



SMART India Foundation



May 2026

EDITORIAL

Elevating Impact — The Imperative of Professionalism in Social Work

For generations, social work in India has been largely perceived through the benevolent lens of charity and voluntary service. While deep empathy and moral commitment remain the beating heart of human welfare, goodwill alone is no longer sufficient to solve the systemic and multi-faceted crises facing contemporary society. Today's complex socioeconomic challenges—spanning mental health disparities, environmental vulnerability, and generational poverty—demand more than well-meaning interventions. They require a social work fraternity equipped with specialized skills, standardized methodologies, and an uncompromising commitment to professional discipline. Professionalism does not dilute compassion; rather, it provides the structural scaffold that turns noble intentions into measurable, long-term impact.

At its core, professionalizing social work means treating practice as a rigorous discipline rooted in action, research, and training. It demands that practitioners go beyond ad-hoc relief to adopt evidence-based frameworks, systematic casework, ethical accountability, and empirical field evaluation. True professionalism requires continuous capacity building, where frontline social workers actively upgrade their competencies in crisis intervention, community mobilization, and policy advocacy. By embracing standardized codes of ethics, robust clinical and field supervision, and continuous peer review, the social work community can safeguard vulnerable populations from harm while asserting its rightful position as an indispensable partner in national development.

As we look toward the future, institutionalizing this spirit of professional excellence across academic bodies, field organizations, and policy spheres is our collective responsibility. The **SMART India Foundation** continues to champion this evolution by nurturing young practitioners, fostering research-driven interventions, and bridging academia with grassroots practice. When social workers stand not just as sympathizers, but as skilled catalysts of systemic change, society begins to recognize social work as the vital profession it truly is. Let this May issue of Smart Voice serve as a renewed pledge for our fraternity to raise the bar—transforming passion into purpose, and purpose into sustainable, transformative action.

- Team Smart India Foundation

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ARTICLES

FROM GOOD INTENTIONS TO REAL IMPACT: WHY SOCIAL WORK NEEDS BOTH HEART AND SCIENCE?

Most people think a PhD in social work means reading thousands of dusty papers, tracking statistics, and studying problems from afar. They don't picture someone helping out at a shelter, counselling a family in crisis, or organizing a neighbourhood cleanup. But that deep, human connection is the absolute heartbeat of our profession.

In academia, bridging the gap between frontline passion and real-world solutions is called intervention research. To a non-researcher, it sounds like cold, clinical jargon. In reality, it is one of the most deeply human things we can do. It is the bridge that turns our best intentions into actual, lasting change.

An intervention is simply any action a social worker takes to make someone's life better like a new therapy technique for a traumatized child, a business program for women, or a support group for lonely elders. Intervention research is just a fancy way of asking: *"Is this actually helping, or are we just hoping it helps?"*

It means we don't just hand out aid and walk away. We stay, we measure, we listen, and we figure out exactly why a program worked for one family but failed another.



PARVATHY RAVIKUMAR
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RAJAGIRI COLLEGE OF SOCIAL
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Why Frontline Research Matters?

- **Stopping the Guesswork:** In social work, relying on "the way we've always done it" isn't good enough. If a doctor gave you medicine just because it "felt right," you'd be terrified. Families in crisis deserve that same certainty. Research stops us from guessing and ensures we bring proven care to people who are hurting.
- **Protecting Our Funding:** To build a shelter or start a youth center, you need resources. Governments and donors don't just want to hear sad stories anymore; they want proof that their money fixes the problem. Showing them that a program reduced school dropout rates by 40% opens their wallets.
- **Honouring Local Culture:** We cannot just take a social program designed in a different country and drop it into our local communities. Every neighbourhood has its own rhythm, culture, and struggles. Research is how we listen to local voices and design help that actually fits.

How to enter into Research world: A Beginner's Guide

When you spend your days working directly with people, you see the real cracks in the system and know things a textbook could never teach. We need your frontline voice because you understand the human faces behind the problems. If you have just finished your Master's program, you can build your research confidence one small, practical step at a time:

1. Find your 'spark' question

Look back at your fieldwork. Think of the one human problem that kept you up at night and ask: "What kind of program or support would actually fix this?"

2. Clear your entry pathways

Focus on clearing national exams like the UGC-NET or university entrance tests. This opens doors to doctoral fellowships and funding, giving you the financial peace of mind to focus purely on your studies.

3. Learn by doing (Shadowing)

Join a university or NGO project as a Research Assistant. It is the best way to learn how to interview people, map community needs, and handle data without the pressure of running the whole project yourself.

4. Read the human stories in data

Start reading simple research papers in areas you care about. Don't focus just on the math and look at how other researchers listened to communities and what solutions they tested.

"Research is just formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose."

— Zora Neale Hurston

We don't do research just to print papers that sit on library shelves. We do it because every statistic represents a human face like a mother trying to feed her kids, a teenager looking for hope, or an elder looking for dignity.

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WHAT DOES A PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORKER ACTUALLY DO?

“Oh, you’re a social worker? Which hospital do you work in? Are you a counsellor?”

This is probably the most common question I hear whenever I introduce myself as a social worker.

When I explain that I work in community development rather than medical or psychiatric social work, people often look surprised. Some quickly ask another question: “Is social work really a profession?” Others wonder whether it offers a stable and rewarding career.

These conversations reveal an important reality. For many people, social work is synonymous with counselling, hospitals, orphanages, or charitable organisations. While these are valuable areas of practice, they represent only a part of a much larger profession.

Helping others has existed for as long as human society itself. Professional social work, however, has evolved over more than a century into a recognised profession with its own body of knowledge, ethical standards, specialised education, and evidence-based practice.

According to the globally accepted definition developed by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work, social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change, social development, social cohesion, and the empowerment of people and communities. Simply put, social workers help people, communities, and institutions work together to address social challenges and improve quality of life.

Like engineers apply technical knowledge to build infrastructure and doctors use medical science to improve health, social workers apply knowledge from the social sciences to understand people, strengthen communities, and improve the systems that shape everyday life.

In a country like India, governments invest enormous resources in programmes related to health, sanitation, education, nutrition, livelihoods, social protection, and rural development. Infrastructure, funding, and sound policies are essential, but they alone cannot guarantee success. Public programmes achieve their intended outcomes when people understand them, trust them, participate in them, and make them part of their daily lives. That human dimension is where professional social workers make a significant contribution.



AKHILESH RAMESH
PROJECT MANAGER
WASH INSTITUTE

Many people assume that social workers spend most of their time counselling individuals. In reality, the profession is remarkably diverse.

In my current role, no two days are the same. Some mornings begin in discussions with senior government officials on programme implementation or policy. Other days are spent in villages understanding community needs, conducting baseline and impact assessments, training frontline workers, facilitating consultations, or working alongside engineers and public health professionals to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services.

On paper, my designation is Project Manager. In practice, I move between different roles—a researcher while analysing field data, a trainer while building the capacities of frontline workers, a facilitator during community consultations, a programme manager reviewing implementation, and occasionally a policy advisor during discussions with government departments. This diversity is one of the defining strengths of professional social work.

One experience that captures this well was the development of Malambootham, Kerala's first state-level faecal sludge and septage management campaign, launched by the Local Self Government Department in 2022.

Faecal sludge management is not a topic that naturally attracts public attention. Most people rarely think about what happens after they flush a toilet, yet unsafe management of human waste contaminates water sources and the environment, creating serious public health risks.

The challenge was not the absence of technology. The challenge was making a technical subject meaningful to ordinary citizens.

Instead of relying on technical terminology, the campaign transformed a complex sanitation issue into a simple, relatable public movement rooted in Kerala's local context. It gave people a language they could connect with and enabled local governments to initiate conversations about sanitation that had previously remained confined to technical discussions.

Looking back, I realised that the campaign was never just about communication. It was about understanding behaviour, simplifying complexity, encouraging public ownership, and helping institutions communicate effectively with citizens. That, to me, is professional social work in action.

Another experience changed the way I think about development altogether.

During a community sensitisation meeting in a Gram Panchayat in Kasaragod, we were discussing the establishment of a Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP). As we explained how the facility would protect public health and the environment, an elderly resident quietly raised his hand.

“The government is struggling to maintain a public toilet. How can we be sure this treatment plant will be maintained properly?”

The room fell silent.

His question was not about engineering.

It was not about technology.

It was about trust.

That single question changed my perspective. Communities do not judge development projects only by the quality of the infrastructure. They also judge whether the institutions responsible for managing that infrastructure are capable, accountable, and trustworthy.

Building infrastructure is an engineering challenge.

Building public confidence is a social process.

Development requires both.

People sometimes ask me what makes social workers different from other professionals. I believe the better question is: What role does each profession play in creating lasting social change?

Sometimes that means understanding why communities hesitate to adopt a programme. Sometimes it means designing behaviour change campaigns, strengthening the capacities of frontline workers, facilitating dialogue between stakeholders, or helping policymakers appreciate local realities before decisions are made. In many ways, professional social work stands at the intersection of people and systems.

For students considering this profession, my advice is simple. Do not rush into choosing a specialisation. Spend your first three to five years exploring different sectors. Work with communities. Experience public health, education, local governance, disaster management, research, livelihoods, and development programmes. Every experience will teach you something new about society and help you discover where your strengths and interests truly lie.

If you want a career that allows you to work with people throughout your life, solve real-world problems, and contribute to building stronger communities and more responsive public systems, professional social work offers a meaningful path.

So, the next time someone asks me, “Which hospital do you work in?” I will probably smile.

Because the workplace of a professional social worker is not defined by a hospital, an office, or a designation.

It is found wherever people, institutions, and communities come together to solve problems and create lasting social change.

About the Author

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and are based on his professional experience and personal reflections. They do not necessarily reflect the views or official positions of the WASH Institute, its partners, clients, or any government department or organisation with which the author is associated.

LEARNING THROUGH THE SURAKSHA PROJECT

For students pursuing Social Work (BSW/MSW), the Suraksha Project (Targeted Intervention Project) is much more than just a social initiative; it serves as one of the finest practical fieldwork settings to witness the direct application of social work theories, values, and methods. Here is why this project holds immense significance for social work students:

1. Direct Engagement with Marginalized Communities

Concepts like Social Exclusion, Stigma, and Discrimination are frequently discussed in classrooms. However, students understand their true depth only when they step into the field. By interacting closely with female sex workers (FSWs) and transgender individuals, students learn to:

Understand the grassroots realities, challenges, and vulnerabilities of these communities.

Develop a non-judgmental attitude, which is a core principle of professional social work.

2. Practical Exposure to Community Organization & Advocacy

The project provides a live platform to learn how to organize communities and design effective awareness campaigns. Students gain insights into:

The Peer-Led Approach: Observing how 'Peer Educators' from within the community are empowered to drive behavioral change.

IEC Development: Designing and utilizing Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, posters, and street plays tailored to specific target audiences.

3. Understanding Counseling and Social Case Work

Individuals living with HIV or those in high-risk categories often face immense psychological distress. Through this project, students can:

Observe professional counseling techniques, such as pre-test and post-test counseling used in ICTCs (Integrated Counseling and Testing Centres).

Practice Social Case Work by understanding how to assess an individual's unique problem, create an intervention plan, and assist in rehabilitation.

4. Learning Project Management and Leadership

The Suraksha Project offers an excellent case study on how public health projects and NGOs operate. Students get firsthand exposure to:

How a Project Manager coordinates a team, manages documentation, monitors indicators, and ensures accountability.

The administrative linkage between government bodies (like KSACS) and grassroots-level non-governmental organizations (NGOs).



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KANNUR

5. Rights, Advocacy, and Social Legislation

Instead of just reading about welfare policies in textbooks, students see how policies like the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act or national HIV/AIDS control policies are implemented on the ground to secure social justice for the marginalized.

In Summary:

The Suraksha Project bridges the gap between social work theory and practice. Fieldwork in such a setup equips students with essential professional skills, including active communication, deep empathy, and crisis management, shaping them into competent social work professionals.

UNDERSTANDING GEN Z: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN BUILDING RESILIENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY

"Every generation has its own language. To understand Gen Z, we must first understand the world they are growing up in."

A few decades ago, relationships were often defined by simple terms such as friendship, love, engagement, or marriage. Today, Gen Z has introduced an entirely new vocabulary—situationships, ghosting, benching, breadcrumbing, orbiting, nano-ships, and many more. To many adults, these words sound strange or unnecessary. However, behind every new term lies a real human emotion, a real experience, and often, a real psychosocial struggle.

Today's young people are growing up in a world where relationships begin with a follow request, develop through text messages, and sometimes end with a single click. Social media has made people more connected than ever before, yet many young people feel emotionally disconnected. They may have hundreds or even thousands of online connections, but very few people with whom they can openly share their fears, disappointments, and emotions.

Love and relationships have become increasingly complex. Many young people hesitate to define relationships because they fear rejection, emotional vulnerability, or commitment. Others experience repeated breakups, emotional confusion, loneliness, anxiety, and low self-esteem. While relationship challenges have always existed, the speed of digital communication and the constant comparison created by social media have intensified these emotional experiences.

Unfortunately, society often misunderstands Gen Z. Adults may describe them as "too sensitive" or "emotionally weak." Such judgments only widen the gap between generations. Instead of asking why they are struggling, we often criticize how they express their struggles.

This is where social workers have a significant role to play.

Social work is built on the values of empathy, dignity, social justice, and empowerment. Rather than asking, "What is wrong with this young person?" social workers ask, "What has this young person experienced?" They recognize that emotional pain, relationship difficulties, and mental health concerns are not signs of weakness but opportunities for support, guidance, and growth.

The first responsibility of a social worker is to create a safe and non-judgmental space where young people feel heard. Sometimes, a young person does not need immediate advice or solutions; they simply need someone who listens with empathy. A meaningful conversation can become the beginning of healing.



GARSHO RAHUL
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Social workers also play an important role in helping Gen Z develop healthy relationship skills. Many young people have never been taught how to communicate their emotions effectively, set healthy boundaries, resolve conflicts respectfully, or cope with rejection. Through counselling, life skills education, group work, peer support programmes, and awareness campaigns, social workers can equip young people with these essential life skills.

Another crucial responsibility is strengthening self-efficacy—the belief in one's own ability to overcome challenges and make positive life decisions. A breakup should not become the end of someone's confidence, and rejection should never define a person's worth. Social workers encourage young people to recognise their strengths, rebuild confidence after emotional setbacks, and believe that every difficult experience can become an opportunity for personal growth.

Equally important is the role of social workers in promoting resilience. Resilience is not about avoiding difficulties but about developing the ability to recover, adapt, and move forward despite setbacks. By teaching emotional regulation, problem-solving skills, stress management, and positive coping strategies, social workers help young people become emotionally stronger and more confident in facing life's uncertainties.

Families also have an important role in supporting Gen Z. However, many conflicts arise because parents and children often speak different emotional languages. Social workers can bridge this communication gap by helping parents understand the pressures of growing up in a digital world while encouraging young people to appreciate the concerns and perspectives of their families. Healthy communication creates healthier families.

Educational institutions must also become emotionally supportive environments rather than places that focus only on academic achievement. Schools and colleges should integrate mental health awareness, relationship education, life skills training, peer support groups, and accessible counselling services into campus life. Social workers are uniquely positioned to design and lead these initiatives, creating spaces where students feel respected, understood, and empowered.

In today's digital era, the role of social workers extends beyond traditional community settings. They must also understand the online environments where young people build relationships, experience rejection, seek validation, and form their identities. By embracing digital realities and engaging with young people in meaningful ways, social workers can provide more relevant and effective support.

Understanding Gen Z does not mean agreeing with every trend or relationship style. It means recognising that every generation faces unique challenges shaped by its social environment. Today's youth are navigating a world that changes faster than any previous generation has experienced. They need guidance rather than criticism, empathy rather than judgment, and support rather than stigma.

As social workers, our responsibility is not to judge the language of this generation but to understand the emotions behind it. When we replace assumptions with empathy, criticism with conversation, and labels with support, we help young people discover their strengths and rebuild their confidence.

The future of society depends not only on educating the minds of young people but also on strengthening their emotional resilience and self-belief. Every young person deserves to know that a failed relationship does not mean a failed life, and that their value is never determined by someone else's acceptance or rejection.

Understanding Gen Z is not simply about learning new relationship terms or adapting to changing social trends. It is about recognising the hopes, fears, and emotional realities of a generation growing up in an increasingly complex world. By fostering resilience, strengthening self-efficacy, and creating supportive environments, social workers can empower Gen Z to navigate life's challenges with confidence, purpose, and hope.

IMPORTANCE OF PRE- AND POST-MARITAL COUNSELING

Marriage is one of the most important relationships in human life. It is a partnership built on love, trust, understanding, and mutual respect. However, in today's fast-changing world, marital conflicts have become increasingly common. Couples often face challenges due to differences in expectations, financial pressures, work-related stress, communication problems, family interference, and changing social values. These conflicts can affect not only the husband and wife but also their children, families, and society as a whole. Therefore, pre-marital and post-marital counseling have become essential tools for building healthy and successful marriages.

Nowadays, many couples enter marriage with high expectations but limited understanding of the responsibilities involved.

Modern lifestyles are often busy and stressful, leaving little time for meaningful communication. Financial difficulties, career demands, social media influences, and lack of emotional support can create misunderstandings between partners. Small disagreements, when not addressed properly, can grow into serious conflicts. Issues such as lack of trust, poor communication, unequal sharing of responsibilities, and differences in values or goals can lead to emotional distance and marital dissatisfaction.

Pre-marital counseling is a professional guidance process that helps couples prepare for married life before they get married. It provides an opportunity for couples to discuss important topics such as communication, finances, family planning, personal values, expectations, conflict resolution, and future goals. Through counseling, couples gain a better understanding of each other's personalities, strengths, and weaknesses. They learn how to handle disagreements respectfully and how to build a strong foundation for their relationship.

One of the major benefits of pre-marital counseling is that it helps couples develop effective communication skills. Good communication is the key to a successful marriage. Counseling teaches partners how to express their feelings honestly, listen actively, and understand each other's perspectives. It also helps them identify potential areas of conflict before marriage and find healthy ways to address them. As a result, couples enter marriage with greater confidence, maturity, and realistic expectations.

Post-marital counseling, on the other hand, is designed for couples who are already married and facing challenges in their relationship. It helps partners address ongoing conflicts, improve communication, rebuild trust, and strengthen emotional connections. Many couples hesitate to seek counseling because they believe it is only for relationships in crisis. However, counseling can benefit any marriage by providing support and practical strategies for maintaining a healthy relationship.



PRAVEEN JOSEPH
MSW 2nd year
IGNOU

One important advantage of post-marital counseling is conflict resolution. Counselors help couples understand the root causes of their disagreements and guide them toward constructive solutions. Instead of blaming each other, partners learn to work together as a team. Counseling also helps couples manage stress, anger, and emotional pain in a healthy manner. In cases where trust has been damaged, such as through dishonesty or neglect, counseling can assist in rebuilding the relationship and restoring mutual respect.

Furthermore, counseling promotes emotional well-being and strengthens family stability. When couples maintain a healthy relationship, children benefit from a secure and positive family environment. Strong marriages contribute to happier families and healthier communities. Counseling also encourages personal growth by helping individuals become more aware of their emotions, behaviors, and relationship patterns.

In conclusion, marital conflicts are becoming more common due to the pressures and complexities of modern life. While disagreements are a natural part of any relationship, unresolved conflicts can seriously damage a marriage. Pre-marital counseling helps couples prepare for married life by developing communication skills, realistic expectations, and problem-solving abilities. Postmarital counseling helps couples overcome challenges, strengthen their bond, and maintain a healthy relationship. Therefore, both pre- and post-marital counseling play a vital role in promoting successful marriages, emotional well-being, and family harmony. Investing in counseling is not a sign of weakness but a wise step toward building a stronger and happier marital & social life.

“BETTER LATE THAN NEVER”

The quote itself stresses the importance of acting now, not later. Our environment directly impacts all living beings. Due to pollution, climate change, deforestation, we are struggling for pure air. Oxygen available in portable cylinders at huge price showed us the value of clean air. Countries like Bhutan prove that prioritizing environment is possible. For a populated highly polluted country like India where Air quality index rate is higher we must make serious efforts to reduce pollutants.

Social workers have the responsibility to create community awareness for sustainable use of resources and can aim to develop awareness and interest in the environment and the problems associated with it. We may not be able to change the world overnight but we can begin with one small step at a time. This must begin at the root level. Instead of only teaching academic subjects, kids should have a weekly ‘Nature Period’ where marks and awards are based on practical actions like planting and caring trees, keep surroundings clean, practising good habits, waste segregation. This way every child develops interest and responsibility in their own way. The biggest challenge is tokenism.

Environmental Day on June 5 sees mass tree planting, but follow-up care is missing. Trees get eaten by animals and forgotten after photo session. It must become a habit for every individual to give back or do good things for nature. Continuous awareness from childhood can make environmental responsibility a daily practise, not an annual event.

Environmental protection is the practice of protecting the natural environment for the benefit of both the environment and humans.

A social worker’s role is to bring back what is lost - our connection with Mother Nature - and make environment care a habit, not a hashtag.



ANJANA RAGHAVAN
MSW 2ND YEAR
IGNOU

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH THROUGH MSW FIELD WORK

Field work forms the basis of training for social work because it gives an opportunity for students of MSW to merge theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Since social work is a practice-oriented discipline, being exposed to varied fields allows students to appreciate the intricacies of human behavior, social systems and community dynamics along with gaining professional skills and ethical conduct.

During my field work in the final year of MSW, I gained exposure to varied areas of social work such as community development, environmental social work, geriatric social work, public health and child development. During this process, I was able to implement the principles of social work theory and practice in varied fields.



Community surveys and household visits helped learn about the ecological systems perspective in which the relationship between individuals and the environment is stressed. Learning about and evaluating issues such as water shortages, waste disposal, and pollution by industries taught us trainees the importance of the environment in determining individual and community welfare.

Fieldwork experiences with communities that were being affected by environmental degradation brought about a deeper appreciation of issues concerning social justice and empowerment. The effects of environmental degradation on health, livelihood, and psychosocial functioning gave me an idea of the work that a social worker does to ensure community involvement and action.

Through working with senior citizens in digital literacy and cyber-safety campaigns, experience of micro-practice was gained. Helping seniors in surmounting technological challenges, empowerment theory could be applied, whereby individuals gain more control and independence. Likewise, working with medical camps and blood donation drives showed the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and use of the person-in-environment approach in tackling health issues.

Working with children in child-specific campaigns, for example, summer camps, gave chances of applying group work principles and strength-based perspective in my practice. From doing recreational and life skills activities, the importance of creating a good environment is highlighted to enable children to build their confidence and develop in a holistic manner.

The field experience has also helped in developing the professional skills of assessment, communication, documentation, planning, and evaluation. Through tasks such as writing reports and newsletters, accountability in social work was emphasized.

In conclusion, conducting field work in diverse settings can enable the students pursuing the MSW course to experience different forms of intervention at different levels. This helps to narrow the divide that exists between theory and practice and helps develop professional values, hence equipping future social workers to deal with different social challenges effectively.

WORKSHOP

UNLOCK THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNSELLING IN DAILY LIFE

THREE-DAY COUNSELLING WORKSHOP

SMART India Foundation organized a three-day Counselling Workshop titled “**Unlock the Importance of Counselling in Daily Life**” from 11th May 2026 to 13th May 2026 through Google Meet from 8.00 PM to 9.00 PM each day. The programme aimed to create understanding regarding the significance of counselling and its role in supporting individuals, students, and families in addressing various life challenges.

The programme featured distinguished resource persons including **Dr. Semichan Joseph**, Director, Mindbliss Counselling Centre, **Ms. Anila Arjun**, Life Skill Educator and School Counsellor, and **Ms. Seethamol B**, PhD Scholar, Department of Psychiatry, AIMS Kochi. Each session focused on a unique aspect of counselling, providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of its principles, applications, and relevance in daily life.

The first session introduced participants to the foundations of counselling, professional ethics, and the role of counsellors in promoting mental well-being. The second session focused on school counselling and highlighted the importance of supporting students’ academic, emotional, and social development. The final session explored family counselling and discussed effective strategies for strengthening family relationships and resolving conflicts.



Throughout the programme, participants actively engaged in discussions, shared experiences, and interacted with the resource persons. The sessions encouraged critical thinking, self-reflection, and greater awareness regarding mental health and psychosocial support systems. The programme successfully enhanced participants’ understanding of counselling as a valuable tool for personal growth, healthy relationships, and community well-being.

Overall, the three-day programme was informative, engaging, and enriching. It provided participants with practical knowledge and professional insights while emphasizing the transformative role of counselling in improving the quality of life of individuals, families, and communities.

SOCIAL WORKERS' EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKER IN DISABILITY SETTING

The 113th Social Workers' Empowerment Programme on the topic **"Role of Social Worker in Disability Setting"** was conducted on 8th May 2026 from 8.00 PM to 9.00 PM through Google Meet. The session was led by **Ms. Anupama Rajan, Project Coordinator, Welfare Services Ernakulam.** The programme aimed to enhance participants' understanding of the multifaceted role of social workers in supporting persons with disabilities and promoting inclusive development. A total of participants from different academic and professional backgrounds attended the programme.

The session began with an introduction to disability and the importance of adopting a rights-based and person-centred approach in social work practice. The resource person highlighted the various categories of disabilities and discussed the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in education, employment, healthcare, and community participation. Emphasis was placed on the importance of inclusion, accessibility, and equal opportunities for all individuals regardless of their physical, intellectual, or psychosocial conditions.



Ms. Anupama further explained the diverse roles performed by social workers in disability settings, including counselling, advocacy, rehabilitation support, resource mobilisation, case management, and community awareness. The session also explored the significance of multidisciplinary collaboration involving families, educators, healthcare professionals, and government agencies to ensure holistic support for persons with disabilities. Various government schemes, welfare measures, and legal provisions related to disability rights were also discussed.

The programme concluded with an interactive discussion where participants actively engaged with the resource person by raising questions and sharing observations from their field experiences. The session provided valuable insights into disability-inclusive social work practice and strengthened participants' commitment towards promoting dignity, empowerment, and social justice for persons with disabilities.

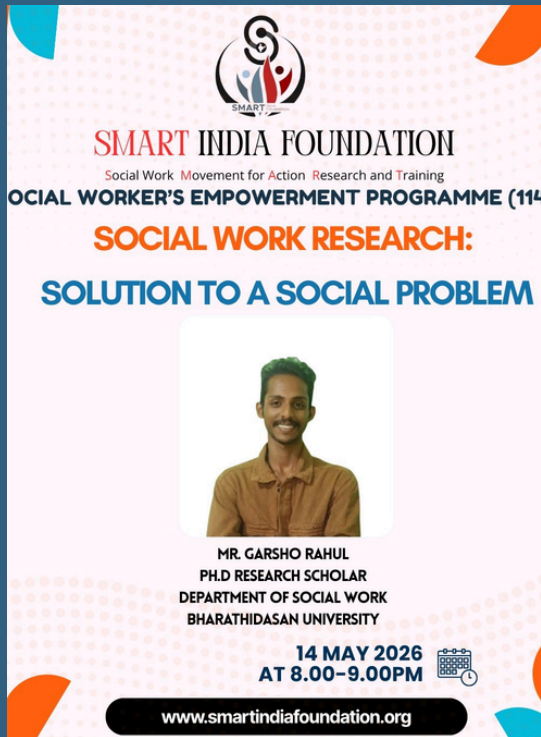
SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH: SOLUTION TO A SOCIAL PROBLEM

The 114th Social Worker's Empowerment Programme on the topic "**Social Work Research: Solution to a Social Problem**" was conducted on 14 May 2026 from 8.00 PM to 9.00 PM through Google Meet. The session was led by **Mr. Garsho Rahul, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Bharathidasan University**. The programme witnessed active participation from social work students, practitioners, and professionals who were eager to enhance their understanding of research in social work practice.

The programme commenced with a warm welcome and introduction of the resource person. During his presentation, Mr. Garsho Rahul emphasized the significance of social work research as an essential tool for understanding and addressing social problems. He explained that research enables social workers to identify the root causes of social issues, assess community needs, and develop evidence-based interventions that contribute to sustainable social change.

The resource person discussed various stages involved in social work research, including problem identification, literature review, research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting. He highlighted the importance of both qualitative and quantitative research methods in understanding complex social realities and generating reliable knowledge for professional practice.

The session further focused on how research findings can be translated into practical solutions for addressing issues such as poverty, child welfare concerns, substance abuse, unemployment, gender discrimination, and community development challenges. Through examples from the field, the speaker demonstrated how research contributes to programme planning, policy formulation, and effective service delivery.



Participants actively engaged in the interactive discussion that followed the presentation. They raised questions regarding research methodologies, ethical issues in data collection, challenges faced by researchers in the field, and the application of research findings in social work interventions. The resource person responded thoughtfully and encouraged participants to adopt a research-oriented approach in their professional practice.

The programme proved to be highly informative and enriching, enabling participants to understand the critical role of research in promoting evidence-based social work practice and social development. The session concluded with a vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to the resource person and all participants for their valuable contributions.

BEYOND FAIRNESS: EQUALITY, EQUITY & INTEGRITY IN SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

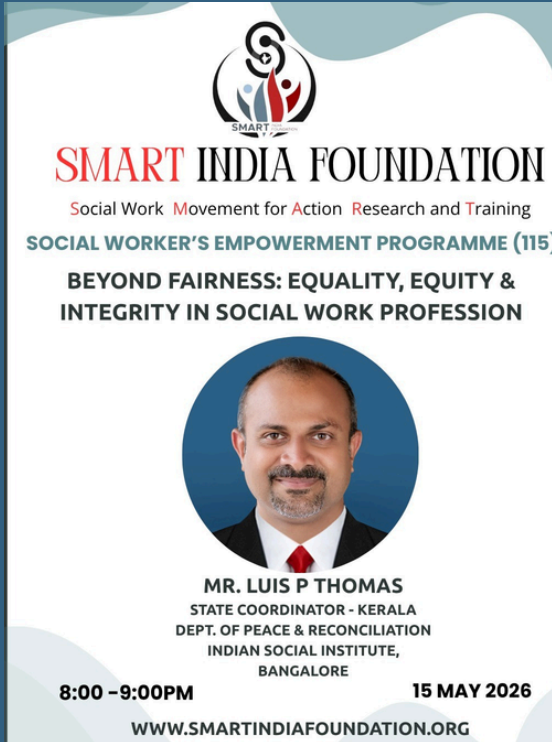
The 115th Social Worker's Empowerment Programme on the topic **"Beyond Fairness: Equality, Equity & Integrity in Social Work Profession"** was conducted on 15 May 2026 from 8.00 PM to 9.00 PM through Google Meet. The session was facilitated by **Mr. Luis P. Thomas, State Coordinator – Kerala, Department of Peace and Reconciliation, Indian Social Institute, Bangalore.** The programme attracted social work students, practitioners, and professionals interested in strengthening their understanding of ethical practice and social justice.

The session began with an introduction to the concepts of equality, equity, and integrity and their relevance in professional social work practice. The resource person explained that while equality focuses on providing the same opportunities and resources to all individuals, equity recognizes the different circumstances and needs of people and seeks to ensure fair outcomes through appropriate support and intervention.

Mr. Luis P. Thomas elaborated on the importance of integrity as a core professional value that guides social workers in maintaining honesty, transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct. He highlighted how integrity strengthens trust between social workers and service users and promotes professional credibility within society.

The discussion further explored the relationship between equality, equity, and social justice. The speaker presented practical examples from community work and welfare programmes to illustrate how equitable approaches help address systemic disadvantages and ensure the inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable populations. He also discussed challenges faced by social workers when balancing ethical principles, professional responsibilities, and organizational expectations.

The session emphasized the need for social workers to uphold human dignity, respect diversity, and advocate for the rights of disadvantaged groups. Participants gained valuable insights into ethical decision-making processes and the importance of maintaining professional integrity while addressing complex social issues.



The poster features the SMART India Foundation logo at the top, which includes a stylized 'S' and 'I' with a person icon. Below the logo, the text reads: **SMART INDIA FOUNDATION**, *Social Work Movement for Action Research and Training*, **SOCIAL WORKER'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (115)**, and **BEYOND FAIRNESS: EQUALITY, EQUITY & INTEGRITY IN SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION**. A circular portrait of Mr. Luis P. Thomas is centered below the text. Underneath the portrait, it says: **MR. LUIS P THOMAS**, **STATE COORDINATOR - KERALA**, **DEPT. OF PEACE & RECONCILIATION**, **INDIAN SOCIAL INSTITUTE, BANGALORE**. At the bottom, the event details are listed: **8:00 - 9:00PM** and **15 MAY 2026**, with the website **WWW.SMARTINDIAFOUNDATION.ORG** at the very bottom.

An interactive discussion followed the presentation, during which participants raised questions related to ethical dilemmas, discrimination, social inclusion, and professional accountability. The resource person shared practical experiences and encouraged participants to critically reflect on their role in promoting fairness and justice in society.

The programme was highly engaging and thought-provoking. Participants appreciated the practical examples and meaningful discussions that enhanced their understanding of ethical social work practice. The session concluded with a vote of thanks and expressions of appreciation to the resource person for his valuable contribution.

ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN A CHILD SETTING

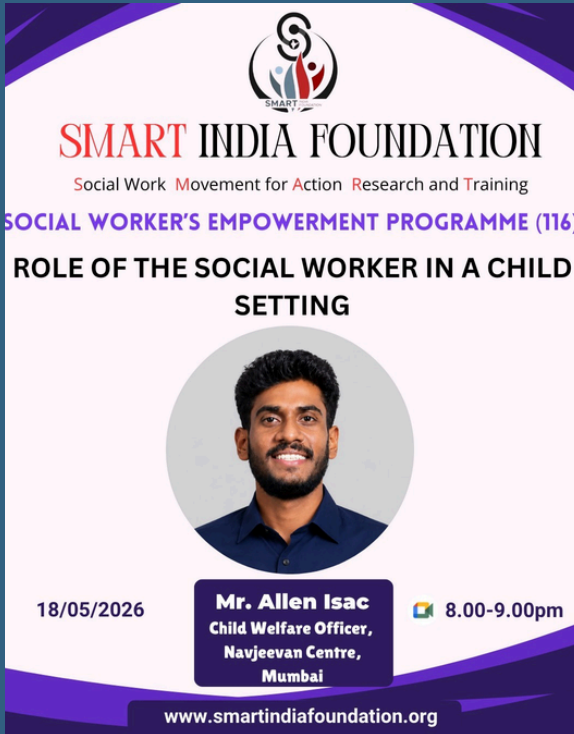
The 116th Social Worker's Empowerment Programme on the topic **"Role of the Social Worker in a Child Setting"** was conducted on 18 May 2026 from 8.00 PM to 9.00 PM through Google Meet. The session was led by **Mr. Allen Isac, Child Welfare Officer, Navjeevan Centre, Mumbai**. The programme brought together social work students, child welfare practitioners, and professionals interested in strengthening their knowledge and skills in child-centered practice.

The session commenced with an introduction to the significance of child welfare and the critical role played by social workers in ensuring the protection, development, and well-being of children. The resource person highlighted that children constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in society and require specialized support and interventions to safeguard their rights and promote healthy development.

Mr. Allen Isac discussed the diverse responsibilities of social workers working in child-related settings, including assessment, counseling, case management, advocacy, rehabilitation, and family support. He explained how social workers collaborate with children, families, schools, healthcare institutions, and legal systems to create a safe and supportive environment for children's growth and development.

The speaker emphasized the importance of understanding child development, child rights, and child protection mechanisms. He provided valuable insights into identifying children at risk, responding to cases of abuse and neglect, and ensuring access to education, healthcare, and psychosocial support services. Practical examples from his professional experience helped participants understand the realities and challenges involved in child welfare practice.

The session also focused on the significance of multidisciplinary collaboration in addressing the complex needs of children. The resource person highlighted the role of social workers in coordinating services, advocating for children's rights, and facilitating family-based and community-based interventions.



Participants actively engaged in the discussion and sought clarification on issues related to child protection laws, institutional care, foster care, rehabilitation services, and professional challenges faced in child welfare settings. The resource person responded comprehensively and encouraged participants to adopt a child-centered and rights-based approach in their practice.

The programme was informative, practical, and inspiring. Participants gained valuable insights into the professional competencies required for effective child welfare practice and developed a deeper understanding of the responsibilities of social workers in child settings. The session concluded with a vote of thanks, acknowledging the resource person and participants for their active involvement and contributions.

TOOL TESTING AND REFINEMENT AT KANJOOR GRAMA PANCHAYAT

As part of the preparatory activities for the Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage, a field testing of the survey tool was conducted in Kanjoor Grama Panchayat with the support and guidance of Shri Sebastian Paul, President of Kanjoor Grama Panchayat, and Ms. Deepa Bijan, Volunteer Coordinator.

The pilot testing was carried out in Ward 8 of the Panchayat, covering 10 households. The primary objective of the exercise was to assess the clarity, relevance, and practicality of the survey questionnaire under actual field conditions before its large-scale implementation. The testing provided an opportunity to evaluate how respondents understood the questions, the time required for completing the survey, and the suitability of the response options provided.

During the field visits, surveyors interacted directly with household members and administered the questionnaire. The process helped identify several practical challenges, including questions that were difficult for respondents to understand, ambiguous wording, overlapping response categories, and areas where additional response options were required. Certain technical terms were found to be unfamiliar to respondents, indicating the need for simpler language and clearer explanations. In some sections, respondents provided answers that were not adequately captured by the existing options, highlighting the necessity of expanding the response categories.

Based on the observations and feedback collected during the pilot exercise, the survey tool was carefully reviewed and revised. Several questions were reworded to improve clarity and ensure better comprehension among respondents. Additional response options were incorporated where necessary, and some questions were reorganized to improve the logical flow of the interview. These modifications were made to enhance the accuracy of data collection and minimize the possibility of misinterpretation during the actual survey.

The tool testing exercise proved to be an important quality assurance step in the survey development process. It ensured that the questionnaire was contextually relevant, user-friendly, and capable of capturing reliable information on household drinking water safety, hygiene practices, and water security issues. The insights gained from the pilot testing contributed significantly to strengthening the final survey instrument and improving the overall effectiveness of the data collection process. The support provided by the Panchayat leadership and local volunteers played a vital role in the successful completion of this activity.

TESTIMONIES



JOEL LAL
BSW
RCSS, KALAMASSERY

My field work experience at SMART India Foundation was highly enriching and rewarding. The organization provided a supportive and professional learning environment that enabled me to gain practical exposure to various aspects of social work practice. The opportunities provided in areas such as mental health awareness, community outreach, programme planning, documentation, fundraising, and media-based interventions significantly contributed to my professional development.

The guidance and encouragement received from the supervisor and organizational members helped me improve my skills, confidence, and understanding of social work values and ethics. The organization encouraged creativity, independent learning, and active participation in all activities, which enhanced my ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings.

SMART India Foundation serves as an excellent platform for social work students to develop professional competencies and gain meaningful field experience. The organization's commitment to community development, mental health promotion, and social welfare is highly commendable. I am grateful for the learning opportunities and exposure provided during my placement and sincerely appreciate the support extended throughout my field work period.



ELIZABETH AGNES AJITH
MSW
IGNOU DEPAUL CAMPUS

My internship at Smart India Foundation was a good learning experience. It helped me understand how social work is done in real-life situations and how organizations work for the welfare of people and communities.

During the internship, I got the chance to learn new things and improve my communication and teamwork skills. The staff members were friendly, supportive, and always ready to guide us whenever we had doubts.

The activities and tasks given to us helped me gain practical knowledge that cannot be learned only from textbooks. I also learned the importance of helping people with respect, patience, and understanding.

The internship environment was comfortable and encouraging. It gave me more confidence and helped me understand the role and responsibilities of a social worker.

Overall, I enjoyed my internship at Smart India Foundation. It was a valuable experience that improved my knowledge and skills. I am thankful for the opportunity and the support provided by the organization.



SREEKANTH C S
MSW
IGNOU DEPAUL CAMPUS

The 30-day training at Mindbliss was really good for us. We learned a lot of things at the 30-day training at Mindbliss that we can use when we are working in the field and in our personal life.

The classes held by Semichan Sir were great; he helped us understand how to organise a community and how to work with people in the 30-day training at Mindbliss. We learnt a lot from his experience and had a practical approach in his teachings. Dalin Sir taught us about working with clients and counselling at the 30-day training. The way he explained things made us feel like we could handle our clients. Mariya Ma'am's sessions on working in groups and communicating with people were very helpful. Xavier Sir's classes on writing reports taught us how to write notes and reports at the training program

These classes in the 30-day training at Mindbliss helped us a lot. We became more disciplined. Learned to work together. The training at Mindbliss gave us what we need to do work. We got knowledge and skills.



SHILPA MOL K.M
INTERN, BSOLS,
CHOONDY

My field work experience at SMART India Foundation was highly informative and beneficial for my professional growth. The organization provided a supportive environment that enabled me to understand various aspects of social work practice and community engagement. Through active participation in different programs and activities, I had opportunities to interact with people from diverse backgrounds, observe community-based interventions, and enhance my communication and interpersonal skills. The experience helped me bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in the field of social work.

The supervisor was friendly, approachable, and supportive throughout the fieldwork period. Their guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback helped me perform my responsibilities confidently and develop a better understanding of professional social work practices. The staff members were also cooperative and welcoming, creating a positive learning atmosphere. Overall, my fieldwork at SMART India Foundation was a meaningful and enriching experience that contributed significantly to both my personal development and professional competence as a social work student.



SREELAKSHMI SUNEED
UNITARY LLB BSOLS
CHOONDY

During the internship programme, I actively participated in various activities that helped improve my professional and personal skills. Through model learning sessions, I gained practical knowledge and developed better understanding and analytical abilities. Participation in poster making activities enhanced my creativity, imagination, and presentation skills. The industrial visit to Chempannoor Industrial Area helped me improve my communication skills, observation skills, and ability to interact confidently with different professionals and workers. During the visit, I also gained awareness about environmental issues and legal concerns related to industrial pollution, including violations of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, Environment Protection Act, and the violation of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, which ensures the right to life and a healthy environment.

Through the digital literacy programme, I developed communication and technical skills by engaging with participants and explaining digital concepts effectively. The programme also helped me understand the importance of cyber safety and created awareness about the Information technology act and the legal measures related to online safety, cybercrime prevention, and responsible use of digital platforms.

The internship also strengthened my documentation skills through report writing, note preparation, and maintaining records of activities conducted during the programme. Overall, the internship experience contributed greatly to my learning, teamwork, confidence, creativity, communication, social awareness, technical knowledge, and professional development.

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DISCLAIMER

The content in this newsletter report is intended for informational purposes only and provides an overview of the activities conducted by Smart India Foundation throughout the month. The views and opinions expressed reflect the experiences of the participants and organizers and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of any affiliated organizations or institutions. While efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information, Smart India Foundation does not assume responsibility for any errors or omissions. Readers are advised to verify any details before relying on them.
