

SpringerBriefs in Social Work

Social Work and Social Change

Muhammed Jabir · Anoop C. Choolayil



**Social Work
with Populations
Vulnerable to Neglected
Tropical Diseases**

Evidence and Insights
from India

 Springer

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Foreword

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) aims to achieve health and wellbeing for all by 2030. However, health services, health systems and healthcare facilities in most countries are becoming expensive despite advancements in science and technology, new innovations and paradigm shifts in medical systems. In the midst of growing inequality and disparity across nations and population groups, safeguarding minimum basic welfare, such as good health and wellbeing, is imperative to any country in its way towards development. Our global society experienced the worst public health challenge, namely COVID-19, which the World Health Organization declared a pandemic in March 2020. During the time of the pandemic, most countries in the world came to understand the shortcomings in their healthcare facilities and healthcare management. The COVID-19 pandemic also worsened the already existing global health inequality, in which countries in the Global South were experiencing the most difficult challenges due to their resource and leadership deficits. The pandemic provided an opportunity for policy makers and administrators to understand that the investment in public health and the wellbeing of people should not go unnoticed.

This book, written by Muhammed Jabir and Anoop C. Choolayil, brings fresh discussion on aspects related to social work practices with populations vulnerable to neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). It consists of five chapters that outline the current situation of NTDs in India. The authors open the discussion with a global overview of NTDs, the challenges in addressing NTDs and the role of social work in controlling and eliminating NTDs. The discussion in Chap. 2 provides more detail related to India and offers an understanding to readers on the social dimensions of health and illness. Furthermore, the authors also discuss health equality and the impact of health inequality in Indian society, with special reference to populations vulnerable to NTDs. While NTDs are common in developing and less developed countries, their impact on vulnerable population groups in India cannot be neglected. With limited health facilities and poor access to clean water and basic sanitation, housing and nutrition for most vulnerable population groups, addressing the impact of NTDs on the overall wellbeing of these groups in India is timely and important.

As the authors highlight in their book, social work intervention with populations vulnerable to NTDs is important for achieving a just and equal society where no one is left behind. Furthermore, social justice and human dignity are the core principles on which the social work profession is established and practised across the globe. Social workers, as human service professionals, strive to ensure access to equal, meaningful and participatory opportunities for all sections of society. Social work provides a range of services in both the physical and mental health areas. However, in our contemporary society, the role of social work is not well recognized and respected in several countries. In India, even 87 years after its birth, social work is unable to achieve professional status; nevertheless, through various forms, the profession is profoundly impacting millions of people who are marginalized and vulnerable in contemporary India.

Throughout this book, authors Muhammed Jabir and Anoop C. Choolayil highlighted the importance of developing innovative and impactful social work interventions and practices to address NTDs. Social workers need to understand the social conditions and economic situations that increase people's vulnerability in terms of health and wellbeing. Furthermore, their ability to understand social dimensions such as poverty, cultural practices, and social identity among different communities in India significantly influences their intervention with these population groups. Social workers play a pivotal role in strengthening societies through social work interventions and participatory social development. To address growing health and wellbeing concerns, India needs to strengthen its human services profession, such as social workers and allied health professionals.

In conclusion, I remind readers that social work as a human service profession can bring desirable and impactful change to our society when we believe in the power of human dignity, human worth and human rights. Accordingly, modern social work educational programmes and training should focus on developing professionally trained and ethically competent workforces to serve the neediest population groups of our society.

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