

International Korner

Center for International Social Work Studies

Written by: Cari A. Carter

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Policy and Planning

The profession of social work has found a space in the policy and planning arena through the development, analysis, implementation and evaluation of social policies locally, federally and internationally. In the international realm, social work methods are used in the development and evaluation of programs and policies. Organizations and government departments, such as the United Nations, USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) and private companies, provide fertile ground for this type of policy work.

Where does social work fit????

I was part of a project that sent me to Armenia during Spring break. The project is a joint effort between the University of Connecticut School of Social Work and Yerevan State University in Yerevan (capital city), Armenia. Throughout my time in Armenia I continued to run across various government, non-government and private agencies involved in assisting the country of Armenia with the transition from a communist to a capitalist economy. The agencies focused their efforts on economic growth, humanitarian aid and policy development at a national level. I was able to make a connection between what these agencies were doing and what social work aims to do. The goals of each fit nicely into the specific goals of the policy and planning method here at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. The following are profiles of various organizations I learned about while experiencing the wonders of Armenia:

USAID

The USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) is an independent federal government agency that is overseen by the Secretary of State (currently Colin Powell). The goal of USAID is to encourage and support long-term and equitable economic growth and to promote U.S. foreign policy objectives in the process. The agency focuses its energy on:

- ◆ Economic growth, agriculture and trade
- ◆ Global health
- ◆ Democracy, conflict prevention
- ◆ Humanitarian assistance

Their programs and policies serve four major regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Near East, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Eurasia. USAID also works with private voluntary organizations, indigenous organizations, universities, American

businesses, international agencies, other governments and other U.S. government agencies.

Social Work

It is safe to say that the first goal of USAID is to promote economic growth through program and policy development. The role of social work may be to ensure that the program or policy implemented considers vulnerable populations, that are often times overlooked when focusing on economic growth. In Armenia, USAID partnered up with local and international NGO's (non-governmental organizations) to work on health issues, economic stimulus (such as providing resources to local entrepreneurs) and humanitarian assistance.

PADCO Inc.

PADCO (Planning and Development Collaborative International) is a private for profit agency based in the United States that specializes in providing assistance to governments and/or private clients facing economic transitions and/or rapid urban growth. The specific specializations of PADCO include:

- ◆ Privatization of urban services and utility restructuring
- ◆ Social sector reform
- ◆ Urban and regional development
- ◆ Housing, land and infrastructure development
- ◆ Environment, energy and natural resources issues

PADCO has programs and staff located in more than 85 countries worldwide, including Armenia.

Social Work

The focus of PADCO is policy development and urban planning. When browsing PADCO's website you will see advertisements for positions requiring experience in social policy analysis and development and urban planning, among others. For example an advertisement for a Policy Reform Expert in Serbia stated: "*Work with the Serbian Policy Reform Specialist and Associate Development Specialist to contribute to policy reform process already under way in Serbia*". Degrees that are required for various positions include social work, social policy and economics. The profession of social work has a place in this type of work and is recognized as an asset to the goals of the agency.

UNHCR

The UNHCR (United Nations High Commission on Refugees) was also a part of the network of organizations in Armenia. UNHCR focuses its energy on assisting with the resettlement or repatriation (return to home country) of refugees. The goal of the organization is to ensure the rights and well-being of refugees and displaced persons. In order to accomplish this goal, the UNHCR works closely with governments (if possible) to create policies that will secure the rights of refugees in that country. For example in Armenia, I was able speak with a representative from UNHCR who explained the goals of a long-term plan for the refugees in Armenia. Part of the plan was to continue its work with the Armenian government to secure policies and entitlements to refugees within the country. Emphasis was also placed on assisting refugees who were interested in becoming Armenian citizens. I was also able to speak with the director of the Armenian

State Department of Migration and Refugees. The director was very involved with creating laws that would protect and secure the rights of refugees and migrants. The two organizations are working together in order to create long-term legislation that will dictate entitlements reserved for refugees.

Social Work

The role of social work in a policy and planning process can be found in the formulation of policies, laws and programs focused on securing refugee rights. The perspective provided by the social work profession can merge the goals of the two organizations in this situation (UNHCR and the Department of Migration and Refugees). This could provide a bridge that will assist the policy making process and lead to a holistic plan that protects the rights of a vulnerable population.

April 23rd, 2002 : Save this date! Come hear more about Armenia and the role of social work within the country. The four students who were given the opportunity to travel to Armenia will present information regarding specific topics such as political social work, distance learning and the refugee situation in Armenia. **Tuesday, April 23rd from 1-2pm Room # 203!**

References:

1. www.usaid.gov USAID (United States Agency on International Development) website
2. www.padcoinc.com PADCO Inc. (Planning and Development Collaborative International) website
3. www.unhcr.ch UNHCR (United Nation High Commission on Refugees) website