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Introduction to Global Perspectives on Social Work in Transition

It is commonly recognised that the current social, economic, and political systems are widely acknowledged as unjust, inequitable, and unsustainable shaped by various social, political, economic and cultural development trends. This creates room for aspiring for a better tomorrow by initiating various initiatives that promote a socially, politically, and economically equitable society which believes in equity. Therefore, it opens doors for social workers to act in a scene depicting sustainable development. Global social work perspectives are evolving in response to several challenges, including social, economic, and political systems, which sometimes challenge human rights issues about altered environmental conditions. This invites social workers to act upon respecting diversity and different belief systems, predominantly Indigenous and vulnerable voices, to address political instabilities, violence, dominance, and the erosion of peace. This demands not to be stand-alone but to work in built-in networks that facilitate collaboration with individuals, families, and communities to develop culturally appropriate, sustainable, and empowering solutions. It opens venues for social workers, especially in the post-COVID era, for international collaboration and connectivity to build global perspectives and address the concerns of the time.

The major social work organizations IFSW, IASSW and ICSW, aim to unite social work educators, social workers, and social development practitioners across the globe. Social work in a global context involves understanding and addressing the various social, cultural, economic, and political factors that impact individuals, families, and communities worldwide, rendering multiple services to marginalised and vulnerable societies. At this juncture, social work has to promote a scientific approach to fight social injustice with a theoretically reflected framework that the universities encourage the education of social workers. This reflects social work's commitment to universal social protection, taking universal actions on ecological integrity, economic reform, international solidarity, and social security. The professional and organisational value of sharing strategies to strengthen social work profiles globally enables social workers to contribute more substantially to policy development, which is imminent.

This book was designed to articulate a new and crucial vision for engagement in a new global context. This was an attempt to address the new social work challenges. The impact of colonialism and the predominance of Western cultural and epistemological bias in knowledge and practices are being challenged by social work practitioners and educators, to create dominant knowledge perspectives and practice models, which opens venues for decolo-

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nisation or learning to unlearn through reflective learning practices using critical pedagogy. Social work education and practice should be driven by critical reflection that helps social workers question and analyse society's different forces (such as poverty, injustice, discrimination, and oppression). Social work education must value diversity in social work, which can act as a guiding principle for social work education and connect local practices to global concern with a commitment to action. Critical pedagogy provides a theoretical framework underpinned by a commitment to critically reflective practice.

The global pandemic had devastating individual, interpersonal, and societal impacts, necessiating efforts to build upon positive changes while addressing multiple challenges. The themes articulated in the book invite educators and practitioners alike globally to create tangible evidence of social work's engagement with international concerns with local implications. This requires innovation in social service delivery and education while centering on core values, skills, and competencies. This insightful exploration of the book delves into the dynamic intersection of societal needs and professional responsibilities and assigns a crucial role to social work in shaping a better tomorrow. It aims to explore today's experiences and lives that transcend the age to provide new directions. We embark on a journey through the intricate tapestry of contemporary social work, unraveling imperatives crucial to the present and forecasting their profound implications on the landscape of tomorrow. This book navigates the dynamic interplay between societal exigencies and the evolving role of social work professionals, offering a comprehensive examination of the challenges, innovations, and ethical considerations that define the field. With an unwavering focus on the future, this not only encapsulates the current state of social work but also serves as a compass guiding us towards a future where compassionate, practical, and ethically grounded social work practices become even more indispensable. This is a beacon illuminating the path toward a socially just and equitable tomorrow in the intellectual odyssey.

This volume deals with current social work practices, offering practical examples for readers to understand modern challenges and solutions from the field. It attempts to bring about global perspectives, as most of the authors are experienced and represent various countries. The relevance and uniqueness of this work lie in the fact that it combines the contributions of social workers from academic and practical fields representing seven countries. The authors delve deep into a wide array of current social work concerns that are difficult to understand with valuable insights. Social work authors from seven countries deliberated and discussed social work practices and their adaptability in the post-COVID period. The book provides insights into four segments challenging today's social work education and practice: Social work among the vulnerable for a better world, technology, and health social work.

The opening section commenced with a discussion on the vulnerability proposed by Kira Margarete Barut, who states that advancing diversity while

working among youth in the context of Germany needs to emphasize the importance of conceptual work to enhance relevance and meaning, advocate for a community-centric approach, and underscore the necessity of developing robust diversity skills among professionals. The current challenges can only be met tomorrow by expanding and formalising professionalism within the field. The diversity of youth work in social work offers actionable insights for improving practices and competencies to ensure that diversity is embraced and utilised.

The ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine places the social work profession at a crossroads and invites social workers to play a vital role in resilience and empowerment. Drawing from experiences, Tetyana Semigina and her colleagues unveil sketches of the creative and innovative interventions and strategies implemented in the country, fostering resilience amid the war and addressing ethical dilemmas. They argue that the trajectory of future social work practices, especially in conflict or war-induced areas, depends on the profession's dynamic response to conflict demands. The authors present vital lessons for global social work education, advocating curriculum reforms for adaptive, flexible, and prepared practitioners addressing complex emergencies and post-conflict scenarios, as this sets the foundation for a globally relevant and resilient social work profession capable of navigating uncertainty and fostering hope.

Ivania Delgado, based on the lived experience of adjuncts as educators in the the USA, argues that working conditions within a multi class system disempower, exploit, and marginalise them through the classification system and methods of adjunctification. This shows a dire reality of low wages, lack of job security, absence of protection, lack of health insurance, lack of paid leave, and lack of voice, which forces educators/workers to survive in this inequitable economic system. The author introduces critical pedagogy and conflict theory lenses, revealing educators' challenges and how these conditions serve the status quo. The author attempts to connect the multi class system within academia and its impact of domination and power to a culture of silence during periods of fascism and genocide, engaging in an anti-oppressive praxis for themselves and their communities.

In the transition from war-affected areas of social work to strategies for women empowerment, Norby Paul, Joyashri Dey & Monisha U suggest that COVID-19 lockdown measures have resulted in a surge in domestic violence cases, further endangering the lives of women, although women contribute to sustaining development. Reflecting on Schumpeter's Innovation Theory, Liberal Feminist Theory, Resource Mobilisation Theory, Theory of Change, and Empowerment Theory, their chapter openes a discussion based on the assumption that post-COVID-19 poverty is a new dimension that requires addressing the risks, vulnerability, and consumerism enshrined by neoliberalism, power inequality, stability, and sustainability. Against the backdrop of Kudum-

bashree as a Women's Collective in Kerala and as an example of Women's empowerment initiatives, the authors argue that women's empowerment initiatives have reached a crossroads after COVID-19 despite their contributions. Therefore, in the post-COVID era, it must be the interplay of innovative theory, resource mobilisation, theory of change, and empowerment theory that led to post-COVID women's sustained development processes. This requires a creative, sustainable strategy that promotes equality and distributive justice, where social workers have a crucial role as strategists committed to social space for marginalized groups. This can facilitate gender landscaping that provides power to attract and respond to needs by utilising the development of a partnership (SDG 17) focusing on sustainability, leading to sharing knowledge, technology, and resources, employing a strategy to overcome poor resource mobilisation by identifying, partnering, and implementing for women's integral growth.

The section on technological social work for better social work practice discusses on the narrative of a comprehensive overview of the impacts of artificial intelligence on social work education and practice, focusing on practical applications. Looking ahead to possible ways of technology adoption, Ahmed Thabet Helal Ibrahim argues that technology impacts the integration of artificial intelligence in social work as it challenges social work practitioners in the wake of adopting AI technology along with opportunities. Additionally, the author delves into the ethics of artificial intelligence in social work and outlines the skills necessary for working in an AI-enhanced environment that demands excellence on par with other professions.

By understanding the nuanced dynamics between digital influence and academic burnout, educators and policymakers Safiya R and her team further suggest targeted interventions in India to support students in navigating the digital landscape while maintaining their wellbeing and academic success, which mandates the presence of school social workers in India. This includes the need for educational programs that provide professionals with the abilities and knowledge they need to handle students' various mental health needs. This chapter suggests that introducing a mandatory school social worker in India holds great potential for enhancing the mental health support available to students. In continuation, Ibrahim Sabry Ahmed presents the case of Egyptian social work as the most important historical organisation that contributed to the emergence of technological social work in the country. The author's work on Egyptian social work attempts to formulate a concept for technological social work that includes initiatives, programs, projects, innovations, and the most important challenges facing technological social work in Egypt. The discussion illustrates that technological social work in Egypt holds immense potential to address complex social issues, bridge resource gaps, and encourages readers to engage in further research, collaboration, and advocacy to support the growth and impact of technological and social work in Egypt.

Culturally sensitive social work for tomorrow's progress is yet another arena that was unearthed by the authors in the book. Leila Salimova and Bermet Egemberdieva present how suicide is perceived in Kyrgyzstan and the country's legal framework. Revealing valuable insights from multiple studies to sketch a nuanced understanding of the interdisciplinary relationship between mental health, social support, and the legal system, the authors argue that the cultural perspective is a hindering or a helping factor for social service providers for effective suicide interventions in Kyrgyzstan. Recognising the diversity of cultural beliefs *is* necessary to build skills and knowledge, foster trust communication, and tailor interventions to individual needs that social workers can impart. Their chapter concludes with practical suggestions for enhancing social workers' cultural competencies appropriate to Kyrgyzstan, grounded in global best practices, which can elevate the effectiveness of intervention efforts to prevent suicide in the Kyrgyzstani context.

Working with the vulnerable, especially people with disabilities, demands further insights that culturally fit strategies and techniques, as Ishari Gunarathna and Chandima Jayasena argue. They suggest four main themes to discuss while practicing social work among people with disabilities in the Sri Lankan context. Disability initiatives, cultural attitudes toward people with disabilities, family roles, support systems, and the influence of religious and moral attitudes on social perceptions toward people with disabilities are significant concerns of the country. The authors discuss the crucial role of families in socialising and supporting people with disabilities, the utility of raising awareness among young people to increase public understanding of people with disabilities, and the promotion of a culturally significant approach to working with them. The role of grassroots initiatives and the unique insights of individuals with disabilities require platforms and facilitation by social workers. This further emphasises the vital relevance of social work interventions in the integration process of people with disabilities in Sri Lanka. The section ends with the arguments made by Priyadharshini K. and Lakshmi J. that India has continued the evolution of regularisation and professionalisation in social work and needs to develop a collaborative approach among educators, practitioners, and policymakers to enhance the profession's capacity to respond to contemporary social challenges. The authors describe the multifaceted landscape dynamics of professionalisation and regularisation in social work from an Indian perspective. Through their work, the authors shed light on processes, challenges, and ramifications related to improving legal and professional structures that govern social work practices in India. The regularisation process can help increase the recognition of this profession, as there is a growing awareness of complex social issues.

The fourth part of the book addresses health social work and attempts to provide new directions for social work interventions in the health sector. The section over arches adolescents, women, older people, and social work inter-

ventions from Indian perspectives. The chapter by Boban K.K. presents various environmental factors of successful aging. Using confirmatory factor analysis, the author identifies the importance of efforts to preserve the balance of nature and promote healthy environments that influence the successful aging of a person. This study demonstrates that social workers play a crucial role in preserving natural environments in the context of global warming and climatic changes to facilitate successful aging. This suggests social work intervention in the current scenario in India, especially in the state of Kerala, where health indices are equal to those of developed countries. Analysing the geriatric care policies of Kerala, which are parallel to developed countries, Manju Jose argues that social workers can make a difference in several key ways in terms of geriatric care, especially in advocating for comprehensive, inclusive, and effective elderly care policies and services that meet people's needs. Developing community-based programs and support networks to combat social isolation among the elderly, educating the public and policymakers on the evolving challenges, and confronting the preequisites of the elderly care to ensure their voices to be heard. The author notes that by taking on these critical roles, geriatric social workers are helping ensure that Kerala's aging population receives the compassionate, holistic care and support they deserve. This opens avenues to recognise the inevitable reality that geriatric social work is crucial as the state grapples with the realities of a rapidly aging society.

Kavitha VRS argues that the changes in the structure and function of the joint family, migration of children, death of a spouse, economic insecurity, and evolving notions of the family have altered the living arrangements of the elderly and shifted geriatric care and the forms of services. Facing complex healthcare issues with limited mobility, fixed income, stress, and social isolation, older adults often confront hardships that necessitate support and invite new paradigms in care policies and practices. Therefore, the author attempts to evolve a conceptual framework and provide a broader understanding of geriatric care, factors contributing to a paradigm shift in geriatric care, geriatric services, and geriatric social work, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the author provides a new direction in geriatric care and calls for geriatric social work as a solution.

Dealing with adolescents with multiple problems is quite challenging, especially when dealing with adolescents addicted to the Internet, which is a health issue combined with various dimensions. Preeti Hossain, Prasad Kannenkanti, and Surjit Prasad urge that parents should balance freedom with boundaries, have open dialogues, and warn against excessive online usage to prevent Internet addiction among adolescents. Parental attachment quality should be considered as a key factor in this regard. Internet addiction causes family distress compared to other factors, and the use of parental control and monitoring is therefore mandatory to prevent Internet addiction and behavioral issues. The authors argue that social workers can perform multiple interven-

tions by adapting primary social work methods, thereby helping parents apply optimal parenting styles.

The next chapter focuses on the multifaceted experiences of females during the postpartum period and highlights the need for the integrated well-being of new mothers to face psychosocial challenges, family support structures, social influences, and societal pressures. Deepika Krishnan P. presents a diverse array of issues postpartum individuals' face, with particular attention paid to the interplay between personal circumstances and external factors. By elucidating these complexities, the author endeavors to contribute to a deeper understanding of postpartum well-being and to inform strategies for holistic support with a direct intervention social work model.

The closing chapter of this book, authored by Gitanjali Sharma and Joyashri Dey talks about the crucial yet often overlooked role of gender equality in climate adaptation, with a specific focus on Barak Valley in North-Eastern India. Situated in a region where ecological vulnerabilities intersect with socio-economic disparities, the chapter highlights how climate change disproportionately affects the health and well-being of men and women which underscoring the need for gender-sensitive adaptation strategies. Grounded in a critical feminist ontological perspective and a constructivist epistemology, this research examines the intricate relationship between gender and environmental challenges. Employing a mixed-methods approach, it integrates quantitative surveys with qualitative insights from interviews, focus groups, and case studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of gendered climate impacts and responses. Emphasising the importance of inclusive policies and community-driven adaptation measures, this chapter contributes to the broader discourse on equitable and effective climate resilience in North-East India.

The book's chapters are research-driven reflections, both from academia and practice. They are well-integrated to provide future directions when the hardcore reality of the traditional mode of service delivery is challenged. The book is thus designed to engage the social work fraternity and act as a catalyst for future action as it deals with the implications of today's challenges. The chapters deal with broad arenas of social work and suggest the reader's practical solutions with the orientation of global social work. This provides readers with easy connectivity to local experiences, particularly after COVID-19. The chapters offer adequate reflections on international social work challenges after the COVID-19 pandemic. It has challenged social workers to practice divergently and creatively to meet demands of the time. Thus, this book will serve as a global resource, both academicians and practitioners, enlightening them on and addressing the trends and challenges of social work.

Norby Paul & Joyashri Dey

Editors