

The International Fieldwork Program in Social Work Education in Globalization

—An Experience of The Japan Lutheran College
in the Philippines

Hiroshi Harashima

I. Preface

Many legacies and lives in this world have been destroyed in the last 20th Century through wars and devastation making humanity become more and more conscious of the importance of world peace and human welfare. It was in this century when many colonized countries began to gain their independence from the colonial forces of their time. This presupposes the need for a new world order as the United Nations was then created to cater to the pressing needs for international law and order, respect for smaller countries and equality among the nations of the world. Despite the fact that the former colonies undertook their own process towards development helped by the richer nations through economic assistance, the gap between the richer and poorer nations only widened and persisted affecting not only the gross domestic product of these poorer countries but the international economy as well.

Everything is connected. Up to this date, technological innovations made this world smaller as international political and economic relationship affect more than ever our living and working places. The effect of globalization in our lives, as a phenomenon of the nineties, could never have been felt more than in the present. Whether positive or negative, globalization is a present reality and a force to reckon with. It is a call to the present practitioners and professionals in the field of social work and among the social work academicians to put emphasis on internationalism by promoting global human welfare from the local sphere to the international level. To realize this, those

schools of social work and development organizations for international social development both in the first and the third worlds should jointly train social workers who could commit themselves to a better understanding of the issues and prospects of international social work. For this purpose, the Japan Lutheran College (JLC) has attempted to pursue international fieldwork as a fundamental part of its International Social Work Program. The fieldwork itself is implemented in the Philippines in cooperation with the Asian Social Institute, a social development school in this country. This paper describes the challenges of social workers in general and of our international fieldwork program in particular, specifically in those areas that provide opportunities for students to understand the issues and the problems in the third world through the Philippine social reality.

II. The International Social Work Program of the Japan Lutheran College: A Backgrounder

Myrdal contended that welfare states in the West had been established and maintained by nationalistic economies. Such nationalistic economies were described as those states that exploited resources in the developing countries through imperialistic capitalism. As long as these welfare states continue to maintain nationalistic economy, poor countries remain and will continue to remain in this world. As an internationalist, he elaborated the necessity to transcend 'welfare stateism' and promoted a concept of a 'welfare world' in order to advance the welfare needs of people all over the world. (Myrdal, 1960.)

However, from the 1960s to the 1980s the United Nations as well as the World Bank/ International Monetary Fund failed in their implementation of economic development policies and programs designed to assist the developing countries of the world. Many people in the world's poorest nations have been left behind, and the incidence of absolute poverty in many African, Asian, and Central and South American countries have multiplied. These problems have been exacerbated by the imposition of structural adjustment programs in many parts of the Third World. (Watkins, 1995.) Up to today, the situation is in no way different.

Today, a process is beginning to unfold that many believe, will replace the local community and nation-state as the primary basis for social identity. This is called globalization, a process that will influence the emergence of a new international world system. In this scenario, global economic forces arising from international capital flows and enhanced communications will now exert greater influence than ever before. The trend toward globalization, however, has also been accompanied by the emergence of new social problems such as international migration, ethnic conflict, violence, and violations of human rights, among others, that social work needs to address. (Midgley, 1997a.)

In this connection, as Midgley (1997b) pointed out, greater efforts are needed to ensure that the profession is able to address the pressing social problems associated with globalization. Similarly, much more needs to be done to ensure that social work fully exploits the opportunities afforded by increased internationalization. This requires that social work enhances its efforts to inculcate an international outlook among its students and that practitioners become more aware of the way international events affect their daily practice. Steps need to be taken to improve international exchange and encourage social workers to become more involved in the activities and programs of international agencies.

It was along this line of thought that the social work department of the JLC designed its international social work program. The International Social Work Program offers curriculum on international social welfare focusing on the developing world. Lectures are related to issues about the developing world which include among others: Introduction to International Social Work, International Relations, Peace Study, Social Development, International Developmental Cooperation, Seminar on International Social Development Issues and Organizations, Seminar on Cross-Cultural Issues such as the migrants and immigrants in the Japanese society. International fieldwork in the Philippines is emphasized to be an integral and unique part of this program.

III. A Potential for Social Workers in the International Social Work /Development

As a rule, international social work education is peripheral to mainstream curriculum of social work education even in North America and Europe. Such trend is also applicable to social work education in Japan. Now more than ever, professionals and academicians in the social work profession recognized the importance of promoting international social work and putting emphasis on its significance as a potent force in combating the social ills created in this time of global economy and global interdependence. In the last three decades, development paradigms have changed from purely emphasizing economic development to putting more stress on social development.

In fact, social work profession and international social welfare organizations share common missions, goals and values. (Huffman, 1981.) Both believe in the worth and dignity of the individual and in the right to self-determination and self-respect. There is a broad overlapping view between the knowledge and skills that social workers in general possess and those sought by international social welfare organizations for their developing-world personnel. (Healy, 1987; Rosenthal, 1985) On the contrary, a survey done in 1990 in the United States revealed that social workers held only three of approximately 1,100 overseas positions in international social welfare organizations for which people with social work training were eligible and desirable. (Rosenthal, 1990.)

Today, social work education needs to recognize this revelation again. In Japan, the situation is similar to the United States experience. Only a few social work graduates, indeed, work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for international social development as well as in international cooperation agencies in Japan and abroad. Furthermore, even those who finished social work course and are working in international social work organizations fail to acknowledge themselves as professional international social workers. It is unfortunate that they cannot find any professional identity in their line of work.

Despite a potential labor market for professional social workers that is available in the international social work/development practice, it remains a fact that international social work/development in the developing world still lack in their share of committed professional social workers whose main preoccupation still remain to be in the domestic social work practice in Japan. International Social Work education has not yet trained social work students and guided their professional career towards international social work practice.

To respond to this situation, JLC looks at international social work education as a mission. JLC tries to formulate a better curriculum of international social work focusing on social development in the developing world. Its goal of curriculum is to train social work students to be equipped with necessary knowledge, skills and attitude so that they will be more competent social workers in domestic or overseas locations dealing with international social welfare issues.

The following chapters present an outline of the International Fieldwork Program for Japanese social work students offered by JLC in cooperation with the Asian Social Institute (ASI)¹⁾ in the Philippines, and the learning from the last three years' experiences.

IV. An Outline of the International Fieldwork Program

The JLC and the ASI is intending to train social work students in order for them to become aware of global social welfare and development issues and be committed to work towards respecting human dignity and empowering the vulnerable sectors in the global community. For this purpose, the international fieldwork program provides social work students an opportunity to have a field experience of a developing country, to utilize their knowledge and skills, and also to strengthen their motivation and commitment to social work.

The JLC chose the Philippines as a training site for the following reasons.

■ Similar colonial history and economic, political and social situation with other

developing countries.

- Various local and international NGOs and government agencies, and also UN field offices are existing, and domestic and foreign social workers/development workers are actively involved in direct and indirect professional social work.
- Geographically near from Japan and less cost for travel expenses.
- The Filipinos can communicate in English and they are supportive of and can accommodate study groups.

A. Significance of International Fieldwork Program

It is recognized that the undignifying global realities are expanding the gap between the developed countries (haves) and the less-developed countries (have-nots). Current welfare and development problems and issues are complicated under the international political and economic structures, which affect the quality of life, especially among the vulnerable groups such as children, women, the disabled, the peasantry and fisher folks, and indigenous groups.

Social Work is a systematic approach to attain a particular goal, specifically in the practice of working for those sectors' in society, each with social needs and problems. To be able to respond appropriately to these needs and problems, it is necessary to train social work students with basic knowledge, skills and attitudes particular to the profession.

Similarly the ASI as JLC sister school, also believes that social work is utilization of helping interventions that confirm and enhance human dignity and worth, and discovers and respects cultural roots and traditions. The helping approaches facilitate people's own initiatives towards their own vision and dreams rather than replicate development models of the West or other foreign cultures. It believes in building a culture of solidarity that will transform inhuman and unjust structures and reality towards a more human and just society.

In this context, the International Fieldwork is designed to train social work students who are equipped with knowledge, skills and experiences they need to be more responsive and effective in their work towards global welfare and development.

B. Purpose of the International Fieldwork Program

Along this line, the primary objective for this fieldwork program is to provide Japanese social work students an opportunity to learn theories and practices of Social Work/Social Development approaches in the developing countries from the global perspective. Specific objectives are as follows;

- To be familiar with the social situation in a developing country. [**Reality**]
- To understand the roles and functions of welfare and development agencies through direct fieldwork experience. [**Organizational Management**]
- To learn approaches and strategies employed by the agencies and to analyze their effectiveness in addressing the needs of the targeted beneficiaries. [**Social Work/Development Approaches and Strategies**]
- To understand the roles and functions of social or development workers in effecting social development work and their implication on professional values and attitudes. [**Professionalism**]
- To understand one's personal strengths and weaknesses in terms of ideas, knowledge, skills and attitudes learned during fieldwork activities in cross-cultural context. [**Self-awareness**]
- To comprehend role and functions of international cooperation in the context of global civil society. [**Global Civil Society**]

C. Phases of International Fieldwork Program

This diagram of a supporting system shows relationships among the actors in the fieldwork program. There are four phases in the fieldwork such as preparation, implementation, evaluation and post-fieldwork phases.

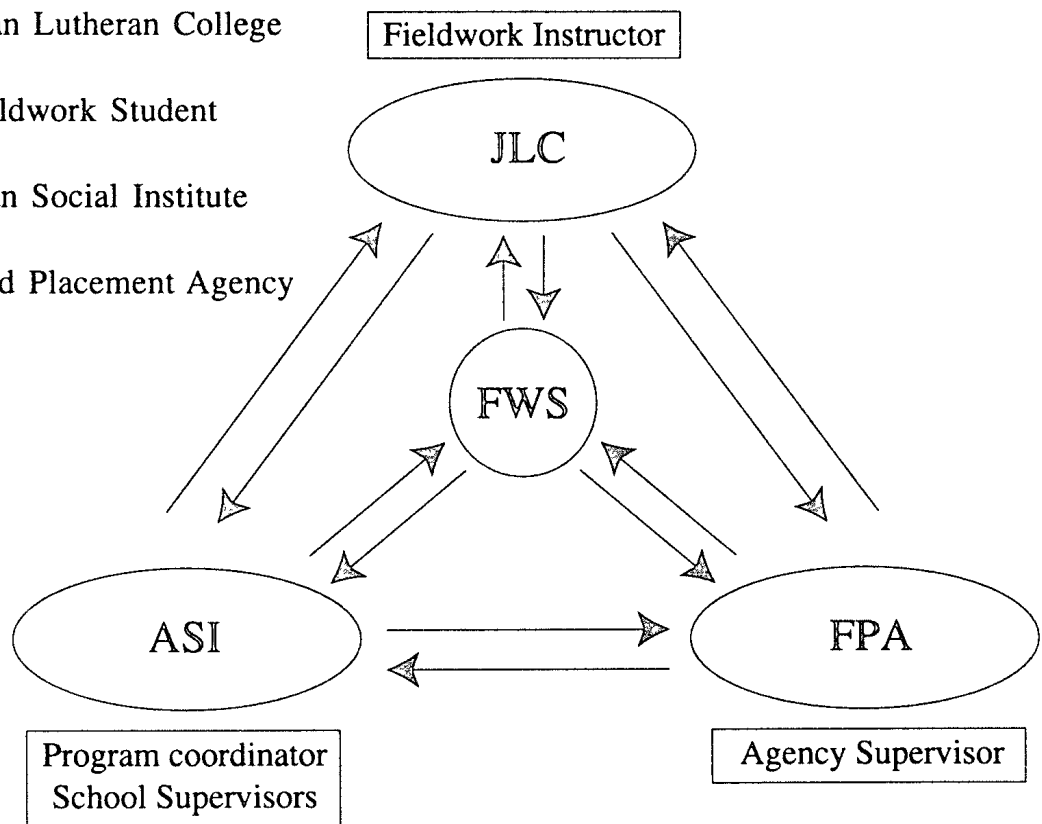
Abbreviations:

JLC - Japan Lutheran College

FWS - Fieldwork Student

ASI - Asian Social Institute

FPA - Field Placement Agency



1st Phase: Fieldwork Preparation

After fieldwork students are screened, they start to identify their area of fieldwork. In this connection, the JLC fieldwork instructor will help them identify the area and the type of agency they can work with in consultation with the ASI program coordinator. The ASI program coordinator will study the feasibility of the proposed fieldwork plan and recommend possible fieldwork agencies.

2nd Phase: Fieldwork Implementation

In this phase, the fieldwork students will work with their assigned agency for a one (1) month period. Before they are assigned at the agency, they must attend Orientation Program comprising lectures and trialogue session, which sessions the ASI Program Coordinator, School Supervisors, Agency Supervisors and JLC Fieldwork Instructor will conduct for the purpose of finalizing agency assignments and other necessary arrangements. At the end of the trialogue

session, the activity plan of fieldwork students shall be finally approved.

In the fieldwork implementation phase, the fieldwork student implements his/her own activity plan with the support of the Fieldwork Agency, ASI and JLC at different levels. During the actual fieldwork, supervision is given to the student. It is very important for the student to deepen his/her learning from this direct field experience. The fieldwork supervision aims at helping learning process of the Japanese fieldwork students.

However, the Japan Lutheran College (JLC) shall be solely responsible to the fieldwork students. The ASI and the agencies involved here will facilitate the learning process of the students and coordinate with one another in order to attain the objectives of the fieldwork as the diagram shows.

3rd Phase: Fieldwork Evaluation

After the students finish their fieldwork, a fieldwork evaluation will be held. This evaluation phase is very important for the students to summarize and conclude their fieldwork experience. The students are required to present their fieldwork experience to the panel of supervisors in a case presentation session. Other than the case presentation, the students are advised to share their experience with the agency staff and the people in the community before or after the fieldwork is over.

■ Case Presentation

Each fieldwork student is required to make a 20 minutes' Case Presentation about his/her fieldwork experience. The fieldwork agencies, ASI supervisors and JLC fieldwork instructors shall attend the presentation session and give their assessments of the presentations to the fieldwork students.

■ Supervisors Conference

It is important for the supervisors to share and discuss the issues and problems that will arise during the actual fieldwork. Supervisors and students will profit much from this dialogue and reflection session. Called the supervisors' conference this will be held before or after the case presentation.

■ Submission of Evaluation Form

Agency Supervisors and ASI Supervisors should give their rating of the fieldwork students using the given rating scale. The evaluation form will be submitted to the JLC Fieldwork Instructor.

4th Phase: Post-Fieldwork Requirements

The Fieldwork Students must comply with the following instructions after the Fieldwork is over.

■ Feedback session

The students should discuss the result of the fieldwork evaluation with JLC Fieldwork Instructor.

■ Submission of the fieldwork summary

The students should submit the fieldwork summary to the Office of the Social Work Department of JLC.

■ Submission of the photocopied fieldwork record

The students should submit one set of photocopied Fieldwork Record to the above-said office.

D. Supervision during the Fieldwork

The fieldwork students are required to attend several kinds of supervision before, during and after the fieldwork practice. The supervisions will facilitate learning process of the students to attain the goals set in an individual fieldwork plan.

Types of Supervision

■ Supervision by JLC

During the fieldwork preparation phase, JLC provides the student fieldwork instruction once a week for 5 months: Sept.- Jan. Each session is 90 minutes for a total number of 13 sessions. These sessions are usually held on individual or group basis depending on the purpose of the supervision.

■ Trialogue as a supervision

Before starting actual fieldwork, each student is given a trialogue session in which fieldwork schedule and activities are discussed and agreed by the parties. This session is composed of the fieldwork student, the school supervisor and the agency supervisor. ASI coordinator and JLC field instructor will function by facilitating communication in this beginning stage.

■ Supervision (individual/group) by ASI

ASI, as the main coordinating and training institute, provides regular supervision for the fieldwork process. Its frequency (daily/weekly) and mode of supervision (individual/group) may be varied. The school supervisor can conduct supervision whether at the agency or at the school. The school supervisor keeps close contact with the agency supervisor to maintain better quality of supervision.

■ Supervision (individual) by Agency

The fieldwork agency provides supervision to the fieldwork student on a regular basis. Frequency (daily, weekly) and mode of supervisions (individual, group) may be varied.

■ Post-fieldwork Supervision

The fieldwork students should discuss the result of the fieldwork evaluation with JLC fieldwork instructor.

V. Summary of the past 3 years' fieldwork experience (1998 – 2000)

Most of the students were placed for a month in local NGOs, which are practicing community-based approach. Foreign NGOs and bilateral assistance of foreign government were funding the projects. Partly the students learned about the role of indirect helping intervention taken by the foreign organizations. The agency's social workers or development workers and school supervisors regularly supervised the fieldwork activities of the students.

A. Social Welfare Areas of Fieldwork Placement and Learnings of the students

In the last three years, 13 students experienced fieldwork in the following areas of social welfare and their learnings are summarized here.

■ Child Welfare

In the area of child welfare, some students worked in drop-in centers using street-based education and protection for the rights of street children. Some others worked with the disabled children in the community with organizations that used community-based rehabilitation (CBR) approach.

The students learned about the children from poor families who are vulnerable members of society especially in urban communities. They become street children, drug addicts, prostitutes and such. They understood more about those children's backgrounds who came from broken families or families who do not take care of them, or they are often victims of physical abuse. Those children who are left on their own and/or lack parental attention could not foster self-esteem. Consequently they are caught in the vicious cycle of poverty and delinquency.

Those social workers are working for the protection of the rights of the children and are rebuilding a better relationship between the children and the families through counseling, regular home visits and other therapeutic approaches for the community. The students learned that the problems are rooted in the weak systems and structures of society, especially the family.

■ Community Development

In the area of community development, some students worked with urban poor or rural poor communities. They learned about community organization, community education and community resource management through community integration.

90% of the Filipinos are Christians and are a very traditional and religious people. The Christian practices are very important for them not only personally but also as communally. The students understood more this Filipino style of community organizing through church-based social action program in urban and rural community in poverty.

Furthermore, they were able to touch the real life of the people through community integration. They realized people's potential power to meet their material and non-material needs when they attended community meetings, income generating activities and community-based health seminars. They appreciated the effectiveness of community organization and community development approaches that allow the people to become empowered. Along this line, they understood about the role of different community organizations such as the Cooperatives, Village Associations as well as the NGOs' working and functional relationship with such people's associations.

They were exposed to the administration of the local government and understood about the importance of collaboration between the government and the NGOs and POs.

■ Gender and welfare

In the developing countries, women are considered as a vulnerable sector of society. One student was placed at a crisis intervention center and shelter for battered women. Feminist counseling in the context of developing society was already practiced in the Philippines.

The student thought that such abuse only happen among poor families. In fact,

the student learned that most cases were not only of those women from poor families but was a reality among couples across any socio-economic stratum. It was the first time for the student to learn about feminist counseling. The student joined the special activity commemorating the International Women's Day and also participated in the feminist advocacy activities during her fieldwork.

■ Migrant and Welfare

They learned that traditionally in the Philippines the female are responsible to support their families. For this reason, many of them go overseas for either employment or international marriage. Working and living overseas is not easy as they expected. They are under stress and crisis when they are not capable to manage their situation by themselves.

Some students were placed at different NGOs supporting overseas Filipinos. In their fieldwork, the students together with some social workers visited clients who came back to their community with problems such as illegal dismissal from their work, sexual harassment, divorce and others. They were able to interview some of the clients and gain knowledge about the situation of the female migrant workers. They realized that women were easy victims of poverty.

The Philippine government has a strong policy that encourages overseas employment for the purpose of earning dollar revenues from their workers. They found out that one of the causes of the plight of women working overseas is such that government policies and at the same time, the government itself should improve measures to protect their workers welfare and not just to sacrifice them for their dollar earnings.

■ Foreign Aid and Its Strategies

Foreign aid works as the political and economic means to help people who are in poverty. The fieldwork students learned how foreign aid worked for the development and counter-development of people the last few decades. It contributed to the decrease in the death rate of children under 5 years old of age through

improvement of water and sanitation facility, expanded program of immunization and food security in the developing world. On the other hand, the gap between the rich and the poor countries has been expanded. And the international debt retarded the human welfare in the developing world and it has become a human rights issue today.

During the fieldwork, the students found that all the agencies were recipients of foreign aid such as US Aid, CIDA, JICA, EC assistance, various foreign NGOs such as OXFAM, NOVIB, Bread for the world and others. Government assistance is mostly spent on hard infrastructure of the assisted projects. On the other hand, the foreign NGOs are using funds for social development projects, which meet basic needs and promote peoples' participation and empowerment. But the students found out that such funds for projects were not fully monitored and evaluated by the foreign aid agencies. The monitoring and evaluation activities are very important and it is a responsibility that the foreign aid agencies must take, this, the students learned. It is not enough to give only funds. It is important that funding agencies ensure that the funds are used properly towards people's and community development.

B. Feedback from the fieldwork experience:

The students generally showed more satisfaction than frustration in their fieldwork experience. Most of them claimed that such satisfaction was brought not only from the community integration but the way they were prepared before and placed in the field. From the first-hand experience, they were able to understand about the reality of a developing country. In spite of social resources being limited in the Philippine society, they met many enthusiastic and highly motivated social workers. Also they were able to learn social work skills that are being used in helping needy people through community-based approaches. Most of the students were not able to demonstrate their skills because of their limitation in the English language. But they were motivated to understand more their line of work as social workers as they gained more knowledge about their profession.

The school supervisors and agency supervisors recognized that the triologue was a very effective means to prepare the students before they were deployed to the different agencies. The triologue functioned as a fieldwork conference where three parties namely JLC, ASI and the agencies clarified the objectives of the fieldwork program, the limitations of students' ability and capacity, and even their personal characteristics. The agency supervisors who spent most of the time with the students revealed that the students are quite independent and well adjusted in their new environment even though they had difficulties in lingual and cultural nuances inherent in local communication. Frequent supervision helped students maintain motivation in learning and avoid psychological and other problems.

School supervisors supervised students in the school and field depending on the necessity and convenience of the students. They noted that the Japanese students had difficulty in expressing their opinions and seeking advice regarding some difficulties they have encountered in the field. In this connection, they felt that there should be group supervision sessions in which the school supervisors facilitate group processes for the Japanese students as a venue for them to express their views on field experiences and personal concerns.

Many NGOs used community organizing as a social work method where the students were placed. Also NGOs in the Philippines are promoting people's participation and empowerment with adult education and community training. However, the NGOs are often running out of funds because many of them are dependent on funds from foreign funding agencies. International social and development organizations should develop funding strategies and project management in order to sustain development process of the local NGOs and People's Organizations in the Philippines.

VI. Prospects of the fieldwork program

After the three years' fieldwork experience, the JLC identified areas for improvement and issues that should be taken into consideration for the future fieldwork program.

Fieldwork students should improve their communication skills before they start fieldwork overseas. In the first place, English proficiency is fundamentally important to make fieldwork successful in attaining the goals of individual fieldwork plan. Other than the English language, the students must learn basic Filipino language since people in a community feel comfortable when the foreign students speak local dialect even with simple words. Using local language as much as possible in a community, the students could smoothly integrate with the targeted group. Intensive language program should be offered in coordination with faculty members teaching English and Filipino languages. **[Language Communication]**

In the second place, international social workers should develop professional and mature outlook in their work. As outsiders in the community, acceptance by the people is very important. They should regard the community as their own by learning the local attitude and characteristics and respecting all the people. They should never regard the people there as objects of research. **[Interpersonal Communication]**

Fieldwork students should have some basic knowledge about the topic they take up. Usually the students are placed in an agency that is working with a particular community or sector at the micro level. They should have knowledge about the larger picture. If a student takes up street children in an urban community as a fieldwork topic, he/she has to have knowledge about national or international welfare policy and strategies on the street children. In so doing, he/she can easily articulate about the topic and understand such policies in relation to the program and direct services in the community by an organization. JLC should request the ASI or other organizations for information and literature about their programs if the information is not available in Japan. **[Welfare Policies and Strategies]**

Many of the social work and social development agencies in the Philippines are practicing community-based strategy and participatory approach in solving social problems. Students should study theory and process of community organizing (CO)/community development (CD) in the third world context. **[Community Organizing/Community Development]**

In most cases, foreign social workers engaging in international social work in the developing world are required management knowledge and skills on planning, monitoring and evaluation. In the fieldwork, the students should be equipped with basic knowledge and skills in the fieldwork practice. Fieldwork students should gain basic knowledge and skills on project management through lectures and workshop. [Project Management]

The past fieldwork experience have provided us with so many insights and ideas for international social work education. Fieldwork practice is fundamental for those who plan to pursue international work in the developing world.

Social development workers are presently engaged in indirect work in international social work as project managers and trainers. And as thus, they should have a wide and more comprehensive view and knowledge of the social situation and movements of the developing world, with the coming of age of the information technology, and the breaking of boundaries. The modern day social development workers should have more exposure to global trends and issues and should be given more opportunities to work in and access to international social work agencies even within their own country's boundaries.

Schools of social work must be prepared for this by tapping resources within and outside their own country. But direct contact with the communities in the developing world through field practice will deepen the knowledge and skills learned in the classrooms and will allow more insights among students who will work for social welfare policies, management and practice in the future. Finally the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) are further expected to play an important role in leading international social work education.

References

- Myrdal, G.** (1960). *Beyond the Welfare State*. London.: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.
- Watkins, K.** (1995). *The Oxfam poverty report*. Oxford: Oxfam.
- Midgley J.** (1997a). *Social Work in International Context, Social Work in the 21 Century*. (p. 59). Thousand Oaks, CA : Pine Forge Press.
- Midgley J.** (1997b). *Social Work in International Context, Social Work in the 21 Century*. (p. 65). Thousand Oaks, CA : Pine Forge Press.
- Huffman, S.** (1981) National Association of Social Workers international program plan. Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers
- Rosenthal, B.S.** (1985, November). American social workers' interest working in the developing world. Panel presentation at the National Association of Social Workers national symposium, Chicago, IL.
- Healy, L.** (1987). International agencies as social work settings: Opportunity, Capability, and Commitment. *Social Work*, 32, 405-409
- Rosenthal, B.S.** (1990). U.S. social workers' interest in working in the developing world. *International Social Work*, 33, 225-232

Note

- (1) **Asian Social Institute (ASI):** The Asian Social Institute was established in 1962 by Rev. Dr. Francis Senden, cism, with the aim of forming socially oriented Asian leaders who would use their knowledge and skills to work for socio-cultural transformation. It offers B.S. in Social Work, M.S. in Social Work, M.S. in General Sociology, M.S. in Pastoral Sociology, M.S. in Economics and Ph.D. in Applied Cosmic Anthropology.