



International Network for School Social Work

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Education for All A Role for School Social Workers

At a World Conference sponsored by UNESCO in 1990 the nations of the world declared that everyone has a right to education. Participants established a framework for countries and international partnerships as a guide to implementing the policy of Education for All. The Millennium Development Goals set by United Nations member states reinforce the goals of Education for All, especially completion of primary school, adults and equalization of education. A 2000 assessment World Education Forum found these goals with 113 million without access to primary school. Participants in the Forum then set new goals and organizations, agencies, groups at the Forum pledged national and international support to meet the goals by 2015. The new goals included specific objectives for early childhood education, free and compulsory primary education by 2015, youth and adult education programs, elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education and improvements in the quality of education with measurable outcomes.



for universal enrolment and universal literacy of young people. The slow and uneven progress in children (60% of them girls) school. Participants in the targets, and the governments, and associations represented

Progress was evaluated and published in UNESCO's EFA *Global Monitoring Report of 2010* <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606E.pdf>. This time the evaluation was more positive. The number of primary school children out of school had dropped from 113 million to 72 million, with less gender disparity. However, it warned that the global financial crisis could erode the gains as education budgets are cut, while unemployment and poverty levels rise. For example, current trends would leave 56 million children out of school by 2015.

The 2011 report <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001907/190743e.pdf> focuses on the destructive impact that armed conflict has on educational opportunities. The largest gender inequalities in education, the lowest literacy levels and high rates of out-of-school children are in conflict-affected countries. The report suggests that progress towards Universal Primary Education (Goal 2 of EFA) is slowing. Children who are most likely to be out of school and/or

not completing primary school are those who are poor, female, rural and in conflict-affected countries. The same factors affect completion of secondary school. The report emphasized the importance of developing a broad set of policies to combat the high rate of dropout for these children. It suggested that building peace-building into national education policies is a key strategy for reducing dropout, thereby making education a force for peace.

The EFA Global Monitoring Reports provide comprehensive data and analysis. In general there was progress in the first part of the decade, but it has slowed following the global economic downturn. The reports state that the international community is failing to make the institutional changes needed to reach the 6 EFA goals by 2015 and they set out agendas for change by governments, global institutions and donors.

School social work in school reforms

Basic governmental reforms involving a collective commitment to education are needed to make it possible to enroll and retain all children in school. For example, the government of Ghana has instituted a series of reforms aimed at increasing access to education, starting with the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education legislation in 1996, followed by removal of school levies, instituting school feeding programs and establishing a Girls' Education Unit, which together have produced steady improvement in enrolment. Countries are increasingly employing social workers as one strategy amongst other reforms to mobilize the strengths of schools, families and communities in keeping vulnerable groups of children in school. Mongolia is a prime example of how joint efforts by social work organizations, international agencies, government and university have established social work services in schools in little more than a decade. The focus of school social work may be on girls, children living in poverty, children with disabilities, working children, children in conflict-affected countries, child soldiers, rural children, minorities and many marginalized groups. As part of educational reform it should be recognized that teachers cannot handle children's complex needs alone. They depend on a team of specialists including social workers to help vulnerable children overcome the obstacles they face to stay in school and to be successful learners. Many of these obstacles are similar in all countries, and school systems everywhere are looking for ways to handle them and to reduce the negative effects on the pupil's learning and on the school community.

Where is school social work still needed?

The EFA global monitoring reports show that the largest numbers of children who remain out of school are in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. Marginalized groups in every country continue to face barriers to school success. School social work is needed to help focus on removing barriers as a component of policies and programs for attaining the EFA goals by 2015.

The 5th International School Social Work Conference
will be held in April 10 - 13, 2012 in Accra, Ghana. The theme is
**"SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK: ENSURING QUALITY EDUCATION
FOR ALL THE WORLD'S CHILDREN".**

<http://www.sswaghana.org/>

Deadline for Abstracts is August 15, 2011