**IASSW – International Project Final Report**

**7/22/19**

**Title of the Project**

The Development of a Global Partnership to Further Social Work Education, Practice and Research in International Military Social Work.

**Project Coordinator and Institutional Affiliation**

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**Executive Summary**

This international project involved the development and implementation of the first international military social work conference. Preliminary research identified 25 countries that employ social workers within their military. Through this research, subject matter experts within each country were identified and invited to participate. The conference was held from April 24-26, 2019 at the Thayer Hotel located on the U.S. West Point Military Academy, New York with a total of 30 participants from 16 countries. Prof. Adrian van Breda, from the University of Johannesburg gave the keynote about the model of military social work role in South Africa. Participants shared their approaches to military social work practice and the challenges faced and explored ways to continue this dialogue and facilitate collaboration in military social work practice, research and scholarship.

**Academic Report**

**Rationale and purpose of the project**

Many countries employ social workers, both in a uniformed and civilian capacity, to work directly with their military service members and their families. Given the critical support needs of military service members and their families world-wide and the expanding role of social work in responding to these needs, a more comprehensive understanding of the common military social work practices among these countries as well as the forms of practice that are unique and perhaps transportable is needed.

To more systematically understand the similarities and differences in practice among the countries that have military social work, an international conference was organized. The conference brought together subject matter experts from countries that were confirmed to have this military social work role and also from countries that were interested in developing such a role. The conference provided an opportunity for participants to share their approaches to military social work practice and the challenges faced and to discuss implications for military social work practice, education and scholarship. Strategies to ensure ongoing collaboration in these areas were also explored.

The funding provided through IASSW was used to offset the overall cost of this first International Military Social Work Conference for the invited participants.

**Description of the process of implementation**

*Conference Development Activities*

Following the notification of the IASSW Award on February 11, 2018, **(see attached award letter)** the PI scheduled a series of meetings with conference planners at the Thayer Hotel at West Point to negotiate the rate for a complete meeting package (2 night hotel stay, all meals and use of the conference facility) for 30 participants. A contract was subsequently signed by Fordham with the Thayer Hotel on April 20, 2018. The PI then worked with Fordham’s IT Department and Office of Budget Management to develop an online registration link and credit card payment process. The registration link was sent to approximately 50 invitees from the following countries identified as having military social work or an interest in developing it.

Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Haiti, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, New Zealand, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Slovakia, South Africa, Taiwan, Tanzania, Trinidad, Turkey, UK, Ukraine, USA and Zimbabwe.

In July 2018, an invitation was extended to Prof. Rev’d Adrian Van Breda, University of Johannesburg, South Africa, to be the conference keynote speaker based on his practice research and scholarship activity in military social work in South Africa. He subsequently accepted the invitation and provided the following title for the keynote; *Military social work developments in South Africa: Practice theory, resilience, and research.”*

During the Spring of 2019, meetings were held with the Fordham Media Services department to arrange for the filming of highlights of the conference including the keynote address. In addition, in collaboration with the Fordham Office of Development, the PI developed a webpage for the conference to assist participants in preparing to come to the conference and to disseminate information post conference.

The PI also met with West Point tours to arrange a private tour of the installation for the conference participants. A tour of Army Community Services at West Point was also arranged with the Director of this agency. Lastly, publicity and coverage of the event was also arranged with Fordham News.

*Three Day Conference – April 24-26, 2019* **(See attached Conference Brochure)**

A total of 30 participants who registered for the conference. In addition, to these invited subject matter experts, there were several invited guests including Col. Venable, Commander of the Keller Army Hospital, Dr. Joseph Gall, Director of Army Community Services at West Point and Dr. Ji Seon Lee, Associate Dean, Fordham Graduate School of Social Services.

Following is a detailed description of the conference activities

April 24, 2019

6:00 PM: Welcome Reception

During this informal reception, display tables were set up to exhibit materials and provide information about each country’s military social work delivery system. This information remained on display for informal sharing for the duration of the conference.

7:00 PM: Conference Dinner (Eisenhower Room)

At the beginning of the conference dinner the following individuals provided welcoming remarks to the participants on behalf of their organization:

*Mary Ann Forgey, Professor, & Ji Seon Lee, Associate Dean,*

*Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service.*

*Col. Brett Venable, Commander,*

*Keller Army Community Hospital, West Point.*

*Annamaria Campanini, President,*

*International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW).*

*David Albright & Kari Fletcher, Co-Chairs, Military Social Work Track,*

*U.S. Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).*

April 25, 2019

8:00AM: Breakfast

9:00AM: Presentation and Discussion of the IMilSW Study

Dr, Mary Ann Forgey & Ms. Karen Hurdle Green provided an overview of the study of international military social work entitled” Toward a More Global Understanding of Military Social Work Practice the results of which provided an impetus for this conference. **(See attached** **IMilSW Study Presentation Power Point (PP)**. Following a description of the study background, objectives, methods and procedure, the below major findings were presented followed by specific questions for discussion.

1. Findings on MilSW Practice Settings, Direct and Indirect Roles, Levels of Practice and Theoretical Approaches Across Countries Identified as Having Military Social Work

Discussion Question: In what ways does the MilSW practice setting (e.g. clinic or military unit etc.) influence the direct and indirect SW roles and approach to practice?

1. Findings on the Common Ethical Tensions in Military Social Work Practice.

Discussion Question: How do ethical tensions get managed by military social workers in your country?

1. Findings on the Interface between Social Work Practice within the Military and Social Work Practice with Veterans.

Discussion Question: Thinking about the needs of military service members and their families as they transition to civilian life, how can military social work models of practice better support the transition from military service to civilian life?

12:00 PM: Conference Luncheon)

1:00 PM Keynote Address - Prof. Rev’d Adrian Van Breda, University of Johannesburg, South Africa, *Military social work development in South Africa: Practice theory, resilience and research.*

**(See attached Keynote Presentation PowerPoint.**

Following the presentation, participants were asked to discuss the following questions in small “buzz” groups:

* How appropriate would Occupational Social Work be as a foundation for military social work in your country?
* How could the military social work practice model presented in the keynote be adopted or adapted into your country context?
* Imagine what you could accomplish if you had a small team dedicated to SW research and development in your military.

2:30PM: Agency Visit: Army Community Services (ACS), Family Advocacy Program and Resiliency Center, West Point.

3:45PM-5:00PM: Guided Bus Tour of West Point Academy

7:00PM: Conference Dinner (MacArthur Dining Room Alcove)

April 26, 2019

8:00AM: Breakfast

9:00AM: Discussion: What have we learned from Day 2?

Participants identified the following as areas of new learning from Day 2:

1. Participants acknowledged the need to think more deeply about a social work practice model in relation to military social work. Several commented that the keynote presentation on the South African model helped them to be more cognizant of their own model through the identification of similarities and differences. This type of thinking was also seen as helpful to the important process of differentiating the role of MilSW from the role(s) of other helping professionals working with the military. This differentiation was seen as needed in order to get closer to the “core” of social work.
2. Some believed that there needed to be more focus on organization and community practice within military social work. Some representatives acknowledged that there was now less focus on social work practice on a macro level and more on practice with individuals within their country’s military due to the increased medicalization of care being experienced.
3. The need to more clearly define MilSW was expressed including a clearer understanding of the commonalities and differences of military social work with active duty military and social work with veterans.
4. Some questions identified that need further exploration include:
   1. What do professional SW organizations think about MilSW?
   2. How do we best convey the need and importance of MilSW?
   3. How can we better “market” MilSW and its importance?

9:30AM Small/Large Group Discussion: What are the opportunities and challenges for IMilSW collaboration in relation to:

IMilSW Practice Sharing Discussion Highlights and Recommendations

* Development of a webpage devoted to MilSW practice resources.
* Address the issue of licensure and whether there should be a MilSW license
* Need to develop a name for military social work practice within the military.
* Identification of MilSW competencies across countries.
* Identify the particular challenges faced by uniformed social workers in balancing the professional social work role and military officer role.
* Need for joint publishing activities including international collaboration on journal articles, an edited book.
* Explore the possibility of submitting an abstract for an international MilSW symposium at the 2020 IMilSW Conference in Remini, Italy.

IMilSW Research Partnerships Discussion Highlights and Recommendations

* Explore the possibility of publishing in the IASSW Dialogue
* Need to consider outcome measures to be able to show the impact of MilSW
* Need evidence of effectiveness in order to expand MilSW.

Need to gather MilSW stories of effectiveness.

IMilSW Education Discussion Highlights and Recommendations

* Discussed whether the focus should be on developing specializations and course work in MilSW or on infusing MilSW content in the required SW courses or both?
* Faculty are in need of MilSW course material. More exploration needed as to ways this case material can be developed with our global partners.
* A book with case material e.g. vignettes with teaching points is needed.
* More understanding is needed about the SW programs that have Occupational SW (OSW) courses and/or specializations since OSW lays the foundation for the work that MilSWs do.
* A strong empirically based rationale is required in order to get support for MilSW curriculum development.
* More information is needed on MilSW field placements

11:15AM: Prioritization Discussion & Next Steps in the Development of a Strategic Plan

* Decision made to continue to meet virtually approximately every two months in order to continue to refine the strategies and move to implementation.
* MilSW definitional issues need attention. Who are we as a group? What is our definition of MilSW? Recommendation made to include a definitional question in the conference feedback survey.
* Explore possible platforms to serve as the central source/depository of MilSW resources/information.
* Review the call for presentation abstracts and consider developing a joint presentation at the next IASSW conference.

12:00PM - Formation of an IMilSW Planning Group

* Participants decided to continue to meet virtually as a group approximately every 2 months to continue refine the recommendations for collaboration and to develop plans for implementation.

12:30PM-2:00PM: Wrap up Luncheon

**Project Outcomes and/or Feedback**

*Dissemination about the conference*

As a way of disseminating information about the conference proceedings, the conference website created by Fordham University will remain active and has been revised to include post conference information and developments. (<https://www.fordham.edu/info/28764/international_military_social_work_conference>)

A Fordham News Article about the conference has also been published (<https://news.fordham.edu/colleges-and-schools/graduate-school-of-social-service/graduate-school-of-social-service-holds-conference-on-military-social-work-at-west-point/>) that also included photos of the conference and a video of the keynote.

The video footage taken during the conference by Fordham media services is also in the process of being edited. This footage includes clips from the Welcoming Reception, the Welcoming Remarks at the Conference Dinner, Small Group Discussions and Interviews with Conference Delegates. The goal is to create a 15-20-minute video of the conference that can be disseminated at future conferences and on the Conference website.

*Ongoing Collaboration MilSW Teaching, Research and Scholarship*

A plan was established at the conference to have ongoing video conferences approximately every two months to continue the planning for the teaching, research and scholarship collaborations recommended at the conference. The first of these video conference has been scheduled for July 23rd. **(See attached** **agenda for this first video conference call).**

Following the IMilSW conference, a proposal for an edited book about what Military Social Work looks like across the globe was also submitted by Mary Ann Forgey and Karen Hurdle to Springer Publishing. The preliminary review by the publisher has been positive and next steps are in the process of being determined. (**See attached book proposal abstract)**

As part of the follow up on one of the conference recommendations, the IASSW 2020 Conference Call for Abstracts has been forwarded to all of the IMilSW participants. The plan is to form a small working group of interested IMilSW conference participants to write the abstract for an International Symposium presentation at the conference.

*Feedback Survey*: **(See attached summary of the feedback received to date).**

A feedback survey was sent to all participants following the conference. The following questions were included:

1. Describe any impact the IMilSW conference had on your thinking about military social work?
2. How do you think MilSW should be defined?
3. Based on your own experience, why do you think social workers (uniformed and/or civilian are an important and necessary part of the military in your country?
4. On the last day of the conference we identified some possible projects that we could work n as a group. Please check any and all that you would be interested in working on.
   * Developing a proposal abstract for a symposium about IMilSW for the 2020 IASSW conference
   * Developing Webinars for Social Work Education and Continuing Education
   * Contributing a chapter about MilSW in your country for an edited book
   * Other

**Conclusions**

The participation of invited subject matter experts in military social work from 16 countries in this inaugural conference demonstrated the critical need for this type of global dialogue about military social work practice. There was also a consensus reached among participants that this dialogue needs to continue on a regular basis in order to refine and implement the recommendations for the conference. Thus, the group made a plan to meet virtually approximately every two months.

In addition to the on-going virtual meetings, it was proposed that the group meet again at one of the international conferences which are organized annually by different international social work groups. The IASSW/IFSW conference next July in Remini, Italy was proposed as a possible venue for the next meeting of this group. The delivery of a symposium about IMilSW at this conference was also proposed as a way of continuing and broadening the conversation about IMilSW. Identifying the most appropriate venue to hold ongoing meetings of this group was recognized as a challenge due to the geographically diverse nature of the group and the mix of both academics and practitioners.

It was also recognized that in order to be effective as a group, further work needs to be done on the development of the group’s identity, function and structure. Over the course of the next year, these critical conceptual issues will be addressed as part of the on-going work of the group that will be meeting virtually.

**Attachments**

IASSW Award Letter

Conference Brochure

IMilSW Study Presentation Power Point (PP) West Point – Forgey/Hurdle

West Point Keynote Presentation PP – Van Breda

Agenda for 7/23/19 Post Conference Video Conference Call

Book Proposal Abstract

Feedback Survey Results to Date

Financial Report/Invoices