in Paediatric Palliative Care was conducted. Inputs on childhood cancers, counselling skills, grief and bereavement counselling, interactions with experts, field visits, peer learning and reflective sharing. Participation in webinars, conferences, carnivals, outings



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# Social Work Intervention in the field of Pediatric Palliative Care: Celebrating A Decade of Field Work Training and Practice

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(for children and their families), home-based care, participation in competitions, commemoration of significant days, celebration of festivals with child and families, use of alternative media, medi-clowning, therapeutic recreation through music, dance, fashion show, exhibitions, thrifting, interactions with celebrities contributed to creating positive and lasting memories for children and their families. Wish-granting initiatives enhanced treatment motivation and contributed to a positive hospital environment. Caregiver skill-training programmes provided opportunities for community building, group support, coping and space to share emotions, experience empathy and compassion. Fundraising initiatives supported children and their families.

Participation in Bereavement Support Circle meetings, initiation of a 'Forum for Fathers' and 'Tele-Cabin Chats' for children in isolation have been innovative practice interventions.

Working with couples / both parents at the stages of diagnosis and treatment is considered as a critical area of practice.

## 3. Findings Key observations, student outcomes, improvements

Encouraging students to engage closely with children with life-limiting illnesses, pain, grief and bereavement experiences of parents /caregivers has significantly enhanced their capacity for compassion and care. Notably, several students have secured employment in this field, often in their concurrent /block fieldwork agencies and continue collaborating with the department, in the capacity of an Agency Supervisor. Areas for improvement include systematic consolidation of student initiatives, modules prepared, patient and caregiver feedback and evaluation of work done. Language barriers is an area to be strengthened.

## 4 Outcome Impact on education, fieldwork, community, or research

Social Work intervention in the field of PPC has provided students with a niche area of practice, enabling development of specialised skills and competencies. Students are equipped to deliver holistic care in teams to children and families who have chosen India/Chennai, as a destination for healthcare. Field Work placements across non-governmental organisations, hospitals and home-based care settings have provided valuable insights to needs of patients and caregivers, health service delivery systems, strong collaborations and partnerships.



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# Social Work Intervention in the field of Pediatric Palliative Care: Celebrating A Decade of Field Work Training and Practice

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## 5 Future Sustainability

It will be worthwhile to offer a course in Medico-Pediatric Palliative Care, beneficial for patient care and field work training. Aspects of PPC can be considered for inclusion in the syllabus for Social Work. In collaboration with an NGO, an online credit/ certificate course in the area can be offered every year. As is a practice, in some of the NGOs, pharmaceutical companies can be sensitised on the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach. Pharma companies, health care institutes and CSR initiatives of companies can be approached to support interventions, training and salaries of Social Workers in this field. To commemorate the work done over this decade, a programme can be organised with all partners and collaborators to evaluate work done. In the future we hope to form a Stella Maris Alliance for PPC with our partners and collaborators.

## 6 Stella Maris Field Work Experiences in PPC over the past decade




Pic courtesy: all partnering agencies

***The experience of field work in PPC has been extremely satisfying. The multi-disciplinary, collaborative spirit across diverse settings has been immensely motivating; the courage and resilience of patients and their families/caregivers deeply encouraging; the dedication and commitment of Social Workers, health personnel truly inspiring; and the sensitivity, generosity, and openness to learning demonstrated by young student trainees/ 'trainees turned Agency Supervisors', both satisfying and rewarding.***



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# Project Field Work at Madras School of Social Work: An Action Research Approach

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## Abstract

***In Madras School of Social Work (MSSW), the Master of Social Work curriculum has a diverse group of learners from different educational backgrounds, social milieu and regions.***
***As part of fieldwork, the Project Field Work (PFW) component is offered for one month during the latter part of the first semester. Each randomly assigned student group is attached to a faculty supervisor. Each group is required to choose a social issue, carry out a small-scale research study, identify the immediate/pressing needs of the target population, and plan and carry out appropriate interventions. Thanks to PFW component, students are initiated to community engagement through guided group interactions in real time contexts. Through the PFW component students receive an immersive learning experience with ample opportunity for co-learning in small groups. The PFW provides students wide scope to network and collaborate with government and NGOs. The very nature of the PFW component provides life-changing experiences for the students in terms of understanding self, others and societal issues. PFA also enables the social work trainees to comprehend the nuances, ramifications and challenges involved in addressing the social issues. Being an integral part of the curriculum, the PFA component is offered across all MSW programmes offered by the College. Future sustainability of the PFW component can be ensured through in-house exchange of ideas, sharing of information with the academic community in appropriate forums, research on stakeholders' perspectives of the PFW component and dissemination of PFW findings through paper presentations &publications.***

## 1. Introduction

Fieldwork is a core component of social work education, providing students with opportunities to experience field realities, understand human and social situations, and learn effective intervention strategies. In the first semester, as students enter the programme from diverse academic backgrounds, their capacity to apply social work methods in field settings is often limited. Therefore, they require a preparatory component that enables them to engage with individuals, groups, and communities from a social problem perspective and to practice basic micro-level interventions that address identified issues to some extent. Project Field Work (PFW), a unique field work component offered at MSSW, provides such a foundational learning experience for social work students.



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# Project Field Work at Madras School of Social Work: An Action Research Approach

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## 2 Methodology

The PFW component is offered for one month during the latter part of the first semester. Each randomly assigned student group is attached to a faculty supervisor.Each group is required to choose a social issue, carry out a small scale research study, identify the immediate/pressing needs of the target population, and plan and carry out appropriate interventions. Depending on the issue addressed, the interventions may include awareness creation, development of communication materials and media, organisation of seminars, provision of services and facilitation of entitlements, as well as fundraising to support project activities. The outcomes of the Project Field Work are presented by each group before an external jury, which serves as a formal evaluation mechanism while also enabling cross-learning and the sharing of experiences among teams.

## 3. Outcomes

1. Guided group interactions: Given the diverse background of the students, PFW gives them a safe space to work with people transitioning from observation visits, rural camp and moving on to dyadic / individual field placements.

2. Small group activity: PFW gives students the opportunity to work in independent groups thereby enhancing their ability to take initiative, articulate their ideas despite difference of opinions, mobilize resources and network in real-time basis.

3. Benefits of working in groups: The PFW is a perfect example of the synergy effect.
Further, the process of working in groups prepares the student for ensuing field work assignments to be carried out independently.

4. Opportunity to work on real-time social issues: Students take up live social issues, carry out research to understand select facets of the same and organize suitable interventions.

5. Experiential learning: PFW gives an immersive learning experience with ample opportunity for co-learning in small groups.



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6. Skills training: The PFW provides students ample scope to network with government and NGOs and work with them. They also learn other skills associated with programme planning and execution. Working on tight timelines also brings out the best among the candidates in a competitive setting.

7. Life changing insights: The very nature of the PFW component provides life changing experiences for the students in terms of understanding self, others and societal issues, comprehending the challenges involved in addressing issues and so on. These experiences remain pertinent during their life course as well.

## 3. Future Sustainability:

There is ample scope to expand the application of the PFW component as detailed below.

a) In-house exchange of ideas: The MSW curriculum in MSSW is offered in five different programmes. Intra-mural discussions across the programmes could help cross-learn and incorporate new dimensions as required.

b) Sharing of information with the academic community: MSSW could share about the PFW experience to other Social Work Educational institutions in appropriate forums.

c) Research on PFW component: Research on stakeholder perspectives of the PFW component will provide interesting insights about the PFW component and will also help identify the scope for improvement.

d) Dissemination of PFW findings: Currently, PFW culminates with report generation, presentation and evaluation. However, efforts to disseminate the findings of the PFW exercise to a larger audience through paper presentations or publications could be strengthened.



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# AI-Assisted Multilingual Communication: Student Innovation to Overcome Language Barriers While doing Fieldwork in Social Work

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## Abstract

***In India, Master of Social Work (MSW) programs attract students from diverse states, many of whom pursue their studies in institutions where the native language differs from their own. Traditionally, the conventional approach to managing this linguistic diversity has been to pair non-native language speakers with native-speaking co-trainees during fieldwork. While helpful, this method often limits independent engagement and does not fully address communication gaps in dynamic community settings. This student-led innovation proposes the integration of AI-driven language tools—such as translation apps, speech-to-text, voice translation, and multilingual scripting—to enhance learning, communication, and participation during fieldwork. By enabling real-time interaction, expression of emotions, and culturally sensitive communication, the approach reduces reliance on human translators and supports more authentic rapport-building with clients. Rooted in experiential learning and inclusive digital practices, this model strengthens clarity, accuracy, and engagement in diverse field contexts. It allows trainees to understand community needs more effectively, facilitates meaningful participation of clients, and enhances the overall quality of interventions. Beyond immediate utility, the proposed idea offers strong potential for long-term sustainability. As AI tools become increasingly accessible, affordable, and integrated into everyday communication platforms, social work institutions can embed these technologies into field instruction, orientation programs, and community engagement protocols. Continuous updates, student training modules, and partnerships with technology providers can further support scalability. With sustained institutional backing, this innovation can evolve into a permanent support system that prepares future social workers to navigate multilingual environments with cultural agility, confidence, and inclusivity.***

## 1. Introduction

Language diversity is a significant challenge in social work education, particularly during fieldwork where effective communication is essential for rapport-building, assessment, and intervention. In India, Master of Social Work (MSW) programs attract students from different linguistic regions who often undertake field placements in communities where the local language is unfamiliar to them Conventional approaches,



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such as pairing non-native speakers with native- speaking co-trainees, offer partial support but limit independent engagement and may not ensure inclusive participation of all clients. This innovative practice explores the use of AI-assisted speech and translation technologies to overcome language barriers during social work fieldwork. By integrating digital tools into real-time practice, the innovation enhances inclusivity, communication clarity, and culturally sensitive engagement, thereby strengthening both social work education and field-based interventions.

## 2 Methodology

This innovation was implemented during concurrent fieldwork at a shelter home for urban homeless women. The context involved group work sessions with residents from diverse linguistic backgrounds, while trainees were non-native speakers of the local language. To address communication gaps, the trainees used AI-based tools, including speech-to-text translators, voice translation applications, and AI-assisted multilingual text scripting. These tools were applied during group activities such as emotional expression exercises, storytelling circles, relaxation activities, and feedback sessions. The methodology was experiential and participatory, allowing trainees to interact directly with residents without constant dependence on human translators. Participants included shelter residents and MSW trainees, and the process emphasized ethical use of technology, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity. The innovation was embedded within routine group work practice, ensuring practicality and ease of adoption.

## 3. Findings

The use of AI translation tools resulted in noticeable improvements in communication and participation. Trainees were able to deliver instructions clearly, understand responses accurately, and facilitate emotional expression without language-related hesitation. Residents showed increased confidence, willingness to participate, and openness in sharing their experiences. Group cohesion improved as communication became more inclusive and balanced. For students, the innovation enhanced independence, confidence, and cultural competence. It also reduced misunderstandings and reliance on intermediaries, allowing for more authentic worker–client relationships. The practice demonstrated that technology, when used thoughtfully, can support ethical and effective social work engagement in multilingual contexts.



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## 4 Outcome

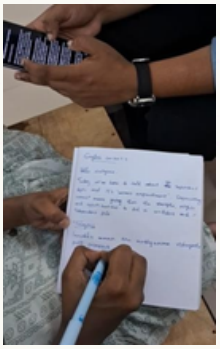
The innovation positively impacted social work education and field practice by improving the quality of interactions, strengthening learning outcomes, and promoting inclusive engagement. It enabled students to apply theory into practice more effectively, enhanced their communication skills, and reinforced values such as dignity, participation, and respect for diversity. For the community, the approach ensured that residents' voices were heard and understood in their own languages, fostering empowerment and trust. Overall, the innovation contributed to more responsive, culturally sensitive, and effective social work interventions.

## 5 Future Sustainability

This practice has strong potential for scalability and institutionalization. Social work institutions can integrate AI-assisted communication tools into fieldwork orientation programs, group work manuals, and practice guidelines. Training modules on ethical and effective use of AI can be developed for students and supervisors. The innovation can be replicated across shelters, hospitals, schools, and community settings where linguistic diversity exists. As AI tools continue to evolve and become more accessible, this model can serve as a sustainable support system for multilingual social work education and practice.









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# ADDRESSING MISTRUST AND TRIAL HESITANCY: SOCIAL WORK APPROACHES TO CLINICAL RESEARCH LITERACY

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## Abstract

***Mistrust, misinformation, and historical inequities pose significant barriers to equitable participation in clinical trials, particularly among underserved communities with limited exposure to research ethics and participant safeguards. Strengthening clinical research literacy is therefore essential to fostering informed decision-making and improving trial inclusiveness. Social work, with its focus on advocacy, ethics, and culturally responsive engagement, is uniquely positioned to address trial hesitancy. This study examines the Clinical Research Literacy Intervention Model (CRLIM), a novel educational framework designed to enhance social work students' research communication competencies and build community trust in clinical research. Thirty-six second-year social work students participated in a four-month practicum incorporating three components: (1) foundational instruction on Good Clinical Practice, informed consent principles, participant rights, and risk–benefit communication; (2) skills development through simulation exercises, misinformation-response scenarios, ethical decision-making cases, and micro-learning pedagogical tools; and (3) community engagement practice across three outreach sites partnered with public health and clinical research units. Students conducted structured awareness sessions, household counselling, and stigma-sensitive dialogues while documenting concerns and referrals. Data were obtained through pre–post community assessments, supervisor evaluations, and structured competency rubrics. The intervention reached 1,850 individuals in group settings and 412 through personalised dialogue. Community literacy increased by 64%, and misconceptions concerning safety, exploitation, and data misuse decreased by 48%. Student competency assessments demonstrated a 75% improvement in communication clarity, ethical reasoning, and confidence in addressing consent-related inquiries. CRLIM effectively enhanced student preparedness for interdisciplinary research-engagement roles while strengthening community trust and informed participation. The model shows strong potential for curricular integration, scalability, and replication across diverse sociocultural contexts.***

## 1. Introduction

Clinical research literacy is essential for enabling ethical and equitable participation in clinical trials, particularly in communities where mistrust, misinformation, and historical injustices shape perceptions of risk. Limited understanding of research safeguards and informed consent often contributes to trial hesitancy, reducing diversity in participant recruitment. Social work, grounded in trust-building and community empowerment, offers a critical pathway to strengthening clinical research communication. This practice introduces the Clinical Research Literacy Intervention Model (CRLIM), an innovative educational approach embedded in social work field instruction, to enhance student competencies and address community mistrust through culturally responsive engagement.



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## 2 Methodology

A total of thirty-six second-year social work students engaged in a four-month practice-based learning model integrated into their field practicum. The CRLIM framework consisted of three components:

• **Foundational Instruction** through modules on Good Clinical Practice (GCP), participant rights, ethics of informed consent, stigma-sensitive communication, and risk perception.

• **Skills Development,** involving simulation exercises, misinformation-response scenarios, ethical decision-making cases, and the use of pedagogical tools such as micro-learning research cards, visual storyboards, and question-based communication aids.

• **Community Engagement Practice,** implemented across three outreach sites partnered with public health and clinical research units. Students conducted structured awareness sessions, household dialogues, myth-busting discussions, and digital documentation of concerns, referrals, and follow-up questions. Data were gathered through pre–post
assessments, supervisor evaluations, and field documentation.

## 3. Findings

The intervention resulted in measurable improvements in both community understanding and student performance. Students reached 1,850 individuals through group sessions and 412 through personalized counseling. Community pre–post assessmentsshowed a 64% increase in understanding of trial purpose, safety protocols, informed consent, and participant
protections. Misconceptions regarding exploitation, side effects, and data misuse decreased by 48%. Student competency scores increased by 75%, particularly in ethical reasoning, communication clarity, and confidence in navigating sensitive trial-related questions. Supervisors observed increased professionalism and cultural responsiveness. Communities expressed high trust in student facilitators due to their relatable and non-medicalized communication style.

## 4 Outcome

The innovation enhanced student preparedness for interdisciplinary research roles by integrating trial literacy, ethics, and communication skills into field instruction, a dimension often missing from conventional curricula. It also strengthened community–researcher relationships by providing accessible, transparent information that encouraged voluntary participation and reduced hesitancy.



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# ADDRESSING MISTRUST AND TRIAL HESITANCY: SOCIAL WORK APPROACHES TO CLINICAL RESEARCH LITERACY

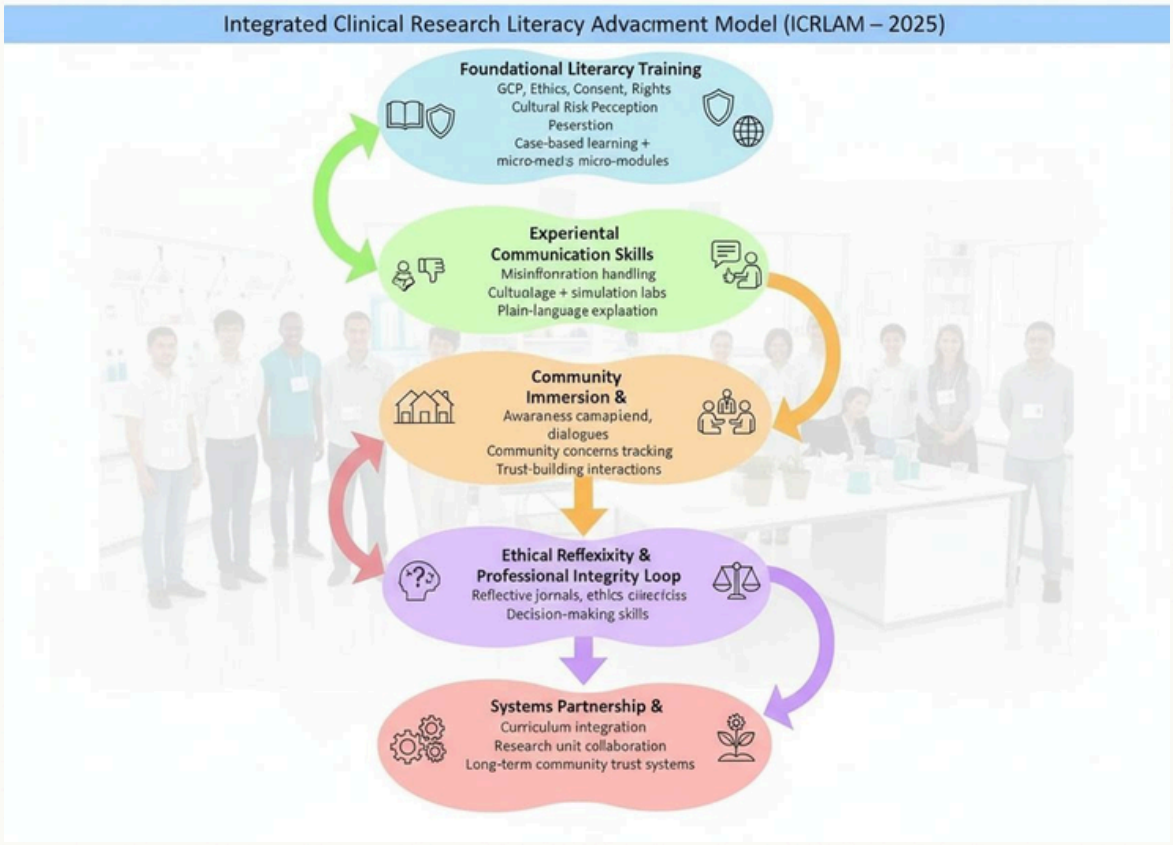
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The CRLIM model simultaneously advanced educational quality, improved fieldwork relevance, and contributed to ethical research practices by bridging communication gaps in underserved communities.

## 5 Future Sustainability

The CRLIM framework can be institutionalized through curriculum integration, long-term partnerships with clinical research organizations, and embedding research-engagement competencies within field learning outcomes. Its adaptability allows replication across diverse sociocultural contexts, especially where mistrust and misinformation impede equitable research participation. With formal adoption, CRLIM has the potential to create a skilled, ethically grounded social work workforce capable of supporting national research priorities and global clinical trial inclusivity.






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# Social Work Education – Criticality of going beyond the dichotomy of conventional and technology-driven teaching practices

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## Abstract

***This paper highlights an Innovation in Social Work Education at MAHE. It is unique in positioning students as active co-creators of knowledge through blended, student-centred pedagogies that integrate constructivist learning, digital technologies, and experiential techniques. The approach departs from traditional lecture-based models, fostering engagement, autonomy, and reflective practice. A core innovation is blended, experiential learning combining face-to-face pedagogies (role-plays, group work, journaling, problem-based exercises) with technology-enabled tools (digital storytelling, virtual discussions, gamified assessments). Pragmatically, it enhances learning outcomes; philosophically, it aligns with constructivist and adult learning principles, emphasising critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and learner empowerment.The approach strengthens practice competencies, professional identity formation, and reflective capacity, allowing students to connect theory with real-world social work contexts. It improves engagement, peer-to-peer learning, and personalised feedback while promoting empathy, ethical reasoning, and anti-oppressive practice. Students gain ownership of learning and adaptability to diverse communities and digital environments. Future development will focus on expanding technology-enhanced, culturally responsive, and inclusive pedagogies across all social work cohorts. Planned innovations include AI-supported formative assessments for personalised learning paths, integration of virtual reality simulations for immersive community and field experiences, and enhanced analytics to track reflective growth and competency acquisition. Faculty development programs will strengthen coaching, facilitation, and adaptive teaching skills. Cross-disciplinary collaborations will enable simulation-based learning and community-driven digital projects. Long-term goals include creating a scalable, evidence-informed, learner-centered model that can be adapted nationally and internationally, bridging digital innovation with social work values, ethics, and context-sensitive practice***

## 1. Introduction

Blended experiential learning, which integrates face-to-face pedagogies with technology-enabled tools, enhances student engagement, inclusivity, and the depth of learning. While role-plays, group work, journaling, and problem-based exercises promote reflection, skill development, and professional identity, digital storytelling, virtual discussions, and gamified assessments extend learning beyond the classroom. This approach accommodates diverse learning styles, fosters critical thinking and collaboration, strengthens the integration of theory and practice, and prepares students for technologically mediated professional environments.



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# Social Work Education – Criticality of going beyond the dichotomy of conventional and technology-driven teaching practices

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## 2. Methodology

Blended experiential learning enhances student engagement, motivation, and ownership of learning by actively integrating theory with practice. It deepens conceptual understanding while strengthening critical thinking, analytical, communication, and teamwork skills. Through role-plays, reflection, problem-based tasks, and digital tools, students develop confidence, ethical awareness, and professional identity. This approach fosters inclusive and collaborative learning, supports personalised feedback, and prepares learners for complex, real-world practice in diverse and resource-constrained settings.

## 3. Findings

Guided by the principle of active student engagement in the teaching–learning process, each course commenced with the collaborative development of classroom and discussion ground rules. Faculty members and students jointly articulated expectations, reached consensus, and formalised these norms as a shared agreement, fostering mutual accountability and a respectful learning environment. A blended, experiential pedagogy was employed, integrating didactic lectures with role-plays, group activities, quizzes, journaling, individual exercises, and problem-based learning.

Lectures were intentionally designed as interactive learning experiences, leveraging verbal and non-verbal communication, classroom space, and instructional props to enhance student engagement. Role-plays emerged as a particularly effective strategy for strengthening students' confidence, conceptual clarity, and professional identity, as evidenced through student feedback. Group activities served as both icebreakers and mechanisms to support affective and cognitive learning, while problem-based learning approaches enhanced analytical reasoning, communication competencies, and peer learning.

Intentional acknowledgement and crediting of student contributions fostered a sense of ownership over the learning process. Reflective journaling facilitated self-discovery and the development of ethical awareness relevant to professional practice. Beyond the classroom, structured support for field-based learning and guided exposure to practice settings strengthened students' ability to integrate theoretical knowledge with real-world application.

## 4. Outcomes

Blended experiential learning enhances student engagement, motivation, and ownership of learning by actively integrating theory with practice. It deepens conceptual understanding while strengthening critical thinking, analytical, communication, and teamwork skills. Through role-plays, reflection, problem-based tasks, and digital tools, students develop confidence, ethical awareness, and professional identity. This approach fosters inclusive and collaborative learning, supports personalised feedback, and prepares learners for complex, real-world practice in diverse and resource-constrained settings.



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## 5. Future Sustainability

This learning approach can be scaled and institutionalised by embedding it within curricula, aligning learning outcomes and assessments with experiential approaches, and building faculty capacity through structured training and communities of practice. Developing flexible pedagogic frameworks, investing in technology and instructional support, and leveraging learning management systems enable replication across contexts. Systematic documentation of outcomes, student feedback, and learning analytics supports continuous improvement and evidence-based scaling.



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# Reimagining Social Work Field Education: A Digitally Enabled, Rights-Based Field Practice Framework at MAHE, Manipal

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## Abstract

***Responding to Gen-Z and post-COVID learning shifts, MAHE MSW integrates digital tools for field research and documentation. We present a best practice and innovation in social work field-education: a digitally enabled, application-based, rights-based Field Practice Framework. It is unique because it blends immersive community engagement with GPS-based spatial analysis and RTI-driven assignments, creating a contemporary, contextually grounded model that strengthens ethical, evidence-informed practice.The framework advances social work practice by moving beyond conventional observation and report-writing toward experiential, technology-supported, and governance-linked learning. Philosophically, it draws on ecological & strengths perspectives, rights-based and participatory principles, and critical-reflective practice. Pragmatically, it integrates RTI-based inquiry, digital documentation, and spatial mapping to deepen contextual understanding and strengthen accountability-driven professional competencies.This innovation enhances students' ability to analyse communities holistically, map social determinants visually, engage with legal systems confidently, and generate evidence that informs interventions. The framework elevates student readiness, strengthens advocacy, and bridges classroom learning with real-world governance, contributing to more responsive, ethical, and policy-relevant social work practice.Future development will focus on deepening the use of spatial and digital tools, and integrating qualitative analysis for pattern identification. The program plans to collaborate with local governance bodies to operationalise RTI-based social accountability projects and extend policy-engagement modules to additional domains beyond child protection. New interdisciplinary partnerships will support mental health, ageing, and environmental social work applications. Scaling efforts will include training other cohorts, publishing practice handbooks, and creating living labs & Curricula, ensuring the model remains adaptable, ethical, and impactful across diverse contexts.***

## 1. Introduction

Field practicum has traditionally been considered the heart of social work education. However, contemporary realities—including post-COVID learning shifts, digital transformation, and changing learner expectations among Gen-Z students—demand a more dynamic, accountable, and technology-enabled approach to field instruction. Recognising this shift, the Master of Social Work programme at the Prasanna School of Public Health (PSPH), MAHE, has redesigned field education into a structured, digitally enabled, rights-based learning framework that integrates practice, research, reflection, and governance engagement.



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## 2. Methodology

At MAHE–PSPH, we have reimagined fieldwork education to build career-ready skills, professional competence, and people-centred practice. Through 1,100 hours of supervised field engagement—including concurrent placements and a 400-hour immersive block placement in India or abroad—students gain rich and transformative practice exposure under trained social work professionals. Our New MMSW model accredited by NCHP will bring in new perptives and regour for our MSW program,

Our deliverable-based curriculum responds to emerging social needs and includes organisational analysis, review writing, RTI drafting, awareness videos, casework, group work, community mapping, policy briefs, blogs, social audit tools, and advocacy modules.

Digital documentation, multimedia communication, GPS mapping, and rights-based inquiry are integrated into field learning, helping students connect classroom knowledge with real-world communities, systems, and governance.

## 3. Findings

Most of the students find this model had much useful and engaging gthem . The model has strengthened student engagement, analytical ability, professional confidence, and social accountability. Students demonstrate improved capacity to critically examine policy implementation, creatively communicate social issues, map social determinants, and understand legal and governance mechanisms. RTI-based assignments and digital field documentation have particularly enhanced evidence-building and accountability-oriented thinking, These changes students have shared while their

## 4. Outcomes

Students often experience deep reflection when they witness inclusive education, women's self-help groups, confident school children, grassroots Panchayat governance, and the realities of end-of-life care. These lived experiences move learning beyond textbooks, helping them understand resilience, participation, inclusion, governance, and human dignity. Reflective writing becomes a process of learning and self-discovery, not a burden.

Partner NGOs also harness students' talents in website development, social media promotion, article writing, proposal preparation, small research studies, fundraising, programme organization, and teaching children. Study-abroad students from Maastricht University join Indian student teams, creating rich cross-cultural learning for all. Together, fieldwork becomes a living laboratory of professional learning, reflection, and social inquiry.

Students leave with stronger practice skills, digital competence, policy awareness, cultural sensitivity, humility, and meaningful bonds with communities—often carrying memories and relationships that shape them deeply as professionals and human beings.



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# Reimagining Social Work Field Education: A Digitally Enabled, Rights-Based Field Practice Framework at MAHE, Manipal

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## 5. Future Sustainability

We continuously refine our field practice model through feedback and emerging best practices, adapting to changing social realities while preserving the core values and ethics of social work. As the field expands into areas such as gerontology, palliative care, disability inclusion, digital advocacy, crowdfunding, and interdisciplinary practice, PSPH seeks to institutionalize innovation through fieldwork handbooks, partnerships, digital tools, and community-linked living laboratories.

This scalable and adaptable model offers a replicable framework for social work education—preparing reflective, skilled, rights-based, and socially responsive professionals.

## 5. Picture / Model






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# Catalyzing Research Innovation in Social Work: A Multidisciplinary Model from PSPH, MAHE

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## Abstract

***Mahila Arogya Samiti (MAS) are community-based voluntary collectives of women residing in urban slums, envisioned as grassroots institutions for promoting preventive health awareness and facilitating community demand for public health services. Despite their strategic importance within India's urban health architecture, many MAS have gradually become inactive due to declining voluntarism, weak community ownership, irregular meetings, and limited linkage with frontline health systems. Recognizing this gap, the Bhopal School of Social Sciences (BSSS) conceptualized and implemented an innovative community engagement initiative integrated within its social work field instruction framework.***

***Implemented between September and December 2024 across four urban slums of Bhopal— Rachana Nagar, Ashoka Garden, Ballabh Nagar, and Laxmi Talkies—the intervention positioned trainee social workers as facilitators of MAS revitalization. Students supported participatory MAS meetings, organized community and school-based awareness campaigns on rabies, mental health, nutrition, diabetes, antimicrobial resistance, and personal hygiene, and undertook systematic vulnerability and health resource mapping. The practice emphasized experiential learning, community participation, and inter-sectoral coordination with ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, Public Health Managers, and municipal authorities. The initiative resulted in renewed MAS functioning, improved preventive health awareness among community members, and strengthened coordination between community institutions and public health systems. Simultaneously, it provided a robust pedagogical platform for nurturing professional competencies, ethical practice, leadership, and voluntarism among social work students. The practice demonstrates a scalable and replicable model of integrating community engagement with social work education to strengthen grassroots health institutions in urban informal settlements.***

## 1. Introduction

The MSW programme at the Prasanna School of Public Health (PSPH), MAHE operationalizes an interdisciplinary research ecosystem that advances social work scholarship through methodological rigorous and practice- embedded enterprise. By leveraging, MAHE multidisciplinary ecosystem, the programme integrates public health, management sciences, data analytics, and community development into social work research and transforms traditional research models into evidence-based practice, policy relevance, and scalable social impact models.



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# Reimagining Social Work Field Education: A Digitally Enabled, Rights-Based Field Practice Framework at MAHE, Manipal

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## 2. Methodology

The research ecosystem at PSPH is built on a multilayered methodological framework. Unlike conventional social work research training, which often investigates field practice or academic inquiry in isolation, students and faculties are trained in systematic reviews, scoping reviews, meta-analyses and participatory qualitative methods including participatory rural appraisal (PRA), ethnography, narrative inquiry, and grounded theory within geographically grounded community research hubs and are embedded early in the curriculum.

Research is opreationalised through a center driven and partnership-oriented research architecture. Centers with expertise in qualitative and quantitative transdisciplinary methods serve as anchors for thematic and applied research. These centres provide structured platforms for faculty–student collaboration, funded research, and policy-oriented outputs. Research is conducted through public–private partnerships (PPP), community immersion sites, geographic field laboratories, and co-creation platforms, ensuring ethical engagement and contextual relevance.

## 3. Findings

Key observations indicate significant enhancement in students' analytical thinking, methodological confidence, and interdisciplinary competence. The number of students employed in research fields in various multidisciplinary setup has increased. Learners demonstrate improved abilities in translating community-based insights into policy-relevant outputs. Faculty–student collaborative research has resulted in peer-reviewed publications, policy briefs, and scalable intervention models. The program has also contributed to strengthening qualitative research credibility within social work scholarships.

## 4. Outcomes

The best field practice methods are evident across academic, community, and institutional domains. The centre-led research model and industry–academia collaborations have strengthened practice-relevant scholarship, enhanced access to real-world datasets, and improved students' exposure to implementation research, impact evaluation, and policy translation. Partnerships have facilitated funded projects, commissioned studies, and joint publications both nationally and internationally.

The model has increased research productivity and improved student research employability. Community partners benefit from context-sensitive interventions, while policymakers gain access to grounded, evidence-informed insights. The production of 72 high-impact journal publications since 2015 reflects sustained scholarly output.



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## 5. Future Sustainability

Sustainability is ensured through institutional support, expanding international collaborations, digital research infrastructure, and the integration of AI-enabled evidence synthesis tools. Future plans include scaling geographic research hubs, strengthening PPP networks, and formalizing co-creation laboratories to institutionalize innovation and replication across social work programs.

## 6. Picture / Model






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# Integrating CSR-Driven Community Engagement into Social Work Field Education: A Practice-Based Learning Approach Using the CSR Community Transformation & Student Competency Spiral (CSR-CTS Spiral)

*Author(s): SATHISHKUMAR K,Sr. Research Officer,Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education & Research (JIPMER)*

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## Abstract

*Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives play an increasingly strategic role in delivering health, livelihood, and youth development interventions in underserved communities. Despite their expanding footprint, CSR programs remain underutilized as structured pedagogical spaces for professional social work education. This study advances the CSR Community Transformation & Student Competency Spiral (CSR-CTS Spiral) as a theoretically grounded and practice-oriented experiential learning model that integrates CSR program environments with social work field education. The model conceptualizes student learning and community transformation as iterative, mutually reinforcing processes, enabling competency development through progressively deeper engagement while simultaneously strengthening community outcomes. Using a mixed-methods design, the study examined the implementation of the CSR-CTS Spiral among fifty second-year social work students placed across four CSR partner organizations during a six-month practicum. The spiral operationalizes learning across six stages, Exposure, Skill Acquisition, Structured Engagement, Partnership Governance, Community Transformation, and Professional Identity Formation, linking pedagogical progression with service delivery impact. Data sources included pre–post competency assessments, supervisor evaluations, digital field documentation, community feedback, and program service metrics across health, youth development, and livelihood initiatives. Findings indicate substantial gains in both educational and community domains. Students facilitated 18 health camps, screened 3,850 individuals, supported preventive education for 1,260 children, engaged 185 youth in skill development programs, and assisted 28 micro entrepreneurs through livelihood interventions. Competency assessments showed a 70% improvement, particularly in communication, ethical decision-making, stakeholder coordination, and community mobilization. Communities reported improved service access, referral continuity, and trust in CSR systems. The study establishes the CSR-CTS Spiral as a scalable, evidence-based framework that strengthens professional identity formation in social work while enhancing the accountability and effectiveness of CSR programs through shared value creation.*



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# Integrating CSR-Driven Community Engagement into Social Work Field Education: A Practice-Based Learning Approach Using the CSR Community Transformation & Student Competency Spiral (CSR-CTS Spiral)

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## 1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives create unique opportunities for delivering community health, livelihood, and youth development programs, particularly in underserved areas. However, their potential to serve as robust pedagogical environments for social work field education has not been sufficiently theorized. This study introduces the CSR Community Transformation & Student Competency Spiral (CSR-CTS Spiral), an experiential learning model in which student development and community transformation progress through iterative, mutually reinforcing stages. Designed to integrate CSR-program contexts with social work pedagogical principles, the CSR-CTS Spiral positions CSR environments as dynamic sites where students acquire competencies through increasing levels of engagement, while communities simultaneously benefit from structured student-led interventions.

## 2. Methodology

The study involved fifty second-year social work students placed across four CSR partner organizations for a six-month practicum. The CSR-CTS Spiral consists of six progressive stages:

- **Exposure**, where students orient to CSR systems, community profiles, and ethical norms
- **Skill Acquisition**, focused on participatory assessment, communication, and documentation training
- **Structured Engagement**, where students facilitate health camps, youth programs, and livelihood support activities;
- **Partnership Governance**, involving coordination with industry teams, government frontline workers, and community representatives
- **Community Transformation**, assessed through service utilization improvements and strengthened trust
- **Professional Identity Formation**, where students reflect on their evolving roles as practitioners.

Data were collected through pre–post competency assessments, supervisor evaluations, digital documentation, community feedback, and program service metrics covering health, youth development, and entrepreneurship interventions.

## 3. Findings

The CSR-CTS Spiral generated measurable outcomes across both student learning and community engagement. Students facilitated 18 health camps, screening 3,850 individuals and identifying 742 high-risk cases for referral. Preventive education reached 1,260 children, while 185 youth enrolled in skill development programs. Students supported 28 micro entrepreneurs through business development and market linkage facilitation.



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# Integrating CSR-Driven Community Engagement into Social Work Field Education: A Practice-Based Learning Approach Using the CSR Community Transformation & Student Competency Spiral (CSR-CTS Spiral)

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Competency scores indicated a 70% improvement, with the largest gains in communication clarity, community mobilization, stakeholder engagement, and ethical decision-making. Supervisors noted increased confidence, professional accountability, and capacity to navigate cross-sectoral systems. Community members reported improved awareness of services and stronger trust in CSR programs, which increased service uptake and referral continuity. These findings validate the spiral model's premise that deeper student engagement correlates with stronger community outcomes.

## 4. Outcome

The CSR-CTS Spiral strengthened the educational value of fieldwork by embedding students in CSR ecosystems that require real-time decision-making, inter-organizational collaboration, and adaptive communication. The spiral model ensured that learning was cumulative, reflective, and competency-driven, while enabling CSR partners to enhance outreach quality and data management. The approach improved community–CSR relationships, supported program accountability, and produced actionable insights for CSR strategy refinement.

## 5. Future Sustainability

The CSR-CTS Spiral is highly scalable. It can be institutionalized through curriculum integration, structured supervisor training, and standardized competency rubrics. The model is adaptable across varied CSR themes, including health, education, environment, and
livelihoods. Long-term sustainability is supported by shared value creation among universities, CSR institutions, and communities, enabling ongoing partnership development and evidence based social work practice.



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# Integrating CSR-Driven Community Engagement into Social Work Field Education: A Practice-Based Learning Approach Using the CSR Community Transformation & Student Competency Spiral (CSR-CTS Spiral)

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| Stage | Focus Area | Key Student/Program Activities | Outcome Driver |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Exposure** | System **Orien**tation | **Orien**ting to CSR systems, community profiles, and ethical norms. | Contextual Understanding |
| **2. Skill Acquisition** | Core Competency Building | Training in participatory **assess**ment, **documen**tation, and communication skills. | Methodological Training |
| **3. Structured Engagement** | Direct **Interven**tion | **Facili**tating health camps, youth programs, and livelihood support activities. | Applied Practice |
| **4. Partnership Governance** | Cross-Sectoral **Coordina**tion | **Coordin**ating with industry teams, government frontline workers, and community **represen**tatives. | Collaboration Skills |
| **5. Community Transformation** | Service Impact | **Assess**ed via improvements in service **utili**zation and strengthened community trust. | Community Outcomes |
| **6. Professional Identity Formation** | Self-Reflection | Reflective **pract**ice on evolving professional roles and ethical dilemmas. | Practitioner Development |



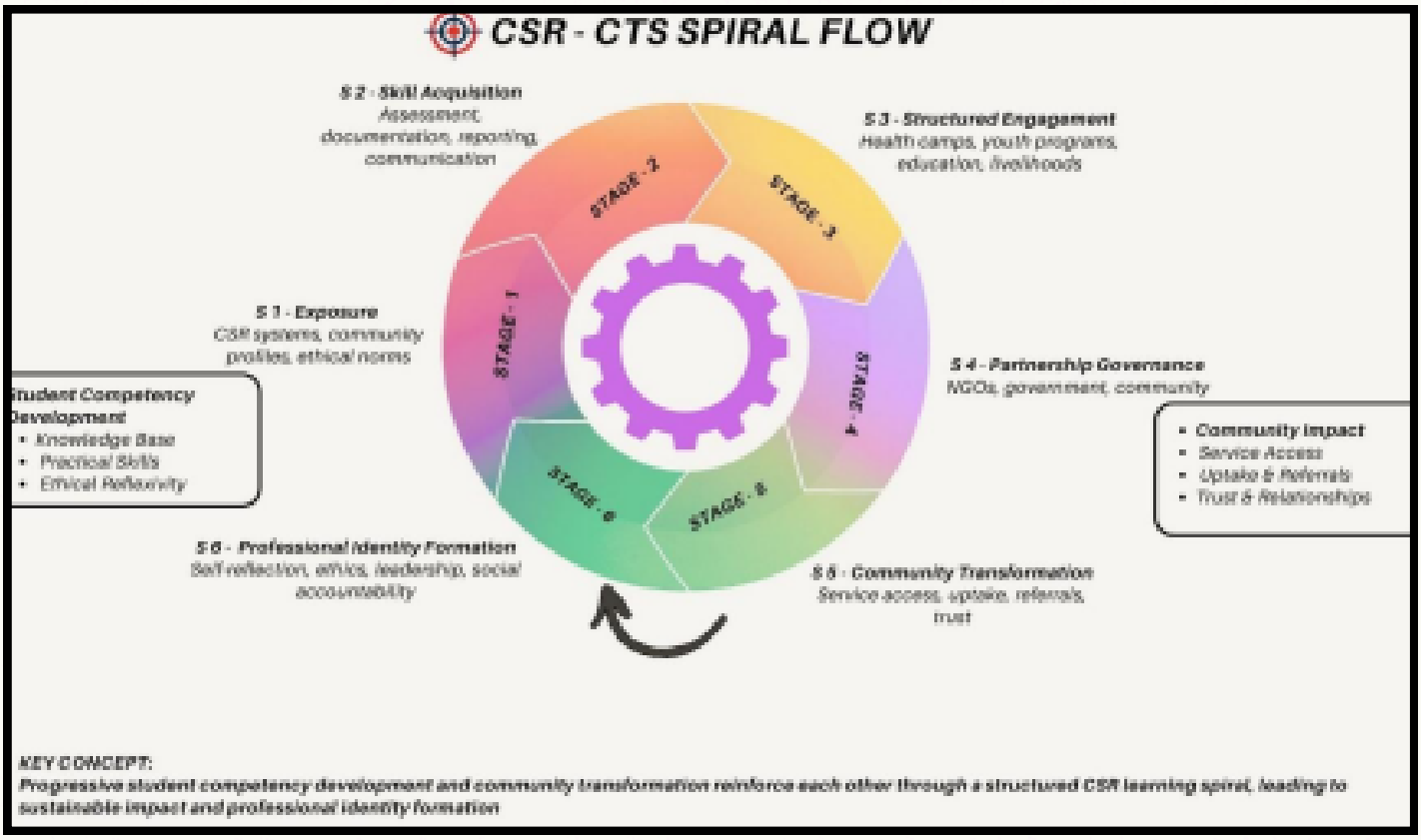
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# Integrating CSR-Driven Community Engagement into Social Work Field Education: A Practice-Based Learning Approach Using the CSR Community Transformation & Student Competency Spiral (CSR-CTS Spiral)

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## 6. Picture



# From Classroom to Community: A Learner-Centred Andragogy for Tribal Social Work Education

*Author(s): Emmanuel Daniel, Assistant Professor CHRIST University*

CHRIST UNIVERSITY

## Abstract

***This abstract presents a Learner-Centric Approach (LCA) implemented since 2022 in social work education to strengthen learners' engagement with tribal communities in India. This approach integrates experiential learning in the classroom with community-centred Learning to equip learners for impactful fieldwork focused on tribal communities in the Western Ghats. Each cohort consists of 25-30 students, who participate in simulation-based learning, case-study analyses, comparative mapping of tribal regions, guided group discussions, role-plays, and problem-based learning related to social problems and sustainable development. Some of the activities include mapping development needs, evaluating livelihood projects, and developing community-centric interventions. One of the main aims is to help learners to confidently apply social work theories and models in community contexts through structured reflection and experiential training. This andragogy differs from lecture-based teaching by emphasising participatory learning from the early stages of facilitation. This method is strongly rooted in empowerment and promoting ethical practice. Some of the observations include improved student participation, higher competency in applying theory into practice, and effective rapport-building with tribal communities. In recent years, tribal communities have also become open to student engagement, leading to stronger collaboration and trust. This framework illustrates how learner-centred andragogy can reshape social work education into a program offering meaningful lessons for tribal and marginalised communities across the Global South.***

## 1. Introduction

In the recent trends of social work education, there has always been a gap between academia and the complex realities of tribal life. Traditional teaching methods have often given more importance to lengthy lectures that do not actively engage most of the learners. The students sit in a lecture hall, listen to the teacher for a while, memorise the class notes for their exams, and then eventually forget what they studied as there are no activities which help the learners apply the concept. Since 2022, a Learner-Centred Andragogy (LCA) initiative has been introduced to enhance students & learning experience. This approach is intended to make social work education more effective by transcending theory and touching real lives, and making an impact. By shifting from teacher-led to student-centric sessions, learners show active participation and are prepared to engage more effectively with the tribal groups, not just as learners but also as tribals and partners in sustainable development.



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# From Classroom to Community: A Learner-Centred Andragogy for Tribal Social Work Education

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## 2. Methodology

The focus on theory into practice is well curated through an intensive training method that emphasises the learner's journey from the textbook to simulation to field realities. Rather than providing learners with answers to all the questions, the facilitator turns the classroom into a lab, using a guided approach to foster desirable social change. For instance, role-plays of community meetings are used to help learners build confidence in actively participating in real field settings. Through this process, learners are given the opportunity to think critically and creatively, analyse, and plan their interventions before attempting them in real-world settings.

## 3. Findings

The introduction of Learner-Centred Andragogy (LCA) has transformed students learning experience. One important observation among student communities is the removal of fear during practice. The students who once lacked confidence and hesitated to interact with the tribals have now begun to demonstrate high-quality rapport-building skills. A much more visible difference is that the learners have started to apply theory to practice, not just for an academic requirement, but they see it as a very effective tool for interventions. Especially, there is a clear change in the learner-tribal relationship. Now people are seen as human beings, not as samples for their study. The learners enter their hamlet with a non-judgmental attitude and humility, and the communities have also started accepting the learners as one of their own. This approach has helped field work into a space where there is immense exchange of knowledge where the tribal communities are like co-facilitators in the teaching-learning process.

## 4 Outcome

The outcomes of Learner-Centred Andragogy (LCA) create a ripple effect and a transformative experience for learners in the field of tribal social work. For the learning community, education is seen as a holistic approach through which one works with communities with their head, heart, and hands. This enables the learners to be competent, emotionally resilient, and ethically rooted. For the tribal people, the outcome is receiving high-quality support, followed by a long-term, valuable partnership that respects their dignity. Finally, at the institutional level, social work education is reshaped through this andragogy, becoming a very powerful approach to uplifting marginalised people across the global south.

## 5 Future Sustainability

The sustainability of this andragogy purely remains in the hands of educators across the globe. This model does not require any expensive gadgets or infrastructure; it only requires a commitment from educators who can go the extra mile in their preparations, so that learners develop curiosity to learn and apply the concepts and come up with solvable solutions across diverse cultural contexts. By formalising these best practices in social work, it is evident that UN SDG 4- Quality Education is aligned with the work. This concept enables educators to best serve the learners and transform them into effective social workers, ensuring the legacy of this work continues to inspire practitioners and policymakers.



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# Reinventing Social Work Practice through Community Engagement: Revitalization of Mahila Arogya Samiti (MAS) in Urban Bhopal

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## Abstract

***Mahila Arogya Samiti (MAS) are community-based voluntary collectives of women residing in urban slums, envisioned as grassroots institutions for promoting preventive health awareness and facilitating community demand for public health services. Despite their strategic importance within India's urban health architecture, many MAS have gradually become inactive due to declining voluntarism, weak community ownership, irregular meetings, and limited linkage with frontline health systems. Recognizing this gap, the Bhopal School of Social Sciences (BSSS) conceptualized and implemented an innovative community engagement initiative integrated within its social work field instruction framework. Implemented between September and December 2024 across four urban slums of Bhopal—Rachana Nagar, Ashoka Garden, Ballabh Nagar, and Laxmi Talkies—the intervention positioned trainee social workers as facilitators of MAS revitalization. Students supported participatory MAS meetings, organized community and school-based awareness campaigns on rabies, mental health, nutrition, diabetes, antimicrobial resistance, and personal hygiene, and undertook systematic vulnerability and health resource mapping. The practice emphasized experiential learning, community participation, and inter-sectoral coordination with ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, Public Health Managers, and municipal authorities. The initiative resulted in renewed MAS functioning, improved preventive health awareness among community members, and strengthened coordination between community institutions and public health systems. Simultaneously, it provided a robust pedagogical platform for nurturing professional competencies, ethical practice, leadership, and voluntarism among social work students. The practice demonstrates a scalable and replicable model of integrating community engagement with social work education to strengthen grassroots health institutions in urban informal settlements.***

## 1. Introduction

Mahila Arogya Samiti (MAS) function as vital community-level platforms for women's participation in urban health governance under the National Health Mission. These collectives are expected to facilitate health awareness, promote service utilization, and act as a bridge between communities and public health systems. However, in many urban slum contexts, MAS suffer from institutional fatigue, declining voluntarism, and lack of sustained facilitation, resulting in dormancy and limited community impact. Addressing this challenge requires structured, continuous, and professionally guided engagement rather than sporadic awareness activities. In this context, the Department of Social Work at Bhopal School of Social Sciences conceptualized MAS revitalization as a pedagogical opportunity to integrate community engagement with social work field instruction.



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# From Classroom to Community: A Learner-Centred Andragogy for Tribal Social Work Education

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CHRIST UNIVERSITY

The initiative sought to simultaneously strengthen grassroots health institutions and equip trainee social workers with practice-based competencies rooted in community organization, participation, and ethical engagement.

## 2. Methodology

The initiative was operationalized as a supervised field instruction module for undergraduate and postgraduate social work students during the January–December 2024 Calander year. Four urban slums of Bhopal—Rachana Nagar, Ashoka Garden, Ballabh Nagar, and Laxmi Talkies—were purposively selected based on the presence of existing but under-functioning MAS. Students were oriented on MAS roles, community organization principles, and participatory methods prior to field engagement.

Field interventions included facilitation of regular MAS meetings, observance of Urban Health and Nutrition Days (UHND), awareness campaigns on rabies, mental health, diabetes, antimicrobial resistance, and hygiene, school-based sessions, rallies, IEC material distribution, vulnerability mapping, and health and resource mapping. Continuous coordination was maintained with ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, Public Health Managers, and Nagar Nigam officials to ensure institutional linkage and service convergence.

## 3. Findings

The intervention resulted in noticeable improvements in MAS functioning, including increased meeting regularity, higher member participation, and clearer role articulation among MAS members. Communities demonstrated improved awareness of preventive health issues such as rabies prevention, mental health services, immunization, nutrition, and rational use of antibiotics. MAS members gradually assumed peer educator roles, facilitating awareness sessions and mobilizing community participation.

From an educational perspective, social work students exhibited enhanced competencies in community engagement, communication, leadership, documentation, and ethical practice. Exposure to real-world health systems strengthened students' understanding of inter-sectoral collaboration and grassroots governance.

## 4 Outcome

At the community level, MAS regained functional relevance as participatory platforms for health dialogue and action. Linkages between communities and public health institutions were strengthened, leading to improved service uptake and responsiveness. At the academic level, the initiative reinforced experiential learning as a core pedagogical strategy, bridging classroom knowledge with field realities.



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# From Classroom to Community: A Learner-Centred Andragogy for Tribal Social Work Education

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## 5 Future Sustainability

The practice offers strong potential for sustainability through institutionalization within social work curricula and continued collaboration with government health departments. Periodic mentoring, documentation, and review mechanisms can support long-term MAS functioning. The model is scalable across urban contexts and replicable by other social work institutions seeking to integrate community engagement with professional education.

## 6 Picture / Model




*Integrated Practice, Social Work Field Instruction with MAS Revitalization, and Community Engagement*



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# Changing the Classroom into a Laboratory: An Experiential Pedagogy for Teaching Social Group Work

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## Abstract

***Social Group Work is best learned by doing, yet classroom teaching often stays limited to theories, models and techniques. Social Group Work (SGW) is a practice-oriented method within social work that demands an understanding of group dynamics and the application of the principles and processes of group work. The challenge of connecting theoretical knowledge with practice remains an important aspect of social work education. This best practice presents an experiential pedagogy that transforms the classroom into a learning laboratory for students to engage with SGW through their own group experiences, practice and reflection. The pedagogy involves five steps: First, students participate in a residential rural camp offering opportunities to observe group dynamics through responsibilities and everyday interactions. Second, students then reflect upon these experiences and examine the functioning of their group within the class. Third, the class identifies an issue or theme within the class (e.g. punctuality, accountability or commitment) to pursue via group work. Fourth, student groups create and lead 90-minute SGW sessions for their classmates, incorporating needs assessment, objectives and planning as well as facilitation and participation management tasks. Faculty members provide guidance through these planning and facilitation stages. Fifth, students then review their group sessions through reflection and faculty feedback. What makes this approach distinctive is the integration of experiential learning with the systematic teaching of the SGW process. Students move from seeing group dynamics to needs assessment, intervention planning, group facilitation and evaluation of their practice. The teacher guides the process of students connecting their experiences to SGW concepts and roles within the profession. Such an approach represents an adaptable pedagogical model for social work education - one that can potentially enhance reflective learning, facilitation skills and collective responsibility.***

## 1. Introduction

Social Group Work is a practice-based subject, but it is often taught mainly through lectures on theories, stages and techniques. Students may understand the group work process on paper and still find it hard to apply when they face real group situations. This practice tries to close that gap by using the students' own class as the group they learn from and work with. In social work education in India, students often take part in a residential rural camp of about ten days. Living and working together shows students how their class functions as a group. This practice uses that experience as the starting point for learning Social Group Work.



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# Changing the Classroom into a Laboratory: An Experiential Pedagogy for Teaching Social Group Work

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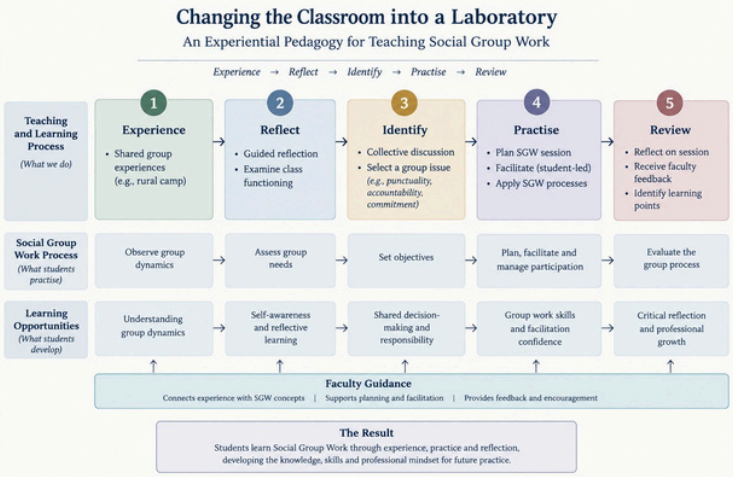
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## 2. Methodology

- First, students attend the residential rural camp, where they live together, share tasks and take part in rural life. Differences in communication, participation, punctuality, time management, accountability, commitment and responsibility become visible in daily routines.
- Second, after returning, students reflect on the camp and on how these dynamics affect their own class.
- Third, the class chooses an issue or theme it wants to work on, such as punctuality or accountability, through collective discussion.
- Fourth, student groups plan and conduct a 90- minute Social Group Work session for their classmates on the chosen theme. Each group assesses the needs of the class, sets objectives, plans activities, facilitates the session, manages participation and handles difficulties as they arise. Classmates take part as group members.
- Fifth, each group reflects on its session with the faculty's feedback. The sessions are part of the Social Group Work assignment, and the teacher guides planning and facilitation

## 3 Outcome

The main educational value is that students learn the Social Group Work process through use, not only through explanation. Students experienced assessing needs, setting objectives, planning, facilitating and reflecting in a real group, with the teacher's guidance. The teacher can observe facilitation and provide feedback while students learn from their classmates and from the process. Working on the class's own issues also gives them shared responsibility, since facilitators and participants both depend on each other for the session to work. The practice may also help students see their own habits as group members, while reinforcing the idea that group work involves planned intervention rather than simply conducting an activity.




## 4 Future Sustainability

The practice already runs every year with the first-year MSW batch, and it needs only a camp or similar shared experience, class time and teacher guidance. Other institutions can adapt it by using a field visit or a short residential programme. To sustain it, the institution can include the sessions in the Social Group Work course plan, use a simple reflection format and a facilitator guide, and collect feedback from facilitators and participants to improve each cycle.

IASSW

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# Bridging Field Realities and Technological Innovation: A Fieldwork-Informed Approach to Problem Framing and Innovation

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## Abstract

***Social work students entering practice settings need innovative solutions and approaches to social problems. Social workers can leverage technological advancements to develop innovations to address the problems they face in practice settings. This innovative practice is part of "Technology and Social Work Practice", a course in the Master of Social Work Programme taught to cohorts of 25 students on average annually. Students are introduced to the latest technology concepts, such as the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and other digital applications and tools. Students are encouraged to identify real-world problems they observed, learned about through community input, or experienced in their social work practice settings, such as community-based or clinical fieldwork. Students then ideate and address the identified need or issue through the design thinking process. The Tech4Impact assignment requires a proposal, a pitch presentation, and process or prototype forms such as sketches and mock-up demonstrations. Innovative proposals include stakeholder analysis, feasibility analysis, and estimated implementation costs. The proposals received so far are at the ideation and conceptual stages, including preliminary consultations and technical input from experts and student incubation and innovation centres. Developing functional prototypes requires interdepartmental or external support, as the students need targeted technological training to build the skills for this endeavour sustainably. Implementation of solutions has yet to be reported. This innovative assignment concept allows students to bridge conceptual learning with applied technical skills and professional preparedness. This practice offers a potentially replicable approach for connecting technology literacy, fieldwork observation and ethical professional judgement.***

**Keywords:** Technology, Social Work Education, Fieldwork Practice, Innovation

## 1. Introduction

Social work practice is transitioning through digital systems; digital competence should not be reduced to technical skills. Social work values such as social justice can be fortified using design thinking since teaching and application of it are limited within social work education. A course on Technology & Social Work Practice taught in Madras Christian College bridges social problems experienced in fieldwork practice settings to technological concepts to create and apply technological innovations; therefore, technology literacy can be applied and not just taught as concepts.



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# Bridging Field Realities and Technological Innovation: A Fieldwork-Informed Approach to Problem Framing and Innovation

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## 2. Methodology

Since 2024, about 25 students annually undergo the course, and they learn about foundational concepts and the latest trends in technology. They are encouraged to identify needs and problems from community-based and clinical settings based practice settings, including medical & psychiatric social work. This process is based on the concept of experiential learning and design thinking process ideation, such as empathising, defining, ideating and prototyping

The Tech4Impact assignment as part of the course invites innovative proposals that comprise a problem statement, stakeholder analysis, feasibility analysis, cost, resources and limitations. The assignment requires submission of a detailed proposal, a pitch presentation, a process flow or prototype sketch, a mock-up or demonstration and documented input from an expert in the field and a technical expert. This is the innovative teaching practice.

## 3 Findings

The observation by the course instructor is that the proposal focuses on ideation and conceptualisation of the proposed technological solution to the identified need or problem. An example is a food-redistribution application linking donors, volunteers and food-insecure people, while another proposes an AI translation device for a public hospital's outpatient department, where patient and doctor languages differ. These proposed solutions address identified social problems as observed and experienced by stakeholders involved. The assignment requires application of the design-thinking process and expert consultation. To create functional prototypes requires in-depth technical knowledge and collaboration with students and faculty of other technical departments within the university or with external technical consultants

## 4 Outcome

The outcome that is observed is that the students can think and create structured, problem-focused technological innovation that directly links to the fieldwork-based contextual needs and problems. Though no tested interventions or community impact is measured, the intended outcomes are the application of digital competence, creativity, design & critical thinking with ethical reasoning that is required to create future-ready social work professionals who would be prepared for contemporary & technological problem solving & mitigation



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# Bridging Field Realities and Technological Innovation: A Fieldwork-Informed Approach to Problem Framing and Innovation

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MADRAS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

## 5 Future Sustainability

Sustainable implementation of the innovative practice requires technical partnership and an established collaborative structure in place. The proposed steps are to gather consented artefacts and reflective journals for analysis by testing the process or product with beneficiaries and practitioners. Partnership with computer science and other relevant departments and with the innovation and incubation centre of the university for mentoring and prototyping. Safeguards should be followed such as informed consent, privacy, algorithmic bias and accessibility. Using open-source tools and platforms to develop prototypes would be cost-effective and adaptable.

## 6 Picture/Model

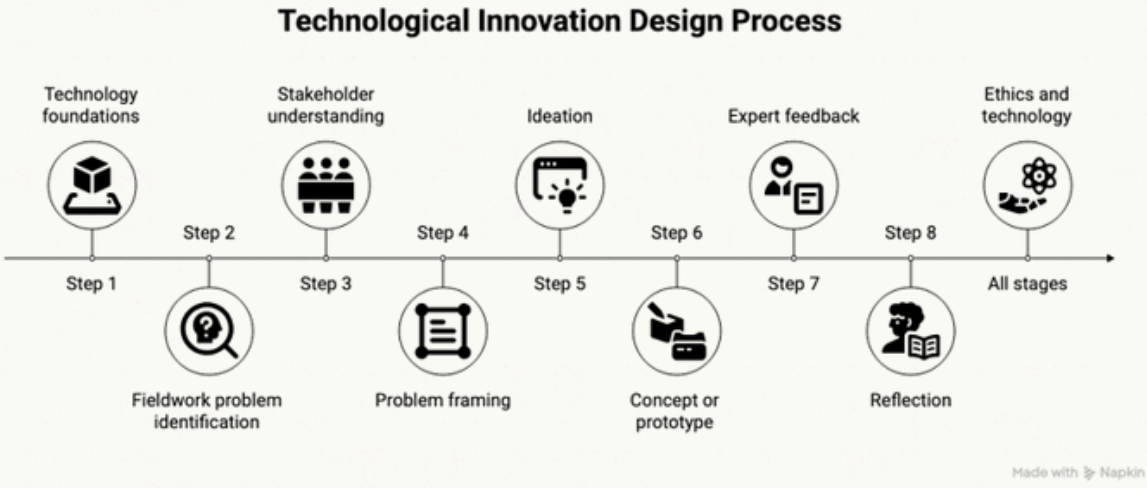



*Figure 1. Technological Innovation Design Process (proposed, not validated)*



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# From Fieldwork to Innovation: Student-Led Initiatives in Cardiac Rehabilitation and Psychosocial Well-Being

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## Abstract

***Fieldwork placements allow students to gain an understanding of the needs of individuals and practice practical solutions. This paper looks at two initiatives by students aiming to improve health and psychological wellbeing. They include a low intensity activity plan for cardiac patients and a card game promoting positive thinking called Pass and Pass. The cardiac rehab project aims to provide patients with activities to engage them during their recovery. They do not require too much exertion and have been created to promote positivity. Pass and Pass is an interactive card game using prompts to promote positive communication, empathy, reflection and meaningful interaction. Both projects look at ways to support wellbeing. They both aim to provide structure and easy to use activities. The cardiac activity plan aims to engage patients whereas the card game allows participants to think about their thoughts, recognise positives and interact with others. By looking at both projects we can see how students can apply knowledge from the classroom into solving real life issues. It also shows how important it is to create activities which take into consideration the needs of those they are aimed at. Further evaluation into how suitable, usable and effective both projects would be would help to identify improvements to make. Overall these projects show how fieldwork can help students to solve problems themselves. They also show how practical solutions can be used to support individuals in healthcare and psychological situations.***

## 1. Introduction

Social work practice is transitioning through digital systems; digital competence should not be reduced to technical skills. Social work values such as social justice can be fortified using design thinking since teaching and application of it are limited within social work education. A course on Technology & Social Work Practice taught in Madras Christian College bridges socSocial work field education provides students with opportunities to understand individual needs and explore practical responses to concerns encountered in different settings. It enables students to connect classroom learning with field experiences and develop approaches suited to the people they aim to support. This paper Presents two student led initiatives. The first is a low intensity activity pack for cardiac patients, the second is a card game looking at developing positive thinking skills (Pass and Pass) to encourage conversation and positive emotional expression.Whilst looking at how to practically support well being through structured activities, these examples identify different ways to do this.ial problems experienced in fieldwork practice settings to technological concepts to create and apply technological innovations; therefore, technology literacy can be applied and not just taught as concepts.



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# From Fieldwork to Innovation: Student-Led Initiatives in Cardiac Rehabilitation and Psychosocial Well-Being

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## 2. Methodology

The two initiatives use different approaches according to their intended purposes. The cardiac rehabilitation initiative focuses on simple, low-exertion activities intended to engage patients during recovery. Such activities require appropriate clinical guidance to ensure their suitability for individual patients.

Pass and Pass is an interactive card game developed to encourage positive communication, empathy, appreciation, and reflection. The game includes 40 illustrated cards organised around eight themes: Sun, Moon, Star, Nature, Ocean, Flower, Cloud, and Rainbow. Players exchange cards through positive statements and appreciation, making supportive communication central to the activity.

## 3 Findings

The initiatives offer different ways of engaging individuals in activities related to well-being. The cardiac programme focuses on participation during recovery, while Pass and Pass creates opportunities for positive interaction and emotional expression. The card game's themes and prompts provide a structured way for participants to practise appreciation and supportive communication. However, further evaluation is needed to establish the extent to which these activities achieve their intended outcomes.

## 4 Outcome

The initiatives illustrate how students can apply social work knowledge to develop practical resources for different settings. The cardiac programme highlights the importance of considering patient engagement during recovery, while Pass and Pass offers an interactive approach to practising positive communication. Developing these initiatives can also provide students with opportunities to identify needs, plan activities, and consider how interventions can be adapted to different groups.

## 5 Future Sustainability

Further development should focus on evaluating the suitability, usability, and effectiveness of both initiatives. The cardiac activity programme requires clinical guidance and appropriate assessment before wider implementation. Pass and Pass could be refined through participant feedback and further use in relevant settings. Collaboration with healthcare professionals and social work practitioners could help strengthen both initiatives. Documenting their implementation and evaluating their outcomes would support future improvements and inform their potential use in social work practice.

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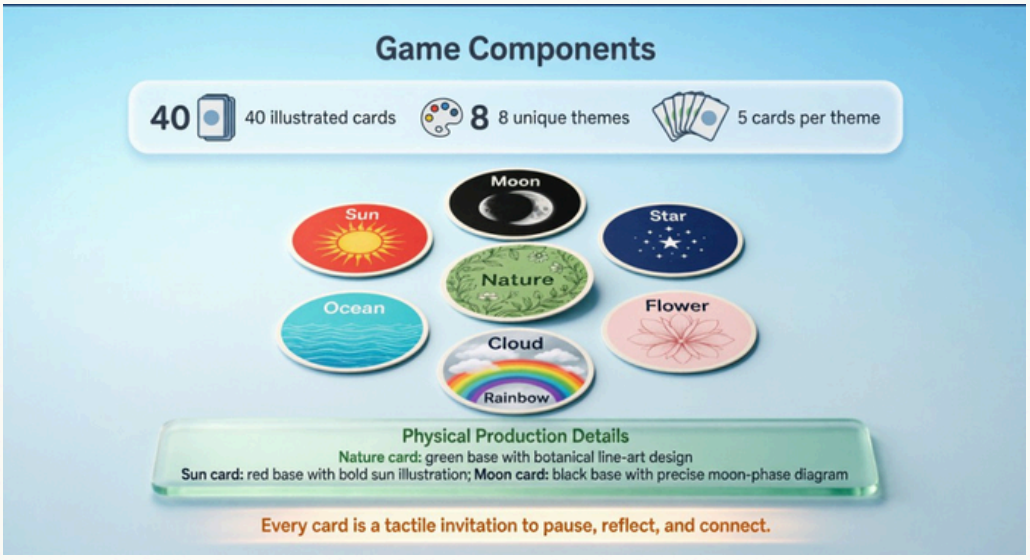
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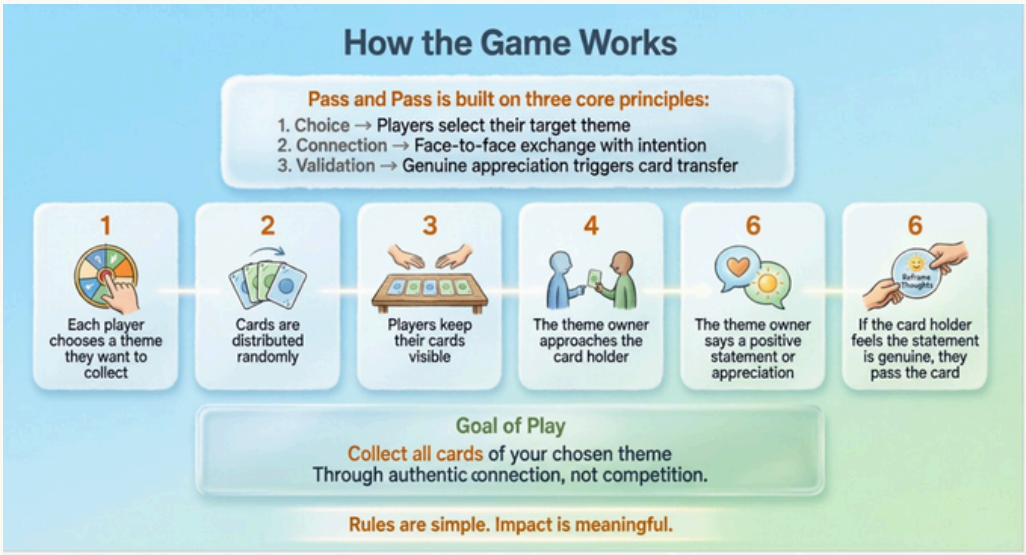
# From Fieldwork to Innovation: Student-Led Initiatives in Cardiac Rehabilitation and Psychosocial Well-Being

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## 3 Picture/ Model






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## Abstract

***SEWA (Student Action Wing) of the Department of Social Work, Madras Christian College, is a student-led initiative established in 1989 to promote socially relevant programmes, community sensitisation and the development of students as agents of social change. This best practice presents SEWA as a Social Work Skill Training Model that complements the Master of Social Work (MSW) curriculum by providing opportunities for experiential learning, student leadership, social action and professional competency development.***

***The model integrates academic learning with practical engagement through student-led clubs, awareness campaigns, workshops, webinars, conferences, public dialogues and collaborative initiatives. The thematic clubs, including SHOUT (Sexual Harassment Out), the Anti Human Trafficking Club (AHTC), the Cyan Club and the Young Human Rights Defenders Club (YHRD), provide platforms for students to engage with child protection, human trafficking, environmental protection and human rights. These activities create opportunities to practise*** ***SEWA (Student Action Wing) of the Department of Social Work, Madras Christian College, is a student-led initiative established in 1989 to promote socially relevant programmes, community sensitisation and the development of students as agents of social change. This best practice presents SEWA as a Social Work Skill Training Model that complements the Master of Social Work (MSW) curriculum by providing opportunities for experiential learning, student leadership, social action and professional competency development.***

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## 1. Introduction

Social work education requires a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical skill development. SEWA, the Student Action Wing of the Department of Social Work, Madras Christian College, provides a student-led platform for connecting academic learning with social action. Established in 1989, SEWA aims to initiate relevant programmes, sensitise communities and nurture students as agents of social change.

Its innovative feature is the use of a student association as a practical learning environment for developing professional competencies alongside the formal MSW curriculum.



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## 2. Methodology

SEWA functions through student leadership, thematic clubs, faculty guidance and collaborative activities. Its initiatives address social issues through awareness programmes, campaigns, workshops, webinars, conferences and stakeholder engagement.The SHOUT initiative focuses on child protection; AHTC addresses human trafficking; the Cyan Club promotes environmental protection; and the Young Human Rights Defenders Club encourages human rights awareness and social action. Activities documented in the orientation material include street plays on plastic pollution, public dialogues on child protection, volunteer training, panel discussions and awareness campaigns.

Through participation in these activities, students have opportunities to practise programme planning, communication, teamwork, leadership, advocacy, networking and community mobilisation. The model can be strengthened through activity plans, reflective journals, faculty observation and competency-based assessment.

## 3 Findings

The documented structure demonstrates how SEWA provides multiple platforms for experiential and participatory learning. Thematic clubs enable students to engage with diverse social concerns, while campaigns and collaborative programmes offer opportunities to translate classroom concepts into action.

The model's potential educational strengths include student initiative, collective responsibility, issue-based learning and exposure to community-oriented practice. Quantitative improvements in student competencies, however, require systematic evaluation.

## 4 Outcome

SEWA offers a complementary learning environment for professional social work preparation. It creates opportunities to develop leadership, interpersonal communication, teamwork, programme management, advocacy and social awareness. Its community-oriented activities also reinforce the values of participation, social justice, human rights and professional responsibility.

The model can contribute to strengthening students' professional identity by encouraging them to engage actively with social issues and collaborative action.



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## 5 Future Sustaibaility

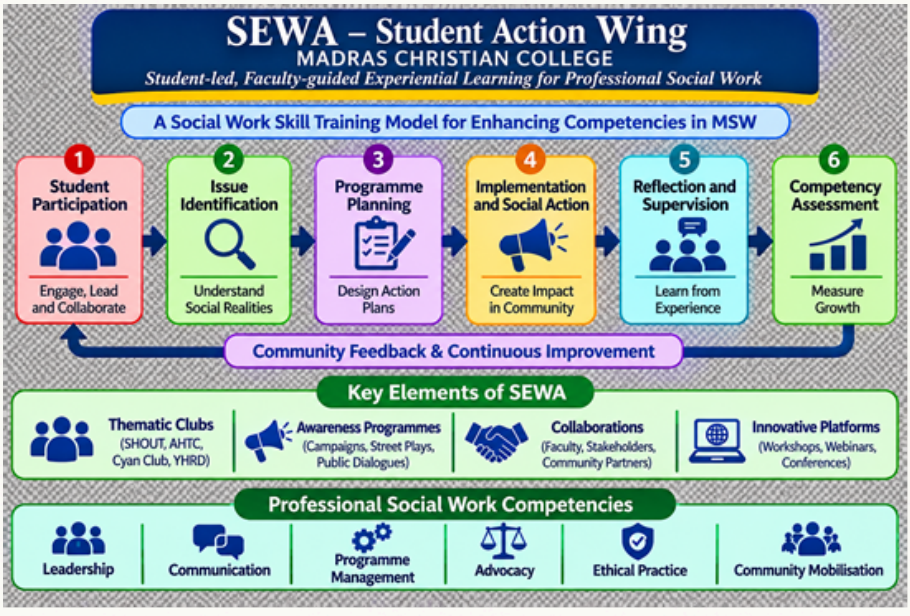
SEWA can be institutionalised as a competency-based co-curricular component of the MSW programme. Annual activity calendars, student leadership transitions, faculty mentoring, community partnerships and structured documentation can support continuity. Pre- and post-activity self-assessments, observation rubrics, reflective journals, stakeholder feedback and annual reviews can help assess competency development and community relevance.

The model can be adapted by other social work institutions according to their local priorities, resources and curriculum requirements.

## 6 Picture/ Model

**Proposed SEWA Social Work Skill Training Model:**

**Student Participation → Issue Identification → Programme Planning → Implementation and Social Action → Reflection and Supervision → Competency Assessment → Community Feedback and Continuous Improvement**






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# Volunteering as a Tool for Social Transformation: Insights from Community-Based Social Work Practice in Germany

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*Dr. Prince Annadurai D (Associate Professor and Head, Department of Social Work, MCC )*

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## Abstract

***Volunteering plays a significant role in strengthening community engagement, promoting social inclusion and contributing to social transformation. It provides opportunities for individuals to participate in social welfare initiatives while developing empathy, intercultural understanding and a sense of social responsibility. This paper explores the role of international volunteering as a community-based social work practice, drawing insights from an Indian social work graduate's volunteering experience at Lebenshilfe Berlin, Germany. The experience offered an opportunity to engage with older adults in a community-based day-care setting, particularly individuals experiencing mental health-related challenges. The practice highlighted the importance of meaningful social interactions, person-centred engagement, participation and inclusive approaches in supporting individuals within community settings. It also provided insights into the contribution of volunteers in complementing professional social care services and fostering supportive social environments. The paper further examines international volunteering as an experiential learning opportunity for social work professionals and students, emphasising intercultural competencies, reflective practice and the exchange of community-based approaches. It highlights the potential for adapting relevant international volunteering practices to Indian social work education and community welfare initiatives. The paper proposes that structured volunteering opportunities can strengthen community participation, promote inclusive social environments and contribute to curriculum development in social work education.***

**Keywords:** International Volunteering, Community-Based Social Work, Social Inclusion, Intercultural Competence, Reflective Practice, Social Work Education.

## 1. Introduction

Volunteering is an important component of community-based social work, contributing to social inclusion, empowerment and collective well-being. It provides opportunities for individuals to participate in social development while strengthening community relationships and promoting inclusive practices. This paper explores international volunteering as a tool for social transformation, drawing on an experience at Lebenshilfe Berlin, Germany, an organisation committed to supporting persons with disabilities in achieving independent, equal and self-determined lives. The experience highlights the relevance of person-centred approaches, participation and psychosocial engagement in community-based social care.



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# Volunteering as a Tool for Social Transformation: Insights from Community-Based Social Work Practice in Germany

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## 2. Methodology

The practice is based on an international volunteering experience undertaken through the weltwärts development volunteer service programme at TagesCenter Neukölln, Lebenshilfe Berlin, from October 2025 to August 2026. The centre supported 24 men and women aged 45–85 with intellectual disabilities, some experiencing additional mental health challenges. Working five days a week alongside an interdisciplinary team of educators, special needs care professionals and therapeutic educators, the volunteer participated in developing, facilitating and supporting individual and group-based activities. The activities included creative arts and crafts, cooking, baking, shopping, music, dance, karaoke, recreational games, beauty and self-care sessions, relaxation exercises and community outings. Participants were encouraged to communicate their preferences and choose activities according to their interests and abilities. Daily engagement also included supporting personal care, hygiene, household activities, social interactions and everyday living skills.

## 3 Findings

The experience highlighted the importance of creating opportunities for individuals to exercise choice, express their preferences and participate actively in everyday activities. Allowing participants to select activities fostered opportunities for self-expression, autonomy and meaningful engagement. Group activities provided opportunities for social interaction, while individual engagement enabled attention to specific interests, abilities and support requirements. Community outings and recreational activities also provided opportunities for participation beyond the immediate centre environment. The experience emphasised that individuals with disabilities should be recognised through their abilities, preferences and potential rather than defined by their limitations

## 4 Outcome

The initiatives illustrate how students can apply social work knowledge to develop practical resources for different settings. The cardiac programme highlights the importance of considering patient engagement during recovery, while Pass and Pass offers an interactive approach to practising positive communication. Developing these initiatives can also provide students with opportunities to identify needs, plan activities, and consider how interventions can be adapted to different groups.



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# Volunteering as a Tool for Social Transformation: Insights from Community-Based Social Work Practice in Germany

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## 5 Future Sustainability

The practices offer opportunities for adaptation within Indian social work education, disability services, elderly-care institutions and community-based rehabilitation programmes. Structured volunteer programmes, activity-based engagement, participant-led planning and intercultural exchange initiatives could strengthen inclusive community practices. Social work institutions can further integrate international volunteering experiences into field instruction through reflective learning, knowledge sharing and community-based initiatives.




***Figure I.*** *Conceptual Framework of Volunteering as a Tool for Social Transformation: A Community-Based Social Work Model Derived from the Lebenshilfe Berlin Experience, Germany.*





***Figure II.*** *Community-Based Recreational Engagement: Accompanying Clients on a Day Outing to a Nearby Park to Promote Environmental Interaction, Social Participation and Psychosocial Well-being.*

***Figure III.*** *Community-Based Recreational Engagement: Accompanying Clients on a Day Outing to a Nearby Park to Promote Environmental Interaction, Social Participation and Psychosocial Well-being.*



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# Research Incubation at IFIM College: A Transformative Model for Student-Led Evidence-Based Social Work ResearchResearch Incubation at IFIM College: A Transformative Model for Student-Led Evidence-Based Social Work Research

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*Dr Sridevi V, IFIM College*

IFIM COLLEGE

Type & Description

## Advancing Innovation in Social Work Research Education.

The Research Incubation Programme is a multi-semester, structured mentoring model implemented at IFIM College to train students in producing rigorous, evidence-based research. The cluster-based mentoring approach, extensive literature review, methodology development, data analysis, and publication in peer-reviewed/Scopus-indexed/ABDC category journals/National and international conference proceedings provide a sustained yet innovative approach to enhancing research competencies within social work education.

## Description of the Innovation / Best Practice

In the Research incubation model, both post graduate and under graduate students are engaged in the full research cycle, from identifying a real-world social problem to designing the research tool, data collection, and analysis, to preparation of papers publishable in reputable journals. Guided by faculty mentors, students create innovative, collaborative research that is socially relevant and demonstrates measurable academic and community impact.

## How Research Incubation Advances Social Work Research Education

Research Incubation promotes research education by preparing students to frame social problems, critically evaluate the literature, apply methods of analysis, and formulate evidence-based solutions. Unlike short-term assignments, Research Incubation spans two years, permitting prolonged immersion in current social issues and identification of problems from the community. In this model, students learn mixed-method research tools, instrument validation, data interpretation, and the creation of practical, data-driven social interventions. This model enhances competencies in methodological rigour, ethical practice of research, teamwork, analytical reasoning, and scientific writing. By culminating in the publication of research papers, RI prepares students for academic, policy, and field-level research roles in Social Work.

## How Research Incubation Differs from Conventional Approaches in Social Work Research

Majority of research projects are concentrated on conceptual models rather than practical exposures.A well structured model is being established in Research Incubation programme to tackle real-world issues that have been identified by NGOs, communities, or business partners replacing textbook-based projects, guaranteeing contextual relevance. The program includes factors that are uncommon in traditional curricula, such as compulsory literature review, instrument development, internal and external review processes, and structured publication pathways. Students will become active researchers who can add to the body of knowledge in social work worldwide if they are encouraged to publish in reputable, peer-reviewed journals and at international conferences.

IASSW

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# Research Incubation at IFIM College: A Transformative Model for Student-Led Evidence-Based Social Work ResearchResearch Incubation at IFIM College: A Transformative Model for Student-Led Evidence-Based Social Work Research

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IFIM COLLEGE

## Pragmatic & Philosophical Underpinnings of the Innovation

The RI program is based on a humanistic inquiry, participatory research paradigms, and empowerment-based philosophies. Consequently, itBandz students to not only challenge, evaluate, and produce knowledge but also to question the existing one drawing from Freirean critical pedagogy. In practical terms, this program facilitates the research process that is systematic and includes problem identification, literature review, conceptual framework development, tool construction, data collection, analysis, and publication of the work. These are all examples of constructivist learning: reflective practice, group inquiry, and engagement in moral quandaries through research. With the help of community-based research, RI becomes an instrument to promote social justice, community engagement, and empowerment; thus, it is a means of consciousness-raising that will give social inclusion and social change a voice.

## Significance / Impact

Research Incubation allows students to have sound research grounds so that they may plan studies that are worthy of publication and become significant to the solving of important social issues. It naturally fosters their cognitive skills of critical thinking, academic writing, and problem-solving, thus, making the practice of social work, based on evidence, more effective. Besides, the program mutually benefits different spheres of knowledge through the collaboration of universities, communities, and professional networks, and intensifies the institutional research culture.

## Future Plans

The establishment of interdisciplinary research laboratories that incorporate sophisticated analytics and qualitative software tools, as well as increased cooperation with NGOs, community organisations, and foreign universities, are the final suggested future developments for the RI program at IFIM. In addition to publishing student-led research compendiums and establishing mentorship pipelines with international scholars, IFIM plans to launch yearly research symposiums. To further improve quality and scalability, workshops for capacity-building, research ethics certification, and digital research training modules are being developed. In order to develop socially conscious researchers who can influence policy, have an impact on communities, and support international social work, the long-term goal is to make the RI model a globally replicable best practice.

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# COMMUNITY ENGAGED FIELDWORK: BEST PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS IN KERALA

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*Dr. Jaya Cherian, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work,*

VIMALA COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)

## Abstract

***Fieldwork constitutes a foundational pedagogical tool in social work education, enabling students to translate theoretical frameworks into sustainable, community centered interventions. This paper presents best practices in social work fieldwork, derived from three impactful community based initiatives undertaken by social work students, examined through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).***

***The first case study focuses on a disadvantaged community where Participatory Rural Appraisal was facilitated in partnership with a NGO to address the psychosocial needs of the Children. Through collective community mobilisation and utilisation of youth in the community as resource persons, evening remedial education centre, awareness building programmes, sports training, and academic material distribution were introduced. These interventions significantly enhanced school attendance, learning motivation, and co-curricular engagement among children while strengthening parental responsibility and community ownership to ensure long term sustainability.***

***The second initiative demonstrates how social work students supported Annamanada Grama Panchayath in becoming elderly-friendly. Through home visits, interviews with 2,522 older persons, and focused group discussions with stakeholders, they identified key physical and psychosocial needs of older persons. This evidence informed a Panchayath level action plan that established health clubs, day care centres, self-help groups, palliative care, and other welfare activities. As a result, it received an award from the Government of Kerala for being the best Panchayath in providing services for older persons. This practice demonstrated how participatory assessment can effectively shape age friendly governance and drive responsive welfare planning.***

***The third case study examines the involvement of social work students in a heritage preservation initiative at Kalpathy Agraharam, Palakkad, the only heritage village in Kerala, undertaken by the Art and Heritage Commission (AHC). As part of the project, the students conducted a socioeconomic impact survey to understand community perceptions of conserving traditional architectural structures. The findings contributed to informed decision making and the inclusion of preservation strategies in the Master Plan for Palakkad Municipality 2041, supporting development approaches that respect cultural heritage and ensure sustainability.***

***These fieldwork experiences illustrate how structured participatory methods, community driven strategies, and collaboration with local governance and institutions can create sustainable social change. The paper argues that embedding such best practices within social work curriculum not only enhancesstudent competencies but also strengthens community resilience and inclusive development outcomes.***

**Key words: Community engaged fieldwork, Best practices, Sustainability**

IASSW

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# Social Immersion Programme (SIP) at IFIM College: A Transformative Community-Engaged Pedagogy for Social Work Education

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## Abstract

***The Social Immersion Programme (SIP) at IFIM College represents an innovative, community-engaged pedagogical model that integrates experiential learning, participatory research, and Techno-Economic Viability (TEV) analysis into social work education. Designed as a 15-day immersive field experience, SIP positions students within real community contexts where they conduct needs assessments, engage with local stakeholders, and co-develop sustainable interventions in collaboration with NGOs. This model advances social work field instruction by moving beyond traditional observational approaches toward an evidence-based, impact-orientated framework that emphasises social empathy, cultural sensitivity, reflective practice, and problem-solving. Grounded in experiential learning theory, critical pedagogy, and strengths-based practice, SIP bridges academic learning with practical community transformation. The programme significantly enhances students' research competence, communication skills, and capacity for designing feasible, community-centred solutions. Future directions include strengthening NGO partnerships, integrating digital tools, developing micro-credentials, and expanding interdisciplinary collaboration to establish SIP as a replicable global model in social work education.***

**Keywords: Social Immersion Programme, experiential learning, community engagement, social work education, Techno-Economic Viability (TEV), participatory research, field instruction, critical pedagogy, sustainable interventions, NGO collaboration.**

## Type & Description

**Innovation in Community Engagement / Field Instruction.**

IFIM College in Bengaluru has introduced the Social Immersion Programme as an experiential learning model embedded within the community. This initiative integrates fieldwork and participatory research with structured problem-solving through the Techno- Economic Viability (TEV) approach, establishing it as a distinguished model in holistic education.

**Description of the Innovation or Best Practice**

The Social Immersion Programme (SIP) places students in authentic community environments for 15 days, where they engage in direct observation, participatory interaction, data collection, problem framing, and collaborative solution development with non-governmental organizations. This approach enhances social responsibility, evidence-based field learning, critical thinking, and the capacity to design sustainable interventions grounded in community needs.

**Advancement of Holistic Field Instruction or Education:**

The unique Social Immersion Programme moves field instruction beyond traditional observational models toward a structured and immersive pedagogy. Students live, work, and



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# Know Your Community : A Best Practice Model for Foundational Field Exposure in Social Work Education

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Know Your Community (KYC) is a compulsory, entry level field engagement practice introduced for first semester MSW students immediately after admission. Designed as an early immersion activity, it enables learners to familiarise themselves with governance
systems, welfare structures and institutional mechanisms operating within their own communities. Students independently visit identified agencies, document their functions, engage with key personnel and present their observations. This exposure offers a grounded understanding of community structures and facilitates the integration of classroom learning with the lived realities of public systems.

As a best practice, KYC contributes meaningfully to competency based Social Work education by strengthening essential skills before formal field placements commence. In contrast to routine observational visits, the model requires active interviewing, systematic documentation and analytical reflection. It is informed by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasises learning through purposeful engagement; the Ecological Systems perspective, which situates community functioning within interconnected structures; Critical Pedagogy, which encourages reflective awareness of inequality and social processes; and
Empowerment Theory, which draws attention to participation, access and resource distribution. These theoretical foundations align with the expectations of the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), particularly in relation to experiential learning
and professional competency development.

KYC supports early professional identity formation and enhances students' critical thinking, communication and reflective abilities. Future developments include the introduction of structured assessment rubrics, digital documentation formats and thematic community mapping. Continued alignment with EPAS will guide ongoing refinement and support the scalability of this practice across Social Work programmes in India.



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# Social Work Extension Centers for Community Intervention

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Inauguration of Social Work Extension Centres

Social Work Extension Centres established by the Department of Social Work, Sacred Heart College (Autonomous), Tirupattur. These centres symbolize the department's continued commitment to bridging academic learning with real-world community engagement. The centers were inaugurated by Dr. R. Ananda Kumar, IAS, Commissioner of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (Training), Tamil Nadu, who was invited to officially open the newly established centres.

Rev. Fr. J. Andrews Raja, Director of Extension Activities, provided a comprehensive overview of the initiative. He explained the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Department of Social Work and the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD). This partnership aims to strengthen rural governance, improve service delivery, and address social issues in the villages of Tirupattur district through participatory interventions led by MSW students.

Rev.Fr. Andrews Raja highlighted the objectives, scope, and functioning of each of the four extension centres.



Rev. Fr. J. Andrews Raja Explaining on the Extension Centres



Dr. Anandha Kumar inauguration of the Centres



Dr. Anandha Kumar Reviewing the Documents

- HR – Talent Forge
- MNP – Centre for Holistic Health and Wellbeing
- YD – Centre for Positive Youth Development
- CD – Centre for Good Governance and Community Building

These centres are strategically placed in rural panchayats to serve as:

- Community learning and resource hubs
- Fieldwork platforms for student practitioners
- Outreach bases for awareness campaigns, capacity-building programs, and surveys Each centre focuses on key social themes including health and hygiene awareness, women and child welfare, education support, human resource development, livelihood promotion, mental health awareness, rights-based education, and environmental sustainability.

The inauguration ceremony began with a ribbon-cutting by Dr. Ananda Kumar, IAS, formally marking the launch of the centres. This was followed by a brief walkthrough where the IAS officer visited the documentation displays of previous activities conducted by students in the rural areas.

He took time to review reports, posters, and field records, showing keen interest in the grassroots-level social work carried out by the students. He commended the department's efforts to integrate classroom learning with community practice and appreciated the innovative initiatives designed by the students to address local issues.In his remarks, the IAS officer emphasized the importance of field-based experiential learning, especially in rural contexts where developmental gaps are often most visible. He encouraged the students to view these centres not just as academic extensions but as real-time laboratories for social transformation.

The inauguration of these centres marks a significant milestone in the department's journey towards holistic education, rural development, and institutional-community partnerships, offering students valuable platforms to apply their skills in real-life settings.

IASSW

# Integrating Visual Methods into Social Work Practicum: An Innovative Approach to Fieldwork Learning

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## Abstract

*Fieldwork and practicum training form the foundation of social work education, enabling students to apply primary and secondary methods across diverse practice settings. Traditionally, these experiences are structured through concurrent fieldwork, rural camps, internships, and block placements. While these formats have long served as essential learning platforms, they often remain confined to conventional approaches that focus primarily on observation, documentation, and direct intervention. The proposed innovation seeks to expand the fieldwork curriculum by integrating visual methods as complementary and*

*contemporary tools for practice. Visual methods such as photovoice, photo elicitation, and participatory image-based documentation enable students to engage with clients and communities through alternative, expressive, and culturally sensitive forms of communication. These methods help students visualize social issues from the client's perspective, fostering deeper empathy, reflection, and critical understanding. Although visual methodologies exist in broader research and community practice, their systematic use within social work practicum remains relatively new. Incorporating these tools enhances the learning*

*environment by encouraging creativity, participatory engagement, and collaborative problem-solving among trainees. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, the integration of visual tools aligns social work training with contemporary digital practices. At the same time, it prompts students to navigate crucial ethical considerations such as consent, privacy, confidentiality, and the responsible use of images, particularly when working with vulnerable populations. By embedding visual methods within the fieldwork curriculum, social work education moves beyond its traditional models, offering a more holistic, technology-enabled, and ethically grounded approach to practice. This innovation ultimately strengthens the experiential learning process and equips future professionals with versatile skills to address complex social realities.*



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# From Fragmentation to Continuity: A Relay Approach to Social Work Field Practicum

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## Abstract

**Type & Description**

Field practicum in social work education is often fragmented, short-term, and weakly coordinated, limiting both student learning and community impact. This submission presents an innovation in field instruction: the "Relay Approach." It replaces episodic, disconnected placements with a continuity-based model where successive student cohorts build upon the work of their predecessors, transforming practicum into a sustained, multi-stage community project.

**The Innovation**

The Relay Approach institutionalizes a structured handover system, including standardized transition reports and digital repositories, to ensure continuity and knowledge retention between cohorts. Unlike conventional models where students repeat introductory tasks, placements are organized into cumulative stages: assessment, co-design, implementation, and evaluation. Grounded in experiential learning and social responsibility, the model positions agencies as co-educators and emphasises both student learning and meaningful contribution. It shifts the focus from placement-seeking to partnership-building, aligning learning objectives with the long-term priorities of host communities.

**Significance**

This model strengthens university–agency accountability and reduces supervision fatigue by eliminating redundant onboarding. It fosters deeper learning through engagement in multi-year interventions and supports sustained, measurable community impact, addressing systemic fragmentation in traditional field education.

**Future Plans**

The model will be piloted across three partner agencies to generate longitudinal evidence of impact on student competencies. Future plans include developing a "Continuity Toolkit" and a cross-institutional digital platform to track student-led community initiatives across academic cycles.

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Innovations and Best Practices in Social Work Education

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