

Social Services of Local Congregations

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Abstract

Since at least the early 1990s, there has been a trend in Taiwan of the privatization of public services. Under this global trend, the state has shifted its responsibilities of service provision to for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Among the nonprofit organization, rising expectations extend to faith-based organizations, particularly to local congregations. Yet the link between social services and religion has deep historical root in most countries. However, little attention has been given to the social service provision role of the local congregations. Due to the secularization of religion and the welfare reform of USA, the role of local congregations has been recognized again. There were a few studies on services of local temples in Taiwan more than 10 years ago. But the policy environment in Taiwan has a sea change plus a lot of emerging social problems in the past 10 years. We need to recovery the new role of local congregations and temples on service provision. This descriptive research applies qualitative method to explore the social services of local congregations and temples at Puli. Like local congregations as in the USA, the local faith-based organizations at Puli also provide temporary or one-shot social services, most of them are traditional charity relief work. Only one Taoist temple and two churches recruit social workers to provide professional and on-going services. The barrier of local faith-based organizations of providing social services is not financial problem. Leadership and human resources are critical factors that affect capability of service provision. The capacity building may be needed for local faith-based organizations at Puli for providing social services.

Keywords: Local congregation, Faith-based organization, Nonprofit organisation, Social service