BHARATA MATA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
BHARATA MATA COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), THRIKKAKARA

"THE COMMUNIQUE"

NEWS LETTER OF BHARATA MATA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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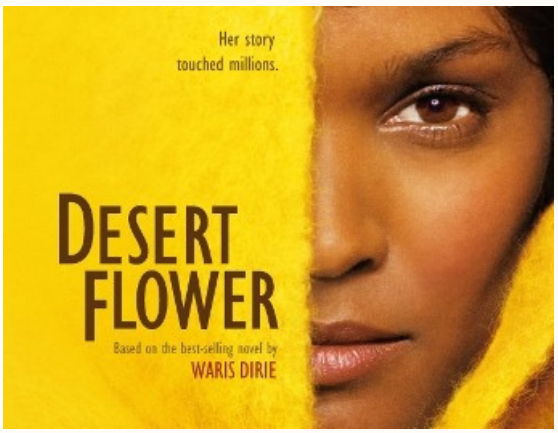
The Communiqué is the monthly newsletter of Bharata Mata School of Social Work, created by MSW students as a student-led initiative. It highlights the extension and outreach activities of the institution, the achievements of the department and students, and reflections from students. The newsletter also provides a summary of important day observances, seminars, webinars, and faculty development programs (FDPs) conducted in the previous month. Through this initiative, we aim to share updates, celebrate accomplishments, and keep everyone informed about the dynamic activities of our school.

ALUMNI EXPERT LECTURE



The Bharata Mata School of Social Work at Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara, hosted an engaging alumni talk on Premarital Counselling on January 3, 2025. Led by Ms. Sapna K S, a seasoned counselling practitioner, the session provided invaluable insights into the role of counselling in preparing individuals for marriage and family life. Recognized as a Pathway for Change, premarital counselling fosters healthy and stable marriages by improving communication, conflict resolution, and parenting skills. The session also highlighted key government initiatives such as the Nyoonapaksha Shemavakoop Scheme and the Minority Coaching Centre for Youth, empowering minority youth through guidance and support. Ms. Sapna emphasized the significance of setting realistic expectations in marriage, nurturing children with emotional and behavioral understanding, and maintaining open communication about sexual health and intimacy. The interactive Q&A session enriched participants' perspectives, reinforcing the importance of counselling in fostering personal growth, harmonious relationships, and a stronger society.

MOVIE SCREENING ON FGM



As a follow-up to the expert lecture on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), B-VOIC organized a screening of the film "Desert Flower" for first-year MSW students on January 8, 2025. The event aimed to raise awareness about FGM and its impact on individuals and communities.

"Desert Flower" is based on the autobiography of Waris Dirie, a Somali supermodel and activist who survived FGM at the age of 3. The film chronicles her remarkable journey from a nomadic tribe in Somalia to becoming an international model and activist.

Through Waris's story, the film sheds light on the physical and psychological trauma of FGM, the cultural complexities surrounding the practice, and the resilience of those who fight against it. The movie provides a powerful and thought-provoking look at the issue of FGM and its impact on individuals and communities.

PROJECT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP



As part of their fourth-semester curriculum, MSW second-year students from Bharata Mata School of Social Work attended a three-day workshop on project proposal writing and visited NGOs at Christ University, Bangalore, from January 9-11, 2025.

The workshop featured sessions by experts such as Dr. Sheeja Karalam on project proposal writing, Dr. Saji Varghese on social innovation, and Dr. Leena N. Sukey on professional grooming. These sessions provided valuable insights into proposal development, innovative social work practices, and professional skills enhancement.

The trainees also visited 'Parivarthana,' an NGO focusing on sustainability through paper recycling, waste segregation, and biogas production. On the second day, field visits to Nightingales Sandhya Kirana Home and CBM India Trust provided insights into elderly care and disability-inclusive development. Activities included interactions with elderly residents, observing livelihood programs, and participating in an experiential exercise on disability awareness. These experiences enhanced students' understanding of social work interventions, community empowerment, and professional development, equipping them with practical skills for their careers.

HONOURING THE SEMESTER TOPPERS





On January 10, 2025, Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakkara, celebrated the academic achievements of its students in the School of Social Work by recognizing the semester toppers of the BSW and MSW programs. The event highlighted the outstanding academic performances of students, reaffirming the college's commitment to fostering excellence in social work education.

In the BSW program (2024-2028), the top-performing students were Diya C Dinu, Sreya Carmel, Sarah Prince, and Mariam Anna Sajan. Their dedication and hard work were commendable, setting a high standard for their peers. Similarly, in the MSW program (2024-2026), Ann Chrisswie Chrillin and Deena Davis M distinguished themselves through their academic achievements, demonstrating their commitment to excellence in the field.

PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING WORKSHOP (ONLINE)

Christ University, Bangalore, organized a follow-up workshop on project proposal writing on January 21st. The online session aimed to reinforce and expand upon the knowledge and skills required to develop effective project proposals.

The workshop provided a platform for participants to refine their proposals, receive expert feedback, and enhance their writing techniques. Key topics covered included proposal structuring, technical writing skills, budgeting, and funding. Interactive sessions and peer reviews helped participants improve their proposals.

The workshop witnessed active participation from students and faculty members. Participants gained increased confidence in structuring and presenting their proposals and enhanced their understanding of budget planning and funding strategies. The initiative was appreciated by attendees, emphasizing the need for continued support and training in project development and funding acquisition.

GENDER SENSITIZATION PROGRAM



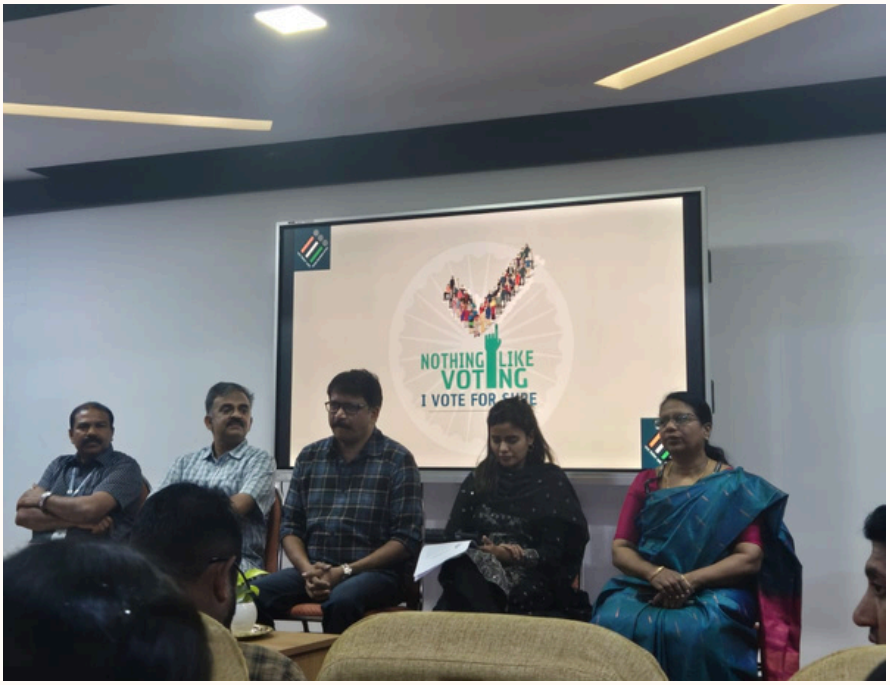
Bharata Mata School of Social Work, in association with the Women's Cell of BMC, organized a Gender Sensitization Program featuring an enlightening session by Prijith P.K., a DEIB catalyst, queer and Dalit rights activist, vendor trainer, and SOGIESC consultant. The session was welcomed by HOD Dr. Elsa Mary Jacob and emphasized the importance of gender inclusivity and awareness, challenging societal norms and stereotypes. Mr. Prijith addressed the gender gap, the binary understanding of gender, and the challenges faced by intersex individuals, while also exploring diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. He also introduced students to the NALSA Act and the TGI Policy of Kerala 2015, reinforcing the significance of legal frameworks in fostering inclusivity. The session proved to be an eye-opening experience, encouraging students to adopt a more empathetic approach toward gender diversity while promoting equality and respect in society.

NATIONAL SEMINAR AT DON BOSCO



On January 24 and 25, 2025, MSW students from Bharata Mata School of Social Work participated in Ressaisir 2025, a national seminar on Reimagining Gender Roles: Trends, Perspectives, and Challenges, organized by the Department of Social Work, Don Bosco Arts and Science College, Angadikadavu, affiliated with Kannur University. The seminar featured distinguished speakers, thought-provoking discussions, and cultural programs that brought together participants from diverse backgrounds. Social work trainees from Bharata Mata School of Social Work presented research papers on topics such as LGBTQ+ issues, non-communicable diseases, women at work: working conditions and well-being of women tea plantation workers in Munnar Grama Panchayat and gender queer identities, contributing valuable insights to contemporary gender discourse. The event also provided an enriching platform for networking, knowledge exchange, and cultural engagement, highlighting the importance of inclusive perspectives in social work practice.

VOTERS DAY OBSERVANCE



The National Voters' Day celebration on January 25, 2025, was inaugurated at Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara, under the auspices of the District Election Office, Ernakulam. The event commenced with a prayer song, followed by a welcome address by Asst. Prof. Manesh Michael, emphasizing the importance of elections. The presidential address by Ernakulam ADM and Deputy Collector Vinod Raj highlighted voting's role in ensuring a peaceful democracy. The inauguration, performed by Aswathy Sreenivas IAS through the symbolic act of watering a plant was followed by speeches from Tahsildar Bindhu Rajan and Academic Director Sindhu on the significance of the day. Chief Guest Sri Srikanth Murali extended his greetings, and an interactive session allowed four participants to share their voting experiences. Aswathy Sreenivas IAS led the voters' pledge, followed by an address from Ernakulam Deputy Collector for Disaster Management Manu. The event concluded with prize distribution for competition winners and ELC club representatives, the distribution of voter IDs to young voters, and the presentation of certificates to participants. The program ended with a vote of thanks by Sindhu P.V., Deputy Election Collector, and the National Anthem.63*

CONCURRENT FIELD WORK BSW

BSW students from Bharata Mata School of Social Work commenced their community-based concurrent field work practicum on January 25, 2025. The practicum, focusing on 21 wards within the Edathala Grama Panchayath, is being conducted in partnership with Bharata Mata Extension For Organic, Research and Environment (BeFORE), the outreach wing of Bharata Mata College. Every Saturday, the students engage in community surveys, conduct community-based activities, and utilize Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques during their field days.



THIRIKE ALUMNI MEET



The annual alumni meet, "Thirike," was held on January 26, 2025, at Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara. The MSW department's celebrations began at 12:00 PM, with 20 alumni from different batches participating. The program, coordinated by second-year MSW students and Dr. Sheena Rajan Philip welcomed all attendees. Dr. Elsa Mary Jacob, head of the department, presided over the function. The inaugural speech was delivered by alumnus - Mr. Ullas Madu sir, a member Juvenile Justice Board member. The event also featured the launch of the official brochure for "SOCION," a workshop program initiated by second-year MSW students.

The alumni meet provided a platform for students to interact with alumni, gain insights into the field, and network. The event included a 20-minute cultural music program presented by the second-year MSW students, a short treasure hunt guessing game, and refreshments. With its blend of formal and informal activities, the alumni meet was a resounding success, fostering connections between past and present students.

SOCION WORKSHOP



On January 29, 2025, a workshop on Effective Disaster Management: Strategies and Practices was conducted under the SOCION program, organized by the Kerala Fire and Safety Department, Thrikkakara. The session, held from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM, was led by resource persons Mr. Nizam M.P. and Mr. Rasheed, who provided hands-on training in essential emergency response skills.

Key topics covered included first aid, CPR techniques, and fire rescue methods, with live demonstrations enhancing the learning experience. Dr. Elsa Mary Jacob, head of the department, presided over the function. Dr. Sheena Rajan Philip presented the memento. Faculty members, including Sooraj M V, Sheema Elsa Daniel, and Praisewin Kallingal, were present at the event

The workshop proved beneficial, equipping attendees with practical knowledge on disaster preparedness and safety measures.

PLACEMENT ORIENTATION

Bharata Mata School of Social Work (BMSSW) hosted a Pre-Placement Training Workshop in collaboration with Teach For India (TFI) on January 4, 2025, introducing students to TFI's two-year Fellowship Program aimed at addressing educational inequity. Led by Dr. Saravana Kumar and Mr. Sibin Kurian, Recruitment Manager at TFI, the session highlighted TFI's mission, the fellowship experience, and the application process. Mr. Kurian discussed the eligibility criteria, emphasizing leadership, problem-solving skills, and a passion for social change.

The interactive session engaged students in conversations about teaching in low-income schools and the broader impact of education reform. Insights were shared on crafting a strong application and excelling in the selection process. With 20 students in attendance, the workshop provided an invaluable opportunity to explore careers in the social sector. BMSSW remains committed to empowering students with platforms for meaningful social impact.

ARTICLES

FROM NEEDS TO ASSETS: THE PARADIGM SHIFT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

"Communities have the power to shape their own destinies when they recognize and harness their existing strengths." – John P. Kretzmann & John L. McKnight

Community development has concentrated on fixing inadequacies and seeking external assistance to help struggling regions. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) provides an alternative by focusing on a community's assets, abilities, and resources to generate long-term improvement. ABCD, developed by John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight in the early 1990s, encourages self-sufficiency, collaboration, and local empowerment (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). This article delves into ABCD's ideas, practical uses, and an independent evaluation of its performance. Several communities across the world have successfully implemented the ABCD principles. In South Africa, for example, local artisans and entrepreneurs used communal talents to form cooperative enterprises, lowering unemployment and promoting economic growth (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Likewise, in the United States, ABCD has been utilized to revive low-income communities by connecting local businesses, schools, and civic organizations to create long-term job possibilities (Russell 2012).

Recent trends in ABCD focus on integrating technology and digital platforms to enhance community development. With the advent of social media and internet networks, communities may more efficiently map assets and link people for collaboration. Crowdsourcing and digital storytelling are being utilized to document and highlight communal assets. climate resilience is becoming

increasingly important in ABCD, with communities harnessing local knowledge and resources to establish long-term environmental practices (Anderson & Jones, 2021). Another emerging trend is the increased involvement of corporate partnerships in ABCD projects. Businesses understand the value of community assets and are investing in local people and infrastructure to promote mutual progress. The transition from traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) to community-led co-development efforts improves the long-term viability of ABCD programs (Brown & Taylor, 2022).

ABCD has various advantages that make it an effective method to community development. One of its primary benefits is sustainability; unlike external help, which frequently generates dependency, ABCD promotes self-sufficiency by utilizing local resources and talents. It also encourages empowerment by encouraging community people to take responsibility for their own development, resulting in increased engagement and long-term commitment. ABCD also assures cultural relevance by tailoring solutions to the community's specific requirements, capturing local traditions, skills, and strengths to achieve meaningful and long-term change. Despite its virtues, ABCD suffers a number of obstacles and limits. One significant barrier is initial resistance, since communities used to receiving external assistance may struggle to convert to an asset-based approach (Green & Haines, 2015). Resource mobilization might be challenging in locations with few recognized assets, making ABCD implementation less effective. Another key obstacle is scaling issues; while ABCD has been successful at the local level, its efficacy in large-scale policy implementation is controversial. To achieve sustainable and inclusive growth, it is necessary to engage continuously, create capacity, and implement adaptive measures.

ABCD provides a powerful alternative framework for community development that shifts the focus from weaknesses to strengths. Communities can achieve long-term success by focusing on local assets, collaboration, and empowerment. successful implementation requires overcoming obstacles such as community buy-in and efficient resource identification. The current trends, such as digital innovation and corporate participation, increase the importance of ABCD in modern community development. ABCD is a promising method that, if properly implemented, has the potential to significantly improve community development outcomes



Fathimathu Sharafiya
First Year MSW

APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SOCIAL WORK

"Artificial intelligence has the potential to transform social work by enabling timely interventions and expanding access to services, but it must be guided by ethical principles to ensure equity and humanity remain at the core of practice."
— John L. Jackson Jr.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the way social work operates, making it easier and faster to help people in need. AI can analyze large amounts of data to predict issues like child neglect, poverty, or homelessness, allowing social workers to act early. It powers chatbots that offer instant support to clients, automates paperwork to save time, and even translates languages or provides tools for people with disabilities. While AI brings many benefits, such as improving efficiency and reaching more people, it also raises important questions about privacy, fairness, and ensuring that everyone has access to these new technologies (Barber et al., 2022). By combining AI with human care, social work can become more effective and inclusive, helping more people in smarter ways.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming social work by enhancing efficiency, improving accessibility, and enabling proactive support for individuals and communities. It can analyze large amounts of data to identify at-risk populations, predict social issues such as homelessness or child neglect, and recommend timely interventions. AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants provide 24/7 support, offering immediate assistance to clients and reducing the workload on social workers.

"Administrative tasks like documentation and case management are streamlined through automation, allowing professionals to focus on client care. Tools such as sentiment analysis help monitor emotional well-being, while AI-driven technologies improve accessibility for individuals with disabilities through real-time translation and speech-to-text services. However, these advancements come with challenges, including risks to privacy, algorithmic bias, and the digital divide that may exclude underserved populations. Despite these concerns, the integration

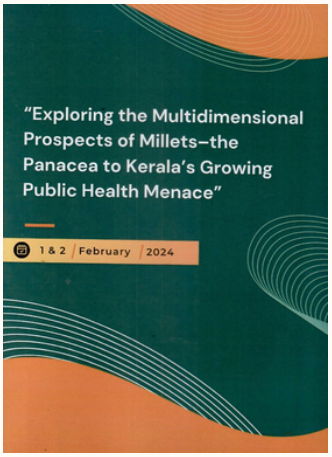
the integration of AI with human expertise holds immense potential for creating a more inclusive, data-driven, and impactful social work practice that meets the evolving needs of the modern world (Smith et al., 2021; Zlotnik & Soltanifar, 2020).



Reshma Alton
First Year MSW

BOOK PUBLICATION

The Bharata Mata School of Social Work has recently published an insightful book titled "Exploring the Multidimensional Prospects of Millets – The Panacea to Kerala's Growing Public Health Menace." This ISBN-registered publication (ISBN: 978-81-980072-2-3) is based on the National Conference Bharathion 2024, held on February 1–2, 2024. Edited by Dr. Elsa Mary Jacob, Dr. Arya L Chandran, and Mr. Sooraj MV, the book highlights the crucial role of millets in addressing Kerala's pressing public health challenges.



The publication features five research papers from the department, exploring various dimensions of millet-based solutions. Among them, "Revival of Millets for Livelihood and Nutritional Security of Women and Transgenders," authored by Dr. Arya L Chandran, examines the potential of millets in improving nutritional security for marginalized groups. "Empowering Farmers Through Food Sovereignty: Addressing Challenges and Ensuring a Sustainable Future," by P. T. John, Adnold Alin Goveas, and Arun Paul, discusses the role of food sovereignty in strengthening farmers' livelihoods. Additionally, "Bridging the Gap: Unveiling Opportunities and Challenges in the Landscape of Social Entrepreneurship for Millet-Based Health Solutions in Kerala," by Ameerali K Y and Dr. Elsa Mary Jacob, delves into the intersection of social entrepreneurship and millet-based health initiatives.

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SEAPORT-AIRPORT ROAD, THRIKKAKARA, KOCHI-682021, KERALA, INDIA
Phone: +91 94004 63358, Mail: bmssw@bharatamatacollege.in
http://www.bharatamatacollege.in/, http://www.bmssw.in/

CHIEF PATRON
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DESIGNER:
Ann Chrisswie Crillin (MSW 1st Year)