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TRANSFORMING SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION: NEW INSIGHTS FROM PRACTICE RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP
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Advancing Community Development Field Placements in Pakistan: A Case Study on Community Drinking Water

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Developing countries are increasingly adopting community development approaches to achieve their national development goals to enhance the living standards of the population. The community development approach has made remarkable improvements in the developing world in many ways and has been proven to be exceptionally successful in enhancing community well-being (Green, 2016; Iqbal & Khan, 2020; Islam, 2017; Nel, 2018). The role of social work is critical in delivering these community development practices and, therefore, quality field education is essential for social workers to succeed in their professional journey.

Community development practices have been implemented in Pakistan for several decades and have contributed significantly to the country's growth. These practices have been particularly successful in empowering the most vulnerable sections of society as millions of people in Pakistan live in underdeveloped areas without basic facilities (Seemab & Tahmina, 2019). The majority of the population lives below the poverty line, children are malnourished, mothers give birth without the support of trained nurses, health and hygiene standards are poor, infectious diseases are common, and women are subject to domestic violence (Ahmad & Talib, 2015). The country is also facing a serious climate challenge and ranks fifth

on the list of most vulnerable nations (Saleet, 2019). A large portion of society, especially those from lower socioeconomic status, are experiencing a water crisis due to its scarcity and poor quality (Ahmed et al., 2020).

As a professional and academic discipline, social work is critical in helping to address these challenges. Social workers are implementing community development interventions, for example, by providing the general public with information about their basic human rights and giving them the necessary training to exercise those rights (Mehmood et al., 2016). Community development models have been introduced by numerous local and international development agencies working in diverse sectors. Many of these initiatives have been highly successful and have gained international recognition. Some examples include the Orangi Pilot Project, the Agha Khan Rural Support Program, the National Rural Support Program, and the Punjab Community Water Supply and Sanitation Program (Nazuk, 2019). These local and international development agencies are highly engaged with social work schools across the country in terms of research and training, and their relationships are playing a vital role in the development of the profession in Pakistan.

Gaining experience in the field, referred to as field education or practicum, is a vital component of social work education for students. Success stories and reports emerging from the field have informed the modernization of social work curriculums and community development (Ahmed & Ahsan, 2014). Opportunities for students to gain training and hands-on field experience have been created through partnerships between social work schools and development agencies. Internships at active project sites are the most popular form of field education in Pakistan. Following the completion of their practicum, students are often hired by these agencies on a permanent basis (Asrar-ul-Haq, 2015).

To illustrate the importance of social work field education in community development, this chapter describes on-site training and practicum opportunities for students in community development programs in Pakistan. A case study of a Pakistani community drinking water project provides insights into the field education model that trains practicum students in need assessment, community mobilization, participatory action research, capacity building, monitoring, evaluation, and long-term sustainability of the project.

Insights Into Social Work in Pakistan

In 1953, the Government of Pakistan trained its first cohort of 65 social workers with the assistance of the United Nations (UN). It was an 8-month training certificate for in-service government officers to support the social welfare services sector. This short course provided a foundation for social work discipline in the country. Consequently, in 1956, the University of Punjab initiated a 2-year diploma in social work by building upon the idea and content from UN training resources. A social work department was later established at the University of Punjab and a master's degree in social work program was introduced (Graham et al., 2007).

In Pakistan, social welfare and community development are two important features of practice where the role of social workers has been established and widely accepted. Federal and provincial governments allocate budgets in their annual plans to hire social workers and, as a result, many graduates are hired in service areas. Additionally, schools of social work have curriculums and field education which align with both sectors (Shah, 2015). There are defined programs and job structures for social work graduates (Riaz, 2016), particularly within governments. Lastly, social work students can get internships in federal and provincial social welfare departments.

Social Work, Community Development Practice, and Field Education

Pakistan is the world's fifth most populated country with a population of 229,488,994 (World Population Review, 2022). Governments and public sector organizations in the developing world face a lack of resources and capacity to provide social services. To address these challenges, there are international frameworks and arrangements to support developing countries (Lub, 2019). International developing agencies, such as the UN, have been providing resources and training, as well as introducing innovative best practices through capacity building arrangements and establishing support units to assist with social development programs in government organizations (Ahmad & Talib, 2015).

The community development approach has been used as a key strategy to uplift the vulnerable communities; it is built upon the idea that engagement initiatives can be used to empower the end-users (community). Community development as a method of social work practice is well

established in Pakistan (Raza, 2021). Social workers play a key role in these initiatives by leading and coordinating the development process in the provision of basic human services such as water, food, health, and safety.

To respond to the need for leadership and coordination in these initiatives, social work schools focus on community development practice in their curriculums. Independent certificate courses and specialization in community development have been commonly offered in social work schools across the country (Bashir & Shah, 2017). Finally, practicum students have internship opportunities in several community development projects.

Internships in Pakistan: Field Work/Field Education/Practicum

While social work students take part in internships in community development initiatives in the areas of health, education, poverty reduction, and sustainable development, social work is not an established discipline like other social sciences in Pakistan, despite the significant increase in the number of social work programs in the last two decades (Ansari, 2015). Social work must compete for placements with other social sciences that also offer internships in their degree programs, such as sociology, anthropology, gender studies, and development studies. Furthermore, in the job market there is an overlap around the subject-specific jobs (Riaz, 2017). The other academic disciplines mentioned above get the majority of the placements that are supposed to be the domain of social work (Ahmad & Bano, 2021). The same holds true for the number of internships available in government and non-governmental organizations. Thus, when social work students serve in their practicums and professional settings, it is hard for them to distinguish themselves from the students and professionals from other social science disciplines (Naqvi & Ibrar, 2017).

Social work also faces two other challenges in terms of field education. While most social work students envision their future in the social development sector, there is stigmatization attached to social work practice and training. Local communities consider social workers as the representatives of Western culture and values in society. This can be discouraging to students, especially when these sentiments and attitudes are expressed by the population while students are doing their internships (Jamal & Baldwin, 2019).

The second challenge is that there are no formal supervisory arrangements through field educators or coordinators to facilitate field education and practicums. This has an influence on the development of internships as the arrangement of placements are not done in a systematic way. Agencies contact schools directly based on internship vacancies available, and conversely students can also obtain internships by directly contacting agencies (Ali & Rafi, 2013).

Case Study on Community Development Initiatives in the Water Sector

Background and Context

There is considerable concern in the social work literature about global environmental and climate change issues. Since the most vulnerable and poor segments of society are also the most impacted by environmental degradation, these issues have a social and environmental justice dimension (Chase, 2015). As noted earlier, Pakistan is the fifth most populous nation in the world and ranks among the top five countries facing global climate change and environmental threats (Hussain et al., 2020). Water quantity and water quality related issues are prevalent throughout the country, and they particularly affect vulnerable communities. Overall, 75% of the population is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture to earn its livelihood. Water scarcity has affected this sector at a massive scale. This water crisis has implications for food production and overall financial security of poor people (Khalid & Khan, 2020).

Although the provision of clean drinking water is a basic human right, it is not being met in Pakistan. Large cities like Lahore, which has a population of more than 15 million, are facing a severe water crisis. Most of the country's urban centres rely on underground water for their drinking needs, but this resource is becoming scarce (Ahmed, 2016). There is not enough water available in the cities for many poor people, so they migrate seasonally to procure enough water for their family to survive during the hot summer season (Ali & Ali, 2019). The quality of the available water is another imperative issue. As a result of environmental changes and industrial activities, drinking water is often unsafe to consume. The poor often cannot afford to buy potable, clean water. Furthermore, some areas are at

high risk of arsenic contamination. Arsenic is a poison that is tasteless, colorless, and odorless, and it becomes even more harmful when boiled (Rabbani & Fatmi, 2020).

Community Water Supply Initiative by the Punjab Public Health Engineering Department

The Punjab Community Water Supply project is a prominent community development initiative in the Punjab region of Pakistan. The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) is planning, designing, and executing the water services activities with the financial support of government and international donors. The main objectives of this initiative are to provide clean drinking water and health hygiene education in the region. This project has been so effective that it has a presence across the Punjab province, which is demonstrated by the fact that every city and town in the region is represented in this project by community-based organizations (Padawangi, 2010). The Punjab Community Water Supply Project is the largest project of its kind in Pakistan. It provides internships and practicums for students of social work and other disciplines, and serves as a great learning platform for the students, researchers, and practitioners (Nabi et al., 2019)

In the past, drinking water delivery has been the role of traditional engineering-focused organizations. Until 2001, the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) was mainly an engineering-focused entity and was responsible to provide the water services to the communities. This department has always controlled a significant portion of the project in terms of its size and areas of operation. Engineers have held the key positions at all levels of the project (Jabeen et al., 2015). However, various evaluation reports have highlighted the weaknesses of this traditional model. Despite spending more than 500 billion Pakistani rupee of public money in the last two decades of the 20th century, PHED was unable to serve at a large enough scale to reach across the region, resulting in many communities continuing to have unsafe and insufficient drinking water (Azizullah et al., 2011). Consequently, the government began to explore other options with the assistance of the UN and other agencies. Ultimately, a community development model of water governance was

adopted, encouraging the engineers to step down from their traditional leading role in water management initiatives.

Subsequently, social workers were assigned the primary role in decision making, and to ensure community participation in all phases of development, social workers needed to directly engage with communities (Adam & Zulu, 2020). A community development unit was introduced in the organizational structure of PHED, within which social workers and sociologists were recruited through a competitive process. Following intensive training in community development practice with the support of UN agencies, community development staff were appointed to all offices throughout the province. As a government organization with a large converging area, the PHED currently employs more than 5,000 people in over 200 offices across the country to carry out the Community Water Supply Initiative (Tariq et al., 2020). The initiative includes activities such as needs assessment, community mobilization, training, capacity building, monitoring, and evaluation, as well as sustainable development.

Students are also engaged through internships. They are able to gain skills and experiences while participating in the project (Khalid & Rashid, 2020). Project leadership is well-connected with the academic community and includes personnel who have graduated from local universities. The intensive training program is facilitated by social work schools through seminars, workshops, and conferences (Ashiq et al., 2020). Master's students also conduct research on the different aspects of this project. The project team cooperates to facilitate this process. Several master's theses and doctoral dissertations highlight reflections on the field experience, as well as learning and project outcomes (Bashir, 2016).

Prominent Project Features and Learning Opportunities for Practicum Students

As highlighted earlier, the Community Water Supply Initiative is community-focused and has a large coverage area and presence throughout the province. Offices and active sites are available even in small towns and remote areas. The range of locations makes it convenient for social work schools to identify internships for the practicum students. Additionally, this type of practicum is also preferred by students, as they can complete a field placement close to their homes (Ahmad & Talib, 2010).

As part of the supervision model, trained social workers and sociologists oversee students in their practicum work and engage them in project activities. Formal documentation, such as learning agreements and contracts for practicum students, does not seem to exist in this water service initiative because in Pakistan, unlike in Western countries, social work schools and institutions are not aligned with the formal field education arrangements (Norrka, 2011). However, after completing their practicum, students need to submit a fieldwork report which is endorsed by the supervisor from the faculty and the agency where the practicum was completed (Shah & Baporikar, 2012).

Practicum students are provided a seat in the corresponding PHED office and travel to field sites using agency transportation. Students' learning and participation in the project are based on the ongoing activities in the field at the time of their placement (Anwar et al., 2020). It is worth mentioning that, owing to the on-going activities at the project's sites, students have the opportunity to understand its cycle and participate in field activities such as baseline surveys, needs assessments, community mobilisation, community-based organization (CBO) formation, on-site capacity building activities, office-based training of community leaders, monitoring and evaluations, operations and maintenance, and socio-economic sustainability measures in the project process (Khan & Bibi, 2011). Some of these unique features of the water service community development initiative and implications of the field education are discussed below.

Baseline Surveys. As the very first activity in the project cycle, the baseline survey is where practicum students begin their learning journey. Supervisors in the agency encourage students to participate in baseline surveys and walk them through the process. Basic information such as population data, number of households, tribes, castes, literacy rate, schools, hospitals, and distance from other public facilities have been collected in the baseline surveys. The initial training is conducted for the field visit at the relevant office, and questionnaire templates and relevant data collection tools are provided. There are standard operating procedures for the field visits: they include information to the relevant government authorities, transportation, and security arrangements (Luqman et al., 2021). Following the training sessions, students join field staff to visit the target community (village or town) to plan the project. Students actively

participate in all of the activities associated with the baseline survey and facilitate the project process (Khan & Jan, 2015).

Needs Assessment. Once the baseline data has been collected, the next step in the project cycle is a needs assessment to help better plan a community development project. Project team members visit the community and engage in a dialog to determine the community needs. A community may have different groups, and their preferences may not be the same as those of other community members (Rana & Routray, 2018). In this case, needs assessment procedures are the most appropriate method for identifying the issues and problems the community is facing. The procedure aids in identifying the needs of various groups in a community — such as women — which have different needs with respect to water usage.

Identifying the social structure of a community and its needs is crucial (Amin & Afzal, 2019). Different tribes, castes, and clans may live in the community, but they will not want to share the same water source with each other, and this could lead to conflict. The needs assessment procedure facilitates decision-making in this case. This process helps promote reflection by the students about their social work practice. They share their field reflections and stories with their fellows, supervisors, and faculty. Students often incorporate these field reflections into their final reports and conduct seminars to share their experiences after the completion of their practicums (Asim et al., 2016).

Community Mobilization. High-level skills are needed to mobilize and engage communities to achieve the project goals, because when it comes to the immediate needs of people, their varying preferences emerge or become manifest. The severity of the problem is not always clear to them. For example, it can be hard for people to believe they are drinking polluted water since they have been using a water source for generations. In some cases, people oppose development and prefer their local water service arrangement, even if it is unsafe (Malik et al., 2020). If this is the case, instead of a development project on the ground, the government can allocate funds to other projects. As a result, social workers use several strategies to mobilize the people, including awareness campaigns, media campaigns, and consultations with the community (Shafique & Warren, 2015). Gaining support from local schoolteachers and educated groups within society is one effective method of mobilizing communities.

Another way to mobilize communities is through local religious institutions. Every community has a different strategy depending on the types of barriers that may surface in the development process. As part of their training, social work students engage themselves with these types of interventions (Khan & Irfan, 2018; Shah, 2018).

Formation of Community-Based Organization. Forming a community-based organization (CBO) is a crucial element of a successful community development program, because all future developments and decision-making in the selected community rest on a community organization's active role (Kafle, 2017). The CBO must ensure that each and every segment of the community is adequately represented. However, this is difficult to achieve in rural and tribal communities. It is often difficult for social workers to identify key community members and to ensure the participation of the youth, women, and marginalized groups in a community organization (Ahmad, 2020).

Communities sometimes experience major conflicts regarding the organization's structure and roles. Social workers are responsible for overcoming these conflicts, organizing community meetings and dialogues, and using this as an opportunity to ensure a sustainable future for the initiative. A CBO that has the support of the community and was formed with consensus can play a key supportive role throughout the development process (Rafique & Khoo, 2018). Participation in the formation of CBOs are important educational opportunities for social work students and their future professional journey, as it helps them to learn more about the community organization. In many cases, practicum students played an important role in engaging women and the youth in the CBOs formation process (Raza, 2020).

Capacity Building and Training. Capacity building and training of the community and CBO members are an important part of development activity. In the Community-Based Water Project, trainings are primarily focused on water quality, availability, conservation, health and hygiene, resource mobilization, and use of financial resources. Professional trainers, who are part of the PHED team, lead these learning activities. They utilize pedagogical resources such as cartoons, videos, field success stories, and training modules to assist in this task, and they are available as PHED resources (Wahid et al., 2017). Two types of training are offered in

the water supply initiative. The first type is on-site training with a large number of participants. In the training program, the participants are motivated by success stories from around the world, and they learn about health and hygiene and how to combat waterborne diseases (Azhar & Choudhry, 2016). In the second type of training, many communities also mobilize their resources and bring positive changes to their local settings by participating in capacity building activities and in CBOs' work. An example of this is the vocational training that contributed to the economic well-being of people (Birkinshaw et al., 2021). Training activities provide a unique opportunity for social work students. They participate and organize these activities with the responsible PHED staff members. Some social work and sociology schools participate in these activities and facilitate the PHED to deliver better trainings. Some selected training happens in the PHED offices. Designated community members and CBO office bearers attend these trainings, which are usually donor funded (Malik & Rana, 2020).

Monitoring and Evaluation. A strong monitoring and evaluation framework is necessary for community and social development. Thus, a dedicated monitoring and evaluation unit is part of PHED's organisational structure. This unit is responsible for monitoring project tasks, milestones, and outcomes. Mostly, this unit's work involves data collection and analysis (Nibbering, 2019). Social workers and sociologists are part of this unit, and they work in conjunction with other staff members who have skills in information technology. They assist in the use of informational communication technology tools. Also, the unit serves as a data and resource bank for the project and supports the decision-making process with the daily data coming from the field (Khan, 2018). This unit has substantial involvement in outcome assessments and socioeconomic impact assessments in order to meet provincial government and donors' requirements about project outcomes.

Students with strong research skills often secure practicums/internships in the monitoring and evaluation unit. They are mostly engaged in organizing and reporting data, and they use a variety of software applications to help in the process. These students receive training and are given opportunities to learn how to use the software during their practicums. Students completing report writing or thesis work seek support from monitoring and evaluation staff about the latest information and data

pertaining to the project. Social work schools encourage their doctoral students to engage with the monitoring and evaluation unit in PHED, in order to receive advanced training in data collection and analysis (Khan & Anjum, 2016).

Sustainability (Operations and Maintenance). It is the community's responsibility to operate and maintain the water supply project. Whenever major damage or failure occurs, the government is responsible for technical and financial support. However, the community is responsible for daily and monthly expenses. Water is viewed as a commodity, and convincing people to pay for it is an ongoing challenge, especially in the initial stages of this development process. A billing mechanism is imperative to ensure the sustainability of water infrastructure (Memon, 2004). However, by implementing project interventions and analyzing field assessments, it has become apparent to community members that collective arrangements are cheaper than solutions provided individually at the household level. This community development initiative contributed up to a 50% reduction in the costs of monthly electricity bills at the household level. The operation and maintenance mechanisms represent a major aspect in the overall sustainability of the project (Haq et al., 2014).

While studying the operation and maintenance mechanisms in the project areas, students gain an understanding of the environmental sustainability aspect of community development projects. The future priorities of the profession and global sustainability debates make this an excellent learning opportunity for social work students (Jamshed et al., 2018).

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter described the successful evolution of the Community Water Supply Project and the unique features of this project, as well as how social work students can take advantage of numerous learning opportunities in their field practicums through this initiative. The elaboration on students' training at active field sites and in collaboration with schools during their practicum, provides an inside glimpse at how the university and community development agency are connected in the development process. Stories that emerge from field practicums motivate and inspire students to pursue social work practice. Students integrate these stories into their field reflections in their final report and

often conduct seminars to share their experience with their fellow students, supervisors, and faculty.

Over the years, community development techniques have remained dynamic while they evolved, but in the future more knowledge resources will be required in this sector to address multiple challenges, which include climate change, environmental degradation, population growth, and poverty (Agyeman et al., 2016). Community development is recognized as an essential component of social development by global development agencies such as the United Nations, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank. This chapter demonstrates the importance of collaboration between social work schools and social development agencies. In the future, even more collaboration is needed to address the multidimensional challenges related to social and environmental justice. Through their internships, students can play a critical role in this process while learning how to be effective members of our profession.

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