



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

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### **Electronic Newsletter June 2011**

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## **School Social Work Initiatives on Three Continents**

### **Vietnam**

#### **Violence, suicides prompt call for social workers in schools**

HCM CITY — The need for social workers to be a regular part of the educational system has gained urgency in Viet Nam, given the increasing incidence of school violence, dropouts and suicides, experts say.

At a conference held by the HCM City Open University and UNICEF Viet Nam on social work last weekend, participants talked about the Ministry of Education and Training's proposal for a US \$3.3 billion plan that would comprehensively revamp the education curricula towards providing children with life-skills traditionally not taught in schools.

The most important step to teaching life-skills was the presence of qualified social workers in schools, experts said. Social workers in schools would provide a valuable service in counselling high school students and helping them deal with daily life problems, but policy makers have not paid attention to this aspect, the conference heard.

The task of social workers cannot be undertaken by teachers who are already overloaded with regular academic work, said Thach Ngoc Yen of HCM City's Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs. Yen said a child spent most of his/her time at school and the educational system was typically blamed when he or she became delinquent.

About 10 years ago, with support from Save the Children Sweden, social workers were appointed in two senior secondary schools in HCM City as a pilot project, with the hope it could be expanded to other schools. The social workers helped students with psychological issues including problems they had with teachers, parents and other people. Later, similar projects were implemented in eight more schools in the city's Districts 3, 8, 10, Tan Binh and Go Vap, as well as the Phan Thanh Gian High School in the Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta province of Ben Tre.

Le Chi An, head of HCM City Open University's Social Work faculty, said many schools in HCM City have currently adopted counselling as a support to reduce school violence and deal with psychological issues faced by their students. However, An said, most of these projects have been short-term, pilot projects. The work done by social workers should go beyond providing counselling to addressing other problems they face on a regular basis, he said.

According to the HCM City Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, among 5,000 social workers in the city, around 1,000 work in the education and healthcare sectors. The country has around 34 universities training social workers. However, in order to help the social workers do their tasks professionally and effectively, they should be made part of schools' staff, experts reiterated at the conference. — VNS Copyright © 2009 Viet Nam News

Corrections from Le Chi An: The workshop was sponsored by the Ford Foundation, not by UNICEF. Le Chi An is head of the Social Work section of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, HCM City Open University.

## Hungary

A representative of the Ministry of National Resources attended the school social workers' National Meeting held on 24 May in Pécs. A working group of school social workers, representatives of professional associations and the Ministry will continue working towards establishing school social work (*iskolai szociális munkás*) in Hungary. A news item <http://www.rtlklub.hu/hirek/belfold/cikk/345111>

indicates that social workers are needed to handle conflicts and violence in the schools. The legal framework, practice model and financing are to be worked out in the near future and it is anticipated that the new law on social services will make it possible for every school to employ a school social worker.



## South Africa

Social workers in South Africa will gather at the NASW-SA Conference <http://www.naswsa.co.za/images/stories/2ndnaswsacommunicationpack.pdf> September 28-30, 2011 to work together on issues affecting the profession and to shape its development. One of ten commissions will work on **Building a school social work movement: A response to psychosocial challenges in basic education system**. Presentations on school social work will focus on introducing a school social work movement, developing a suitable model for South Africa and practical issues such as costs, training and developing multi-disciplinary teams.

## Botswana

The Botswana Gazette recently carried the article “There is a Need for School Social Work”. Kgomo Jomo Jo, President of the Botswana Social Workers Association (BOSWA) wrote about the many problems that children bring to school due to rapid social change. There is a need for trained school social workers to help committed and hard-working teachers with these social issues, so that teachers can teach without having to deal with children's psychosocial problems, children can learn and the schools achieve their goal of excellence in education. [http://www.gazettebw.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=7977%3Athere-is-need-for-school-social-work&catid=15%3Aeditorial&Itemid=2](http://www.gazettebw.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7977%3Athere-is-need-for-school-social-work&catid=15%3Aeditorial&Itemid=2)

## Kenya

Charles Mbugua, President of the Kenya National Association of Workers, writes that school social work is an idea whose time has come. A group of social workers in Kenya are starting to gather resources and map out the approach for introducing a school social work program.