

Community Practices in India:

Lessons from the Grassroots

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Edited by

Purnima George, Geeta Balakrishnan,
Vaijayanta Anand and Ferzana Chaze

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and Ferzana Chaze

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To our teachers of College of Social work, Nirmala Niketan who inspired us to commit to values of social justice, equity and social change

&

To community practitioners and social activists who have dedicated their lives to champion the cause of the marginalized communities in India.

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PREFACE

College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai, was founded in 1951 during the first decade after India acquired independence from colonial rule. It was a period of heightened enthusiasm to shoulder the reins of government and to work for the social uplift of the people. It was a time of dreams and hopes that every tear be wiped away from the faces of those who were eking out a meagre existence in the distant villages, hamlets, hills and valleys of a sprawling young nation.

The leaders of the freedom movement realized that the acquisition of power in a democracy was both a political and social way of being, therefore the struggle had to continue for a society imbued with the spirit of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan stated, "Poor people who wander about, find no work, no wages and starve, whose lives are a continual round of sore affliction and pinching poverty cannot be proud of the Constitution or its law. What does a vote mean to such persons?" (Basu, 2006, p. 24).

The founders of the Nirmala Niketan Institute saw, sensed and admired the spiritual depth and cultural richness of Indian heritage but they too vibrated with the pain and suffering of the masses spilling over onto the streets and slums of a proliferating, unplanned metropolis, the urban complex of Mumbai. How then to respond to the situation? Their answer lay in the preparation of a cadre of motivated young professional social workers through an academic programme that would sharpen the perception of social reality leading to a hands-on engagement with people, especially those who were marginalized and socially ostracized.

During the early years when social work was not recognised as a profession in India, the academy borrowed heavily from the established programme of social work education in the West. This was due to the fact that most professors in social work education were educated at universities in the West. However, entry into the field in an Indian reality exposed the limitations and futility in applying a methodology that had evolved in a particular culture to populations conditioned by another set of cultural values, interlinked with other patterns of belief systems, psycho-social relationships and a resultant socio-economic system of operation.

As one of the first colleges of social work education in the country, the College was often called upon to lead and participate in national and

international conferences. One became increasingly aware of the necessity of Indian social workers to be more deeply-rooted in the indigenous reality of the country where the wheels of change had begun to turn from an ancient order to more modern aspirations in unique ways with each community and each location having its own history, rhythm of change and particular responsiveness to the existing environment.

The movement of political independence from colonial power began to affect a large number of countries especially in the Asian, African and South American contexts. As power dynamics began to change, new realizations emerged about people's power, cultural hegemony and liberation struggles. These influences helped to shape new approaches in the theory and practice of professional social work splitting from an individual-centred benefactor approach to recognition of the collective empowerment of a people as conscious agents of their own struggle for change and self-realization.

Such changes resulted in a stronger pro-people stance against the continuation of the status quo that characterizes the pro-establishment order. These stances inevitably bring in their wake a certain amount of tension not just in the field projects themselves, but in the ethos of the College and in relation to parents who feel that students are there only to acquire a degree and should be involved in "safe" projects. These dilemmas were approached largely through dialogue among faculty members, dialogue between faculty and students where each party was aware of each others' ethical base in terms of one's choices and the personal responsibility one bears to respond to one's convictions in a given situation. The College, as an educational institution, was challenged to affirm its stand demonstrated in its study on pavement dwellers or in the case of construction workers.

It was that the theory of classrooms found an entry point in field practice, facilitating professionals to test the effectiveness of theoretical goals with the complex reality of the Indian situation in rural or tribal areas or in the appalling living conditions of the urban labyrinth. As projects began to develop in a way that was meaningful in their interventions, as resources were gradually built for the continuity of the project, faculty and alumni were encouraged to take independent responsibility, assuring that the administration, financial management and professional competence would converge towards the envisaged goals. The effectiveness was seen in the project's capacity to empower people and train leaders. Additionally, we initiated dialogue with like-minded NGOs or public service undertakings to assure continuity of contribution and creating a necessary support system for effective action.

The College is proud of the demonstrative community action projects inspired by the determination of the Institute to explore and work for a better quality of life for the people of an independent nation. The academic programme has indeed motivated young women and men to pursue the goal of effecting social responsibility among the more vulnerable sections of our society. True to the philosophy of social work, it is the growth of the individual into the fullness of his/her being that underlies the struggle, not the superficial glamour of programmes that shine for a brief time that eventually leaves people struggling in oppression.

If a project is not successful, it is seen either as the methodologies need improvements or it is a learning opportunity. Values in one age may change at another but what is fundamental is that the human factor is not crushed by the weight of assuring the advantage of a few.

Our faculty and alumni have, through the projects presented in this book, worked to promote a quality of life that is not a manipulation of the forces of caste, class and religion but rather the recognition of humanity that is capable of growth into unity by the forces of justice, equity and respect for every man, woman and child in our country.

In your hands is a collection of original narratives by academics and practitioners who are alumni and/or faculty members of the College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan. Through their different perspectives and subjectivities, the contributors to this volume position human rights focus, critical awareness raising and facilitating community leadership as core aspects of community organising process and outcomes. Although this is a diverse collection of community organising approaches that are germane to the local contexts and have been developed organically through grassroots work over a long period of time, certain critical perspectives, elements and strategies of community organising persist throughout the chapters.

One perspective central to organising in this book is the focus on a critical analysis of the social realities that lead to community oppression and marginalization. Within this context, the central focus of organising rests on working with communities to address various forms of human rights violations through a wide range of strategies to accomplish the social justice vision of our communities. In doing so, the narratives transgress the boundaries of traditional understanding of community practices. While these initiatives have been incredibly responsive and exciting, they signal a serious limitation in the pedagogy on community practices that continues to rely heavily on practice conceptualisations developed in the West (Mathabane & Sekudu, 2017). The contributors of this book intend to lay the foundation for building an indigenous body of

knowledge in the area of community practices. This book pushes the traditional boundaries of knowledge construction to transform the academy by inviting practitioners with the rich and vast base of practice experience to inform and build knowledge from the local context. The narratives presented here collectively constitute over two hundred years of successful engagement and mobilisation with rural and urban communities in India.

Acknowledging the challenge posed by the lack of indigenous teaching material that has confronted social work education in India the contributors align themselves with scholars who have raised questions about social work training in India (Adaikalam, 2012; Jaswal & Pandya, 2015; Pawar, 2014; Pawar & Anscombe, 2015, Thomas & Varghese, 2012) and with scholars who have argued for indigenisation of social work (Brydon, 2011; Midgley, 1981; Nimnagadda & Balgopal, 2000; Osei-Hwedie, 1993).

This book is written at a time when neoliberal and global forces have impacted social work education in general (Alphonse, George & Moffatt, 2007) and the social development / community sector in particular (George, Moffatt, Alphonse, Kanitkar, Anand & Chamberlain, 2009; Moffatt, George, Alphonse, Kanitkar, Anand & Chamberlain, 2009) in India. Within a climate of increasing withdrawal of the State from social welfare and a lack of funding to carry out mobilisation and social change agendas, community practice faces a recognised threat of regressing to its original programme/service based model. Through sharing the narratives of these various projects, this book demonstrates current, diverse ways in which social justice work and the upholding of human rights continues to be carried out in different parts of India. These projects/organisations bear witness and offer hope that this work is possible and social change is achievable.

Sections and Directions

The chapters in this book are divided into five sections based on communities and the context of community organising. The first section provides the philosophical basis of initiating demonstrative field action projects which were the origins for a number of contributions in this book. The second section captures projects undertaken in urban contexts. Similarly, the third section presents projects undertaken in rural contexts. The fourth section presents an unprecedented example of the contribution made by the College of Social Work as an educational institution in addressing societal injustice. The final section pulls together the critical

elements of community organising from the various contributions of the book and presents a conceptualisation of elements and strategies of community organising in the Indian context.

Setting the Context: Introduction

This introductory chapter by Gracy Fernandes sets the context for this book and provides an overview of all demonstrative field action projects of College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan. Gracy presents the philosophical foundation of the College in initiating work in communities and presents the evolution and shift in the College's perspectives through the decades. The details of the evolution and shifting focus present the relentless effort of the College in remaining true to its vision and mission to society and itself as an educational institute. These projects are not only a site for integrating theory with practice, but a site for responding to emerging societal issues and/or communities.

Community Organising in Urban Contexts

The authors in this section provide examples of their work with geographic and functional communities in urban contexts.

In Chapter 2, Jalinder Adsule provides an insight into the regional approach of working in slums. Learning from the limitations of organising members of a single slum community, this chapter posits ways in which the work focuses on developing critical consciousness and inculcating community solidarity among members of different slum communities that eventually led to collective action on common problems. A notable aspect of the work of this project is the fluidity with which it responds simultaneously at local and structural levels as they mutually impact each other.

In Chapter 3, Vaijayanta Anand presents work of Nirman an organisation that works with construction workers in the city of Mumbai. This field action project with a new perspective took the stance of working on three levels: first, direct work with the construction workers connecting them to various government services, strengthening their skills and also empowering them to fight for their rights. Second, working with the builders to ensure safe and proper working and living conditions for the workers and third, active participation in all the campaigns and alliances involving trade unions and other NGOs at the micro and macro levels to influence policies and labour laws for construction workers. This chapter showcases complexities of working with different stakeholders in order to

accomplish social justice and equity.

Adding to this discussion, in Chapter 4, Patsy Khan presents the work of SETU with domestic workers in Mumbai. In describing the various phases of SETU's work, Patsy demonstrates ways in which work that started with negotiations with individual employers of domestic workers at a single site, grew to multiple sites and then led to leadership training and mobilisation to influence the government to pass a Bill to protect the rights of domestic workers. This chapter stands as an incredible example of work with a functional community.

Community Organising in Rural Contexts

The third section focuses on community organising in rural contexts. In Chapter 5, Bhim Raskar presents his work on facilitating a social movement to mobilise women and strengthen their participation in political processes within Panchayati Raj institutions in the state of Maharashtra. Utilizing a campaign and critical consciousness raising strategies, the chapter presents community organising experiences with multiple goals of inclusion and leadership of women in governance of political institutions in rural contexts.

Similarly, in Chapter 6, Indavi Tulpule shares yet another example of forming a broad-based opposition movement of Adivasis and the rural poor in Thane district of Maharashtra to assert for their rights and achieve a sustainable natural resource management. The narrative provides an insight into the various strategies used by the project to create awareness and mobilise community members along with focus on the process of organising.

In Chapter 7, Ulka Mahajan presents the work of Sarvahara Jana Andolan, a people's organisation of Adivasis in the Raigad district of Maharashtra. Ulka describes their work as focused on issue-based mobilisation and resistance at the local level as well as active engagement in anti-globalisation resistance at the national level. The organisation used a wide spectrum of strategies from education, awareness and capacity building to advocacy, campaign and contest to effect change. The chapter presents a unique model of community practice started by a people's organisation that is built on values of social justice, equity and people-oriented development.

Continuing further the discussion of community practices with the Adivasis, in Chapter 8, Anjali Kanitkar demonstrates ways in which the organization, AROEHAN, focuses on addressing issues of health, education, livelihood and governance. Through a (w)holistic perspective where she finds all of the above aspects as interrelated and interconnected, Anjali narrates the experiences of collaborating with the corporate sector.

While capturing the various milestones in the perspectives of community practices in the Indian context, Anjali also focuses on some of the tensions she has experienced while engaging with this project.

In Chapter 9, Mohan Surve shares his experiences of organising communities on the move called as Nomadic or Denotified Tribes (NT/DNT), in Maharashtra. The chapter provides an interesting insight into the power dynamics between NT and other settled communities in a geographic rural area. The narrative also presents the challenges it poses in getting a nomadic community to settle at a location and facilitating collaboration between members of both communities to work jointly on issues that affect them. Mohan's work also presents complications of using the alliance based approach of community organising.

Moving the focus from Maharashtra to northern Andhra Pradesh, in Chapter 10, Nafisa and Dominic D'Souza present their work with Adivasis. Their chapter presents details of their work on safeguarding the rights of Adivasis and developing sustainable alternatives at the grassroots level. Their narrative presents unique initiatives developed towards sustainable alternatives such as herbal-based community health care, sustainable agricultural practices, decentralized energy options and micro enterprise. Their organisation, LAYA focuses on developing capacities of women and youth. Besides initiating a network at the local level and actively engaging at the regional, national and global level, a noteworthy aspect of their work is restoration of Adivasis' knowledge and practice around health care and agriculture.

Moving from northern Andhra Pradesh to Gujarat, in Chapter 11, Paulomee Mistry's story portrays the intense resistance developed with the communities in challenging the power and oppression by forest officers. Beside developing a people's organisation to sustain the resistance and reclaim land for the tribals, a unique aspect of the work of DISHA lies in ground-breaking areas of leadership development that focuses on developing skills in critical analysis of local government's budget, and interpreting government rules and legislations. The work of this organisation also focuses on development of sustainable agro-forestry based industry for livelihood of tribals.

Response of College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan to Emerging Crises

This section focuses on the work College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan (CSWNN) has done to remain relevant and respond to various crises that have taken place in the last several decades in Mumbai, Maharashtra and India.

In Chapter 12, Purnima George explores the critical and unprecedented role of CSWNN in challenging the decision of the state government to evict and deport pavement dwellers. The chapter provides an insight into the barriers in participating in such resistance, ways in which those barriers were addressed and the opportunities provided for student engagement and learning. Based on the learnings derived from this experience, the chapter leaves the reader with thought-provoking questions around the scope and role of academic institutions in addressing emerging crises of our times.

Moving from a local level crisis to a focus on national calamities, in Chapter 13, Geeta Balakrishnan presents the engagement of the College in responding to varied types of disasters. The engagement of the College over the years has made it easy for it to carve out a role for social workers in addressing such crises and be recognised by various state and national governmental and non-government agencies. These experiences have led the College to make important curricular changes in the social work training offered.

Building Knowledge from Community Organising Experiences in India

This concluding chapter by the editors brings together various perspectives and theoretical frameworks on community organising. Based on the narratives presented in this book, the editors have developed a conceptualisation of elements and strategies of community organising that are relevant to Indian context.

I end this preface with an invitation to engage and be inspired from the lifelong commitment and passion of most of these contributors. While this book has captured important work of some community practitioners who are alumni and/or faculty members of CSWNN in Mumbai, there are many other organisations and social work projects initiated by other schools of social work across India. We urge these institutions to similarly document and draw on their experiences, to continue to build a body of knowledge in relation to indigenous social work in the Indian context.

Hazel D'Lima
Former Principal, College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan

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We thank immensely the authors for participating with us in this unprecedented journey of indigenising knowledge on community practices for India by sharing their inspirational narratives. This dream project would not have been accomplished without their commitment to contribute.

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SECTION I:
SETTING THE CONTEXT

CHAPTER ONE

COMMUNITY BASED DEMONSTRATIVE FIELD ACTION PROJECTS

GRACY FERNANDES

Introduction

A unique feature of the College of Social Work (CSWNN) is its vision to the commitment of social justice and equity in the development of vulnerable populations, both urban and rural. This chapter traces the historical evolution and rationale of the College in its dedicated engagement in community-based field action projects from the beginning to the present.

Historical Origin

The attraction and interest in India is well expressed in French by the first missionaries of the Religious Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary (DHM) as found in the historical annals of Nirmala Niketan (1949-1961): “India has always been a particularly interesting country. This interest has become more acute at present, because of the turning point of history, where she finds independence from the political, as well as, from the economic and social point of view. India has a rich cultural heritage; however the contrast in the Indian society is equally evident” (Reunion de Bombay Historique, 1961, p. 21).

Observing glaring social inequality, the early DHM missionaries felt that their mission was to strive for social justice, social change and equality that stemmed from more than the material poverty of individuals, families and communities. Their goal was in restoring innate human dignity and well-being of people for a life with basic amenities of food, clothing, shelter, education and health-care for children. Steeped in their firm conviction and commitment to social justice and equity, they conducted regular visits to the slums in Mumbai with a team of nurses and volunteers.

Maria Paiva de Coucerio, the founder of DHM in Asia, believed in the divine power of faith and was blessed with a deep religious faith and a compassionate heart. Her journey to India flowed from her vocation and mission as a member of the DHM. She had a 'tough mind with a tender heart' (Paulsell, 1990) and believed that it was a sacred calling to prepare students for careers both within and beyond academy. She was inspired to initiate professional training through the College of Social Work which would provide an educational opportunity for young Indian students in social work. Her contribution continues to be inspiring in the legacy and motto of the Institute, "the highest law of love is service". CSWNN was built on the edifice of this faith, service, justice, wisdom and learning.

Rationale for Commitment to Demonstrative Field Action Projects

The origin of the College in 1955 was a response to the young independent India whose struggle for development would be served not so much by material relief, as by sensitive social concern and insightful committed action. The vision of the College then as now is to contribute to the creation of a new social order based on human dignity and social justice and it made a choice to work with the poorest of the poor, vulnerable and exploited groups in society. Its goal is to provide professional training to young Indians and build a cadre of professional social workers equipped to effectively intervene as catalysts of social change at multiple levels.

The College strives to relate the educational content of the courses to contemporary social realities such that the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are inculcated in the students and they develop a keen sense of social responsibility and commitment to nation building (Prospectus, 1960).

The College effects this mission in two complementary ways. First, it provides professional academic training that enables young adults to plan, intervene, and participate in social-development activities with the underprivileged. Second, the College initiates innovative projects to provide relevant and effective services to the vulnerable population of the city with a focus on specific target groups such as street children, women in distress, construction workers, pavement dwellers and others.

Role and Importance of Demonstrative Field Action Projects

Demonstrative field action projects have been the hallmark of the College and are initiated to provide meaning to the entire academic discourse,

creating space for students and trainers to address emerging developmental needs and work out models and approaches for practice. The focus of the College has been to develop knowledge which is value-based. Innovations carried out are based on practice wisdom and help the students and faculty to develop a wholistic perspective through linking classroom teaching, field practice, research and community work. The projects have contributed to theory-building and excellence in academic programmes. The issues chosen being those which most severely affect marginalized groups, the projects have also equipped students with skills, and inculcated values of social justice, human dignity and democratic participation.

The College envisages demonstrative field action projects to be a springboard for new areas and models of practice and push the agenda of social work practice. For example, though school social work mainly involved counseling in the West, when introduced in the state-run municipal schools in Bombay¹ city, CSWNN realized that the problem requiring intervention was school drop-outs (wastage) and failure (stagnation). The exclusive focus on the child and the family was shifted to intervention with the school administration and teachers.

These projects also offer opportunities to the students who are placed every year for field work with these groups. In this way, students see theory in practice when they work with College project and also understand how the vision of the College becomes translated in practice. The projects provide the students with opportunities for practical experience in uncharted fields, which later have an impact on wider areas of practice and social-work education. These projects have a lasting value on students' field-work, vulnerable groups and policy decisions. For example, school social work in municipal schools, as mentioned above, was later absorbed by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Bombay.

The projects at times develop into full-fledged NGOs and are registered independently as autonomous organisations by interested persons coming together to bear the responsibility of managing the organisation. In such cases, the College facilitates the process and gradually withdraws after providing support for numerous years.

As a professional social work institute, it is important for the College of Social Work to demonstrate effectiveness in the field. It is essential for students to know that practice is based on what has been demonstrated previously. The field-action projects are unique fieldwork placement opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students of the College. These students are generally supervised by the faculty in charge of the

¹ Renamed Mumbai in 2006.

project. This directs students' exposure to marginalized communities is a form of experiential learning and gaining of knowledge through personal experience. Faculty members, as social work educators, are provided with opportunities for building knowledge through a synthesis of practice theories, models and experience. This learning experience enables the College to take an increasingly proactive approach in preparing diverse field work curricula. The College promotes the process of incorporating experience-based practice into its teaching and field training. Faculty members add relevance to their course teaching by incorporating the insights and lessons learnt from the field.

Historically, in the College of Social Work, projects were generally initiated with no external funding, and proposals were written for funding only after they demonstrate their viability. Students and faculty members had to begin from scratch and the projects survived mainly because of their personal and professional commitment.

Evolution of Demonstrative Field Action Projects

With the vast and rich professional experience in community-based projects of over 60 years, the College to this day responds to the communities' social demands of social justice and equity. The first project was started in 1956 with the potters in Kumbharwada, Mumbai, and the most recent project was initiated in 2017 with tribal villages in the Palghar region of Thane District in Maharashtra to restore much needed child nutrition and community services. These projects serve as practice modules to the faculty and students and signify the service responsibilities of a teaching institution to the most deprived populations in urban and rural communities, and the families with the lowest socio-economic status. What follows is a recounting of the evolution of the demonstrative field action projects of College of Social Work from the 1960s till today.

Initiating and Strengthening Community-based Projects (1960s)

The College began exploring new areas of work and initiating projects in response to the unmet needs of the urban population of Bombay city.

Kumbharwada Community Project

The first of its projects in 1956 was the Kumbharwada Community Project, the largest Asian potters' colony located in north-east Bombay.

The Nirmala Niketan Institute which is the managing body of the College of Social Work began a dispensary that provided much-needed health services for this community. A graduate of the College worked in the community for over twenty years using a participatory approach with groups of women, youth and the community leaders.

She built a network of good relations which motivated residents to be involved in improving the living conditions and work for the development of their community. This project continued to grow with an independent potters' cooperative with updated modern and technical know-how which strengthened their economic base and increased self-reliance. Until the 1980s, the College provided professional expertise and consultation until Kumbharwada became an independent and sustainable community with its own community centre and cadre of workers.

Family Service Centre

While the Kumbharwada project was community-based, the College began a project with a "casework approach", the Family Service Centre, to provide professional services to families in need which was initiated by the Archdiocese of Bombay in 1959 and became known as the Catholic Women's Welfare Centre. Its overarching goal was to preserve and strengthen the family and it was a pioneering agency in non-institutional services for children through adoption, foster care and sponsorship. Up to today, the Family Service Centre continues its vision of keeping families together and has expanded its mission to include the empowerment of women in slums as well as fisherfolk communities in Mumbai. It also networks with government programmes for children and families and other NGOs in the neighborhood.

Sonapur-Chandanwadi Community Project

To replicate its model of intervention in homogenous communities, CSWNN initiated a community-based action research project in Sonapur Chandanwadi, a heterogeneous urban community in Mumbai. This was an opportunity to study social change that was the result of intervention by a community organiser. This study was funded by the Welfare Administration, Department of Health and Education and Welfare, U.S.A. under the PL 480 (Aranha, 1976).

Chuim Community Centre – Khar Danda

The urban slum communities in Khar-Danda, a suburb in Mumbai, grew rapidly with the migrant population coming from different states of the country mainly for economic reasons. These migrant families faced conditions of inequality, exploitation, social injustices, and oppression on lines of caste, class, gender, patriarchy, region and religion. Women found it easier to attain employment as domestic workers in the nearby high rise apartments, while men, who were generally unskilled, were hired as day laborers. The Chuim Community Centre provided much needed basic services of child care, education, health, and livelihood opportunities. Besides providing these services, the aim of this community project served as a field placement opportunity for social work students to experience a community-based approach with the diverse population living in four nearby slum communities. Together with the team of professionals of the Centre, students were enabled to integrate concepts of community organisation such as participation, power structure, leadership and community intervention with the local population. Students accompanied local representatives of men, women and youth to city municipal offices, to the housing Minister, and to government and non-governmental organisations for issues related to water, electricity, drainage, sanitation and housing. With this, students learnt to translate classroom theory and skills of observation, planning, negotiation, mobilisation and advocacy. This project demonstrated the effectiveness of obtaining resources due to these marginalized groups by working together for the improvement of living conditions with human dignity and justice.

Forging New Directions in Community Practice: Unique Projects (1970s)

Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA)

Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) began in 1978, focused on equipping youth with skills in developing their own slum communities. It became an independent project in 1983 working extensively on the housing problem in Mumbai. This project was effective in influencing state policy on housing. The organisation actively advocated the causes of displaced slum dwellers and worked for their rehabilitation. Today YUVA has received international recognition for its work on child labour and advocacy for implementing social policies. YUVA introduced a people's planning model in creating a city based movement against oppression of the poor (www.yuvaindia.org).

Murbad Rural Project

The College successfully initiated and sustained projects in urban settings and wanted to move to rural areas by starting the Murbad Rural Project in 1978. This project was based in a few villages of Murbad, in Thane district, training professionals to deal with rural issues by developing their skills and attitudes required for working in these areas. With a growing interest of students in rural placements, in 1980-81, three students were involved in the initiation of this rural development project. This involved meeting various government officials, creating a rapport with key gatekeepers in the community, and developing a feasible work plan. Adult education classes were also initiated with significant contributions and inputs from the tribal community.

Bombay Slum Citizens Development Project (BSCDP)

The Bombay Slum Citizens Development Project was started in 1979 with the wife of the then Governor of Maharashtra, to focus on the improvement of urban slums in Bombay. Faculty and students of the College worked in these slums in organising youth, women and children for community action – an approach that was different from earlier projects in slums. The rationale in undertaking work in a number of slums located in one area was to experiment with a new approach of community organising i.e. to work on common issues affecting all slums in the zone and collectively mobilising community members from the zone to address their issues. It was felt that working in one slum at a time was not enough to put pressure for systemic change. It was envisaged that organising all slums within a zone might create sufficient pressure on authorities to address the issues of the residents.

Banganga Community Project

This was a completely student initiated and run project in 1979- 80 for the staff and families of Raj Bhavan (Governor's House). Based on the results of a need assessment survey, the main programmes that were initiated were a Balwadi (pre-school programme) for children, sewing class for the women and study classes for older children. The project created visibility for the College in the office of a person occupying a constitutional position. Subsequently, a youth group was also formed to help the students with the running of the programmes.

Parel Community Health Project

This project was initiated in 1979 in urban slum communities in the Parel-Sewri area in Bombay in response to the need to establish a model for training social workers for an outreach health care service that was more appropriate and relevant to slum dwellers. The objectives were to create health consciousness in the people and improve their health status through self-help action groups.

VanaNiketan – Rural Development Project

This project was initiated in 1980 to provide field experience to para-professional, undergraduate and graduate students. Following an informal survey, the main areas of intervention included education, health, need-based socio-economic programmes, and issues of social justice. Significantly, tribal youth were involved in the educational ventures through use of traditional dance and music. Further, the project also focused on the reasons for underutilization of available government programmes. The focus of the efforts around social justice included resistance against exploitation of the tribals by non-tribals and the government machinery.

Cooperage Band-Stand Project

This project began in 1980 and included non-formal education for children and youth, as well as sports, recreational camps and medical check-ups. Thereafter, the project expanded its work to include youth empowerment and activities for the general community.

Bhimnagar Health Project

In 1980-81, a faculty member and a second year student began to work in Bhimnagar and identified issues such as lack of water taps, sanitation facilities, electricity, adequate recreational facilities and the need for creating awareness about health. The community was mobilised through women's and youth group meetings and collaboration with existing health care facilities. The College was also instrumental in training youth volunteers as para-professionals.

The Virar & Bandra Urban-Rural Health Project

In June 1980, this multi-setting project was initiated to provide social work

students with a range of practice experience focusing on comprehensive health response to health challenges and to develop the ability to optimally utilize resources in both rural and urban communities. Accordingly, using group work techniques, six centres were adopted and health issues such as tuberculosis, leprosy, prenatal and perinatal issues in addition to mental health issues among youth were addressed.

Youth Project

Additionally, a youth project was also started later in 1980 which involved a one year training programme for youth, short-term leadership programmes, and inter-slum youth gatherings. Early engagement and experience with youth communities revealed the need to facilitate interaction and exchanges between youth across slum communities and also cater to youth in areas where there were no social work agencies. The goal of the training programmes was to create a cadre of indigenous community workers. What began as a 35-hour training programme initially, morphed into a full-fledged 9-month certificate training programme for youth in two years.

Continuation of Rights-Based Projects (1980s onward)

In the community-based projects of the 1980s, which continued into the 1990s till date, the College began work on newer dimensions of justice such as human rights, globalization, women in prostitution, trafficking, environment, migrant workers, and community solidarity that highlighted the urgent situations of Indigenous peoples, refugees, and displaced persons seeking employment in the large metropolis city of Mumbai.

Awakening the Urban Poor: A Women's Development Project

This project began in 1981 with the goal of raising consciousness among women from lower income groups in six slum communities in Mumbai, developing women leaders and gradually training them to take up issues of social justice, and networking with other women's groups across the city. The College collaborated with three other institutions in the city in this endeavour.

Vatsalya

Project *Vatsalya* began in 1983 in collaboration with Jain Mahila Samaj

and St. Michael's Church in Mahim with the aim to educate, rehabilitate and repatriate street children. *Vatsalya* was a response to the growing number of street children that were seen in and around the railway stations of Bombay. The specific activities undertaken included individual and group counseling, liaising with other governmental and NGOs and creating awareness among the larger community about the plight and needs of street children.

Educational Cell

Through the Education Cell, which began in 1984, the College attempted to work on increasing the attendance and improving the academic performance of municipal school children. This cell was initiated as part of the Mumbai Literacy Campaign. Pavement schools, non-formal education classes and provision of services in schools and communities were initiated through field work placements of social work students.

Prerna

In July 1985, *Prerna* began work in Kamatipura, the red-light district of Mumbai. The overarching goal of the project was to safeguard the lives and rights of the children of sex workers. It began with providing night-care services to the children of women and became an autonomous agency in 1985. It is now working with commercially-sexually exploited women and their children to prevent second-generation trafficking and exploitation and has innovative programmes for the children of women who are sexually exploited.

Nirman

Nirman, the Construction Workers' project, was an offshoot of a student placement in mobile crèches, wherein it was found that there was need for more direct intervention in construction workers' problems than merely focusing on the needs of their children (College of Social Work, 1994). *Nirman* was initiated in 1985 with the aim of working with unorganised construction workers, to advocate for their rights as workers and create access to services that they were otherwise unaware of or denied. The issues tackled at the nakas (street corners) included police harassment and inter-group disputes through collaborative talks, public meetings, raising awareness of existing laws and formation of a core group to strategize the formation of a Sanghatan (association). Over time, health emerged as a

key issue and health education camps, immunization drives, and first aid courses were conducted in addition to linking workers to health care facilities of the state.

Danda Slum Project

The *Danda Slum Project* was initiated in 1985 with a focus on community organisation to create awareness among slum dwellers about their housing rights and prevention of exploitation by builders. By 1996, given the abundance of NGOs working on the issue of housing rights, the College handed over the project to another organisation, SPARC, for further intervention.

Vasundhara (Forum for Environmental Concerns)

This project was a result of the leak of a chemical gas in Bhopal in 1984 that led to several deaths resulting from the lapses in safety implementation by a multinational corporation. Widespread concern about unregulated industrial units in rapidly industrializing Bombay was a prime motivation for the College to initiate an engagement on environmental issues. The objectives of *Vasundhara* were to create awareness around pollution issues among students, teachers, and workers' organisations; develop materials and create awareness using media; and form citizens' action groups and network with other partners for collective action on environmental issues.

Sakhya

Project *Sakhya* was initiated by the Divisional Office of Social Welfare under the Collector of Bombay in 1986 to work against the practice of dowry in the city. In addition to responding to individual cases of dowry harassment, the cell was also called upon to respond to a wider set of problems affecting women in the city such as marital problems, sexual abuse, unregulated work hours, shelter needs, and legal aid. Specific activities included counselling, legal aid and socioeconomic rehabilitation. Gradually, *Sakhya* joined the larger women's movement on various contextual issues.

Setu

Setu, established in 1992, sought to empower vulnerable and unorganised domestic workers and to build a bridge between individual domestic