



EVALUATION CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR A 'MIGRANT CHILDREN-FOCUSED' SERVICE

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CONTEXT:

XI'AN CITY, 西安
(SHAANXI PROVINCE, CHINA)

With rapid industrialization in mainland China, the phenomenon of rural-urban migration has created a population of disenfranchised migrant workers and their families.

A 2011 census conducted of Shaanxi province reported a migrant population of 6 million and these numbers have been on the rise. Of these, 15% are constituted by children/youth aged 14 years and below whose overall welfare, social and educational development have been compromised. This is largely due to their exclusion from the 'Hukou' (户口) system, a household registration system establishing local residency that affects access to social welfare benefits.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Our primary project partner was the Shaanxi Xiaoci Social Development Center, affiliated to the Catholic Social Services of Xi'an diocese. Acknowledging the service gap, the centre established two migrant children service stations within the 'urban villages' of Yu Hua Zhai and Shajincun where a high concentration of migrant families reside.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

3 years since the inception of the first migrant children service station in Yu Hua Zhai, the program staff (our "client" for this project) were keen to measure the impact and effectiveness of the program but had limited knowledge in the domain of evaluation. As such, the project focused on building evaluation capacity using a collaborative approach rather than on executing an outcome evaluation.

OUTCOMES

- Assessed evaluation needs and provided some resources to enhance their evaluation capacity
- Introduced the concept of logic-modeling and collaboratively developed a logic model detailing the program's input, activities, output and outcome measures.
- Assisted client with coming up with basic outcome measurement tools.
- Interviewed program staff on perceived barriers, challenges and strengths.
- Interviewed parents of service beneficiaries for feedback on their help experience / level of satisfaction.
- Provided inputs for their program design and operationalization.



SKILLS UTILIZED/DEVELOPED

- Application of the concept of cultural humility, hearing the help experiences from the children and families affiliated this project without imposing our personal and professional assumptions and values.
- Engagement of client and assessment of their needs and resources, as a precursor to collaborative evaluation and evaluation capacity building of our client.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

SW 504: Diversity and Social Justice in Social Work

This class had helped us to be aware of our social identities and the connections to power, privilege and oppression. These concepts have helped to prepare us to be mindful of the professional privileges that we brought to this global setting.

SW 683: Evaluation in Social Work

The knowledge and skills associated with developing evaluation designs were applied while selecting the model of evaluation. The program's theory of change was also discussed and a logic model was created.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LESSONS LEARNED

From this global special studies experience, we learnt about the importance of integrating theories with practice settings' considerations such as organizational mission, existing strengths and work attitudes of our project partner and their staff.

As we learnt about the role and development of social work in China, we began to appreciate the history and establishment of social work in the US and our home country, Singapore. The rich knowledge base and experiences accumulated through the years such as evidence-based practices and innovations can also be translated to other vulnerable populations across the world.

ADVICE

Rapport building with clients actually begins BEFORE the trip! It would be useful (where possible) to kick-start communication in the form of video calls, email correspondences etc. to build a working relationship. Doing adequate homework on the partner organization (through conversations, annual reports etc.) and country would also be helpful in understanding their work amidst the unique features of their social context.

Be ready to FLEX and be flexible in coming out with contingency plans as there will be many "unknowns" while working in a foreign setting.

