

Amanda Foka, MA Social Work (2010)

Where are you working now and what are you doing?



I am working for the **United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women** (UN Women, formerly UNIFEM) in Ghana.

My career after graduation has taken a promising start with my first job with the United Nations. Understanding of the concept of inequality and social exclusion is key in my work with the UN. Research skills acquired during the course are very important for my work.

What is the best thing about what you are doing now?

I am currently part of the team providing technical support to the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs to conduct baseline study on how the Domestic Violence Act of Ghana protects vulnerable women and girls since its passage in 2007 by the Parliament of Ghana. This research will feed into the UN Women and the Government of Ghana's intervention on gender based violence. Being able to positively influence the lives of the vulnerable in society is very rewarding.

To what extent did your social work degree help you secure your first job?

I believe my training as a social worker has given me the ability to work with various stakeholders at the community, national and international levels. Social work core skills such as assessment, planning, negotiation, organisation, management, resource mobilisation, monitoring and evaluation are very important for international development, just as they are for case work.

How far did your social work degree prepare you for practice?

As stated earlier, social core skills and work values are applicable to development work. The concept of social justice is very much embedded in gender equality, where the bulk of the work I do lies. As six of the **Millennium Development Goals** (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>) are directly related to women and children, the need to focus on the people and their environment in the international development process cannot be overemphasised. For instance, eradicating extreme poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, as well as combating HIV/AIDS are all key areas of social work.

What advice would you give to current students studying on the social work degree?

My advice to current students would be to have a broad mind about the course, the fact that it goes beyond children and family, or mental health pathway. The course shapes you and enables you to see things from a very different perspective from the average person. During placement, they should complete their portfolio on time and should always ask questions when unsure of something. They should also make effective use of the tutorial groups, and group discussion as this can give opportunity to ask questions for those unable to do so in a bigger group.