

Foreword

It is a great privilege and honor to write a foreword to *Social Welfare in East Asia and the Pacific*. This book is important in many respects and a welcome addition to the existing literature on social welfare. It greatly appeals to me because its conceptualization and development were based on the need for it, identified during Sharlene Furuto's time spent teaching social work/welfare/development students. As development occurs across the Asia Pacific region in a highly varied manner in every sense, the need for welfare provisions and programs is growing. In response, programs in social work, social welfare, and international social development are expanding rapidly in much of the region, along with student numbers. For both reasons, this book is timely. Although welfare services, provisions, and practices in different forms, both formal and informal, exist in almost all Asia Pacific countries, very little has been written on them. Thus knowledge about welfare and its operation, strengths and weaknesses, adequacies and inadequacies, and unique features has remained undeveloped. This book breaks that barrier and opens up the welfare practices of many countries for readers to learn about.

The sample of countries selected for this volume is both insightful and interesting. It reflects a great variation in the trajectory of development, poverty levels, political systems, struggles, level of freedom experienced by people, and social and cultural practices in Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific—from the emerging world power of China to small islands in Micronesia. The book discusses the formal and informal social welfare systems in these countries and how the systems are evolving. In the contemporary divided, unequal, and diverse world, people's welfare and adequate

mechanisms to ensure it are vital. The unfortunate reality is that welfare is closely linked to and often dependent on national and international politics, economic development, war, and defense, disregarding the needs of local people.

To understand the welfare conditions of the countries selected for this volume, it is necessary to understand their past. Therefore, historical contexts, different forms of colonization, sociocultural values and social problems rooted in socioeconomic and political structures, and the way states and civil society respond to the needs and problems of people do significantly matter. Without gaining that understanding, it is difficult for the social work profession, social workers, and welfare officials to effectively intervene and work with people in their respective contexts. The authors have firsthand experience in their respective countries and have authoritatively unearthed historical and current conditions and future challenges for social welfare. Their analysis and discussion of the issues engaged me and helped me to be better informed about social welfare in Cambodia, China, Hong Kong SAR, Indonesia, Malaysia, Micronesia, the Samoan Islands, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. Shrinking or stagnating welfare systems in some developed countries in the Americas and Europe and emerging social welfare in Asia and the Pacific provide an interesting contrast for international scholars and social workers.

The book is a gateway for exploring and understanding social welfare in Southeast and East Asia and the Pacific, and I highly recommend it to educators, students, and practitioners in the field of social work, social welfare, social and community development, and human services, and for that matter, to anyone interested in the issue of welfare of people.

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