



International Network for School Social Work

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The International Conferences of the International Network for School Social Work

The International School Social Work Conference held in Ghana this year completed the cycle of a conference in each continent. The 5 conferences have increased communication between school social workers around the world, strengthened practice in each region and enhanced the standing of the profession in the host country. The conferences took place in:

- 1999 in the US, hosted by the School Social Work Association of America
- 2003 in Sweden, hosted by the Swedish School Social Workers Association
- 2006 in Korea, hosted by the Korea Association of School Social Work
- 2009 in New Zealand, hosted by the school social workers of Aotearoa
- 2012 in Ghana hosted, by the School Social Work Association of Ghana

Report On The 5th International School Social Work Conference, Accra, Ghana, April 10-13, 2012, Esther B. A. Mahama (Conference Chair)

The School Social Work Association of Ghana, in partnership with the International Network for School Social Work, hosted the 5th International School Social Work Conference in Accra, Ghana. The theme was “School Social Work: Ensuring Quality Education for all the World’s Children”. The conference was a huge success with over 200 participants from 14 countries attending. Conference activities and workshops provided a stimulating atmosphere for exchange of ideas and experiences in school social work practices around the globe featuring speakers from 11 countries.

The event was organized and sponsored by SSWAG with the crucial support and collaboration of the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana, Legon, and the Department of Special Education, University of Education, Winneba, under the distinguished auspices of the Ministry of Education.

It was so gratifying to hear and see delegates from 14 countries representing all the continents of the World being acknowledged as they stood up to be introduced. As the President of SSWAG and conference chair, organizing, coordinating and participating in the 5th International Conference on “Ensuring Quality Education for all the World’s Children” was the most exciting period of my life. In reality, spending four days with social workers, educators, students, service organizations, government representatives, researchers, policy

makers, and experts in the field of social work from around the globe was a stimulating and motivating professional experience. The level of commitment, humour, talents and passion exhibited during the plenary and breakout sessions was overwhelming. The drive to work together to achieve personal and conference objectives was enormous. Keynote speeches and workshops formed the basis of presentations and discussions, creating an interactive atmosphere for exchange of ideas and knowledge for school social work practices. Among social events, a Ghanaian Cultural Troup showcased a series of splendid traditional dances that moved participants to the dancing floor. A hotel resident band also entertained delegates to famous Ghanaian Highlife music that kept delegates dancing to the late hours of the night.

The Minister for Women and Children Affairs and Ghana's Deputy Minister of Education, Honorable Mahama Ayariga, who delivered a speech on behalf of the first lady of Ghana (the conference Guest of Honour), were among several distinguished plenary speakers. The Minister of Education used the opportunity to interact with conference participants and also participated in two workshop presentations. He left the conference site with informed knowledge about school social work. At his suggestion we have submitted a paper on conference outcomes and recommendations to the Ministry of Education for consideration.

Throughout the conference, seasoned members of the social work profession kept talking about the need to have school social workers in all school settings. The challenge to school social work associations, social work training institutions and employers is to ensure that enough personnel are effectively trained and placed in school settings, particularly in Ghana and other African Countries where the profession is not well developed.

The conference established a platform for SSWAG and social work training institutions to collaborate and produce information to increase administrators' understanding of the role of school social workers in education systems. It also set an agenda for SSWAG to advocate for and initiate programmes that will attract support from the Education Ministry, other sectors and donors.



Ghana Conference souvenir

The delegates at the Accra conference unanimously approved holding the next international school social work conference in Mongolia. The strong School Social Work Association of Mongolia will organize the conference with support from the University, the Ministry of Education and an international committee.