

## **Community mental health practices in Kerala: Challenges and opportunities for social work practice**

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This paper is based on community practice experience and a reflection on the community Mental Health well-being initiatives implemented in Kerala, the southernmost State of India as a collaborative effort of Australian Mental Health Practitioners and Indian Professionals in 2012. With the support of collaborating Australian partners, an International Centre for Wellbeing was started to initiate community mental health practices. Mental Health wellbeing is viewed as experiencing healthy or positive self esteem and contributing positively to the society with a sense of worthwhile. The major elements of mental health wellbeing initiatives encompass mental health promotion activities, which aim at increasing wellbeing, competence and resilience by creating conducive living environment and conditions. Decreasing mental health disorders are also included as the secondary result of mental health promotion activities. Partnerships in mental health practice between the professionals of two different nations, where human development indices are in two extremes, demand a synchronization of many professional attributes. Evidence based practices are inevitable in working with communities to enhance the wellbeing of people in a developing country. In this paper, the authors discuss the very nature of establishing collaboration, the design of community mental health programs and the delivery of services to people in Kerala. Further, based on the field evaluations and evidences gathered from the service by the first author, the presentation will explore the challenges and opportunities for social work practice in Kerala context.