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*“A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work”*

## **MOBILIZING FAITH-MOTIVATED SOCIAL WORKERS BEYOND GLOBAL TOURISM**

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### *Abstract*

*With so much suffering in the world today, social work needs to compound our efforts to impact global social injustice. This mandate is especially true where our faith commissions us to impact the world with God’s love. To date, our international outreach efforts have often amounted to little more than professional tourism. This presentation facilitates further dialog of how NACSW members can use their professional abilities to create greater sustainable impacts for the vulnerable worldwide. Using my experiences from working and teaching in Iraq, Africa, Asia, and Central and South America, I share a variety of scenarios for practitioners, students and educators that can expand our world of global social work opportunities. On-line resources are also shared that can be co-opted for researching new alternatives and future opportunities.*

### **Introduction**

The litter strewn beach in Guinea West Africa was full of snot-incrusted nose kids whose clothes looked more like my rag bag fare than civilized body cover. Their hair was “painted”

with the red hews typical of protein shortages and malnutrition. Their eyes were large, but without shine. A few of the younger children sat under a mangrove tree with flat affect and little energy. Their mothers worked together at the lake front implementing the ceremonial “washing” and wrapping of the infant who had died sometime during the fever vigil of the night before. In the center of the group was one young mother whose uncontrolled grief left her doubled over in agonizing pain. As typical during these difficult experiences, older grandmotherly types had taken over were directing the rituals that were all too well rehearsed as of late. In this village 11 babies had died within 12 months. Kim and Andrew, my social work interns and I could offer very little comfort! We felt powerless. There were no CNN cameras with us to decry this atrocity. There were no reporters and since no one could read or write, the only village record of this injustice were the tiny piles of dirt and rocks that marked the village edge!

The longer I remained living on the front-line of human poverty and degradation, the more I came to realize that this suffering is of complex etiology. There are no single factors that precipitate it and there are no quick fixes to ameliorate it. On the return trip from our visit to this coastal village this article was born. In hours of bouncy African road debate, my students and I brainstormed how social work teams could mobilize and energize to better meet the acute needs of the world’s suffering.

Most of us have, from one time or other, been bitten by the international wanderlust bug. It begins innocently enough. With a late night conversation, a Save-the-Children TV commercial, a book read or by overdosing on National Geographic, our desire to travel aboard is peaked. This drive, coupled with our professional commitment to difference-making, moves us beyond the piña colada (virgin of course) holiday extravaganza to more meaningful outreach ventures. We seek helping aboard opportunities that will leave a more lasting imprint on the

hurt, distrust, poverty, illness, economic and educational disadvantage, and spiritual emptiness that many around the world face.

Traditionally, those of us desiring international helping/travel experiences resort to short-term “tourism” trips to designated countries of interest and need. We often travel in groups and stay a week or two trying to leave a positive impact with our ministry effort. Based on my recent front-line experiences, the advice and resources shared here suggest a larger world view for professional global outreach. Additionally, I hope this discussion further spawns a faith-impassioned forum for promoting ongoing partnership initiatives for expanding our efforts overseas. Among the interrelated scenarios discussed are: Student volunteer trips, practicums, full-time employment, scholarship and research, consultations and an adopt-a-project.

### Difference Making Options

#### Student Volunteer Trips

This is probably the most common form of international service activity in academe. These trips are typically 2-4 week travel experiences. A faculty member or other volunteer adults organize the trip and facilitate a hands-on helping/learning experience in a place with need. One great example of this service would be Habitat for Humanity, where homes are built in partnership with local teams and the family recipients of the home. Many faith groups have used this model for building churches and/or school in poor communities world-wide. In fact there are many organizations that will aid in finding and/or facilitating volunteer opportunities.

Among some of my recommended favorites are the following:

<http://www.idealists.org/if/ioc/en/AdvancedSearch/VolunteerOpportunity/default>

<http://www.globalvolunteers.org/>; <http://www.interaction.org/disaster/volunteering.html>;

<http://www.unitedplanet.org/quest.html>; <http://www.volunteerinternational.org/>;

<http://www.vfp.org/>; <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/>; <http://www.iicd-volunteer.org/>;  
<http://www.volunteer.org.nz/>; <http://www.volunteerinternational.com/>;  
<http://www.habitat.org/ivp/>; <http://www.oxfam.org/en/getinvolved/volunteer/>;  
<http://www.teamworksinternational.org/>; <http://www.sci-ivs.org/>; <http://www.esperanca.org/>;  
<http://www.volunteermatch.org/volunteers/>; [http://www.uniteforsight.org/intl\\_volunteer/](http://www.uniteforsight.org/intl_volunteer/);  
<http://www.villagevolunteers.org/volunteer/>; <http://www.volunteerabroad.com/search.cfm>; and  
<http://www.thevolunteerfamily.org/>. There are many more resources to be found on the World Wide Web.

### Practicums/Internships

As educators of professionals we are always eager for our students to experience life outside-the-box of traditional social work. Helping them acquire larger world views while engaged in meaningful volunteer professional services is an attractive field option for some students. Students who would do well in an international practicum setting would ideally be mature, cross-culturally savvy, open-minded, flexible, secure, humble, sensitive, creative, laid-back, passionate, independent, and have a great sense of humor. Language skills are a major bonus, but there are many developing countries where the main language is English. Careful screening by faculty and the Director of Field are critical to ensuring that the learning outcomes are positive and even more importantly that meaningful difference making occurs from the student's efforts.

International internships have been viable options for students of many professions. It is only in the past couple decades that student of social work have traveled abroad for practicum experiences. There are many resources and options available to students and hundreds of reputable agencies and service are eager to offer students front-line learning opportunities.

Among some of my favorite are:

[http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/hr.nsf/stable/hr\\_internships\\_home?Open&lid=topnav\\_e mpl\\_int&lpos=topnav](http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/hr.nsf/stable/hr_internships_home?Open&lid=topnav_e mpl_int&lpos=topnav); [http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org/?siteID=Care\\_Website](http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org/?siteID=Care_Website);  
<http://www.care.org/careers/internships.asp>; <http://www.globeaware.org/>;  
<http://www.internabroad.com/search.cfm>;  
<http://transitionsabroad.com/listings/work/internships/index.shtml>;  
<http://www.myproworld.org/internships.htm>; <http://internshipprograms.com/>; <http://ciecee.org/>;  
and <http://www.usaid.gov/careers/studentprograms.html>.

### Full-time Employment

For those who desire a more rooted and long-term impacting experience, then leaving the comforts of home and becoming a full-time employee is a great life-changing option. If your current career has you in a professional funk—then you might want to re-energize your personal mission by heading to the front-lines of the humanitarian crusade. If you are telling the same stories to you students, it may be time for expanding your global realities. Living with the poorest of poor while sharing's God's love in action can be a wonderful perspective maker and energizer!

Most full-time overseas positions will offer travel and housing costs as part of the employment package. Almost all openings will offer accompanying options for spouse and children. Occasionally, positions are in geographical areas of higher personal safety risk and these positions would be classified as unaccompanied. Typically, these positions pay much higher and offer every 3-6 month furloughs back to meet with family for a few weeks. These jobs offer post-differential pay and usually danger pay bonus as well. The amounts are most often 25% of gross pay each.

There are many international job opportunities for social work professionals in many countries. Often the job postings will not mention social work, but any jobs that talk about international development require skills that most macro practice social workers will have. Clinical social work positions are more limited and in development work, generally speaking, counseling is a luxury that comes with self-actualization and not in huge demand when working to meet food and basic security needs of indigenous peoples. The one exception is in post-conflict setting where often clinical staff is hired to provide PTSD services. In a few progressive settings some family systems strengthening work is being done. There are always opportunities in mission settings where you can find sponsors can craft your own ministry niche and implement more creative and faith-integrated interventions.

More common in the world of humanitarian is the need for program managers and community organizers. USAID, our governmental humanitarian outreach agency, has jobs that most social workers are qualified for. One example can be viewed at:

<http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/getjob.asp?JobId=65437126&AVSDM=2007%2D12%2D08+12%3A29%3A45>. There are many other web sites that share hundreds of job opening. Some that

I recommend are as follows: <http://www.workingoverseas.com/>;

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/res.nsf/doc212?OpenForm>; <http://www.ngoabroad.com/>;

<https://jobs.wvi.org/webjobs.nsf/webjobshome?openform>;

<http://www.interaction.org/jobs>;

<http://www.developmentex.com/oppsummary.jsp>;

<http://tbe.taleo.net/NA5/ats/careers/jobSearch.jsp?org=CAREUSA&cws=1>;

<http://www.escapeartist.com/jobs/overseas1.htm>; <http://www.jobsabroad.com/search.cfm>;

<http://www.workingabroad.org/>; and

<http://transitionsabroad.com/listings/work/careers/index.shtml>.

### Scholarship & Research

One of the most rewarding ways to explore the globe beyond is as a researcher scholar. This can be faculty only activities, faculty and student research, a cross-cultural scholarly collaborative with faculty in Universities overseas, funded research or a myriad of other possible scenarios. Whether it's qualitative or quantitative research efforts, scholarship abroad can enhance global professional developmental efforts. There is a dearth of empirical evidence determining how and what we do with the at-risk populations we serve worldwide. More scholarship is critically needed to inform creative solutions for crafting sustainable and positive impacts for those who hurt.

Most of our academic and practice institutions offer us access to funding databases where we can search for outside support for conducting research. Beyond what we can access in our University Offices of Scholarship, the web has good resources that can be further explored as well. Among others are: <http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/>;  
<http://www.irex.org/programs/grants.asp>; <http://ciee.org/IFDS.aspx>;  
<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/Research/InternationalActivities/OtherIntResearchchopps.htm>;  
<http://www.fordfound.org/>; and <http://international.drugabuse.gov/funding.html>.

### Consultations

Related to scholarly efforts, is the option of doing consultations in international settings. This can include trainings (formal or informal), doing needs assessments, strategic planning, program evaluations, intervention planning, mediation, policy analysis and development, and staff development to name only a few. Consultations are great for short-term impact making and

are a good engagement option for those who feel they can't go into full-time work abroad. The most rewarding consultations are those where you can be involved over time and make multiple trips for facilitating longitudinal positive impacts for existing international programs.

Increasingly, agencies and international organizations are using consultants rather than full-time employees as cost-cutting measures. Therefore, many opportunities exist where you can post your CV on-line. As in most of life's efforts, the more experience you have, the more you can be paid for your expertise. If you are willing to volunteer and use your skills to help more low-budgeted international projects, this can prepare you to get the more lucrative consultations and build your qualifications. Breaking into the international career world is not easy and most of us succeeded in reaching our global impact goal, only after volunteering. There are many web sites that you can use to network your skills with organizational needing your services. Some that I recommend are: <http://www.idealists.org/af/ioc/en/AdvancedSearch/Consultant/default>;

<http://www.idealists.org/af/ioc/en/AdvancedSearch/UserSpeakerProfile/default>;

<http://www.devnetjobs.org/>; and

<http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/career/global/privatefirms.htm>.

A better more targeted way to approach finding good consultancy opportunities is to identify organizations that are providing services in your area of professional skills. As I mentioned earlier, most international organizations post their consultancy openings on-line and many allow you to post your CV into their consultant data bases. Relief web is also a great place to post any training sessions that you would like to hold

(<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/res.nsf/doc212?OpenForm>) for either pro bono work or fee-for-service.

Adopt-a-project (Vicarious Travel)

Not everyone can go aboard. But exciting engagement opportunities can be as real as accessing the World Wide Web. We don't need to leave home to become dynamic facilitators who engage our students or congregations in meaningful support services for those who are on the front lines. Beyond, our childhood mandate to "pray for our missionaries in foreign lands" today's opportunities for "arm chair" helping are more sophisticated. Of the resources that can be most helpful, money is always on the top of the list. We should not fall into the trap of giving items to charity that we no longer can use ourselves. That's typically a post-depression era copout! If we don't need it, it's probably not worth passing on already disenfranchised peoples. Sending used clothing to hurricane victims has created unwelcome nightmares during times of crisis. Personalizing our gifts is a nice way to share our Christian spirit of love with our disaster response efforts.

All of us have our favorite charities. The web also has many great and constantly changing options as well. The following web sites provide examples of just a few vicarious projects that could be explored. There are thousands of others and you can add your own personal favorites to this list as well. Among some that I recommend you explore are:

[http://www.interaction.org/;](http://www.interaction.org/)

[http://media.worldvision.org/getinvolved/aids\\_experience/index.html?lid=362&lpos=fea\\_txt\\_AIDSexp](http://media.worldvision.org/getinvolved/aids_experience/index.html?lid=362&lpos=fea_txt_AIDSexp)

<http://www.idealists.org/if/IOC/en/Home/default;>

[http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/comms2.nsf/stable/party\\_about?Open&lid=sponsorship\\_party&lpos=main;](http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/comms2.nsf/stable/party_about?Open&lid=sponsorship_party&lpos=main;)

Before you want to become involved in any organization you need to carefully research their mission and background. There are some wonderful resources for helping us do this. One of the most reputable is Guide Star (<http://www.guidestar.org>). Others are:

[http://www.charitywatch.org/top\\_top\\_rated.html](http://www.charitywatch.org/top_top_rated.html); <http://www.charitynavigator.org>; and <http://www.accountability-central.com/>. As a general rule you want to find organizational partners who you know well and/or ones that spend no more than 25% on administrative costs. The more money that goes directly helps those in need, the better!

### Other Ideas

One of the biggest challenges especially student face is how to acquire the funding need to make our dreams for international travel become reality. There are some scholarship available (<http://scholarships.goabroad.com/resultscholarship.cfm>), but typically students need to generate support to cover their travel costs and enough money to cover their in-country expenses. It is common for the local hosting agency to offer free room and board for the student.

One creative method my students have used for doing fund raising is First Giving. <http://firstgiving.org/>. Grandparents, church members and local business people have traditionally been wonderful at supporting international volunteer travel costs. There are other creative fund-raising ideas shared on the web. Some of these that can be explored are: [www.justfundraising.com](http://www.justfundraising.com); <http://www.efundraising.com/>; <http://www.askttt.com/fundraise/>; <http://www.fasttrackfundraising.com/> and I am sure there are many others. Again, let me reiterate the caveat that we all know-- before using any web-based resource, especially for fund-raising, carefully research the organization. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

### Social Work Organizations

Getting involved with international social work organizations is a great way to integrate global perspective into our educational activities. Groups like the International Consortium for Social Development (<http://www.iucisd.org>), International Association of Schools of Social Work, (<http://www.iassw-aiets.org/>), International Federation of Social Workers

(<http://www.ifsw.org/home>), Global Social Work Network (<https://www.gswn.com/>), Planet Social Work (<http://www.planetsocialwork.com/>) and the Global SW web hub called: <http://hometown.aol.com/egeratylsw/globalsw.html>, are great place to find kindred spirit professionals. CSWE also has the Global Commission that offers ideas for expanding international social work education efforts. There is another International Field networking effort that I found when researching this presentation, but it was not clear how updated this web site was (<http://www.isw.org/>). You may know other social work specific resources that you can add to these.

### Future Challenges

Facilitating safe and professional international experiences will continue to create barriers and challenges that must be addressed. Among two of the most significant are quality supervision and safety concerns.

#### Supervision

One of the continued challenges facing the future of overseas student opportunities is our need to meet or exceed Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accreditation compliance requirements for practicums. From the proposed changes to the CSWE EPAS (see Appendix A), it appears that with careful planning, decent computer and reliable internet access, students can interact with their supervisors in a manner that ensures a quality field learning experience. Some schools of social work are at the forefront of placing students in international practicums. One example is the University of Washington (<http://depts.washington.edu/sswweb/practicum/intl.html>) . I am confident there are others and hope that those attending this session can share additional resources. I know of one fee-for-service agency that can be contracted with to provide field supervision for international students.

One of these is Cross Cultural Solutions (<http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org/>). This might be a viable option where the social work program is smaller and faculty resources are limited.

### Safety & Security

No discussion of traveling aboard could be complete without at least some mention of safety. Threats to personal security come in many forms these days and travelers need to be hyper-vigilant and prudent. Careful consideration should be given before deciding which areas offer safer options for international service. Faith-linked groups can rely on feedback from local missionaries and indigenous leaders to help weight the risks-to-benefits. Typically, our University or work institutions offer guidelines, training, insurance, and other protections that we will advantage to help insure a safe return. There are many World Wide Web resources that can be helpful as well. Among the ones I use more frequently are:

<http://www.globalsafehaven.org/default.asp>; <http://travel.state.gov/>;

[http://www.kevincoffey.com/safety\\_tips\\_index.htm](http://www.kevincoffey.com/safety_tips_index.htm);

[http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Usresponse/Travel\\_Safely.shtml#vgn-international-travel-vgn](http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Usresponse/Travel_Safely.shtml#vgn-international-travel-vgn);

<http://www.safetraveler.com/>;

[http://studenttravel.about.com/od/healthandsafety/Student\\_Travel\\_Safety\\_and\\_Health.htm](http://studenttravel.about.com/od/healthandsafety/Student_Travel_Safety_and_Health.htm);

[http://studenttravel.about.com/od/healthandsafety/Student\\_Travel\\_Safety\\_and\\_Health.htm](http://studenttravel.about.com/od/healthandsafety/Student_Travel_Safety_and_Health.htm); and

for safety gadgets you can purchase, a good web site is:

<http://www.corporatetravelsafety.com/catalog/>.

As with all of our choices, each one comes with risks and rewards. You can stay home, but remember more people die in bed at home than in traveling aboard. The work of peace building is not for the fearful and those unwilling to take risk. For example, when I arrived in Iraq on one of the first UN flights to bring humanitarian team six days post- US troop's arrival,

my best security was the wonderful church members who housed me in an underground bunker in the church. The dear church women took turns bringing me home prepared meals and in offering to do my laundry. Out on the street, riding with my head covered in “good” Islamic fashion in the back of a church member’s taxi cab I could fly more safely under the radar of the lawless and violent prone! When the new country director for our church project arrived and I was hired by a USAID project and given a bullet proof car and was required to drive in military convoy, things got more difficult. Our multi-vehicle entourage screamed “shoot here!” and twice our convoy was shot at while my staff and I traveled the country working to rebuild the health care system for still hopeful, yet violent-weary Iraqis. Those of us with faith-ties can use our “family” relationships to offer protections touted by safety experts as highly effective. Safety in international work is a serious concern. Yet with smart planning, indigenous support, and most significantly being shadowed with the Lord’s protection and blessings, we need to go aboard and take the gospel of peace to a conflict riddled and dangerous world! Whether short-term or longer term, your professional skills are needed. You, your family, friends and/or your students can make a huge and wonderful impact for “the least of these!” Let’s do it together!

Please share your suggestions and comments to the presenter at: [spittman4@yahoo.com](mailto:spittman4@yahoo.com)

## APPENDIX A

### CURRENT CSWE EPAS WORDING

#### 4.7 Field Education

Field education is an integral component of social work education anchored in the mission, goals, and educational level of the program. It occurs in settings that reinforce students' identification with the purposes, values, and ethics of the profession; fosters the integration of empirical and practice-based knowledge; promotes the development of professional competence. Field education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated on the basis of criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program objectives. The social work program administers field education (Educational Policy, Section 4.7 and Section 5) consistent with program goals and objectives that:

2.1.1 Provides for a minimum of 400 hours of field education for baccalaureate programs and 900 hours for master's programs.

2.1.2 Admits only those students who have met the program's specified criteria for field education.

2.1.3 Specifies policies, criteria, and procedures for selecting agencies and field instructors; placing and monitoring students; maintaining field liaison contacts with agencies; and evaluating student learning and agency effectiveness in providing field instruction.

2.1.4 Specifies that field instructors for baccalaureate students hold a CSWE-accredited baccalaureate or master's social work degree. Field instructors for master's students hold a CSWE-accredited master's social work degree. In programs where a field instructor does not hold a CSWE-accredited baccalaureate or master's social work degree, the program assumes responsibility for reinforcing a social work perspective.

2.1.5 Provides orientation, field instruction training, and continuing dialog with agencies and field instructors.

2.1.6 Develops policies regarding field placements in an agency in which the student is also employed. Student assignments and field education supervision differ from those associated with the student's employment.

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### PROPOSED NEW CSWE EPAS WORDING (Received in CSWE Email in January-2008)

#### Educational Policy 2.3--Signature Pedagogy: Field Education

Signature pedagogy represents the forms of instruction and learning in which a profession socializes its students to perform the role of practitioner. Professionals have pedagogical norms with which they connect and integrate theory and practice. 4 In social work, the signature pedagogy is field education. The intent of field education is to connect the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting. It is a basic precept of social work education that the two interrelated components of curriculum – classroom and field – are of equal importance within the curriculum, and each contributes to the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice. Field education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated on the basis of criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program competencies. Shulman, L. S. (2005, Summer). Signature pedagogies in the professions. *Daedalus*, 52-29.

## **Accreditation Standard 2.1--Field Education**

The program discusses how its field education program:

2.1.1 Connects the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practice setting fostering the implementation of evidence-informed practice.

B2.1.2 Provides opportunities for students to demonstrate the ten foundation competencies.

M2.1.2 Provides opportunities for students to demonstrate the program's foundation and advanced competencies.

**Deleted:** Defines its conception of generalist social work practice consistent with its mission

**Deleted:** Defines its conception of advanced social work practice consistent with its mission

**Deleted:** its EPAS Draft 10

2.1.3 Provides a minimum of 400 hours of field education for baccalaureate programs and 900 hours for master's programs.

2.1.4 Admits only those students who have met the program's specified criteria for field education.

2.1.5 Specifies policies, criteria, and procedures for selecting field settings; placing and monitoring students; maintaining field liaison contacts with field education settings; and evaluating student learning and field setting effectiveness congruent with the program's competencies.

2.1.6 Specifies the credentials and practice experience of its field instructors necessary for students to demonstrate program competencies. Field instructors for baccalaureate students hold a baccalaureate or master's social work degree from a CSWE-accredited program. Field instructors for master's students hold a master's social work degree from a CSWE-accredited program. In cases where a field instructor does not hold a CSWE-accredited social work degree, the program assumes responsibility for reinforcing a social work perspective and describes how this is accomplished.

2.1.7 Provides orientation, field instruction training, and continuing dialog with field education settings and field instructors.

2.1.8 Develops policies regarding field placements in an organization in which the student is also employed. Student assignments and field education supervision are different from those associated with the student's employment.