

# *Exploring the Path of Social Work Intervention in Grassroots Governance: The Example of Project D*

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**Keywords:** Social work, social organizations, grassroots governance, path, localization

**Abstract:** Community is the most basic unit of human activities and interactions. Grassroots governance reflects not only the ability of community managers, but also the development level of harmonious community construction. Social work plays an important role in social services and grassroots governance, mainly in being an important force supplement for grassroots governance and a powerful coordinator of community benefit services and community resource integration. This paper explores the feasibility and effectiveness of social work interventions in grassroots governance based on the practical study of Project D. The study finds that social work interventions in grassroots governance have excellent professional advantages, especially in helping community residents to solve their problems. The study finds that social work intervention in grassroots governance provides social work professional services, nurtures community social organizations, and effectively integrates community resources, but also faces problems and challenges such as immaturity of social work service system, low scope of social work services, low awareness of social work services, and insufficient social work service teams. This paper puts forward suggestions to improve the social work service system, strengthen the cultivation efforts of social organizations, and enhance the localization of social work.

## 1. Introduction

Grassroots governance is a complex social system project. After more than twenty years of exploration and development, a new model of grassroots governance has gradually emerged in China, from the initial "control type" to "top-down management type" and then to "multi-participation governance type". "A profound transformation has taken place. In recent years, as an important platform for achieving grassroots governance and public services, community construction is taking residents' needs as the guide, public interests as the link, various social organizations as the carrier, and resource integration as the guarantee, and a harmonious and civilized development atmosphere has been formed initially [1]. Social work is an important part of social construction. It is a profession that embodies core socialist values, follows professional ethics, adheres to the purpose of "helping people to help themselves", and integrates professional knowledge, skills and methods in the field of social services and social management to help individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities in need, integrates social resources, coordinates social relations, and prevents the

development of social problems. Social workers are professionals who help individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities in need to integrate social resources, coordinate social relations, prevent and solve social problems, restore and develop social functions, and promote social harmony [2]. As an important force in providing professional social services, social workers will play an important role in community services such as dispute mediation, healthy aging, education and training, public welfare and charity, disaster prevention and mitigation, cultural and sports recreation, neighborhood mutual assistance, resident integration, and social organization cultivation. In this context, various parts of China have been increasing their efforts to purchase services and encourage social forces to undertake basic public service projects, especially grassroots public service projects [3].

Project D is one of the public service projects purchased by City H. It is operated by a social work agency. Through "talent linkage, organization linkage, service linkage, venue linkage and volunteer service linkage", social workers take community public issues as the entry point to activate resources inside and outside the community, start from the needs of disadvantaged groups, families, minors, volunteers and other groups, and guide the community, social organizations, residents, enterprises and other community multi-functional forces. The project aims to create a harmonious community atmosphere through participation in grassroots governance and community construction. This paper attempts to explore the new path of social work participation in grassroots governance by taking Project D as an example.

## **2. The Importance of Social Work Intervention in Grassroots Governance**

### **2.1. Promote Effective Linkage and Integration of Community Resources**

Linking and integrating resources has always been an important task for social workers. Using the D Project as a platform, social workers are able to make full use of the resources of their grassroots organizations while leveraging the vast resource network held by social work service organizations. And they can allocate the resources they have effectively to serve the grassroots residents and meet their needs, and they can also flow the resources purposefully to social workers in other fields to help them assist the disadvantaged groups in society and meet their needs [4].

### **2.2. Effective Supplement to the Power of Grassroots Social Organizations**

For the time being, China's grassroots public service force is relatively weak. Although community social organizations have developed, they are still unable to meet the growing needs of community residents [5]. Social workers, with their professional values and knowledge in social work, can effectively supplement the strength of grassroots public service workers on the one hand. On the other hand, social workers can use their professional expertise to cultivate a backbone of community public service in the community. At the same time, social workers cultivate a group of community social organizations according to the characteristics and development needs of the community, and the community social organizations will undertake various community service projects.

### **2.3. A Strong Supporter of Helping the Disadvantaged**

In the exploration of social worker development, based on the social workers' own role positioning, social workers assume multiple roles in the process of helping the disadvantaged. Firstly, they are the service providers. To provide services for those disadvantaged groups in difficulties, such services may be material or spiritual in nature. For example, to provide direct material compensation for some special disadvantaged groups or social workers use their professional knowledge to provide assistance

to groups with service needs. Secondly, it is a consolidator of resources. Therefore, in the process of helping the disadvantaged groups, social workers follow the principle of self-determination of the client [6], fully mobilize the enthusiasm and creativity of the client, encourage the client to make plans for self-development, and give material and intellectual support to the client in the process of development, and assist the client in integrating his or her own resources. For example, in the face of socially disadvantaged groups, it is important to encourage the development of the client. For example, in the face of socially disadvantaged groups, such as the livelihood problems of families of workers in difficulty. On the premise of fully respecting the subject status of the case owners, social workers carry out various activities to guide the disadvantaged groups to emancipate their minds and update their concepts, integrate their own resources with the help of social workers, and embark on the path of self-reliance. Finally, they are advocates of policies. Through field surveys and other means [7], social workers understand the development needs of socially disadvantaged groups and organize them into document proposals to promote the introduction of social policies, ultimately achieving the purpose of helping disadvantaged groups.

### **3. Common Problems Faced in the Process of Traditional Grassroots Governance**

#### **3.1. The Weakness of Grassroots Governance**

On the one hand, the number of grassroots staffing is insufficient. As grassroots communities have a wide range of affairs, they need to deal with different things every day, from various tasks issued by superiors to community infrastructure, neighborhood conflicts and disputes, and handling public affairs, etc. from the feedback of community residents. The grassroots staff often have to deal with many matters at the same time, which will lead to burnout over time and eventually affect the efficiency of work, and even the phenomenon of shifting responsibilities to each other. On the other hand, the layers of grassroots governance are too cumbersome [8]. This leads to the phenomenon of slow information transfer and inaccurate information transfer, thus increasing the cost of grassroots governance.

#### **3.2. Single Means of Grassroots Governance**

Although with the development of modern technology, many places have gradually adopted grid-based and information-based management, the grassroots have not fully realized the establishment of a modern grassroots governance system and have not given full play to the advantages of big data. In addition, many grassroots staff members are not highly educated and unfamiliar with modern information technology, such as computer office. As a result, there is still a need for grassroots communities to adopt meetings, transcripts, and door-to-door visits in grassroots governance, which does not allow them to keep track of the situation in the community as well as to understand the needs of residents in a timely manner.

#### **3.3. Low Participation of Residents in Grassroots Governance**

Grassroots governance emphasizes the situation of multi-participation, and the ultimate goal is to realize that community residents can manage the community well on their own [9]. At present, community residents still rely too much on government departments or social organizations, thinking that grassroots governance is a matter for the government and lacking the awareness of main participation. As a result, community residents have little awareness of participation in community affairs, especially public affairs and public welfare services, and lack recognition of grassroots governance.

## **4. Analysis of the Path of Social Work Intervention in Grassroots Governance**

### **4.1. Provide Social Work Professional Services**

To address the individualized problems faced by community residents, such as emotional confusion and interpersonal communication, social workers use casework methods to provide case counseling services to community residents, provide emotional guidance and communication, and promote community residents to develop their potential and solve problems. To address the common problems faced by different groups of community residents, social workers use group work methods to provide therapeutic groups, interest groups, developmental groups and other services to promote the formation of self-help and mutual help organizations for community residents. To address the public problems faced by the community, social workers use community work methods to provide services such as community forums, community public activities, community publicity activities, and community advocacy activities to promote community residents' sense of belonging to the community.

### **4.2. Nurturing Community Social Organizations**

Community social organizations are an important carrier of grassroots governance. Social workers can give full play to their professional expertise in social work and actively cultivate community social organizations. First, guidance in value concept. Social work's value concept of "helping people to help themselves" is very suitable for the value construction of community social organizations. Because community social organizations are non-profit organizations, the nature of public welfare determines the development direction of community social organizations. Secondly, the organizational structure is a guide. The people in charge of establishing community social organizations are often senior people who provide voluntary services in the community, but these groups have only stayed at the level of volunteers in the past and are relatively unfamiliar with how to operate and manage social organizations. Therefore, social workers need to guide the person in charge to build a reasonable structure in terms of organizational structure. Finally, we need to strengthen the capacity building of community social organizations. Community social organizations need to survive and develop, so the people in charge of community social organizations need to improve their own capacity, especially the ability to undertake grassroots governance service projects.

### **4.3. Promote Community Residents' Participation in Grassroots Governance**

Social workers can attract community residents to come out of their homes to participate in community activities through community activities with different themes. For example, social workers will make use of the Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival, Chung Yeung Festival, National Day, and Dragon Boat Festival festivals to carry out promotional activities to make community residents understand the community and care about its construction and development. Social workers also listen to the opinions and suggestions of community residents through residents' councils and other means, ultimately promoting community residents' interest and participation in grassroots governance.

## **5. Reflections on the Practice of Social Work Intervention in Grassroots Governance**

### **5.1. Problems**

#### **5.1.1. Immaturity of Social Work Intervention in Grassroots Governance Service System**

Social work is a product of industrialization, urbanization and marketization to a certain stage of development, and is closely related to the degree of economic development. Social work in China is still at an early stage of development, and social workers need to face various complicated affairs, and the service management and service system are not standardized enough. Since the service field is relatively new and started late, academic research on this service field has rarely been covered, so the relevant research, theories and methods guiding social workers' practice are relatively weak, which to a certain extent affects the professional level of social workers and fails to build a mature service system of grassroots governance within a short period of time.

#### **5.1.2. The Scope of Social Work Intervention in Grassroots Governance Services isn't Wide**

At present, the coverage of social work interventions in grassroots governance is relatively small and the types of services are relatively homogeneous, mainly focusing on civil service recipients, and most of them are superficial and lack long-term service planning and design. Social work is guided by its professional knowledge and skills, and if social work is carried out as an administrative tool, the professional skills of social work will be affected. The mobility and instability of social workers also limit the resources and services available to social workers. At the same time, the lack of community resources makes it difficult for social workers to cultivate a certain number of community social organizations with mature operations. Together with the insufficient number of social workers, this directly affects the low scope of social work intervention in grassroots governance services.

#### **5.1.3. Social Work Intervention in Grassroots Governance isn't Well Known**

Social work intervention in grassroots governance is still in the exploratory stage, and community residents do not know enough about social workers and often simply regard social workers as grassroots workers. As a result, they are unable to reach a service relationship with social workers in their work and are unclear about the nature of social workers' work and service contents. When social workers carry out community activities, community residents often lack enthusiasm for participation and adopt a non-active and inactive attitude, which to a certain extent affects the effect of social work intervention in grassroots governance.

### **5.2. Suggestions for Countermeasures**

#### **5.2.1. Improve Social Work Intervention in Grassroots Governance Service System**

First, it is necessary to create a favorable institutional environment for social work at the macro level, increase the purchase of social work services, and encourage social work forces to participate in grassroots governance. Secondly, establish a unified social work management system and operation mechanism. Integrate resources from all parties, unify management, unified approval, unified arrangement and unified distribution, and rational use of resources under the guidance of various competent departments, so as to avoid problems such as diverse subjects, difficulty in integrating resources, and duplication of services or inappropriate services [10]. In addition, social workers should innovate working mechanisms and methods according to the actual situation and local conditions to improve the social work intervention service system of grassroots governance.

### **5.2.2. Increase the Efforts of Social Work to Cultivate Community Social Organizations**

In response to the characteristics of social work in general, such as small number, small scale and insufficient strength, social workers are incapable of taking up the heavy responsibility of service subjects alone in the face of the diversified needs of community residents. Therefore, social workers need to further integrate community resources, actively guide volunteer service teams to develop into community social organizations, and improve the capacity of community social organization leaders through capacity building. Through the linkage of social workers + volunteers [11], they can participate in grassroots governance services, thus alleviating the plight of insufficient service teams.

### **5.2.3. Actively Explore the "Localization" of Social Work Intervention in Grassroots Governance**

Social work was born in Western countries, and its values, theories and knowledge are compatible with the social system and cultural characteristics of Western countries. Therefore, it must be "localized" to meet the needs of Chinese reality [12]. Social work interventions in grassroots governance lack sufficient work practice and experience accumulation, so it is necessary to continuously summarize successful experiences and effective methods to explore a grassroots governance model that meets China's reality.

### **5.2.4. Strengthen Team Building and Promote the Professional Development of Social Work**

As a highly professional profession, social work requires a high level of professional competence, moral quality and political awareness from its practitioners. In view of the limited number of social workers, their generally low quality and low professionalism, first of all, professional training should be provided to the existing practitioners. Through various forms, we should organize professional training for social workers to improve their professional knowledge, methodological skills, service level and ability to solve practical problems. Secondly, financial investment support should be strengthened to attract outstanding professionals by providing favorable conditions to promote the development of the social work industry. Finally, increase the publicity of social work to improve the awareness of social work among community residents.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, using Project D as a platform for practice, we have achieved better research results through the path exploration and practice of social work intervention in grassroots governance. Social work plays a very important role in grassroots governance and is an effective complement to the dimension of grassroots governance. Social work in grassroots governance not only acts as a service provider to provide professional social work services to community residents, but also acts as a resource linker to integrate community resources to meet the needs of community residents and carry out community building. And through nurturing community social organizations, it enriches the strength of grassroots governance. Of course, social work intervention in grassroots governance is in the exploratory stage, and there are still many challenges and shortcomings in the process of practice. With the deepening and development of social work localization, it will certainly provide quality professional services for community residents and play a greater role in the construction of harmonious communities. At the same time, more scholars are needed to continuously research and innovate to explore new paths of social work intervention in grassroots governance.



## Acknowledgements

This study is the result of the Huizhou Philosophy and Social Sciences Discipline Co-Construction Project (project number: 2022ZX041).

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