



# School Social Worker Professional Development

Impacting children and families through  
the increased capacity of school social workers



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# 1. Genesis–AOM and New Generation Programme

Asian Outreach was one of the first Christian mission organizations to pioneer in Mongolia, venturing in immediately after the Russians left in 1990, exploring how to bring the gospel to this country, which had been solidly closed for 72 years. After traveling the length and breadth of this vast landmass, they discovered that at most there were five Christians in the country - three expatriates and two Mongolians. There were no churches, no Bibles, no Christian books. Since then, the number of believers has increased dramatically to over 500 churches and 90 000 believers. Through the work of Genesis-AOM, 85% of all pastors in Mongolia have been trained through our GCI program. Also thousands of underprivileged children have graduated our literacy classes and have been re-integrated back into mainstream schools. Rural families have been trained to start small businesses and given loans, Over 40,000 Bibles and Christian literature have been printed and distributed, plus many churches planted in Mongolia and Russia. The vision of Genesis-AOM is **Transforming Mongolia At All Levels Of Society**. This of course includes the next generation – the crucial 30% of the population that is under the age of 14 years.

Under the Next Generation Programme, Genesis-AOM has three main integrated and holistic projects that work together to benefit children and their families: LifeSkills Values Education, Winter Kits, and School Social Worker Professional Development.

**1. LifeSkills Values Education** is focused on developing good character and values in children and empowering them to see that having positive values benefits themselves, their families, and society as a whole.

**2. Winter Kits** focuses on the physical needs of impoverished children, providing them with a set of winter clothing (including a thick jacket, warm trousers, scarf and gloves) that will enable them to attend school throughout winter and also reduce the incidence of winter-related illness.

**3. School Social Worker Professional Development** seeks to benefit children through the increased capacity and expertise of social workers in the education setting. Most Mongolian schools have social workers but they are currently significantly under-qualified and under-skilled. The majority of their working time is diverted away from the children under their care and into administrative duties. This professional development project helps school social workers to up-skill in order to have a more beneficial impact on the lives of the children they are responsible for; as well as educating school workers, parents, teachers, and the children themselves as to the role and responsibilities of a school social worker.

As an integrated part of all these projects, Genesis-AOM is also developing **Vital Personal Coaching** - a personal development programme that will be available for the adults connected to our projects. Without the training and coaching of the adults as well, these projects to benefit children will never be sustainable or effective. Life Coaching beneficiaries include teachers, social workers, parents, and school workers, in addition to the wider public, making Vital Personal

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Coaching a key component of the LifeSkills Value Education project (see Appendix B).

## 2. Goals of School Social Worker Professional Development Project

- To increase value and capacity of school social workers to effectively impact the lives of children in their care.
- To raise professional standards and broaden the skill base of school social work in Mongolia.
- To help equip and engage the local church in meeting needs in their communities.

## 3. Situation and Need

### **Background**

The profession of social work did not exist in Mongolia prior to 1997, when it was introduced by Save the Children UK as a way of addressing some of Mongolia's burgeoning social problems resulting from the collapse of the Socialist system in 1990.

During the Communist era there was no formal social work profession, but the tasks usually encompassed by modern social workers were carried out in large by political officers responsible for supervising social, community and even family life.

The collapse of the communist system brought a plethora of economic and social problems previously almost unknown: unemployment, alcoholism, domestic violence, prostitution, truancy, street children, illiteracy, and soaring crime rates. Blue collar workers suffered the highest job losses, resulting in widespread unemployment among men and consequent family breakdown. School drop-out rates soared as the government removed subsidies on boarding school facilities for children of nomadic

herders. Rural-urban migration saw many thousands of children lose access to schooling through failure to gain registration in urban areas and consequent access to services.

### **Introduction of Social Work to Mongolia**

Into this setting, *Save the Children UK* and the *Mongolian Child Rights Centre* introduced the concept of Social Work in 1997. The Mongolian government began to see the crucial need for social workers in child protection, advocacy and in encouraging children's participation in the development process. By 2001 a job description for school social workers had been adopted and every school in the nation had a designated school social worker.

### **Qualifications and Training**

However, in the initial scramble to appoint school social workers, and in the absence of accredited social work training facilities, almost none of the social workers appointed were qualified in the field. In the 15 years since that time, social work training programmes have been established, but a dearth of qualified and competent workers still exists. Nationwide approximately 40% of school social workers hold no formal qualification in their field, and graduates of training programmes are underqualified and underskilled.

### **Professional Development and Job Supervision**

The school social worker is appointed by the School Director rather than the Ministry of Education, and while it is required that a candidate be qualified, the Ministry of Education policy allows social workers to train while they concurrently work. However, supervision of the social worker's job performance and professional development is left in the hands of the School Director. Although the Ministry of Education has produced a job description for school social workers, in practice the school director allocates the school social

worker's duties, which may include organising cultural and social activities, work with talented children, follow-up on truancy, and administrative tasks.

## 4. Genesis-AOM's Introduction to the Field of School Social Work

During more than ten years in the early 2000's, Genesis-AOM addressed the growing problem of school truancy by running Non-Formal Education Classes in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, municipal authorities and other NGOs such as World Vision. More than 5,000 children completed a one to two year intensive education programme and were able to either enter school at their correct grade level, or sit their school leaver exams and graduate from high school.

During these 10 years of involvement in the Mongolian education system, we observed many incidents of child abuse/neglect, and the maltreatment and discrimination suffered by children from disadvantaged backgrounds. We came to appreciate the unique role of school social workers in the lives of the children under their care, and the opportunity school social workers have to bring positive change to children and families. Social workers we spoke to were devoted and hard working, but struggled with case loads of up to 3,000 children and the diverting of their time and energies into tasks outside their job description. School social workers were very aware that they lacked key skills needed to carry out their job conscientiously. They also felt that they lacked opportunities for professional and personal development that would enable them to engage more effectively the children and families under their care and address key issues relevant to the school setting, such as bullying, video game addiction, and substance abuse.

We believe that school and community social workers occupy a key position in society where they can interact with children and families and bring about positive change. We see that the next step in transforming the lives of Mongolian children and bringing about

societal change lies in supporting and training social workers, giving them the skills and competencies they need to address social issues and effect change.

## 5. Project Overview

The three day professional development course for school social workers covers 12 topics relevant to the school setting and is worth 24 credits (See Appendix A for a list of topic headings). It is intended to develop skills in administration and reporting, as well as much needed skills in relating to children, working with children in specific situations, and liaising with other child advocates, such as NGO's, or professionals such as teachers and school staff.

The training is facilitated in conjunction with the Municipal Education Department and will take place in three-day blocks, to be conducted during the school term or in the school holidays. In the early months, the training will be held in the different areas of Ulaanbaatar city, and thereafter will be taken to the provinces. The topics covered are all included in the School Social Worker Handbook, which will be provided as a part of the course.

A teaching team of qualified Social Work professors from within Mongolia has been established. However, international experts will also be contracted to teach aspects of the course in order to bring the greater depth of knowledge and wider skill base of more experienced nations to the programme.

A number of expatriate social workers are already working in Mongolia. A network of social workers has been established whereby NGOs working in the social work sphere can draw on the knowledge and resources of the network to strengthen their projects.

In order to keep abreast of current best practices in the field, project staff subscribe to relevant magazines, journals and periodicals, and undertake training and up-skilling opportunities where possible.

## 6. Time Frame

This project will run from January 2014 to July 2015.

## 7. Beneficiaries

There are approximately 600 school social workers in the public school system in Mongolia that would be eligible to undertake this training. An improvement in their abilities would impact over 30,000 families.

The training will initially be taught throughout the districts of Ulaanbaatar city and later taken to the provinces. As almost half of the nation's population lives in the capital, the initial training will impact a significant number of children and families.

## 8. Goals

The overall goal of the project is to improve the well-being of 100,000 vulnerable children in 30,000 families all over Mongolia through the increased capacity and skills of school social workers. Additionally the project aims to benefit the school social workers directly through providing professional and personal development.

## 9. Objectives

- To assist 600 school social workers nationwide to provide better quality service to children and families through professional development training and skills-enhancement workshops within three years.

- Provide increased awareness of the role of the school social worker in the educational setting.
- Produce professional development resources in Mongolian for school social workers and educators, including the School Social Work Handbook.
- Enhance the standing of the school social worker in the public awareness by increasing their professional credibility and capacity.
- To draw on the practical experience of western nations in order to promote current best practices in the school social work field.
- To provide additional personal development opportunities to school social workers through **Vital Life Coaching**.

## 10. Partners

This project is recognised and supported by the Ministry of Education, the Municipal Department of Education, and the Teachers' Professional Development Institute. The three-day course is worth 24 credits. We work in co-operation with other organisations involved in the field of social work, notably the Mongolian Association of School Social Workers.

## 11. Sustainability

This programme has already received approval by the Teachers Professional Development Institute, and the Ministry of Education. Genesis-AOM is legally entitled to charge the Municipal Education Department fees for this training, however, their own budgetary constraints mean that the MED is not able to cover the training costs completely. Therefore, in this pioneering stage there is a need to fund curriculum development, translation of resources, and ongoing development for project staff through partners and donations. The MED will pay a fee for each of the capital's school social

workers that go through the training, and this will be topped up if necessary from project funds.

The goal is that this program will become significantly self-funded by the end of 2015.

## 12. Monitoring and Evaluation

After every training session the attendees will complete review and feedback forms so that the facilitators can monitor the effectiveness of the sessions and will seek to improve the training quality. Also, after every training session, the facilitator team will have a meeting to share their observations and findings.

Training will be reviewed every six months by the Genesis-AOM director and other partners, such as the Mongolian Association of School Social Workers, and the Municipal Education Department.

## 13. Budget/Finances

Budget for Training (January 2014 to July 2015): 12 Three Day Training Sessions with 4 teachers and 20 participants in each (a total of 240 social workers trained).

Item	Total US\$
Specialist Trainers related costs	
Fees	\$4,600.00
Meals	\$3,630.00
Travel	\$2,750.00
Accommodation	\$2,800.00
Training Room rentals	\$2,900.00
Curriculum development	\$5,780.00
Printing and Translation of manuals and resources	\$3,590.00
Local Transport	\$1480.00

Local Communication	\$1260.00
Extra Curriculum Personal Development /Training for S. Workers	\$3,780.00
Spiritual Development of S. Workers via Vital Life Coaching	\$3,360.00
Administration and Related Genesis Operational/Staff Costs	\$3,820.00
Monitoring and Evaluation	\$2,332.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$42,082.00</b>

## 14. Appendix A

### List of topics contained in Module One of the Programme:

Administrative Skills Topics	Professional Skills Topics
1. Research Skills	1. Working with Child Drug-Addicts
2. Report Preparation	2. Working in partnership with Teachers and School Staff
3. Using Information Technology	3. Working in partnership with Child Rights, Participation and Protection Organisations
4. Using Mass Media	4. Developing a Healthy Self Image
	5. Discovering Children's Giftedness
	6. Working with Difficult Children
	7. Working with Children involved in the Worst Forms of Child Labour
	8. Working with Children from Vulnerable Families

## 15. Appendix B

### Vital Life Coaching and Personal Development

In Mongolia today corruption remains a large issue in public services and business relationships. Corruption is a significant problem in areas ranging from the government's passing of laws and awarding of contracts, to the judiciary being influenced by those with wealth and power; to the enrollment of new students to the public schools. The need exists to transform this atmosphere in Mongolia through enhancing the ethics and morality of the leadership where decisions are open, transparent and are made for the best interests of all stakeholders involved.

Genesis-AOM will provide personal and leadership development coaching to the social workers, integrated with promoting biblical values and upright governance within their public schools and communities to increase their work ethics and desire to improve their public services to the children and families.