



International Network for School Social Work

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

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The Conference

The Mongolian Association of Social Workers announces that the 6th International School Social work conference will be held June 10-12, 2015 in Ulaanbataar, Mongolia. Many Mongolian social workers and social work educators are working hard to bring this conference together. The hope is that it will benefit not only Mongolia, but also children around the world. Contact the Mongolian Association of School Social Workers for more information at <http://www.massw.org/?lang=en>.

School Social Work in Mongolia

Mongolia, in North-East Asia, is bordered on the south by China and on the North by the Russian Federation. Mongolia has approximately 2,736,764 people scattered over a territory of 1.5 million square km, making it the least densely populated country in the world. About 40% of the population, about a million people, lives in the capital city Ulaanbaatar, while many still follow a nomadic lifestyle with herds of livestock and horses.

The social work profession began in schools in Mongolia during the 1990's. Social and economic turmoil following Mongolia's transition from an authoritarian communist system to a parliamentary democracy contributed to increased stress on families and this was creating a negative impact on the school lives of children. The need to safeguard children's rights, provide protection and welfare services and ensure educational development brought about creation of a school social work pilot program in Ulaanbaatar. In 1997, Save the Children (UK), in collaboration with the Mongolian Child Rights Centre (MCRC), established a model project, working to reduce the school drop out rate and provide social welfare services to children in need.

In the last decade school social work has been introduced throughout the country and it has been written into the law. Training materials, school social work standards and a job description have been produced. These activities have been organized and financed in a collaboration between the Mongolian State University of Education, Save the Children UK, Save the Children Norway, the Mongolian Association of School Social Workers and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The job description that has been accepted by the Ministry of Education is significant. It outlined the four main purposes of providing a child friendly environment, ensuring child protection, promoting the full participation of the child in school life and networking with parents, teachers and other local organizations that work for children.



Along with training, various publications have contributed to the further development of the field. The first textbook on school social work was published in 1999. Currently, there are books, journals and research papers for school social workers. A handbook for school social workers was produced in 2009.

The Mongolian Association of School Social Workers

A professional association dedicated to school social work was started to support the newly trained workers, provide professional development and help them to lobby for their role in schools. In 2001 school social workers started the Mongolian Association of School Social Work, and since then it has played a central role in the development of school social work. The MASSW has worked steadily on the legislation, training, research and publications, always in collaboration with agencies such as Save the Children, plus the Ministry of Education and the University. The Association publishes the journal *School Social Work Practice* four times a year. Members have participated in international conferences and are active in both the International Network and the Asian School Social Work Network. Most of the school social workers currently employed are members of the Association.



Present challenges

In 2008, the age requirement for starting school in Mongolia was changed from 8 years old to 6 years old. Many children who live far from schools, including the 6 year-olds, must attend boarding schools. The Ministry of Education collaborated with MASSW to organize national training for dormitory teachers to help them understand the impact of this change. Seven school social workers also took part in train-the-trainer sessions. 1200 dormitory teachers attended the 2 training sessions.



The challenge of training school social workers in Ulaanbaatar and all 21 provinces continues. Workshops, University courses and conferences are offered and the MASSW makes sure that participants enjoy the experience.