

**Report to International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW):
Human Rights and Social Justice Committee July 2020**

This report highlights the overall focus of the Human Rights and Social Justice (HRSJ) Committee, actions that have been achieved in the last year and in moving forward.

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated that this is truly a global problem which knows no borders and has spread to all parts of the world. This has brought lockdown and measures of restriction of mobility in a number of countries, at different levels. The IASSW, and through the work of the HRSJ Committee, acknowledge the unprecedented impact of COVID-19, particularly those who are marginalised and at-risk citizens across the globe, highlighting systemic institutional shortcomings and the realities of precarious lives. All regions have seen incidents of discrimination, xenophobia, racism and attacks.

The IASSW stand in solidarity with the diverse Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities who stand against racism and intolerance cross the globe, recognising that racism and social injustice is deep-rooted and that we need to work collectively to stand with those who seek to challenge and change oppression. The Black Lives movement have highlighted the systematic racism that is deeply embedded within attitudes and institutions. This can be seen as a manifestation of historic and current racism, discrimination and prejudice which results in inequality and exclusion. Action is critical to challenge, support and demonstrate solidarity and positive action.

As educators and researchers working across the world, and as social work practitioners, there is an acknowledgment of the importance of continuing to promote and highlight the centrality of human rights and social justice for all citizens, particularly through the focus on education, teaching and learning for student social workers and as continuing professional development for social workers. This is also achieved through research that highlights and respects the impact and voices of all citizens, especially those that are marginalised and challenges institutional and systematic racism and oppression.

Human rights are key in shaping the pandemic response, both for the public health emergency and the broader impact on people's lives and livelihoods. Human rights put people centre-stage. Responses that are shaped by and respect human rights result in better outcomes in beating the pandemic, ensuring healthcare for everyone and preserving human dignity. But they also focus our attention on who is suffering most, why, and what can be done about it. They prepare the ground now for emerging from this crisis with more equitable and sustainable societies, development and peace

(World Health Organisation, 2020: 2¹).

Black Healing and Wellness are essential to our Liberation - State violence and systems of oppression traumatize us and our communities, and make it simultaneously impossible for us to fully heal. We have the inherent right to access healing and be free of institutions and systems that explicitly harm and undermine our capacity to live with our full humanity, connection and purpose

(Black Lives Matters 2020: 10).²

¹ World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020) *Covid-19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together*. New York, NY: WHO

² Black Lives Matters (2020) *Healing in Action: A Toolkit for Black Lives Matter Healing Justice and Direct Action*. Boston: Black Lives Mater.

The focus of the Human Rights and Social Justice Committee (HRSJ) is on supporting education, learning and teaching and social work research in all aspects of human rights and social justice. This is intended to recognise the interrelationship for social work of human right and social justice and actions that are required to promote rights, responsibilities and justice for citizens, communities and countries. Further there is a concern for human right violations on social workers and social work educators and campaigning that support and promote human rights and social justice.

1. The IASSW website has been updated to reflect the contemporary dialogue of the IASSW concerns for human rights and social justice and to reflect the broad intention of the HRSJ Committee. This will be monitored to ensure compliance with its ambitions. As required, it will be updated on a regular basis to ensure it remains contemporary with a clear focus on human rights and social justice. particularly the potential for it to be reflective of developments and issues at a national, regional and global level for social work. It needs to reflect our approach, be informative and interesting and current.
2. The HRSJ Committee acknowledge the importance of the synergy of the work with Regional Associations of Schools of Social Work in achieving its aims. Consequently, it will support work at a regional level. This is intended to support Regional Associations in:
 - contributing information on key issues and concerns for human rights and social justice in their regions and exemplars of actions in their region of schools of social work in prompting and development of their approaches to human rights and social justice in and across the curricula; and
 - monitoring and representing human rights violations affecting social work educators, practitioners and students.
3. It is acknowledged there needs to be closer links with the focus of this Committee and the work of colleagues representing the IASSW in the United Nations. A process will be developed to support this.
4. IASSW will continue to represent and strength its profile as being a key partner in the promotion of relevant global and regional agendas for human rights and social justice. It is proposed that at each Executive Meeting specific time be set aside to examine human rights and social justice issues to determine if, and how, IASSW resources may be directed to facilitate work being done to address these issues and to develop recommendations for action by member organizations, in line with the strategic priorities of our Association and the recommendation of our membership. The IASSW also acknowledges the importance of key links with partners, International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) and International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), as well as other regional and global organisations, including the United Nations (UN).

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