

tailoring experts and a linkage with a potential market in Australia and France. Recently in the project, exclusionary practices by people from the backward castes towards dalit people became evident. This was contrary to the principles of human rights and social justice that underpin the project. We are addressing this issue by working with the wider community to establish a Panchayat-wide Community Development Committee which will work towards self management of the tailoring project and other projects that will be initiated in the Panchayat. This committee is representative of the diversity of the Panchayat, including gender and caste. The project is named "Healthy Districts Project" and is a partnership between two Indian, and one Australian organisation. It is based on the WHO Healthy Settings approach. However, our starting point is a local community rather than a District. This is a deliberate strategy because we believe that in order to maximise genuine participation that includes decision making ability, we must start at the grass roots level, where people identify with their local community and can play social citizenship roles through participation. We believe that beginning at a District-wide level runs too much of a danger of a top-down approach and perpetuating the power relations that deny the strengths and resources local people have to transform their lives and their relationships with wider structures.

### **Social Work Practice: A Perpetual Odyssey Towards Strength's Based Practice**

**Pam Trotman, B.SocWk., Dip.Ed**

This paper will retrace, from a reflective viewpoint, a 40 year journey through professional and personal challenges as part of ongoing efforts to discover and utilise my strengths as an integral part of social work practice. It will cover terrain in which forces such as internalised dominance threaten to undermine or disrupt my strengths and capacity to reach professional maturity. It will describe the journey inherent to exploring the implications of applying principles of social justice, self determination, uniqueness of the individual, and respect for difference. It will attempt to take listeners through the dark, lonely, often terrifying realm of fears and prejudices country we must travel if we are to break free of those forces to encounter our humanity the cornerstone of good social work practice. It will chart the trials, challenges and triumphs resulting in confidence in myself as a social work professional, the future, and a sense of belonging to the global struggle to achieve just and equitable societies, as well as being part of the social work profession's contribution to that collective effort. The paper will conclude by describing a vision for the future and the likely challenges facing those people who attempt to achieve that vision.

### **Towards a Stronger, More Caring Community - a Non Government Organisation's Experience of Building the Capacity of Local Communities**

**Metaxia Tsoukatos & Bernadette Richards**

Metaxia and Bernadette are very proud of the community in which they live and work. In this workshop they will share with you some demographic information about their home town and identify a number of key issues that the community is currently experiencing. They will discuss the organisation that they are currently employed by (Mallee Family Care) and some of the work they have been involved in to strengthen and build the capacity of their community.

### **Empowering Social Work Education and Practice: Applying the Strengths Perspective**

**Dr. V. Uma, G. Gopala Krishna Murthy**

The Social work Education in India with a 70 year old history has traveled through various phases while undergoing changes both in content and approach. The focus however has been more on the content than on the approach, which adopted to a large extent, a problem solving approach at the micro level. The changes during the last decade or so have recorded a shift and provide evidences of the adoption of a strengths approach, either consciously or unconsciously. The key areas of such application include curriculum development, field work and student support to enhance performance. The other area of promoting the strengths perspective has been social work practice through a process of capacitating NGOs, their staff and the communities while building the concept into the project proposals and components. The paper discusses the application of the strengths perspective in social work education and practice drawing examples from the author's experience as a teacher and practitioner. The key areas of practice include HIV/AIDS, trafficking of women and children, youth development and institution building, while drawing support from Gandhian Ideology and Strategies. The paper concludes by highlighting the need for a conscious effort towards adopting the strengths perspective in social work education and practice.

### **Networking for Women Empowerment: A study of SHG movement and its strategies in Tamil Nadu**

**Dr. P.Madurai Veeran**

After the success of Grameen Bank experiences in Bangladesh, the self-help group movement gained momentum in most of the developing countries. India is no exception. In 1989 women SHGs began in Tamil Nadu's Dharmapuri district as a poverty alleviation programme among the agricultural workers with active assistance and supervision of NGOs. Now it has developed both in rural and urban areas into a movement under the name "Magalir Thittam" aimed at empowering the women, who have been sidelined for centuries. It is in this context, this paper strives to explore the various strength-based strategies adopted by NGOs, such as formation of SHGs, federating SHGs, and networking SHGs. As a result of the SHG movement, women have come out of their homes and taken part in socio-