

# Exploring the Practice of Social Work to Foster Rural Community Formation in the Context of Rural Revitalization—A Case Study of Village H in Jinwan District, Zhuhai City, Guangdong Province

**Kaiqi Li**

*School of Law, Qingdao University of Science and Technology, Qingdao, China*

**Abstract:** *At the 19th National Congress of the Communist Organization of China (CPC), a major historical mission to construct a prosperous society and a modern socialist nation was undertaken, with the strategy of reviving the countryside being a major decision. This was in addition to the general comprehension of the "three rural areas" in the new era. On October 16, 2022, leader proposed in the report of the 20th National Congress to comprehensively promote rural revitalization. Social work, as a powerful professional team, is essential in rural construction. To ensure this, it is essential to prioritize agriculture and rural areas, integrate urban and rural areas, and facilitate the interchange of urban and rural elements. Additionally, it is essential to vigorously encourage the revival of rural industry, culture, ecology, and organization. This paper takes village H in Guangdong Province as an example to explore the practical experience of social work participation in rural community creation through professional techniques and also discusses the results of social work participation in rural revitalization.*

**Keywords:** *rural revitalization; rural social work; community creation*

## 1. Theoretical background of the study

### 1.1 Rural social work

A social service and support activity in rural areas, known as rural social work, strives to better the lives of farmers, foster social progress, and construct a more favorable communal atmosphere. Rural social work is particularly important because rural areas have slower economic development, serious brain drain, aging population and poor public services compared to urban communities. Rural social work's primary components encompass education and training, health care, mental health aid, community organization, social aid and other amenities. It aims to meet the various needs of the rural population and help them achieve self-empowerment. For example, in the field of education, rural social workers can carry out activities such as children's volunteer education courses, 4:30 classes, and vocational skills training for rural talents; in the field of health care, they can organize health checkups and conduct popular health care lectures; in the field of social support, they can provide poverty alleviation policies for poor families, do community visits, and provide psychological guidance and crisis intervention. The purpose of this paper is to present the Green Farming Social Work Agency's practice in H Village, Jinwan District, Zhuhai, and to demonstrate how to concentrate on rural growth with an asset-based developmental outlook, as well as to foster urban-rural unification and sustainable growth of people and communities.

### 1.2 Community creation

Shigeru Sato, a professor at Waseda University in Japan, defines community creation as a cyclical process that utilizes the resources of the local area to enhance the environment of people and their homes, invigorate community vigor, and advance interpersonal connections, culture, lifestyle, and economic trends within the community <sup>[1]</sup>. In China, community building is a model of development that relies on the collective effort of citizens, social organizations, and government departments. Green Farming, a rural social work organization, has taken advantage of the rural revitalization policy to enter rural areas and offer intensive social services. This has enabled them to help rural people leave poverty

behind, draw upon local resources, and connect social resources.

## **2. The basic situation of H village community in the context of rural revitalization**

An examination of Community H in Jinwan District, Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, is the focus of this paper, which serves as a representation of the metamorphosis of an agricultural and fishing village into an industrialized one in the Pearl River Delta. Since 1978, Zhuhai, the boundary of China's reform and liberalization, has been transformed into a special economic zone. With its close proximity to Hong Kong and Macao, the government has encouraged the alteration of agricultural techniques to industrial development models, resulting in a multitude of farmers (including fishermen) to "wash their feet and ascend" one after the other. At the same time, in order to prevent land abandonment and to fulfill the task of paying the national public grain, governments at all levels brought in farmers from remote areas such as Meizhou and Yunfu in Guangdong and rented out their farmland to them for free. Since the 1990s, the Pearl River Delta region has seen a surge in industrialization, transforming it into the "factory of the world". Zhuhai City has been the birthplace of this new industry, with the first factory situated in the administrative village of H community and leasing nearly 100 mu of farmland in the same area<sup>[2]</sup>. The influx of numerous foreign workers to H village caused a drastic alteration of the village's demographic makeup and growth pattern, transforming it from a mere agricultural and fishing village to a bustling, industrialized one with a blend of local inhabitants, substitute farmers, and foreign workers.

## **3. Problems of H community creation**

### ***3.1 Lack of community consciousness among villagers in H community due to geographical separation***

In recent times, vast tracts of land have been seized for infrastructure building and commercial purposes, leaving only a meager amount of residential land for the H community. The traditional green stone houses and the village collective small property houses, situated in the same area, divide the community into the "Old Village" and the "New Village", with a main road serving as the boundary. The local population of community H is 590, with 349 households, including more than 100 elders, living mainly in the "old village"; the foreign population of more than 3,000 people living in the "new village" and "old village"; and 13 households of more than 100 substitute farmers living in the periphery of the village. The geographical gap between the ancient and modern hamlets has caused a disconnect between the foreign inhabitants and the locals, thus making it hard to create a sense of fellowship.

### ***3.2 The transformation of village industries leads to the decline of local traditional culture***

The gradual disappearance of H-village's self-sufficient production and lifestyle due to industrialization and urbanization has caused the traditional village to gradually transform into an industrialized one. This is accompanied by diminishing farmland, increasingly indifferent community relations, a worrisome ecological environment and a declining living landscape. Village H, with its abundant natural resources arable land, water sources at the national level, and backcountry and its abundant human resources fishing and farming cultures has not been adequately nurtured.

### ***3.3 Changes in village livelihood patterns lead to problems in the allocation of public welfare resources***

Before the implementation of the household contract responsibility system, the livelihood pattern of residents was mainly farming and fishing, supplemented by going out for business. The reform and opening up of the community, coupled with the swift industrialization, saw outworking and self-employment become the primary source of income for the people, and the market-driven wages from work became a significant economic asset. The villagers' lack of a sense of belonging and identity to the village, due to the market-oriented and industrialized livelihood mode, and the high mobility of the population, made it impossible to sustain the village economic model. In addition, local household residents also enjoy a certain amount of collective dividends, but substitute farmers and migrant worker groups do not enjoy any public welfare resources, resulting in the fruits of economic development in H-village not benefiting the residents in the village.

#### **4. Social work's practice path has been instrumental in fostering a sense of community in H village, as part of the rural revitalization process.**

In 2011, the Civil Affairs Department of Guangdong Province officially registered the Guangdong Green Farming Social Work Development Center, making it the first rural social work organization in China<sup>[3]</sup>.

##### ***4.1 Create community public space and cultivate villagers' self-organization***

Green Farm uses the concept of community asset building to create a public space with local characteristics by empowering local villagers to form self-organization. The strategy believes that villagers have the ability to develop themselves and can improve their living standards by tapping and utilizing their advantageous assets<sup>[3]</sup>. The inhabitants of Village H, having come together, formed a council, and the granary was transformed into a village center of activity, granting the community's capable members the opportunity to take part in the alteration and organization. The villagers' awareness of paying attention to the community's public affairs has been increasing, and they put forward their own suggestions and ideas, thus creating an atmosphere of communion among the community residents through self-organization building. Green Farming social organizations sometimes hold community Open Day activities in granaries, with the purpose of inviting college students to listen to the community backbone talk about community construction experience sharing. To get college students interested in rural social work, the Green Farming organization then creates some volunteer opportunities and invites them to come up with a blueprint for a beautiful countryside.

##### ***4.2 Conduct rich folklore activities to empower villagers' cultural actions***

Cultural action refers to the conscious introduction of cultural action while confirming the state of the mainstream life pattern, thus opening up a diversified living space for the villagers' single life pattern and striving for a new life pattern that coexists with the mainstream life pattern<sup>[4]</sup>. In daily life, social workers encourage villagers to participate in community kitchen activities and organize women and children to cook healthy food to enrich daily life. The social workers actively explore the local oral history, interview, record and disseminate the village history of H village to build the collective memory of the community by finding the witnesses of the village change, and carry out the oyster oil making cultural festival while inviting media reports to promote the history of oyster oil culture in Yulin village to stimulate the villagers' cultural confidence in the local folklore. Oyster sauce making groups, women's discussion groups, oral history groups and so on have been fostered to continuously increase the residents' participation and sense of community.

##### ***4.3 Models of agrarian livelihoods that are inventive to foster equitable commerce between urban and rural regions***

Fair trade means that labor incomes in developing countries are duly guaranteed, ensuring that laborers have access to resources that help them upgrade their skills to improve their quality of life, obtain richer resources for social welfare, and achieve sustainable livelihood patterns. The establishment of fair trade in both urban and rural regions provides a chance to bargain for prices that are not only economical, but also adhere to social justice and environmental sustainability principles<sup>[5]</sup>. Green farming created a fair trade independent docking cooperation platform for product sales, developed the H village oyster oil agricultural products at the same time in other villages to develop cinnamon, plums and other special agricultural products, and organized large fairs in the community to attract the community to ask for prices and procurement activities, Urge villagers to self-organize their production, so that the outcomes of agricultural products are shared and a cooperative and supportive atmosphere is formed.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Social work's contribution to the formation of rural communities is seen in the context of rural revitalization. To foster a sense of community among rural inhabitants, social workers cultivate local self-organizations to create public spaces; secondly, they empower villagers to engage in cultural activities and activities that are traditional to rural areas; and thirdly, they encourage fair trade between urban and rural areas to create new agricultural livelihood models, thereby allowing more villagers to

access local public welfare resources. In this way, a harmonious and livable rural environment is created.

### References

- [1] Bian Fang, Lv Bin. *A study of urban community governance models in the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan based on a comparative perspective [J]. International Urban Planning, 2018, 33(04): 93-102.*
- [2] Wan Xiangdong, Wang Yafei, Gao Xianda. *From "landing in the city" to "landing in the community": Insights from the study of migrants and urban villages and basic strategies of urban integration services for foreigners [J]. Social Work and Management, 2016, 16(04): 56-62.*
- [3] Zhang Heqing, Chen Xi. *Social empowerment, social economy and community development for poverty reduction [J]. Social Development Research, 2022, 9(04): 108-125+244.*
- [4] Zhang Heqing, Yang Xicong. *Community-based integrated social work practice: theory, practice, and green farming experience [M]. Social Science Literature Press, 2016.*
- [5] He Yufei. *Strategies and dilemmas of developmental social work to help farmers connect to the market [J]. Journal of Huazhong Agricultural University (Social Science Edition), 2020(04): 149-157+181. DOI: 10.13300/j.cnki.hmwkxb. 2020.04.016.*