



## **International Network for School Social Work**

**<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>**

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### **Field Placements in Schools in Sri Lanka**

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#### **National Institute of Social Development**

Professional social work education in Sri Lanka started in 1952 with the establishment of the Ceylon Institute of Social work. The institute conducted short-term training for welfare personnel and later developed a one-year certificate course in social work. In 1965 the school launched a two-year Diploma in Social Work programme to prepare professional social workers. In order to provide higher education in social work the school was upgraded and renamed as the National Institute of Social Development in 1992. In 2005 the National Institute of Social Development was recognized as a degree awarding institution by the state, on the recommendation of the University Grants Commission. The Sri Lanka School of Social Work, a division of the Institute, is the sole provider of professional social work education in Sri Lanka.

The 2-year Diploma and the 4-year Bachelor of Social Work programmes produce generic social work practitioners. The Master of Social Work (MSW) programme, introduced in 2008, has the additional purpose of turning out managerially competent practitioners. All three programmes include extensive field practice with individuals, families, social groups and communities.

#### **Field placements in Schools**

School social work projects have been implemented on a pilot basis in a few Sri Lankan government schools from time to time since 1969 and in private school since 1996. These projects are initiated as field placements by the students and the National Institute of Social Development.

Following a needs assessment, the students' school social work projects fulfill some of the following services:

- Working with children with economic, social and behavioral problems
- Referral services
- Improving the school attendance among the children
- Working with children who have dropped out of school
- Working with groups with special needs
- Building up social relationships between all stake holders of the school system
- Linking resources available in the community and the schools
- Helping to find resources for infrastructure facilities of schools
- Developing peace-building programmes among the school children
- Empowering children regarding issues such as child abuse, children's rights and responsibilities

### **School children in Sri Lanka**

Teaching and learning is geared towards the development of the whole child as a contributing member of society. However, today's children face varied problems of growing up in a complex society that prevent them from benefiting fully from their education. Poverty, ethnic conflicts, changing cultural values, warfare and the absence of mothers who are working in domestic labor in the Middle East are some of the major problems affecting school children. Classroom teachers do not have the time to help children deal with these issues. School social work services are needed to assess situations, link children with resources and support and guide them to move on to a better quality of life.

### **The Status of School Social Work in Sri Lanka**

The field placement experience revealed that there is a great need for school social workers. Schoolteachers who have entered the social work degree programmes have been particularly successful in field placements in schools as they bring their experience of working in a school setting to the social work role. School Management, students and parents have been very positive towards school social work. However, there is little public awareness about school social work, and appointing social workers to work in schools is a financial challenge for the Government of Sri Lanka.

So far 2 private schools are the only schools to have hired social workers for their schools. SERVE, a Sri Lankan non-profit organization, has been working in Government and Private Schools through its School Social Work Project since 2001. It is one of the field placement agencies which managed to promote this concept to two leading private schools. The challenge in Sri Lanka is to extend social work services to all school children.

### **Attend the 4th International School Social Work Conference for University Credit Michelle Alvarez**

The Fourth International School Social Work Conference will be held in Auckland, New Zealand in April 2009. At <http://4isswc.massey.ac.nz/> you can find details about the conference and how to send in an abstract to present a paper.

Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU,M) is pleased to offer anyone attending the conference a course in current international topics in school social work. Come improve your knowledge of school social work from an international perspective and enhance your cultural competence skills. Participants will network with school social workers from other countries, visit a local school, ride a luge and a gondola, participate in a coffee cruise in the Auckland inner harbor, and enjoy the hospitality of a host family for two nights. The course objectives are listed below.

The course will be offered for undergraduate and graduate credit. Participants must pre-register for the course by November 21, 2008. For information and to find out the requirements of the course, go to <http://www.mnsu.edu/ext/cpe/newzealand.html> or email Dr. Michelle Alvarez at [michelle.alvarez@mnsu.edu](mailto:michelle.alvarez@mnsu.edu).

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#### **International Topics in School Social Work Course Objectives**

- 1) Students will increase their knowledge base about current school social work practice in the United States or their country of employment.
  - 2) Students will explore models for school social work practice delivery in other countries.
  - 3) Students will identify similarities and differences between school social work practice in the United States or their country of employment, and other countries.
  - 4) Students will reflect on how culture impacts the development and delivery of school social work services in the United States or their country of employment, and other countries.
  - 5) Students will expand their awareness of cultural diversity in the countries represented at the International School Social Work conference.
  - 6) Student will develop a plan to apply learning in the course to their practice
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