

Chapter 6

A Positive Peace Initiative with Rural Women in China

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In this chapter, writing from outside China, we use a peacebuilding framework to reflect on a collaborative social work project completed from 2004 to 2010 in China. Since experience and knowledge are shaped by and within national social institutions, we do not claim to represent the views of anyone else involved in the project. The women whose words are included in the chapter have not been part of this exploration of peacebuilding nor do we know if they have or could have similar sentiments to those expressed in this chapter.

According to Johan Galtung, "peace is the absence/reduction of violence of all kinds." He elaborates, "peace work is work to reduce violence by peaceful means."¹ Galtung further defines *negative peace* and *positive peace*, where negative peace refers to "the absence of violence of all kinds."² On the other hand, positive peace refers to transformations within and across institutions that rectify structural inequities. Positive peace involves actions that prevent violence.

In many settings, positive peace efforts take place at the grassroots level through experiences that change values and attitudes and, subsequently, behavior. In this chapter we describe the outcomes of a project that employed participatory training methods to develop a climate of inclusivity, egalitarian relations and local innovation with and for rural women in China. We will also describe changes that occurred by drawing on the accounts of those who work for the Communist Party at the All China Women's Federation and the rural women in the villages in which they provided services.

WOMEN AND PEACE

Peace processes have not often included women at the formal meetings of decision-making bodies. This may be because peacebuilding has occurred in

the context of negotiations during conflicts or in post-conflict situations that have involved military personnel and national leaders who are primarily men. However, there are good reasons why women need to be included in such processes. A publication of the International Association for Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Resolution states: "[W]omen involved in these processes will help design a lasting peace that will be advantageous to the empowerment, inclusion and protection of women."³

Based on her peace work with women in Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan, Shun Hing Chan conceptualizes positive peace as a holistic concept that includes gender equality, education, and sustainable livelihood. She articulates that peacebuilding takes place in "the everyday," which includes actions taken at the individual, group, and community levels to promote peace.⁴ Building a peace process involves cultural values related to hard work, persistence, and harmony, qualities that women bring to bear in the face of a harsh environment and struggles to sustain a livelihood. Chan wrote:

Whether as elected officials, members of worker cooperatives, or environmental entrepreneurs, women use their different positioning and tactics to exercise power and sustain their work, which indirectly subverts unequal power relationships while building a balanced cultural ecology. Securing the rights of indigenous people, defending the livelihoods of low-income workers, and cultivating cultural values and sustainable environments are new kinds of peacemaking that require persistence, creativity and intensive negotiation.⁵

Julie Drolet and Tuula Heinonen find that in some traditional rural settings and localities women's engagement with family and household, including home-based economic production and animal-raising, in comparison to men's involvement in wage earning away from the household, represent different needs, interests, and priorities⁶ and, thus, the meaningful inclusion of women's experiences and perspectives in discussions of peacebuilding are required. However, shifts in roles and responsibilities may occur due to social and economic change, processes and effects related to violence and conflict, and these will be accompanied by resultant and often differential effects on women's and men's lives.

We embarked on a six-year international project in partnership with academic institutions and a number of All China Women's Federations (ACWF) from several provinces to work in three regions of rural China with the aim of building capacity in over 500 front line ACWF cadres employed by the Chinese Communist Party.⁷ The purpose of the project was to promote gender equality and human rights.⁸ We adopted participatory methods in a series of social work training courses in five counties of the project areas, including two counties in Sichuan (southwestern China), two in Inner Mongolia and

smaller county in Shandong. Twenty-six townships and 73 villages from the five counties were involved in the project. The three provinces in which the project was implemented represented different developmental stages in economic development and marketization as a result of Deng Xiaoping's reform strategies since 1978.⁹

Although structural oppression and violence are not easily discussed by people in China, there has, however, been some latitude in discussion and activities around women's human rights and entitlements. During this six-year project, our university partners designed and delivered participatory training programs for the Women's Federation in each project site and enabled cross-site learning between them. We collaborated to conduct workshops for students and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work with rural migrants in Beijing and participated in an annual exchange program for faculty members, students, and leaders in the ACWF and local governments. We also trained three Master of Social Work students who graduated and later applied their newly acquired knowledge in the project sites.

In this chapter, we examine the project's outcome and critically discuss how our project contributed to building a culture of peace that transcended what might be seen as an otherwise rigid and hierarchical context that structurally oppresses rural women. During the years of this project, we witnessed a change of culture in the everyday lives of women and their respective communities that contributed toward a process of peacebuilding.

WOMEN'S WORK IN CHINA

In rural China, the role of organizing women is monopolized by the ACWF. Nonparty state-controlled NGOs are nearly nonexistent in our project sites. ACWF is a mass organization formed under the Chinese Communist Party to carry out the Party's political work.¹⁰ Since economic reforms in 1978, the Women's Federation has assumed a more active role in mobilizing women to participate in economic development. The ACWF is the main actor in organizing activities and services for local women, including matters of domestic dispute. The Women's Federation also serves as the main resource for mobilizing women in economic production and carrying out centralized policies.

The ACWF structure starts at the national level and terminates at the township level in rural areas. At the village level, a nominal honorarium is given to a local woman resident (called *funu zhuren*) appointed by the ACWF to carry out officially prescribed duties in mobilizing grassroots women to support party policies. Although most of the paid cadres were university trained, they were not prepared or specifically trained for women's work (as social services with women are referred to in the ACWF organization). Those at

the township level need to fulfill duties other than women's work and have limited external resources and support to do so.¹¹ With its top-down, party-oriented approach to management and communication, the ACWF has had difficulty gaining the trust or support of rural women over the years.¹²

Without any formal structure for NGOs in the rural project sites, our project's main partner was the ACWF in each respective site. We conducted social work training with the ACWF local women leaders and cadres on gender equality, and social work skills based on humanistic principles and practice that were adapted to suit Chinese indigenous cultures. The social work training was grounded in participatory and interactive methods,¹³ which focused on relationship building underscored by principles of *power-with* and *power-to-empower* others.¹⁴ Western knowledge was adapted to local culture and context and trainers from Chinese university partners drew on local knowledge and experiences of rural women. We used participatory rural appraisal (PRA) to work with rural women to identify needs in their local communities.¹⁵ The main idea of PRA is that by using a participatory method and seeing villagers as local experts, the villagers can work together to resolve local issues collectively and on their own. PRA often involves the use of appropriate and available technology from the local environment, such as pebbles, grains, and beans, to represent information. Villagers who are very familiar with these local materials can participate by using them, even limited by low literacy or numeracy, to cast votes on their views or priorities of concern. During project training, cadre trainees worked together in small groups on the floor to draw community maps and voice their perceived needs and dreams for improvement in their villages. The PRA methods were widely used in project sites not only to conduct needs assessments, but also to democratically make community decisions. For example, a democratic method was used to select a model family in the village, which sharply contrasted with the conventional method in which only the local authority was designated to choose. The result of encouraging rural women to express their own opinions was more local participation that reflected the rural women's interests. The ACWF cadres promoted a greater variety of activities for rural women and their families.

At the beginning our project partners were worried about the use of community organizing due to the sensitivity of grassroots organizing as a new concept in China. Without naming it as such, the end result of employing participatory methods was similar to some community organizing strategies and outcomes from outside of China.¹⁶ In the project sites during PRA workshops, identified issues such as poor water resources, lack of road infrastructure to support their economic activities, inadequate health care facilities, and women's voices in community leadership. The most common need identified in all sites was for technical knowledge about agriculture and animal husbandry.

for income generation. At the end of the six-year project, through mutual aid projects and learning ways to access and negotiate resources with local authorities, water pumps were installed and roads were built in local communities. A small number of women won local elections and had more say in community and political affairs. Women's needs, particularly in health care, were better addressed. Women led their households by engaging in new economic activities. As a result, women's status in social and economic domains was raised in their families and communities.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOSTERING A CULTURE OF PEACE

1. Accessing Traditional Cooperative Values which Humanized the Other and Built Trust

At the beginning of project training for ACWF cadres, the trainees were skeptical of the participatory approaches, which were unfamiliar to them. The approaches adopted by the project contrasted with the conventional top-down, didactic approach imposed by the upper hierarchy. With some skill development and practice, the trainees tried out their new methods as they sat in circles, a format which generated interaction and learning in a way they had not experienced before. Into the second year of the project training, the cadres started reporting a change in their own lives such as an increase in communication with their children and families and, hence, improved relationships. In their everyday work encounters they noticed how a different approach could bring about positive engagement with the rural women they served. They welcomed this new approach and adapted the knowledge to their practice in local cultural contexts.

In the first couple of training sessions, I resisted [social work ideas], considering them practically useless.

During the course of training, when we heard about these, we were all so excited, it's like butterflies in the stomach. We just think, after we come back, we would like to do something when we go back.

The change required disciplined action, constant self-observation and reflection, as well as feedback from and exchange with other cadres who found this change equally challenging. The positive response of cadres, especially among the village directors, and the remarkable increase in local women's participation in the various community projects confirmed that these changes in method were indeed bearing positive results. Seeing results from applying these methods reinforced their continued use among the cadres and led to further evolution of their participatory approach within the practicum.

context. The participatory interaction and collective reflection created an alternative way of knowing that was flexible and interpersonally connected.

In our project's outcome study, the trained participants provided evidence of remarkable changes as a result of the social work training. One of the greatest achievements of the project was that the ACWF cadres began to work more collaboratively with rural women who came for help. They no longer saw these women in the category of *other* or as women inferior to them. Many cadres spoke about the contrast between the newly learned and applied bottom-up approach with the previously applied judgmental, top-down and rigid approach. Instead of using the old mode of giving orders to rural women, the cadres learned to listen to their service recipients and built their own capacity for empathy toward their rural service recipients. One of the greatest achievements was removing some of the hierarchies imposed by the system. A more egalitarian relationship emerged in the cadres' relationships with those they served.

After training, many trained Women's Federation cadres noted greater trust and respect for the rural women and families to whom they provided services:

After we learned this social work method, we now approach things from bottom to top, to know about their needs; then we will launch the services in an appropriate way [according to people's needs]. I think this is much better.

The clients we are dealing with are all socially vulnerable people. I used to think that they were all incapable. But, after the training, I believe that those people are also respectable and capable. Thirdly, my work attitudes have changed a lot. I used to only do the work that was assigned by others. Now, I try my best to find the work by myself in order to help others better.

Following training on gender equality, PRA, and social work methods, cadres learned and tried to apply principles such as respect for privacy, self-determination, being nonjudgmental, and helping others so they could help themselves, as contrasted with earlier top-down methods.

After this project, we learned to respect each other and to keep their information confidential. . . . [In the past] we helped them make the decision, but now they make the decision by themselves. We are no longer their leader. Instead . . . we give women some references and comments, and we do not impose our own ideas but let them make a decision by themselves. The results are better than what they were in the past.

Respect for the individual, understanding, and genuine regard for the right to self-determination were developed through training as reflected in the following scenario about a domestic dispute shared by a cadre:

Previously, when I tried to resolve family disputes such as fights and quarrels between husband and wife, I was also very *angry* when they came to me for help. I would usually directly give them my opinions and comments regarding their dispute. After they both agreed to my comments, I asked them to write and sign a contract indicating commitment to prevent future similar disputes from happening again. But this method was not effective enough and could only solve problems temporarily. After a while, they started to quarrel and fight again.

When the same couple came to my office again, this time I listened to their complaints carefully and asked the woman to decide how she really wanted to solve the dispute. She decided to sue her husband, take him to court, and divorce him. Generally, a court hearing does not result in the immediate approval of a divorce. The judge took a short period of time to try to resolve their dispute first before divorcing them. During this period, her husband realized how serious it was this time. So he stopped drinking alcohol and started to work really hard like he had before. Then the wife slowly changed her mind and expressed concern to her husband. Later on the husband moved back to the house and lived together again with his wife. She withdrew her divorce application from the court, so the problem was resolved. I don't have to force them to sign the contract and become their guarantor.

In the outcome study conducted in 2010, project participants reported that conflicts with in-laws had been reduced. Family communication and relations improved. Women learned and applied various methods in handling conflicts that resulted in less occurrence of domestic violence. Many mothers-in-law became more supportive of their daughters-in-law when they saw the younger women become economically active and bringing additional income to the family. The shift in women's economic status at home changed gender relationships in the household. Women were treated with more respect at home. Decision-making patterns changed. The women's husbands listened to their views more and they became more supportive, taking on household tasks such as cooking and housework that were traditionally assigned to women. The spouses were proud of their wives' newly acquired role in leading the family in economic achievement and sustainable livelihoods.¹⁷ In the agricultural project areas, women were engaged in producing high-value cash crops, and sideline electronic production work, while in pastoral areas women acquired the skills to raise chickens and goats. Both women leaders and cadres reported increased self-esteem and confidence, and greater awareness of needs and their own potential. The knowledge acquired by ACWF cadres equipped them with a new approach in working with rural women. The new training they offered to rural women helped local women increase their self-confidence, hence, realizing greater self-esteem and better self-care.

2. Building Social Capital and Caring Communities through Cooperation

In Sichuan and Inner Mongolia, over 100 mutual aid groups were formed in local villages during the six years of the project. In the villages where we conducted outcome studies women were mobilized and took the lead in negotiating resources with local government to build pumping stations to relieve them of the heavy labor of increasing farm work. In one village, in a joint, practical effort with men, women worked toward more sustainable livelihood for the village by opening up a canal so that water pumped from a lower level could run through the canal and irrigate their farmland.¹⁸

Women formed themselves into different self-help groups to support one another socially and economically. Some formed micro-credit groups to obtain small-scale loans to support new economic activities. With financial help to start up local businesses, some women became entrepreneurs by opening hardware or other shops or engaging in recycling businesses. The social work practice methods that the cadres had learned taught them how to coordinate different kinds of available resources to enable the women to start these local businesses. Following is a story told by a cadre at the end of the project:

When [the rural woman] originally came to us, she told us she was motivated to start the business, but was afraid of losing money and did not have the capital she needed. We helped her get a loan from the *Rural Credit Co-operatives* but, as this loan was not sufficient, we also loaned her some through micro-credit groups. We no longer only sought social assistance from the local civil affairs department, which would have been our previous approach. This change in approach was more effective. As the old Chinese proverb tells us: "It is better to teach one how to fish than to give one a fish, for the one who is taught will eat for a lifetime, not only for a day."

The following story told by a trainee in a photovoice session (involving photography as a data collection strategy) is representative of many village women's stories of achievement that captures the process of building social capital:

Originally, she was the only *left behind* woman in the village who had become rich by raising pigs. Then she started a mutual aid group in the community to teach group members pig-raising techniques and experiences. Because of her efforts, more than 30 women followed her example and started to raise pigs. This has been done exclusively by this *left behind* woman.

In some of the villages, we heard from women about their dreams of having a concrete road so that they could transport their fresh produce to the market on time. During the outcome study we heard that, in some project sites, roads were built and the women's incomes had increased. Since most of their spouses

migrated to work in urban centres, the women organized themselves to repair the road. In other villages, women told us that some had to wait to participate in such projects as all were enthusiastic and wanted to help but not all could be accommodated.

Women who participated utilized their newly acquired skills not only to generate income, but also to provide care for persons who were disabled or pregnant women and whose husbands had migrated to work. In their respective mutual aid groups, the rural women helped one another during harvest season when someone was sick or needed additional help so they could tend to their in-laws.

Ervin Staub remarked on the values of cooperation and community that aptly describe the results of our project:

Values of cooperation and community, an appreciation of others' humanity and worth that is not based on their material possessions but on their character, capacity for positive relationships, and contribution to their neighbour's lives and community, would make the evolution of violence less likely.¹⁹

3. A Change in Culture

In one of the northern project counties, a group of women took up singing and dancing as a means to express themselves. Yangko dance was performed publicly despite the conventional male-dominant view that such practices took women away from household chores and was a waste of time. The women wanted to sing and dance together and worked with the village women directors, subsequently forming a group of over 80 women dancers who practiced and performed publicly. Some more conservative members believed that women who appeared in public to perform in this way would encourage the corruption of village morals. The dancers were sometimes subject to gossip and ridicule that prevented some from taking part, however, the dancing activities flourished and the women soon performed at cultural activities with community support. The role of dance was important for the women because, as Julia Anwar McHenry notes, the arts can represent both social and civic engagement; dance and other arts are "a means of communicating meaning and emotion . . . and are used to make a statement, for pleasure and the creation of beauty."²⁰ In rural China, these activities opened up for the women the possibility of building networks and communal expression. Dancing also promoted harmonious activities and relations among village women, instilling in them a sense of common purpose and effort.

As a result of the project more women participated in community affairs and decision making. For example, there was an increase in the number of women and men who participated in community activities initiated by

women. With regard to local political decision making, men had previously dominated village leadership and women had seldom voted. At the end of the project, it was reported in many villages that 70 to 80 percent of villagers who came to vote were rural women. Women voted for the people they wanted to support, which resulted in more women being selected as village representatives and taking up political positions.

After the social work training, the cadres developed abilities in resource mobilization and acquired the knowledge and skills to tap into available resources to meet the needs of villagers. With increased ability of cadres to write their own funding proposals and reports, they began to experience some success in soliciting funds for a variety of local projects aimed at improving the lives of rural women and their communities. Through learning how to apply participatory approaches and generate positive support from local governments, rural women's capacities were also built, as well as awareness of their needs. The following account was given during focus group interviews of the evaluation study:

I think this project has been a big influence. Before, our work was all arranged by the government; each department was responsible for its own business. Before, we carried out tasks by using that approach. But now it is different, according to women's wishes; they know we focus on them too. Their awareness has been improved. This project pays more attention to women, and the government does as well—and other working methods have also changed. Now, even if their husbands are not at home or the government doesn't initiate any projects, women would look for work and develop their own projects. Their awareness of self-empowerment has improved. It is because the local government now pays attention to the work of rural women, and this project has played some role in that, too.

One of the major achievements as a result of trainees' local initiatives in Inner Mongolia was the establishment of centers for women and for children who were left behind in the villages as men migrated to work in city centers. With minimal start-up funds from the project itself, the Women's Federation cadres convinced the county government to finance the infrastructure of the centers. These are also important gathering places for women who can share experiences and concerns. Regular discussions were held on topics such as women's health and parent-child relationships. Both in Sichuan and Inner Mongolia, several project townships obtained over 100,000 renminbi (approximately 17,000 Canadian dollars) to build irrigation projects and roads. One trainee recounted the following:

This time our whole village completed an application form, so it was clear how many people were participating in this project and experiencing this work.

issue. After completing this form, they submitted it to our leaders, and they felt it was very good, as it reflected the need and the size of the community. Before the government didn't know which *Kacha* [village, in Mongolian] needed this project, but now with the submitted application, they know what the needs are and have a better understanding.

According to Johan Galtung, a condition for peace is an equitable relationship.²¹ The changes in cadres' attitudes and work methods not only had a tremendous impact on the women in the villages but also resonated with their superiors in the ACWF, contributing to the creation of institutional change. Some cadres who went through the social work training shifted from a submissive stance to one in which they challenged their local government supervisors and brought forward ideas from the grassroots to the local authorities. As local authorities witnessed concrete results from the changes, they became more supportive of the Women's Federation cadres' work and more affirming of the gender initiatives they proposed. The transformation that took place in trainees' attitudes and methods led to ripple effects of change evident in a less hierarchical organizational management in the ACWF institution and outreach to the grassroots. There was also more consultation with women in local villages, rather than direct orders from front line cadres.

In the past, county leaders seldom traveled to the countryside to participate in local village activities. The participatory approach adopted by trained local township and village cadres motivated the county leaders to visit the townships. For the first time, rather than separating themselves on the higher points of the podium as in the past, leaders sat with the local women during their public engagement activities. A cadre recounted how this action moved many local women to tears:

We held an activity for these *left-behind* populations that involved us going into the front level, riding a long way to the towns and villages. The most impressive thing was that those *left-behind* rural women in the village held our hands and cried. One said, "I am in my 40s. This is the first time that Women's Federation has come to us to hold this activity and we can sit together and enjoy the activity." Because before, during our activities, we would sit on the platform (top), while village women would sit off-stage. We gave them lectures, and sometimes announced orders from upper levels of governments or bills passed in conferences. But now we joined their activities.

4. Praxis in Relation to Transformation

During the six years of the China project, the ACWF trainees experienced praxis during a process of change as a result of active learning in the social work training program. This process resembles what Stephen Kemmis

describes as "action, practice and change."²² From the cadres' accounts in reports and their written stories, we see seeds of praxis that developed as the cadres learned, tried out what they learned, reflected on their actions and results and revised their course of action to fit better with the local situation and context. In their everyday lives and work, the cadres reported that they often revisited ideas and questioned their assumptions. Reflection and further practice enabled them to re-evaluate existing values and premises in the light of their developing new practices.

Through the training, I started to wonder if I really hold the assumption that every woman has the capability. So, for the recent New Year's celebration party, I changed my approach. I asked them what I could do for them. They offered lots of good suggestions, such as playing games, dancing and talk shows, etc. We tried them out. Everyone had a good time as a result of the varieties of the activities.

The praxis process encouraged trainees to examine and challenge their notions related to gender, for example, the perception that men are superior and women inferior, and to explore the structural issues related to such gender assumptions. Thus, after taking part in gender awareness training, cadres started to question these notions and wanted to address the structural issues that lead to gender inequity. The following reflection characterizes a shift from an individual to a structural level of problem analysis:

The techniques that we learn are not sufficient to solve problems on a larger scale. Moreover, as societies evolve there will be all kinds of new problems and dilemmas. If we just work with our clients in terms of individual cases, it will not get us very far. In order to solve a problem from the root, we need to raise the awareness of gender equality in the whole society, and with the mutual support of other social benefit policies. This is a piece of my thoughts about the deep problems.²³

According to Malcolm Payne, reflection is a cognitive process influenced by emotions and bodily reactions, which are also regarded as important sources of knowledge.²⁴ From the outcome data, we found that cadres had a subjective experience as they took action through reflection and further action, which had evoked a great deal of emotion. In the process of learning social work in class and practice settings, the authors (also occasional trainers) witnessed the trainees going through stages of confusion, challenge, and reflection on what they were taught in social work, deconstructing old concepts and modes of action, and finally embracing the appropriate ones to develop their base of informed practice. During the praxis process, trainees used an indigenous term, *thought collision*, to describe the arguments and

reciprocal challenges that occurred between trainers and trainees as they strove to find the practice modes most relevant to local rural practice. Their practicum experiences offered an opportunity to immediately apply theory to practice, and supported learning from the bottom-up and from grassroots practice experiences.

The positive response of cadres, especially among the village directors, and the remarkable increase in local women's participation in the various community projects confirmed that these changes in method were indeed bearing positive results. Seeing results from applying these methods reinforced their continued use among the cadres and led to further evolution of their participatory approach within the practicum context. The participatory interaction and collective reflection created an alternative way of knowing that was flexible and interpersonally connected. Such a process is an example of effective social work practice that makes use of a thoughtful and critical approach where different ideas and concepts generate reflection and action and lead to a new conceptualization of practice. Ultimately, practice is transformed, as reflected in the accounts of front-line experience of both the cadres and the rural women.

Michael Edwards and Gita Sen suggest that deep-rooted personal transformation fuels a search for more humane social systems founded upon more collaborative, egalitarian principles. The potential for change is made possible when the wishes of people at the grassroots level can be expressed and realized.²⁵ We saw such a possibility occurring as cadres strove to understand the needs of rural women and work more collaboratively with them and as they reflected these needs to their superiors. For their efforts, they experienced some good responses from the authorities. In their exploration of how transformation of human relationships may lead to social change, Edwards and Sen also argue that change requires a fundamental shift in values. This shift needs to be freely chosen in order to be sustainable, and such choice is more likely to be made by individuals who have experienced a "transformation of the heart." These personal and/or collective transformations need to be fostered by larger institutions in order to be sustainable.²⁶ When one considers the transformation experienced by local cadres, and its impact on the local villages they served, the question arises: To what extent can this transformation be sustained?

CONCLUSION

This six-year long project with women in China was successful in generating more egalitarian, respectful relations as seen in activities that broke new ground and challenged existing rigid, hierarchical structures. The women

who were trained were interested in joining together to help one another and to meet local household and community needs, for example, in local micro-enterprise initiatives, and in groups to build alternative structures and networks, such as rural roads, wells, and libraries, to further women's needs and interests.

The Women's Federation cadres who participated in training activities and practicums raised their awareness of rural women and of women's mutual interests. They also drew from the lessons learned in the training, which stimulated improved morale, new perspectives and methods, and a greater energy for working at the grassroots with women who were no longer distanced from them. The activities and outcomes of the project can be framed as peacebuilding in that they changed relationships once characterized by tension and conflict and built capacity in individual participants and communities. They also initiated institutional change in that those ACWF cadres who applied the participatory methods learned in their work brought their experiences into the ACWF organization, a structure within the Communist Party. Although we do not know how the new ideas and practices were transferred to these bodies, nor do we know how much this was possible, we hope that some seeds were planted that will lead to greater equality between women and men at the grassroots, in the Women's Federation organizations, and in other government bodies.

NOTES

1. Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London, England: Sage, 1996), 9.

2. *Ibid.*, 31.

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5. *Ibid.*, 529–30.

6. Julie Drolet and Tuula Heinonen, "Gender Concepts and Controversies," in *International Social Development: Social Work Experiences and Perspectives*, ed. Tuula Heinonen and Julie Drolet (Halifax, NS and Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood 2012).

7. The project, *Building Human Capacity—Social Work with Rural Women in China (2004–2010)*, was funded by the Canadian International Development Association (CIDA).

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17. Cheung and Heinonen, "Grassroots Change."

18. Ibid.

19. Ervin Staub, "A World without Genocide: Prevention, Reconciliation and Creation of Peaceful Societies," *Journal of Social Issues* 69.1 (2013): 193.

20. Julia Anwar McHenry, "Rural Empowerment through the Arts: The Role of the Arts in Civic and Social Participation in the Mid West Region of Western Australia," *Journal of Rural Studies* 27.3 (2011).

21. Galtung, *Peaceful Means*, 1.

22. Stephen Kemmis, "Research for Praxis: Knowing Doing," *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 18.1 (2010): 11.

23. Meng Liu, *A Collection of Stories in the China Project* (Beijing, China: Chinese Women's University, 2009), 20.

24. Malcolm Payne, *Humanistic Social Work: Core Principles in Practice* (Chicago, IL: Lyceum, 2011).

25. Michael Edwards and Gita Sen, "NGOs, Social Change and the Transformation of Human Relationships: A 21st-Century Civic Agenda," *Third World Quarterly* 21.1 (2000).

26. Ibid., 606.

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