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# Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: First report – promoting social and economic equalities

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The messages in this document come from professionals immersed in the real world. We know that our global community can and should provide equitable standards of decent wellbeing for the whole of the world's population, but this is not the current reality. As social workers, educators and social development practitioners, we are working every day with life at its extremes, witnessing the highs and lows of human capabilities and behaviour. We recognise that, for many people, the opportunities for social mobility and full realisation of their potential are beyond their own efforts; family inheritance and place of birth (be it locality, community or country) and access to resources are determining factors for many. We are also aware that being born into some communities makes self-improvement personally challenging and immensely difficult. We are, therefore, realistic about social limitations whilst optimistic about human potential.

The global commitment to respect for human dignity and rights is at the centre of our work, but we live the reality of social injustice. Our experience and research tells us that people, systems and the way we exist together can change for the better. Together, we can create a better world. This conviction is the driving force behind our efforts in establishing *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development*.

This process is being driven by the 3 main global bodies representing social workers, social development practitioners and educators: the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). (For more information on the partner organisations and *The Global Agenda* see Appendices I and II).

## The Global Agenda process

This, the first report from *The Global Agenda* process, focuses on the theme: 'Promoting Social and Economic Equalities' and has been compiled by practitioners and educators in many different types of organisations at local, national, regional and international levels. The report has been co-produced without new resources as a bottom-up action. It is the latest step in a joint global strategy<sup>1</sup> by IASSW, ICSW and IFSW to address the worldwide dynamics that perpetuate poverty, inequality of opportunities and access to resources, and oppression, and to give greater prominence to the key contributions of social work and social development. It is a major element in a decade-long commitment to focus worldwide attention, over two year periods, on each of the following themes:

- *Promoting social and economic equalities,*
- *Promoting the dignity and worth of peoples,*
- *Working towards environmental and community sustainability,*
- *Strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships.*

The need for effective and ethical working environments for social workers and social development practitioners, and for high quality education and training to equip them for this globally essential endeavour, runs throughout each theme.

The 3 organisations agreed that we need to create a common platform – *The Global Agenda* – as a basis for advocacy with regional and global bodies and to demonstrate professional coherence, solidarity and credibility (Appendix II; Jones and Truell, 2012). However we recognise that there are competing ideas and diverse perspectives within the fields of social work and social development (Tassé, 2014). Global organisations, by definition, aim to build a sufficient consensus around common values, beliefs and objectives. However, as open and accountable bodies, we recognise and welcome debate and acknowledge that positions change over time; the special issue of *International Social Work* (57(4)) published alongside this report, and the IFSW book *Social Work Around the World V* (Hall 2012), are evidence of our determination to encourage debate and reflection. With all its insufficiencies and limits, *The Global Agenda* process has created a space for debate, within the profession and beyond, with all those committed to social, economic and political justice.

We intend that the reports on these themes will grow in scope and rigour as we develop capacity, drawing from ‘on-the-ground’ experience of the policies and practices which work and those which fail people. A formal process to identify and support 5 Regional Observatories, consisting of partnerships between universities and social work and social development practitioners, is being launched in 2014. These Observatories will together form the Global Observatory, led by the 3 global bodies (IASSW, ICSW and IFSW), which will provide the robust structure and engine for collecting qualitative and quantitative data for future reports and to sustain the debate. This report is based on submissions from the 5 regions (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America), drawing on evidence from written and other submissions, surveys, conference presentations and discussions, and existing knowledge and literature, including information from most of the countries in each region.

## **Social work, social development and promoting equalities**

Social workers operate at the point where social forces and individual behaviour meet (IFSW/IASSW, 2000); they work with the consequences of both human choice and social disadvantage. We know that improving the well-being of people, families and communities requires a conducive, just and fair social environment within which people can make their own choices. ‘Promoting social and economic equalities’ was chosen as the first *Global Agenda* theme to focus on the major causes that constrain individual opportunity, human development, and care of the earth’s ecosystem and keep people in poverty and disadvantage. The theme includes advocacy for the realisation of human rights for all peoples; a socially-just international economy; the development of socio-economic structures that ensure environmental sustainability; and the recognition that social cohesion and institutional solidarity must be at the forefront of policy and government decisions. These broad social realities provide the context within which people decide how to live their lives.

Widening social and economic inequality within most countries and across the world is now well-documented and unarguable (UNDP, 2013). There has been a deluge of international reports and research studies all pointing in the same direction (e.g. Milanovic, 2011, 2012; Wilkinson, 2009; Stiglitz, 2012). A recent UN report argued that ‘inequality does not affect only the poor, but can be detrimental to growth, stability and well-being in general’ (UN DESA, 2013). Welcoming *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development*, Helen Clark (head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said:

We, like you, base our work on empowering individuals and communities. At the heart of the concept of human development is an acknowledgement of the importance of people being able to live lives which they choose and value. At the heart of our work is engaging communities in voicing what they want their future to look like. (World Social Work Day, 26 March 2012 UN, New York)

‘There is growing global consensus on the need to bridge the divide between the haves and the have-nots’ (Hongbo (UN DESA), 2013: 5) and on the likely consequences of this trend. This is seen, for example, in the groundswell of support for the International Labour Conference Recommendation 202 (June 2012) concerning National Floors of Social Protection that every country should establish and maintain their social protection floors comprising basic social security guarantees. The guarantees should ensure, at a minimum that, ‘over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential health care and to basic income security’ (ILO, 2012). The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors created in 2012 and comprising more than 70 NGOs and social movements has proposed that Social Protection Floors initiative should be an integral part of the post-2015 global development framework.

Strong political and economic voices are raised defending growing inequality, however, and blaming disadvantaged people for their own fate. Nevertheless, robust evidence demonstrates that ‘growing inequalities can be arrested by integrated policies that are universal in principle while paying particular attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized populations’ (UN DESA, 2013; see also Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). That is one of the key factors underpinning the campaign initiated by the ILO to consider social security as an investment in people, reaffirming that the right to social security is a human right and an economic and social necessity for development and progress.

This report addresses the social consequences of the well-documented reality of growing inequality and some responses to it. Social work and social development practitioners are not normally involved in global, macroeconomic decisions (Davies, 1985). However practitioners do bear witness to their social consequences and realities on a daily basis and have a duty to provide feedback about the outcomes of social policies. We observe that unreliable, unequal, fluctuating societies undermine health and well-being and erode the potential for positive futures and that these instabilities are often driven by macroeconomic decisions. Thus, as professionals who work with complex and interlocking systems, we are compelled to advocate for the principles of respect for people and social justice and to develop the beginning of a social work and social development perspective on the social elements of economic regulation and deregulation and their impact on human wellbeing and the physical environment (Dominelli, 2012; Shajahan, 2013; Truell, 2013a).

Since the 1980s, financial turbulence has become a permanent feature of the world economy; in 2008-9 the world went through its worst financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s (International Labour Organisation, 2011). These often rapid macro changes inevitably have devastating social consequences for individuals and communities. On average, it takes two years to create the problem and 4.8 years for employment to recover to pre-crisis levels (ILO, 2011). Each time this happens, large numbers of people become unemployed, homeless and insecure, families are torn apart, children lose educational opportunities and death rates increase. The economic environment leaves a trail of misery and damaged lives.

How do governments and the international economic frameworks respond? Typically they tend to seek short-term solutions that often aggravate the problems. For example, the current pursuit of ‘austerity’ and ‘competition’ in Europe and elsewhere has not produced the anticipated growth that politicians’ desire, mirroring the experience of countries which were subjected to World Bank ‘structural adjustment’ policies in earlier decades. Austerity policies are driving massive job losses,

wage reductions, price increases, significant migrations, loss of the skilled workforce, business failure and increased inequality. Many people have lost access to adequate housing, health care and education services, with lasting implications for future generations. This has caused major dislocation for so-called 'vulnerable groups', such as people with disabilities, chronic health conditions, mental health problems or parenting problems, frail older people and those coming out of prison, some of whom have lost all the support which enabled them to have any quality of life (IFSW, 2013; Lavalette and Ioakimidis, 2011).

These social trends are reflected in different ways in the global regions. The regional perspectives which follow draw on the regional reports which are built on information gathered from all parts of the world. Detailed information and references for projects are included in the regional reports.

## Regional perspectives

### Africa

Africa has witnessed a period of significant economic growth, driven largely by rising commodity prices, but the fruits of this growth have been shared unequally and the distribution of wealth has become more unequal within most countries (Africa Progress Panel, 2013b). Social development activity is well-recognised throughout Africa, delivered by a range of agencies and professionals, including social development and social work practitioners. Social work is an established, but mostly an unregulated profession in the continent. Some national governments are discussing formal regulation of title and qualifications, as has been achieved in South Africa (Osei-Hwedie, 2013).

Social workers, educators and social development practitioners have worked together on *The Global Agenda* theme across the region. Two conferences drew practitioners and educators together, raising awareness of the *Global Agenda* and assisting the development of a regional overview on promoting social and economic equalities. The International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD) conference was held in Uganda in July 2013<sup>2</sup> and the 'Voices for Development' conference in Johannesburg in September 2013.<sup>3</sup> These events provided a platform for the views of the people who are the targets of international policy, voicing their aspirations for what should follow the MDGs in 2015 and contributing to the UN process.

Delegates in Johannesburg responded with a set of key messages to the international community that address the major causes of regional poverty and exploitation. These include the need for global frameworks of agreed fair taxing and just trade systems so that Africa does not continue to be exploited by international companies (Mason, 2004; Truell, 2013b).

Concern was expressed that improvement in the social and economic conditions of the vast majority of people has not matched the economic growth in Africa over the last 10 years. Instead of equal benefits for all, the wealth has gone to a small minority, including multi-nationals and offshore investors from the mining and mineral extraction industry who avoid paying proportionate taxes that would otherwise enable governments to invest in the well-being of people. Documenting these trends, the Africa Progress Report (Africa Progress Panel, 2013a) also shows that more money is taken out of Africa through tax avoidance than all monies received from aid. Social workers called on the UN and other international agencies to develop new regulations that call the multinationals to account and build the foundations for regional economic and social prosperity (Truell, 2013b).

Social workers at the conference also had messages for their own governments on the need to see the links between economic growth and social development. They said that there was little evidence that regional economic growth was benefiting the lives of the majority of people (Truell,

2013b). There was however clear evidence of significantly growing inequality (World Bank, 2013; Africa Progress Panel, 2013). The experience of grassroots social workers resonated with academic research showing that people are happier and their well-being greater in more equitable societies. And when economic growth is not linked to improving social conditions, suffering and wellbeing can worsen (Mwansa, 2015).

Delegates also reminded governments and international agencies that they cannot 'develop' other people. Many decades of experience has informed social work practice that people who are the targets of development policy need to be engaged in the policy frameworks from the beginning and that solutions have to be locally driven. Including people, developing shared visions and empowering them to be in charge of their own environments and futures will always have greater impact than rolling strategies upon them.

## Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region includes a wide diversity of countries, regions and socio-economic environments, including seven of the 10 most populous countries as well as the smallest, some of the poorest countries and some of the fastest growing economies in the world. The Middle East and parts of the Indian subcontinent continue to suffer from serious political conflict and lack of development, China and some other countries have seen rapid growth (up to around 8% per year), Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa have not suffered the extremes of financial crisis seen in some other developed economies, whilst the Japanese economy was adversely affected by the 2011 tsunami. Inequality in wealth and income has increased within all countries. About 20% of total income went to the wealthiest 5% in most countries, and the share of income accruing to the richest households has increased more than three times in Asia's largest and most diverse countries: China, India and Indonesia (Asian Development Bank 2012). The Gini coefficient (standard measure of inequality) has leapt across the whole region from 39 to 46 in the last two decades.

The development of social work is also very varied within such a diverse 'region'. Social work is formally regulated in Australia (Gray, 2013), New Zealand/Aotearoa, Japan and South Korea, with legislation being discussed in Malaysia. There has been a rapid growth in the number of schools of social work in China, with a similar trend in Vietnam, whilst India continues to produce a large number of qualified social workers (Tan, 2013). Middle Eastern countries, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, are investing more in professional social work (Graham, 2013). The profession has low status in countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal, although qualified social workers are employed, mainly delivering social development through NGOs. In some countries, the narrowly defined and tightly managed role of social workers, with limited resources, makes it difficult to envision how they could address *The Global Agenda* in daily practice (Nikku, 2013).

The region has seen a number of *Global Agenda* related events. Annual Government-NGO forums to discuss welfare and equity were held in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2012 and Siem Reap, Cambodia in 2013. The biannual regional social work conference in Tokyo in 2011 focussed on The Agenda and a regional consultation in Indonesia on environmental issues and disaster response (an Agenda element) was held in 2013. A number of national workshops on the Social Protection Floor (SPF) and work with vulnerable groups took place, linked to Agenda themes. The ASEAN Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2011-2020) has provided a focus for Agenda themes. A regional conference on 'Social Protection: Perspectives and Policies', was held in Kuttikkanam, Kerala, India, in December 2012 and on long-term care of older persons in Seoul, Korea in June 2013. A tripartite conference on Agenda themes was held in Nepal. Preliminary



discussions about strategic *Global Agenda* partnerships between regional members of the 3 global bodies have been initiated.

Disaster response has been a specific focus of the region, reflecting recent experience. There is clear evidence from disasters in Aceh, Japan and The Philippines that, where local people supported by social workers are directly involved in recovery and reconstruction, including decisions about relocation where necessary, the recovery is quicker and more robust (Truell, 2014a).

Examples of community participation in ‘bottom-up’ consultation are also evident. For example, a ‘Low Level Panel’ was convened in India, supported by the UN, including older people, people with disabilities, young people and people from the LGBT community (Praxis, 2013). The group reviewed the MDGs, developed proposals for post-2015 priorities and made recommendations to the UN in a process supported by social work and development practitioners. A similar project involved tribal peoples in north India in a consultation about their future and their rights.

The social work associations in Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa have stimulated discussions around Agenda themes and professional groups have consistently confronted inequality arising from lack of respect for the rights of indigenous peoples.

## Europe

Social work is a major element in the welfare models across Europe (Lorenz, 1994; Jones, 2013) but service quality has been reduced by the 2008/9 financial crisis, to a greater or lesser extent. Negative consequences of the crisis experienced across Europe include a widening of economic and social inequality, with a universal government focus on reducing financial benefits and cutting social services. In this negative context, the European region considered the *Global Agenda* process at the bi-annual ENSACT<sup>4</sup> conference in Istanbul in April 2013 and through the EASSW<sup>5</sup> call for submissions, an IFSW regional project on *Economic Crisis in Europe – Challenge and Response of the Social Work Profession* (IFSW Europe, 2014) and ICSW regional consultations.

Practitioners in austerity-affected countries have witnessed traumatic social dislocation, increasing individual and social crisis, decreasing quality of services and worsening working conditions (e.g., IFSW Europe 2014; Ioakimidis and Teloni, 2013; Truell, 2014b). Youth unemployment rates have reached record levels, outward migration has risen, public sector employment has contracted and salaries have been reduced. Social and political conflict has increased, including the rise of fascist and racist groups (Fazzi, 2013) and increased incidence of discrimination against minority groups such as Roma (Zaviršek, 2010).

Suicide rates have significantly increased as joblessness and homelessness intensify. The hidden but all too real consequences of this strategy are, for example, the suicide of a father who cannot cope with not being able to provide income to his family. The costs and emotional and inter-generational consequences far outweigh any benefits of closing down jobs to achieve national savings targets. Whilst migration can result in some economic benefits, such as reverse cash flows, the driving away of young people to other countries where they can find work leaves the austerity affected countries with an increasing proportion of older persons and younger children and a population gap, making it more difficult to rebuild economies for the future (Truell, 2012b).

To address the breakdown in their communities and society, on-the-ground practitioners in the most seriously affected southern European countries have supported the mobilisation of community populations to voice their solutions at local and regional levels (e.g., Consejo, 2013). They have facilitated community care in the absence of affordable state based social health care. They brought their case to the European Union, demonstrating the human costs that underlie the massively negative statistics of austerity (IFSW, 2013).



The Agenda submissions show how social workers have been able to develop and improve services, even in these difficult times (see regional chapter for details). Service user groups are involved with practitioners and educators to ensure users are involved at all levels to shape the education and training of new professionals. Practitioners and researchers have worked in different ways with those receiving state financial benefits to help them claim their rights and to identify where administration prevents policies from working effectively or causes problems for recipients. Cross-national studies explore the consequences of increasing global mobility, especially as they affect families and children. The social exclusion of older people and people with disabilities has been addressed in innovative ways, including the involvement of local communities and political structures. Work with prisoners and staff has expanded economic opportunities for young offenders following release from prison.

Social work and social development practitioners are also involved in advocacy or action to confront inequalities. The consequences of health inequalities have been identified from research and an international website has been launched with suggestions for improved practice. A mechanism for sharing policies focussed on LGBT populations has been established. A group of students organised a conference with local people on the realities of poverty which raised their own community consciousness. Projects aiming to develop competencies for citizen empowerment and to stimulate young people to understand their situation and to raise their voices were launched and a social interventions database has been created to share experience and outcomes.

This collation of examples of social work from across Europe is set within the very difficult social and economic conditions resulting from the financial, political and Eurozone crises. The projects illustrate the creative use of social work skills and knowledge to create change at personal, local, national and international levels.

## Latin America and the Caribbean

Social work and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean have also been affected by the global financial climate. The status of social work varies across the region, with well-established and powerful professional voices in Brazil and some other countries and smaller professional groups in others (Baker, 2013; Julia, 2013; Parada et al., 2012; Queiro-Tajalli, 2013). There are also wide social and economic differences between countries. Whilst Brazil is one of the few countries in the world which can point to reducing economic inequality, other countries have seen a widening gap and even Brazil has witnessed growing social discontent (Chossudovsky, 2010; Mesquita, 2013).

Several conferences and workshops have been held in the region to review the impact of inequalities and discussions are continuing to generate a working alliance between IFSW (LAC) and the Latin American Association for Research and Training in Social Work (ALAIETS). A new joint body, the Latin American and Caribbean Committee of Organisations in Social Work and Social Service (COLACATS) was launched in May 2013 to strengthen regional cooperation. The III Encuentro<sup>6</sup> – *State and Social Policy. Challenges and Opportunities for Latin American and Caribbean social work* – was held in Montevideo in May 2013 and focused on vocational training, conditions of professional work and ethics and human rights. The Association of Caribbean Social Work Educators (ACSWE) conference<sup>7</sup> in Curaçao in July 2013 continued the theme, and when examining the implications of the *Global Agenda* for the region, noted the range of natural disasters that affected the region and the differential impact on survivors from differing socio-economic backgrounds. The poorest people always experience the greatest risks. There was discussion about the development of locality specific, culturally relevant approaches to problems. Practitioners and academics on many of the small islands are working together to innovate and produce good

examples of micro-practice that produce goods and services for those in need. Community development and uplift were major themes in the projects open for participant visits.

Increasing violence in the societies of the region is causing professional concern, linked with increasingly repressive policies which, in effect, criminalize poverty and increase pressures on vulnerable populations. These trends are also increasing personal risks for social workers based in those areas, including risks of personal violence.

A study has been launched into the deteriorating working conditions of social workers in the region, with growing insecurity of employment and changing roles, even though numbers employed are increasing (IFSW, 2014). Professional bodies believe that the Latin American social work model (e.g. Netto, 2012), which has evolved over decades, is under attack from neoliberal policies (Tavares, 2013). Despite the challenges, social workers retain a privileged position to observe and comment on changing and unequal social realities and aim to use these experiences to help develop more effective policies.

There is also evidence of pressure on educational institutions to depart from the well-established historical-philosophical social work tradition in the region, moving towards a more 'consumer' driven model, dominated by the needs of government policies and employers. Social workers are concerned that there is a trend to expect training to prepare social workers to focus on the problems of individuals rather than the reality of the social context (Netto, 2012).

This context of worsening social and economic conditions and increasing challenges for social workers highlights the important role of associations in putting the ethical and social dimensions of policies and economic development in the foreground. This implies a practice based on ethics and unwavering protection of human rights, but especially on critical reflection about professional work and the social contexts in which social relations are played out today. This is reflected in the regional debate about the definition of social work and the launch of an Observatory on Human Rights to promote the objectives of *The Global Agenda*.

## North America

Social work in North America (Canada and USA) is well-established, with formal regulatory systems for qualifications and practice (Shera, 2013). The Caribbean islands are included in this region for IASSW but are in the IFSW Latin America and Caribbean region; the education for and practice of social work varies significantly between the different islands of the sub-region (Baker, 2013). This section focuses on Canada and the USA.

Both countries experienced the impact of the banking crisis and global recession and have a widening gap between the majority of the population and the wealthiest. Social workers, educators and social development practitioners supported the Occupy movement in highlighting the need for business practice to change to a more sustainable, regulated, people-centred (Truell, 2012a) environment. The reality of the socio-economic situation is perhaps best seen in the number of children living in poverty. In 2007, it was reported that 13.3 million children in the United States were living in poverty, rising to 15.5 million by 2009 as a result of the recession, or 1 in 5 children in the United States (Sell, 2010).

Discussions on *Global Agenda* themes took place within the existing framework of conferences and networks, including the annual joint conference of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) and Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), the US Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) conferences and the biennial conference of the Caribbean Association of Social Work Education (ACSWE). The process was promoted on the CSWE Kathleen Kendall Institute website.<sup>8</sup>

Activities which supported Agenda objectives were diverse. The Associations of Social Workers in Canada and the USA jointly promoted strategies on Agenda themes in the region. CASW and CASWE adopted a joint call for a national poverty reduction plan to ensure equitable access to programmes and services for all Canadians. Additional collaborative initiatives being undertaken by these two associations are likely to strengthen their capacity for action to implement the Agenda commitments, including a joint national conference in May 2014 where presentations are expected to focus on social and economic inequalities. CASWE and CASW have actively supported campaigns by indigenous peoples for recognition, resources and justice.

CSWE published an edited manual, *Teaching Human Rights: Curriculum Resources for Social Work Educators* (Hokenstad, 2013). CSWE requires schools to prepare students to promote advocacy in the areas of human rights and social and economic justice; the manual should support more consistent implementation. The human rights assessment scales, developed and submitted by McPherson and Abell (Florida State University), aim to ‘measure human rights engagement and human rights exposure in social workers’. A core textbook has been updated: *Social policy and social change: Toward the creation of social and economic justice* (Limenez, 2014) covers several forms of discrimination including social and economic justice issues.

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) commissioned two reports on social and economic rights. *Canada Social Transfer project: accountability matters* (2012), critically examines the inconsistent implementation of the Canada Social Transfer (CST), the primary source of federal funding that supports provincial and territorial social programs. *The Canada Social Transfer and the Social Determinants of Health* (2013) examines policies and practices in relation to social service funding and delivery, and their impacts on social determinants of health. The authors conclude that ‘economic and social inequalities are exacerbated by the inadequacy of (financial) benefits’ (p. 2).

NASW USA supported several Agenda related activities, including a seminar on *The Feminization of Poverty: Revisited*, to highlight the impact that poverty and income inequality still have on women and girls. Campaigns were pursued on health care reform; immigration; maternal, infant and early childhood health and needy families. Marking the 50th Anniversary of the *War on Poverty*, NASW-USA partnered with the Council on Social Work Education and several other leading bodies to brief lawmakers on the strong correlation between poverty and child abuse and neglect. The theme for Social Work Month 2014 was ‘All People Matter’. NASW-USA actively participated in the 50th Anniversary of the historic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made his famous ‘I Have a Dream’ speech. Social workers played a key role in the 1963 March, including Dorothy Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr.

## Asserting our voice

Thousands of people in each of the five regions, working through conferences, other professional exchanges and workplace discussions on the theme of ‘Promoting Social and Economic Equality’, have shown a common set of values and practices in action, that can help shape the hopes of peoples and facilitate better wellbeing. These values and practices are informed by the following insights derived from the experience of working at the interface of people and communities with social and developmental policy:

- *People cannot be developed by others.*

Our frontline experience has taught us that to escape from poverty and oppressive situations, people need to be actively involved in their own futures.

- *The cornerstone of a thriving economy is a stable, well-resourced and educated community*  
All too often governments argue that they cannot afford to invest in community, whereas our frontline experience informs us that investing in community stimulates entrepreneurship, skill development, cultural innovations and business growth and widens opportunities for young people, men and women.
- *People are happier and wellbeing is better for all in more equitable societies.*  
The massively unequal distribution of wealth causes more social instability, health and crime problems, negatively affecting everybody (Wilkinson, 2009).
- *When people have a collective voice, they are more able to advocate for their rights and participate in decision-making processes resulting in better wellbeing.*

Social work and social development practitioners are involved with individuals, families and groups who need supportive, stable and equitable communities and societies. For this to be realised, they need to be built on a socially just economic foundation. What would this fair and just global economy look like? Just like today, regulation would be based on multilateral treaties. Unlike today, national interests would be subordinated to acknowledgement of global interdependencies between nation-states and recognition of the need to rectify the earth's unequal distribution of finite resources (Dominelli, 2012). A just economy would be founded on human rights, fair pricing, international standards of labour, corporate social responsibilities, capacity building for low-income countries, and agreed forms of dialogue underpinning supply-and-demand agreements, enabling all parties to participate and share in benefits (Truell, 2013a). Collective international action could achieve sustainable economic, social and environmental wellbeing to meet the needs of today and future generations (George, 2003; Dominelli, 2012).

As social workers, educators and social development practitioners, we have a responsibility to draw attention to the realities of hardship and poverty, which are so often hidden, and to their causes. We must challenge the stereotypes that blame individuals for allowing themselves to fall into trouble or for being inadequate or dishonest. We know the reality is different — and more complex. People do have individual responsibilities but can exercise them more successfully in a fair and just environment which supports them with opportunities and resources.

We are not alone in promoting social and economic equalities and the need for socially just international regulation. Many economists have made this case (e.g. Ortiz, 2014; Milanovic, 2011; 2012). There is a growing, deep sense of injustice and lack of fairness all around the world, seen not only in the Occupy movement but also in political and academic writing and the popular mood. In that context, it is inevitable that social workers find themselves alongside the global movements which are challenging inadequately regulated and anti-human financial systems and advocating for fair and just economic and social policies.

The professional task of social work and social development practitioners is infinitely more difficult in an environment of blatant injustice and against such vindictive narratives about the alleged personal failures of those who are disadvantaged. That is why we are compelled to promote social and economic equalities and why the process of *The Global Agenda* is so important for our professions.

## **Moving forward**

This first global report is a significant achievement for social work, education and social development in the international domain. It demonstrates commitment and the political will to share

resources, to work together, to act at community, national, regional and worldwide levels and to ensure that people have a say in their own futures. The social dimensions and needs of people must be at the forefront of policy at all levels and those with power need to address the global drivers of poverty and oppression.

The hard work and joint efforts of the thousands of volunteers behind this report give us all encouragement and hope for the health of our professions and a future global society based on social justice. Such a process can act as a model for governments and international policy development organisations, as lack of political will is the major barrier to overcoming many of the causes of social injustice and inequality.

The *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* assists our professions jointly to support a set of common objectives and focus points. In the last two years, our focus on *Promoting Social and Economic Equalities* has resulted in many joint global actions including advocating in political structures, facilitating community resourcefulness, and supporting communities to have influence over their own futures. This theme will of course continue and remain an important aspect of our joint work. The theme of the next two years will also result in advocacy and action, coordinated through our newly established Regional Observatories.

The theme for 2014 – 2016 is *Promoting the dignity and worth of peoples*. This provides us with the opportunity to advocate for the person's dignity to be at the centre of societies' actions, including those aimed at eradicating socio-economic inequalities.

Our work blends together with the voices of many others and the common call for a more humane and environmentally focused global society. To join our actions and be a part of the 2nd Global Agenda report in 2016 visit [www.globalsocialagenda.org](http://www.globalsocialagenda.org).

## Notes

1. <http://www.globalsocialagenda.org>
2. <http://www.simmons.edu/ssw/icsd2013>, <http://www.socialdevelopment.net>
3. <http://ifsw.org/news/voices-for-development-outcomes-from-african-region-conference>
4. sss<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ensactistanbul.org>
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## African Region

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### Introduction

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development is a joint venture between the International Association for Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).

The team that leads the Global Agenda for the African region is Antoinette Lombard (South Africa) and Janestic Twikirize (Uganda) for IASSW; Judith Kaulen (Zimbabwe) for ICSW and Charles Mbugua (Kenya) for IFSW. Abye Tasse (IASSW) and Charles Abbey (ICSW) provide the link between the Africa region and the Global Coordinating Group of the Global Agenda.

The Africa region is committed to the institutionalization of the African Observatory for the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development. The process towards this end commenced with individual discussions and by preparing the data collection instruments. The Africa region used two international conferences as a platform to launch the Global Agenda Dialogue; to articulate mechanisms to solicit participation for collecting data on the theme, *Promoting social and economic equalities*; and to start coordinating the work in the region. The first was the International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD) conference in Uganda in July 2013. The IFSW African Regional Conference, hosted by the National Association for Social Work South Africa (NASW:SA) in September 2013, provided a further platform to discuss the Global Agenda, to plan and coordinate activities (in particular, to solicit and mobilize participation in the data gathering actions) and to agree recommendations to the United Nations and others.

Data on the first pillar of the Global Agenda, namely *Promoting social and economic equalities*, were obtained by means of case studies and an online survey. In both instances, a set of questions guided the data gathering processes. Colleagues could choose to respond to the survey or send in a case study or do both. The purpose of the data instruments was to gather data on activities/experiences/examples/case studies on how social work and development educators and practitioners promote social and economic equality. The data gathering instruments clearly stated that participation was voluntary; that all the data would be captured for the envisaged Africa Regional Observatory and would be a source of information for teaching, practice and research purposes, including research reports and professional and scientific publications.

The data gathering instruments were directed at social work and social development practitioners, academics and students. The call for participation was circulated amongst various academic and practitioner networks within the Africa region. Seven case studies were received, albeit in different formats; two from South Africa, four from Uganda and one from Kenya. A total of 188 responses were received for the online survey. In view of the limited scope of this observatory report, the discussion will only focus on an analysis of the case studies. The following section will present a preliminary view on how social workers and social development practitioners in the region see their role in promoting social and economic equalities; what activities they engage in and how they succeed in reducing social and economic inequalities. Seven case studies in three countries cannot claim to be the voice of Africa; however they offer, within the qualitative context of case studies and taken with other evidence, significant pointers to the current social and

economic equality activities among social workers and social development practitioners in the region. Analysis of the quantitative online survey will strengthen the research findings from the case studies, to be read alongside the outcomes from the conferences.

## **Promoting social and economic equality**

The themes for the respective case studies are as follows: 1) a day in the life of street children, a case study of a social worker making a difference in the lives of street children; 2) agri-business value chains and social enterprises for economic empowerment; 3) reflections on a national day labour study and a national street waste pickers' study; 4) ITÊRÊLÊNG Women's Project on social services to families and sustainable livelihoods; 5) medical social worker in the Nyeri Provincial General Hospital; 6) promoting social and economic equalities in Rakai District, Uganda: Case study on Manny Parish Kifamba Sub County; and 7) case study project summary: Sustainable Livelihoods for Women Ex-combatants (SLIWE). The discussion that follows is a consolidation of the answers to the respective questions that underpinned the case study data collection instrument.

## *Defining social and economic inequality*

The case studies reveal that social workers and social development practitioners engage in environments where people's living conditions are inadequate and depicting a wide gap between the rich and the poor. They define social and economic inequalities as disparities and unfairness in distribution of both economic and social resources which create a gap between the rich and the poor, influencing social service delivery and ultimately the well-being of people. Social and economic inequalities are evident in the case studies in relation to income (including wages and social transfers), social class, housing (shelter) and access to clean drinking water, health services, education and infrastructure like road and communication networks.

## *Theories and approaches*

Theoretical frameworks and approaches that social workers use in the studies to analyse the problems that social and economic inequalities present and to inform interventions, include theories on social learning; social enterprise; gender and social inclusion. Approaches include social development; empowerment; strengths-based perspective; human-rights; asset-based planning; Max Neef-Fundamental Human Needs; sustainable livelihoods; People Centred Development; psychosocial and client centred approaches.

## *Target populations and nature of activities*

Children, youth and women feature prominently in the activities of the case studies. Social and economic inequalities are addressed on both a structural and personal level which depicts an emphasis on micro- and macro-practice. Activities include, amongst others, establishment of social enterprises; business mentorship; youth cooperatives and youth focused financial services including access to finance; youth engagement in governance and leadership; sustainable livelihoods; child and youth policy development; peace building and reconciliation; establishing food gardens; forming of women's groups for income generating projects; early childhood development activities; training in various skills, including entrepreneurship and life skills and adult literacy; information campaigns and advocacy on human rights; assisting beneficiaries to obtain

documentation such as birth certificates to access social grants and the reintegration of vulnerable populations such as women ex-combatants and children living on the street back into society. Activities also include protective services targeting safety of children, including rehabilitation and protection of children living on the street and protecting them against drug abuse and being used to sell drugs and in particular, girls being gang raped; protection of women from sexual and labour exploitation and physical violence; advocacy and improved service delivery to former abductees, ex-child soldiers, international displaced persons and refugees, and advocating for good harvesting and planting methods, organic farming, green growth and environmental conservation in an endeavour to achieve sustainable agribusiness. From these activities, the wide spectrum of second-generation rights (Ife, 2012) is observed as well as the importance of social workers involvement in promoting social, economic and environment justice.

### *Role players involved*

It is evident from the case studies that a combined effort of various stakeholders is needed to promote social and economic equalities. Role players in the listed activities include civil organizations; religious leaders; local leaders; central government officials; school administrators; health workers; broader civil society; the involved vulnerable population(s); government departments and ministries; chiefs (in rural areas); social auxiliary workers; student social workers; volunteers; the private sector; international partners and donors. It is also evident from the case studies that the credibility of service organizations, such as the Youth Social Work Association in Uganda and the east African region, plays a critical role in the successes of activities promoting social and economic equality. In addition, partnerships with international and other role players are significant for effective social work service delivery and capacity building of marginalized populations, especially the youth. The success of activities is also related to the level of government involvement which ranges within the projects reflected in the case studies from no involvement to complete involvement in various departmental levels. Government role in setting aside resources in support of activities is highlighted as particularly important. 'Without equal resources, opportunity cannot really be equal' (Isbister, 2001: 9).

### *Social and economic issues and rights influenced*

Social workers and social development practitioners engage in activities that promote the right to health, education, shelter (housing), food, water and economic empowerment. This affirms the claim that social work is a human rights profession (Ife, 2012). The right to education includes adult literacy and early childhood development, including day care centres and placement of children in schools. The right to adequate food supply and nutrition is linked to activities such as food gardens; preparing nutritional dishes in an economic manner; food parcels as incentive to attend entrepreneurial skills training and negotiating with farmers in the surrounding areas to plough the field and to donate seedlings. The right to health includes HIV and Aids awareness campaigns; talks at schools on such topics as teenage pregnancies, and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. The right to water includes the development of funding proposals to obtain donor funding to sink boreholes, install water pumps and taps, in particular at rural schools, and securing access to water for vegetable garden projects. The right to social security includes rural campaigns to assist beneficiaries to apply for relevant social grants and assisting them to get identification and other relevant documentation for this purpose. The right to social security also includes protecting children from physical, mental and sexual abuse through preventative measures and/or statutory intervention. The right to housing includes finding accommodation for children who are

temporarily or permanently removed from home. Victims of domestic violence are accommodated in shelters and HIV/Aids orphans in drop-in centres. Economic empowerment is linked to facilitating opportunities for training in entrepreneurship; access to finances; saving opportunities and linking groups and communities to markets for their goods and services.

The activities reflected in the case studies and the socio-economic rights that these activities address, indicate the affirmation of Sen's (2008) view of poverty as 'unfreedoms' of various kinds, including the absence of health facilities, lack of education and the subjugation of women, amongst others.

### *The level of influence*

The Youth Social Work Association organize debates and interactive talk shows in communities and through the media (radio, television, text messages) at local, national and regional levels. They have also initiated income generating activities and then encouraged these beneficiaries to save their income in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). Furthermore, they have also organized a former child soldiers-led campaign for their rights where they presented a petition to the Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda. The Youth Social Work Association also initiates social enterprises for youth employment and sustainability of interventions in this regard such as advocacy for youth labour rights. The case study of the ITÊRÊLÊNG Women's Project reflects an effort by social workers and social development practitioners to influence the right to education, including adult literacy and early childhood intervention and child protection rights. The main purpose of advocacy practice 'is the pursuit of social justice' (Hoefer, 2012: 2) and in turn, 'Social justice is the most important aim of the social work profession and thus of advocacy practice' (Hoefer, 2012: 215).

### *Impact on practitioners and educators*

Social work and social development practitioners and educators involved in the case studies indicated that being involved in activities that promote social and economic equalities confronts them directly with the reality of poverty; it facilitates a better understanding of the link between social and economic aspects in development; it deepens the awareness of the struggle and courage of people making a living in the informal economy and it raises the importance of having a global perspective on local problems. Furthermore, social work and social development practitioners are stimulated to become more creative in finding methods to address social and economic problems with limited resources. Focusing on promoting social and economic equality and hence on the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, is therefore a renewing of the commitment of social work and social development practitioners and educators to eradicate poverty (Midgley, 1996).

### **Success of activities, innovations and lessons learnt**

The case studies indicate some successes in promoting social and economic equalities in a concrete manner in the Africa region. Successes are seen as children going to school; seeing families sleeping under well roofed houses without further fearing heavy rains; improvement of people's health; empowerment which leads to positive live changes such as expanding income generating activities and increasing savings; beneficiaries of agribusiness projects starting up own farms and gardens using the knowledge acquired from demonstration gardens, and women ex-combatants being fully integrated in their communities and accepted as human beings despite being formerly abducted

persons. Najjemba Clare, as reflected in the case study on 'Uganda Promoting Social and Economic Equalities in Rakai District, Uganda', aptly captures the reward for social workers to engage in promoting social and economic equality:

Seeing a child receive an education who would otherwise be at home without my intervention is fulfilling for me, watching someone who was fighting for life feeling lively and well gives me a reason to smile, feeding a hungry family and being the reason they sleep under proper shelter makes me feel proud of what I do. . . The activities I undertake are developmental and focus on improving the people's social functioning and general well-being.

On the other hand, projects such as the ITÊRÊLÊNG Women's Project, are successful in income generating projects, but on a limited scale as only small groups can be involved at a time due to human resource constraints. On the positive side, the annual exit of these women with self-starting packs and the intake of a new group of women on the waiting list contribute to skills development and income security. Planning for success is therefore important in relation to available resources. There are therefore lessons to be learnt from the case studies with regard to being able to present the evidence of successes.

The women ex-combatant project provides an example of the importance of alignment of activities with identified needs based on a baseline survey. The baseline survey includes information on the status of the target groups' economic and emotional well-being before the intervention(s) to allow measurement of the outcomes of the project. Evidence of successes in measurable terms indicates how ex-combatants girls had returned to school as a result of psycho-social and other social work support as well as improved incomes. Compared with the baseline information, it was also revealed that there was a greater acceptance of female ex-combatants at family and community levels following the interventions. Further evidence of successful re-integration into the community is that one of the beneficiaries was elected as a councillor in the local government. In relation to emotional well-being, the end line survey established that beneficiaries developed a sense of optimism. Furthermore, a group work approach for specific target groups such as women ex-combatants and youth is demonstrably effective in contributing to community development in a collective manner. Successes in promoting social and economic equalities through research are evident in publications such as reflected in the case of the national day labour study and the national street waste pickers' study.

Case studies emphasize the importance of cultivating a culture of self-reliance within people's capabilities and overcoming a dependency syndrome. Capabilities are strengthened through education and empowerment which motivate beneficiaries to take responsibility for achieving sustainable livelihoods. Social enterprises emphasize a sustainable agenda which is equally tied to business continuity and sustainable social and economic development, dependent on innovations in generating own financial resources. Agri-business value chains and social enterprises directly affect economic empowerment and social security as viable alternatives to sustainable household's livelihood.

Other lessons learnt from the case studies, if social and economic problems have to be addressed anew, are that empowerment should focus on income generating activities as well as knowledge on rights such as health and access to education; a gender focus should be included in activities, and local communities and leaders, especially at project inception, should be involved in activities to increase local project ownership. Engaging more women in activities will enhance the livelihoods of children at household level.

On a micro-level, case studies indicate that social and economic equality cannot be achieved without a focus on individual intervention. This was in particular evident in the case of children living on the street and women ex-combatants, whose emotional well-being cannot be achieved in

one year as, for example, some women experience re-occurrence of the post-traumatic stress syndrome. In addition to addressing structural issues, counselling sessions during project activities for beneficiaries, such as in the case of women ex-combatants and children living on the street, are important in order to deal with emotional well-being which proved fundamental in achieving changes in their lives. Within the context of promoting social and economic equality, there is a strong link between the personal, the micro-, and macro-practice and hence the remedial and maintenance functions cannot be excluded from the social change function of social work and social development (Midgley, 2010).

## Support guidance from IASSW/IFSW/ICSW

Case studies indicated a role for IASSW/ICSW/IFSW in promoting social and economic equalities. Exchange programmes were suggested as a support mechanism that can widen horizons in opening social work and social development practitioners' minds, expanding their skills and knowledge. Appreciation was also expressed for capacity building opportunities for both beneficiaries of social enterprise projects as well as for social work and social development practitioners in charge of implementing these projects. This could include guidance on how best to 'fight the dependency syndrome' and to help people utilize opportunities to escape from the poverty trap. Finally, funding for research on promoting social and economic equality remains a priority.

## Conclusion

This report points to social work and social development practitioners in Africa being committed to 'support, influence and promote global initiatives aimed at achieving social and economic equality' and their willingness to support and work in 'collaboration with others for the development of strong local communities that promote the sustainable social well-being of all their members' (*The Global Agenda for Social Work and Development*, 2012: 2). The activities reflected in the case studies indicate that social workers and social development practitioners engage in promoting social and economic equality in alignment with the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, more deliberate action is required by social work and social development practitioners and educators to confront structural issues that keep vulnerable groups socially and economically excluded. Best practice models of social work and social development practitioners standing up against injustices and embracing social inclusiveness are thus important in order for them to be recognized as significant contributors to promoting social and economic equality.

The platform has been created for the next phase to strengthen relationships with the United Nations' system and other international agencies and to prepare for the post-2015 development agenda. This includes strengthening the capacity of communities to interact with their governments to extend social and economic development (*The Global Agenda for Social Work and Development*, 2012: 2). There is clearly a role for social workers and social development practitioners to be politically more active in finding ways to effect policy change so that adequate levels of social provision can be made to people who need it (Ife, 2012).

The Africa region has initiated collaboration to promote education and practice standards in social work and social development that enable social workers and social development practitioners to facilitate social development outcomes (*The Global Agenda for Social Work and Development*, 2012: 2). The analyses of the case studies indicate singular findings on activities promoting social and economic equalities by social workers and social development practitioners. The quantitative research on promoting social and economic equality will be analysed and compared with the research results of the case studies. Research findings will position Africa to do comparative studies



on the Global Agenda with other regions. In addition to analysing research data and obtaining and comparing research results to determine best practices, curricula that address the issues of social and economic inequalities within schools of social work in Africa, will be compared and be shared with other colleagues within Africa and beyond.

It can be concluded that Africa has engaged with the objectives of The Agenda and the first phase of the African Regional Observatory for the Global Agenda. Social work and social development practitioners can, from their specific positions, shed light on issues related to promoting social and economic equality as well as the other related themes of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development. They can provide their own evidence and interpretations that can be used by communities, policy-makers, practitioners, educators and researchers for the betterment of all.

### Submissions

‘A Day in the Life of Street Children: A Case Study of a Social Worker Making a Difference in the Lives of Street Children’, Uganda. Submitted by Titus Gerald Tumusiime, Programme Monitoring Officer, Eriks Development Partners, East Africa Region. Eriks is an International Swedish NGO that supports partners in 25 countries in the world.

‘Agri-Business Value Chains and Social Enterprises for Economic Empowerment’, Uganda. Submitted by Allan Nkonge.

‘ITêRêLêNG Women’s Project on Social Services to Families and Sustainable Livelihoods’, South African Women Federation (SAVF), South Africa. Submitted by Erna Eloff, SAVF Carletonville Office.

‘Medical Social Worker (Kenya) in the Nyeri Provincial General Hospital’, Kenya. Submitted by Josphat K. Kiarri.

‘Promoting Social and Economic Equalities in Rakai District, Uganda: Case Study on Mannya Parish Kifamba Sub County’. Submitted by Najjemba Clare, Mannya Social Worker.

‘Reflections on a National Day Labour Study and a National Street Waste Pickers’ Study’, South Africa. Submitted by Rinie Schenck.

Youth Social Work Association (YSA) ‘Case Study Project Summary: Sustainable Livelihoods for Women Ex-Combatants (SLIWE)’, Uganda. Submitted by Geoffrey Tumusiime.

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## Asia-Pacific Region

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The team which leads the Global Agenda activity in Asia-Pacific includes Tatsuru Akimoto and Nikku Bala Raju (IASSW), Sergei Zelenev (ICSW) and John Ang and Mariko Kimura (IFSW). IASSW and IFSW both have one structure covering the region: Asian & Pacific Association for Social Work Education (APASWE) and IFSW Asia-Pacific. ICSW has four regional structures.

### Social and economic context in Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific<sup>1</sup> region includes around 60 percent of the total world population spread across a wide diversity of countries, and facing very different socio-economic environments. The region includes seven of the 10 most populous countries in the world as well as the smallest, some of the poorest countries and some of the fastest growing economies, some with very basic welfare systems and others which are highly developed.

The welfare outcomes of countries in the region have also been different: while several countries in South Asia have made some significant headway in socio-economic development, extensive poverty has persisted in some large countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Remarkable progress in improving social conditions has been achieved in many countries in East Asia and the Pacific, but in many parts of the region poverty, marginalization and social exclusion persist alongside enduring social and economic structural disparities (Shajahan, 2013).

The Middle East and parts of the Indian subcontinent continue to suffer from serious political conflict and development deficit. China and some other countries have seen rapid growth (up to around 8% per year). Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa have not suffered the extremes of financial crisis seen in some other developed economies, whilst the Japanese economy was adversely affected by the 2011 tsunami.

Inequality in wealth and income has increased within all countries. About 20 percent of total income went to the wealthiest 5 percent in most countries, and the share of income accruing to the richest households has increased more than three times in Asia's largest and most diverse countries: China, India and Indonesia (Asian Development Bank, 2012). From the onset of the 1990s to around 2010, the Gini<sup>2</sup> ratio has increased from 32 to 43 in China, from 33 to 37 in India, and from 29 to 39 in Indonesia (the higher figure indicates greater inequality). The Gini ratio has leapt across the whole region from 39 to 46 in the last two decades, signifying a big increase in inequality in the region. Analysis of consumption by groups also shows a significant increase for the wealthiest 10 percent, much slower increases for the middle and stagnation for the poorest 20 percent, also illustrating the growth in inequality. This picture is similar in other countries experiencing rapid industrialization and economic development, such as China, Indonesia and Vietnam.

The benefits of the dramatic economic growth in a number of Asian economies, far exceeding global averages, have been very unevenly distributed. In India, for example, the poverty line is defined as having 'sufficient to buy food providing 2,400 calories (rural) and 2,100 calories (urban), plus 20% of that amount for other basic needs' (Shajahan and Sharma, 2014). The percentage defined as below the poverty line has changed significantly. During 1950s to 1970s it fluctuated

around 50 percent of the population. Since that time, there has been some decline but even in the early 1990s it stood at over 30 percent for both rural and urban populations (Shajahan and Sharma, 2014). There has since been only a marginal decline according to governmental estimates, which are contested.

The socio-economic situation in the Middle East is strikingly different. Some national economies, particularly wealthy oil-exporters, rely heavily on migrant workers, who have very limited social rights. In other countries, political and economic instability affects the poorest most severely. Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa were not seriously affected by the financial crisis but, in common with other developed economies, governments have implemented austerity strategies and service reductions which impact on the poorest.

As in all contexts, those in this poorest segment of the population across the region, many of whom are members of minority or indigenous peoples, are typically excluded from participation not only in economic activity but also in political and social life and have limited opportunities for personal development (Shajahan and Sharma, 2014). The Asia-Pacific region contains 750 million young persons aged 15 to 24, 60 percent of the world's youth population. Rapid economic growth and expansion in education has meant that a substantial proportion of these young people are now in a better position to participate more fully in society when jobs are available. The opportunities open to this vast social group have been mixed, however, due to widening economic and social gaps which have deprived many of the fruits of economic development, leaving a significant proportion to suffer from chronic poverty, gender inequality, poor health and limited access to education.

The income security and social position of the rapidly growing elderly population is increasingly affected by changing family and intergenerational relationships, including evidence of weakening ties between young and old, as well as shifts in long-term familial commitments between them (Alam, 2010). The results of a survey in Delhi, India indicated the positive role played by socio-religious and moral factors in motivating people, especially younger siblings and children, to help the aged (Alam, 2010). Social workers tended to play an important role in the provision of such care, actively cooperating with family members.

Gender discrimination is a pervasive feature in the region; it has enduring implications for future generations and is the focus of many social work projects. Close to 100 million women in Asia are estimated to be 'missing' because of discriminatory treatment in access to health and nutrition, neglect, or pre-natal sex selection (ADB, 2012). Many Asian women report experiencing physical violence from their intimate partners: 30 percent of women in Vietnam, more than 40 percent in Bangladesh, Samoa and Timor-Leste and above 60 percent in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. In South Asia more women die in childbirth than in any other region of the world except in sub-Saharan Africa (ADB et al., 2012).

The development of social work is also very varied within such a diverse region. Social work is formally regulated in Australia (Gray, 2013), New Zealand/Aotearoa, Japan and South Korea, with legislation being discussed in Singapore and Malaysia. There has been a rapid growth in the number of schools of social work in China, with a similar trend in Vietnam (Tan, 2013). India continues to produce a large number of qualified social workers but the profession of social work is not formally regulated and most social work practice is in the non-governmental sector. Middle Eastern countries, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, are investing more in professional social work (Graham, 2013). The profession has low status in countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal, although qualified social workers are employed, mainly delivering social services through NGOs. In some countries, the narrowly defined and tightly managed role of social workers, with limited resources, makes it difficult to envision how they could address the Global Agenda in daily practice (Nikku, 2014).

## **Agenda related activities**

A number of Global Agenda-related events have been organized in the region. Annual government–NGO forums to discuss welfare and equity were held in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2012 and Siem Reap, Cambodia in 2013. The 2011 biannual APASWE/IFSW regional social work conference in Tokyo focused on the Agenda and a regional consultation in Indonesia on environmental issues and disaster response (an Agenda element) was held in 2013. A number of national workshops on the Social Protection Floor (SPF) and work with vulnerable groups took place, linked to Agenda themes. A regional conference on ‘Social Protection: Perspectives and Policies’ was held in Kuttikkanam, Kerala, India, in December 2012 (which included discussions regarding potential partnerships for monitoring the Global Agenda and equality promotion), and another one on long-term care of older persons was held in Seoul, Korea in June 2013. Preliminary discussions about strategic Global Agenda partnerships between regional members of the three global bodies have been initiated.

In a small survey of academics across the region, some reported apprehension about the ability of social workers to promote equalities, given the policies and expectations of governments, who are the major employers (Nikku, 2014). National organizations have also organized Agenda consultations, often linked with World Social Work Day. For example, social work bodies in Japan have systematically developed their national social work day to both energize the profession and to provide public information, with very successful outcomes (Japanese Coordinating Body for IFSW, 2014). New Zealand/Aotearoa,<sup>3</sup> Nepal, Republic of Korea and India are just some of the countries that have organized Global Agenda activities. The 2014 world conference in Melbourne, on the theme of ‘Promoting Social and Economic Equalities’, provides the Australian focus on the Global Agenda. A meeting in March 2014 of Arab social workers from North Africa and the Middle East, held in Cairo, discussed Agenda themes and began planning for a new regional network. The ASEAN Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2011–2020) provides a regional focus for Agenda themes.

Notable actions have also been undertaken in different countries in the region, aimed at reducing inequalities. South Korea has developed significant social welfare services and Malaysia is moving in the same direction. The Asian Development Bank has recommended governments to confront growing inequality by supporting the creation of quality jobs, increasing spending on education and health and expanding social protection, including conditional cash transfers (ADB et al., 2012). The government of India has implemented a range of policies to stimulate employment and improve the economic position of the poorest communities.<sup>4</sup> A large number of social workers are engaged in policy-making, planning and implementation of all these programmes. Macro-policies such as this are essential but micro-initiatives are equally important in effectively reducing inequalities on ground.

## **Practice which promotes social and economic equalities**

Across the region many projects involving social workers and social development agencies intervene to assist marginalized groups to find a voice and exert some influence over their circumstances and to promote greater social and economic equality. The curriculum of social work courses does not always prepare practitioners with skills needed to undertake this task (Nikku, 2014). The following examples illustrate some of the approaches adopted by practitioners and outcomes achieved.

A ‘Low Level Panel’ was convened in India during 2013, in conscious counterpoint to the High Level Panel established by the UN, to address the post-2015 development framework (Praxis, 2013). A small group including older people, people with disabilities, young people and people from the LGBT community, supported by the UN, reviewed the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs) and developed their own vision for post-2015 priorities, including recommendations to the UN. The process was supported by social work and social development practitioners. The discussion was informed and grounded, the vision is rational and achievable and the recommendations are realistic and inspirational. The project illustrated the power of giving people space for discussion and reflection and that, when given the opportunity, people can make profoundly informed proposals for their own development.

A similar project involves tribal peoples in North India in a consultation about their future and their rights (John, 2014). The Katkaris are one of the three 'Primitive Tribal Groups' in Maharashtra, India, a fragmented and very scattered community of around 235,000 (GOI, 2012), highly dependent on others for their livelihoods and for a place to live. Some estimates show that almost 75 percent of the community has never been to school. Traditionally they lived on the collection and sale of forest products, hunting, fresh water fishing and agricultural labour. Most of the families now work, in effect, as bonded labourers in brick kilns and charcoal units. Several NGOs are using non-formal education, health care provisioning and skill building for better employability and improved livelihoods as strategies to reduce the multiple vulnerabilities of the community.<sup>5</sup> A social worker from the Prerana Charitable Trust concludes: 'tribal communities, like that of the Katkaris, uphold values of sharing and community stewardship of natural resources. Involving and empowering people at the grassroots is the key to sustainable development' (John, 2014). These findings are replicated all around the world in work with minority and excluded community groups.

Along with the increase in social welfare facilities in the Republic of Korea, the number of professional social workers engaged in the field of social welfare has grown to several thousands. Since 1980 the national spending on social welfare grew steadily from 1.0 percent of GDP in 1980, to 3.1 percent in 1990, 5.5 percent in 2000 and 9.4 percent in 2010 (Cha, 2013). An example of a citizen-based services is seen in the 'Good Neighborhood' scheme, established and operated by Korea National Council on Social Welfare (KNCSW, 2014). Local community volunteers reach out to those who fall through the social welfare net (finding themselves in the 'welfare dead zone'), for example homeless people. Social workers often make links between those needing assistance and the community volunteers. The project had been extended to 55 districts throughout the country in 2013, with substantial financial support. The community groups inform the social welfare services of individual needs and work with the people to find a more stable situation. The project aims to reduce inequality by involving local communities and ensuring access to appropriate services for people who are isolated and 'invisible'.

Disaster response has been a specific focus of the region, following recent experience of devastating earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and floods. There is clear evidence from disasters in Indonesia, Japan and The Philippines that, where local people (frequently supported by social workers) are directly involved in the clear-up, recovery and reconstruction of their own communities, including decisions about relocation where necessary, the recovery is quicker and more robust (Truell, 2014). When government or aid agencies impose technocratic solutions on devastated communities, recovery takes longer and people suffer greater long-term trauma (Tan, 2009; Tan and Rowlands, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

These few examples illustrate the consistent finding across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond that involving people in their own development, trusting people to make sensible choices and respecting human dignity are fundamental to successful social development and also to economic growth (Mathbor, 2008). Social work and social development practitioners know that transforming com-

munities and individual opportunities requires the right mix of social policies and local interventions, as this chapter has sought to illustrate.

## Submissions to the Global Observatory

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## Notes

1. The Asia-Pacific region for the purposes of this report includes Asia, Australasia, the Pacific islands and the Middle East.
2. The Gini coefficient is a standard measure of inequality – the higher the figure the more unequal the population
3. [http://anzasw.org.nz/social\\_work\\_practice/topics/show/377-the-global-agenda](http://anzasw.org.nz/social_work_practice/topics/show/377-the-global-agenda)
4. India in the last few years has implemented significant policy changes within a rights and entitlements framework. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme aims at providing 100 days of assured wage employment to the rural poor and the Mid-Day Meal scheme provides cooked meal to children in government run schools to promote child education, arrest child labour as well as enhance the nutritional intake of children particularly from the poorer sections. National level missions such as National Rural Health Mission and National Rural Livelihoods Mission, also aim to systematically reduce inequalities in development achievements of vulnerable communities. Similarly, The National Food Security Act 2013 (known as Right to Food Act), aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two-thirds of India's population. Pregnant women, lactating mothers and certain categories of children are eligible for daily free meals.
5. The activities of the Prerana Charitable Trust are based on an empowerment and human rights approach, including education in human rights and citizenship; sharing information about Government programmes and how to obtain formal documents like birth certificates; leadership training for women, young girls and youth; training about bank loans and self-employment; preventative health programmes; regular women's meetings aiming to help them participate more fully in emancipating their own community; 26 children's parliaments with 400 members; supplementary education programs for children; and anti-alcohol campaigns, among other activities. Community members have developed mutual support through a collective micro-finance project and are more confident in challenging traders who had previously exploited them.

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## European Region

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### Background

The European Observatory is a regional arm of the Global Observatory, established by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). The Observatory was set up to report activity under The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development<sup>1</sup> and to monitor its implementation. The European Observatory was launched on the 18 April in Istanbul at the conference of the European Network for Social Action in Istanbul by the European Association of Schools of Social Work, ICSW Europe and IFSW Europe).

The team that leads the Global Agenda for the European region is Sue Lawrence (European Association of Schools of Social Work), Christian Rollett (International Council on Social Welfare European Region) and Maria Moritz (International Federation of Social Workers European Region). David N. Jones was the link between the region and the Global Agenda Coordinating Group.

In a joint statement at the Istanbul conference, the European Presidents of the three Associations said:

We welcome the creation of this joint initiative to record and promote the social activities that address the major social problems facing Europe. In these times of social crisis and austerity in Europe, it is essential that social workers and social development professionals find effective ways to document what is happening in our continent. The Observatory will give us an opportunity to showcase what makes a positive difference and gather evidence to inform the United Nations, the European Union and other regional bodies and national governments.<sup>2</sup>

The European Observatory invited submissions that illustrated, recorded and documented the ways in which social work and social development are promoting social and economic equality in Europe. The framework for submitting evidence was made available to download on the websites of all three organizations.<sup>3</sup>

The deadline for submissions to the European Observatory was 31 August 2013. EASSW received a large and diverse variety of submissions incorporating many different media which gave testament to the creativity and innovation of social work and social development academics students, service users and practitioners in promoting of social and economic equality in practice, teaching, policy development and management.

The submissions to EASSW included written papers (15); PowerPoint presentations (four); posters (three); webpage links (two); films (two); podcasts (two); photographs (two) and one brochure. IFSW gathered information through a questionnaire and a Europe-wide workshop in Lisbon; this has been published in a separate report (IFSW Europe, 2014). ICSW provided background reports on European social policy relating to equalities.

This written report alone cannot do justice to the range and variety of those submissions, most of which are available on the website of the journal *International Social Work* (<http://isw.sagepub.com>). Examples of the submissions to EASSW, where authors had given their permission, are available on the EASSW website.<sup>4</sup>

## **Social and economic context**

Social work is recognized as an important public service in most European countries and can be said to be an element within the European Social Model (Jones, 2013; Lorenz, 1994); the development of social work in the Eastern European countries was a condition of accession to the European Union and attracted financial support from the EU. Social work has a legal status in many countries and is a protected title in some countries. The arrangements for regulation of the profession vary widely. The responsibility for organizing social services is devolved to the member states of the European Union but the EU has in practice extended its influence over social policy, for example by creating laws about contracting of public services (see for example, European Commission, 2013).

The social situation in Europe in 2013 was still deeply affected by the financial crises of the past five years and the austerity measures being imposed by most governments. This has been well documented elsewhere, including by the European Union (Bonesmo Fredriksen, 2012; European Commission, 2014; OECD, 2011, 2013; Social Platform, 2014; United Nations, 2013).

The specific impacts across Europe noted by social workers include: increasing family and child poverty, increasing homelessness – more people living on the streets, more people living in temporary accommodation, increase in begging in public places, increase in some criminal behaviour – including organized begging, increase in family violence including child abuse, increase in unemployment including increasing exploitation of adult and child labour, increase in people relying on temporary and transient work, increase in mental health problems and suicide, more difficult access to health services and early medical help. It is well documented that inequality within countries is increasing, with a growing divide between those with capital and employment and others, with the small wealthiest minority seeing a very significant increase in their incomes and standard of living at the same time as the worse off are becoming poorer. Social workers from all over Europe report that there must be a change of the rules in economics and politics. The measures that have been implemented have been counterproductive. The situation must be stabilized with support for the most endangered groups (IFSW, 2014).

Alongside this rising social pain and growing ‘demand’ for assistance, there has been a significant reduction in the number and quality of services available (Lavallette and Ioakimidis, 2011; Social Platform, 2014). Whilst the pattern of problems and the structure of and change in services differs significantly between European countries, the same general trends are observed by social work practitioners, as reported by the IFSW Europe seminar:

- People are seeking more support from social welfare and social work services. However, the support available is decreasing.
- Financial welfare support for older people, people with disabilities, families and those out of work is decreasing, in terms of both the amount available and the length of time the support can be claimed.
- Fewer services are available, both in terms of state services and those provided by NGOs.
- Many of those services which remain are levying charges or requiring financial contributions from service users.
- Financial support which has been available to support the development of services in poorer countries has been cut.

The impact on social workers personally has been severe, more so in some countries (especially in the South) than others. For example, the IFSW seminar identified that:

- Social workers have experienced significant cuts in pay and benefits (such as travel allowances).
- Social workers have experienced very significant rises in workload.
- Working conditions are deteriorating.
- Stress and burnout is increasing.
- When workers leave they are not being replaced and periods of maternity leave and prolonged sickness absence are not being covered.

In this context, it is to the credit of social workers around Europe that examples of positive and creative practice can be identified, frequently in projects managed jointly with service users and local communities.

## Examples of practice

Examples of social work practice submitted to the Observatory are summarized below:

1. ***Children and Families Across Borders (UK) and the State Children's Rights Protection and Adoption Service Lithuania*** examined the management of cases involving cross-border families where interventions must be coordinated in multiple countries. The most common motivation for migration is economic (seeking a better income, reflecting economic inequality), which frequently divides families across international borders. This should result in better-informed social work interventions and increased inter-country collaboration, leading to better outcomes for children and families (Wilson, 2013).
2. ***PowerUs – EU Leonardo funded project (UK, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany)*** is enhancing user involvement in planning and delivering services. The PowerUs network has recognized a gap between a service user perspective and professional social workers. PowerUs is therefore committed to develop sustainable methods where service user representatives, researchers, teachers and student groups develop new knowledge on how social work is best practised.

Teachers from the network have developed several methods in cooperation with service user organizations in teaching and research. The Shaping Our Lives organization has been developing many manuals for good practice. Many teachers give courses where service users study together with social work students. The project has led to a radical change in methods of how to develop service user influence and sustainable partnerships between the educational system and service user organizations and launch of an international network of social work teachers and researchers and representatives of service user organizations (Heule, 2013).

3. ***University of Tampere, Finland*** undertook research to examine the marginalization of people who should be entitled to social security, but who do not get it. Suggestions and arguments for the proposed changes in the social security system were sent to the social and health minister.
4. ***Bournemouth University, UK*** worked with South African colleagues to better understand the factors which influence the quality of care provided for children and young people whose biological parents are unable to care for them. The current workstreams include: a comparative study of kinship care in the UK and South Africa (Zululand), an evaluation of experiences of 'safeguarding' (protection) processes in child care, a co-production piece of

work with Bournemouth and Poole Local Authorities and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Through partnership development further curricula dissemination will be explored with South African HEIs (Davey, 2013).

5. **University of Coimbra, Portugal** project aims to promote active aging, develop intergenerational solidarity and facilitate the democratic participation of all people who want to get involved, thereby expanding opportunities to reduce exclusion and negative stereotypes about aging. It aims to promote well-being by using small and beautiful artistic interventions involving the population in a situation of social vulnerability, collaborating in the aesthetic improvement of the city and their street. This project involved the senior residents of the Fernandes Tomás Street, neighbours, local businesses and local public institutions together with the students and their informal support networks. The formal partnership was with the City Hall of Coimbra, the village hall of Almedina and the University of Coimbra (FPCEUC). After a study of the local area and contact with dwellers, local authorities and marketers, the placement of crocheted umbrellas over the street was proposed. There was a positive response from the community. The umbrellas were created and strung over the street. The effect was cheerful, colourful and artistic, illustrating in a practical way the moments of sharing and warmth created by people of different generations involved in implementing this initiative. A common place was transformed into a special symbol of intergenerational solidarity. Residents, customers, tourists and passers-by now circulate through a street that previously was not part of the usual track, to the pride and satisfaction of the older residents and students (Guerra, 2013).
6. **De Montfort University and Leicester City Council, Safeguarding Adults Team behalf of the Social Work and Health Inequalities Network (SWHIN)**<sup>5</sup> have developed a website (hosted by the Social Care Institute for Excellence) to provide a platform to disseminate practice examples showing how social work can address health inequalities. Reducing inequalities in health and well-being is a global objective, with 125 governments worldwide committed to implementing policies to address them. The case study highlights social work's key role in promoting social and health inequalities. The webpages went live at the beginning of July 2013 attracting positive feedback.<sup>6</sup> It is hoped that SWHIN will develop an international set of evidence and case studies for the website (Fish, 2013).
7. **University of Bradford, Division of Social Work and Social Care with local partner agencies in social work and social care, UK** supported social work students to organize a conference on tackling poverty, thereby aiming to help them understand and promote social and economic equality. Speakers from academic and practice settings highlighted the importance of understanding the impact of poverty on people using social work and social care services and possible social work strategies. Evidence from students' assessed work following the conference demonstrated that it had made a significant impact on their thinking and their practice on placement (Karban, 2013).<sup>7</sup>
8. **Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH) and Croatia working with The Open University and The Open Society, UK** examined the social inclusion of parents with children with disabilities in policies and practices that affect their children's lives in Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia. Evidence was gathered through qualitative data collection and analysis, workshops and round tables in Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia and an analysis of impact outcomes. Parents as service users participated in workshops to feedback on

the preliminary findings and a year later were present for the final round tables with policy-makers and professionals. A series of policy recommendations and practice outcomes were documented and circulated to professionals, policymakers and all the parents involved in the research (Dowling, 2013).

9. ***MOVISIE, Netherlands Centre for Social Development*** has been supporting four projects that contribute to creating a society for all.<sup>8</sup> The projects are different in aim and their approach. They focus respectively on national and international policy exchange and policy development; building professional competences; (youth) activism and enabling the use of effective social interventions (Meinema, 2013).
10. ***Odenore (Observatoire des non-recours aux droits et services) for European Union*** researched the lack of take-up of state financial benefits (Non Take Up – NTU) due to ignorance (non-knowledge), lack of relevance (non-demand) or administrative blocks (non-reception). NTU contributes to sustained social exclusion and increases social and economic inequality. A high level comparative study examining a series of typical explanations for each of these three forms of NTU was undertaken. The typology proposes a general analytical framework that is applicable to all situations of NTU and which can be used to direct policy and influence approaches to contact with those entitled to financial payments. NTU is seen to be not only a managerial issue – as originally thought – but also a political issue primarily associated with an issue of social cohesion. The report calls for more research into identifying the effects of the different regimes of conditionality (for receipt of financial support) on the behaviours of potential beneficiaries. This recommendation identifies a clear link with social work practice and experience (Hamel and Warin, 2011).
11. ***Centre for Continuing Training and Assessment of Social Work Competency, Romania and the Austrian Association of Social Workers (OBDS)*** implemented a project to change priorities in evaluating people with mental, physical or psychological handicaps, moving away from measuring limitations through medical examination and psychological tests in order to justify government aid, and instead identifying the abilities and talents of disabled persons. Austrian practitioners provided a number of study visits and seminars, emphasizing individualized planning of occupational orientation and personal development. A mix of training in professional skills and social competences combined with work placement and temporary employment in social workshops has been provided to more than 140 people. Seminars for social workers and other experts from public institutions and authorities complemented the new approach. An important part of public relations were regional and national conferences for potential employers and employment agencies. This resulted in fundamental changes in service organization and individual practice.
12. ***Austrian Association of Social Workers (OBDS) and Centre for Continuing Training and Assessment of Social Work Competency, Romania*** organized a project to support social reintegration of juvenile offenders by enhancing their access to the labour market. The Romanian prison system was based on a model of institutions mainly interested in punishment and repressing aggressiveness within the prison walls, with no vision for what happens after release. The team worked with two target groups: inmates and prison staff. For the staff, there was an intensive training program for 36 employees from two Romanian penitentiaries for juveniles and a number of study visits for directors and



head of departments. Between July 2009 and December 2010 each participant visited the equivalent institution in Austria three times and became part of the daily routine for one week. After the first visits to Austria, the Romanian colleagues started their experiments. With a minimum of resources they arranged a basic program for leisure time, development of social skills and conflict resolution. At the same time premises within the prison were renovated and equipped with machines and other devices in order to start occupational education. Some staff members qualified as instructors, others specialized in pedagogical assistance. By the end of 2010 the first workshops opened: a bakery, a training kitchen, a flour mill, a workshop for producing and imprinting cardboard boxes (serigrafie and cartonage), a carpentry, a blacksmith's shop and a vegetable farm. A prison director commented, 'With this project humanity arrived in our prison!'

13. **Danish Council on Social Welfare (ICSW Denmark)** has promoted a range of activities to explore and promote the Global Agenda. Conferences have been organized to explore human rights and the working poor (involving around 150 people half of whom are service users), citizenship and solidarity in a globalized world, youth unemployment and other themes related to The Global Agenda. Those involved included, among others, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, universities, NGOs, politicians, youth organizations, trades unions and global organizations. These events have laid foundations for the next stage of The Agenda as well as focusing on local priorities.
14. **Consejo, (the General Council of Social Workers of Spain)** launched a campaign Marea Naranja (Orange Wave) in 2012,<sup>9</sup> bringing together citizens, social workers and other professionals (Consejo, 2013). Social workers wear the orange T-shirt to work every Friday and there is a nationwide programme of activities working with local communities and other professions, mobilizing thousands to challenge service reductions and support social rights. Consejo is also supporting the Alliance for the Defence of Public Social Services System – a network of representatives from different institutions and social entities (e.g. unions, third sector, universities) to develop a common platform relating to the Fourth Pillar of Social Welfare in Spain and to campaign to uphold the social rights of citizens and strengthen the social services system (Lima Fernandez, 2011).

## Commentary

This random sample of examples of social work and social development across Europe does not provide a systematic overview of the current state of social work in Europe. However, it does describe aspects of practice and activity and should be read alongside the substantial literature already published on social policy and social intervention. In that sense, the examples provide an informative perspective. Public agencies are frequently reluctant to allow social work and social development practitioners to describe their work and talk about their successes, often for political reasons; the Global Agenda process may encourage agencies to support more practitioners to speak out.

## Theories and approaches

The projects illustrate a number of theoretical approaches to research and practice, including theories on social learning, social enterprise, gender and social inclusion. Approaches include social development, empowerment, strengths-based perspective, human-rights, People Centred Development and psychosocial and client centred approaches.



### *Target populations and nature of activities*

The projects illustrate the breadth of social work activity, involving children and young people, families, people with mental health problems, people with learning difficulties, LGBT communities, offenders, older people, benefit recipients and local communities. The activities range from direct work with individuals through to group and community work and macro-policy work. This is typical of the range of social work and social development activity across the region.

### *Players involved*

Those involved in these projects included some or all of social workers and other professionals, social work students, service users including children and young people, carers, service managers, community members, academics and researchers and local and national politicians, again illustrating the diverse groups with which social workers cooperate.

### *Social and economic issues and rights influenced*

Social work practice almost always confronts social and economic inequality and seeks to support people to improve their circumstances and therefore to reduce their inequality. These examples illustrate this in respect of strengthening capacity for employment and earning income (including managing the consequences of economic migration and family breakdown); supporting people to challenge and overcome discrimination as a result of disability, sexual orientation, exclusion from health services, gender and aging; developing proposals to make financial benefit systems work more effectively so as to deliver financial support where it is needed; working to provide the best care and education for children who are not able to live with their natural parents.

### *Level of influence*

The activity illustrated in these examples aimed to influence individual behaviour and self-perceptions, community attitudes, organizational structures and government policies.

### *Impact on those involved*

The impact on those directly involved was both personal and structural. Social work and social development always works towards change of some kind, however small. This affects both the practitioners involved and those they are working with.

### *Success, innovations and lessons learnt*

It is frequently difficult to see the outcome of social work intervention and social development, especially in the short term. However, these projects highlight clear examples of success, such as changes in structures and attitudes within the prison system, changes in the approach of people working with those with learning difficulties, new information about comparative approaches to alternative child care which will provoke reflection about future policy and practice and changes in community perception of aging.

## **Conclusion**

This first collation of examples of social work from across Europe is set within the very difficult social and economic conditions resulting from the financial, political and Eurozone crises. The

projects illustrate the creative use of social work skills and knowledge to create change at personal, local, national and international levels.

## Notes

1. <http://www.globalsocialagenda.org>
2. EASSW: <http://www.eassw.org/news-archive/2013>; IFSW-Europe <http://ifsw.org/news/launch-of-european-observatory-for-social-work-and-social-development-a-new-outlook-on-social-action-in-europe>; ICSW Europe: [http://www.icsw.org/doc/2013-04-Global\\_Cooperation-Eng.pdf](http://www.icsw.org/doc/2013-04-Global_Cooperation-Eng.pdf)
3. See for example, <http://www.eassw.org/global-social-work/5/instructions-about-the-observatory-of-the-global-agenda.html>
4. <http://www.eassw.org/global-social-work/6/examples-of-submissions-to-the-global-observatory.html>
5. For more information, visit [www.warwick.ac.uk/go/swhin](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/go/swhin)
6. <http://www.scie.org.uk/workforce/socialcareandhealthinequalities/>
7. [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yue7zdxjmvvg0ec/zWgYN\\_8PVw/Uncut\\_cinterview.m4v](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yue7zdxjmvvg0ec/zWgYN_8PVw/Uncut_cinterview.m4v)
8. For details of each project visit, <http://www.eassw.org/global-social-work/6/examples-of-submissions-the-global-observatory.html>
9. [http://www.cgtrabajosocial.com/consejo/Marea\\_Naranja](http://www.cgtrabajosocial.com/consejo/Marea_Naranja)

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# Latin American and Caribbean Region

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## Summary

The region includes the countries of South and Central America and the Caribbean. The regional bodies are the Latin American Association for Research and Training in Social Work (ALAIETS), ICSW Latin America Region and IFSW Latin America and Caribbean Region. The Regional Coordinators for the Latin America and Caribbean Region are Patricia Acevedo (Argentina) (ALAIETS), Laura Acotto (Argentina) and Rodolfo Martínez (Uruguay) (IFSW), Mirtha Sosa Crevoisier (ICSW). Rory Truell is the link between the region and the Global Agenda Coordinating Group.

The major challenges in the Region during this period are:

- 1) deepening the discussion on the Global Definition of Social Work
- 2) generating a working alliance involving FITS/IFSW and the Latin American Research and Training in Social Work (ALAIETS), the regional body of IASSW
- 3) conducting a study on Latin American and Caribbean working conditions of social workers
- 4) promoting the work of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development through an Observatory on Human Rights
- 5) increasing the participation of the countries of Central America and the Caribbean, the Andean region and the English and French speaking Caribbean.

## Resumen

La región incluye a los países de América del Sur, América Central y el Caribe. Los órganos regionales son la Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigación y Enseñanza en Trabajo Social (ALAIETS), CIBS/ICSW Región de América Latina y de la FITS/IFSW América Latina y el Caribe. Los Coordinadores Regionales para la Región de Latinoamérica y el Caribe son Patricia Acevedo (Argentina) (ALAIETS), Laura Acotto (Argentina) y Rodolfo Martínez (Uruguay) (FITS/IFSW), Mirtha Sosa Crevoisier (CIBS/ICSW). Rory Truell es el vínculo entre la región y el Grupo de Coordinación de la Agenda Global.

La región ha asumido algunos desafíos importantes en este período:

- 1) Profundizar la discusión sobre la Definición Mundial de Trabajo Social
- 2) Generar una alianza de trabajo con la FITS/IFSW y con la Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigación y Enseñanza en Trabajo Social (ALAIETS)
- 3) Realizar un estudio latinoamericano y caribeño sobre las condiciones laborales de los trabajadores sociales
- 4) Promover el trabajo en la Agenda Global Mundial a través de un Observatorio sobre Derechos Humanos

- 5) Aumentar la participación de los países de América Central y Caribe, de la región andina y del Caribe de habla inglesa y francesa.

La Región ha trabajado por una discusión amplia y participativa en lo relacionado con la promoción y dinamización del dialogo y el trabajo con la Asociación de Investigación y Enseñanza en Trabajo Social (ALAIETS), con el objetivo de fortalecer las alianzas estratégicas entre los principales representantes de los colectivos de trabajadores sociales profesionales y del campo académico. Nuestra región ha defendido la propuesta de Definición Internacional de trabajo social elaborada en el Taller de Trabajo realizado en Río de Janeiro en 2012, que fue elaborada con aportes de organizaciones nacionales de trabajadores sociales y escuelas e institutos de investigación.

El problema de las condiciones laborales en que desempeñamos nuestro trabajo nos viene ocupando desde 2010 y en 2013 y 2014 se logró concretar la realización del “Estudio sobre condiciones laborales de los trabajadores sociales en América Latina y el Caribe”, que permitirá por primera vez en la historia de la FITS América Latina y Caribe, contar con datos reales sobre las condiciones de trabajo y salariales de los trabajadores sociales; con estos insumos pretendemos en la próxima gestión elaborar distintos proyectos que apunten a mejorar esas condiciones.

Por otra parte, estamos plenamente comprometidos con la Agenda Global Mundial y su implementación, y para esto venimos trabajando para concretar en 2014 un Observatorio sobre Derechos Humanos, que permita conocer y seguir lo que pasa en relación al cumplimiento de los compromisos internacionales asumidos por los Estados en esta materia, y denunciar públicamente las violaciones y amenazas a los Derechos Humanos, cometidos tanto por el Estado como por particulares.

Otro aspecto importante de la gestión ha sido la participación de los representantes de la FITS y de ALAIETS en congresos y seminarios así como la realización de distintas reuniones de trabajo con países de América Central y del Caribe, con el objetivo de aumentar su involucramiento en las acciones y actividades que se llevan a cabo. Es destacable la participación con los países de habla inglesa y francesa del Caribe y de las Antillas, y la solicitud de ingreso de la FITS realizada por la Asociación Haitiana de Trabajadores Sociales.

Uno de los eventos principales de la región fue el “III Encuentro de la Región América Latina y del Caribe de la FITS: Estado y Políticas Sociales. Desafíos y oportunidades para el Trabajo Social latinoamericano y caribeño”, realizado en la ciudad de Montevideo en mayo de 2013 y que reunió participantes de distintos países de América Latina y del Caribe (Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Nicaragua, Perú, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, República Dominicana, Paraguay, Uruguay y México), además de contar con la participación como invitada especial de la Presidenta de FITS Europa.

En el marco del III Encuentro se produjeron distintas reuniones: la reunión del Comité MERCOSUR de Organizaciones Profesionales de Trabajo Social y la reunión de la FITS América Latina y Caribe. En la primera se analizaron distintos temas de la región del cono sur de América Latina y se decidió constituir un nuevo espacio latinoamericano y caribeño de organizaciones profesionales de Trabajo Social o Servicio Social, denominado Comité Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Organizaciones Profesionales de Trabajo Social/Servicio Social (COLACATS) y realizar un seminario internacional en abril de 2014 en Chile. Como destaque fundamental se decidió trabajar para la realización de un Estudio sobre las Condiciones Laborales de los Trabajadores Sociales en América Latina y en el Caribe y para la concreción de un Observatorio sobre Derechos Humanos en el marco de la Agenda Global Mundial.

Los principales ejes sobre los cuales se debatió en el III Encuentro fueron los siguientes:



- Formación profesional
- Condiciones de trabajo profesionales
- Transformaciones de las políticas sociales y el Estado en la última década
- Ética y Derechos Humanos

Éstos fueron puestos en debate a través de conferencias centrales y sesiones de intercambio, en la búsqueda de hallar una perspectiva latinoamericana y caribeña que reúna las principales visiones y tensiones, encuentros y desencuentros sobre cada uno de estos grandes temas.

Durante la Conferencia de la Asociación Caribe de Educadores de Trabajo Social (ACSWE) en Curaçao en julio de 2013, se continuó con el tema, y al examinar las implicaciones de la Agenda Global para la región se señaló la gama de los desastres naturales que afectaron a la región y el impacto diferencial sobre los sobrevivientes de diferentes antecedentes socioeconómicos. Las personas más pobres siempre experimentan los mayores riesgos. Hubo una discusión sobre el desarrollo de la localidad específica, enfoques culturalmente relevantes para los problemas. Los profesionales y académicos en muchas de las islas pequeñas están trabajando juntos para innovar y producir buenos ejemplos de micro-prácticas que produzcan bienes y servicios para los más necesitados. El desarrollo comunitario y la elevación fueron temas importantes en los proyectos abiertos para las visitas de los participantes.

En relación al eje formación profesional es posible afirmar que la profesión encuentra un gran desafío en recuperar el rico legado histórico-filosófico presente en Latinoamérica y el Caribe para incorporarlo a sus currículos formativos. Se presenta la necesidad de contrarrestar las tendencias pragmatistas que impone el modelo vigente en el área de la educación, para evitar una lógica de “consumo” del conocimiento para su aplicación práctica y la mera ejecución de políticas sociales.

En esta línea, se visualiza una exigencia colectiva por consolidar la formación teórica en vistas de generar profesionales con capacidad crítica que puedan comprender la realidad en la que intervienen y de la que son parte. Esto implica un esfuerzo ineludible por contribuir a resocializar lo social, evitando aquellas tendencias de formación para el abordaje centrado en la individualidad fuera de su contexto.

Conocer la oferta pública y privada, los currículos, la articulación entre investigación e intervención, que hay en el área del Trabajo Social y generar acuerdos en torno al perfil profesional que el colectivo espera parecen ser dos elementos a considerar medio y largo plazo.

En relación a las condiciones de trabajo profesionales, la región presenta similitudes que expresan la precarización del empleo. Si bien en muchos países las cifras de inserción son muy altas, las condiciones en que los profesionales lo hacen se han visto precarizadas como consecuencia de las transformaciones en el mundo del trabajo y en las intervenciones estatales.

Hoy más que nunca se verifican situaciones de contratos precarios donde el trabajador social aparece con una aparente mayor independencia que en realidad encubre situaciones de asunción completa de los riesgos del trabajo. Se desdibuja la figura del empleador, se pierde la capacidad de negociación para la formulación de respuestas y la intervención profesional, así como también la autonomía técnica para definir las metodologías de abordaje más apropiadas en función de un saber específico.

En esta área, las asociaciones gremiales deberían tener un protagonismo esencial recogiendo las inquietudes y dificultades desde los espacios de inserción laboral concretos, promoviendo la organización de los profesionales y colaborando para construir demandas colectivas articuladas bajo intereses comunes.

En lo que respecta a las transformaciones de las políticas sociales y el Estado en la última década el elemento central parecería ser la reorganización del sistema capitalista y las necesidades funcionales que para ello requiere. La pérdida del trabajo como categoría ontológica y pieza fundamental

de la integración social ha llevado a un crecimiento de las incertidumbres, una proliferación de los supernumerarios y un Estado cada vez menos capaz de dar respuestas integrales. No obstante, también se visualiza en gran parte de la región un “retorno” de un Estado que se replegó durante la década pasada. A partir de ello se crean múltiples dispositivos de intervención que deben ser aún estudiados y problematizados.

En este sentido, el Trabajador Social tiene una inserción privilegiada en los ámbitos donde se expresan las manifestaciones de la cuestión social. Es a partir de esta inserción de la experiencia profesional que es posible contribuir a mejorar aquellos dispositivos, pero muy especialmente, a el debate sobre su capacidad integradora en sociedades altamente desiguales.

El colectivo profesional ha acumulado mucho en esta línea pues las políticas sociales se podría decir que son su ámbito casi natural de inserción. Por tanto, capitalizar esta experiencia y poder asumir colectivamente la capacidad propositiva en la formulación de políticas sociales, coherentes con las líneas políticas (en sentido amplio) y programáticas de las asociaciones gremiales, parece ser otro desafío a tener en cuenta.

En lo que tiene que ver con el eje Ética y Derechos Humanos una de las dimensiones más importantes radica en la creciente violencia constatada en las sociedades de la región. Ante ello, se multiplican las políticas represivas a las poblaciones vulnerables retrocediendo en esta materia hacia una nueva “criminalización de la pobreza”.

El sistema capitalista muestra sus efectos también a nivel de la subjetividad y las construcciones socio-cultural. Se hace patente una degradación del valor de la vida y de las personas desde el momento en que se convierten en “inútiles para el mundo” (parafraseando a Robert Castel) y se convierten en objeto de vigilancia y castigo cuando se revelan.

En este sentido, la violencia es un componente clave de la intervención profesional, tanto de aquel profesional que se expone al riesgo del trabajo en estos contextos como – y muy especialmente – cuando se convierte en la figura que encarna la violencia institucional de un sistema esencialmente excluyente.

Para finalizar, en lo relativo a este eje se visualiza un rol importante de las asociaciones para poner la dimensión ética en primer plano. Esto implica una práctica basada en la ética y en la defensa irrestricta de los derechos humanos, pero especialmente una reflexión crítica sobre el quehacer profesional y el contexto en que se producen las relaciones sociales en la actualidad.

Es importante destacar uno de los aspectos más sustantivos del III Encuentro de la Región Latino América y el Caribe de la FITS. A saber: la inminente necesidad planteada por el colectivo regional de contribuir a reformular la definición de Trabajo Social en el marco de la FITS. Se demanda la integración de los marcos conceptuales y las prácticas de la región en dicha definición como una forma de democratizarla y contemplar la unidad en la diversidad del ejercicio profesional.

## North American Region

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Social work in North America (Canada and USA) is well-established, with formal regulatory systems for qualifications and practice (Shera, 2013). There is a strong history of social development and community organization in both countries, which continues to be supported by established non-governmental bodies, although the prevailing political climate of individualism does not create a favourable context for their work (Taillon, 2013). The Caribbean islands come within this region for IASSW but within the Latin America and Caribbean region of IFSW; the education for, and practice of, social work varies significantly between the different islands of the sub-region (see Latin America and Caribbean section) (Baker, 2013). This section focuses on Canada and the USA.

Canada and the USA have national social work education associations: the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), respectively. They also have national professional associations: the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-USA). The ICSW member organizations are the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) and the US Committee International Council on Social Welfare (USCICSW). The partnership to take forward The Global Agenda has operated within the existing working arrangements and networks. The regional Agenda Coordinators for the North American region are Dixon Sookraj (IASSW), Winsome Wilkins, Margery Carpenter and Peggy Taillon (ICSW), and Morel Caissie and Jeane Anastas (IFSW). Lena Dominelli is the link between the region and the Global Agenda Coordinating Group.

Both countries experienced the impact of the banking crisis and global recession. Both have a widening gap between the wealth and income of the majority and of the wealthiest. Social workers, educators and social development practitioners supported the Occupy Movement in highlighting the need for business practice to change to a more sustainable, regulated, people-centred environment (Truell, 2012). The reality of the socio-economic situation is perhaps best seen in the number of children living in poverty. In 2007, it was reported that 13.3 million children in the United States were living in poverty, rising to 15.5 million by 2009 as a result of the recession, or one in five children in the United States (Sell, 2010). Both countries have therefore been managing, in different ways, the impact of significant budget reductions, changes in welfare arrangements and the consequences of increasing unemployment.

The representative organizations in Canada and the USA have pursued the Global Agenda themes within the regional frameworks of conferences and networks, including the annual joint conference of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) and Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), NASW-USA events, the US Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) conferences and the biennial conference of the Caribbean Association of Social Work Education (ACSWE). The outcomes from these events have reaffirmed the themes in the Global Agenda. 'Development efforts must look beyond economic markers of success and focus on efforts specifically shaped to achieve the type of economic growth that contributes to social cohesion and human development. . . . Policies and interventions that build

cohesion and address inequality must be coordinated and work under a common framework' (Taillon, 2013).

## Promoting social and economic justice

National social work organizations in the US and Canada have all highlighted the need for changes in national and international policies in order to promote social and economic justice and provide more effective social services. The following is a summary of activities by these organizations.

In Canada, the two national social work organizations issued joint statements on a number of issues concerning social and economic inequalities.

- *Statement Supporting the Aspirations of Indigenous Peoples* (31 January 2013) and specifically the *Idle No More* movement of indigenous peoples. This was in response to legislative changes which privilege economic development and resource development, while compromising social needs and well-being, especially the well-being of aboriginal peoples in Canada. The statement also reiterated the value that these two associations place on indigenous ways of knowing with respect to protection of water, air and land.
- *Statement in Support of Aboriginal Children and Families – National Aboriginal Day* (21 June 2013), strongly supporting the two Aboriginal Organizations (Assembly of First Nations and First Nations Child and Family Caring Society). They have been engaged in a lengthy legal battle with the federal government of Canada over the issue of inequitable funding for services to aboriginal children and families relative to non-aboriginal recipients. The government has ultimately failed to silence the voices of aboriginal children and families and the matter is now proceeding through the Human Rights Tribunal.
- *International Women's Day: A promise is a promise* (7 March 2013), declaring solidarity with all groups in Canada who have been demanding a national inquiry into violence against indigenous women and girls in Canada. Several hundred indigenous women have disappeared within the past few decades, but successive governments have refused any inquiry to examine the root causes of systemic discrimination and violence against indigenous women.
- *Social Workers defending social programs for a stronger Canada* (1 March 2013), launched the official theme for National Social Work Day (March 2013). The theme responded to the Canadian federal government's accelerated legislative and funding changes which have been undermining the welfare state and producing growing income inequality in Canada. The associations called for a national poverty reduction plan to ensure equitable access to programmes and services for all Canadians. Social issues identified as needing particular attention included housing, poverty and child care.

*Social Workers Promoting Equity for a Stronger Canada* (March 2014) was the theme for Social Work Month 2014, reflecting the growing concern at the rising social, economic and health inequalities in Canada and consistent with the Global Agenda theme.

The CASWE Board of Directors will present a new mission statement to the General Assembly in May 2014. This new statement aligns more closely with the Global Agenda commitments, emphasizing the 'promotion of social and economic equalities and global solidarity'.

NASW USA has supported several Agenda-related activities:

- A seminar on ‘The Feminization of Poverty: Revisited’, highlighted the impact that poverty and income inequality still have on women and girls. Bringing together leading women advocates, health care professionals, economists, policy analysts, government officials and other decision-makers, the seminar explored the progress made since the term ‘feminization of poverty’ was coined in 1978 by a social worker. To change the differential impact that poverty and inequality have on women and girls in the United States and internationally, it is essential that social workers collaborate with women leaders in other disciplines.
- Lobbying to shape public policies that directly affect the lives and well-being of their clients and communities, working with more than 100 organizations to promote causes important to social workers. Campaigns were pursued on health care reform; immigration; maternal, infant and early childhood health and needy families, among other issues.
- Campaign to improve the working environment for social workers, who face daunting challenges in the workplace, such as low pay, high caseloads, insurmountable education debt and safety concerns that compromise their ability to provide their clients with service and care. NASW worked to promote the Social Work Reinvestment Act (SWRA). This act will analyse these workforce shortage challenges and will determine the best course of action to address them. SWRA was reintroduced in the US House of Representatives and Senate during this period.
- Briefing for law-makers on the strong correlation between poverty and child abuse and neglect. Marking the 50th anniversary of the ‘War on Poverty’, NASW-USA partnered with the Council on Social Work Education and the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy, co-sponsored by the National Child Abuse Coalition and National Foster Care Coalition, in conjunction with the Congressional Social Work Coalition, to ensure that law-makers were fully informed about the research and practice knowledge.
- Working with Congress to support the Bipartisan Voting Rights Bill (2014) and to implement the US Supreme Court decision to uphold the Affordable Care Act (2012).
- Policy statements were revised and submitted to the Delegate Assembly for comment and approval. Topic areas consistent with the Global Agenda included: gender, ethnic and workplace discrimination; affirmative action; homelessness; women’s issues; women in social work profession; public child welfare; and healthcare.
- Social Work Policy Institute (SWPI) think-tank symposium disseminated a follow-up report: ‘Achieving Racial Equity: Calling the Social Work Profession to Action’.
- Supporting the campaign for marriage equality, helping to achieve legislative and court victories on the state and federal level. Marriage equality in the US achieved several milestones during this period and NASW-USA has been active in these efforts.

CSWE published an edited manual, *Teaching Human Rights: Curriculum Resources for Social Work Educators* (Hokenstad et al., 2013). CSWE is a partnership of educational and professional institutions, social welfare agencies and private citizens and is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as the sole accrediting agency for social work education in the USA. It requires schools to prepare students to promote advocacy in the areas of human rights and

social and economic justice, although practice is uneven. The new manual should support more consistent implementation.

CSWE published teaching materials and background papers on sustainability issues in social work. The paper examines how principles used in the social work discipline, such as human rights and social justice, contribute to the sustainability model and the 'greening of social work' (Pillai and Gupta, 2013/2014). CSWE also launched online global learning modules for instructors to use in several foundation-year courses, in order to infuse global information into social work curricula. This includes a module on understanding poverty and well-being in the United States and other developed and developing countries. It examines ways for determining poverty using the UN Human Development Index and its embedded measures of inequality (Abell, 2013).

The human rights assessment scales, developed by McPherson and Abell at Florida State University (2012), aim to 'measure human rights engagement and human rights exposure in social workers'.

A core textbook has been updated: *Social Policy and Social Change: Toward the Creation of Social and Economic Justice* (Jimenez et al., 2014). This covers several forms of discrimination, including social and economic justice issues which feature in the Global Agenda.

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) commissioned two major projects aimed at promoting and protecting social and economic rights by influencing the legislative and administrative processes. *Canada Social Transfer Project: Accountability Matters* (2012) critically examines the inconsistent implementation of the Canada Social Transfer (CST), the primary source of federal funding that supports provincial and territorial social programmes, specifically, post-secondary education, social assistance, social services and programmes for children.

The authors concluded that the Canada Social Transfer is 'a largely unconditional transfer which has no accountability measures for ensuring a level of adequacy with respect to social programs across Canada'. Additional recommendations include clarifying the objectives of the CST system, educating citizens about their rights under the system, and ensuring that funding decisions are transparent and are based on collaboration processes. Calls for the formation of a coalition among NGOs, social policy think-tanks and academics with similar understanding to keep the issue of lack of accountability alive on the political agenda have been successful.

*The Canada Social Transfer and the Social Determinants of Health* (CASW-ACTS, 2013) examines policies and practices in relation to social service funding and delivery, and their impacts on health inequalities. The authors conclude that 'economic and social inequalities are exacerbated by the inadequacy of (financial) benefits', accompanied by the 'lack of accountability and uniformity in social programming' (p. 2). Recommendations for action to redress the situation are presented and will be pursued by CASW. Implementation of these recommendations would bring these initiatives even closer to the intent of the Global Agenda commitment.

The Canadian Council for Social Development is contributing to the national debate about the consequences of growing inequality 'to the point where: economic stability is imperilled, community cohesion is destroyed, the weak lose their dignity or place in the economy, ethical standards are sacrificed, or the environment, including the climate, is put at risk'. CCSD asserts that 'communities thrive when enabling conditions are present. People form community when people have good jobs, meaning in their lives, strong family support, good living standards, opportunities to participate' (Taillon, 2013).

The national organizations in North America are actively promoting social and economic equalities through a range of strategies and commitments. Considerable work is also being done to increase educational resources for teaching about social and economic justice, especially in the United States. However, integration of these materials into the curriculum remains a formidable task. Several barriers exist, including 'access to resources; attitudes of faculty; faculty competence;



and structural factors in social work education' (Healy and Link, 2012: 333). Human rights education in social work in Canada appears more firmly embedded, as many Canadian programs have had a long history of including human rights in their curricula (Hawkins, 2009). Strengthening the human rights curriculum in Canada and the US is perhaps a critical first step in engaging students and colleagues in understanding and implementing Global Agenda commitments.

## Notes

1. <http://www.casw-acts.ca/en/joint-statement-supporting-aspirations-indigenous-peoples>
2. [http://www.casw-acts.ca/sites/default/files/Press%20Release\\_Aboriginal\\_Child\\_Rights.pdf](http://www.casw-acts.ca/sites/default/files/Press%20Release_Aboriginal_Child_Rights.pdf)
3. [http://www.casw-acts.ca/sites/default/files/Press%20Release%20International%20Women%27s%20Day%202013\\_E.pdf](http://www.casw-acts.ca/sites/default/files/Press%20Release%20International%20Women%27s%20Day%202013_E.pdf)
4. [http://www.casw-acts.ca/sites/default/files/Joint\\_CASW\\_CASWE\\_Proclamation\\_March\\_1\\_13\\_E\\_0.pdf](http://www.casw-acts.ca/sites/default/files/Joint_CASW_CASWE_Proclamation_March_1_13_E_0.pdf)

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## **Appendix I: The Partner Organisations**

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The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development is the product of a collaborative initiative undertaken by three international organisations representing social work practice, social work education and social development. All three of these international bodies were founded in 1928 and have held formal consultative status for many decades with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and other UN and related agencies.

The International Association of Schools of Social Work is an international community of schools and educators in social work, promoting quality education, training and research in the theory and practice of social work, administration of social services and formulation of social policies. IASSW speaks on behalf of 2,000 schools of social work and 500,000 students.

Visit <http://www.iassw-aiets.org>

The International Council on Social Welfare is a global, non-governmental organisation which represents tens of thousands of organisations around the world that are actively involved in programmes to promote social welfare, social development and social justice.

Visit [www.icsw.org](http://www.icsw.org)

The International Federation of Social Workers is the global federation of national social work organisations in more than 116 countries representing over 1 million social workers. IFSW is striving for social justice, human rights and social development through the promotion of social work and best practice models and the facilitation of international cooperation.

Visit [www.ifsw.org](http://www.ifsw.org)



## **Appendix II: The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development - history and process**

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The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development is the product of a collaborative initiative undertaken over a decade by the three international organizations representing social work practice, social work education and social development. These three international bodies were founded in 1928 and have held formal consultative status for many decades with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and other UN and related global and regional agencies.

The Global Agenda was affirmed at the Hong Kong 2010 world conference (IASSW et al., 2010), revised following consultation in 2011 (IASSW et al., 2012), presented to the United Nations and other global and regional bodies in 2012 and reviewed at the Stockholm 2012 world conference (Jones and Truell, 2012). The focus of the past two years, including World Social Work Days in 2013 and 2014, and of this first report, is the first pillar of the Agenda, *Promoting Social and Economic Equalities*. We intend to focus on the subsequent pillars in the following years.

The process is explicitly designed to strengthen the profile and visibility of social work, to develop new partnerships, to boost the confidence of social workers and to enable social workers to make a stronger contribution to policy development (Abye, 2014). This represents a re-positioning of the global social work profession, together with social development professionals.

### **Our commitments**

As social workers, educators and social development practitioners, we witness the daily realities of personal, social and community challenges. We believe that now is our time to work together, at all levels, for change, for social justice, and for the universal implementation of human rights, building on the wealth of social initiatives and social movements.

We, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), recognize that the past and present political, economic, cultural and social orders, shaped in specific contexts, have unequal consequences for global, national and local communities and have negative impacts on people. Specifically, we recognize that:

- the full range of human rights are available to only a minority of the world's population;
- unjust and poorly regulated economic systems, driven by unaccountable market forces, together with noncompliance with international standards for labour conditions and a lack of corporate social responsibility, have damaged the health and well-being of peoples and communities, causing poverty and growing inequality;
- cultural diversity and the right to self-expression facilitate a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence, but these rights are in danger due to aspects of

globalization which standardize and marginalize peoples, with especially damaging consequences for indigenous and First Nation peoples;

- people live in communities and thrive in the context of supportive relationships, which are being eroded by dominant economic, political and social forces;
- people's health and well-being suffer as a result of inequalities and unsustainable environments related to climate change, pollutants, war, natural disasters and violence to which there are inadequate international responses.

Consequently, we feel compelled to advocate for a new world order which makes a reality of respect for human rights and dignity and a different structure of human relationships.

### *Therefore*

We commit ourselves to supporting, influencing and enabling structures and systems that positively address the root causes of oppression and inequality. We commit ourselves wholeheartedly and urgently to work together, with people who use services and with others who share our objectives and aspirations, to create a more socially just and fair world that we will be proud to leave to future generations. We will prioritize our endeavours to these ends.

We intend during the period 2012–20 to focus our efforts on the following areas:

- Promoting social and economic equalities
- Promoting the dignity and worth of peoples
- Working toward environmental sustainability
- Strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships

A commitment to ensuring an appropriate and ethical environment for practice and education runs throughout the process.

The commitments are guided by and consistent with our core statements on the definition of social work (IFSW and IASSW, 2000), the ethical principles of social work (IASSW and IFSW, 2004) and the Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession (IASSW & IFSW, 2005).

## **Global Observatory for Social Work and Social Development**

The three organizations intend to invite proposals for the creation of Regional Observatories which will work together with the three global bodies to create a Global Observatory for Social Work and Social Development. We plan to complete the process by early 2015 so that these new entities will take forward the creation of future global reports on the Agenda pillars, to be published to coincide with and to provide the focus for future world conferences.

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## Appendix III: Regional Observatories on Social Work and Social Development - call for proposals

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### Vision

The three global partner organisations (International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Council on Social Welfare, International Federation of Social Workers) affirm the vision of the Global Agenda which makes explicit the contribution of social work and social development in building a 'society for all' in which every individual has an active role to play within a fair and just world.

### Purpose of the Observatory

The Global Agenda Observatory is the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of The Agenda Commitments. The Observatory will gather evidence about the activities of social workers, educators and social development practitioners, which support the implementation of the Global Agenda, in order to give visibility and credibility to their contributions and to promote further action. Activity is structured around the four themes of The Global Agenda: *Promoting Social and Economic Equalities* (2012–14) and *Promoting the dignity and worth of the person* (2014–16). The themes to be covered in subsequent years are: *Working towards environmental sustainability* and *Strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships*. A focus on ensuring an appropriate environment for practice and education will be included throughout.

### Observatory structure and process

The Global Agenda Observatory, established by IASSW, ICSW and IFSW, is a process and a structure which are evolving; it is our aspiration to have established a strong, credible Global Observatory during the first ten years. The Global Agenda Observatory will consist of regional networks or consortia composed of institutions of higher education and professional/practice-based organisations that jointly research, analyse, synthesise and report on Agenda activities.

The *first phase* of The Global Agenda Observatory (2012–14) involved a joint activity, organised through the regional structures of the 3 global partners and facilitated by global and regional Coordinators appointed by each of the 3 partners.

The 3 partner organisations are now launching the *second phase* of The Global Agenda Observatory process. This phase involves the selection of regional Observatory arrangements to generate evidence on the implementation of the priority themes of the Global Agenda, informing the regional reports which will form the basis of the 2016 global report on *Promoting the dignity and worth of the person*.

The second Observatory Report will be launched at and form the focus of the 2016 Joint World Conference in Seoul, Republic of Korea. It is intended that the report will be published as a supplement to *International Social Work* journal and reported widely in the international media.

### **The benefits of becoming a Regional Observatory partner**

The 3 global partners are confident that the award of the status of Regional Observatory will bring significant benefits not only to the 3 global partners but also to the institutions that host the Regional Observatories. The Regional Observatories will provide the core material for the bi-annual Observatory Report, which will be published by the 3 global organisations and widely promoted at world conferences and beyond. We anticipate that these reports will become standard points of reference for global partners such as the United Nations, as well as for professional bodies and educational institutions. We hope that consortia will attract significant additional human and financial resources to the host organisations, which will also be beneficial to the global bodies. The bodies anticipate that the hosting institutions will achieve a higher profile and recognition, enhancing their global reputations through participation in the Regional Observatory and as a result should be able to attract additional human and financial resources.

### **The bid and decision making process**

IASSW, ICSW and IFSW invite concrete proposals from interested bodies as the first stage in the selection process. **The bidding process will be publicised through the websites of the 3 partners and by notification to members.**

## **Global observatory timeline to the 2016 global conference in Seoul**

### *Before July 2014*

The three global partners agree the process for engaging with bidders and conducting the selection of bids for the regional observatory bodies.

### *July 2014*

The first Global Observatory report is launched at the world conference in Melbourne.

The selection process for the Regional Observatories is formally launched at the world conference.

### *30 October 2014*

Deadline for receipt of bids, to be reviewed by regions facilitated by the global organisations.

### *30 November 2014*

End of screening process and start of formal engagement with bidders (i.e. discussions and exchanges about improvement of bids and possible merger of bids to form regional consortia).

### *19 December 2014*

End of formal engagement process and dialogue.

### *5 January 2015*

Deadline for submission of revised tender bids. Start the process of selection facilitated by the global organisations.

### *31 January 2015*

Selection of Regional Observatory consortia complete.

Regional Observatory partners formalise the arrangements and start the process of gathering evidence for the 2016 report. The global bodies facilitate contact between regions and confirm expectations.

### *March 2015*

The regional structures of the global bodies in cooperation with the global organisations review progress and offer support where needed.

### *March 2016*

Global report completed by the global bodies, in cooperation with the regional structures, including global overview analysis, coordinated with the publication timetable for the possible publication of a supplement to the International Social Work journal (ISW) (see below).

### *June 2016*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Observatory report published as a supplement to International Social Work and launched at the Seoul world conference.





## Appendix IV: Acknowledgements

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The three global organisations recognise the significant contributions of organisations and individuals at international, regional, national and local levels who have shaped The Agenda process and helped create this report, including many practitioners and educators. We also acknowledge the insights and learning gained from working jointly with local individuals and communities. The work would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and voluntary commitment of them all.

We are grateful to the universities of Nouakchott and Durham for their continuing facilitation of The Agenda process at international level and to Monmouth University (New Jersey, USA) which generously supported the process for editing the final report. Sage Publications has supported our work with enthusiasm and flexibility from the outset and we especially appreciate their advice on the editing and publication process.

The Global Coordinators have made a distinctive contribution, translating The Agenda vision into an ongoing reality and a worldwide movement with unlimited potential. This was only possible thanks to the Regional Agenda Coordinators and others who facilitated the regional consultation processes and reports.

IASSW, ICSW and IFSW also acknowledge each other's contributions. Since 2008 the governing bodies of each organisation have upheld the vision for The Agenda and had the faith to pioneer new ways of joint working, not only with each other but also with many organisations all around the world.

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## Appendix V: Agenda Coordinators

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