Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Greetings from Colombo, Sri Lanka! My name is Ravi Shankar Rajaratnam, and I am the Regional Strategic Programme Manager - Asia at Strømme Foundation (Norwegian: StrommeStiftelsen). Besides that I am pursuing my PhD at the School of Environment, Resources, and Development, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand. My research focuses on dignity and empowerment discourses among adolescent girls in Nepal.

As the guest editor this month, I would like to further the invitation to you for your contribution, particularly if you are part of a research centre, cluster, or informal network that has a focus on the Third Sector in the Asia and Pacific region. Please don’t hesitate to email if you have ideas, suggestions or would like to edit an issue.

According to scholars, there are gaps in the measurement of empowerment and rights-based approaches to development. Unless these gaps are addressed, the development sector will stagnate without progressing toward making positive and lasting changes in people’s lives. For instance, when we realized that caste and gender-based discrimination violate human dignity, we at the Strømme Foundation seriously started reflecting on this during the programme design as well as in measuring the changes as conventional indicators of empowerment need to be revisited. In this manner, research can play a major role in addressing these gaps. It is time to link research and practice and to promote pracademics! Many ISTR members have made significant contributions to this field. Accordingly, for “In Spotlight”, I would like to share with you the work of the Strømme Foundation in Nepal.

Also, we have selected two articles, one from Nonprofit Management and Leadership and one from the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, to share with you some of the interesting current publications and topics in our field.
Last but not least, ISTR has already started preparations for the 16th International Conference, which will take place in Antwerp, Belgium, from July 16-19, 2024. In the days leading up to the conference, the 8th International PhD seminar will take place, also hosted by the University of Antwerp. Calls for Contributions will be coming shortly. We hope many of you will participate and attend.

Enjoy reading!

Ravi

In Spotlight: The Strømme Foundation
By Ravi Shankar Rajaratnam

Research and model creation: A key to sustainable development

Development organisations commission different types of assessments during the programme cycle to assess whether the programmes are effective, efficient, relevant, coherent, sustainable, and impactful. These assessments, such as mid-term evaluation, end-term evaluation, and impact assessment, contribute to learning, innovation, and expansion of the programme as well as organizational excellence. Strømme Foundation intends to formalize such studies in collaboration with research institutions and universities to ensure that the programme models are endorsed with scientific knowledge and findings. I present here one of SF’s programmes to highlight the contribution of research to model creation.

Adolescents’ empowerment
The Strømme Foundation (SF) is a rights-based development organization that strives to eradicate poverty in the world. Three fundamental approaches to eradicating poverty promoted by SF are economic inclusion and job creation, education, and a strong civil society. SF implements programmes in partnership with local NGOs in Asia, East Africa, and West Africa.

The adolescent empowerment programme provides life skills training for young people in developing countries, mainly those who have often dropped out of school due to poverty. This programme makes adolescents aware of their issues and how to address them, and it provides them with knowledge about their rights and the opportunity to earn an income. This programme gives them the tools to fight against child marriage, exclusion, discrimination, and exploitation. As a result, this one-year programme gives them the confidence to stand up for and advocate for their and others’ rights.

Community empowerment
Community empowerment is a fundamental element of any development initiative. SF has created a model keeping families as the entry point. Through SF’s "family as a unit" approach, the entire family is targeted in the programme with multiple interventions. Accordingly, the socioeconomic empowerment of entire families is ensured by having quality education and a stable livelihood as pillars, where establishing a strong civil society is the foundation for this approach. All these families are taken on a five-year journey by facilitating them into the formation of small groups, then into a larger self-help or community-based organization, and finally, at a later stage, into a larger network that links with the duty bearers. In this manner, SF has created a model for community empowerment and democratization.
Adolescents-led community empowerment
The assessments and evaluations conducted in the recent past in Nepal confirmed that adolescents have been empowered due to the adolescent empowerment programme known as "Samvad" (literally meaning dialogue). Their ability to influence and contribute to the family decision-making process, their capability of developing visionary plans (in networks) and annual action plans, and their advocacy initiatives have proven that adolescents can become "Change Agents" at their family level first and then eventually at the community level. SF built on this and promoted adolescents-led community development by making the adolescent girls facilitators at the grassroots level.

Advocacy for Adolescents
Unfortunately, the issues affecting adolescents’ lives are still rising in Asia. In line with the right-based approach, it would be ideal to work with other stakeholders and promote this concept of empowering adolescents as a successful model for scaling up, thereby creating a massive impact through advocacy initiatives. Further, understanding other development models that empower adolescents and how such models complement SF's model and vice versa are important factors when considering the scale-up operation of such models in the region. This requires further research, coalition building, and advocacy.

The studies conducted internally and externally emphasized that the "Samvad" model is a workable model for empowering adolescents, and therefore it should be expanded even in schools to maximize the results with wider coverage. Hence, through SF’s advocacy initiatives, part of the Samvad module has already been incorporated into the local curriculum in selected schools. Further, in collaboration with Kathmandu University (KU), SF initiated studies to link research with practice to develop programme models that yield lasting changes. Such research will certainly help SF look at the programme from a different angle, as it will provide conceptual clarity and practical insights.

Concluding remarks
One of the primary value additions for development practitioners should be model creation. When programme models are created, they could facilitate programme expansion both vertically and horizontally and contribute to lasting changes in the lives of the people we work with. When such models are validated by scientific research, they become easily demonstrable and replicable models. Thus, the development sector requires practices backed up with rigorous research.

For more information on the Strømme Foundation’s work in Asia, please click here.

Core Academic Journals

Nonprofit Management & Leadership, Volume 33, Issue 3

I Selected Abstract

Promoting social innovation amidst organizational complexity: Case study evidence from the German Red Cross

René Burfeindt, Peter Schubert

Abstract:

Social innovation is concerned with the creation and implementation of new solutions to social problems. Although research commonly frames social innovation as the domain of small, entrepreneurial organizations, an increasing number of large and well-established nonprofit
organizations have started actively launching their own innovation initiatives. Using a case study of social innovation ventures within the German Red Cross (GRC), this study identifies organizational hurdles and viable management strategies targeting the promotion of social innovation within particularly complex organizations. Based on our results, we develop a conceptual framework highlighting that promoting social innovation in established organizations requires simultaneous attention to multiple dimensions of leadership and governance. Our study thereby offers a blueprint for management strategies that can guide nonprofit leaders in their quest to promote social innovation from within their organization.

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I Selected Abstract

Supporting Volunteer Well-Being Through Disaster: Perspectives and Practices of a Youth-Led Informal Crisis Volunteer Group

Sylvia Nissen, Sally Carlton, Jennifer H.K. Wong

Abstract:

Embedded in growing expectations for post-disaster volunteer participation are questions of volunteers’ psychological well-being. Witnessing destruction and suffering, and the intense pressures of the work itself, can place heavy demands on crisis volunteers, particularly in “informal” community groups that may lack the structure, systems, and supports embedded within “formal” disaster response organizations. This article examines how the Student Volunteer Army in Aotearoa New Zealand has negotiated volunteers’ well-being across two disaster responses: an earthquake in 2011 and terrorist attacks in 2019. We identify three interrelated practices adopted by the group to support well-being: “action” (enabling opportunities for people to engage in volunteering); “reflection” (facilitating processes of discussion and debriefing); and “connection” (creating physical space and practices to enhance social interactions). Our discussion considers the implications of multi-layered practices of support that can develop within informal crisis volunteer groups.

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**Publications | News | Reports in the Sector**

**ISTR PhD Seminar Alumni Quarterly Newsletter & ISTR Alumni Survey**

The new issue of ISTR PhD Seminar Alumni Quarterly Newsletter is now available. Co-edited by Lesley Alborugh and Elaine Xu, the quarterly newsletter seeks to keep ISTR’s alumni network informed about the work and stories of colleagues researching and working in the third sector. The editorial team is also conducting the ISTR Alumni Survey 2022 to better understand the needs of our members and broaden the scope of the alumni network more inclusive. Please participate in this [online survey](#) if you are an alumni.

**ISTR Working Papers Features**

The newly created ISTR Working Paper Features is a designed publication opportunity for ISTR members, particularly advanced stage PhD students, early career academics, and pracacademics, to present fresh-from-the-field works, innovative thought pieces, theoretical reviews, and more; and, to use this space as an important steppingstone for further development of scholarship and research collaboration. Moreover, the ISTR Publications Committee, acting as the interim editors of this Series, would like to invite all members to consider this space to showcase work-in-progress with grounded observations and reflections. If you are not an ISTR Member, please join today to [submit your work](#).

The QCOSS has launched the latest report by Professor David Gilchrist and Clare Feenan at the Centre for Public Value, UWA Business School and it discusses the inadequacies in indexation for the purpose of the community service sector in Queensland.

The sustainability of funding for community services in Queensland relies on various factors such as the length and value of contracts, the provision of additional funding during major policy changes and indexation. The expenses associated with providing community services have risen substantially, particularly those pertaining to labour, auditing, accounting, and marketing. As these costs are non-negotiable, it is imperative to bear them to maintain the provision of crucial frontline services to our communities.

The report identifies several key findings:

- Current indexation levels are inadequate to maintain the sustainability of Queensland’s human service delivery
- Indexation does not appear to be passed on uniformly in all sub-sectors
- This reduces sustainability
- Traditional measures used in other Australian jurisdictions are also inadequate
- Reductions in profitability of the industry over many years confirms the finding here
- Evidence gathered demonstrates current indexation levels are likely significantly under providing for cost increases

Access the full report here

Call for Papers

International Conference on Knowledge, Culture, and Change in Organizations

The Future We Want: Organizational Responsibilities for Climate Responses

Founded in 1993, the Organization Studies Research Network comes together around a common concern for, and a shared interest to explore, new possibilities in knowledge, culture and change management, within the broader context of the nature and future of organizations and their impact on society. We seek to build an epistemic community where we can make linkages across disciplinary, geographic, and cultural boundaries.

The Twenty-fourth International Conference on Knowledge, Culture, and Change in Organizations calls for research addressing the following annual themes and special focus:

Theme 1: Organizational intangibles and tangible value
Theme 2: Knowledge economies as the constant
Theme 3: Organizations as knowledge makers
Theme 4: The value of culture and the demand of change

Deadline for proposal submission is 3 September 2023. Please check the conference website for more details.

The 2024 Annual IRSPM Conference
Hybrid futures for public governance and management

The 2024 Annual IRSPM Conference, which is being held at Tampere University, Finland from 16 - 18 April 2024, invites you to submit proposals on conference panels. The conference theme for 2024 is ‘Hybrid futures for public governance and management.’ As governments have evolved into more hybrid constellations of actors, public governance has increasingly resorted to collaboration between governments and business as well as public–private–civil society cooperation. For addressing global management challenges for good governance, it is crucial to understand public management, not as detached from private efforts and civic activities, but as resulting from the outcome of the complex interfaces and interactions between them.

The proposal for a panel should be submitted via online submission form by 7 July 2023.

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About Us
The Asia Pacific Third-Sector Researchers Network (formerly the East Asia Third-Sector
Researchers Network) is an initiative first launched by the ISTR (International Society for
Third-Sector Research) and the Centre for Social Innovation Studies in the Chinese University
of Hong Kong in 2016 to help scholars and students in East Asia and beyond to exchange
information about publications, conferences and job vacancies in third-sector studies through
this Newsletter. The scope of the Newsletter and the network has expanded to cover the entire
Asia Pacific region since November 2018. Starting from January 2020, the School of Social
Sciences, University of New South Wales, Sydney, has been the host of the Newsletter.