

Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development:
Fourth Report

STRENGTHENING RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS



Global Agenda for Social Work and Social
Development: Fourth Report

**Strengthening Recognition of the
Importance of Human Relationships**

David N Jones (Editor)

Global Agenda Co-ordinating Group

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Foreword

Annamaria Campanini, Eva Holmberg Herrström & Silvana Martinez

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development is central to the partnership between our three global organisations. We are grateful to all those who have contributed to this fourth and final report on the first decade of *The Global Agenda*. We recognise the significant contributions of many organisations and individuals around the world who have shaped *The Agenda* process and helped create this report, including many practitioners, experts by experience, local communities, educators and researchers. The work undertaken was based on the realities of practice and the enthusiasm and voluntary commitment of them all. Our three organisations are very grateful to you all.

The Global Co-ordinating Group has steered this process, translating *The Agenda* vision, shaped in the 2010 Hong Kong conference and subsequent consultations, into a worldwide movement with unlimited potential to achieve a healthy balance between social, economic and environmental well-being underpinned by social justice and human rights. This was only possible thanks to all those involved in the Regional Observatories and others who facilitated the regional consultation processes and reports. The names of global and regional coordinators are listed in the Appendix. Pascal Rudin prepared the text for publication online and in printed form. The online PDF download is available at no charge. We are grateful to them all.

David N Jones agreed to co-ordinate this process on behalf of our three organisations. He has liaised with the regional coordinators, edited the regional reports, worked on the global overview report and evaluation and chaired the new *Global Agenda* Task Force which is shaping the new Agenda and steering the global consultation. As he hands over this role to Abye Tassé, we acknowledge with gratitude his decade-long commitment to sustaining this process and editing the reports.

IASSW, ICSW and IFSW also acknowledge each other's contributions. Our three organisations look forward to launching the second decade of *The*

Global Agenda process in 2020 and the continuing global consultation. We are grateful to the members of the new Task Force.

In the challenging times facing the world today, as we learn to live with the Covid-19 pandemic, the expertise of our professions is as relevant to world peace and development as it has ever been. The Global Agenda process is therefore important, not only for us but also for the world community. It provides a platform from which to take that knowledge into the wider community, to civil society, policy makers and politicians.

We are grateful to all those who have sustained the vision, contributed to this report and helped to achieve recognition, not only for *The Agenda* process but also, more importantly, for the worldwide contribution of social work and social development.

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Prefacio

Annamaria Campanini, Eva Holmberg Herrström & Silvana Martinez

La Agenda Global para el Trabajo Social y el Desarrollo Social es fundamental para la asociación entre nuestras tres organizaciones mundiales. Agradecemos a todos los que han contribuido a este cuarto y último informe sobre la primera década de La Agenda Global. Reconocemos las contribuciones significativas de muchas organizaciones e individuos en todo el mundo que han dado forma al proceso de La Agenda y ayudaron a crear este informe, incluidos muchos profesionales, expertos por experiencia, comunidades locales, educadores e investigadores. El trabajo realizado se basó en las realidades de la práctica y el entusiasmo y el compromiso voluntario de todos ellos. Nuestras tres organizaciones están muy agradecidas con todos ustedes.

El Grupo de Coordinación Global ha dirigido este proceso, traduciendo la visión de la Agenda, conformada en la conferencia de Hong Kong de 2010 y consultas posteriores, en un movimiento mundial con un potencial ilimitado para lograr un equilibrio saludable entre el bienestar social, económico y ambiental respaldado por justicia social y derechos humanos. Esto solo fue posible gracias a todos los involucrados en los Observatorios Regionales y otros que facilitaron los procesos e informes regionales de consulta. Los nombres de los coordinadores mundiales y regionales se enumeran en el Apéndice. Pascal Rudin preparó el texto para su publicación en línea y en forma impresa. La descarga del PDF en línea está disponible sin cargo. Estamos agradecidos a todos ellos.

David N Jones acordó coordinar este proceso en nombre de nuestras tres organizaciones. Se ha puesto en contacto con los coordinadores regionales, editó los informes regionales, trabajó en el informe global de evaluación y evaluación y presidió el nuevo Grupo de Trabajo de la Agenda Global que está dando forma a la nueva Agenda y dirigiendo la consulta global. Cuando le entrega este papel a Abye Tassé, reconocemos con gratitud su compromiso de una década de mantener este proceso y editar los informes.

IASSW, ICSW e IFSW también reconocen las contribuciones de cada uno. Nuestras tres organizaciones esperan lanzar la segunda década del proceso de La Agenda Global en 2020 y la consulta mundial continua. Agradecemos a los miembros del nuevo grupo de trabajo.

En los tiempos difíciles que enfrenta el mundo de hoy, a medida que aprendemos a vivir con la pandemia de Covid-19, la experiencia de nuestras profesiones es tan relevante para la paz y el desarrollo mundial como lo ha sido siempre. Por lo tanto, el proceso de la Agenda Global es importante, no solo para nosotros sino también para la comunidad mundial. Proporciona una plataforma desde la cual llevar ese conocimiento a la comunidad en general, a la sociedad civil, los responsables políticos y los políticos.

Agradecemos a todos los que han mantenido la visión, contribuido a este informe y ayudado a lograr el reconocimiento, no solo por el proceso de La Agenda, sino también, lo que es más importante, por la contribución mundial del trabajo social y el desarrollo social.

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Executive summary

This the fourth and final report from the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) on the first decade of *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development 2010-2020* (IFSW et al. 2012, IASSW et al. 2014, IASSW et al. 2016, IASSW et al. 2018) is focused on *strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships*. The report includes a Global Overview, five regional reports on that theme, a description of the process of *The Global Agenda*, an evaluation of the decade of activity and a chapter looking to the next decade.

The key messages of the Global Overview can be summarised as:

- Failure to address worsening inequality is increasing instability and undermining social relationships
- Planning for sustainability and wellbeing for all in healthy environments benefits individuals and humanity
- Valuing and involving people in decision making, respecting local knowledges, including indigenous knowledges, produces better and more sustainable outcomes
- Demonstrating support for respectful relationships, building on people's strengths, creates the best outcomes
- Respecting the practice experience of practitioners in social work and development strengthens the effectiveness of policy
- Ensuring a positive working environment with relationship based management draws out the best in practice
- Resourcing education and training, including continuing personal development and research, is crucial both for organisational effectiveness and professional practice

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development 2010-2020 was launched at the *World Conference for Social Work and Social Development 2010* in Hong Kong. Designed to enhance the visibility of the professions and organisations, it has provided a common platform for the three global partners. The four themes each spanned two years and were the focus of World Social Work Days (WSWD) and regional and global conferences.

The *Global Agenda* has attracted considerable interest including references in over 100 published books and articles, extensive discussion in professional magazines and newsletters, references in submissions to global and national official bodies and action on WSWDs. It has stimulated reflection on the nature of social work and social development and helped shape the global discourse.

A consultation on *The Global Agenda* for the next decade was launched at the Dublin world conference in 2018. The consultation was disrupted by the global pandemic and its far-reaching consequences. The global bodies decided to continue the consultation in 2021 to enable time for reflection on the implications of the pandemic and other developments. It is proposed that the theme for 2020-2022 should focus on solidarity.

The Global Agenda has provided a unifying focus for social work and social development laying a foundation for further development and enhanced influence in its second decade.

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Chapter 1

Global Overview

David N Jones

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Introduction

This is the fourth and final report from 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 global bodies) of the first decade of *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development 2010-2020* (IASSW et al. 2014; IASSW et al. 2016; IASSW et al. 2018). It therefore includes not only the five regional reports but also a chapter describing the whole process of *The Global Agenda* and an evaluation of the decade of activity and also a chapter briefly looking to the next decade. This global overview chapter draws key themes from all of this material.

This fourth pillar of *The Global Agenda* is focused on *strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships*. The five Regional Observatories have examined social work and social development practice related to this fourth pillar drawing on material from the national social work associations and other sources. It is not an exhaustive review of the literature or a comprehensive review of current practice. It does aim to reflect on global and regional trends affecting social work and social development and to stimulate further discussion and collective action. The observations in this Fourth Report are set in the context of the social, political, economic and environmental realities of 2018-20.

The report draws on the outcomes from World Social Work Days in March 2019 and 2020, will be followed by a special issue of International Social Work journal and feeds into the 2020 consultations on the focus for the next decade of *The Global Agenda*. It was planned to launch the report at two world conferences in 2020 in Rimini and Calgary. The travel and socialising restrictions imposed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic have made this impossible so it is being launched virtually and is available at no charge through the organisation websites.

The coronavirus pandemic was rapidly spreading as the regional observatories were gathering their material so there is reference to the social work response to the pandemic but this is limited. Similarly, the global response to the murder of George Floyd and the worldwide Black Lives Matter protests came after the regional reports had been submitted, so this is not covered in the regional reports at all. However issues of health, social protection, racism, discrimination and inequality have been prominent in the previous three reports and are equally prominently

addressed in this report. The global pandemic and the response to the killing of George Floyd have shone a spotlight on these long standing issues.

This fourth and final theme or pillar of *The Global Agenda* therefore returns us to the origin and heart of social work practice – relationships between people. Social workers know that relationships are not static but can create and sustain social and economic development and promote healing and wellbeing, not only in individuals and families, but more widely in communities and nations. Fractured relationships also cause conflict and pain. This is evident in the regional reports:

‘Human relationships are located in all aspects of the social work process Human interactions are part of what social workers do’.

Asia

‘When human relationships are strong, citizens help one another and advocate for the most vulnerable so that policy and programmes are put in place to help them improve their well-being distrust and intolerance negatively impact on human relationships, which affect the ability to collaboratively solve problems.

Africa

‘Structural transformation of human relationships leads to transformation of individual identity, then to communal and organizational change, and finally to social change. In short, problem solving through human relationships has the potential to bring about social change.’

Asia

‘The importance of social relationships and strengthening human relationships to effect social changes was both essential and clear.’

Europe

‘To improve relationships and influence policy change, there must be a diversity of voices, respect, local political engagement, and improvements to health care.’

North America and Caribbean

‘We believe that we must see the future with cautious hope, precisely because of the human relationships that, with increasing roots and commitment, are articulated to face our many challenges.’

Latin America and Caribbean

This global overview is therefore taking a broad view of relationships, exploring how social workers work in relationships with individuals, communities, organisations and structures. Guidance was issued to the regional observatories and members of the three global bodies in early 2019 setting out a framework for collecting material for the report. Regions applied the guidance differently, in all cases taking into account the need for people and professions to apply a ground-up approach in identifying their own concerns and social work solution. This approach has brought together a rich overview of practice in social work and social development. This chapter follows the headings offered in that guidance.

What are the main/key/core social problems now and how can these be improved by improved human relationships?

The issues identified in 2020 are little different from those which were explored in the 2010 Hong Kong global conference and which resulted in the identification of the four *Global Agenda* pillars (IASSW et al. 2014), which is perhaps no surprise. The world does not usually change so quickly – except that in the period during which this report was being prepared, the global social and economic conditions DID change dramatically because of the pandemic. Governments introduced social control measures (such as physical distancing) and economic interventions at a global scale never before seen and the role of multi-lateral institutions suddenly became central to politics, especially the World Health Organisation and UN development agencies. This showed clearly that there is no truth in the political rhetoric that there are limits to the possibilities of government intervention and international co-operation.

The crisis is generating both optimism and concerns about the future. The optimism is that we may find a new order which respects the planet and recognises mutual interdependence. The concerns are, in particular, that the pandemic will worsen inequality within and between countries, leave millions in extreme poverty with limited access to opportunities to earn income, increase nationalism and inter-communal tensions and make it

impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. These are significant concerns but not yet inevitable. The world is struggling to breathe as we anticipate the outcome.

The three global organisations decided that this was not the time to make binding decisions on the themes for the next decade 2020-2030; there are too many uncertainties about the shape of the 'new normal' and too many conflicting narratives to enable decisions to be made with confidence. On the other hand, we have seen the vital importance of social solidarity and community self-led development during the pandemic and it has been proposed that this will be the focus for the next two years (Deacon et al. 2011; Lorenz 2014; Utting 2015).

The following issues are identified as the main current social problems, most of them evident in all regions in some form.

Environmental Justice

The theme of the third *Global Agenda* report was '*promoting community and environmental sustainability*' (IASSW et al. 2018). Concern about climate change has continued to grow and there has been a burgeoning of publications about Green Social Work, Ecological Social Work and practice issues related to the physical environment (Gray et al. 2013; Alston 2015; Leung 2015; Nöjd 2016; Matthies et al. 2017; Rinkel et al. 2017; Dominelli 2018; Powers et al. 2018; Gray 2019; Rambaree et al. 2019). There is growing awareness of the relationship between physical and social environments and the implications for human relationships and survival (Mason et al. 2019). The regional reports refer to the social challenges of climate change and environmental degradation and the need for human environments which support life and wellbeing. Whilst many are concerned about climate change, the impact on mainstream practice is still emerging.

The accelerated 'commodification' or 'privatisation' of the natural world is changing the basics of life for many people, exacerbated by environmental degradation and climate change (Clark 2015; United Nations 2015; Mason et al. 2019). Natural resources which have been freely available for everybody, such as green space in cities, fresh water and grazing land and forests, are allocated to or purchased by private interests (Pawar 2014; Morais et al. 2019) and then

‘presented as objects of consumption, only available to those with the purchasing power to obtain them.’

Latin America and Caribbean

This has been well documented in many areas where land has been purchased without regard to traditional ownership rights and longstanding common usage.

Social media and digital technologies

The widespread access to social media and digital communication is identified as an issue in several regions, presenting challenges and opportunities. Discussions elsewhere have identified the risks of disinformation, fake news and misrepresentation. This presents a challenge for those without access to digital media who are increasingly excluded from extensive areas of social life and the economy (European Union 2017; United Nations 2019a). This has also become a new tool for social work and community development (Watling et al. 2012; Beresford et al. 2018; Lavié et al. 2018; López Peláez et al. 2018; Megele et al. 2020; O’Leary et al. 2020).

Poverty and inequality

The regional reports highlight continuing social tensions arising from growing inequality and unemployment. This series of *Global Agenda* reports has consistently warned about the risks to the world community of growing inequality (Jones 2010; 2011), echoing warnings in United Nations publications and others (United Nations Development Programme 2017; 2019). History points to a variety of possible consequences, many of which are already visible, such as support for populism and authoritarianism on the one hand (Molloy 2018; Torre 2018) and social unrest and protest on the other (e.g. the global Black Lives Matter movement) (Williams et al. 2018). History shows that populist leaders frequently foment conflict and even wars. These developments reveal fractured relationships within and between communities and countries, which can be healed but could also escalate into in more conflict.

The wave of demonstrations sweeping across countries is a clear sign that, for all our progress, something in our globalized society is not working. Achim Syeiner

(United Nations Development Programme 2019)

The global inequality crisis is reaching new extremes. The richest 1% now have more wealth than the rest of the world combined. Power and privilege is being used to skew the economic system to increase the gap between the richest and the rest.

(Oxfam 2016)

Poverty and extreme inequality also has an impact on and may be made worse by the lived environment, in the context of a growing awareness of the relationship between the natural environment and human wellbeing. Concerns include poor housing (Bloch et al. 2017; Manomano et al. 2017), lack of access to clean water (Pawar 2014), and food insecurity, including the growth in foodbanks in some developed countries (Rinkel et al. 2017; Burgess et al. 2018).

Research (e.g. Wilkinson et al. 2009) clearly demonstrates that:

‘More equal societies have reduced social problems, higher levels of wellbeing and a stronger community life.’

Europe

The regional reports point to the involvement of social workers in services aiming to mitigate the impact of gross inequality and build relationships for better understanding.

Discrimination and exclusion

Previous reports have highlighted the reality of discrimination against women, and others based on race, ethnicity, cultural group, national origin, age, disability and sexual orientation. These are again identified in the regional reports.

As majority female professions managed largely by men, issues of gender equality and empowerment of women are highly significant to the global bodies and member organisations, as is seen in regional reports. This issue is central to the concerns of social workers and social development professionals and has been well document elsewhere (Manzanera-Ruiz et al. 2017; Ravalier 2018a; Staab et al. 2018; United Nations Development Programme 2019; UN Women 2020).

As this report is being written, evidence is building up that the pandemic has already and will continue to exacerbate this discrimination and worsen the situation of many of those involved, not least because of the severe negative implications of the economic downturn. There have been

profound concerns about the treatment of older people during the pandemic in many countries, including stories of older people being turned away from treatment. The full impact of the pandemic on discrimination has yet to be researched but there seem good grounds to fear that the numbers in extreme poverty will more than double and that discriminations will worsen for all these groups.

Violence and crime

Domestic violence, child abuse and dysfunctional family relationships are universal concerns, linked with concerns about gender-based violence and growing awareness of coercive control and the impact of the #MeToo movement. This is well documented in the literature which is not repeated here.

The past decade has seen a growing awareness of abuse in residential homes and institutions, with formal inquiries in several countries bringing to light failures in civic relationships and distorted relationships between 'carers' and those placed in their care (Doyle 2017; Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) 2018).

Awareness of human trafficking, modern slavery and exploitation have become more significant in global and local policy (Androff 2011; Williams 2013; Jones et al. 2015; Busch-Armendariz et al. 2017; European Commission 2017; Malik 2017); the importance of effective working relationships between social workers, law enforcement and health teams is consistently emphasised.

Substance misuse and drug use is a problem around the world, frequently associated with domestic violence, poverty and crime and sustained by highly organised criminal networks (Coates et al. 2015; Dawe et al. 2018; Halpern et al. 2018).

In some regions and localities, violent crime is endemic and includes armed robbery, kidnapping, political and economic corruption and killings associated with witchcraft beliefs.

Migration and refugees

People on the move has been a growing public and political concern throughout the decade, which reflects the dramatic on-the-ground reality:

‘Between 2000 and 2017, the estimated number of international migrants increased by almost 50 per cent, reaching 258 million in 2017’ (United Nations 2019b).

The public perception of a dramatic increase in the number of people on the move is supported by the facts. However not all are refugees. Significant numbers are moving to find work; the remittances sent back home are a major element in development. One consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic has been the exposure of the poor living and working conditions of migrant workers, making social distancing impossible, and the lack of healthcare services for them. This has resulted in a much higher incidence of the virus. Taking people migrating for all reasons, the pursuit of employment is seen clearly in their destinations:

‘Together, Asia and Europe host 6 of every 10 international migrants, corresponding to 31 and 30 per cent, respectively, of persons who reside outside their country of birth, followed by Northern America at 22 per cent. Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Oceania host approximately 10, 4 and 2 per cent of the world’s migrants, respectively’ (United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) 2020)

Of those who are forced migrants, 68% are fleeing major conflicts or internal disputes in Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar.

‘One per cent of the world’s population – or 1 in 97 people – is now forcibly displaced’ (United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) 2020).

The distribution of refugees has been very unequal with five countries hosting the majority of refugees – Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda and Germany (United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) 2020). However, the impact on the countries involved in terms of the number of refugees per 1,000 inhabitants shows a very different picture; those supporting the highest proportion are Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Chad and Uganda.

The concern about migration in the developed countries has had a significant political impact, even where the numbers involved are relatively few (United Nations 2018; Hujo 2019; United Nations 2019b).

‘Migrants face unprecedented hostility throughout Europe ... This so-called ‘crisis’ is related to one million people who entered the European Union seeking humanitarian support in 2018.’

Europe

This is discussed further in the section on political authoritarianism and increasing social tension below.

Social workers are one of the key professional groups engaging with displaced people, helping to build better relationships between local people and migrants, working to foster better mutual understanding and supporting migrants to find forms of employment.

Under-investment in health and social services

‘Social Injustice is killing on a grand scale’

(World Health Organisation 2008)

Concern about the under-funding of health and social services has been a constant concern in this series of reports, exacerbating inequality and undermining human rights (Marmot 2020). It has been highlighted by the impact of the pandemic (Truell 2020b).

The pandemic is a health, social and economic disaster and, as in all social disasters, those individuals and communities who are poorest and most vulnerable suffer the most, often because they live in more crowded environments and have limited access to services (Cronin et al. 2015).

The evidence from recent pandemics such as SARS and HIV-AIDS suggests that early government intervention, physical distancing (or distant socialising), effective tracking and tracing of contacts and effective treatments can limit infections and reduce the need for high cost medical interventions (Kissler et al. 2020). Social workers have been involved in such programmes in many countries (O’Leary et al. 2020), including South Korea, Vietnam and Kenya.

The importance for the whole population of effective measures to promote wellbeing and treat ill-health for all people has been demonstrated in the pandemic.

The regional reports record the activities of social workers seeking to mitigate the effects of adverse social and economic conditions, including those knowingly created by governments and international agencies, for example in austerity policies in response to the 2008 financial crisis. The

reports also highlight the social significance of improved roads and social and economic infrastructure and the damage resulting from corruption which takes resources away from development of communities into the hands of powerful elites (High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda 2013).

Corruption, in the words of Transparency International, “undermines justice and economic development, and destroys public trust in government and leaders”. Endemic corruption is a corrosive scourge that chips away at societies from top to bottom. It is the poor who suffer most: low-quality education, a lack of access to health services, a high cost of basic needs, inadequate infrastructure, and so on.

(ElBaradei 2015)

Professional recognition and working environments

Recognition of the profession and public understanding about what the work involved was an issue in all regions, although the expression of that concern varied.

Practice examples from Western European countries, focused on the implications and responses to neo-liberalism, austerity and multi-agency working for promoting relationships. The Eastern European practice examples mainly concentrated on raising public awareness about specific social problems, promoting the social work profession and the lack of regulation of the profession.

Europe

In a number of countries the responses highlighted the development of partnerships with politicians and civil servants, working towards achieving legislative recognition of the profession and formal regulation (Worsley et al. 2019). Some countries reported significant if frequently faltering process (e.g. Malaysia, Nigeria) whilst many others expressed frustration about the lack of progress (e.g. Bulgaria, Macau (China)). Where social work is regulated, there is growing evidence of tensions between the regulator and the professional body (Jones 2020).

Alongside this battle was a concern for the working conditions and environment of social workers (Ravalier 2018b). Regional reports refer to changes in working arrangements, ‘deprofessionalisation’ and reliance on ‘managerialist’ techniques which ignore professional values and seek to

reduce social workers to roles as care managers, gatekeepers and eligibility assessors which tend to undermine the development of relationships which are the engine of change and transformation.

‘job flexibility has been used as a method to fragment the social work professions ... reducing and eliminating the characteristics that create a profession including loss of autonomy and discretion in their professional practice’

Latin America and Caribbean

The first results from the IFSW and Bath Spa University workforce study will begin to provide more consistent data about those working conditions and action required as a basis for a long-term comparative study (International Federation of Social Workers 2019).

Indigenous peoples

Regional reports highlight the challenges for social work and social development arising from the widespread discrimination against indigenous peoples, their knowledges, cultures and ways of life (United Nations 2007) (Gray et al. 2010). The challenges for social work and social development were explored in the *Indigenous Voices of Social Work Conference* held in Taiwan in August, 2019, the latest in a series of such conferences. The impact of changes in land use and appropriation of land has a particular impact on indigenous peoples in many countries including Canada, Australia and several Asian countries.

The relationship between indigenous and majority communities appears to be difficult in all countries, with disproportionate numbers of people from indigenous communities in prisons, mental health facilities, child care settings and in unemployment. There is clearly a need to reflect on social work practice which sustains these forms of discrimination but more importantly to address the underlying social conditions which result in this outcome.

Knowledge base of social work

The knowledge base of social work draws on several related academic disciplines and professions (International Association of Schools of Social Work et al. 2014; Payne 2020). In seeking to develop a ‘holistic’ methodology which understands relationships in their social and physical environments, practitioners are constantly drawing on new insights, research findings and practice experiences which are used to guide

practice. In the absence of rigorous evaluation and critical reflection, there is always a danger that new models become distorted and even destructive. One person's 'common sense' approach to practice is too often another person's prejudice. Social work practice needs to be grounded on tested and evaluated good sense informed where possible by validated experience and research. This depends on a network of adequately resourced universities and research institutes.

The knowledge base of all human service professions is in constant flux as new experiences and research results in new insights and suggestions for practice. The regional reports include several examples of relationships between practice and research; it is essential that there is a dynamic relationship between these two elements. It is also essential that education and research are adequately funded and independent in order to explore new ideas and propose new policies and approaches to practice.

There is a growing global movement, reflected in the regional reports, seeking to develop social work methods which are relevant to the social and cultural context of the country or locality or peoples and not dominated by Western theories and models (Gray 2005; Yunong et al. 2012; Hertel 2017; McNabb et al. 2017; Ravulo 2017; Reamer et al. 2017; Wark et al. 2017; Beddoe 2018; Forkuor et al. 2018; Kime et al. 2018; McCauley et al. 2018; O'Leary et al. 2018; Ornellas et al. 2018; Zhao et al. 2018; Canavera et al. 2019; Masoga et al. 2019; Ravulo et al. 2019; Stock et al. 2019; Mathebane 2020; Morley et al. 2020). This is reflected in the global definition of social work (International Association of Schools of Social Work et al. 2014). A more inclusive knowledge base may be easier to develop in a time of social media but there are still implications for publishing, validating and generalising theories and models of practice which present a continuing challenge to the profession.

Political instability, authoritarianism and increasing social tension

All the regional reports note challenges arising from political instabilities and the apparent rise in authoritarian governments. These tend to target minority groups in political rhetoric and actions, often referred to as 'populism' (Moffitt 2016; Henley 2018; Jagland 2018; Molloy 2018; Torre 2018; IFSW Europe 2019) and frequently attack or close civil society organisations and groups which are supporting those who are vulnerable. The issue is complicated for social workers who very often have authority to intervene to protect children and adults, including those with mental

health problems or limited mental capacity. In that context, it is disturbingly easy for social workers to be drawn into or instructed to implement social controls which target vulnerable populations, such as people surviving on the street, and to become tools of authoritarian control.

There are many examples in the past century of social work being drawn into abusive practices associated with authoritarian regimes, such as removing children from families of opponents of the regime or facilitating deportations. Social workers need to retain a critical awareness of the context in which they are operating. The international profession needs to be vigilant and to unite against such abuses of human rights when they are observed.

It was argued above that growing inequality and frustration about lack of opportunity will almost inevitably result in political consequences, such as internal conflict, revolution, support for authoritarian and populist leaders, racial and inter-communal tensions and attacks on minority groups. The United Nations has recognised the increase in social unrest around the world (United Nations Development Programme 2019).

This fracturing of relationships is having an impact on social work practice all around the world in different ways (Behring 2013). In some cases social workers themselves may be targeted as perceived supporters of those who suffer discrimination or people who seek to protect human rights (Ramon 2012). These are dangerous times.

The global protests against racism and the emergence of the #BlackLivesMatter movement in 2020 is evidence of long-held and deeply felt inequalities and grievances, which can be said to be consistent with the experience of other groups around the world, such as tribal conflicts in Africa, caste discrimination in India and discrimination against indigenous peoples discussed above (Woo et al. 2018; Crewe et al. 2019; Jha 2019). It is dangerous to make simplistic judgements and draw trite conclusions when in the middle of a period of turmoil, but it seems reasonable to see this movement as part of a global response to transparent inequalities and perceived injustices (Wormer et al. 2018; Bernard 2019) with such a vast proportion of the wealth of the world held in the hands of a very few individuals (Oxfam 2016).

Concerns about corruption (discussed above) and lack of accountability of politicians and civil servants are also identified as a problem in some areas.

What are the essential policies that will effectively address these problems? Where do relationships need to improve?

The regional reports were strong and consistent in their analysis of social problems and in describing practice examples. There was less discussion of 'essential policies' affecting whole populations. The connections between macro social and economic policy and social work interventions at individual, family and community levels, would benefit from further exploration. Both are based on perspectives on how people will behave - on the micro-interactions in individual relationships and the behaviours of groups – drawing on evidence. A stronger connection needs to be made to enable more effective policy and practice (Stevenson 2013). This could be an area to explore in the next decade.

Relationships in work

A clear message coming through several regional reports is the challenge faced by many social work practitioners arising from their poorly resourced and unhelpful working environment. Negative managerial relationships, which appear to value procedures and consistency and constrain relationship building, are also a significant concern for many. There is clear evidence of a reaction against the 'managerialist' or 'new public management' approaches which value process, data, financial calculations and 'efficiency' more than human relationships (Kitchener et al. 2000; Kirkpatrick et al. 2004; Hingley-Jones et al. 2016).

There is growing research evidence that a positive attitude to the working environment and to the people doing the work is the best way to achieve positive outcomes, user satisfaction, efficiency and even cost savings (Joint Reviews 2000). Positive relationships really do matter. They make a difference and result in higher staff morale, strong commitment and a more stable workforce (Coulshed et al. 2006; Jones 2009; Ferguson et al. 2020; Payne 2020). This includes recognising the emotional demands of the task and building employment structures which support staff rather than undermine them (Mastracchi et al. 2019).

A study of 40 local social services departments in the UK observed that 'five core characteristics of successful relationships [CAIRE] emerge from

research on counselling, social work and industrial relations (Joint Reviews 2000; Jones 2004; Jones 2009). They still come top in surveys of what is appreciated by people who use services:

- Consistency and fairness
- Acceptance and respect
- Integrity and honesty
- Reliability and trustworthiness
- Empathy and understanding

This confirms that living and applying social work values in management and organisation in a way which is consistent with the positive relationships which staff are expected to create with the public and users, results in better outcomes for everybody (Global Social Service Workforce Alliance 2019). The importance of collective action to achieve change in the workplace is recognised.

Relationship-based practice

Professional discussions in recent years have referred to the ‘rediscovery’ of relationship-based social work practice:

‘which broadly emphasises ‘capabilities’, ‘strengths’, ‘emotions’ and ‘expertise’ of service users based on lived experience alongside the practitioners’ ‘use of self’ within relationships to ‘...support a process of discovery and transformation’.

Europe

Others have expressed reservations about ‘relationship-based practice’ in social work on account of the undeveloped emotional competence of social workers (Morrison 2007), staff turnover and burnout (Le Grand 2007), and organisational bureaucracy or structural issues (Byrne et al. 2019). However what is very clear and is coming powerfully from all regions as well as recent research is that relationships matter in practice and management. Without investing time in creating effective relationships, things go wrong.

Relationships with service users and co-production

It follows from this analysis that relationships with people who use or engage with social work and social development practice – service users – are also crucial and this is examined in regional reports. Countries, regions and individual practitioners appear to be at different stages in their understanding and implementation of engagement with people who use

services (Beresford et al. 2018). In some regions there was strong evidence of 'co-production' with service users, working jointly and equally together to achieve an agreed outcome (Yeates 2015; International Association of Schools of Social Work et al. 2016). In other areas the activity seems to be more about consultation and involvement. Regions tended to stress the importance of developing skills in this area:

'learning from the constructive feedback of services-users and critically reflecting on one's own practice and mistakes as social worker were highlighted as issues that urgently to be addressed and incorporated in social work education.'

Europe

Developing effective relationships with people who use services is clearly a policy development which is gaining recognition, with schools of social work increasingly involving people with lived experience as trainers and assessors.

'enable oppressed social groups to represent the world as their own and on their own terms, since only then can they change it according to their own aspirations.'

Latin America and Caribbean

Relationships to secure resources and funding

All regions highlight problems securing adequate resources for quality services. This is clearly relative given the widely different resource contexts. Those countries which have suffered from austerity policies following the 2008 financial crash tend to point to deteriorations in the amount and quality of services with negative impacts on service users. Regional reports highlight the importance of effective relationships with like-minded professional and grassroots organisations to bring pressure to bear on governments and to influence public opinion.

Social relationships and poverty

The global bodies support the United Nations Social Protection Floor initiative, which advocates for a minimum income for all and effective social services.

In many ways the power of the social protection floor lies in its simplicity. The floor is based on the idea that everyone should enjoy at least basic income security sufficient to live, guaranteed through transfers in cash or in kind, such as pensions for the

elderly and persons with disabilities, child benefits, income support benefits and/or employment guarantees and services for the unemployed and working poor.

(International Labour Organisation 2011)

It is striking that the coronavirus pandemic immediately stimulated a range of economic interventions by governments, including guaranteed personal incomes for a limited period. Many of those governments had been extremely resistant to the idea of cash transfers and had been reducing the real value of payments. This experience should provide a foundation for wider public support for social protection and social security.

Other policies available to social workers to mitigate poverty included collective enterprise including food production and micro-financing of small businesses.

Digital relationships through social media

Regional reports show that national and local organisations have advocated for social media organisations to implement policies which protect children and vulnerable people and sought to influence governments to enact appropriate legislation.

What do people (clients, service users, citizens, beneficiaries) with whom you work want to see improved?

The regional reports imply that people who use services tend to want the same things as the practitioners, namely adequate resources, quality services, respectful relationships and a positive working environment.

Who are the actors/stakeholders/partnerships currently involved in addressing these issues and who should be involved?

The regional reports identified the same range of important relationships in tackling the issues that impact on human relationships. The list in the African regional report is comprehensive and multi-sectoral, cutting across individual, community, national and international levels. These include:

- Ministerial and Presidential offices; Government departments and agencies (local, provincial/regional and national)
- International organisations

- Religious organisations
- Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)
- Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs)
- National welfare bodies and forums
- National Associations of Social Workers
- Other professionals e.g. Psychologists; educators'; nurses; lawyers; doctors, police
- Social work practitioners, social work educators, social auxiliary workers, child care workers, community development workers, field instructors/supervisors
- Children's courts
- Corporates / business
- Human rights institutions
- Political leaders
- Professional associations
- Children's groups
- Women Associations and groups
- Service users
- Communities (leaders, chiefs, youth leaders and representatives of local groups)
- Funders / donors
- Development partners
- Students and student representatives
- Training institutions
- Academics
- Researchers and research organisations

What are people doing about these problems? What is the evidence that social work and social development interventions are having a social, economic and/or political impact?

The regional reports illustrate the range of activities that social workers and social development practitioners are engaged in from international and national campaigns to very local actions and services. The following gives an overview; more detail is found in the regional reports.

Pandemic – developing relationships in a new context

The pandemic was at an early stage when the reports were being written but evidence being gathered by IFSW and others¹ illustrate the differential involvement of social workers in the official response. In some countries they were identified as ‘essential’ or ‘key’ workers and in some others they were not recognised at all and did not have permission to travel or support people. Summarising the developments, the IFSW Secretary General identifies clear phases highlighting social workers’ struggles and outcomes:

1. Making governments recognise that a social response is imperative;
2. Advocating for social services to remain open during lockdown;
3. Adapting social services to a new world & managing ethical dilemmas; and
4. Integrating transformative practice.

He concludes ‘what has become clear is that this transformative process, though far from painless, has seen a new rising of the profession’ (Truell 2020a).

The ICSW Secretary General identifies five key elements: solidarity, humanity, environment, surveillance and politics. He concludes: ‘we need to build bridges not fences. And understand we are in this together’ (Johannesen 2020). IASSW set up a section of its websites to collect examples of practice responses to the pandemic.

Local responses include a speedy response by the Chinese association to the initial outbreak in Wuhan².

‘As soon as the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic was confirmed, CASW started a series of actions, for example, “the National Social Workers proposal” called on social workers for personal protection, and fulfilling the mission to support the prevention and control of the epidemic ... in particular online psychological counselling and training, offline community screening and counselling in Wuhan.’

Asia Pacific

¹ <https://www.ifsw.org/updated-information-on-ifsw-and-the-covid-19-virus/>
<https://www.iassw-aiets.org/covid-19-updates/>
<http://www.icsw.org/index.php/covid-19>

² <https://www.ifsw.org/chinese-social-workers-actively-engaged-in-the-fight-against-the-corona-virus/>

CASW also published “The Social Worker Support Manual on the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia Caused by the Coronavirus Infection” and developed online training materials.

Singapore social workers are actively involved in working with migrant workers in over-crowded hostels where a second outbreak occurred. NASW USA and BASW UK provided ethical and practice guidance to social workers and campaigned for adequate personal protective equipment. The Covid-19 impact on Brazil, with among the highest incidence in the world, is stretching health and social work services. Schools of social work around the world are adjusting to a new environment for teaching (see below).

We must take advantage of this crisis to rethink the profession and its involvement in new forms of development.

Latin America and Caribbean

Disaster response – relationships in trauma

Practitioners in social development and social work are inevitably drawn into disaster response when they are closely connected to local communities. The pandemic can be seen as an exceptional form of social disaster. The regional reports also give examples of other forms of disaster response. Following the attacks on a mosque in New Zealand, social work teams on the ground and at the hospital worked tirelessly, in the face of overwhelming levels of emotional distress and unrelenting demands, to support the families and friends of those injured and unknown numbers of deceased, as reported at the Indigenous Voices of Social Work Conference held in Taiwan in August, 2019.

National actions using personal and organisational relationships

Activities by social workers and social development practitioners reported in the regional reports include campaigns about:

- resources and service quality
- recognition and regulation of the profession
- regulation of social media to protect children and people in general
- environmental protection
- support for specific groups such as the rights of indigenous people or those who are homeless
- engagement with the media

The Iranian association negotiated a column by association members in the largest daily paper on the importance of human relationships over one-year and promoted the naming of a city street as '*Social Work Street*'. The President of the Macau association is a member of the Professional Council of Social Workers led by the Government of the Macau Special Administrative Region which shapes social work policies.

Among the countries actively involved in exploring the options for regulation of social work are Macau China, Malaysia, Nigeria, Puerto Rico, Kenya, India and several countries in central and Eastern Europe.

Some advocate the importance of overt political engagement, as seen in the Latin American ethical political project (Netto 1999; Behring 2013; Sewpaul 2016) (Ferguson et al. 2018). Others favour a narrower focus on issues specific to the service context or profession. Whatever the focus, the regional reports show the importance of engaging with national and international politicians and governments.

Social workers and their organisations are also involved in providing conferences, training and development opportunities both to support the national campaigns and to provide personal and skill development. For example the Hong Kong association provided training on digital competence. The Malaysian association has taken the lead in planning and running a training program for home-based child care workers and another about children's rights for residential care staff. In South Korea the association organised street demonstrations and developed relationships with other organisations with similar interests to challenge the national budget relating to children's centres in 2018. It has also joined with 26 social welfare organizations to hold the first '*Social Welfare Policy Convention*'.

Sri Lanka secured national TV coverage of the World Social Work Day events and in Kerala, environmental protection programmes were organized with an award ceremony to celebrate achievements; in 2019 a special postage stamp was issued drawing wide public attention to the Asia-Pacific conference

Local partners in working relationships

The regional reports include several examples of creative local partnerships. For example, a study in Puerto Rico demonstrated how

community leaders, social workers with environmental practices and municipal legislators need have a working relationship to be successful.

‘Some legislative processes ... leave interest groups stranded, waiting for participation to propose or challenge ideas. However, it is precisely in the communities where multiple day-to-day working groups are the reality that some public policies on climate change seek to influence.’

(Ortiz-Mojica 2019)

In Venezuela the UCV school of social work developed a curricular project enabling students to work closely with organised communities and groups; communal councils involve citizen participation aimed at solving the needs of the community.

Chinese social workers took a proactive role in fighting poverty, by supporting the rejuvenation of villages in “the Better Community Project”. Social workers in Africa support food security projects encouraging agricultural development, community initiatives and small enterprises. In North America, NASW USA has working relationships with several organisations which lobby Congress to strengthen anti-poverty programmes and the Canadian association works jointly with the schools of social work to campaign on key issues such as the high number of murders and disappearances of indigenous women (CBC News 2019).

Changing relationships in education and training

The pandemic has precipitated schools of social work into a very new environment, for most, of distant and digital learning with real dilemmas about the arrangements for practice learning in a world of physical distancing. This is one of a number of challenges facing schools of social work as the higher education system adapts to new circumstances. The importance of social work being seen as an equal academic discipline to other human service professions remains a challenge. The regional reports illustrate the close working relationship between practice and education in many areas, including creative research projects. Well-resourced schools and research centres for social work and social development are essential if the professions are to be enabled to make their crucial contribution to responding to the grave social challenges of the next decade.

Professional relationships using social media

Social workers and social development practitioners have begun to explore creative ways to use social media and online services including online counselling and virtual home visits. The pace of development appears to be faster as a result of requirements during the pandemic. The Hong Kong association, among others, has provided training for social workers

Conclusions

This final report in the first decade of *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* has returned to a core element in the practice of social workers and social development practitioners, the 'professional relationship'. The regional reports have explored different types and levels of relationship and how relationships can be a resource for social improvement and social changes. Whilst some suggest that there is still a lack of documented evidence of positive impact of relationships, there is growing research evidence, alongside practice wisdom, which affirms the importance of human relationships – people matter and need to be respected.

The report has coincided with the global experience of the Covid-19 pandemic which is affecting all parts of the world and storing up social problems and social tensions. The world has learnt again that pandemics affect everybody regardless of social status but that those who are poorest suffer most.

There is little doubt that there will be a long period of recovery which will disrupt social relationships, increase the number of people in 'extreme poverty' and in unemployment and make it impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The rapid increase in government debt is easily sustained during periods of low interest rates but may become more of a challenge over time. There are also grave concerns about the willingness of governments to sustain and invest in health and welfare programmes, even though their value has been demonstrated during the pandemic. The need to build on experiences of community solidarity highlights the importance of grassroots community development and relationships. Planning for sustainability and wellbeing for all - in healthy environments - benefits individuals and the whole of humanity.

The social and political consequences of the crisis cannot be predicted but are likely to be profound. There is a real danger that inequality will increase, within and between countries, resulting in increased social

tension. Whilst social workers and development practitioners will work for international solidarity, strengthening of multilateral organisations and nurturing mutual respect, there is already evidence of other movements emphasising closing borders, building walls, increasing separation and reinforcing nationalism and racism.

The lessons from this report emphasise again the potential for involving people in seeking creative solutions to their local and national problems. Whilst some people find it more comfortable to follow a 'strong' leader, better outcomes happen when people are engaged in developing their own solutions.

The renewed interest in community solutions in all regions, highlighted in the previous report in this series, presents an opportunity to social work and social development, building on the consistent findings and message of *The Global Agenda*. Strengthening relationships involves respecting voices of partners, developing social capital and engaging in determined advocacy, all traditional components of social work.

This may be more difficult in an environment of growing authoritarianism which is seen in a number of countries across the world. It is perhaps significant that smaller countries with a more inclusive leadership style, often led by women, have had greater success in avoiding the worst of the pandemic, such as New Zealand, Scotland, Finland and Ethiopia, in contrast to the medical and social tragedies seen in USA, UK and Brazil.

Finally, the reports have illustrated examples of creative practice but have also highlighted the continuing lack of recognition of and respect for social work in many parts of the world, poor working conditions, insensitive management and the continuing struggle to gain recognition. There are examples of progress and the pandemic has shown the value of effective social work in responding to sudden shortages of necessities, to bereavement and distress and also to the need for community education and collective response.

The key messages can therefore be summarised as:

- Failure to address worsening inequality is increasing instability and undermining social relationships
- Planning for sustainability and wellbeing for all in healthy environments benefits individuals and humanity

- Valuing and involving people in decision making, respecting local knowledges, including indigenous knowledges, produces better and more sustainable outcomes
- Demonstrating support for respectful relationships, building on people's strengths, creates the best outcomes
- Respecting the practice experience of practitioners in social work and social development strengthens the effectiveness of policy
- Ensuring a positive working environment with relationship based management draws out the best in practice
- Resourcing education and training, including continuing personal development and research, is crucial both for organisational effectiveness and professional practice

The Global Agenda has provided a global framework for the profession to project itself and develop the recognition it deserves but this is still a work in progress. The evaluation of the process in a later chapter reflects on what has been achieved and what more there is to do. Building on the evidence of the past decade the global bodies and their members have an opportunity to make significant progress and to enhance the confidence of those involved in social work and social development and to strengthen the impact of their humanitarian commitment.

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Chapter 2

Africa

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Introduction

The four pillars of the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: Commitments to Action 2010-2020* [hereafter Global Agenda] are interrelated, but as it is distinguished into themes, each has a unique focus. Each theme has been the focus for two years respectively across the globe in social work and social development education, practice, research and policy which was also annually celebrated during World Social Work Day. The Global Agenda (IASSW et al, 2012) states in the fourth theme, strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships, “we recognise that:

...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 wellbeing 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.”

Human relationships are at the heart of social work and social development. Relationships take different formats such as social, personal, interpersonal and therapeutic, among different people and in different contexts. Trust is important in relationships where people thrive. To the contrary, distrust distorts relationships which do harm. The importance of human relationships is best understood within the pan African philosophical framework of Ubuntu. Essentially, Ubuntu has been literally described by Tutu as referring to the fact that ‘[m]y humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours’ (cited in Mupedziswa, 2019:22). It encapsulates ideals of human dignity, equality, and social justice and hence directly aligns to the global SGD aspiration of leaving no one behind. Power imbalances in relationships play a pertinent role in who benefits and who does not, leaving people vulnerable. Reducing vulnerability “is crucial in

the fights against poverty and inequality” as “[the] opposite of vulnerability is security (Green, 2012:167). The point of departure in building trustful, emancipatory relationships in social work and social development, is to include the vulnerable who “are far from passive” (Green, 2012:170) as an important stakeholder in building human relationships to deal with social, economic and political problems.

The fourth themed report continues with the legacy of the African regional Global Agenda reports to be informed by original contributions from educators, practitioners, policy makers and students. Guided by the global guidelines for the report, a survey was launched with seven open ended questions using the Qualtrics platform. The questions were supported by the Africa regional body representatives of IASSW (ASSWA), IFSW and ICSW. The survey link was distributed through the ASSWA list server to country specific networks such as the Association for Schools of Social Work in South Africa (ASASWEI) and member networks of IFSW (Africa) and ICSW (Africa). Data was collected from 15 February to 5 April 2020. In addition to the survey, examples or case studies were invited on best practices in strengthening human relationships.

Fifty-eight (58) people from ten countries participated in the study of whom nineteen (19) were practitioners, thirty-three (33) educators, three (3) was from policy, two (2) from advocacy and one (1) student. Countries included DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Tanzania.

The open-ended questions yielded mostly qualitative data and therefore findings are presented in a summative format per question. The report starts with the nature and levels of professional relationships that participants are engaged in, followed by what they see as the social problems in the region and its effect on human relationships. The next discussion focuses on the key role players that participants work with, followed by the role of human relationships in tackling problems. Thereafter, evidence is presented on how social work and social development interventions are promoting human relationships. The next section gives a brief overview of policies to protect and promote human relationships. Finally, three best practice and case examples are presented, followed by conclusions.

Nature and levels of professional relationships

The question focused on the nature of professional relationships that participants were involved in strengthening and valuing human relationships beyond individual differences.

Responses indicated that social work practitioners, educators, researchers and policy makers engage in a range of interrelated professional relationships on local, national, regional and international levels. Professional relationships cut across boundaries and are developed in various contexts, e.g. organisations provide services but also contribute to policy development, advocacy, research and student field placement supervision. Professional relationships happen with and between people as clients, students, colleagues, peers, educators, practitioners, supervisors, managers, development partners, local and national political leaders, civil society and agencies, including NGOs, CBOs, higher education institutions, advocacy and human rights organisations, funding bodies, and professional bodies.

Professional relationships with clients/service users include relationships with individuals, the family, community and other stakeholders relevant in the context. Relationships connect communities with one another and resources and facilitate sharing of knowledge, experience and skills on what works in the community. Likewise, educators, practitioners, researchers and policy makers develop relationships within and across the same sectors for similar or different outcomes; including with accreditation bodies; professional bodies, funding bodies, field placement organisations, NGOs, civil society and government.

Africa hosts international students for professional development in exchange programmes and field placements and therefore contributes to the advancement of international social work. Social work educators and practitioners work in close partnership to realise these programmes.

Participants indicated that various platforms are or could be used to develop professional relationships within and across sectors. Professional associations for social work practitioners and educators respectively play an important role in this regard. Structures such as a Provincial Children and Family Forum can be utilised to advance specialised fields of social work practice. Conferences and workshops locally, regionally and

internationally provide platforms for collaboration and development of constructive relationships in practice, education and research. Social workers serve on policy-making bodies that foster positive change in society. Collaboration in advocating for the rights of specific groups such as children, women and the LGBTIQ+ community is another example where professional relationships can develop within and across sectors.

The workspace is a key area relevant for development of professional relationships in recognition of human relations among colleagues. The working environment – across all sectors and organisations - should be conducive for growth and development of all levels of workers. Cohesion in the work place should be embedded in social work principles and values that speak to respect and dignity, effectiveness and efficiency. Social work professionals should respect and value other people's contributions irrespective of their rank because that creates an opportunity to learn and grow. Top management has an important role to play in facilitating cohesion. Reviewing of policies in the work place is important to create just and fair platforms that encourage growth opportunities for all employees.

The essence of the development of professional relationships should be embedded in showing respect to all people. This is in particular important on a professional level where professionals maybe influenced by ethnic differences, differences in values and levels of experiences.

Main social problems in the region and their effect on human relationships

Key social problems that cause a great deal of tension between people and a continuous feeling of mistrust and distortion in human relationships are endemic poverty, unemployment and in particular among the youth, hunger, homelessness, poor housing, human trafficking; exploitation, gangsterism; child abuse, substance use disorders, gender-based violence, crime which includes armed robbery and killings associated with witchcraft beliefs, kidnapping, insurgency, communal clashes, racism and tribalism, corruption, and political unrest. Groups who are particularly vulnerable are children, women, older persons, people with disabilities and people from the LGBTIQ+ community. Xenophobia is detrimental for social cohesion and building a harmonious society where people can have healthy relationships. Many of these social problems are intertwined and related

to inequality and the structural causes of poverty which contribute to social and economic exclusion. The result is intolerance, distrust and insecurity that negatively affects relationships.

Lack of municipal services leads to protests. Water scarcity divides communities and energy challenges increase inequality. Social service delivery is influenced by a lack of access to the community due to bad roads and lack of funds from government to social work agencies. Social problems are deepened by limited social service delivery and in particular access to health services, education opportunities and social protection which impedes the optimal functioning of people and invariably affects their relationships with others. Fuelled by inefficient use of government funds, these conditions broaden the relational divide between those who are empowered (on economic and psycho-social levels) and those who are left vulnerable. Timely release of funds for interventions is critical for professional service delivery. Lack of accountability by leaders highlights power imbalances and these divisions break trust in relationships.

Poverty denies people access to basic human rights as they struggle to meet their primary needs and ability to network with others. One of the consequences in responding to the insecurity associated with poverty is displacement of people. Displacement distorts familial relationships and harmony and infuses the mindset of conflict in the displaced persons. One participant mentioned that the Osu caste system among the Igbo community in South Eastern Nigeria is still rife and a basis for discrimination and denial of certain rights and privileges which results in social exclusion of the Osu people. Social inequality is especially experienced along gender lines. Gender based violence affects families and communities.

Domestic violence destroys marriage and family relationships and forces many children to run from home and become 'street' children. Domestic violence mimicked by children in homes is practiced in schools which in turn affects relationships between teachers and learners and increases levels of crime and substance abuse, among others. Victims perceive human relations to be harmful which creates distrust of people. Child abuse ruins the trust children have in their parents, relatives, teachers and community members.

Structural causes of poverty and inequality, along with lack of proper parental care and supervision, and in particular uninvolved fathers, play a huge role in substance abuse, gangsterism and school dropout. While children are left behind, they are at the same time left growing up with no proper moral values and lack of interest in contributing to building a better society. The culture of violence continues while building a very hostile community, where everyone is scared to trust the next person due to violence and theft.

Because of these problems people experience frustration and therefore become desolate, leading to a breakdown in family relations because of depression and agony.

Poor health services impact on people's ability to survive illnesses and physical trauma that could easily have been treated if sufficient medical treatment was received. Therefore, a family can lose a mother, father or child, impacting on their livelihood and contributing to severe tension in families which can result in desperate acts by people such as substance abuse. The high unemployment rate resulting in prolonged experiences of not being able to find a job, has led to some people feeling isolated and worthless and unwilling to share their struggles with their family and in worst cases leading to self-destructive behaviour and even homicides. It is evident that people's mental wellbeing is severely affected and under enormous strain while it impacts on their human relationships.

Dysfunctional families contribute to dysfunctional communities and a breakdown of social values and relegation of morals. Difficulty to reward hard work or merit has affected many people in their value systems while many now praise material acquisition more than justice, honesty and integrity. The result of degraded values is a lack of respect for others (individuals, families, including elders and children, and communities) and a lack of trust towards others. All this seems to have created an atmosphere of entitlement, where everybody is focussing on what is best for themselves, without being concerned about the wellbeing of others.

Key role players in tackling the issues that impact on human relationships

The role players that social work and development practitioners and educators, researchers and policy makers engage with in tackling the issues that impact on human relationships are multi-sectoral and cut across individual, community, national and international levels. These include:

- Ministerial and Presidential offices; Government departments and agencies (local, provincial/regional and national)
- International organisations
- Religious organisations
- Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)
- Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs)
- National welfare bodies and forums
- National Associations of Social Workers
- Other professionals e.g. Psychologists; educators'; nurses; lawyers; doctors, police
- Social work practitioners, social work educators, social auxiliary workers, child care workers, community development workers, field instructors/supervisors
- Children's courts
- Corporates / business
- Human rights institutions
- Political leaders
- Professional associations
- Children's groups
- Women Associations and groups
- Service users
- Communities (leaders, chiefs, youth leaders and representatives of local groups)
- Funders / donors
- Development partners
- Students and student representatives
- Training institutions

- Academics
- Researchers and research organisations

The list shows the multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral nature of social work and social development. Furthermore, it confirms the inter-relatedness of social, economic and political issues and the importance of dealing with these in a relevant context. Furthermore, it shows that practitioners, educators, researchers and policy makers have an interrelated responsibility to work as a team.

Tshwane Homelessness Forum⁵ is an example of an activist and advocacy group who deal with homelessness in the city on various levels. Their aim, among other goals, is to establish understanding and more tolerant relationships between local government, the city officials, the public and homeless people in the city. It serves as a teaching example for social work students to become activists for peoples' rights which can enable them to strengthen human relationships to protect them against external stressors.

An international student exchange programme⁶ on all four pillars of the Global Agenda between two South African universities: University of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) (Dr Mthembu) and University of Johannesburg (UJ) (Prof Raniga) and Dortmund University of Applied Sciences (Prof Boecker) presents another example of engagement of students and academics across countries. Social work students from these three institutions met in Germany from 7 to 19 December 2019 for the first phase of the project to give their perspectives on the Global Agenda themes and will meet again in July 2020 for the next phase of this robust academic exchange. The writing up of the perspectives of the students on the Global Agenda themes are in process by the involved academics. This project is an example of the interrelatedness of the Global Agenda themes.

⁵See <https://tshwanehomelessresearch.wordpress.com/policies/tshwane-homelessness-forum/>

⁶ See details of the program on the link [file:///C:/Users/u02393751/Downloads/Internationalization%20for%20Building%20Competences%20\(3\).html](file:///C:/Users/u02393751/Downloads/Internationalization%20for%20Building%20Competences%20(3).html) Applied Social Sciences

The role of human relationships in tackling problems

The question elicited responses on what role human relationships play in how people (including clients/service users and citizens) tackle problems that they experience.

Responses evoked a range of expressions underpinning the meaning and value of human relationships, how to build human relationships and what influences good human relationships.

Human relationships were described as being core to handling problems. One response referred to the wellbeing of human relationships which possibly could be seen as the single most important 'commodity' to work with in order to successfully tackle any of the mentioned problems. Another response emphasised that human relationships bring a 'real face' into dealing with the problem. In an era where everything can be found 'online' or through social media, human relationships become more important in ensuring that rights of all citizens, but in particular those who use the services of social workers are advanced and protected

Another description of human relationships referred to human relationships as the relationship between individuals, families, as well as the community that helps build a functional environment. The manner in which people communicate and relate to each other and the way they treat each other is determined by human relationships. Human relationships remind people of their moral values and obligation to help each other. In essence human relationships form the foundation of collaborative efforts to address social problems by building positive relationships with all people at all levels based on mutual respect and responsive behaviours in overcoming problems.

Relationship plays invaluable role in how problems faced by individuals, families, and communities are tackled. It forms a synergy that allows one to tap from the collective strength of engaged parties in a functional relationship. Functional relationships influence group behaviour in how they tackle common problems; they encourage emergence of informal leadership as part of supportive teams to facilitate desired change; helps to build trust, social capital, equal opportunities and rewards for all social groups; improves life satisfaction and ultimately leads to a more just society. Furthermore, human relationship gives one the assurance that

he/she is not alone; it allows people to interact, negotiate, advocate and mobilise. It connects communities and facilitates sustainable communities; it contributes towards upholding people's dignity and promotes human rights.

On the other hand, human relationships can be harmful. If there is negativity and no trust in a relationship, conflict and resistance will prevail. Resentment and a lack of trusting relationships could negatively affect people's commitment and cooperation to tackle problems. Furthermore, distrust can contribute to a lack of transparency among role players. Professionals reflecting poor human relationships display lack of respect for clients. To deal with psychosocial issues, broken and poor relationships first need to be mended.

Building and maintaining constructive human relationships is important on all levels. In professional engagements, human relationship acts as an empowering tool in ensuring access to social services. It plays a role in advocacy, awareness raising, psycho-social support, economic empowerment and referral services. Trust building, showing of respect, the approach and good listening are key motivation factors to build and maintain human relationships.

Using a developmental approach in social work is a starting point for building positive human relationships as it is embedded in social justice and respecting people's rights and principles of democracy, people-centredness, participation, Ubuntu and sustainability. Promoting the importance of human relationships must be embedded in social work values and principles. During World Social Work Day 2020, social work students of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)⁷, South Africa, deliberated how social work principles of showing care and concern for others' wellbeing, consciousness raising and inclusiveness can promote human relationships and the role that policies play in structural change and addressing social injustices.

⁷ Submitted by Dr. Thobeka S Nkomo from Wits.

When well established, respected and implemented, human relationships make the tasks to be accomplished easier. Participating individuals feel acknowledged and their value and worth appreciated. This is often reciprocal and is sustained when participating individuals/stakeholders feel that they are positively taken and handled for who they are and not what they have.

When human relationships are strong, citizens help one another and advocate for the most vulnerable so that policy and programmes are put in place to help them improve their well-being. Professional relationships can be enhanced by ensuring that employees have a good understanding of the mandate of the Department/organisation and its partners. Likewise, human relationships will allow people to understand the regional, national and global mandate for development. This platform will allow for the sharing of strategies to develop the entire African continent. Social service professions have to be informed and empowered in a participatory manner to effectively and ethically deal with problems. Positive human relations will also improve workplace communication and cohesiveness and as a result improve quality of services.

Communities need to have a voice when it comes to addressing socio-economic problems they face. That voice can only be heard when relationships are fostered between community members and those that render services to them. Social support structures have been critical in assisting child headed households infected and affected by HIV and Aids.

Because human relationships bring people together, it enables people and communities to work collaboratively to achieve common goals such as reporting crime to the police and then to demand accountability and to restore the broken trust of people towards the police. Building hope as in the case where a country has lost hope in the justice system, can be achieved through strengthening relationships among role players and stakeholders. It is very important to build on what people have and know as opposed to deciding what is best for them and acting on their behalf unless instructed by them to do so. To initiate, nurture and foster such relationships requires an understanding and will from those in power to specifically reach out to marginalised and vulnerable people. People must be involved in their own empowerment processes, which calls for

relationships to exist between them and those who seek to empower them or who are supposed to empower them.

In the context of the third theme of the Global Agenda on promoting environmental and community sustainability, human relationships are core to success in dealing with environment issues such as pollution, access to water and sanitation and the impacts of global warming and climate change.

Policies and legislation play an important role in guiding actions that influence human relationships. Professionals have an important role in creating awareness among policy makers about social issues and to hold political office holders accountable to ensuring better service delivery. Students are also contributing their voices through conferences to ensuring that governments pay serious attention to tackling problems such as insurgency and kidnappings.

Qualitative research in particular gives a voice to the marginalised and action research is implemented with the view to transform the circumstances in which people find themselves. It inspires social action and support groups. When people come together as a group, respecting and valuing human relationships, there is a lot they can achieve. If there is no relationship, they will not be able to come together to form a group. To resolve problems, it is important that people form alliances or teams which is only possible by forming relationships with one another.

In summary, distrust and intolerance negatively impact on human relationships, which affect the ability to collaboratively solve problems. It also prevents a sense of unity in communities, which negatively affects the inclusion of citizens. On the other hand, human relationships can be strengthened by participation, building trust and respecting and valuing people.

Evidence that social work and social development interventions are promoting human relationships

In this section, responses indicate the qualitative or quantitative evidence in the region and countries that social work and social development interventions are promoting human relations that have an impact on

social, economic or political levels. Evidence is provided in different contexts and levels including local, national and international.

The response to this question ranges from not much, some, to significant evidence of the impact of human relations on various levels which is reflected in the kind of services delivered and the involvement of stakeholders, including donors. The implication is that the promotion of human relationships and its impact on social, economic and political level is in some instances directly visible, and in other instances implied and embedded in changes that are observed of project initiatives and outcomes. As much as best practices in social work and social development are under-recorded in relation to promoting human relationships, it is also evident from responses that participants are not always aware of best practice examples that have been documented. In some instances participants know about changes from observation, but these are not documented anywhere. An example of observation is noticing the change in people's orientation and world views in relation to cases of discrimination. Professionals are more open to acknowledge and discuss differences in a freer way.

Documented evidence can be found on websites, in newsletters, annual reports of government and civil society organisations, research studies, including masters' and doctoral studies, book and journal publications and conference papers. Although the theme of "promotion of human relationship" is not necessarily central to these documents, it is embedded in projects and activities in different forms and outcomes. In some countries the social work profession is very new or less recognised and social workers employed in local government and NGOs do their best to demonstrate the role of social work interventions in bringing positive change in the lives of the beneficiaries of their interventions and activities.

Organisations present statistics and description of the impact of services in reports that indicate the nature of the developmental services they deliver to individuals and communities, the number of service users that benefit from the services, the possible impact of the services and the areas for improvement. Furthermore, academic research papers are written by scholars or jointly with practitioners on the impact of social developmental interventions on social, economic or political levels.

Quantitative evidence was mentioned in terms of statistics that clients fill in after they have received services from a social worker which is consolidated monthly and sent to regional offices. Civil organisations provide walk-in services for the survivors of gender-based violence. These organisations also have to report the statistics of people who received counselling services and referrals on a monthly basis. Some organisations submit monitoring reports on a quarterly basis which could include some qualitative data to explain the statistics. However, it is worth noting that such management information systems usually report periodic statistics and quite often miss out qualitative information that would describe the subjective experiences of individuals and the quality of relationships.

The working environment provides a pertinent platform to observe interpersonal relations among all stakeholders involved in tasks to be accomplished in line ministries, departments and / or institutions.

A social worker⁸ in the employment of government provides an example of how she develops working relationships with various stakeholders to render prevention and early intervention services through awareness campaigns at schools and clinics in Mabopane⁹. Establishing good working relationships with schools, especially with school principals, led to identifying children in need of care and protection. It led to the planning of an anti-bullying awareness campaign which is intended to improve learner-teacher, learner-learner, and teacher-teacher relationships. Parents will be engaged through parental meetings and parenting skills programmes. Ultimately, improved learner-family relations are expected to impact the whole community where the children reside.

Social protection is a well-researched platform of evidence of improving the lives of children, older people and households in general. It transforms lives and communities in various areas, such as providing access to schools, health centres and water supply, promoting women's empowerment and building peoples' capacity to take decisions on matters that affect them. In

⁸ Nkamogeleng Kgomotso Ntlatleng is a social worker in the Department of Social Development: Mabopane Office.

⁹ Mabopane is a township situated in the Tswane Metropolitan Municipality, South Africa

countries where social protection is prioritised, social workers form the backbone of the national child protection system.

In Ghana, evidence is provided on how social workers practicing in public service under a decentralisation agenda manage their working relationships. About 80% of social workers in government service practice under the district assemblies which is under a separate ministry known as Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development; yet all social intervention programmes are under a different ministry known as Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection which is the implementation agency for all social protection interventions. Thus, social workers employed in local government receive directives from two ministries with regard to service delivery. With this arrangement, it takes good working relationships to minimise conflict and to ensure that beneficiaries to social protection interventions are not affected negatively by this divided accountability.

Practice research presents a pathway of evidence for improvement of human relationships. Since the beginning of 2020, high incidences of unnatural deaths of school learners especially in the Gauteng province in South Africa, were reported on national news networks. Each report was concluded with the statement that a team of social workers was sent to the schools to provide counselling to fellow learners. A postgraduate group research study that involved six masters' students conducted individual studies on the use of play materials to facilitate communication among hearing impaired adolescents who attended group work sessions. The feedback from the participants indicated that attending the group work sessions helped them to better understand fellow group members and feel included in social groups; thereby addressing social exclusion that is a common problem among hearing impaired youth.

In five other research projects, social workers worked with intercultural groups to build relationships among them. The findings showed that, once the intercultural group starts functioning, and a sense of community (belonging) is experienced, the groups are able to work together to identify solutions to problems and to plan interventions collectively.

In Tanzania, research in the social work and social development fields is very limited and even the exact number of social work practitioners in the

country is not well known. In the huge country of about 169 districts, only about 69 have social welfare officers which include social workers, sociologists, community development officers and psychologists. Some evidence presented by the participant included *Strengthening the Governance of Social Protection* in Tanzania by Oxford Policy Management commissioned by UNDP (2018); *Tanzania National Costed Plan of Action for Most Vulnerable Children* (2007-2010); the *National Costed Plan of Action for Most Vulnerable Children* (2007-2010); *Violence against children in Tanzania: findings from a National Survey, 2009* and *Tanzania child rights status report 2013* overseen by the Tanzania Child Rights Forum (TCRF). (2013). More evidence is presented in the Assessment report of the alternative care systems for children in Tanzania (SOS, 2014) published in Austria by SOC Children's Villages International and a doctoral thesis from the University of Botswana by Maku (2017) on Family Matters: Strengthening Alternative Care Systems for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It is evident from these studies that many human relationships have been promoted which in turn, impact on social development.

Examples of international networks and sponsors contributing to promoting human relationships in Nigeria include United Nations Agencies, e.g. UNICEF Nigeria, fund child protection programmes in the country and America International Health Alliance (AIHA) funded programmes to develop the social welfare sector through training para-professionals for the Social Work/ Auxiliary Social Work Programme to support social work services in the local community. On a national level, Twinning for Health Support Initiative- Nigeria (THSI-N) supports the development of benchmarking of the social work curriculum in Nigeria. Through field practicum, social work students are helping clients to live better lives, which include facilitating solutions for economic problems and sustainable livelihoods. In Nigeria, through fundraising activities of students during field practicum, many patients in the hospitals have been helped to pay their 'enormous hospital bills'. In this way human relationships were promoted. Many economically disadvantaged pupils during the field practicum were linked to resources where they got scholarships.

To make an impact on social, economic and political levels, the need was expressed for social work to shift to a developmental approach and include more prevention and early intervention strategies as opposed to an over-

emphasis on crisis intervention. Developing capacity while supporting people in ways to secure sustainable livelihoods is important in developmental societies who rely on supplement social assistance programmes. Facilitating social development projects requires using local knowledge, expertise and support. However, one participant indicated that there is some confusion on the role of social work in social development; finding it difficult to divorce social development from doing social work. It is vital that social workers understand their role in social development, promoting human relationships in order to have an impact on social, economic and political levels.

In many countries In Africa social work is not professionalised and thus not protected by law which influences the opportunities that trained social workers have to showcase contributions to promoting human relationships. This situation is slowly changing through research initiatives and training of social workers by Universities. East Africa has made huge strides in this regard through the Promotion of Professional Social Work towards Social Development and Poverty Reduction in East Africa PROSOWO (<http://www.appear.at/prosowo>) and the Centre for Research and Innovation in Social Work (CRISOWO) at the Makerere University in Uganda.

Policies to promote human relationships

The question on what national and organisation policies participants draw on to protect and promote human relationships included international, regional and country specific policies.

There are multiple laws and policies in which human relationship are central. However, they have to be implemented to ensure the protection of human relationships on the one hand, and on the other, to recognise and strengthen human relationships. Being available to draw from acts and policies is one thing, but it is another to use these to advocate for a more just society on social, economic and political levels.

International instruments are drawn from such as the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The African Union's African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want are some regional documents to draw from.

On a national level, various country specific documents are used to protect, recognise and strengthen human relationships. These include:

- Country constitutions and in particular, the Bill of Human Rights if it exists
- National Development Plans

A detailed list of country-specific acts and policies is too extensive to include in this report. Below is a summary of target groups and specialised areas which legislation and policies cover in participating countries that could be drawn upon in protecting and promoting human relationships:

- Children
- People with disability
- Older persons
- Drugs and substance use disorders
- Families
- Youth
- Human trafficking
- Sexual offences and related matters
- Torture of persons
- Social assistance
- Domestic violence
- Women and gender
- HIV & Aids
- Law of Marriage
- Health
- Education and Training
- Social development
- Social welfare policy
- National research and development
- Basic conditions of employment
- Organisation and workplace
- Labour relations

- National language policy
- Traditional customs
- Local government

In addition, frameworks for social welfare service delivery and government directives such as the *Batho Pele* (meaning People First) in South Africa, and manuals and procedures in organisations and international bodies such as IASSW and IFSW are utilised.

To ensure that legislation and policies are used to promote human relationships, it is important to keep duty bearers accountable for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This includes transparency on the real beneficiaries of the policies and inclusion of contextual relevant information which shape policy development and responses.

Best practice and case examples

In this section, three examples are presented, showing the importance of relationships in Sierra Leone between a social worker and a volunteer, in South Africa between a social work educator and services user, and finally between academics and researchers across countries in the African region.

Relationship between social worker and volunteer

Sierra Leone offers an example of the dynamics of a relationship between a professional and service user. It started with the voluntary handling of the case of a highly traumatised war victim who had been disabled by a land mine. Publishing her story attracted huge global attention. She became an expert through her experiences with social services and helped in facilitating the establishment of a national association and now runs a charity known globally as the Disability Empowerment Movement Sierra Leone¹⁰. The movement brings social development projects to the most remote and needy communities of Sierra Leone. She travels around the globe, raising funds, building human relationships and fostering development. Her initiative connected the World Bank, other institutions and businesses and has become life changing as a result of the World Bank contracting her to be the mouth piece for people who with disabilities.

¹⁰ DEMSL was started in February 2019. <https://demsl.org/about-us>

Relationship between social work educator and service user

Sewpaul and Ndlovu (2020:108) reflect on their voluntary work and experiences as university professor and service user/giver which they have engaged in since 22 years ago. It is a powerful account of how small groups in the field of HIV and Aids support the transition of adversity to hope, activism and emancipatory development. Presenting the voice of Princess Nkosi Ndlovu and Vishanthie Sewpaul respectively, a professional relationship unfolds which demonstrates the role of trust and relationships in emancipatory social work. By tuning into the life worlds of Princess Nkosi Ndlovu, she was emancipated to transition from a service user to a service provider.

Professional relationships among academics and researchers

The Africa Network of Care-leaving Researchers (ANCR, www.careleaving.com) was founded in 2016 by Prof Adrian van Breda (University of Johannesburg) and Dr Frimpong-Manso (University of Ghana) who are also the leaders of the group. ANCR is a collective of African scholars doing research on young people leaving residential, foster and kinship care when they reach adulthood. Before the establishment of ANCR there were only a handful of individuals researching in this area and had no contact with each other. They are now a close international collective of people, building relationships with each other as scholars in this field.

Main social problems and their effect on human relationships

Poverty is felt in higher education, through the lack of funding for research, lack of access to academic resources (particularly literature), lack of support for development of research competencies and lack of opportunity to meet other scholars in specialised research fields. Furthermore, the inadequate IT infrastructure also makes communication, including platforms such as Skype and Zoom a challenge for building of relationships between African academics. The lack of funds for research leads to isolation of researchers from each other, even when working in the same area.

Key role players

Role players are scholars at African universities. ANCR currently has about 35 researchers in 13 African countries, in addition to 'friends of ANCR' in

various countries in the Global North, elsewhere in the Global South (e.g., India) and non-researchers in Africa (e.g. practitioners and policy makers).

The role of human relationships in dealing with problems

As the group has been able to build their relationships with each other as scholars with a common interest, they have found that their interest in the topic has increased, their actual research on the topic has strengthened, they have become more confident as researchers and writers, their research writing and publications have increased and are now reaching a global audience, and they are developing an African agenda for care-leaving scholarship that is collective and coordinated.

Evidence that social work and social development interventions are promoting human relationships

ANCR has a number of events or moments that both constitute their work (including building relationships) and provide evidence of growing human relationships through these activities. The first was a meeting of South African researchers (with Dr Frimpong-Manso) in 2016, where they met for the first time as researchers in this field. In January 2019, ANCR hosted the first workshop of African scholars, including most of the members of ANCR, together with some colleagues from the Global North. This was a three-day workshop to build capacity, build networks and generate an African agenda for care-leaving research. It was followed by the First Africa Care-leaving Conference, with 200 delegates (mostly practitioners) in Gauteng, South Africa. In February 2020, ANCR published a themed issue of the American journal 'Emerging Adulthood' on care-leaving research in Africa, with 10 papers, many authored by first-time authors and some presenting the first 'international' (global North) publication from their country. In 2019-2020, the group conducted the first multi-country study on care-leaving in Africa. The study was a feasibility study of small scale, with a focus on methodologies. In March 2020, they launched the study with SOS Children's Villages international staff (from Ethiopia and England), members of the AU's secretariat on African Charter for the Rights and Well-being of the Child, ASSWA's President, and various other NGOs and policy groups, in Nairobi, Kenya.

Policies to promote human relationships

In the Africa region, ANCR draws particularly on the African Union Charter for the Rights and Well-being of the Child and the UN CRC for their research. ASSWA has played an important role in providing a platform to invite people to join ANCR, enabling increased relationship building between social work scholars in Africa.

Conclusion

This report reflects how educators, practitioners, researchers, policy makers, advocacy groups and students responded on human relationships in social work and social development. Their responses indicated that human relationships manifest in different kinds, levels and contexts. Supporting and constructive relationships are embedded in trust and respect and contribute collective efforts in dealing with problems while allowing people to thrive. Social, economic and political forces contribute to destructive and dysfunctional relationships rooted in mistrust and disrespect. Social work and social development interventions and activities in the Africa region recognise the importance of relationships and adopted strategies to strengthen relationships with stakeholders on various levels. It is particularly the relationship with service users that should be prioritised by means of emancipating social work to enable service users to benefit from a different structure of human relationships that are liberating. Human relationships are strengthened on all levels when people feel they have been heard; their dignity is respected; that they are trusted and in turn, can trust others in a transparent and constructive relationship.

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Chapter 3

Asia Pacific

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¹¹ International Federation of Social Workers Asia Pacific Region

¹² Asia Pacific Association of Social Work Educators

Introduction

This is the 2020 Asia Pacific Regional Report on the fourth pillar of the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* focusing on ‘Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships’. The report was edited by Global Agenda Regional Coordinators representing the Asia Pacific Association for Social Work Education (APASWE) and the International Federation of Social Workers Asia Pacific Region (IFSW-AP). It is based on a regional workshop at the APASWE and IFSW-AP joint regional conference and additional written materials received by the coordinators after the conference.

The 2019 Asia Pacific Regional Global Agenda Workshop on ‘Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships’ was organized by APASWE and IFSW-AP on September 19, 2019. It was part of the 2019 Asia Pacific Social Work Conference (APSWC2019) on ‘Social Work Partnerships towards an Equal Society: Asia Pacific Perspective’ in Bengaluru, India. The conference was hosted by APASWE and IFSW-AP, and organized by the Department of Sociology and Social Work of CHRIST (Deemed to be University), the India Network of Professional Social Workers’ Associations (INPSWA) and the Department of Psychiatric Social Work of the National Institute of Mental Health And Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) at the NIMHANS Convention Center between September 18 and 20, 2020 with pre-conference programs also taking place on September 17 at CHRIST (Deemed to be University). National reports were presented at the workshop from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, China, Hong Kong (China), India, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka. Additional written reports were submitted from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, China, Hong Kong (China), India, Japan, Macau (China), Malaysia, Palestine, Singapore, and South Korea.

Being geographically the largest and culturally possibly the most diverse region, national reports on the Global Agenda touch on many themes related to ‘Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships’. What follows is a summary of national reports concluded by a discussion of common themes. Also, the report is supplemented by an Appendix on the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the social work response in the region.

National reports

This section provides a summary of national Global Agenda reports from the Asia Pacific Region on 'Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships'. It is organized in alphabetic order by country. Many countries utilized the global campaign of World Social Work Day (WSWD).

Aotearoa New Zealand

Human interactions are part of what social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand do. They are mindful that human relationships are located in all aspects of the social work process. Acknowledging the importance of human relationships through the strengthening of the persons own support relationships is a recognized indicator of improved wellbeing.

At the national and international levels, the importance of human relationships provides the focus of raising awareness and lobbying governments about social issues, human rights or social justice matters. Aotearoa New Zealand has witnessed quality relationships and respectful interactions being utilized at the highest level when the prime minister led the negotiations to address the posting of inappropriate recordings on social media. This resulted in an international agreement with the social media giants (Facebook and Google) that unacceptable recordings would not be screened, forwarded or reposted. The country's relationships with other heads of state and having a united vision assisted securing that outcome.

Social workers from Aotearoa New Zealand ask readers of this report to remember and pay tribute to all those who have been killed and injured following the Christchurch terrorist attacks in March, 2019. The whole country came together and united in ways never imagined possible previously. Love and support for those affected resulted in many vigils, floral tributes, marches, memorial services and multiple offers of financial, practical and psychological help. Both the indigenous Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association (TWASW) and the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) acknowledge the work of social workers in the immediate aftermath and ongoing recovery work. Against a backdrop of a heightened state of fear with alerts about possible further attacks, social work teams on the ground and at the hospital worked tirelessly in the face of overwhelming levels of emotional distress and unrelenting demands to support the families and friends of the injured and

unknown numbers of deceased. This solidarity and unity in response to the terrorist attack brings to life the fourth pillar of the Global Agenda and provides hope for a better future together.

The importance of human connections and making a positive contribution was present at the Indigenous Voices of Social Work Conference held in Taiwan in August, 2019 too where Aotearoa New Zealand was also represented. Themes encompassed the sustaining of indigenous knowledge and skills, recognizing the importance of indigenous ways of knowing and doing, and respecting and appreciating those unique differences. The social work profession in Aotearoa New Zealand is proactive and strives to work positively and enhance skills and knowledge to work effectively with indigenous people and other cultural groups living in the country and contributing to a just and peaceful society.

Australia

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is the key professional body in the country. There are approximately 32,000 social workers in Australia working across a diverse range of fields and united in their commitment to social justice and human rights in accordance with the AASW's Code of Ethics. Regarding the fourth Global Agenda pillar of promoting the importance of human relationships, AASW has been engaged in the following activities.

AASW conducts policy and advocacy work for policies to be more inclusive and socially just, while challenging inequality and oppression. In the past year, the association has been part of over 20 government inquiries, making submissions and in several giving expert witness statements. AASW also frequently attends public protests and rallies to advocate on a wide range of issues. Furthermore, AASW is currently taking part in two major Royal Commissions on mental health and aged care reviewing how systems fail individuals, groups and communities. AASW is working with members and developing submissions that call on major reform towards a system that is person-centered, rights-based, multifaceted and systemic in its approach to service delivery.

In 2019, AASW has continued to progress its aims of building meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and stakeholders, and working together for a more just Australia. This included

greater collaboration with branches and continued focus on engagement with key stakeholder groups. The association has progressed in establishing a relationship with these, and continues to improve and refine internal processes. Progress is evidenced by improved communication and coordination of actions between AASW's national office and branches resulting in numerous National Reconciliation Week and National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee celebrations. AASW also continued to advocate on key indigenous issues, especially during the recent federal election calling on all parties to commit to reconciliation through a greater emphasis on self-determination, closing the gap and recognition of children's right to culture.

Currently, there are 30 higher education providers in Australia that offer AASW accredited programs. The association will launch a revised version of its education and accreditation standards to address significant issues in light of systemic and emerging issues. Similarly, the ten-year regular revision of the ASSW Code of Ethics is in progress. Since social work is not a registered profession in Australia, it is an issue that AASW has campaigned for over a long period. The state of South Australia is now the first jurisdiction in the country to begin legislating to make registration a reality. This is a direct result of years of focused and targeted AASW advocacy.

China

By the end of 2018, there were more than 1.24 million social workers, more than 800 social work training institutes and over 800 social work organizations in China. Social workers play a significant role in social construction, such as anti-poverty, community building, youth, elderly and rural services and so on. Major achievements are made in the fields of medicine, drug control and anti-domestic violence.

The China Association of Social Workers (CASW), as a national social sector organization for social workers in China, is committed to promoting the development and professionalization of social work, as well as international exchanges in social work. In order to improve social work development in the community, "the Better Community Project" was launched, riding on community platform with social workers as the medium and introducing partners into the development of the community. Social workers take a proactive role in fighting poverty, supporting

rejuvenation of villages, serving underprivileged people, and coordinating social governance.

Initiatives taken by CASW during the Social Work Publicity Week in 2019 includes: launching the “I love social workers, I speak for social workers” campaign, releasing the “China Social Work Development Report 2018”, donating funds to social organizations to support their work in fighting poverty and carrying out rehabilitation work in deprived areas, engaging all sectors in the community to carry out the “Tell the story of social workers” for promoting social work to the public.

Currently, CASW has been actively engaged in the fight against COVID-19. Shortly after when the outbreak of the epidemic occurred in China, CASW started a series of actions, such as releasing the “National Social Workers Proposal” to call on social workers for personal protection and publishing the “Social Worker Support Manual” which laid the basic principles and methods for social workers in preventing and controlling the virus during the epidemic. Online psychological support and training were provided to social workers. Social workers are mainly engaged with online psychological counselling and offline community screening, as well as education for the public.

One case is demonstrated by the Wuhan Association of Social Workers (WASW) as they recruited social workers and volunteers to provide psychological counselling and relief services to the community when Wuhan was seriously affected by the epidemic and residents were put in quarantine. Additionally, WASW partnered with the local government to provide “home from home” services for screening and early intervention.

Hong Kong, China

Hong Kong experienced an extremely challenging year in 2019 since June 9, aroused by the discontent with the Extradition Bill introduced by the government. Continuous protests and demonstrations took place. The issue swiftly escalated to widespread anti-government sentiment. Confrontations between the police and protesters leading to increasing force, violence and massive arrests. Social workers faced the trauma and threat on human rights and social justice in the midst of the political crisis. Human relationships broke particularly between family members, friends and colleagues; society divided; mental health problems prevailed in the

community. Lessons learnt from the social movement called for social workers' critical review and reflect on social work's core values and principles when dealing with the complications and people affected by the situation.

The Hong Kong Social Workers Association (HKSWA) conducted workshops for social workers on skills at frontline in face with crisis and conflict, organized sharing platforms to support social workers and supervisors, facilitated reflection for social workers to re-examine values and ethics in the midst of confrontation and oppression. Regarding the role of advocacy, HKSWA put up statements and submitted position papers independently or jointly with other social work counterparts to the government, defending human rights, supporting the oppressed, confirming social workers' role and function during and after crisis.

In addition, Hong Kong suffers seriously from the COVID-19 epidemic since late January, 2020. The threat of spread of the virus turns people into panic, anxiety and fear in every aspect of living. The epidemic adds further hardship on people's livelihood, especially the deprived, the sick and the underprivileged groups. Apart from the essential services, many social programs and services are suspended. Social workers meet great challenge on the conventional service delivery modes and skills when people are required social distancing and staying home. The social work profession calls for new means of communication, mobilizing support to disadvantaged people from neighbors and the community, promoting sharing and giving from the "haves" to the "have-nots", helping people in despair with power for change, creating new paradigms for human relationships. Using the internet for individual and group counselling, teaching and learning, meetings and conferencing, has become predominant in social work practice. HKSWA organized a series of training aiming to equip social workers' digital competence for delivering casework and groupwork through the internet and various social media.

Hong Kong will not be the same after one year's upheaval. Social workers have to rethink their values, ethics and practice in preparing for a whole new world: uphold human rights and social justice, protect the oppressed, seek peace and reconciliation, support and speak for the needy, maintain faith for love and hope, and restate the importance of human relationships.

India

The India Network of Professional Social Workers Associations (INPSWA) and its member associations have been organizing many programs and activities on a regular basis. For example, INPSWA co-organized the 25th Asia Pacific Joint Regional Social Work Conference of APASWE and IFSW-AP in September, 2019 in Bengaluru. This was the first such conference to be organized in India and was attended by 531 delegates including 165 international delegates from 31 other countries.

The Indian Society of Professional Social Work (ISPSW) held its 37th Annual National Conference and the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Department of Psychiatric Social Work at NIMHANS in January, 2019. The theme was 'Social Work and Wellbeing: Practice and Strategies' and it was attended by 532 professionals. During the inauguration of the conference, India Post released a special postal cover recognizing and appreciating the event. On WSWD2019, quiz and debate competitions were held and invited dignitaries highlighted the importance of 'Promoting the Importance of Human Relationships' lauding the profession and its recognition by communities globally.

The Karnataka Association of Professional Social Worker (KAPSW) collaborated with the National Institute of Personnel Management's local chapter and Bengaluru Central University for WSWD2019 to organize an event with a quiz competition for students, an exhibition by NGOs, a panel discussion and student presentations on the theme, and a student talent show (street theatre, poster display and singing).

The National Association of Professional Social Workers in India (NAPSWI) co-hosted the 6th Indian Social Work Congress with the University of Delhi in November, 2018 in New Delhi on 'Human Development and Social Inclusion: Imperatives for Social Work Education and Practice'. Also, in association with the University of Lucknow, NAPSWI organized the 7th Indian Social Work Congress in Lucknow in October, 2019 on 'Social Care and Social Wellbeing: Challenges and Opportunities for Social Workers'.

The Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers (KAPS) engaged in the following activities in its district chapters. With regard to WSWD2019, an online directory of professional social workers in Kerala was released, people who served the community during the 2018 Kerala floods were

honored, and environmental protection programs were organized including the clean-up project of a pond. For WSWD2020, an event was held with a public meeting, an interactive session and a street march among other programs.



Iran

Social work in Iran has a long history with more than 10,000 social workers. It is the only country that has a “Social Work Street” and a nationwide social emergency service that anybody facing social issues can call and have a social worker dispatched with a social work ambulance to help. However, for a country with more than 80 million people, social work still needs to develop more. The Iran Association of Social Workers (IASW) is working hard to develop the profession nationally.

Specifically, to promote the importance of human relationships, IASW engaged in the following activities during the past year.

- Translating the WSWD2019 poster to Farsi, printing and publishing it widely to different organizations, as well as celebrating WSWD2019.
- Giving interviews on national and regional television as well as radio channels, and informing people through online media.
- Sending out SMSs via the IASW database.
- Hosting an international conference with participation from 10 countries with the presence of the IASSW President and more than 1,600 delegates. During the event, a video message by the IFSW

Secretary General was played and messages from the IFSW-AP Regional President and the ICSW President were read on the stage and distributed to the delegates and in the media.

- Holding regional conferences in more than 20 regions of Iran to promote the importance of human relationship all over the country.
- Organizing a commemoration event with high level government officials and major stakeholders in social health in order to promote human relationships.
- Coordinating conferences on the topic of promoting the importance of human relationships in other organizations including ministries and other organizations.
- Publishing a book for new generation social workers on the lived experience of social work pioneers.
- Concluding an agreement with the country's largest newspaper for a one-year column by association members on the importance of human relationships.
- Opening a workshop and meeting on the ecological development of social work with the participation of more than 20 regional managers of IASW from all over the country.



IASW has promoted the fourth Global Agenda pillar through additional conferences, events, meetings, discussions, and a strong presence in various Iranian media. Activities were not confined to Tehran, but were carried out in all regions with an IASW office.

Japan

Approximately 98% of social workers in Japan are employed in services under social welfare legislation. Since 2000, there has been a noticeable progression towards a pluralistic and market-based principles approach related to service providers. Recent policies are based on a trend toward constraining welfare benefits as a result of neo-liberalism. Below is a description of specific activities related to the fourth pillar of the Global Agenda focusing on practices by a non-profit organization (NPO) called Community Ties that are related to promoting the importance of human relationships.

The agency was established in 2006 and mainly provides services under the long-term care insurance scheme. Organizational objectives include “building local communities where the dignity of all people can be protected” by promoting community development in 13 facilities in Hiroshima Prefecture. In Japanese society, there is a strong sense of ingroup solidarity and trust, but these are much weaker in outgroup context. Particularly, segregation is strong between groups such as disabled people and those who are physically fit, rich and poor people, and elderly and younger generations. This is due to the lack of and/or failure of intergroup encounters. For example, the level of participation in mainstream society for people with disabilities is low in all age groups, since specialized services begin in infancy and continue throughout the lifetime. Scarce opportunities for encountering certain groups in society result in a sense of disregard, lack of understanding, indifference, anxiety, fear, and exclusion.



Therefore, Community Ties provides opportunities for daily and continuous interaction between service users and local residents. In particular, the NPO has increased opportunities for contact with local residents by building on the strength of service users. Examples of such opportunities include selling and providing meals and crafts made by service users to local residents and service users delivering greetings at events. These activities aim to eliminate prejudices. Social workers are required to control the opportunities for such encounters in line with the values of social justice and human rights, and take responsibility for the results.

Such structural transformation of human relationships is the first step towards social change. Structural transformation of human relationships leads to transformation of individual identity, then to communal and organizational change, and finally to social change. In short, problem solving through human relationships has the potential to bring about social change.



Macau, China

The Macau Social Workers Association (MSWA) celebrated its 35th Anniversary in 2019. It also marked a significant development of the profession when the law regulating social workers was enacted on April 1 in 2019 and will be in effect on April 2, 2020. It took 10 years' time to walk through the whole journey. Apart from recognizing the professional status of social workers, MSWA also aims to enhance the supervision skills of supervisors for nurturing social workers and particularly students to prepare them to enter into their social work career.

The legislation is an important milestone for social work development in Macau. As of April 2, 2020, social workers are required to register in addition to being licensed when they practice as social workers. If they do not register within three years, they need to take exams in order to be qualified for registration. Even though the law is passed, there are some implementation issues e.g. social workers in civil service will register but are exempted from licensing, registration applies to Macau residents and therefore non-Macau residents cannot register and can only practice as consultants.

The President of MASW takes part in the Professional Council of Social Workers led by the Government of the Macau Special Administrative Region. The role of the council is to enable the exchange of ideas and take reference to counterpart organizations around the world. Social workers will share their experience in serving migrant workers, underprivileged people and the social issues they are facing every day, and they will learn from around the world.

Malaysia

The main focus of the Malaysian Association of Social Work (MASW) for the past two years has been on the finalizing of the Social Work Profession Bill and related regulations after the new coalition government reactivated the efforts in enacting the bill in 2018 with the aim to table the bill to the parliament in 2020. The Special Project Team, consisting of senior social workers from the Department of Social Welfare and key members from MASW, has engaged with various state authorities and stakeholders in explaining the need and importance of legislating the social work profession.

The last pillar of the Global Agenda, which is also the theme for World Social Work Day for 2019-2020, 'Promoting the Importance of Human Relationships' has been used extensively during the celebration of WSWD by MASW, universities, and the related government agencies especially the Department of Social Welfare and the medical social work department of the Ministry of Health. Promoting the professionalization and professionalism of social work remains the key activity for MASW to continue raising the professional standing of social work in the country.

On the other hand, the government, through the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, has put greater attention to child care, family-based care, violence against children and women, and through the Ministry of Education, on zero-reject policy to ensure equal access to education for children and people with disabilities. In this regard, MASW has undertaken the role of project manager in planning and running of a training program in one state for home-based child care workers in 2019 and 2020.

The Department of Social Welfare, with assistance from UNICEF Malaysia, has started two pilot projects, one on family-based care and one on probation services. Executive members of MASW were either engaged to conduct training or in discussion on the implementation of these two projects. MASW is also in collaboration with the Malaysian Council on Welfare and Community Development and Selangor Social Welfare to provide training for workers in non-governmental children residential facilities on child rights policy and family-based care to enhance the relationship of children and their families while being placed under care at residential homes.

In addition, the Ministry of Health has mooted the idea on decriminalization of drug usage. Executive members of MASW have participated in two of the public consultations on the matter, and will closely monitor the development as there are still confusion and misunderstanding among the general public to differentiate between decriminalization and legalization of drug use.

In short, there are many positive developments from the government on promoting a more responsive and humane approach in social services since 2018. Political turmoil, however, has resulted in changes of

government in end of February, 2020. This change of government, together with the threats of the COVID-19 pandemic locally and globally, has put uncertainty on government priorities in the enactment of the Social Work Profession Bill, as well as social welfare policy directions of the previous government. Nevertheless, MASW will continue to take leading role in engaging the government and other stakeholders in promoting more competent social work practice and better social services in the country.

Palestine

Palestine is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic like the rest of the world. The country is encountering the health situation while the government faces challenges in preventing the spread of the virus. Measures such as closing schools and restricting work at workplaces lead to psychological suffering for people. The closure of occupation and expulsion of Palestinian workers in some cities further trigger racism and unfairness on people. The society and Palestinian children are driven to a state of terror.

The Palestinian government took preventive measures from March 6, 2020, the second day of the outbreak, including staying-home policy, closing cities and restricting people's movement between cities and villages. In Gaza, a 14-day quarantine was implemented on people from Egypt and workers within. Emergency committees formed and volunteers mobilized were able to enforce restriction measures and coordinate efforts between different government departments such as security services and the Ministry of Health in order to help people during the pandemic.

Social workers play a role in parallel with emergency committees with regard to:

- Supporting local communities and concerned people by raising people's awareness of the virus;
- Raising awareness in the community of the importance of strengthening family relations, especially with children;
- Supporting security and medical services by communicating with them through field visits;

- Establishing a free hotline for people to refer cases to psychological support teams in different cities;
- Providing chronic medicine and food aid to families in need.

Social workers received and managed hundreds of calls from Palestinian families. In addition, there is a daily broadcast radio program throughout Palestine by a group of social workers who established this platform to discuss many topics related to the virus. Furthermore, small initiatives take place by people distributing food and hygiene items to people who most need them. Social workers are working in government, international and private institutions, and as volunteers in emergency committees to continue helping poor families and people during quarantine.

Singapore

The COVID-19 pandemic has caught the world by a mighty storm and as of April 18, 2020, the number of confirmed infections worldwide is more than 2 million with nearly 150,000 deaths in more than 200 countries, while Singapore has nearly 6,000 confirmed cases and 11 fatalities. With the healthcare system under strain worldwide, many countries implement lockdowns to contain the transmission – shutting borders, closing schools and business, quarantining millions, and this is taking a toll on economies and lives.

Given the scale at which COVID-19 is impacting individuals, families, corporations and societies, the government has been quick to respond and the scale of welfarism and income transfers is unprecedented. Comprehensive fiscal rescue packages amounting to US\$42 billion (12 per cent of GDP) are rolled out to help workers, families and businesses.

A multi-sectorial approach involving government bodies from public housing, health, military, police; employers from the private sector as well as community partners is used to address the mental health and religious concerns of migrant workers. For example, apart from addressing the COVID-19 infection, through this collaboration, the workers are guaranteed their salaries to remit home. Also, they can continue to exercise their faith during the Muslim Ramadan period and access hotline services. They have been assured that they will receive care like all Singaporeans.

With regard to the community and the social work profession, donations in cash and in kinds from individuals and corporations continue to flow in. There is a surge of volunteer activities to raise funds, packing and distribution of masks, sanitizers and food to migrant workers, low income families, elderly and disabled people. Social entrepreneurs develop communication materials and tools to communicate with dialect speaking elderly people and migrant workers from various countries. Social workers are using on-line and video conferencing to work from home and provide services to those in need. Social workers are also on the streets with safe distancing ambassadors to help assure and encourage people, especially seniors, to stay at home. Hospital social workers are continuing their work to ensure safe discharge and the coordination of safe continuity of care in the community; support to COVID-19 patients and their families; peer support to fellow health care workers and as volunteers for the 24/7 national mental health hotline. Many of the legislations arising from COVID-19 to contain transmission create several challenging issues for patients and hospital social workers help them to navigate this stormy climate. Some social workers and their support staff are redeployed to help augment screening teams in hospitals.

South Korea

The Korea Association of Social Workers (KASW) took an active role to make proposals on the social welfare budget in solving the budget crisis of the local children's centers in fall 2018. Around 6,000 social workers working in child care united to protest against the unreasonable budgeting through street demonstrations in January, 2019. KASW worked together with the national association and cooperated with political parties as well as government offices to realize a single wage system for child welfare employees. The president of KASW stressed the value of labor guaranteed by the constitution, the value of identity security at the level of government employees according to the Act on the Improvement of Treatment and Status of Social Workers and the value of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the UN. The realization of a national single wage system for child welfare employees aims to improve the treatment of social workers in the child care field which will help reducing staff turnover and retaining the expertise of employees. As a future direction, KASW collaborated with three other organizations for a proposal with a joint goal for creating a highly-recognized child welfare job type by securing the budget for social workers' labor cost as well as the related expenses, so

that it will improve professionalism in child welfare. Also, by introducing more standardized services, it will ultimately improve children's welfare services.

Another campaign set off is to build a "welfare state" by promoting active policy through solidarity among social welfare organizations. KASW joined 26 social welfare organizations to hold the first 'Social Welfare Policy Convention' in attempt to demand for four policies for Korea to become a welfare state: i) securing the average social welfare budget of OECD nations; ii) improving the working environment for social workers; iii) realizing the salary level of social workers equivalent to social work civil servants; iv) cooperation between civil services and the government. The president of KASW pledged to take further steps for participating in social issues and constructing solidarity among social workers in the country for achieving the four major policy agendas and social welfare pledges in the coming future. Thus, it is essential to call for active participation and solidarity activities by social workers. Korean social workers have formed a stronger and united voice in the country with a mission to protect welfare rights based on an extensive effort to construct a welfare state for the next generation.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is an island country with a population of over 20 million people. Social work education and practice started in 1952 with the establishment of the Ceylon Institute of Social Work. It conducted a short-term training that gradually developed into a one-year certificate, a two-year Diploma in Social Work, and a four-year Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program for training generalist social workers. The school was upgraded and renamed as the National Institute of Social Development (NISD) in 1992. Currently, the Sri Lanka School of Social Work, a division of NISD, is the sole provider of professional social work education in the country. A Master of Social Work (MSW) program was introduced in 2008 with the additional purpose to train managerially competent practitioners. Additionally, the University of Peradeniya launched a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Social Work program in 2019.

At present, there are approximately 2,000 social workers in the country trained by NISD. However, there is no system of registration and licensing for social work to identify social workers as professionals. The Sri Lanka

Association of Professional Social Workers (SLAPSW) is proposing legislation to establish a regulatory body for professional social workers.

To promote the fourth pillar of the Global Agenda, WSWD2019 celebrations highlighted the theme of promoting the importance of human relationships. Just as on a worldwide scale, it is the key day in the year that Sri Lankan social workers celebrate the achievements of the profession and take the theme's message into their communities, workplaces and to their governments to raise awareness of the social work contributions and need for further action.

For example, NISD commemorated WSWD2019 on March 18, 2019. A "Celebration Walk" was organized with the participation of social work students, practitioners and professional social workers engaged in various fields. The walk commenced in the morning at a public park and was followed by a scholarly discussion and a press conference at the Sri Lanka Foundation. The subjects of presentations and discussions included five successful social work interventions and one research study.

Altogether more than 500 social work practitioners, scholars, students and social work stakeholders participated in the event and it was telecasted in mainstream television and social media networks throughout Sri Lanka. Since social work as a profession suffers a lack of national recognition, the walk contributed to promoting social work to the Sri Lankan general public. It raised awareness to the need for professionalizing social work practice including the legal recognition of the social work profession.

Conclusion

To conclude the Asia Pacific Regional Report, a discussion of common themes is provided in this section.

Common themes related to the fourth pillar that can be identified in the Asia Pacific Region are the following:

- Crisis
- Indigenous inclusion
- Social integration and community development

- Legislation for social workers and promoting public recognition
- Advocacy for and participation in social welfare policies

First, crises in the form of some sort of social upheaval that connects people were observed in Aotearoa New Zealand and Hong Kong (China). Aotearoa New Zealand faced the Christchurch terrorist attacks and social workers fulfilled roles in both immediate response and long-term recovery by collaborating with multi-level stakeholders. Meanwhile, Hong Kong (China) experienced social unrest and social workers engaged in conflict management as well as advocacy through community platforms.

Also, indigenous inclusion and nurturing relationships with indigenous people are important and continuous themes in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. In both countries, indigenous and non-indigenous social workers are working together with each other and indigenous communities towards the realization of indigenous justice in society.

Next, social integration and community development aiming to reduce isolation and enhance cohesion are focal issues in China and Japan. Chinese social workers are engaged in grassroots community practice on all levels and social workers in Japan are aiming for macro-level social change through the structural formation of human relationships on micro- and mezzo-levels.

Additionally, legislation for social workers and promoting public recognition for the profession are part of overall long-term efforts, namely in Australia, China, India, Iran, Macau (China), Malaysia, and Sri Lanka. Social workers in Australia, Macau (China) and Malaysia worked together with public actors and showed significant progress with regard to legislation to recognize and regulate the profession. Also, Chinese, Indian, Iranian and Sri Lankan social workers provided examples of utilizing WSWD and other opportunities to reach out to society and raise awareness of the profession as well as its social standing.

Finally, active advocacy for and participation in social welfare policies in a wide range of areas appears to be an overarching theme in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong (China), India, Japan, Malaysia, and South Korea.

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APPENDIX: Fighting the COVID-19 pandemic

The regional report is accompanied by a summary of available online information about the COVID-19 pandemic in the Asia Pacific Region and the fight against it by social workers.

Below is a list of resources on the state of and social work involvement with the COVID-19 pandemic in the Asia Pacific Region available online as of April, 2020.

- IASSW News

1. February 11, 2020 *IASSW Stands with Social Workers in China*

<https://www.iassw-aiets.org/featured/4468-iassw-stands-with-social-workers-in-china/>

2. March 31, 2020 *Interdisciplinary Remote Networking: Social Work Involvement in the COVID-19 Outbreak Aid in China*

<https://www.iassw-aiets.org/covid-19/4704-interdisciplinary-remote-networking-social-work-involvement-in-the-covid-19-outbreak-aid-in-china/>

3. March 31, 2020 *School of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Nanjing University Launched International Renowned Universities Public Courses*

<https://www.iassw-aiets.org/covid-19/4707-school-of-social-and-behavioral-sciences-at-nanjing-university-launched-international-renowned-universities-public-courses/>

4. March 31, 2020 *Social Workers' "Joint Action of Three-Three for Community-Based Pandemic Prevention and Control" in Hubei*

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Chapter 4

Europe

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Introduction

This is the European contribution to the fourth phase of the Global Agenda Observatory, which was established by IASSW, ICSW and IFSW (IASSW, ICSW, IFSW, 2012). This European chapter is the joint production of the European Observatory of the Global Agenda on Social Work and Social Development which comprises: EASSW (European Association of Schools of Social Work), ICSW (International Council of Social Welfare) European Region and IFSW Europe e.V (International Federation of Social Workers, European Region). The aim of the European Observatory of the Global Agenda on Social Work and Social Development is to monitor, report and disseminate the contributions of social work and social development to building a ‘society for all’ – a society that is fair and just and in which every individual has an active role.

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development is intended to be used as a policy and practice guidance tool to steer social work and social development professions towards making significant contributions to the policy and decision-making processes of governments and international bodies. The report includes European practical examples that demonstrate social work’s contribution to promoting the importance of human relationships. The examples have been provided by practitioners, educators, policy makers and researchers from social work organisations and social development institutions in Europe (Sanches and Meinema, 2018).

This report is the outcome of a joint effort. Hakan Acar and Wendy Coxshall (both representing IFSW Europe) have written the theoretical framework, discussion and conclusion of this chapter. They also analysed the data collected by IFSW Europe. Aila-Leena Matthies (representing EASSW) and Bodil Eriksson (representing ICSW) have analysed the data collected by their respective institutions. Madalina Manea (Honorary Secretary to IFSW Europe) and Sandra Mendes (Honorary Secretary to EASSW) have coordinated the data collection on behalf of their institutions.

Social Welfare and Social Work in Europe: Understanding Current Trends and Challenges

The global definition of social work states that the profession is “a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.” (IFSW, 2014). Social work “involves relationships with individuals, between individuals, with individuals in groups, with individuals and organisations, and between organisations” (Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto, 2008; Kadushin, 1972; Perlman, 1979; Petr, 1983; Richmond, 1899; Wilson et al., 2011; cited in O’Leary et al., 2013: 136). It also recognises “the ontological need for relationships” and aims to “respond to the breakdowns of personal and societal relationships” (O’Leary et al., 2013: 137). However, this is not an easy task to accomplish as the mission and roles of social work education and the profession change in parallel with the developments in the world. “Schools of social work, today, reflect the prevailing political, cultural and intellectual climate” (Leighninger, 2000 cited in Reisch, 2013, p. 719). As a result, the nature and form of social work has been the source of serious professional discussion at certain historical periods of significant change and rupture.

In this chapter, we focus on neo-liberalism and managerialism as forms of significant change and rupture. We also focus on the more recent rise of ‘far right’ populist and nationalist discourses and increased human rights violations in Europe. In doing so, we discuss the implications for the social work profession and social service provision. As Ornellas et al (2018, 5) state, “The international social work profession is in somewhat of a ‘value crisis’ as a result of the implementation of neoliberal and management principles, as well as the reduction of welfare and social service provision; these changes are directly impacting the ability of the social work profession to uphold its established professional values as an international and national community”.

According to Esping-Andersen (1990) there are four types of European welfare regimes: 1) social-democratic (Nordic) which is most prevalent in

Sweden; 2) liberal (Anglo-Saxon), dominant in the United Kingdom; 3) corporatist-conservative (Continental), favoured in Germany and 4) the Southern welfare model that predominates in Italy (Ferrera, 1996; Mapelli, 2017). These categorisations are broadly reflected in current welfare regimes and welfare provision in Europe (Mapelli, 2017), and have implications for variations in contemporary social work in Europe.

It is also important to take account of the European Union (EU), which Bieber (2019) points out chose to adopt a liberal (Anglo-Saxon) model and market-oriented approach after 1989 to promote solidarity between the newly unified Eastern and Western Europe. However, this reliance on free market principles did not lead to solidarity in Europe but rather to its fragmentation. Inequality and fragmentation within Europe were made apparent by the economic crisis in Greece and Greece's resistance to the neoliberal austerity measures imposed on it by the 'Troika' (European Commission, European Bank and International Monetary Fund) in exchange for financial 'bail outs' in 2010 and 2015. Questions over equality and solidarity in Europe were also raised by the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union in 2016, as one of the richest (former) EU Member States. The protracted negotiations and disarray that followed in the UK Parliament to agree on Britain's departure from the EU on 31st January 2020 also highlighted the risks associated with favouring Eurosceptic populism over EU internationalism.

Lorenz (2016) and Lyons and May-Chahal (2017) state that the national and local characteristics of social work have been challenged by: the growth of globalisation and international processes; the unification of Europe after 1989 following the end of state socialism; the specific development of European policies and reforms. Similarly, Dominelli (2010) and Healy (2001) (cited in O'Leary et al., 2013: 136) define social work as both a local and an international profession with diverse histories that are closely connected to 'national policies, national legislation, and national cultural traditions of civil society'.

Lyons and Chahal (2017) identify social work as a 'glocal' profession and highlight how social workers are increasingly called on as local responders to global challenges. This includes responses to the increased global migration and movement of refugees, and 'natural' (climate-related) and (hu)man-made disasters such as: oil spills, fires, floods and earthquakes.

These global challenges are fundamentally the consequence of ‘deep-rooted structural problems within the global capitalist economy’ and the continued advance of neoliberalism (Ferguson, Lavalette and Ioakimidis, 2018: 8-9). The impacts of this on all of us, globally, are profound globally, and have also made analysing contemporary social work in Europe a truly complex and challenging task.

Social work is deeply rooted in national characteristics but also affected by global social-economic policies and problems. However, despite their differences, almost all European states are similarly engaged in a common dilemma over the future and form of the welfare state and welfare regimes, especially since the global rise of neoliberalism from the 1980s, and EU neoliberal reforms. As an integral part of welfare regimes, social work has been directly challenged by neoliberal calls to “roll back the state” and promote marketisation, despite the ‘political necessity of every state to hold on to a role in the provision of social services as an invaluable source of legitimation’ (Otto and Lorenz, 1998: 1). Neoliberalism’s continued advance has led to the increased privatisation of public services the “reduction of welfare states, budgets, service provision and benefits” (Carvahlo, 2014; Ioakimidis, Cruz Santos, Martinez Herrero, 2014; Cummins, 2020), and the ‘retrenchment of public welfare and restrictive measures such as workfare, constructing welfare as “a burden”’ (Lorenz, 2016 cited in Lyons and May-Chahal, 2017: 3).

The reduction in professional autonomy and state-imposed restrictions in England was noted by Samsonsen and Turney in their comparative study about attempts to regulate the social work profession in England and Norway (cited in Lyons and May-Chahal, 2017: 2). Their findings were echoed by Djupvik et al. (2019) who conducted comparative research about social work in Wales and Norway. Both studies respectively highlighted how social work in Norway was more flexible and less administrative than in England and Wales, and enabled more creative problem-solving, which also reflected the ‘universal inclusive and relatively high-tax welfare state’ in Norway (Djupvik et al., 2019: 11).

In the last ten-year period since the Global Agenda was established, income inequality has increased in many EU countries, while inequalities have steadily grown in every country throughout Europe (Fresno, Meyer and Bain, 2019: 68). Inequality is continuing to increase, globally, as well,

with the richest 1% in the world currently owning more than twice the wealth of 6.9 billion people (Oxfam, 2020). Over the last decade, Eastern European billionaires have also emerged, after centrally organised economies collapsed and have since post-socialist states become integrated in the 'free' market (Penz, Fedorinova and Sazonov, 2019). This inequality threatens 'social cohesion', and limits 'the state's capacity to invest in education and social protection and to break the generational transmission of poverty' (Fresno, Beyer and Bain, 2019: 68). Inequality, however, is not simply about income inequality but rather about inequalities in social status, measured by income, education or employment (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; 2018: xx). Lower social status it has been established leads to shorter life expectancy (Marmot et al., 2020; SRHIE, 2010); Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009) and increased social problems in more unequal societies (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009) as well as higher rates of stress, anxiety, and depression (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2018). More equal societies, by contrast, have reduced social problems, higher levels of wellbeing, and a stronger community life (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2018).

Poverty has been recognised as a significant and growing issue by the EU, which declared 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The EU identified 80 million people (16% of the total EU population) as living below the official poverty line and 120 million people (24%) to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion (Eurobarometer, 2010). The EU strategy 'Europe 2020' pledged to reduce the last figure by 20 million by 2020 and precise national targets were identified, which continue to be monitored. But in the light of the deep economic crisis in Europe, there are clear indications that in most countries the proportion of the 'at risk' population is increasing and increasing dramatically. 'The deterioration of financial distress among people in the lowest income quartile households accelerated since 2007 in all Member States. The proportion of people in the lowest income quartile of households that experience financial difficulties ranges from less than 10% in Germany and Luxembourg to more than 40% in Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Spain' (Europe, 2020: 5 cited in Lorenz, 2017: 23).

In this process, populist far right parties have thus become 'the most important actors mobilizing against the consequences of globalization and

immigration' (Hutter and Kriesi, 2013 cited in Muis and Immerzeel, 2017: 910).

Halikiopoulou and Vlandas (2019) say that nationalism is the defining feature of contemporary far right parties in Europe, which are widely sceptical of the EU, strict on immigration, and prioritise 'native' inhabitants to the exclusion of 'non-native' elements (people, goods and ideas). 'Non-native' elements are deemed threats to the homogeneity of nation-states (Bieber, 2019). Exclusion of 'non-native' elements leads to strict border controls and immigration rules. Muis and Immerzeel (2017) indicate stricter migration policies and legislation in the EU and Europe need to be considered in the context of the rise of the far right in Europe over the past decades.

Migrants face unprecedented hostility throughout Europe, 'mobilized through legislation and political rhetoric' (Mort, 2019: 60). EU and national policies such as in the UK, have also been explicitly designed and implemented to create a 'hostile environment' for refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. In early 2015, the significant rise of boats capsizing and numbers of refugees dying during sea crossings to the EU, led to what became known as the 'European migrant crisis' (Carrera, Blockmans, Gros and Guild, 2015). This so-called 'crisis' related to one million people who entered the European Union seeking humanitarian support (Wroe, Larkin, Maglajlic, 2019: 18). In response, the EU developed policies aimed to protect European borders and prevent migrants from leaving countries in Africa. It also created a €3.9 billion fund for economic development and border-management projects in 27 African countries (Rankin, 2019).

Example of the anti-immigration policies developed in Europe is Italy's "closed ports" policy. This policy prevented refugees disembarking from boats in the Mediterranean Sea and later became law after Matteo Salvini, the former interior minister and head of the League Party, hastily put forward two government legal decrees in 2017-18 (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Humanitarian protection for refugees was also removed under the League Party in Italy by the withdrawal of two-year residency permits, allowing refugees the right to employment and access to welfare provision (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

The shift in Danish welfare policies also provides a clear evidence of the growing hostility towards refugees and migrants in Europe. The link between changing welfare policies and the treatment of refugees and migrants is exemplified in a Danish analysis of policies introduced by the conservative government in Denmark in the early 2000s (Bak and Larsen, 2015). These policies were designed to dismantle the principle of universalism on which the Danish welfare state was founded. Since a large proportion of those claiming the lower social assistance benefits were refugees and migrants, the new policy clearly sent a signal to refugees and migrants that they could not expect to be treated equally in the Danish welfare system until they had earned the right to welfare support by regularly working in the labour market. (Bak and Larsen, 2015: 32).

These examples also raise wider ethical and human rights concerns about neoliberal welfare reforms in other European and EU Member States and about the positionality of social workers in the relationship between immigration controls and welfare provision within states. Under such reforms, to what extent are social workers able to exercise their statutory powers and legal and ethical duties to advocate for social justice and the human rights of migrants?

Recent EU and national legislation and policies on migration in Europe also reflect the growing organisational split between care and control in welfare provision, which social workers have historically always tried to hold in balance. The care aspects of welfare provision are now increasingly outsourced to private sector companies – or are left to ‘informal’ care arrangements - while social services and the state have become focused on the control aspects of public welfare, in the name of security. This has come at the expense of humanitarian and social protection for refugees and migrants seeking safety and shelter. As such, social work and welfare provision now appear to be rather less about a balance between care and control and rather more about an emphasis on control over care.

Punitive and ‘far right’ policies have not only created a hostile environment for refugees and asylum seekers in Europe; other service user groups and social workers have also experienced the effects of living in a hostile environment in Europe.

In Hungary, punitive laws came into force in 2018 to ban rough sleeping, making it a crime. Under this law, the Hungarian police must order people sleeping rough to move into shelters and can arrest anyone who has not done so after being ordered three times in a 90-day period. Those who are charged can face time in prison, community service and their possessions being destroyed (Harris, 2018).

In Palestine, the Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists (PUSWP, 2018) reported further arrests of social workers and that a significant number of social workers had been detained as a result of their involvement in peaceful marches to request the release of detainees and an end to the occupation. Two social workers, Nidal Abu Aker and Ghassan Zawahra, have been in administrative detention since 2014 - the same year in which Israeli occupation forces assassinated the social worker, Hashem Abu Marya. Subsequently, on 9th January 2018, Mohammed Lutfi (Habashe) (social worker) was arrested for participating in a peaceful march demanding the release of child detainees and our colleague, Munther Amira who was arrested on 27th December 2017. The arrests of two more social workers, Hassan Faraj and Wesam Hamdan followed on 12th of January 2018, for participating in the same peaceful protest.

In Turkey, since an attempted coup in July 2016, the Turkish authorities have 'launched a crackdown that is destroying civil society. Criminal investigations have been opened against a staggering 150,000 people. Turkey's entire civil society has come under attack, freedom of expression has been curtailed, and attempts to investigate allegations of human rights violations by state officials have been prevented. Towards the end of 2016, around 375 non-government organisations (NGOs) – some of which were providing care for the massive numbers of Syrian refugees and people internally displaced in the country – were forcibly shut down (Allen, 2018)

These developments have implications for social workers in Europe, as they seek to build relationships and solidarity with service users, and especially with migrants and refugees, in the name of social justice, equality and human rights (IFSW, 2018a). Harms-Smith et. al. (2019: 11) also remark that "social workers must be aware of the rise of the 'far right' as it threatens the wellbeing and dignity of many groups, and particularly among refugees, migrants and minority ethnicities. In this climate, social

workers must be ready both to support victims and to rehabilitate perpetrators often through restorative justice approaches”.

The Relational Turn and Rise of Relationship-Based Practice in Social Work

Relationships lie ‘at the heart of social work’ practice (Trevithick, 2003) and are central to social work intervention (Alexander & Grant, 2009; Hennessey, 2011; O’Leary, Tsui, and Ruch, 2013; Ruch, 2005; Trevithick, 2003). Fewster (2004) cited in Ingram and Smith, 2018: 4) asserts that ‘within the caring role, the relationship is the intervention’ while O’Leary, 2013: 137) claims that social work is at the forefront of professions that address the ontological need for relationships and responds to the breakdowns of personal and societal relationships (O’Leary et al., 2013: 137). Social work relationships exist ‘within and between families; between families and the team; with neighbours and wider communities’ (Featherstone et al., 2014: 35). Social work has also been defined as a profession that involves relationships with individuals, between individuals, with individuals in groups, with individuals and organisations, and between organisations (Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto, 2008; Kadushin, 1972; Perlman, 1979; Petr, 1983; Richmond, 1899; Wilson et al., 2011; cited in O’Leary et al., 2013: 136). Positive relationship-building can be important for clients and central to delivering respectful and effective services (Beresford, Croft, & Adshead, 2008; Buckley, Carr, and Whelan, 2011) and it is also in a ‘relational context’ of practice that social workers tend to struggle, not with specific problems themselves (Bryan, Hingley-Jones and Ruch, 2016: 230).

The introduction of market principles has turned ‘clients’ into ‘service users’ and ‘rational consumers’ in social work rather than people with difficulties who would prefer to have a professional to talk and relate to (Wilson et al, 2011: 7 cited in Hingley-Jones and Ruch, 2016: 4). The introduction of impersonal, bureaucratic systems and managerialism developed in response to the recognition of multiple truths and realities of a ‘risky environment’ that was created as grand theories of modernity became challenged in ‘late’ modernity (Giddens, 1991 cited in Hingley-Jones and Ruch, 2016). The rise of globalisation and managerialism in social work, has led to a shift ‘away from relational social work’ in the UK, with the practitioner–social worker relationship becoming more distant

(Dominelli, 2010: 602) and it has led to the narrow focus of relationships in social work (Featherstone, Gupta, Morris and White, 2018: 14).

As managerialism has become normalised, so too has social work practice become increasingly depersonalised and defensive. In turn, this has called into question the meaning of relationships in social work and relational practice. The increased demands on social workers under austerity since the 2008 economic crisis have also contributed to the rise of managerialism and the increased use of techno-rational processes and digital technologies in social work.

Social workers across Europe have responded to these challenges to protect the identity and integrity of social work profession based on its core ethical principles and value base; namely, by promoting social justice, solidarity and human rights for all.

There are several recent examples of what such ethical and political social work responses might look like in different European countries. In 2011, economic recession and austerity in Greece led to mass unemployment, poverty and left significant numbers who lacked national health insurance with no access to healthcare or medicines, which had massively increased in price with cuts to state subsidies. In response, Ferguson, Lavalette and Ioakimidis (2018: 34-5) report that healthcare professionals provided free healthcare, using charitable donations of medicines, in a series of 40 solidarity clinics around the country. The clinics 'were part of a wider and avowedly political movement of citizen-run – food solidarity centres, social kitchens and cooperatives' (Ferguson, Lavalette and Ioakimidis, 2018: 35), which has also since expanded.

In response to austerity following the economic crisis in 2008, Ioakimidis et al. (2014: 293) also report that for the first time in their histories, social workers in Portugal, Greece and Spain instigated processes aimed at reclaiming the political role of social work through 'active mobilizations, activist interventions, facilitation of grassroots alliances and articulation of powerful political arguments, which have largely replaced the mainstream academic and professional jargon of the past' (Ioakimidis et al., 2014: 293).

Social workers throughout Europe have also more recently protested austerity and public expenditure cuts, which have impacted on service

users and service delivery, and worsened working conditions for social workers. On 12th October 2018, around 2000 social workers took part in a protest organised by the Polish Federation of Social Workers and Social Service Employees Unions (PFZPSiPS) to demand improved working conditions based on 'dignity, labour rights and safety'. They also protested about the 'bureaucracy and wages' in social work and called for a change in the law to prevent government ministries, alone, deciding on how public funds in Poland are allocated (IFSW, 2018b).

In the UK, social Workers also protested in April 2017 in support of the British Association of Social Workers' (BASW) anti-austerity campaign against public welfare cuts and the impacts of austerity on the working conditions for social workers. BASW is working to embed anti-poverty practice in social care. Awareness of poverty is included in all the BASW professional development activities. In September BASW launched The Anti-Poverty Practice Guide for Social Work to support the practice of social workers working with people living in poverty. This complemented the Campaign Action Pack to encourage anti-austerity activity locally, regionally and nationally across the UK. The step-by-step guide outlines everything from how to organise public meetings, rallies and awareness-raising film nights to setting up petitions, lobbying and contacting the press. BASW membership used the Annual General meeting in 2019 to pass two motions to mandate the organisation to further action. One was on homelessness and the other what is known in the UK as NRPF (No Recourse to Public Funds) – a policy where, having been denied the right to work, asylum seekers are deprived of all funding and most services in an attempt to force them to return 'home'.

A 2018 survey (Ravalier and Boichat, 2018) of BASW England's members revealed that social workers are frustrated that they are spending too much time on administration tasks, instead of direct relationship-based work with children and families. BASW has campaigned to reverse the current trend which sees social workers spending just 20 per cent of their time in direct contact with families. Our survey has revealed that BASW England members feel more of their time should be spent building relationships with families and less of their time on administrative and process activities. Therapeutic, reflective, relationship-based practice is the best way for social workers to bring effective and positive change to vulnerable children and families. The BASW England 80:20 campaign brings

a variety of evidence and resources together to help make this change a reality.

Similarly, in Kosovo, UPSK (Social Workers Organization of Kosovo) and ISPD (Institute for Social Policy Development) address “effects of decentralization, lack of regulatory body for social work profession and lack of professional knowledge in social work centres as well as financial difficulties and lack of funding. In their report, UPSK and ISPD state “service users are being discriminated against during the service delivery process and most of them are refused assistance from the Centre for Social Work due to the lack of knowledge and competence of social workers”.

Social workers have also developed ethical and rights-based intervention models to support various service user groups. An example includes the UK charity, Social Workers Without Borders (SWWB), which provides an ethical, humanitarian and social justice social work response to the ‘European migrant crisis’, across the national borders of France and the UK. SWWB was initially set out by Lynn King to safeguard and provide material support to people in camp in Calais on the French border, who were also crossing borders. In the process, SWWB established the legality of their status and practice as social workers from the UK practising on the French border (King, 2019). This sets a precedent for future social work interventions to promote solidarity with migrants and advocate for their human rights and social justice across borders within the EU and Europe. SWWB’s initial interventions led to requests by the camp’s legal shelter and subsequently also UK lawyers to carry out ‘best interests’ assessments of the child (UNHCR 2008) to safeguard separated children and to reunite them with their families under the EU Dublin III regulation. This regulation, adopted in 2013, determines which EU state is responsible for an asylum claim or if it is Iceland, Norway, Switzerland or Lichtenstein (King, 2019).

These developments have also initiated a (re)turn to relational social work and relationship-based practice’ and a renewed emphasis on ‘the importance of human relationships’ (Global Agenda, 2010-20). Relationship-based practice (RBP) has become a way of reasserting the centrality of relationships in social work (Ingram and Smith, 2018; Ruch, Turney and Ward, 2010), and as holistic approach, not a specific and optional method (Ingram and Smith, 2018). Relationship-based practice broadly emphasises ‘capabilities’, ‘strengths’, ‘emotions’ and ‘expertise’ of

service users based on lived experience, and the practitioners' 'use of self' within relationships to '...support a process of discovery and transformation'(Featherstone et al, 2014: 35 cited in Hingley-Jones and Ruch, 2016: 5).

There are concerns, however, that 'relationship-based practice' has turned into somewhat of a mantra and been adopted as the 'sine qua non of professional discourses' by different agencies (Featherstone, Gupta and White, 2018: 14). Concerns have also been raised that RBP privileges the 'professional-service user' relationship in a way that consolidates professional power and disempowers service users (Featherstone, Gupta and White, 2018: 14). This, paradoxically, echoes the 'client-therapist' relationship in psychosocial and psychoanalytic models. It also has implications for the ways 'relationship-based practice' is promoted. This includes ethical attempts to promote RBP such as the British Association of Social Workers' 80:20 campaign (BASW, 2018). In this campaign, 'relationship-based practice' was the way in which austerity and rising managerialism in social work were challenged.

Psychosocial approaches to relationship-based practice, however, tend to be based on Rogerian humanistic psychology rather than Freudian psychodynamics. Even so, Murphy et al. (2013) have questioned the extent to which such approaches can be 'person-centred' and 'non-directive' in the sense that Carl Rogers set out in his humanistic psychological approach. 'Modern' contemporary social work is task-based and therefore necessarily requires social workers to be 'directive' at some point in relationships with service users, even though the social worker may display empathy, emotional intelligence and a skilful use of self to initially develop positive, trusting relationships with the service users (Murphy et al. 2013). Other scholars have expressed reservations about 'relationship-based practice' in social work on account of the undeveloped emotional competence of social workers (Morrison, 2007), staff turnover and burnout (Le Grand, 2007), and organisational bureaucracy or structural issues (Smith et al., 2012; Winter, 2009 cited in Byrne and Kirwan, 2019: 221).

Coulter et al (2019) however have sought to find value in relationship-based practice by situating RBP within a social constructivist and systemic perspective to recognise 'theoretical coherence' among the different 'RBP models' that social workers use – sometimes simultaneously - in Europe,

North America and Australasia (For example: Family Group Conferencing, Signs of Safety, Reclaiming Social Work, Safe and Together (Coulter et al., 2019). A social constructivist approach re-emphasises 'the social, rather than the intrapsychic or psychological' (Coulter et al., 2019: 8) while a systemic approach recognises the relational and interactional ways in which humans are interconnected in a wider political, economic and cultural 'ecology' (Hedges, 2005 cited in Coulter, 2019: 9). A systemic perspective also enables social workers to recognise the dialogical processes in RBP and communicative practices that can disempower and dehumanise or empower service users.

Turney (2016) focuses on the potential of digital, communication technologies to 'connect' social workers with service users within relationship-based practice while also recognising the ethical and methodological concerns raised about social work responses, professional ethics and service user empowerment (see also, Byrne and Kirwan, 2019).

Relationship-based practice is thus a complex and contested way of promoting relational social work. But, as Cooper (2010) and Trevithick (2011) state (cited in Hingley-Jones and Ruch, 2016: 8), the point for psychosocially informed social workers is that relationship-based practice should be 'to raise broader social awareness of the everyday struggles facing disadvantaged sectors of the community, while engaging in supportive casework and in managing risk'. Moreover, social workers who may appear to be 'stumbling' through interventions are involved in complex relational work with particular children and family members (individualised 'casework'), and other parts of the system such as family courts, the social work agency with its management structures, schools and medical surgeries. In such contexts, relationship-based practice involves social workers advocating on behalf of individuals and families to support them to access scarce resources and services (Hingley-Jones and Ruch, 2016). This information should ideally feed-upwards so that councillors and elected members are kept informed about the social issues facing members of the community they serve (Hingley-Jones and Ruch, 2016: 8) and be integral to social work as an 'intrinsically political activity' (Ferguson, Lavalette, and Ioakimidis, 2018).

'Co-production' and 'personalisation' have become key policy concepts in Europe and particularly in adult social care in the UK. 'Co-production' has

its origins in the 1970s but recently re-emerged as part of the personalisation agenda in the UK, under New Labour's drive to 'modernise' social services (Hollinrake, 2019: 38). The aim was to move from dependency to 'a more equal relationship in the planning and receiving of support' (Hollinrake, 2019: 38). Placing service users who may lack the 'capacity' to make sound judgements in the same way as 'rational consumers' rather than fitting with organisations and services available, makes personalisation a contentious policy decision. Restructuring of social services around personalisation has also been associated with de-professionalisation of social work and social services embracing marketisation (Ferguson 2007 cited in Hollinrake, 2019: 39). Budget cuts under austerity have narrowed the extent to which personalisation is empowering and can enable them to have choice or control. Ultimately, the personalisation agenda is the product of a 'rolled back' neoliberal state.

At the same time, 'co-production' offers 'a potentially transforming way of thinking about power resources, partnerships, risks and outcomes' (Hollinrake, 2019: 78), which has 'resulted in the near eradication of long-term, institutional care for the majority of people with disabilities' and the 'increasing satisfaction' of 'many frail older people' (Fox, Fox and Marsh, 2013). Within relationships of 'co-production' a 'high sense of self-efficacy' has been associated with mentors who have been able to promote a sense of self-efficacy in those they mentor (Staples et al., 1999), 'indicating the power of peer support' (Weaver and McCulloch, 2012 cited in Bovaird, Van Ryzin, Loeffler and Parrado, 2015). Social workers can therefore also be potentially effective mentors within relationships of co-production with service users, which also seek to identify, design and deliver services collectively and collaboratively (See the Care Act 2014 in the UK). The key principles and values of 'co-production' according to Cahn (2004) are: the assets and expertise of individuals; the revaluation of non-market economy (informal care); reciprocity (with an emphasis on giving back); inter-dependency; and 'the importance of social capital, and social infrastructure which is built through trust, reciprocity and civil engagement' (Hollinrake 2019: 40).

Case Examples: The Role of Social Welfare and Social Work Organizations in Strengthening Human Relationships

For this European contribution to the fourth phase of the Global Agenda Observatory report, in October 2019 all three European professional networks/associations (IFSW, EASSW and ICSW) launched a call for good practice examples from European social work and social development professionals. In the data collection process, the IFSW Europe e.V. has received 14 contributions from 10 European countries. The EASSW received 21 contributions from 15 different Universities across Europe. The ICSW European region received 5 contributions from 4 European countries. Details of the contributions from member schools/organizations are in Appendix.

Following Coulter et al (2019), we emphasise the value of a systemic approach for understanding the relational and interactional dimensions of these examples and their interconnectedness at different levels within a wider political, economic and cultural ecology – one that reflects the diverse histories of social work and welfare regimes in Europe and European states common experiences of neoliberal capitalism and its continued advance.

Social Work, Rights and Political Activism

In Germany, Deutscher Berufsverband für Soziale Arbeit (DBSH – the German professional association) has launched a campaign called “Right to Refuse Testimony”. The Campaign has been launched to challenge social workers’ legal obligations to testify in court proceedings or in regulatory institutions. DBSH says social workers can be forced to testify against the interests of their service users and that this obligation harms professional relationships. The campaign calls on social workers to “Respect the Mandate of Social Work”. It declares that “Social work is a profession; it is not just a duty to follow instructions” (For detailed information about the Campaign visit: https://www.dbsh.de/fileadmin/redaktionell/pdf/Profession/Zeugnisverweigerungsrecht/20191106_Broschuere_Zeugnisverweigerungsrecht_2019_engl.pdf).

In Norway, a grassroots campaign (#heierna) has been directed towards the Norwegian Prime Minister, Erna Solberg (#heierna = Hello Erna) and her comments on Norwegian children welfare system. The prime minister said

in her new year speech on TV that she wanted more success stories from the children welfare system. The message in the campaign is: we need more employees to do the job, so that the quality of the work improves and becomes success stories.

In Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Social Work Public Union (AZSWU) launched a project to raise awareness on child poverty and to introduce CDA's (Child Development Accounts) in Azerbaijan. AZSWU held various activities in the project:

- Awareness raise campaign on child development accounts
- Lobbying activities such as meetings, roundtables and seminars on child development accounts with policy makers
- Develop policy paper for child development accounts in Azerbaijan
- Organize international conference on child development accounts to learn the experience of countries that implement child development accounts as a national public policy.

At the end of 2019, the Swedish National Committee of ICSW organized an 'expert seminar' on Child Poverty in Advanced Welfare States in cooperation with Malmö University. Participating countries included: Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Austria and Switzerland. The aim of this seminar was to deepen understanding and exchange knowledge on child poverty and compare and contrast current national trends and discuss measures to be taken in response. Written reports produced from these seminars are used as a basis for lobbying governments for changes on different levels.

After an initial introduction by the organizers from Sweden, the other participants gave their views on child poverty in their respective countries, which was followed by discussions and conclusions. The seminar opened with a discussion of a research report published by Save the Children in Sweden. The report showed that income disparities have intensified and that increased poverty, social problems and relationship difficulties in families with children can be linked to reduced investments set out in family policy in Sweden during the early 2000s. As a result, the welfare

state is not providing families on low incomes with sufficient benefits to meet their needs in line with other children and families in Sweden. The amount of families with children living at a low economic standard (below 60% of the median income in the country) has increased.

The other participants made introductions and confirmed that there were similar tendencies in their countries. In the following discussions the participants agreed that poor children must be seen in their family context. Poverty must be viewed as a multidimensional and dynamic issue including economic, social and cultural dimensions. Some conclusions were established: To repeal poverty among children in advanced welfare states actions are needed on different levels. That means that both state, municipalities and voluntary associations must create a social environment giving possibilities for children and their families in poverty to change their position. It includes actions of both preventive and reducing character. Relating to this, it is of significance to address the responsibility for reducing poverty. Structural changes in the social welfare systems affecting poverty must be met on a structural level. The welfare systems must compensate poor families and adjust to conditions of today. Social benefits and allowances to families must follow changes in income index over time. Education, day-care, leisure time activities were emphasized as measures to reduce poverty and must be organized in a way to include children into the society. To get children from early age to meet and socialize with each other, day care was stated as a means to learn language and become integrated. Investments in leisure time activities were exemplified as means to reduce cultural poverty and give children broader views. One difficulty described by the participants was the professional secrecy in social welfare systems and health systems, preventing exchange of information and cooperation. Needs of professional networks including social and health servants around vulnerable families were worded.

In the UK, social activism against poverty has also focused on promoting social workers' rights and protesting government austerity and working conditions. In the UK, many social workers undertake high levels of unpaid extra work, suffer from stress and have above average sickness levels. Consequently, turnover and vacancy rates are high. This in turn creates further stress. These issues undermine positive relationships between social workers and service users but can also undermine social workers own relationships with partners and children. BASW and its sister

organisation the Social Workers Union (SWU) have continued to speak out in the media on the issue of working conditions for social workers. This year in the UK there was a General Election and in December 2019 BASW launched the BASW UK manifesto which calls for action to support social workers. This included a call to tackle poor working conditions and unfeasibly high caseloads of social workers. Following the government election in December 2019 BASW wrote to all new government ministers and MPs calling for support for the BASW UK social work manifesto and to ask for meetings to discuss it. BASW continues to lobby ministers, grow media interest and build awareness and influence with the research which shows that social workers are strongly engaged in their work and want the very best outcomes for people that use services, but they are hampered by poor working conditions and limited resources.

In another example at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen (United Kingdom), social work educators chose to promote students' consciousness, knowledge and understanding of human rights and their centrality in all human relationships and to the ethical principles and values of the social work profession. The project involved developing specific learning materials on human rights including practice guidance and human rights literature for student analysis and class discussion.

Service User Participation and Social Work Education: Promoting Human Relationships and Service User Empowerment

In Belgium, UFAS (Union Professionnelle Francophones des Assistants Sociaux – French speaking union of social workers) initiated an action plan for unemployed people to provide an opportunity in social work for them. In the project, UFAS worked with relevant ministries, trade unions and schools. UFAS organized a social work training programme in cooperation with Project Partners and provided supervision. In Switzerland, a social service education and training project has been developed to support unemployed people on welfare benefits to acquire the necessary qualifications and employability skills to gain secure employment. Many lack vocational training and basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, which the project supports them to develop and to secure sustainable employment thereafter. Social service centres in this project are developing methods to map education gaps assess service user needs and develop education support plans. Co-operation between the social worker and service user are an essential part of this planning process

and the idea is that the social worker supports individual service users throughout the process - all way from the assessment of needs to education and training support to finding a secure job in the labour market. In turn, this creates the possibilities for service users to develop lasting and sustainable relationships with service users. The nine social service centres are also cooperating with each other to develop methods for mapping and assessing education and training needs a to formulate support plan. This collaborative working is intended to strengthen the ties between social service centres as well as with education providers and employers in the labour market. An online platform is provided for sharing information and tools This provides opportunities for these agencies to share best practice with each other and to evaluate their actions. Two experts on social welfare provide education support to every social service centre in this project. In addition, there will be opportunities for the participating social services and experts to share their knowledge and examples of best practice at four workshops. An advisory group, including people from federal offices, labour organizations and the social/educational sector, also supports the project at a higher, strategic level. There are plans to extend the project, which has submitted a proposal to the Swiss Parliament asking for more resources for the education of people receiving social welfare support.

A Lithuanian project, "Let's be together", developed leisure time activities for young people living in care homes and attending day care institutions. The aim of this project was to create opportunities for the young people to meet and familiarise themselves with people from different generations and professions and thereby also develop life and career aspirations. Volunteers from the Vilnius International Club and the Lithuanian National Committee organized small group activities for 150 young people and invited representatives to talk about their professions and in European perspective. This meant that the young people also developed a wider knowledge about other countries and professions in Europe. This project is, besides creating social relations between children, emphasizing social relations between children and grown-ups. Attention from the leaders and grown-ups is one cornerstone in the work. Such relations are a way of including children into the society and widen their knowledge.

In Poland, the low level of participation of children and young people in local decision making was addressed in a project carried out by the

University of Lodz, which aimed to enhance social recognition of children and young people as important members of their urban neighbourhoods. Young people shared their ideas about how to revitalize their neighbourhoods in a participatory process.

The lack of inclusion experienced by young people with intellectual disabilities on university campuses motivated the Palacký University Olomouc in the Czech Republic with the support of three European ERASMUS partners, to develop a project to promote inclusion at higher education institutions. The project gathered the opinions of students and staff and analysed young people with intellectual disabilities about their experiences of the campus environment. Joint sessions and a conference were organised to discuss the findings of this project.

Service User Participation and Social Work Education: Promoting Human Relationships and Critically Reflective Social Work Practice

Two separate projects in Finland and Italy focused on supporting social work students to develop empathy and their understanding of the service-user perspective. In both projects service-users participated in classroom teaching and learning activities as ‘experts by experience’.

- In Italy, the service users and ‘experts by experience’ were care leavers.
- In Finland, the ‘experts by experience’ were young people not in education or training. The young people first engaged in sociodramas to share their negative experiences of human relationships using services and then developed another sociodrama with students in which strengthening human relationships was the focus.

Other examples focused on social work education and practice learning with an emphasis also on critically reflective social work practice. In Bulgaria, (Angel Kanchev University of Ruse) a student internship programme was set up to provide a social work practice learning opportunity for students to critically reflect on how to apply social work theories to practice.

In Italy, the University of Trento placed an emphasis on student learning from practice and critical reflecting on decision-making processes and

learning 'to be in the wrong'. The example from the Netherlands (University College Ghent) similarly focused on student practice learning and critical reflective practice but in terms of encouraging students to use supervision to actively experiment with their ideas about social work practice.

A number of other examples chose to focus developing practice learning opportunities for students to enhance student engagement and thereby increase retention rates among first students on social work courses (The University College Ghent, Netherlands), new teaching and learning interventions and used practice examples to enhance students' practice learning opportunities (University of La Rioja, Spain) and to integrate curriculum into practice by taking student to combine theory with practice with participatory actions with service users (Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic).

Social Work Education and Counselling Skills: Promoting Human Relationships Through Practice Learning Opportunities to Provide Psychosocial Support for Service Users

In Austria, the University of Applied Science in St. Pölten developed a project called 'Inclusion Counselling' as social work practice training model for student social workers. The aim of this training is to provide social work students practice learning experiences of focused work with specific clients over about eight months to build relationships, help organize daily routines and promote service user participation. During the period the students get inclusion counselling from the university in close cooperation with respective institution. The University of Applied Science has established partnership agreements with the institutions to regulate the cooperation. Structured cooperation agreements were set up with social institutions, interested students and service users. Service users are involved on various levels as a part in setting up the project, as well as following researches and monitoring the process. They also take part in reflections and evaluation of the project. This project is evaluated as a good practice and will be a permanent element in the education.

In Turkey, the Manisa Celal Bayar University carried out a project to address the psychosocial needs of children in hospital. The project provided these children and their relatives with psychosocial support to cope with the child's illness.

Social Work Methods and Partnership Working: Strengthening Human Relationships with Service Users, Multiagency Collaboration and Service Delivery

In Iceland, the Municipality of Hafnarfjörður launched a project to address problems in multi-agency cooperation. The project focused on early intervention as a method for better meeting the needs of children and young people. The Bridge Project is a collaborative effort aimed at integrating school and social services at municipal level in Iceland. The project aims to improve the quality of life among pre- and primary school children in Hafnarfjörður and strengthen support and service delivery at earlier stages. The launch of THE BRIDGE emphasises a strengthened co-operative effort between professionals in the Municipal Family Service, Hafnarfjörður Educational and Leisure Services, and the primary and preschools in the municipality. The project is based on work procedures in part already applied in the municipal schools and preschools.

In Georgia, GASW (Georgian Association of Social Workers) implemented a nation-wide action research project to address the gap between service users' needs and local authority service provision. The project aimed to strengthen civil society in Georgia and promote advocacy and service user participation. The aims of the 2-year project were to:

- Increase NGO capacity in advocacy and participatory budgeting and monitoring;
- Enhance cooperation between local governments and civil society to develop participatory policies

and decision-making practices;

- Support NGOs and devolved local governments to develop affordable social services;
- Raise awareness of corporate social responsibility and volunteering opportunities with NGOs, local governments and in the private sector.
- Socially engaged arts as a social work method to promote service user participation and activist

Two Portuguese projects focused on the use of socially engaged arts as a method for strengthening human relationships with service users and promoting social justice. The first was a social work education project called 'LUTO' which was developed by the UTAD University in Portugal. The project drew on socially engaged arts as a social work and teaching and learning method to develop students' awareness and engagement with social problems and social activism to combat violence against women in this case.

The second project was carried out by the University of Coimbra to address alcohol addiction as a social problem in Portugal. The project used 'Photovoice' as a way for service users to have a 'voice' by creating visual and audio narratives of themselves and their lives. Photovoice was also used to explore the importance of confidentiality in relationships with service users.

In a practice example submitted by the University of Hradec Králové in the Czech Republic, a series of community art workshops were carried out as part of an ART-TELLier project to strengthen social cohesion and social relationships. The participants' artwork was also displayed in art exhibitions and sold as graphic prints to further strengthen the importance of social relationships and social cohesion (Project ART-TELLier Cerekvice nad Bystřicí).

The Romanian Association of Social Workers (ASproAS) launched an education project (Step Up into Social Work) to promote the social work profession in Romania, eliminate the stigmatisation of service users, and promote active citizenship. The aim of the Step up into Social Work Project was to teach children and the young people (from 7 to 18 years-old) about the support provided by social workers. Through the project, children have reportedly become aware of the different social services available to them in the community and how they can access these services and social work support.

Contemporary Issues and Social Work's Response

The Azerbaijan Social Work Public Union (AZSWU) organized a campaign to raise "mental health awareness (with a focus on children and young people)". In the Campaign, AZSWU held seminars on mental health with adolescents, their parents, head teachers, teachers and adult members of

the public in the cities of Baku, Khanlar and Qubain. The AZSWU also convened round-table discussions on mental health with directors and employees of Family Support Centres and ten employees of two government agencies. In addition, it organized talks about mental health on the radio, and on television as well as publishing newspaper articles to raise public awareness about mental ill-health.

The European migration crisis and specific issues among migrant groups such as the special needs of child migrants, were raised in two of the case examples submitted on social work in Europe. In Portugal, the University of Lisbon incorporated teaching and learning about European integration policies and strategies with social work students to develop their competences and knowledge of social work with migrant children. This included interviews with migrant minors and talks by professionals at public seminars and other events. The University of Belgrade/Serbia similarly sought to develop students' knowledge and understanding of migrant experience while it focused on the co-creation of knowledge and management of knowledge to ensure that lessons learned from the field about support during migrant crises were not forgotten.

The global environmental crisis and disasters were the focus of the submission by the University of Lisbon Portugal. This social work education project aimed to teach social work students about the social work role in contemporary disasters and interventions to safeguard interventions people affected. This teaching and learning project drew on examples of professional and service user experiences of participating in disaster work. Another project by University of Coimbra offered an opportunity to social work students to produce a local social diagnosis for strategic decision in terms of sustained and sustainable territorial development (Project Our Territory, University of Coimbra, Portugal).

Poverty as a wider social problem was the focus of two case examples that work towards strengthening the importance of human relationships. In collaboration with various partner organisations the University of Coimbra in Portugal organized a series of annual events. Each event had a specific theme and contributed to the project's overarching aim to the development of an interrelated understanding of human needs and concerns in social, economic and environmental fields, which have a strong influence in people's lives.

A centre called “Manisa Celal Bayar University Social Services Education Practice and Research Center” has been established in Turkey as a forum for social work education, practice and research, which takes place for one month every summer and is open to social work students throughout Europe

Collegial and Interdisciplinary Relationships

The Bulgarian Association of Social Workers organized a joint project to promote social work education and to highlight lack of professional regulation and gaps in government policies. In the project; partners aimed to create a joint platform to promote good practices in Bulgaria. Bulgarian Association of Social Workers states that “the aim of the project is to create an educational and social platform for social work, which creates conditions for: mastering, exchange and promotion of good educational and professional practices; active and constructive interaction between education and social work practice; implementation of educational, vocationally and socially significant initiatives with a focus on analysing current problems, finding opportunities for solving and defining them in good educational, professional and social practices and enhancing the social prestige of social work and related education”.

In Norway, “FO” (Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers) has published three books, focusing on the role of the social worker, and the relationship they have with their clients/service users/community groups. All three books include interviews with social workers, childcare workers and social educators. For instance, the book for social workers includes 21 interviews with social workers working in different fields of the profession, describing different kinds of social work practices, and all of them are talking about the specific role of the social worker.

In a cooperation between the National Committee in Sweden (ICSW) and the University of Gävle and their social work students, an international orientation event on World Habitat Day was arranged. The aim was to create a meeting point for students and associations of social welfare. It was also an aim to open an arena for exchange of experiences from different countries about community work in housing areas and to give opportunities for the students to find contacts to develop their social engagement. A third aim is to support social engagement among the students. This event was designed with a presentation of ICSW, a lecture

from a community work project and a panel debate followed by reflections in small groups on own experiences. One dimension of building a sustainable community work is to understand the importance of social relationships and see and respect users. The outcome so far is that relations between students and associations are established and there is an interest from both sides to continue and deepen the relations. This event is planned as a yearly event for deepening the relations between students and practitioners from ICSW associations.

Conclusion

The importance of strengthening human relationships could not be clearer or more urgent in the face of the significant political, economic, social and environmental changes occurring in Europe and globally. In the last decade, social work in Europe has experienced the onslaught of neoliberalism and the negative effects of austerity on working conditions, service provision and service users. Social welfare and social protection systems have also been eroded. Social workers throughout Europe have responded to the increased migration and movement of refugees as well as global disasters. They have also stood up against human rights violations and opposed the rise of 'far right' nationalist movements and populist political parties.

Despite these broader trends in social work responses, the IFSW Europe, ICSW and EASSW practice examples also reflect the continued diversity and regional differences in social work and between European welfare systems in Western and Eastern European states. For instance, the IFSW Europe practice examples submitted by Western European countries tended to focus on the implications of neo-liberalism, austerity and multi-agency working for promoting relationships. In contrast, the Eastern European practice examples mainly concentrated on raising public awareness about specific social problems, promoting the social work profession, and the lack of regulation in the profession.

The types of social relationships in the ICSW practice examples also differed from those in the IFSW examples and were varied. The ICSW is active in a wide range of projects, from lobbying governments and EU-institutions to promoting change in social work practice and education. The types of relationships in the ICSW practice examples reflected these contexts. In general, the ICSW examples highlighted the long-term

perspectives taken by professionals working in regional and professional networks to build relationships and develop collaborative social welfare and social work projects and activities. The importance of strengthening human relationships to effect social change was both clear and essential.

The significance of human relationships was underlined in various ways in the EASSW practice examples. All of these examples were based on projects that took place in the context of social work education and/or research, and focused mostly on relationships within and between service users, students and practice organisations. Relationship-based social work was a core theme of social work education and training, and especially on practice learning courses. The significance of human relationships for addressing specific problems in social work and for working in partnership with service users was also a common theme in the ICSW practice examples. Learning from the constructive feedback of service users and critically reflecting on one's own practice, and mistakes, as a social worker, were highlighted as issues that urgently needed to be addressed and incorporated in social work education. Overall, the examples of social work practice in Europe reflected the wider increase in service user participation in social work practice and education, and the importance of valuing and strengthening relationships with service users in the name of social justice, equality and human rights.

Over the last decade, the social work profession has worked to strengthen the importance of human relationships through collaborations, networks and partnerships with service users, public institutions and third sector organisations. These have developed from the grassroots, within and between states, and via face-to-face and virtual networks. Relationships have been formed and mobilised by social workers to challenge austerity, increased poverty and inequality, and the rise of the 'far right'. Social workers have also formed and mobilised relationships to protect social workers' and service users' rights, and needs, for social protection and strong welfare systems in European states. These valiant responses, based on core social work values, ethics and human rights, serve to strengthen the social work profession and the quality of human relationships. Standing in solidarity with each other, as a profession, and in support of those people who are most vulnerable to the harsh effects of neoliberalism, austerity, and growing inequality and poverty, are ways in which social

work in Europe can continue to promote social justice and human rights for all.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Case Examples by IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers) Europe e.V.

Country	Case Example(s)
Azerbaijan/ Azerbaijan/Azerbaijan Social Work Public Union	(1) Introducing child development account to Azerbaijan society as an innovative way to child well-being (2) Increasing mental health awareness using an ‘ecological’ perspective
Belgium/Union Professionnelle Francophons des Assistants Sociaux U.F.A.S.- Belgium	Unemployed people choose a second chance and follow education to become social workers (From Unemployment to Career in Social Work)
Bulgaria/Bulgarian Association of Social Workers	“Educational and social platform for knowledge, creativity, growth and development
Georgia/Georgian Association of Social Workers	A strong civil society for good governance
Germany/DBSH – Deutscher Berufsverband	Right to refuse testimony - The role of social work in changing societies with a strong

<p>für Soziale Arbeit (German Association of Social Work)</p>	<p>orientation towards order and safety</p>
<p>Iceland/The municipality of Hafnarfjörður</p>	<p>The BRIDGE- Collaboration between the school- and the social services in the municipality of Hafnarfjörður</p>
<p>Kosovo/UPSK (Social Workers Organization of Kosovo) and ISPD (Institute for Social Policy Development)</p>	<p>Assessment of current social service in Kosovo at Centre for Social Work</p>
<p>Norway/ Norway (Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers- Fellesorganisasjonen "FO")</p>	<p>(1) Three books on the role of social workers, childcare workers and social educators (2) #heierna</p>
<p>Romania/ Romania – ASproAS (Social Workers Association in Romania)</p>	<p>Step up into social work knowledge</p>

United Kingdom/British Association of Social Workers (BASW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) The BASW England 80:20 campaign(2) Calls for action to support social workers(3) Campaign against poverty and austerity
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Annex 2: Case Examples by EASSW (European Association of Schools of Social Work)

Country	Case Example(s)
Belgium/ University College Ghent	Learning by practice: Supervision
	Social engagement for first year bachelor's in social work
Bulgaria/"Angel Kanchev" University of Ruse and Department of Public Health and Social Work	"Educational and social platform for knowledge, creativity, growth and development"
Czech Republic/ Palacký University, Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology and Department of Christian Social Work	Inclusive Campus Life
	Benefits and forms of building cooperation between Palacký University Olomouc and partner organizations
Czech Republic/ University of Hradec Králové, The Institute of Social Work	ART-TELLier Cerekvice nad Bystrčí
Finland/ University of	Could we teach your students how we feel as

Jyväskylä, Kokkola University Consortium	service users? - Socio-drama in the course on communication skills
Italy/ University of Trento	"Bonsai stories" for reflective practice
	Care leavers as teachers
Poland/ University of Lodz, Department of Social Pedagogy	Small revitalization of backyards/neighbourhoods
Portugal/ Universidade de Lisboa	Protection and integration strategies for unaccompanied children in the transition to adulthood
	Social work in catastrophes and with vulnerable groups
Portugal/ Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences - University of Coimbra	Annual collaborative debates – Social Work Major themes
	Our territory, our home
Portugal University of Coimbra - Faculty of	Alcoholism and Group Dynamics: Photovoice with a group of Alcoholics Anonymous

Psychology and Education Sciences	
Portugal/ University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro	Elimination of Violence Against Women
Serbia/ University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science, Department of Social Policy and Social Work	Promoting social integration and excellence in social work education through co-creation of knowledge for the protection of children affected by migration
Spain/ University of La Rioja	Service-learning external practices
Turkey/ Manisa Celal Bayar University Faculty of Health Science Department of Social Work	Establishment of Manisa Celal Bayar University Social Services Education Practice and Research Centre
	'Smile Kid' Project
United Kingdom/BASW+Robert Gordon University	Human Rights and Social Work: BASW Guides for practice

**Annex 3: Case Examples by ICSW (International Council of Social Welfare)
European Region**

Country	Case Example(s)
Sweden/Swedish National Committee (ICSW Europe) and Malmö University	Expert seminar on Child Poverty in Advanced Welfare States (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Austria and Switzerland)
Switzerland/ Schweizerische Konferenz für Sozialhilfe (SKOS)/Schweizerischer Verband für Weiterbildung	Social Service Sustainability Education for Low-educated, Unemployed Clients
Lithuania/ Vilnius International Club and the Lithuanian National Committee	“Let’s be together”
Austria/University of Applied Science St. Pölten	Inclusion Counselling

Sweden/Sweden National Committee University of Gävle	World Habitat Day
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Chapter 5A

América Latina y el Caribe

Iván de Jesús Rosa, José Rafael de la Torre, Verónica C. Ortiz Candelaria, Krystal L. Pérez Martínez¹⁷

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¹⁷ Federación Internacional de Trabajo Social, América Latina y el Caribe

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Contexto general de la Región de América Latina y el Caribe: un repensarse epistemológico

América Latina y el Caribe, desde una perspectiva sociológica y antropológica, constituye uno de los espacios geográficos más diversos del planeta. Con una extensión que verticalmente va desde México en Norteamérica, hasta la Patagonia chilena y argentina al sur, este espacio geográfico es cuna de múltiples pueblos, caracterizados por su diversidad lingüística, cultural y política. Sin embargo, a pesar de la diversidad que constituye a la región, la misma está profundamente vinculada por procesos históricos que configuraron aspectos fundamentales de su identidad, los cuales determinaron su rol particular en el sistema-mundo moderno y su función periférica en los procesos de acumulación capitalista global (Wallerstein, 2005).

Un repensar respecto al lugar de América Latina y el Caribe en el contexto global ha sido potenciado durante las pasadas décadas mediante el movimiento político-intelectual identificado como las Epistemologías del Sur. Este movimiento ha permitido una toma de conciencia dirigida a la problematización y distanciamiento de supuestos teóricos eurocéntricos que históricamente han invisibilizado las realidades latinoamericanas y caribeñas, enmarcando la interpretación y análisis de la realidad social en nociones que no corresponden a nuestro contexto histórico, antropológico y político. Se procura así la creación de nuevos espacios analíticos dirigidos a develar realidades que “han sido ignoradas o invisibilizadas, es decir, consideradas no existentes por la tradición crítica eurocéntrica” (De Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 26). En palabras de Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018), las Epistemologías del Sur se refieren a “la producción y validación de los conocimientos anclados en las experiencias de resistencia de todos los grupos sociales que sistemáticamente han sufrido la injusticia, la opresión y la destrucción causada por el capitalismo, el colonialismo y el patriarcado” (pp. 28-29). De esta forma se pretende “posibilitar que los grupos sociales oprimidos representen al mundo como propio y en sus propios términos, pues solo así podrán cambiarlo según sus propias aspiraciones” (De Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 29).

Entre los nuevos espacios analíticos que se han generado como producto del distanciamiento de la tradición epistémica eurocéntrica, se destaca el estudio detallado del impacto de la colonialidad en nuestra región. La colonialidad, como categoría teórica, permite destacar que si bien la gran mayoría de las naciones de la región, desde una perspectiva jurídico-

política, lograron superar el colonialismo mediante los procesos de independencia acaecidos a principios del Siglo XIX, las lógicas en que se fundamentó la estructuración de las sociedades coloniales continúan aún vigentes en las naciones de la región. Entre los principales dispositivos de poder articulados por la colonialidad y que aun forman parte del orden global de dominación se encuentran: la clasificación racial de los pueblos “como modo de otorgar legitimidad a las relaciones de dominación impuestas por la conquista” (Quijano, 2000, p. 203), el establecimiento de relaciones de poder entre los géneros dirigidas a lograr la legitimación del patriarcado, y la construcción de la naturaleza como objeto de dominación y explotación en función de los intereses de acumulación del capital, entre otros dispositivos de poder dirigidos al control de múltiples dimensiones de la vida social (Mignolo, 2011; Maldonado Torres, 2008).

Tal como lo plantean Hermida y Meschini (2017), las categorías colonialismo y colonialidad del poder, del ser y del saber han permitido “nombrar el horror, el dolor ácido y penetrante que siembra a cada paso la lógica tanática que desde hace cinco siglos se erigió como estructurante de relaciones económicas, sociales, políticas, y de género en nuestra América” (pp. 27-28). Es precisamente en esa historia de horror, dolor y explotación producto del eurocentrismo y la colonialidad que América Latina y el Caribe, aún en la profunda diversidad que la constituye, encuentra los elementos identitarios que la unen como región.

La historia de la región es la historia de la continua resistencia a los procesos de opresión que el patriarcado, el capitalismo y el racismo, como dispositivos operativos de la colonialidad, han generado en nuestras sociedades. Ante esto, podemos afirmar que la lucha contra la colonialidad es la lucha por el reconocimiento y habilitación de derechos humanos no eurocéntricos, los cuales, desde hace al menos cinco siglos, han sido sistemáticamente negados a los pueblos de nuestra región, negación que ha estado en función de la perpetuación de un sistema capitalista que, cada vez más, atenta contra la misma subsistencia de la especie humana y del resto de la naturaleza.

El análisis de la historia de América Latina y el Caribe permite apreciar que la lucha por parte de sectores sociales y políticos en la defensa de los derechos humanos se ha caracterizado por constituirse como un proceso dialéctico, en el cual se hace evidente una continua correlación de fuerzas. Si bien, con el advenimiento del Siglo XXI se observó una oleada de triunfos

electorales de gobiernos progresistas sobre aquellos alineados con el neoliberalismo (Gaudichaud, Webber & Modonesi, 2019), tal como puntualizáramos en el tercer informe de progreso de la agenda global (IASSW, ICSW, IFSW, 2018), la segunda década del presente siglo ha evidenciado un “fin de ciclo” caracterizado por el retorno al poder de gobiernos de ultraderecha, algunos de estos con propuestas abiertamente xenofóbicas, homofóbicas y machistas, cuya agenda neoliberal vuelve a poner en juego el bienestar de la ciudadanía mediante la mercantilización de los derechos humanos, lo cuales se presentan como objetos de consumo solamente disponibles para aquellos con el poder adquisitivo para obtenerlos.

Aun así, la redacción de este cuarto informe de progreso nos permite dar cuenta de un resurgir de fuertes movimientos sociales en la región dirigidos a combatir las nefastas secuelas del neoliberalismo para el bienestar humano. Ejemplo de esto lo constituyen: a) las movilizaciones masivas acontecidas en Ecuador durante octubre de 2019, las cuales tuvieron como objetivo frenar medidas económicas neoliberales propuestas por el gobierno, b) el llamado estallido social en Chile, iniciado en octubre de 2019 y aún vigente, cuyo fin inicial lo fue detener el alza tarifaria del transporte público en Santiago, pero terminó articulándose como plataforma para la demanda de una nueva constitución que permitiera dejar atrás el modelo neoliberal de estado impuesto por la dictadura, y c) las protestas masivas en Puerto Rico, desatadas en julio de 2019, mediante las cuales se demandó la renuncia del líder del poder ejecutivo ante la revelación de chats privados entre funcionarios de su administración caracterizados por comentarios xenofóbicos, misóginos y homofóbicos, cuyo contenido apuntaba a evidentes actos de corrupción. Es importante resaltar que en estos movimientos ha destacado la participación protagónica de grupos sindicales, feministas, jóvenes y de los pueblos originarios de nuestra América.

Ante el contexto descrito, el presente informe de progreso invita a la región a reflexionar sobre las problemáticas sociales que nos afectan, considerando como las relaciones humanas pudieran servir como instrumento para la superación de estas. Frente a dicha invitación nos planteamos: ¿cuáles son las relaciones humanas que necesitamos? ¿aquellas que históricamente, fundamentadas en la colonialidad, han legitimado las dinámicas de opresión contra nuestros grupos nacionales? ¿O unas relaciones humanas Otras, dirigidas a procurar la transformación

de los factores políticos, sociales y económicos que históricamente han impedido la justicia social y la equidad en la región?

Esperamos que el presente informe se constituya en un aporte adicional para lograr la América Latina y el Caribe a la cual aspiramos, una justa, equitativa y libre de opresión.

Principales problemas sociales de la región en la actualidad y como pudieran superarse mediante el mejoramiento de las relaciones humanas

Al comenzar el tercer decenio del Siglo XXI América Latina y el Caribe continúa enfrentando múltiples problemáticas sociales y ambientales cuyo origen pueden explicarse considerando el rol que se le ha impuesto a la región en el proceso de acumulación global del capital. Mediante un enfoque histórico-crítico, entendemos que aquello que tradicionalmente se identifica como problemas sociales, se debería categorizar como expresiones o manifestaciones de la “cuestión social”. En palabras de Esquivel (2007) la “cuestión social” consiste en el pauperismo masivo de la clase trabajadora constitutiva del capitalismo, pauperismo que crece en razón directa con el aumento en la capacidad social para generar riqueza. Sin embargo, también se considera como parte constitutiva de la “cuestión social” los levantamientos políticos que históricamente las clases excluidas y marginadas han protagonizado en la búsqueda de reivindicaciones sociales.

De forma vinculada, De Sousa Santos (2018), al explicar la relación entre el sistema capitalista y los problemas que aquejan la región, plantea que

El capitalismo experimenta hoy uno de los momentos más destructivos de su historia reciente, como lo atestiguan las nuevas formas de acumulación primitiva por desposesión, la reedición de la rapiña colonial, que ahora se extiende por todo el Sur global, desde la apropiación de tierras al robo de salarios y los rescates bancarios; sujetándose a la ley capitalista del valor de recursos y bienes comunes, provocando el desplazamiento de millones de campesinos pobres y pueblos indígenas, la devastación ambiental y los desastres ecológicos; y la eterna renovación del colonialismo, que revela, en viejos y nuevos aspectos, el mismo impulso genocida, la sociabilidad racista, la sed de apropiación y la violencia ejercida sobre los recursos considerados

infinitos y sobre las personas consideradas inferiores y hasta no humanas (pp. 26-27).

Partiendo del contexto antes descrito, la Región de América Latina y el Caribe ha optado por enfatizar, para propósitos de este cuarto informe de progreso, en cuatro aspectos medulares que entendemos ameritan la atención urgente de los diversos organismos internacionales, y que, a su vez, concebimos deben ser parte constitutiva de la agenda global a plantearse para el próximo decenio: la pobreza y la desigualdad, los procesos migratorios, el medio ambiente y el cambio climático, y la desprofesionalización y las condiciones labores. A continuación, esbozamos la relevancia de la atención de cada uno de estos aspectos para el bienestar integral del ser humano y la naturaleza.

Pobreza y desigualdad

Por años, hemos sido testigos de la desigualdad y la pobreza en el contexto latinoamericano producto de la globalización, el capitalismo y el colonialismo. Puesto que “las desigualdades actualmente presentes se justifican en el proceso histórico de distribución de la riqueza, cuyos efectos se ven reflejados en las dinámicas poblacionales de los territorios vulnerables y por ende en las dimensiones del tiempo-espacio de su desarrollo” (Pérez, 2013, p. 43). Rodríguez y Gutiérrez (2010) añaden que

Es precisamente en América Latina donde instituciones como la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), el Banco Mundial (BM) y el Proyecto Regional para la Superación de la Pobreza del Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PRSP-PNUD) han desarrollado distintos enfoques sobre este gran problema que enfrentan los diferentes gobiernos del continente, que crece cada vez más y que pareciera no tener fin (p.10)

En el contexto de Latinoamérica, es necesario cuestionar las nociones del concepto de la pobreza. De lo contrario, caeríamos en constructos neoliberales, en los que se responsabiliza a ciertos grupos vulnerables de su condición socioeconómica y desigual. De acuerdo con Montaña (2016) “la pobreza es tratada a partir de la autoresponsabilización de los individuos; recayendo en el plano individual-subjetivo sus causas y, por lo tanto, sus soluciones” (p.86). Además, puntualiza que

Un análisis crítico sobre pobreza y “cuestión social” exige la superación de las concepciones anteriormente descritas y comentadas

—diferentes concepciones desarrolladas al interior del pensamiento liberal en contextos diversificados—. Pretendemos hacer esto presentando algunos fundamentos para una caracterización histórico-crítica de la pobreza y de la “cuestión social” en la sociedad capitalista (p.87)

A diferencia de otros grupos, los sectores empobrecidos tienen que lidiar con el estigma y la visión que crean los medios de sus comunidades. Navedo (2016) señala que “son múltiples las quejas de los sectores que han sufrido la invisibilización de su gesta positiva e hipervisibilización de su gesta negativa en los medios de comunicación del país” (p.97).

Navedo (2016) concluye que

Entonces, se puede establecer que la representación negativa que constantemente proyectan los medios de comunicación masiva sobre los residenciales públicos y las comunidades especiales en Puerto Rico —por ejemplo— puede aportar a maximizar el discrimen, la marginación, el estereotipo, la baja autoestima, la inferioridad interiorizada, el rechazo y la laceración de la identidad de los sectores invisibilizados e hipervisibilizados (p. 102)

Por otra parte, son claras las respuestas y movilizaciones del Trabajo Social en oposición a los factores antes mencionados. “La relación del Trabajo Social con el tema de la pobreza es fundacional y se articula desde diversos referentes del desarrollo” (Pérez, 2013, p. 61) De acuerdo con Mejías y Suárez (2019)

Las ciencias sociales y el Trabajo Social siempre han declarado estar del lado de los oprimidos, de los subalternos, de los pobres, está arraigado en toda una trayectoria, en toda una tradición, en todas unas dinámicas que comprometen al ser en toda su plenitud, no sólo en su razón, en su pensamiento, sino también en sus emociones, en sus afectos, en sus saberes, en su relación con el universo, la Pacha o Mapu, como sostienen quechuas y mapuche (p.136).

Por un lado, los trabajadores sociales se manifiestan en contra de las políticas neoliberales y de la naturalización de la cuestión social. Por otro, es necesario reconocer que la génesis de nuestra profesión, partiendo de la perspectiva histórica-crítica (Montaño, 2016), nos presenta como el mecanismo del Estado para atender la cuestión social producto del capitalismo neoliberal. Por lo cual, es necesario asumir la criticidad

necesaria para no caer en discursos reduccionistas y culpabilizadores, asumiendo la complejidad intrínseca a nuestro ejercicio profesional.

Procesos migratorios

En la historia de la humanidad, los procesos migratorios siempre han existido en diferentes circunstancias y respondiendo a diferentes fenómenos de la vida en el planeta. Estos procesos, que implican el que las personas se trasladen desde una zona a otra, desde un país a otro, desde un continente a otro, no por diversión, ni por viaje de placer, sino en búsqueda de mejores oportunidades laborales, de un espacio de libertad donde sus vidas y sus proyectos futuros no se vean amenazados, en “las últimas décadas han implicado una profunda transformación de los referentes espacio-temporales, que han tenido necesariamente impacto en las construcciones identitarias” (Castaldi, 2011, pp. 1-8).

Los procesos migratorios actuales se enfrentan a escenarios sociales, culturales y económicos diferentes, ya sea en los países de origen como en los de destinos. Además, las personas que pasan la experiencia de estos procesos enfrentan situaciones, vivencias y emociones no muy distintas a las que vivieron migrantes de otras épocas. Más que los contenidos, parecen haber cambiado los escenarios y las claves de lecturas para comprender los procesos. Las oportunidades, así como las limitaciones que se viven en los movimientos migratorios son interdependientes. Que se destaquen unas respecto de las otras, dependerá de razones multifactoriales. Los retos y desafíos no solo corresponden al migrante, sino también, al país receptor, cuyos habitantes enfrentan los necesarios cuestionamientos que el contacto con la diversidad estimula (Castaldi, 2011).

En la historia de los procesos migratorios en América Latina y el Caribe, nos dice Roberto Aruj (2008), que desde el siglo XIX hasta nuestros tiempos, se pueden identificar cuatro momentos significativos: “el primero se vincula con las migraciones transoceánicas; el segundo, con las migraciones internas, producto de la crisis económica en las décadas de 1930 y 1940; un tercero, con las transfronterizas; y un cuarto, con las que se producen con la globalización (Aruj, 2008, p. 96). La paradoja actual reside en que la globalización debe, hipotéticamente, homogeneizar el mercado planetario, en el cual existe una profunda desigualdad estructural. Pero en donde realmente se constituye la globalización es en el imaginario social, constituido a partir del poder de la industria cultural. Es decir, todo

habitante del planeta debe tener acceso a la pantalla del televisor, porque este lo iguala, lo informa, más allá de su nivel cultural, social o económico, sepa o no leer y escribir. Eso lo convierte en un potencial consumidor y también lo obliga, compulsivamente, a buscar la forma de consumir. En los inmensos territorios periféricos de la globalización, las desigualdades cada vez son más profundas, y la exclusión aumenta en todos los niveles (Aruj, 2008).

García y Restrepo (2019) exponen tres enfoques teóricos de la migración que desarrolló Checa (2002, en García y Restrepo, 2019), en su tesis doctoral y que son un buen punto de análisis para los procesos que ocurren en América Latina:

1. Enfoque individualista: entiende la migración como el resultado de libres decisiones de los individuos, por lo tanto, se enfoca en las motivaciones y expectativas, la convivencia en el marco del microcontexto. Este enfoque parte de la siguiente premisa "... las migraciones son un factor de equilibrio del mercado mundial, que se rige por el juego de la oferta y la demanda..." (Checa, 2002, pp. 39-40).
2. Enfoque histórico-estructural: considera la migración como parte de un sistema "... caracterizado como un conjunto dinámico, integrado por dos o más puntos –países, comarcas, regiones– vinculados por flujos humanos" (Checa, 2002, p. 41).
3. Enfoque integrado: propone una perspectiva amplia de la migración, que se valga, para su comprensión, de diferentes perspectivas entre las cuales se incluyen: análisis histórico, análisis estructural (economía política), análisis ideológico-cultural (discursos sociales) y de redes sociales migratorias (Checa, 2002).

De hecho, la diferenciación entre los países desde los cuales las personas se mueven y aquellos a los que se dirigen no está dada: si bien todavía los movimientos más importantes de personas se producen desde las zonas más pobres, desde aquellas en situaciones de guerra o de hambruna, muchos países son al mismo tiempo puerto de partida y de llegada. O países que en otros tiempos fueron trampolín de emigración de un gran número de personas ahora pueden ser destinos de otros tantos, que los eligen como residencia (Castaldi, 2011).

"Las experiencias migratorias tienen motivaciones y desenlaces diversos", señala Martha Cecilia Ruiz (2002), refiriéndose a la masiva salida de

ecuatorianos hacia el exterior, a principios de este siglo. Esta migración involucra a un grupo amplio y heterogéneo de la población: profesionales y gente con poca calificación, hombres y mujeres, mestizos/as e indígenas, emigrantes en situación regular y un grupo grande que vive y trabaja en calidad de “indocumentado”. Los diversos contextos sociales e individuales que rodean a cada una de estas personas determinan sus motivaciones para salir del país e influyen en su experiencia migratoria, que también está determinada por los contextos específicos de las naciones receptoras. Esta perspectiva aborda el proceso migratorio desde la diversidad y las especificidades, para evitar así un análisis neutral que puede limitar nuestra comprensión de ciertos procesos sociales en América Latina. El acceso de los y las emigrantes a los mercados de trabajo, las redes sociales que mantienen y en general sus experiencias en los países receptores no son vivencias que todos y todas perciben por igual, sino que están marcadas y diferenciadas por especificidades de género, clase, etnicidad, origen nacional, nivel de educación o por el estatus migratorio de estas personas (Ruiz, 2002; pp. 88-97).

Los movimientos migratorios/transmigratorios efectuados en América Latina durante las primeras décadas del siglo veintiuno requieren nuevas estrategias de análisis para su abordaje, ya que el sistema económico-político actual ha creado diversas y novedosas formas de sumisión y explotación, como el trabajo análogo a la esclavitud, reclutamiento forzado, “basurización” simbólica, entre otras violencias ejercidas hacia determinados grupos de migrantes estigmatizados por los habitantes de los países de tránsito y estancia donde se les niega en la práctica los derechos humanos que todo sujeto tiene (Mancillas-López, 2015).

Medio ambiente y cambio climático

Desde el contexto latinoamericano y caribeño, el cambio climático ha sido abordado desde el reconocimiento de la complejidad que le es intrínseca y desde una mirada crítica que devela su ineludible vinculación con los procesos de producción capitalista. Desde la perspectiva de Postigo (2013) “el cambio climático, tanto por ser consecuencia del capitalismo como por aceleración en la velocidad, extensión y agudeza de sus efectos, es una novedad para la sociedad y la naturaleza del planeta. (p. 15). Sobre el particular, el autor amplía como la actual forma de “producción, circulación y consumo de bienes y servicios está llevando al planeta en una trayectoria de transformaciones nunca antes vista, cuyas consecuencias tenderán a la conformación de nuevas condiciones vitales que se

encuentran fuera del rango de las que actualmente percibimos” (Postigo, 2013, p. 15).

De forma vinculada, Cortés (2013) resalta como el “cambio climático es el asunto global más primordial de nuestro tiempo y el mayor reto que enfrentan las políticas públicas. El destino del planeta depende literalmente de cómo la sociedad, en esta generación, responde a la catástrofe climática”. (p. 11). Según la apreciación de este autor, los efectos del cambio climático, entre los cuales destacan el “aumento progresivo en los niveles de temperatura y del mar, crecientes fenómenos climáticos que azotan a comunidades y ecosistemas, acelerada degradación medioambiental que amenaza el suministro de agua y alimentos, entre otros” (p. 11), constituyen una amenaza global, tanto para el sistema económico, como para la propia subsistencia de la humanidad. A pesar del impacto global que implica el cambio climático se espera que sean las naciones bajo opresión económica quienes suframos de forma desproporcional las secuelas de este, soportando entre el 75 y 80% de los daños (Cortés, 2013, p. 11). Tal como elabora Cortés (2013), aun cuando América Latina y el Caribe genera menos del 10% de las emisiones a nivel global “las proyecciones indican que continuará un paulatino pero persistente aumento del promedio de temperatura con graves consecuencias para los ecosistemas y habitantes de la región” (p. 11).

Profundizando en la vinculación entre el cambio climático y el actual modelo de producción capitalista, Cortés (2013) resalta como este fenómeno se enmarca en la “crisis de un patrón civilizatorio de crecimiento supuestamente infinito” (p. 13), crisis que ubica a la población mundial frente a una disyuntiva radicalmente nueva “o se responde con una transformación profunda de tales patrones dominantes, con su concepción de la riqueza y del progreso, patrones científico-tecnológicos, concepción de los bienes comunes, de su uso, preservación y distribución, o seguimos avanzando hacia la barbarie global” (p. 13)

Fundamentándose en un análisis anclado en la perspectiva epistemológica decolonial latinoamericana, Cajigas-Rotundo (2007) presenta el concepto *biocolonialidad del poder*, mediante el cual hace referencia a “la existencia de un patrón de poder colonial aún vigente sobre la naturaleza” (p. 60). El autor amplía como este concepto desarrolla

el entronque entre la ecología política y el programa de investigación modernidad/colonialidad. Si la noción propuesta por Quijano denota la colonialidad como una patrón de poder articulado en torno a la idea de raza que produce subjetividades y ejerce un control del trabajo y del territorio, la biocolonialidad hace énfasis en la producción de naturalezas en el contexto de una de las manifestaciones del capitalismo contemporáneo: el ecocapitalismo (p. 60).

De esta forma se entiende que la biocolonialidad “actualiza las asimetrías de poder presentes en la modernidad/colonialidad; esto es, reconfigura la colonialidad en el capitalismo contemporáneo (Cajigas-Rotundo, 2007, p. 60).

Si la “colonialidad del poder” hace referencia a las asimetrías de poder presentes en las relaciones económicas, sociales, culturales, subjetivas, epistémicas y políticas entre los centros y las periferias del sistema mundo moderno/colonial que posibilita la subordinación étnica y epistémica de las poblaciones locales, es decir a las desigualdades y jerarquizaciones inscritas en esas relaciones articuladas en torno a la idea de raza –privilegiando lo blanco–, la biocolonialidad del poder pretende visibilizar esas asimetrías –o heterogeneidades estructurales– en el marco del ecocapitalismo en su fase posmoderna/poscolonial (Cajigas-Rotundo, 2007, pp. 62-63).

Se pudiera destacar como en el contexto de América Latina y el Caribe, uno de los principales dispositivos de poder de la biocolonialidad lo ha constituido la *mercantilización de la naturaleza*. Franceschi-Barraza (2014), al citar a Gudynas, destaca como esta mercantilización avanza al fragmentar la naturaleza en “los llamados ‘bienes y servicios ambientales’ y en distintas mercaderías para insertarla en los procesos productivos. Los componentes de los ecosistemas, sean especies de fauna o flora o, incluso, sus genes o sus ciclos ecológicos, se convierten en mercancías sujetas a las reglas del comercio, que pueden tener dueños y valor económico (p. 92).

Frente a lo anterior, Franceschi-Barraza (2014) plantea la interrogante respecto a si el tema ambiental debe considerarse como una “cuestión social contemporánea”. Ello al considerar que “las dimensiones estructurales y coyunturales del capitalismo actual, así como, sus manifestaciones en el campo ambiental, partiendo de que las desigualdades antagónicas entre las clases sociales, las confronta en la pugna por el acceso y manejo de los recursos naturales” (p. 92).

Al elaborar respecto al conflicto de clases que atraviesa al cambio climático, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) resalta como

el posicionamiento neoliberal globalizado no solo ha alienando lo humano desafiándolo, desplazándolo, desvinculándolo de su tejido social y natural sino, además, alterando el proceso autorregulador de la naturaleza. La problemática climática trasciende la dialéctica trabajo–capital, y a la cada vez más polarizada estructura de clases sociales e inclusive lo ambiental (pp. 37-38)

De esta forma, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) subraya como en el sistema económico global neoliberal el ambiente se constituye como escenario de conflictos y se inserta en una dinámica de apropiación de recursos para generar capital en un modelo de explotación desmedida” (p. 12). A lo cual se le añade “la cultura del consumo que ha llevado al límite crítico la posibilidad de generaciones futuras de tener la oportunidad de disfrutar el mundo tal cual lo disfrutamos hoy” (p. 12). Frente a lo cual, coincidimos con el autor al plantear que

la dinámica de inequidad de la globalización en sus excesos no solo redujo la ocupación y polarizó las clases sociales, sino que ahora lapida la capacidad humana de perpetuarse como especie. La estructura del capital está montada sobre la base de empresas consumidoras y transformadoras de energía fósil. Esto implica que la batalla por la sustentabilidad planetaria es la batalla contra el capital neoliberal globalizado y las naciones industrializadas como sus principales aliados (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, pp. 158-159).

Desprofesionalización y condiciones laborales

Recientemente se ha establecido como área de atención los efectos de la desprofesionalización. Un fenómeno que trasciende a distintos campos profesionales, incluyendo el Trabajo Social. Benito y Chinchilla (2005) establecen que “la flexibilización laboral se ha utilizado como método para fragmentar las profesiones de Trabajo Social” en Costa Rica. Estos autores amplían que la desprofesionalización “es un proceso dirigido a descalificar de forma premeditada el rango y competencia profesional. Pretende disminuir paulatinamente las calidades y cualidades que caracterizan a una profesión de formación y trayectoria universitaria” (p. 1). Desprofesionalizar implica reducir y eliminar las características que hacen de una profesión, precisamente, una profesión. Asimismo, Hernández (2017) lo define como “el proceso tendente a descalificar a una profesión y

que tiene como resultado la pérdida de la autonomía en su ejercicio profesional, del control de su saber monolítico y de su reconocimiento social, lo cual nos lleva a condiciones laborales desfavorables". (p.164). Germán Reyes (2015), en un análisis sobre la invisibilización de los derechos laborales como parte de los derechos humanos en México, afirma que de manera colectiva "hay un descontento generalizado por las condiciones en las que se encuentran las relaciones laborales y de producción, y en general el trabajo" (p. 76).

Este resultado en el ámbito laboral no surge de manera espontánea o sin predeterminación. El consenso establecido en la literatura profesional es que la causa principal que propulsa el fenómeno de la desprofesionalización son los movimientos de la globalización neoliberal. "Es necesario precisar que la globalización tiene un claro y dominante componente económico, el cual está circunscrito al capitalismo, particularmente en su expresión neoliberal" (Benito & Chinchilla, 2016). En un estudio de caso sobre las perspectivas sindicales en la globalización y sobre cómo se refleja en la regulación laboral, Bouzas, Evaristo y Vega (2015), establecen que

La globalización es un proceso que se inicia en los setenta y aún se encuentra en construcción, el cual nos golpea en la cara con un sinnúmero de evidencias en el mundo del trabajo y una constante: la flexibilización del trabajo, que viene a transformar éste, a los trabajadores e incluso a las organizaciones que éstos crean (p. 158).

El Trabajo Social no ha sido exento de los efectos del neoliberalismo, con su correspondiente efecto en la precarización de la profesión. Huertas-Sosa y Ramos-Cruz (2015) puntualizan, en sus reflexiones sobre como la práctica del Trabajo Social independiente, que el Trabajo Social "no funciona independientemente de las determinaciones históricas o sociales, y requiere ser considerado en el contexto de los procesos económicos y políticos vigentes para poder entender el porqué, el cómo y para qué de la profesión." (p. 26). Por tanto, la globalización ha permitido que a través de los propios Estados se realicen cambios en las políticas públicas en las cuales las nociones neoliberales permean sobre las condiciones laborales y los servicios que estos proveen. En investigaciones realizadas como parte del desarrollo del proyecto ético-político profesional para el Trabajo Social en Puerto Rico, López, Barreto y Rivera (2014) establecieron que

ante las actuales condiciones laborales, se empobrece la calidad de los servicios que, en virtud de derechos sociales, fueron conquistados por la clase trabajadora y diversos sectores de la sociedad civil a través del Siglo XX. Hoy estos se ven amenazados por el impacto del neoliberalismo sobre la política social (p. 38).

Benito y Chinchilla (2016) identifican las distintas áreas perjudicadas que caracterizan la desprofesionalización del Trabajo Social como

las metodologías de intervención, conocimientos particulares, presencia de paradigmas epistemológicos y ontológicos que sustentan el cuerpo de conocimientos y la intervención, métodos de investigación de la realidad, capacidad de interpretación, identidad profesional, principios filosóficos y valores éticos, organización política y profesional entre otros (p. 71).

Por otro lado, la misma profesión se encuentra ante una posible desaparición como parte de las manifestaciones capitalistas. López, Barreto y Rivera (2014) explican que

la desprofesionalización o ruptura con el Trabajo Social como profesión, la focalización y precarización de los servicios sociales y el desplazamiento del Trabajo Social al sector privado como alternativa para mercantilizar los servicios, traen consigo nuevas tensiones y, a su vez, mayor vulnerabilidad de los derechos humanos para todos los sujetos implicados. (p. 38).

Esto se extiende y comienza desde las etapas de creación y luego contratación de dichos servicios. Los neoliberales entienden que el empleado debe ser contratado mientras pueda ofrecer el desempeño esperado y cuando disminuya dicha "capacidad" el Estado debería tener la potestad de sustituirlo con uno más "capaz" (Huertas-Sosa & Ramos-Cruz, 2015, p. 27); creando entonces nuevas transformaciones en la profesión de manera emergente y responsiva ante la nueva precariedad.

Emergen los contratos por servicios, los trabajadores autónomos, los contratos por tiempo determinado, la utilización de figuras como becas y pasantías, en fin, nuevas formas jurídicas para eludir la relación laboral tradicional. Así que cada vez menos se contratan en el empleo clásico asalariado (Huertas-Sosa & Ramos-Cruz, 2015, p. 30).

Esta inestabilidad se transmite en la condición laboral salarial. Debido al desplazamiento de puestos profesionales de Trabajo Social, la falta de legitimización de la profesión y el reemplazo por otros puestos, han creado la producción de servicios a costos más bajos, por salarios “más baratos”; alimentando la conveniencia para las corporaciones que remolcan el capitalismo (Nieves-Rolón, et al., 2019; López, et al., 2014; Benito & Chinchilla, 2005; 2016).

Finalmente, se toma en cuenta la evolución tecnológica como instrumento, pero más importante, como reemplazo de puestos de servicio; modificando y distorsionando los mismos. En una investigación sobre las condiciones laborales para jóvenes en México, María de Jesús (2015, p. 202) expone como las “transformaciones tecnológicas, productivas y organizacionales” complejizan los espacios (encauzados en las empresas) y las competencias laborales que se arraigan a estas. Luego procede en explicar cómo esta evolución, mediante una interpretación marxista, puede llevarnos a profesiones de “trabajo muerto” (en donde la producción presencial y de fuerza no es necesitada) dando como resultado el incremento del desempleo, precarización estructural del trabajo, rebajas salariales, pérdida de derechos, etc. (p. 204).

Esta última vertiente tecnológica toma un lugar central en este momento de crisis mundial; en el cual, globalmente, se experimenta un pandemia de salud con el COVID-19 (Corona Virus). Se deben considerar los cambios adaptativos emergentes en la profesión que se sobrellevan en los servicios, tomando en consideración lo expuesto anteriormente. Sin descartar la posibilidad del aceleramiento que pueda tener la tecnología en la minimización de la profesión, se puede investigar y analizar los beneficios y avances que la tecnología puede desarrollar para el desempeño de la profesión de Trabajo Social.

Estamos frente a una crisis extra-económica, provocada por un virus que se expande en el planeta y que afecta al mismo tiempo a la oferta y demanda de bienes y servicios, a la economía real y la financiera, que se da junto con la insuficiencia de conocimientos científicos para enfrentarlo (Neffa, 2020, p. 10)

Por lo tanto, debemos aprovechar esta crisis para repensar la profesión y su involucramiento en las nuevas formas de desarrollo.

El mundo que viene será muy distinto. Han caído barreras teóricas e ideológicas que nos permiten pensar como alternativa un nuevo modo de desarrollo posible, incluso si no se modifica el actual modo de producción, porque la salida de esta crisis no la va a proporcionar el mercado. [...] El Estado democrático emerge de nuevo frente al mercado como la forma institucional dominante y no se lo percibe en este caso como la causa de los problemas (p. 11).

Políticas públicas que pudieran atender los principales problemas sociales identificados

Pobreza y desigualdad

La pobreza como manifestación de la cuestión social en el contexto de América Latina y el Caribe es un tema que continúa siendo eje de discusión y debate en relación con las nociones que se tienen de la misma. De acuerdo con Pérez (2013) “hablar de pobreza implica la comprensión del desarrollo, cualquiera sea la construcción que se tenga de este controversial concepto”. (p.43). De manera similar Muñoz-Erazo (2015) plantea que “la complejidad del término ‘pobreza’ se evidencia en la gama de referenciales que de ella se hace y que reflejan la dificultad para encontrar una interpretación formal de este concepto”. Por lo antes expuesto, la relación entre la pobreza y el desarrollo de las políticas públicas implementadas por el Estado estarán basadas en “la interpretación y representación que de la pobreza y de los pobres se haga” (Muñoz-Erazo, 2015, p. 101).

Lo antes expuesto nos lleva a reflexionar en que el concepto pobreza, más allá de ser “controversial” y “complejo”, es manipulable, promoviendo así que sea el Estado el que defina quienes entran en el espectro de dicha problemática social y como consecuencia la forma en la que estos serán impactados por las políticas públicas.

El tema de la pobreza, más que cualquier otro, ha estado marcado por connotaciones políticas, dado que los diferentes intereses de los grupos sociales y políticos inciden fuertemente en los modelos de distribución de la riqueza (Pérez, 2013, p. 50).

Ante esto, Leyton y Muñoz (2016) elaboran que

Las dificultades que han experimentado los Estados latinoamericanos para establecer un contrato social o un pacto de ciudadanía que garantice mecanismos de aseguramiento universal para el conjunto de

la población han reforzado las dinámicas exclusionarias en la región, primando las políticas focalizadas en los más pobres y vulnerables (p. 55).

Además, dichos autores concluyen que

Esto, pues fundamentalmente restringen las posibilidades de acción desde el Estado para mejorar la calidad de vida de la población en situación de pobreza al no preocuparse por las estructuras y mecanismos que reproducen y mantienen a esta población excluida de la sociedad a la que pertenecen (p.58).

De manera coincidente, Del Valle y Oliva (2014) concuerdan que

En realidad, se trata más bien de políticas “de” la pobreza, que no buscan la superación del problema sino encerrarlo en un espacio social delimitado y codificado de forma tal de ampliar los márgenes de tolerancia social y evitar así que altere el normal funcionamiento de la parte “sana” de la sociedad (p.8).

En síntesis, basado en los autores antes expuestos, las políticas públicas en el contexto latinoamericano promueven la exclusión y perpetúan la desigualdad en sociedad. Debido a que las ideas capitalistas y neoliberales, a pesar de los esfuerzos colectivos por erradicarlas, están presentes. Johnson y Da Silva (2019) elaboran que “en esa senda, el aumento de la miseria y el desempleo a nivel mundial es interpretado como malestar pasajero a ser mitigado con políticas compensatorias” (p.73). Además, puntualizan que “esas políticas complementan la insistente mercantilización del acceso a los bienes sociales, como educación, salud y jubilaciones. Esas medidas económicas son implementadas de forma heterogénea y pertinaz en América Latina, pues hacen parte del conjunto de políticas neoliberales”. También resaltan que en las políticas públicas latinoamericanas se emula el modelo anglosajón y eurocentrista (Johnson y Da Silva, 2019).

Considerando de que en las políticas públicas contra la pobreza en el contexto latinoamericano se destaca el pensamiento neoliberal, capitalista y eurocéntrico, un repensar de las mismas es imperativo. Es decir, es necesario el desarrollo de políticas que se adapten a la realidad de América Latina y el Caribe. Ante esta premisa, Gómez (2013) propone la idea de desarrollar políticas públicas críticas.

Desde una mirada liberadora, las políticas deben ser formuladas de manera vinculada al contexto de realidades sobre el cual actúan; sin necesidad de caer en el particularismo, las políticas públicas deben responder a las características del lugar desde el cual emergen y para el cual se piensan (p. 96).

Bajo el mismo argumento de políticas públicas críticas, Barragán (2011) propone que

La teoría de la liberación es un proyecto ético-político latinoamericano que se presenta como una alternativa válida para un nuevo desarrollo de la política en la región, redirigiendo las actuaciones estatales a favor de administraciones públicas más incluyentes y responsables con las poblaciones oprimidas y afectadas por el fenómeno de la miseria, todo en pro de una política de la prosperidad, propuesta desde los postulados de Enrique Dussel (p.106).

Procesos migratorios

Entre las diferentes naciones existen modelos migratorios que tienen el propósito de esbozar alguna solución de nivel jurídico-político a los desafíos que representa este fenómeno. Pero, además, refleja la voluntad política del país, sustentada en un determinado sesgo ideológico que, al mismo tiempo, instauro el tipo de relación que se pretende establecer entre los migrantes y la sociedad e instituciones del país de recepción. En definitiva, las políticas migratorias establecen las condiciones de elegibilidad de grupos de poblaciones, identificando la cantidad y composición de los candidatos a entrar, transitar o salir del territorio (Navarrete, 2017). La elaboración de estas políticas es potestad de cada nación. En ese proceso intervienen una serie de factores internos y externos de carácter político, social y económico, así como los patrones migratorios enfrentados y las intencionalidades de los gobernantes para atender, promover, regular o restringir las migraciones internacionales (Muñoz-Bravo, 2016).

En el caso de México y su migración prominentemente hacia los Estados Unidos, ha tenido diferentes acuerdos y políticas entre ambas naciones, por décadas, desde el Acuerdo Bracero, a mediados del siglo pasado, hasta las actuales medidas de criminalización de la administración Trump en Estados Unidos. El asunto migratorio es un tema constante en la agenda bilateral México-Estados Unidos. Es un aspecto de la formulación de política externa e interna que define, en gran medida, la dinámica de la

relación entre ambos países. La migración mexicana hacia territorio estadounidense ha representado una serie de retos sociales y políticos para ambos estados, pero también ha generado el ingreso promedio de más de 21.000 millones de dólares anuales a México, producto de las remesas, mientras que Estados Unidos obtiene beneficios económicos y demográficos, puesto que es gracias a los inmigrantes que este país puede mantener el actual sistema de producción y de vida en su sociedad (Muñoz-Bravo, 2016, pp. 333-366).

Por otro lado, en el caso de la crisis política, humanitaria y migratoria del éxodo hondureño y centroamericano, no puede eludirse la responsabilidad directa de Estados Unidos en su área de influencia y control político regional (Durand, 2019). En Chile la reflexión sobre la necesidad de una política migratoria acorde a los tiempos es una cuestión fundamental. El aumento sostenido de población inmigrante en las últimas décadas ha traído nuevos cuestionamientos sobre la forma de legislar el fenómeno. Ante esto, las opiniones y actitudes de la población nacional constituyen importantes vehículos respecto a cómo adecuar su política a la nueva realidad (Navarrete, 2017).

Carmen Norambuena y Rodrigo Matamoros (2017) hacen un estudio analítico de la política migratoria argentina desde la teoría del institucionalismo histórico donde las migraciones internacionales representan uno de los procesos más relevantes de su historia y cuya institucionalidad, ha estado latente durante la última década. Se hace un recorrido desde las políticas restrictivas del siglo XX a las nuevas políticas basadas en derechos humanos. La Ley de Migraciones del año 2004 en Argentina, ha sido reconocida por los estudiosos como una normativa migratoria de puertas abiertas y tiene el mérito de ser la primera ley en el mundo en reconocer el derecho humano a migrar, cuestión fundamental si se considera la percepción restringida hacia las migraciones que había caracterizado la política migratoria argentina del siglo XX, sustentada en una noción de seguridad nacional. Por su parte, esta ley se pensó con miras al fortalecimiento de la integración regional, propendiendo al logro de la libre circulación de personas en el Mercosur (Norambuena y Matamoros, 2017).

En el caso de Venezuela, Tomás Muñoz Bravo (2016) analiza que existe actualmente una política de no política que radica en la falta de reconocimiento de la existencia de una comunidad venezolana

transfronterizas, que se ha incrementado de manera significativa en los últimos tres lustros, como consecuencia de la polarización política que vive el país, la delincuencia y el recrudecimiento de la crisis que padece el modelo económico venezolano, basado en gran parte en los ingresos generados por la venta del petróleo. El modelo del expresidente Hugo Chávez logró bajar los índices de pobreza entre 2003 y 2009, pero en la actualidad, este modelo participa en el fomento de la emigración ante la pauperización de los empleos o la falta de ellos, la carencia de productos básicos y la inflación que supera los dos dígitos anuales (Muñoz-Bravo, 2016).

Es inevitable que las políticas migratorias se tengan que ajustar a las coyunturas, pero deben mantener una base de principios fundamentales de acuerdo con la ley y en concordancia con la historia y el presente latinoamericano. El Pacto Mundial para la Migración Segura, Ordenada y Regular, firmada en Marrakech, Marruecos, en diciembre de 2018, exige la aplicación de un principio básico, ya estipulado en múltiples foros internacionales: el de la “responsabilidad compartida” (ONU, 2018). Un principio que obviamente no tiene un correlato empírico, ni en los países centroamericanos de origen ni menos aún en el de destino, Estados Unidos, cuyo gobierno, por lo pronto, ya se retiró formalmente de este pacto. Por otra parte, el otro principio básico de Naciones Unidas y del Pacto Mundial es el de “coherencia institucional”, que, en otras palabras, significa ser equitativo entre lo que se exige y lo que se practica. En el caso de México, este principio fue puesto a prueba con las caravanas de 2018 y salvo diversos errores y omisiones de parte de las autoridades gubernamentales, se trató de salvaguardar los derechos humanos de los migrantes y de solventar la crisis coyuntural que supone recibir de manera masiva a cerca de una decena de miles de migrantes en tránsito hasta la frontera. (Durand, 2019). Aunque, cabe destacar que las políticas de cierre de fronteras y persecución de los migrantes tanto en Europa como en los Estados Unidos están en gran medida sustentadas en nuevas formas de racismo donde la figura del inmigrante prima entre los sujetos racializados negativamente como los otros y las otras de la nación (Lao-Montes, 2008).

Medio ambiente y cambio climático

Varios estudios destacan como en el contexto de América Latina y el Caribe las políticas públicas para disminuir o adaptarse a los efectos del cambio climático no han quedado de forma exclusiva bajo el dominio de los estados, sino que también han sido influenciados por la lógica

mercantilista. Sobre el particular, expone Cortés (2013) que “el Estado ha venido sufriendo una pérdida de control y poder sobre lo público en medio del dilema que todo lo estatal es público, pero no todo lo público es estatal” (pp.12-13). Puntualiza, además, como “la función central del paradigma neoliberal ha sido pasar elementos de la esfera estatal a lo privado (mercado) sin sacarlos de la esfera pública” (p. 13). El autor, al abordar el contexto histórico de explotación de la región de América Latina y el Caribe, arguye que una nueva política pública para detener el cambio climático

no solo implica recuperar el protagonismo ciudadano, sino también la propia historia de resistencia del continente. Es cierto que los efectos del cambio climático se han precipitado en las últimas décadas, pero este fenómeno no se limita a este período. Como lo han destacado diversos historiadores de nuestra región, a lo largo de cinco siglos, ecosistemas enteros fueron arrasados por la implantación de monocultivos de exportación. Fauna, flora, humanos, fueron víctimas de invasiones biológicas de conquistadores europeos o de enfermedades. En definitiva, esta dramática situación de crisis exige un cambio sustancial en la forma como concebimos el cambio climático y las formas de pensar nuestras acciones individuales y colectivas (Cortés, 2013, p. 15)

De forma coincidente, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) destaca como “la política pública a favor del desarrollo sustentable y la preservación del ambiente natural ha estado henchida por las luchas ideológicas de diversos grupos de interés principalmente en aspectos tangentes al crecimiento económico” (p. 143). El autor amplía como la noción de *crecimiento* “es el producto ideológico neoliberal que busca romper las ataduras de reglamentación proteccionista” (p. 143). Además, destaca como “el crecimiento neoliberal cabildea y financia políticas públicas antagónicas a la sustentabilidad y la preservación de la biodiversidad vía la desregulación o eliminación de leyes protectoras (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, p. 144).

Cajigas-Rotundo (2007) nos señala como, a pesar de lo anterior,

frente a la hegemonía del conocimiento científico/empresarial presente en las políticas estatales y globales de biodiversidad emerge la posibilidad de un *polílogo* epistémico y una praxis transmoderna y posoccidental, es decir, un conocimiento y una práctica no eurocentrados en los cuales las diversas fuentes de

poder/conocimiento establezcan acuerdos mínimos en torno a la conservación de lo común, de la reproducción de la vida; y en concreto, sea posible establecer una plataforma de conocimiento que otorgue igual validez al conocimiento científico y al conocimiento local (p. 70).

Enmarcado también en la crítica a los derechos humanos eurocéntricos, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) esboza como “más allá de tratados voluntarios, poco se ha logrado en el terreno de fijar responsabilidad por daños a grupos poblacionales o países. Aquí transluce el vínculo con los derechos humanos de poblaciones vulnerables y no vulnerables alrededor del mundo” (p. 4). Ante esto, destaca como “el desarrollo de políticas para un crecimiento sostenible o sustentable basado en la experiencia comunitaria es una idea que debe ser reincorporada a la discusión pública” (p. 8). También destaca como los movimientos comunitarios en América Latina permiten la identificación de estrategias “de adaptación climáticas ajustadas a nuestras necesidades y conformación cultural en el contexto de los recientes cambios climáticos experimentados” (p. 9).

El uso de espacios naturales como aliciente al estrés o estrés térmico, la energía solar a nivel doméstico y comunitario, vehículos eléctricos, aumentar de rutas de transporte colectivo, usar la bicicleta como medio de transporte, la reforestación de bosques, los edificios verdes y el espacio público verde per cápita son solo algunas de las medidas más populares en el contexto de una ciudad sustentable (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, p. 9)

Además, el autor, especialista en Trabajo Social, política social y cambio climático, nos señala como necesario el desarrollo, implementación y evaluación “de política pública para trabajar en fase para la prevención, intervención y mitigación ante eventos naturales extremos. Algunos de estos eventos extremos son las inundaciones repentinas intensas, sequías prolongadas, olas de calor y otros peligros asociados a los fenómenos climáticos ciclónicos” (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, p. 9).

Ortiz-Mojica (2019) concluye destacando la necesidad de que el Trabajo Social asuma un enfoque ambientalista dirigido a insertarse “en la elaboración de políticas sociales no solo desde el escritorio legislativo sino además enfocando su análisis de la realidad social en los proyectos emergentes comunitarios fortaleciendo, nutriendo y nutriéndose en el proceso” (p. 154). Amplía que para lograr este fin “el análisis del problema

a ser atendido debe ser uno abarcador con una perspectiva sociocrítica que permita la afluencia de saberes para una práctica transdisciplinaria” (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, p. 154). Por lo cual, se destaca la necesidad del establecimiento de políticas públicas que reconozcan a naturaleza como una figura jurídica dotada de derechos y el incluir a los grupos vulnerabilizados en la planificación, implementación y evaluación de políticas públicas dirigidas a detener el cambio climático.

Desprofesionalización y condiciones laborales

Considerando que la globalización neoliberal es el elemento principal que propende a la desprofesionalización a través de cambios en la economía capitalista, surgen cuestionamientos sobre los Estados que permiten entrelazar estos cambios desde las políticas públicas que regulan los países Latinoamericanos y del Caribe. Cruz y López (2019) puntualizan que “la política pública es concebida como las respuestas que se generan por parte del Estado que se implementan o materializan por instituciones como respuesta a las necesidades y demandas de una sociedad”. (p. 94) De Jesús (2015) concuerda y añade que las políticas públicas son una de las herramientas principales para el manejo de estos fenómenos económicos/laborales exponiendo que

la globalización es un proceso innovador que está permitiendo descubrir las dos caras de la moneda: la explotación y subordinación, la igualdad y las oportunidades. No hay recetas mágicas, las iniciativas de cambio pueden empezarse a construir con el instrumental que brindan las políticas públicas (p. 220).

No obstante, se reconoce que a pesar de poder establecer las necesidades que entablan los problemas sociales, las políticas públicas que se desarrollan son incongruentes con las necesidades identificadas.

Cruz y López (2019) elaboran como en Colombia el diseño de la política pública distrital tiende a ser coherente frente a la

estructura de programas que quieren optimizar el servicio y dar soporte a las necesidades de la población. Esta política conceptualiza de manera compleja las realidades sociales más allá de las consecuencias o resultados explícitos de una necesidad, relacionando de manera sistemática aspectos como el medio ambiente, la familia, la comunidad, entre otros, que permiten la articulación de un campo interdisciplinario de conocimiento como epidemiología, psicología,

Trabajo Social, Sociología y demás, para dar respuestas a estas necesidades. Sin embargo, en el momento de implementar los diferentes modelos de gestión se visibiliza incoherencia con la realidad soportada en problemas de manejo del concepto de la necesidad o problema en la política pública, de las instituciones que implementan los modelos y de la comunidad que es focalizada (p. 94).

Efectivamente, se establece que las mismas políticas laborales son el medio para el deterioro de las profesiones. En el caso de la desprofesionalización, se han creado distintas “reformas” en los ámbitos laborales en países como: Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, México, Costa Rica y Puerto Rico (Aravena-Carrasco, 2020; Benito & Chinchilla, 2016; De Jesús, 2015; García-García, 2017; Lucena, 2020; Neffa, 2020; Pucci, 2020; Reyes, 2015), las cuales se promueven como de beneficio sustancial para los involucrados, tanto profesionales como beneficiarios del servicio. Sin embargo, al realizar un análisis de su contenido y estudiar sus efectos, resultan aún más precarizadas las condiciones y derechos laborales, unido a la deslegitimización de las profesiones, incluyendo la de Trabajo Social. Esto, últimamente, beneficia al empleador corporativo y empresarial. García-García (2017), al elaborar un análisis sobre la reforma laboral realizada en el contexto puertorriqueño durante el año 2017, destaca

que es negativo para los empleados y beneficioso para los patronos porque se diseñó con la aspiración de que ello redundará en una mayor creación de empleos. Habrá que esperar a ver si el objetivo se logra. Mientras tanto, el sector obrero de la isla dependerá de la buena fe patronal en la contratación y en la concesión de términos y condiciones de empleo. De no ser así, en la era de la revolución tecnológica habremos retornado a los tiempos previos a la revolución industrial. (Benito y Chinchilla, 2016, p. 1166).

Incluso, Benito y Chinchilla (2016) critican, respecto a la deslegitimación de la profesión del Trabajo Social, que por medio de la contratación de empleados no especializados o educados para el puesto, se concretiza una de las vías para fragmentar la misma profesión. Esto permite tener como resultado menos pérdidas y más beneficios capitales (para las empresas, corporaciones y agencias) a través de la mercantilización de la profesión.

el Poder Ejecutivo [de Costa Rica] elevó a conocimiento de la Asamblea Legislativa el nocivo Proyecto de Ley conocido como “Ley de

Transformación del Sector Público No Estatal”. Dentro de sus múltiples implicaciones negativas se destaca la minimización del Trabajo Social como una disciplina, desregulándola de tal forma que no necesariamente se deberá ser trabajador social para poder intervenir en este campo disciplinar (Benito & Chinchilla, 2016, p. 68).

Esto es un proceso de flexibilización laboral en el cual

la incorporación de personas no profesionales en la ejecución de servicios sociales lleva a una progresiva degradación de la intervención y consecuentemente, de su imagen, legitimación y credibilidad social, en la medida que su trabajo responderá a las buenas intenciones personales, y no a un proceso metodológico y de acumulación de conocimientos y experiencias que garanticen un mayor nivel de eficacia en la intervención (Benito & Chinchilla, 2005, p. 4).

Por tanto, la habilitación de la mercantilización de servicios, sustentada por políticas neoliberales, permite que las dinámicas de fragmentación profesional ocurran. López, Barreto y Rivera (2014) destacan que

la desprofesionalización o ruptura con el Trabajo Social como profesión, la focalización y precarización de los servicios sociales y el desplazamiento del Trabajo Social al sector privado como alternativa para mercantilizar los servicios, traen consigo nuevas tensiones y, a su vez, mayor vulnerabilidad de los derechos humanos para todos los sujetos implicados (p. 38)

Entonces, para contrarrestar la desprofesionalización es imprescindible la protección de los derechos laborales. Protección que debe ser establecida como parte de los acuerdos, resoluciones, tratados, articulaciones, convenios y constituciones; como parte de los esfuerzos para garantizar, no solo la oportunidad equitativa de integrarse al cuerpo laboral, sino también, asegurar que se cumpla con los parámetros de dignidad laboral y de calidad en la prestación de los servicios.

Aspectos por mejorar identificados por la ciudadanía junto a la cual se trabaja

Pobreza y desigualdad

Los movimientos sociales en América Latina y el Caribe han estado presentes en distintos periodos de nuestra historia en respuesta a diversas problemáticas. Entre estas, las dinámicas de opresión y exclusión que

perpetúan la pobreza y la desigualdad. Martí (2004) expone que los movimientos sociales

son una forma de acción política colectiva que implica la preexistencia de un conflicto que trata de resolverse a través de la movilización, hablar de movimientos sociales en la actualidad indica que algo anda mal (al menos para unos cuantos) en «nuestro» nuevo orden global y con un especial énfasis en la región latinoamericana (p.80).

En el contexto latinoamericano dicha movilización puede surgir en respuesta al neoliberalismo y capitalismo que perpetua la desigualdad económica y exclusión en nuestro contexto. Bajo esta línea, Centro Social Ruptura (2016) invitan a la movilización en contra del sistema capitalista debido a que “ha sido un sistema social depredador de la vida y de la naturaleza. Por tanto, pensamos que es necesario hacer algo en contra de esta dinámica depredadora y criminal de la lógica capitalista” (p.138).

La sociedad no es estática. Si no que está en constante cambio a través del tiempo. Los movimientos sociales no son la excepción a dichos cambios. De acuerdo con Lago y Marotias (2006) el internet y las redes son parte de las nuevas formas de movilización en contra del neoliberalismo y la desigualdad. Dichas autoras plantean que:

El modelo de organización en red, a partir del cual se estructuran las principales actividades de la sociedad de la información, también es un modelo referencial para los movimientos y redes sociales de resistencia y oposición al proceso de globalización neoliberal (p.2).

En respuesta a las condiciones de pobreza y desigualdad económica surgen movimientos de índole comunitario. Ejemplo de esto, son los movimientos de turismo comunitario en regiones de Cuzco, Perú. Casas, Soler y Pastor (2012) plantean que

Este tipo de turismo está basado en la comunidad local que pretende reducir el impacto negativo y reforzar los impactos positivos del turismo en la naturaleza. Permite generar riqueza en las áreas rurales de los países en vía de desarrollo, a través de la participación de la comunidad local en la gestión turística, de forma que los beneficios repercutan en la propia comunidad (p.93).

En Puerto Rico, el Centro de Acción Urbana, Comunitaria y Empresarial (CAUCE) es un proyecto de alcance comunitario en el que se promueve la

rehabilitación social, física y económica del casco urbano de Río Piedras y de las comunidades limítrofes (Pérez, Ponce y Matos 2016). Mientras, en México, trabajadores sociales han desarrollado proyectos de impacto a comunidades en desventaja económica. Ejemplo de esto el proyecto Reconfiguración de Ejes y Lazos Comunitarios (Galeana & Sainz, 2018). Dichos autores plantean que

A partir de las intervenciones realizadas en la primera región, se elaboraron procesos, estrategias y acciones de manera articulada, con un enfoque de promoción social centrado en derechos sociales y en la construcción de colectivos, en donde se enfatizan como funciones de Trabajo Social: la educación, la organización, la gestión y la mediación sociales, dirigidas a movilizar al colectivo para atender la problemática de su localidad (p. 70).

Procesos migratorios

En las políticas migratorias que se van generando en la región es importante ampliar la perspectiva de las vulnerabilidades y los aspectos de diversidad. Uno de los problemas a tratar y que pueden quedar invisibilizados en la discusión política de los procesos migratorios es la perspectiva de género. Sabemos que un número significativo de mujeres cruzan todos los días las fronteras por distintas razones: pobreza, falta de oportunidades, deterioro ambiental, desastres naturales, persecución, violencia de género y otros motivos que afectan su bienestar o el de sus familias. En este sentido los Estados y organizaciones de apoyo necesitan comprender los requerimientos de atención y protección de los diferentes grupos que conforman los flujos migratorios, así como también de aquellos miembros de la familia que quedan en los lugares de origen, para pensar políticas, normativas y programas pertinentes a sus necesidades y también oportunidades. Las mujeres se enfrentan a contextos de vulnerabilidad asociados no solo a la migración irregular, sino también a la discriminación y la violencia basada en género. Las mujeres, sin importar su condición migratoria, pueden sufrir doble discriminación: por ser mujer y por ser migrante. También es conocido que las mujeres se ven expuestas a la violencia sexual, física y psicológica durante todo el proceso migratorio (OIM, 2016).

Otro grupo vulnerable es la comunidad LGBTI. Una persona con identidad sexual diferente a la normativa social impuesta, posee una ciudadanía lacerada y de segunda categoría frente al privilegio de la heterosexualidad.

Este contexto político, económico y social desde el rechazo, recibe al emigrante con una orientación sexual homosexual. Tanto la condición de inmigrante como de persona homosexual es lo que podemos interpretar como la intersección de identidades humanas, que en este caso valida doblemente la exclusión (López, Toro y Nieves, 2012). La violencia hacia esta población que migra a otros países no se detiene automáticamente al cruzar una frontera y los instrumentos de protección nacionales varían en la región. Así, mientras Belice penaliza la homosexualidad, El Salvador y Honduras no cuentan con mecanismos de protección; y aunque México DF reconoce el matrimonio de las personas del mismo sexo, Amnistía Internacional reportó que la mayoría de las personas LGBTI que se han movilizado del Norte de Centroamérica a este país, continúan experimentando altos índices de discriminación y violencia, tanto por civiles como por autoridades gubernamentales; Costa Rica, por medio del seguro social, admite el aseguramiento de parejas del mismo sexo, y su Ministerio de Trabajo permite el beneficio de la pensión por viudez a estas; y Nicaragua cuenta con una legislación que penaliza la discriminación hacia las personas LGBTI y una Procuraduría de la Diversidad Sexual. Las personas migrantes LGBTI no deben ser discriminadas, y hay cosas que los Estados pueden hacer, esto implica capacitación y sensibilización, así como la comprensión de los puntos de riesgo para la discriminación de las personas LGBTI con el fin de adaptar las medidas para salvaguardar su seguridad y dignidad (OIM, 2016).

Por otro lado, Leticia Calderón (2006) plantea que, debido a que la mayoría de los migrantes internacionales son trabajadores, el espacio laboral es el contacto más inmediato y sostenido que tienen en la sociedad a la que se incorporan. Es tal su importancia en la vida de los sujetos que este espacio llega a constituir, en ocasiones, la idea global que los migrantes establecen sobre el nuevo país. La sindicalización es, por tanto, una de las vías por excelencia para analizar la experiencia de todo grupo étnico en sus distintos destinos y en la búsqueda de soluciones a los problemas inherentes a la inmigración. También, incluye el activismo en los grupos étnicos y la participación electoral, como fuerzas tanto para protegerse en un nuevo escenario, como para construir redes sociales que permiten que el circuito migratorio se consolide (Calderón, 2006).

“El fenómeno de las caravanas en Centroamérica es otra expresión de un proceso migratorio que la región ha estado enfrentando por un tiempo”, explica Marcelo Pisani, Director Regional de la OIM para Centroamérica,

Norteamérica y el Caribe. “El mismo constituye un flujo migratorio mixto, impulsado por factores económicos, la reunificación familiar, la violencia y la búsqueda de protección internacional, entre otros” (OIM, 2018). En general, muchos migrantes entienden que ir en caravanas pueden protegerse de la violencia y captar la asistencia que los países están dispuestos a ofrecer, según los acuerdos internacionales.

Medio ambiente y cambio climático

Como parte de los resultados de una investigación centrada en la organización comunitaria y el Trabajo Social Ambiental, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) compila varias recomendaciones dirigidas a la atención del cambio climático. Estas recomendaciones se fundamentaron en el insumo que el investigador recibió de parte de líderes comunitarios, trabajadoras sociales con práctica ambientalista y legisladores municipales. Como recomendaciones, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) destacó la necesidad de realizar la evaluación de la vulnerabilidad ambiental de las comunidades vulnerabilizadas. Para ello, se debe procurar el establecimiento de alianzas entre sectores académicos para la articulación de investigaciones libres o a bajo costo. Además, señaló como apremiante el desarrollo de propuestas a organismos locales e internacionales enfocadas en la investigación, prevención y conservación de los ecosistemas, ello con el involucramiento de las comunidades impactadas. Destaca también la participación de los organismos gubernamentales para evaluar el impacto del cambio climático en el agua, el suelo y el aire. El autor enfatiza en la necesidad de identificar estructuras críticas expuestas a la costa o en áreas inundables. Propone también la sustitución de energía de combustible fósil por energía renovable.

Adicionalmente, Ortiz-Mojica (2019), al puntualizar la relevancia de los grupos comunitarios para la atención adecuada del cambio climático, expone que se deben establecer mecanismos de consulta permanente que permitan a las comunidades identificar las áreas de necesidad y riesgos vinculados al cambio climático. Esto, unido a la creación de comités asesores integrados por profesionales de las Ciencias Sociales y Naturales, que incorpore líderes comunitarios para asesorar en aspectos vinculados a política pública.

Igualmente, al enfatizar en recomendaciones vinculadas al desarrollo teórico-metodológico del Trabajo Social Ambiental, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) enfatiza en la necesidad de fomentar procesos formativos en el Trabajo

Social con un enfoque transdisciplinario, la integración la temática de la crisis ambiental como parte del currículo del Trabajo Social Comunitario y vincular la formación en el campo de las políticas sociales con la crisis ambiental y el espacial aporte que se puede realizar desde el Trabajo Social.

Desprofesionalización y condiciones laborales

Primeramente, se identifica que debemos aceptar el problema de la desprofesionalización como una dinámica que afecta directamente la profesión de Trabajo Social, y no únicamente como un problema externo que se trabaja en su práctica, a través del servicio prestado para otras personas. López, Barreto y Rivera (2014) trazan que

es necesario reconocer que los escenarios laborales donde se inserta el Trabajo Social han sufrido transformaciones y cambios que a su vez impactan la calidad, disponibilidad y el acceso y disfrute de los servicios sociales que se ofrecen en virtud y como garantía de derechos sociales adquiridos. (p. 23).

De esta forma, a modo general, Reyes (2015) identifica que las áreas más afectadas son el desempleo, trabajo informal, pérdida del poder adquisitivo de los salarios y falta de justicia laboral. (p. 70). Benito y Chinchilla (2016) identifican que los efectos que se producen en la profesión del Trabajo Social son: la deslegitimización y credibilidad social de la profesión, movilidad, mercados de trabajos fragmentados, movimiento laboral o ascenso estructural profesional, la reducción del desarrollo gremial y distorsión en las discusiones sobre políticas y la profesión de Trabajo Social (pp.72-73). De manera más específica, discuten que estos efectos en la profesión se concretizan mediante: la formación profesional como negocio, inestabilidad en la contratación laboral, los niveles de ingreso y la contratación de profesionales no preparados en el área de Trabajo Social. (pp. 71-72). Este último efecto concuerda con las argumentaciones de De Jesús (2015), quien destaca que “los cambios en las formas de contratación, cada vez más flexibles, son otro componente que le da funcionalidad al sistema de producción en el actual modelo económico” (p. 206), refiriéndose a la globalización neoliberal y capitalista.

Para lograr cambios sociales y en las políticas públicas que aseguren derechos laborales y que también erradiquen las políticas neoliberales capitalistas, se necesita más participación dentro y fuera de la profesión del Trabajo Social. Por un lado, Reyes (2015) establece la importancia de

“la denuncia internacional para reconocer los problemas de desprofesionalización”. (p. 78). En el caso de las profesiones se requieren redes de políticas públicas para tejer los apoyos y brindar las oportunidades desde los distintos agentes involucrados en el tema. “Estas política no deberían competir sólo al Estado, sino que deben tener un amplio espectro participativo” (De Jesús, 2015, p. 220). Ello, considerando que los movimientos nacionales son los que inciden directamente en estos conflictos.

Solo la fuerza de un colectivo unido y organizado será capaz de defender nuestras propias conquistas y proyectos futuros, y de colocarnos en posición de responder a los reclamos del interior del gremio, así como a los de los movimientos sociales emergentes (López, Barreto, Rivera, 2014, p. 40)

Por ende, se puntualiza sobre los profesionales de Trabajo Social y su involucración en las organizaciones, uniones o gremios, que no tan solo legitiman la profesión y su práctica, pero crean movimientos para involucrarse en el mejoramiento de las condiciones laborales. Huertas-Sosa y Ramos-Cruz (2015) apoyan las medidas como la colegiación obligatoria para, precisamente, promover estos cambios de manera colectiva.

Es sumamente necesaria la colegiación compulsoria y el apoyo de todos y todas las profesionales que están ejerciendo el Trabajo Social. Esta colegiación obligatoria no puede limitarse al pago de una cuota anual, pues entendemos que es vital la participación activa, el apoyo y la integración de los colegiados y las colegiadas a los procesos y a las luchas del CPTSPR (Colegio de Profesionales del Trabajo Social en Puerto Rico), de las cuales, en última instancia, todos y todas nos favoreceremos, ya que todas y todos somos el Colegio (p. 35-36)

Por otro lado, en un estudio para examinar estrategias concretas para mejorar las condiciones laborales actuales de los profesionales del Trabajo Social en función de una práctica ética y garante de derechos humanos, De Jesús-Rosa, Ortiz-Mojica, Gayol-Santana, Cruz-Sánchez y González-Parés (2016) encontraron discrepancias en las verbalizaciones de sus participantes sobre la satisfacción de su colegio. Algunos expresaron sentimiento de ausencia del colegio para el manejo de dicha problemática (pp. 51-52). Entonces debe haber sinergia entre ambos cuerpos (los del gremio, organizaciones, colegios o uniones, con los practicantes de la profesión) para lograr superar las preocupaciones que ambos claramente

establecen sobre la profesión y su práctica. Por tanto, los autores recomendaron que “los esfuerzos que se hagan desde estos cuerpos estudien y analicen las múltiples propuestas esbozadas por las personas participantes respecto a estrategias concretas para superar la precarización de las condiciones laborales del Trabajo Social” (p. 55).

Benito & Chinchilla (2017) cautionan que

La desprofesionalización además de profundizar las condiciones señaladas anteriormente busca desarticular cualquier proceso de desarrollo gremial que implique articular esfuerzos gremiales orientados a desarrollar una mejor práctica profesional, crítica y comprometida con el desarrollo social. Busca castrar cualquier intento de práctica y acción política desde el Trabajo Social (p. 73).

Basado en este análisis, la participación colectiva profesional es totalmente necesaria para evitar que las organizaciones profesionales dedicadas a proteger la profesión de Trabajo Social se hagan obsoletas; y como consecuencia eliminen la misma profesión del Trabajo Social.

Como los actores sociales se involucran o deberían involucrarse en la atención de los problemas planteados

Pobreza y desigualdad

En relación con los aspectos a vinculados con la participación de los actores sociales, es necesario retomar el tema de las políticas públicas, específicamente las de índole focalizado, debido a que son estas políticas las que abundan en el contexto de América Latina y el Caribe. En respuesta a las políticas focalizadas también surgen los esfuerzos de las personas en desventaja económica por ser incluidos en dichas políticas. Ante esto, Cortés y Zárate (2019) plantean que “las diversas estrategias que utilizan para ser incluidos en dichos programas es un tema muy presente entre los grupos marginados, y con el cual se enfrentan una y otra vez las evaluaciones del combate a la pobreza (p.88).” Lo que nos lleva a concluir que dichas políticas lejos de atender la pobreza perpetúan las condiciones de desigualdad en la sociedad.

La pobreza y la desigualdad impactan múltiples aspectos en sociedad, entre estos el derecho a la salud. De acuerdo con Rivera (2015)

Los determinantes sociales de la salud se definen como las circunstancias en que las personas nacen, crecen, viven, trabajan y

envejecen, incluido el sistema de salud. Dichas circunstancias de vida son el resultado de la distribución desigual del dinero, el poder y los recursos a nivel mundial, nacional y local (p. 124).

En el caso de Puerto Rico, tanto el sistema de salud como el de salud evidencian reformas fundamentadas en la ideología neoliberal. Rivera (2015) critica el que “la Reforma de los Servicios de Salud que tenía como propósito brindar servicios de salud a la población médico indigente a través de una modalidad de manejo de cuidado con proveedores privados y el pago de un ‘capitation’ por paciente” (p.132). Es decir, aquellos grupos que no cuenten con poder adquisitivo para costear servicios de salud, si entran en el espectro de lo que para el Estado es “pobreza”, están a merced de los servicios y decisiones que tome el estado. Entre los servicios que se ven afectados son los de salud mental. Al momento, el sistema de “capitation” (Rivera, 2015) continúa vigente y los servicios específicos que se brindarán están previamente establecidos. En el caso de los que pertenecen a la Reforma de Salud del Estado, de presentar alguna emergencia psiquiátrica, tienen que pasar por las llamadas “salas estabilizadoras” del país. En las mismas se observa como en Puerto Rico se responde a un sistema basado en fármacos de acción rápida y se ignoran los factores macroestructurales (ejemplo de esto desigualdad económica y el desempleo) creados por la cuestión social. Sobre la educación, se identifica que la administración de los fondos públicos se ha caracterizado por una implementación “señalada en varios momentos con deficiencias tanto en el manejo de los fondos como en los resultados obtenidos por las escuelas, en el aprovechamiento académico de sus estudiantes y en el aumento en la deserción escolar (Rosado, 2014, p.143).

Frente a lo anterior, se reitera la necesidad de desarrollar políticas críticas que sean pensadas desde nuestro contexto Latinoamericano y que se atemperen a las necesidades del colectivo de nuestros tiempos y a no perder de perspectiva el alcance e impacto de los factores macroestructurales en los individuos, familias y comunidades con las que se interviene. Por lo tanto, se entiende que

el Estado, el mercado y la sociedad civil son centrales para cualquier reconstrucción de un proyecto político realmente democrático que pretenda dar salida a muchos de los problemas y especialmente a los de pobreza, que comprenden la cuestión social contemporánea (Pérez, 2013, p. 61).

Procesos migratorios

Hay una brecha entre las condiciones de opresión y las gestas de liberación, un tejido fundamental de mediaciones históricas (culturales, políticas, circunstanciales) y dimensiones de subjetividad (afectivas, éticas, identitarias, epistémicas, simbólicas, de deseo) que son indispensables para explicar el por qué las acciones colectivas surgen y los movimientos sociales emergen en coyunturas y lugares particulares (Lao-Montes, 2008).

Existen varias iniciativas internacionales, regionales y nacionales para colaborar en el estudio de los procesos migratorios, propuestas para crear políticas públicas más justas, programas para atender las necesidades humanitarias y centros de asistencia al migrante. La Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM) está consagrada al principio de que la migración en forma ordenada y en condiciones humanas beneficia a los migrantes y a la sociedad. En su calidad de principal organización internacional para las migraciones, la OIM trabaja con sus asociados de la comunidad internacional para:

- Ayudar a encarar los crecientes desafíos que plantea la gestión de la migración a nivel operativo
- Fomentar la comprensión de las cuestiones migratorias
- Alentar el desarrollo social y económico a través de la migración, y velar por el respeto de la dignidad humana y el bienestar de los migrantes.

El Comité Internacional de la Cruz Roja (CICR), una organización independiente no-gubernamental que se esfuerza por prestar protección y asistencia humanitarias a las víctimas de los conflictos armados y de otras situaciones de violencia, toma medidas para responder a las emergencias, procesos migratorios y promueve, al mismo tiempo, el respeto del derecho internacional humanitario y su aplicación en las legislaciones nacionales.

La Casa de Migrante que se encuentra en varios países de Latinoamérica y Estados Unidos, surge con el objetivo de ocuparse del estudio y de la aplicación de la pastoral para “la gente en movimiento”: migrantes, desterrados, refugiados, prófugos, pescadores y marineros, viajeros y personal de aviación, los pertenecientes al transporte por carretera, nómadas, los activos en circos y parques de atracciones, peregrinos y turistas, así como para todos los grupos de personas que por diversos motivos están relacionados con el mundo de la movilidad humana, como los estudiantes en el extranjero, los especialistas y técnicos que, a causa de

grandes obras o para la investigación científica de ámbito internacional, deben desplazarse de un país a otro.

El senador demócrata estadounidense Bernie Sanders, quien además aspiraba a la presidencia de su país, presentó un plan migratorio para transformar ese sistema en los Estados Unidos. Bajo el lema: “unos Estados Unidos acogedores y seguros para todos”, pretende revertir todas las iniciativas en ese frente del presidente estadounidense, Donald Trump. Entre sus ideas, Sanders crearía un camino 'rápido y justo' hacia la ciudadanía estadounidense, despenalizaría la inmigración, desmilitarizaría la frontera con México y protegería y fortalecería los derechos laborales de los inmigrantes en los Estados Unidos. Además, incluye garantizar que los solicitantes de asilo puedan presentar sus peticiones en Estados Unidos, poner fin a la detención y separación familiar, reunir a las familias, eliminar el veto a viajeros de países musulmanes y detener la construcción del muro fronterizo (Noticel, 2019).

En junio 2019, los gobiernos de México y Estados Unidos acordaron una serie de medidas para reducir los flujos migratorios irregulares. Estas incluyen: incrementar el control migratorio en México; llevar a cabo operaciones conjuntas contra el contrabando; expandir los protocolos de Protección a Migrantes (MPP por sus siglas en inglés y conocidos informalmente como “Quédate en México”), un programa que envía a los solicitantes de asilo a México mientras esperan por su audiencia de asilo en Estados Unidos; y comprometerse a abordar las causas fundamentales de la migración mediante inversión para el desarrollo en Guatemala, Honduras y El Salvador, los países del llamado Triángulo del Norte de Centroamérica. Ambos gobiernos también pactaron considerar la negociación de un acuerdo de tercer país seguro en el futuro que requeriría que los solicitantes de asilo aplicaran en el primer país al que llegaran. Sin embargo, Andrew Selee y otros del Migration Policy Institute (MPI) (2019) no están muy convencidos de la sostenibilidad de esos acuerdos, “debido a una debilidad institucional crónica y a estructuras de política pública poco planificadas en ambos países” (Selee, et al., 2019). MPI plantea cinco recomendaciones sobre cómo ambos países podrían abordar la migración en una forma más eficaz para disuadir la migración irregular y, al mismo tiempo, garantizar que aquellos que busquen protección tengan un proceso justo:

1. Replantear la condición de asilo

2. Fortalecer las instituciones migratorias
3. Desarrollar un enfoque regional para enfrentar las redes de contrabando
4. Crear vías legales para la migración
5. Inversión en desarrollo y seguridad pública

Por otro lado, la Asamblea General de la ONU reunida en Marrakech, Marruecos en diciembre de 2018 aprobó el Pacto Mundial para la Migración Segura, Ordenada y Regular, el cual no es vinculante, pero lo gobiernos se comprometen a poner en práctica los acuerdos. “El presente Pacto Mundial expresa nuestro compromiso colectivo de mejorar la cooperación sobre la migración internacional. La migración ha formado parte de la experiencia humana desde los albores de la historia, y reconocemos que genera prosperidad, innovación y desarrollo sostenible en nuestro mundo globalizado, y que estos efectos positivos pueden optimizarse mejorando la gobernanza de la migración. En el mundo actual, la mayoría de los migrantes viajan, viven y trabajan de manera segura, ordenada y regular. Sin embargo, no cabe duda de que la migración tiene efectos muy distintos y a veces imprevisibles en nuestros países y comunidades y en los migrantes y sus familias” (ONU, 2018).

La Oficina Regional para Centro América, Norte América y el Caribe de la OIM ha implementado una serie de iniciativas para combatir la xenofobia de manera colaborativa, particularmente a través de campañas de divulgación y comunicación comunitaria. Los proyectos de extensión comunitaria implican la creación de eventos y actividades que fortalecen los lazos entre las personas migrantes y las comunidades de acogida (Astles, 2016).

Medio ambiente y cambio climático

Cordero Ulate (2017) señala que el estudio de los movimientos ambientales en el contexto de América Latina y el Caribe permite “comprender su diversidad, y como las múltiples perspectivas se traducen en discursos político-organizativos diferenciados cuando se trata con iniciativas o luchas relacionadas con el medio ambiente” (p. 448).

De forma vinculada, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) resalta como una mirada crítica al cambio climático “configura una complicada cuestión social producto de la dialéctica irresuelta entre los que apropian bienes naturales al punto de su extinción bajo el régimen neoliberal, y los que están del otro lado viendo reducirse su sustentabilidad” (p. 5). El autor amplía como en ese otro lado

“están los países bajo opresión económica, etiquetados como ‘en desarrollo’ o ‘subdesarrollados’ que configuran un bloque a merced del financiamiento internacional y continúan proveyendo un terreno fértil al capitalismo industrial tóxico e insostenible” (p. 5). De esta forma, destaca como, tanto en los países industrializados como aquellos en opresión económica se observan comunidades vulnerabilizadas por los efectos del cambio climático. También, resalta como “en estas unidades geográficas se hacen manifiestas las consecuencias del proceso económico, no solo en la morfología urbana o territorial en general, sino en las condiciones humanas y ambientales del diario vivir” (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, p. 5).

Al destacar el rol que asume la organización comunitaria en la lucha por la justicia ambiental, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) resalta que “el trabajo que se gesta en la comunidad es de por sí una respuesta a preguntas complicadas sobre el interés ciudadano en los diseños de política pública que en ocasiones descuidan la inclusión de los actores comunitarios” (p. 20). Ante ello, en autor critica como

algunos procesos legislativos siguen un trámite casi expedito dejando a grupos de interés varados a la espera de participación para deponer o contrastar ideas. Sin embargo, es precisamente en las comunidades donde múltiples grupos de trabajo día a día hacen realidad lo que algunas políticas públicas sobre el cambio climático proyectan resolver (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, pp. 20-21).

Polastri (2012), al profundizar respecto al rol de los movimientos sociales ambientales en el contexto de América Latina, destaca como estos

en sus distintas reivindicaciones, como el caso de los reclamos de los pueblos originarios, el de los movimientos urbanos (centrándose en la demanda de servicios públicos, tierra y agua), también en las manifestaciones a favor de la democracia frente a las dictaduras militares, movimientos feministas, reconocimiento por las identidades sexuales, étnicas y culturales han venido tomando un énfasis realmente importante y decisivo a partir de las décadas del treinta y del cuarenta (p. 7).

Por su parte, Cordero-Ulate (2017) enfatiza en como la perspectiva ecologista de los movimientos sociales de América Latina y el Caribe “intenta comprender los problemas ecológicos relacionándolos con un orden social desigual e injusto que hace un uso irracional de los recursos

naturales” (p. 448). Destacando como para estos grupos “la idea de una mejora real en el medio ambiente está profundamente vinculada con un cambio profundo en el orden social y político”. (Cordero-Ulate, 2017, p. 449). Frente a lo cual, Polastri (2012) destaca como los países de nuestra región “han sido históricamente reproductores del saqueo impuesto por los países desarrollados. Se nos ha designado un rol en la división internacional del trabajo y somos receptores y depositarios de desechos y fábricas que en el hemisferio norte consideran contaminantes” (Polastri, 2012, p. 10). Por ello, plantea la necesidad de considera que

contextualizar las demandas de los distintos movimientos sociales en algunos países supone la retroalimentación dialéctica que se ha dado a lo largo del tiempo, en función de lograr reivindicaciones y proponer estilos de vida diferentes al planteado en el capitalismo. Aunque no de manera lineal o taxativa han contribuido a la base organizativa de lo que se daría en conocer en las últimas décadas como ambientalismo o movimientos ambientales (Polastri, 2012, p. 7).

Esto lleva a que Polastri (2012) plantee la necesidad presente en la región de América Latina y el Caribe de

fortalecer las bases organizativas, de difusión y reflexión de los postulados teóricos y metodológicos que permitan la construcción de formas de vida diferentes a las impuestas por el poder hegemónico, y de acción más colectiva y organizada frente a este sistema de exclusión y dominación, para empezar a reconstruirnos en una racionalidad alternativa (Polastri, 2012, p. 10).

Desprofesionalización y condiciones laborales

Ya establecido la importancia de la participación de los profesionales en los movimientos sociales y como parte de su gremio, se reconoce entonces que

estas problemáticas no son creadas por las personas en su carácter individual y son producto del contexto social/económico/político, significa que no podrán ser atendidas y solucionadas con acciones individuales. Solamente mediante la creación de un frente amplio de profesionales y con un proyecto profesional en común es que se podrá llegar a mejorar las condiciones laborales de los trabajadores y las trabajadoras sociales, luchar para garantizar los derechos humanos de nuestros participantes y lograr políticas sociales más inclusivas,

equitativas y de transformación (Huertas-Sosa & Ramos-Cruz, 2015, p. 31).

Puesto que, según plantean Cruz y López (2019)

la deliberación descansa en la participación con poder de decisión de ciudadanos comunes y corrientes, en los funcionarios, en procesos de deliberación razonados que delegan los poderes de decisión e implementación en las unidades locales de acción transformando y colonizando las instituciones produciendo una igualdad en el poder entre los participantes. Es así como, el Trabajo Social, desde su quehacer promueve el desarrollo y la participación de las comunidades en la construcción de estructuras democráticas reales (pp. 103-104).

Los mismos autores reflexionan, basado en la “naturaleza intrínseca” de la práctica comunitaria del Trabajo Social, que las organizaciones sociales pueden desarrollar un camino legítimo para la reconstrucción del tejido social a través de formas espontáneas y de base comunitaria. (p. 106). “De esta manera, la profesión del Trabajo Social puede lograr la reestructuración remediando las fallas de las entidades que proveen estos servicios precarizados” (pp. 98-99).

En el estudio que realizaron De Jesús-Rosa, et. al. (2016) encontraron que

la investigación es otro elemento de pertinencia. Señalaron que era necesario que no solo se investigue, sino además que se comparta ese conocimiento nuevo para el enriquecimiento de la profesión. Manifestaron que la investigación puede servir para concienciar sobre las condiciones laborales en el Trabajo Social y mejorar la imagen de la profesión (p. 51).

En adición, encontraron un consenso entre sus participantes sobre otras estrategias que puedan ayudar a la profesión y su condición. Como se ha identificado anteriormente sobre los movimientos tecnológicos que se insertan cada vez más en los ámbitos laborales, expresaron “la utilización de los medios de comunicación como una herramienta útil, de propósito dual, que permitiría dar a conocer las condiciones precarias de la práctica profesional, por un lado, y el por el otro serviría para dar a conocer qué es el Trabajo Social y su importancia para la sociedad” (p. 51).

Otro análisis que realizan los autores y autoras es la búsqueda e integración de otras profesiones que, en unión, puedan encaminarse a los mismos deseos “utópicos laborales” (Pérez-Sáinz, 2020), que encaucen el establecimiento de los derechos humanos, en este caso los laborales y/o profesionales. Por lo que se

debe continuar teniendo entre sus principales prioridades el fortalecimiento de sus diversos organismos (comisiones, capítulos y junta directiva) mediante una participación significativa en términos numéricos y diversos ideológicamente. Esto, procurando establecer vínculos con otros grupos profesionales y de la sociedad civil que también aspiren a combatir los postulados y secuelas de la política y economía neoliberal (De Jesús, 2016, p. 54).

Hernández-Echegaray (2018) en su análisis de la desprofesionalización del Trabajo Social, expresó algunas recomendaciones similares a las anteriores expuestas. Añade la importancia de enfocar en el “fortalecimiento de la disciplina”. Por consiguiente, en la misma búsqueda de conocimiento sobre las condiciones laborales de la profesión, se establecen las prácticas que se han desarrollado en los últimos tiempos como resultado y estrategia de sobrevivencia de la profesión del Trabajo Social.

El rol de gestor de recursos y la sobrecarga laboral ha generado un conflicto entre lo que se hace (práctica) y lo que se debe hacer (valores), que ha generado malestar y frustración en las trabajadoras sociales. Se propone incorporar acciones de cuidado profesional tendentes a mejorar la autoestima profesional y el empoderamiento como colectivo, como la formación permanente y el aprendizaje desde la práctica, verificando los procedimientos que retroalimenten la profesionalidad y den sinergia al quehacer profesional. Poniendo en valor las buenas prácticas, se pone en valor la utilidad social de la profesión (p. 149).

Asimismo, se exploran y articulan las nuevas formas de práctica profesional que emergen de las mismas dinámicas de la desprofesionalización. Una de las vertientes profesionales que emergen, y que ha sido de preocupación, son las prácticas independientes. “Otras motivaciones que propiciaron que profesionales del Trabajo Social ejercieran la práctica independiente fueron: el desempleo y la libertad de ejercer metodologías, teorías e intervenciones autónomas fuera de los protocolos establecidos en las agencias” (Huertas-Sosa & Ramos-Cruz, 2015, p. 33). De la misma forma

que los autores invitan a tener un acercamiento crítico con esta modalidad de práctica, se puede tener con cualquiera de las otras variedades de la profesión que sigan surgiendo. Por lo que estas prácticas por sí solas no son “cómplice o aliadas”, sino, “quienes contribuyen a que el neoliberalismo tome fuerza son todos los profesionales y todas las profesionales del Trabajo Social que apoyan las premisas neoliberales antes expuestas, independientemente del escenario laboral, o quienes entienden que su ejercicio profesional está descontextualizado” (p.28).

Una vez se alcance a ordenar las ideas antes expuestas, se puede lograr incluir nuevas prácticas emergentes y los profesionales que las ejercen bajo la protección de los gremios, organizaciones o uniones de la profesión.

Solo la fuerza de un colectivo unido y organizado será capaz de defender nuestras propias conquistas y proyectos futuros, y de colocarnos en posición de responder a los reclamos del interior del gremio, así como a los de los movimientos sociales emergentes (López, Barreto, & Rivera, 2014, p. 40)

Evidencia del impacto del Trabajo Social e iniciativas de desarrollo social en los ámbitos sociales, económicos y políticos vinculados a las problemáticas identificadas

Pobreza y desigualdad

A través de la literatura es notable que el tema de la pobreza ha estado presente en los procesos de investigación en Trabajo Social. Desde estudios que abordan iniciativas comunitarias en sectores marginados hasta estudios que identifican el impacto de la desigualdad económica en las familias y políticas públicas.

Romero Plana (2018), en su investigación sobre familia y estrategias de afrontamiento ante la pobreza en ciudad de Colima, identifica que todo el núcleo familiar, incluyendo a los niños, aportan ya sea “con su trabajo, sus ingresos o con sus recursos” (p. 92). Por otra parte, destaca el sentido de pertenencia existente entre las familias de la comunidad. Añade que

Este contexto hace que se cree un sentido de comunidad y vecindario que traspasa el hecho de que las condiciones no sean las más adecuadas en determinados momentos para el crecimiento de dicha población. Muchos de los miembros a los que se ha entrevistado, a pesar de ver las dificultades que hay en la colonia, sostienen el

discurso de no querer irse de allí, porque ya lo conocen y saben cómo funciona, además del cariño que le han tomado a la casa y a los vecinos (p. 98).

Sobre las iniciativas de índole comunitario, Galeana y Sainz (2018) en su estudio implementaron un modelo de intervención denominado como “Reconfiguración de Ejes y Lazos Comunitarios” en dos comunidades en México. Añaden que

En este sentido, sus acciones se dirigen a movilizar a la población, potenciar estructuras de participación social y la conformación de una red de programas sociales dirigidos a generar y enriquecer capital social, sentido colectivo y participación social, con el propósito de atender la problemática prioritaria de la localidad, con el fin último de contrarrestar las condiciones adversas para su desarrollo social (p.77).

También se encuentra la investigación en Argentina sobre estudios de percepción de la población en general sobre la pobreza: entre “flojera”, injusticia y fallas de los programas sociales. Algunos de los hallazgos profundizan sobre la aporofobia, como “una actitud que lleva a rechazar a las personas, a las razas y a aquellas etnias que habitualmente no tienen recursos” (Adela Cortina, 2017, pág. 21; citado en Abramo, Cecchini y Morales, 2019, p. 34).

En Venezuela se crea el proyecto curricular vigente de la escuela de Trabajo Social UCV, permitiendo que desde las prácticas profesionales y servicio comunitario el mayor acercamiento de los estudiantes con las comunidades y grupos organizados. De manera concreta se toman los consejos comunales, que son entes de participación ciudadana orientados a solventar las necesidades de la comunidad que los forma y los integra (García-Palma, 2017).

La Federación Internacional de Trabajo Social (FITS) creó un proyecto de documento de política sobre el alivio de la pobreza y el papel de Trabajadores Sociales. También, unos 17 proyectos innovadores de jóvenes latinoamericanos fueron seleccionados por la CEPAL y América Solidaria como propuestas clave para superar la pobreza y proteger el medio ambiente en la región. Estos proyectos serán desarrollados por “jóvenes de Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estados Unidos, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Perú, Uruguay y Venezuela fueron seleccionados como ganadores y participarán

de una semana de actividades formativas que les permitirá ampliar su conocimiento sobre la Agenda 2030” (Noruega, 2018).

Procesos migratorios

Es fundamental dar una mirada al fenómeno de la migración desde la perspectiva del Trabajo Social, desde la intervención propiamente dicha, en todas las modalidades (individual, familiar, comunitaria), el análisis de la realidad, el diagnóstico social, la propuesta y participación en las políticas sociales. Por otro lado, la aportación teórica de los profesionales contribuye a aumentar la escasa bibliografía que hasta la fecha se ha publicado en materia de Trabajo Social y migración (Delgado Ortega, et al., 2017).

Desde una noción de defensa de los derechos humanos, la migración como alternativa de vida para las personas, debería presentarse como un reto para las naciones y los países en la protección de la diversidad de condiciones humanas. El reto estima en aplicar las normas y principios internacionales para garantizar el respeto a los derechos humanos en un mundo globalizado (López, Toro y Nieves, 2012). Actualmente la migración se ha convertido en una alternativa para los seres humanos facilitada por la globalización -la cual de forma contradictoria también facilita grandes diferencias entre naciones y seres humanos- impactando las políticas públicas sobre el manejo de la migración que se perfilan muchos más restrictivas (Niera & Giraldo, 2006). Es a través de los estados o naciones que se regulan los flujos migratorios, mostrando diferencias en el trato y manejo de las llamadas minorías inmigrantes. Con la advertencia de que el discurso de la supuesta "mayoría" denota una imposición de poder que puede ser condicionada por la subjetividad y la exclusión de quienes se denominan como nativos, muchas veces cargadas de prejuicios y estereotipos. Según Quiñones y Barreto (2000) la suma de los prejuicios y el poder de unas personas, sectores o grupos se traducen en opresión, ante las condiciones expuestas entonces, las regulaciones de los flujos migratorios poseen los elementos para encarnar manifestaciones de opresión. La opresión implica la privación a una persona o grupo de las condiciones de libertad, felicidad, o al acceso de los recursos por otras personas e instituciones; se da en un proceso donde existen dos partes unas con el poder y privilegio sobre la otra parte (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2009).

Cuando nos planteamos la relación de ayuda con los migrantes siempre analizamos en profundidad uno de los dos actores que intervienen en

dicho proceso (el migrante). Sin embargo, también es necesario plantearnos qué ocurre con nosotros y nosotras profesionales del Trabajo Social, cómo nos posicionamos frente a una persona que tiene unos registros culturales distintos, cómo influyen esos registros, qué aspectos de nuestra visión de la vida se ven amenazados y por qué ante esta presencia. En definitiva, cuáles son las especificidades que hay que estudiar y manejar en la relación de ayuda con personas de distintas culturas (Delgado Ortega, et al., 2017). Por tanto, no basta con conocer la cultura del otro, hay que ser conscientes de la cultura propia, de los prejuicios, las preconcepciones, las imágenes guía, que son filtros que van a mediatizar claramente nuestra relación profesional con los migrantes, ya que van a orientar nuestra percepción sobre conductas de personas con registros distintos. Ser conscientes de cuáles son nuestras zonas sensibles, aquello que nos produce rechazo porque no se ajusta a nuestra forma de ver el mundo.

Medio ambiente y cambio climático

Al reflexionar sobre el rol que debería asumir el Trabajo Social en la atención al cambio climático en el contexto de América Latina y el Caribe, Franceschi-Barraza (2014) destaca que tanto en la dimensión académica como profesional se requiere colocar la discusión ambiental “en el contexto actual de la globalización económica neoliberal y esclarecer sus expresiones particulares en cada sociedad concreta. Implica análisis de coyuntura, que permita entender los determinantes y condicionantes de los problemas ambientales” (p. 96).

De forma vinculada, Ortiz-Mojica (2019), en lo que constituye uno de los aportes más significativos al análisis del rol del Trabajo Social en el contexto del cambio climático, nos señala que, desde la profesión, se deben

umentar las investigaciones que propenden a su desarrollo teórico práctico para abordar la problemática de la crisis climática global. Esto representa un giro de los referentes típicos de la cuestión social hacia un terreno desconocido que recién ha comenzado a manifestarse. Además, en los diferentes escenarios comunitarios implicará la apertura a saberes diversos representados por grupos de trabajo interdisciplinarios o multidisciplinarios, terreno que es conocido para el Trabajo Social (p. 2).

Ortiz-Mojica amplía que, desde el Trabajo Social, una de las principales rutas a abordarse lo constituye la lucha por la justicia ambiental, esto

reconociendo las implicaciones que este fenómeno tiene para la “salud, alimentación, seguridad, derechos, ciudadanía, en fin, su bienestar general” (p. 20). El autor destaca que, para el logro de esta justicia ambiental, ante la complejidad inherente al cambio climático, se hace necesaria la utilización de conocimiento proveniente de diferentes disciplinas. A su juicio “más allá del ocasional enlace del Trabajo Social con la Sociología, la Psicología y la Antropología se amplía la obtención de información de investigaciones de la Biología, Ecología, Física, Química y Oceanografía, entre otras ciencias” (p. 4). Este enfoque transdisciplinario permitiría “la afluencia de acciones concretas desde diversas perspectivas que enriquecen los marcos conceptuales de análisis y aun aquellos en desarrollo utilizados en proyectos comunitarios por organizaciones locales e internacionales” (p. 4).

Ante lo cual, concluye Ortiz-Mojica (2019) que

La praxis del Trabajo Social en el escenario de la crisis climática no debe considerarse como simplemente la aplicación de modelos en escenarios de desastres naturales o el manejo o gerencia de riesgos contemporáneos. Es un trabajo abarcador que inicia antes de que ocurran eventos extremos colaborando con las comunidades en el desarrollo de acciones que les permitan mitigar impactos y concienciarse del nivel de riesgos al cual están expuestos. Además, este trabajo se debe orientar mediante un enfoque transdisciplinario donde el Trabajo Social toma forma en cada experiencia y define un marco de acción original al nutrirse de las múltiples orientaciones de la realidad que laboran en el mismo escenario (p. 21).

Desprofesionalización y condiciones laborales

Lo que se pretende, dentro de los esfuerzos en contra de las ideas neoliberales, es responsabilizar al Estado como el “centro de los derechos” (Reyes, 2015, p.74). A través del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2010-2014, en Colombia, para la implementación de una serie de medidas que permitan reducir la informalidad profesional, se logra que las agencias empleadoras contraten directamente a los trabajadores; eliminando las contrataciones externas o a terciarios. Esta medida ayuda a “proveer estabilidad salariales con empleos permanentes y los beneficios que pueda traer consigo para garantizar la satisfacción de necesidades del profesional contratado” (Bermúdez-Alarcón, 2015, p. 126).

Desde que México fue incluido en la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE), encontrándose con el índice más bajo de salario mínimo dentro de los 37 países del alrededor del mundo que participan de esta organización, se han realizado esfuerzos que permitan cambios sustanciales en el área laboral.

A partir de entonces, diversos actores políticos y sociales han manifestado sus posiciones en la materia. Por su parte, la Comisión Económica para Latinoamérica y el Caribe (CEPAL) llamó la atención acerca de la magnitud del deterioro salarial en México y anunció la realización de un seminario internacional sobre el tema el próximo agosto. Todas estas son noticias alentadoras en torno a la posibilidad de efectivamente abrir un debate nacional y lograr las reformas necesarias para empezar la recuperación del salario, y con ello impulsar el desarrollo económico y mejorar la convivencia social del país. (Gravito & Olguín, 2015, p. 66-67).

Explican los autores que el jefe de gobierno del Distrito Federal lanzó la iniciativa para comenzar la recuperación del salario mínimo (p. 66) como un avance al mejoramiento de las condiciones laborales.

En Uruguay se reconoce “internacionalmente como uno de los países que más avanzó en la conquista de derechos laborales.” (Frente Amplio, 2018). Se generaron cambios que permiten reconocer y ampliar los derechos laborales. Entre algunos de los logros alcanzados son: un incremento salarial del 55.5 % (ubicando a Uruguay como el país en su región con mayor disminución de desigualdad salarial), crecimiento en las jubilaciones y pensiones por encima de la inflación, la creación de la ley que regula el trabajo doméstico, se aprobó la Ley de responsabilidad penal para empleadores/as, se aprobó la Ley de Empleo Juvenil y se creó el Instituto Nacional de Empleo y Formación Profesional (INEFOP).

Torado-Cavallero (2016) y De Jesús (2015) son algunos de los autores que puntualizan sobre como las mujeres sufren más por los cambios producidos por la precarización y flexibilización laboral, como resultado del neoliberalismo que permite el sistema capitalista global. La interseccionalidad de género se caracteriza por las demandas requeridas a este grupo particular; en donde se les exige cumplimiento laboral y doméstico, sin proveerles espacios que le permitan ejecutar de manera asertiva o satisfactoria. Globalmente se pueden establecer los

movimientos de grupos feministas, y aquellos que los apoyan, que se realizan para promover la equidad de género que se proyectan en movimientos sociales globales, cambios en las políticas públicas desde los espacios educativos y legislativos, organizaciones que promueven y protegen los derechos laborales para la mujer, entre otros.

En Puerto Rico, se inicia la creación de un proyecto profesional del Trabajo Social para fortalecer los esfuerzos en contra de desprofesionalización. La construcción de este proyecto tendría tres asuntos medulares, a saber: 1) el mejoramiento de las condiciones laborales de los trabajadores y las trabajadoras sociales; 2) la defensa de los derechos humanos; y 3) la creación de políticas sociales dirigidas a la justicia social y la equidad (De Jesús, 2016; Huertas-Sosa & Ramos Cruz, 2015; López, et al., 2014).

En el 2019, La Federación Internacional de Trabajo Social (FITS) en asociación con el Centro de Salud y Cognición de la Universidad de Bath Spa (en asociación con el Departamento de Trabajo Social de la Universidad de Ulster) realizaron una campaña mundial sobre las condiciones de trabajo de los trabajadores sociales. Se tomó como elemento central la investigación para obtener la primera visión global de las condiciones laborales de los trabajadores sociales, con el objetivo de destacar los entornos laborales cotidianos de los trabajadores sociales en todo el mundo.

Se han elaborado distintas investigaciones y análisis sobre la problemática para entender esta problemática y superarla. De Jesús-Rosa, Ortiz-Mojica, Gayol-Santana, Cruz-Sánchez y González-Parés (2016), realizaron una investigación para examinar estrategias concretas para mejorar las condiciones laborales actuales de los profesionales del Trabajo Social en función de una práctica ética y garante de derechos humanos. También se documentan investigaciones con el propósito de obtener información valiosa relacionada con los objetivos medulares del proyecto profesional. En la primera se realizó un perfil de las condiciones laborales en las que se encuentran los colegiados y colegiadas del Trabajo Social. La segunda investigación es sobre el estado de los derechos sociales en Puerto Rico (López, et al., 2014). También, Huertas-Rosa y Ramos-Cruz realizaron una investigación para la tesis titulada Una Búsqueda de Espacios Autónomos, que tenía la intención de explorar los debates, los retos y las experiencias de los y las profesionales del Trabajo Social que ejercieran la profesión de forma independiente. En Colombia, Cruz y López (2019) investigaron

buscando una mejor “comprensión del Trabajo Social como campo de interrelación de las políticas públicas a partir de dos posturas, la primera desde el rol del trabajador-a social en la comprensión del papel de las organizaciones sociales de base, el desarrollo del liderazgo y empoderamiento de iniciativas comunitarias; y, la segunda en el rol del trabajador-a social en el diseño, implementación y seguimiento de intervenciones institucionales.” (p. 89); centrándolo en los diferentes escenarios donde los planes distritales contienen intervenciones en Trabajo Social direccionadas al fortalecimiento de actores sociales.

Reflexiones finales

La revisión de literatura realizada como parte de la redacción de este cuarto informe para la agenda global nos permite constatar el efecto destructivo que la colonialidad sigue teniendo para el establecimiento de relaciones humanas saludables en la región de América Latina y el Caribe. Quinientos años después del proceso de conquista europea a los pueblos originarios de nuestra región, las nociones propuestas por la colonialidad en los ámbitos de la familia, el trabajo, la naturaleza, el conocimiento y la espiritualidad, entre otros, continúan cruzando transversalmente todos los ámbitos estudiados para el presente reporte.

El análisis aquí realizado nos permitió constatar como en el área de la pobreza y la desigualdad, la región sigue presentándose como la de mayor desigualdad en el mundo. Desigualdad fuertemente mediada por la raza, sexo y origen nacional de los grupos poblacionales afectados. Las dinámicas de pobreza y desigualdad en América Latina y el Caribe están fuertemente vinculadas con las argumentaciones de Young (1990) referentes a como las personas o países bajo opresión sufren un alto grado de inhibición en su habilidad para desarrollar y ejercitar sus capacidades, y para expresar sus necesidades, pensamientos y sentimientos, pudiéndose identificar en América Latina y el Caribe todas las diferentes caras de la opresión: la explotación, la marginalización, la carencia de poder, el imperialismo cultural y la violencia, las cuales, desde el proceso de la conquista europea a nuestra región, funcionan de forma conexas para mantener a los grupos poblacionales no europeos bajo opresión.

Respecto a los procesos migratorios, se observa con una profunda preocupación el incremento del racismo y la xenofobia por parte de sectores dentro de los países recipientes de migrantes. A pesar de que, en gran medida, las migraciones en nuestra región se dan como corolario

de la opresión económica que experimentan nuestros países por parte de los grandes dueños del capital global, se continúa criminalizando a aquellas familias que, con el propósito de salir de la pobreza, se ven obligadas a migrar. En los últimos años, según documenta Amnistía Internacional (2019), esto ha llevado a

1) expulsiones ilegales masivas de solicitantes de asilo en la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México; 2) miles de separaciones ilegales de familias, con las que la administración Trump ha infligido deliberadamente sufrimiento extremo a las familias, forma de malos tratos que ha llegado al grado de tortura en algunos casos, y 3) detenciones cada vez más arbitrarias e indefinidas de solicitantes de asilo sin posibilidad de libertad condicional, lo que constituye tratos o penas crueles, inhumanos o degradantes (malos tratos), terminantemente prohibidos por el derecho internacional.

De forma vinculada, la colonialidad ha afectado terriblemente nuestra vinculación con la naturaleza. El incorporar las nociones religiosas eurocéntricas, las cuales ubican a la naturaleza en función de los intereses de la humanidad, estableciendo una falsa dicotomía entre humanidad-naturaleza, ha llevado a la destrucción masiva de recursos ambientales fundamentales para la subsistencia de la vida tal como la conocemos hoy día. Esta destrucción ha estado determinada por los procesos de acumulación capitalista, los cuales están dispuestos a sacrificar la vida misma con tal de continuar con el enriquecimiento desmedido de unos pocos.

Finalmente, desde el Trabajo Social latinoamericano y caribeño observamos con profunda preocupación los procesos de desprofesionalización y la precarización de las condiciones laborales en los espacios de prestación de servicios sociales donde se ubican la mayoría de nuestros colegas. Consideramos que esta precarización está alineada con el proyecto neoliberal de desmantelamiento de las instituciones gubernamentales que forman parte del ya menguado estado de bienestar. Las nuevas políticas neoliberales pretenden retrotraernos al estado de derecho previo a la Gran Depresión de la década del 1930, en el cual el Estado sólo era responsable de facilitar los procesos de acumulación del capital y de la defensa interna y externa de la nación, sin reconocerle sus derechos humanos a la población. Esto es evidentemente un asunto que, por su naturaleza ética, amerita una profunda atención de parte del

Trabajo Social y las demás organizaciones internacionales vinculadas con el tema.

A pesar de los profundos retos identificados en este informe, consideramos que debemos ver el futuro con una juiciosa esperanza, esto precisamente por las relaciones humanas que, con cada vez más arraigo y compromiso, se articulan para hacer frente a los males antes identificados. Esto, tomando en consideración las múltiples luchas dirigidas al alcance de la justicia social que han asumido en los últimos años los sectores económicamente marginados, las mujeres, las juventudes y los pueblos originarios en la región. Creemos, tal como lo señalan Martínez y Agüero (2017) que el asumir un Trabajo Social en perspectiva decolonial implica

comprender el proceso de construcción del orden social en el mundo y en América Latina, en tanto que superar la matriz histórica-colonial del poder y liberar a los sujetos subalternos de esa matriz equivale a transformar el orden social mediante procesos de emancipación social que implican construcción de sujetos sociales, mundos de vida, procesos identitarios, lazos sociales y ciudadanía (pp. 109-110).

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Chapter 5B

Latin America and the Caribbean

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General context of the Latin American and Caribbean Region: an epistemological rethinking

Latin America and the Caribbean, from a sociological and anthropological perspective, constitutes one of the most diverse geographic spaces on the planet. With an extension that vertically goes from Mexico in North America, to Chilean Patagonia and Argentina to the south, this geographic space is the cradle of multiple peoples, characterized by their linguistic, cultural and political diversity. However, despite the diversity that constitutes the region, it is deeply linked by historical processes that shaped fundamental aspects of its identity, which determined its particular role in the modern world-system and its peripheral role in the processes of global capitalist accumulation (Wallerstein, 2005).

A rethinking regarding the place of Latin America and the Caribbean in the global context has been promoted during the past decades through the political-intellectual movement identified as the Epistemologies of the South. This movement has allowed for an awareness directed towards the problematization and distancing of supposed Eurocentric theorists that historically have made Latin American and Caribbean realities invisible, framing the interpretation and analysis of social reality in notions that do not correspond to our historical, anthropological and political context. Thus, the creation of new analytical spaces aimed at revealing realities that "have been ignored or made invisible, that is, considered non-existent by the Eurocentric critical tradition" (De Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 26) is sought. In the words of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018), the Epistemologies of the South refer to "the production and validation of knowledge anchored in the experiences of resistance of all social groups that have systematically suffered injustice, oppression and the destruction caused for capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy" (pp. 28-29). In this way, the aim is to "enable oppressed social groups to represent the world as their own and on their own terms, since only then can they change it according to their own aspirations" (De Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 29).

Among the new analytical spaces that have been generated as a result of the distancing from the Eurocentric epistemic tradition, the detailed study of the impact of coloniality in our region stands out. Coloniality, as a theoretical category, allows us to emphasize that, although the vast majority of the nations in the region, from a legal-political perspective, managed to overcome colonialism through the processes of independence

that occurred in the early 19th century, the logics inherent in the structuring of colonial societies are still in force in the nations of the region. Among the main power devices articulated by coloniality and that are still part of the global order of domination are: the racial classification of peoples "as a way to grant legitimacy to the relations of domination imposed by the conquest" (Quijano, 2000, p. 203), the establishment of power relations between the genders aimed at achieving the legitimation of patriarchy, and the construction of nature as an object of domination and exploitation based on the interests of capital accumulation, among other directed power devices to the control of multiple dimensions of social life (Mignolo, 2011; Maldonado Torres, 2008).

As Hermida and Meschini (2017) suggest, the categories of colonialism and coloniality of power, of being and of knowledge have allowed us to "name the horror, the acid and penetrating pain that is sowed at every step by the destructive logic that for five centuries erected as structuring of economic, social, political, and gender relations in our America "(pp. 27-28). It is precisely in that history of horror, pain and exploitation that is the product of Eurocentrism and coloniality that Latin America and the Caribbean, even in the deep diversity that constitutes it, finds the identity elements that unite it as a region.

The history of the region is the history of the continuous resistance to the processes of oppression that patriarchy, capitalism and racism, as operative devices of coloniality, have generated in our societies. Given this, we can affirm that the fight against coloniality is the fight for the recognition and empowerment of non-Eurocentric human rights, which, for at least five centuries, have been systematically denied to the peoples of our region, a denial that has been in function of the perpetuation of a capitalist system that, increasingly, threatens the very subsistence of the human species and the rest of nature.

The analysis of the history of Latin America and the Caribbean allows us to appreciate that the struggle by social and political sectors in the defense of human rights has been characterized by constituting itself as a dialectical process, involving a continuous correlation of forces. Although, with the advent of the 21st century, a wave of electoral victories by progressive governments was observed over those aligned with neoliberalism (Gaudichaud, Webber & Modonesi, 2019), as we pointed out in the third progress report on the global agenda (IASSW , ICSW, IFSW, 2018), the

second decade of this century has evidenced an “end of cycle” characterized by the return to power of far-right governments, some of them with openly xenophobic, homophobic and machista proposals, whose neoliberal agenda returns to jeopardize the well-being of citizens through the commodification of human rights, which are presented as objects of consumption only available to those with the purchasing power to obtain them.

Even so, the writing of this fourth progress report allows us to account for a resurgence of strong social movements in the region aimed at combating the dire consequences of neoliberalism for human well-being. An example of this is: a) the massive mobilizations that occurred in Ecuador during October 2019, which aimed to curb neoliberal economic measures proposed by the government, b) the so-called social outbreak in Chile, started in October 2019 and still in force, whose initial purpose was to stop the rate increase of public transportation in Santiago, but it ended up being articulated as a platform for the demand for a new constitution that would leave behind the neoliberal model of state imposed by the dictatorship, and c) the massive protests in Puerto Rico, unleashed in July 2019, by which the resignation of the leader of the executive power was demanded due to the revelation of private chats between officials of his administration characterized by xenophobic, misogynistic and homophobic comments, the content of which pointed to evident acts of corruption. It is important to highlight that in these movements the leading participation of union groups, feminists, youth and the original peoples of our America has stood out.

In the context described, this progress report invites the region to reflect on the social problems that affect us, considering how human relations could serve as an instrument to overcome them. Faced with this invitation we ask ourselves: what are the human relationships we need? Those that historically, based on coloniality, have legitimized the dynamics of oppression against our national groups? Or some other human relations, aimed at seeking the transformation of the political, social and economic factors that have historically impeded social justice and equity in the region?

We hope that this report constitutes an additional contribution to achieve a fair, equitable, and oppression-free Latin America and the Caribbean to which we aspire.

What are the main/key/core social problems affecting your country/region now and how can these be improved by improved human relationships?

At the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, Latin America and the Caribbean continues to face multiple social and environmental problems whose origin can be explained considering the role that has been imposed on the region in the process of global capital accumulation. Through a historical-critical approach, we understand that what is traditionally identified as social problems should be categorized as expressions or manifestations of the "social question". In Esquivel's (2007) words, the "social question" consists of the massive impoverishment of the constituent working class of capitalism, impoverishment that grows in direct relationship with the increase in the social capacity to generate wealth. However, the political uprisings that historically the excluded and marginalized classes have historically starred in the search for social demands are also considered as a constituent part of the "social question".

In a linked way, De Sousa Santos (2018), explaining the relationship between the capitalist system and the problems afflicting the region, states that:

Capitalism is experiencing today one of the most destructive moments in its recent history, as witnessed by the new forms of primitive accumulation by dispossession, the reissue of colonial plunder, which now spreads throughout the global South, from the appropriation of land to the theft of wages and bank bailouts; subject to the capitalist law of the value of resources and common goods, causing the displacement of millions of poor peasants and indigenous peoples, environmental devastation and ecological disasters; and the eternal renewal of colonialism, which reveals, in old and new aspects, the same genocidal drive, racist sociability, thirst for appropriation and violence exerted on resources considered infinite and on people considered inferior and even non-human (pp. 26-27).

Based on the context described above, the Latin American and Caribbean Region has chosen to emphasize, for purposes of this fourth progress report, on four core aspects that we understand merit the urgent attention of the various international organizations, and which, in turn we conceive should be a constituent part of *The Global Agenda* to be considered for the next decade: poverty and inequality, migration processes, the environment

and climate change, and de-professionalization and working conditions. Next, we outline the relevance of the attention of each of these aspects for the integral well-being of the human being and nature.

Poverty and inequality

For years, we have witnessed inequality and poverty in the Latin American context as a result of globalization, capitalism and colonialism. Since "the present inequalities are justified in the historical process of wealth distribution, whose effects are reflected in the population dynamics of vulnerable territories and therefore in the time-space dimensions of their development." (Pérez, 2013, p. 43). Rodríguez and Gutiérrez (2010) add that

It is precisely in Latin America where institutions such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the World Bank (WB) and the Regional Project for Overcoming Poverty of the United Nations Development Program (PRSP-UNDP) have developed different approaches to this great problem faced by the different governments of the continent, which is growing more and more and which seems to have no end. (p.10)

In the Latin American context, it is necessary to question the notions of the concept of poverty. Otherwise, we would fall into neoliberal constructs, in which certain vulnerable groups are blamed for their unequal and socioeconomic status. According to Montaña (2016) "poverty is treated from the self-responsibility of individuals; falling on the individual-subjective level its causes and, therefore, its solutions" (p.86). In addition, it points out that

A critical analysis of poverty and the "social question" requires overcoming the concepts previously described and commented on - different concepts developed within liberal thought in diversified contexts. We intend to do this by presenting some foundations for a historical-critical characterization of poverty and of the "social question" in capitalist society (p.87).

Unlike other groups, impoverished sectors have to deal with the stigma and vision created by the media in their communities. Navedo (2016) points out that "there are multiple complaints from the sectors that have suffered the invisibility of their positive deed and hypervisibilization of their negative deed in the country's media" (p.97).

Navedo (2016) concludes that

Thus, it can be established that the negative representation constantly projected by the mass media on public housing and special communities in Puerto Rico - for example - can contribute to maximizing discrimination, marginalization, stereotype, low self-esteem, internalized inferiority, the rejection and laceration of the identity of the invisible and hypervisibilized sectors (p. 102).

On the other hand, the responses and mobilizations of social work in opposition to the aforementioned factors are clear. "The relationship of social work with the issue of poverty is foundational and is articulated from various references of development." (Pérez, 2013, p. 61) According to Mejías and Suárez (2019)

the social sciences and social work have always declared themselves to be on the side of the oppressed, the subordinates, the poor, it is rooted in a whole trajectory, in a whole tradition, in all dynamics that compromise being in all its fullness, not only in his reason, in his thought, but also in his emotions, in his affections, in his knowledge, in his relationship with the universe, the Pacha or Mapu, as Quechuas and Mapuche maintain (p.136).

On the one hand, social workers demonstrate against neoliberal policies and the naturalization of the social question. On the other, it is necessary to recognize that the genesis of our profession, starting from the historical-critical perspective (Montaño, 2016), presents us as the mechanism of the State to attend to the social question that is the product of neoliberal capitalism. Therefore, it is necessary to assume the necessary criticality so as not to fall into reductionist and blaming discourses, assuming the intrinsic complexity of our professional practice.

Migratory processes

In the history of humanity, migratory processes have always existed in different circumstances and responding to different phenomena of life on the planet. These processes, which involve people moving from one area to another, from one country to another, from one continent to another, not for fun or pleasure travel, but in search of better job opportunities, from a space of freedom where their lives and future projects are not threatened, in "the last decades have involved a profound transformation

of space-time references, which have necessarily had an impact on identity constructions", (Castaldi, 2011, pp. 1 -8).

The current migratory processes face different social, cultural and economic scenarios, both in the countries of origin and in those of destinations. In addition, people who pass the experience of these processes face situations, experiences and emotions not very different from those experienced by migrants from other times. More than the contents, they seem to have changed the scenarios and the keys for reading to understand the processes. The opportunities, as well as the limitations experienced in migratory movements are interdependent. Whether they stand out from one another will depend on multifactorial reasons. The challenges not only correspond to the migrant, but also to the receiving country, whose inhabitants face the necessary questions that contact with diversity stimulates (Castaldi, 2011).

In the history of migratory processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, Roberto Aruj (2008) tells us that from the 19th century to our times, four significant moments can be identified: "the first is related to transoceanic migrations; the second, with internal migrations, as a result of the economic crisis in the 1930s and 1940s; a third, with the cross-border ones; and a fourth, with those that occur with globalization (Aruj, 2008, p. 96). The current paradox is that globalization must, hypothetically, homogenize the planetary market, in which there is profound structural inequality. But where globalization really constitutes itself is in the social imagination, constituted from the power of the cultural industry. That is, every inhabitant of the planet must have access to the television screen, because it equals it, informs it, regardless of their cultural, social or economic level, whether or not they know how to read and write. That makes him a potential consumer and also forces him, compulsively, to find a way to consume. In the vast peripheral territories of globalization, inequalities are deepening, and exclusion is increasing at all levels (Aruj, 2008).

García and Restrepo (2019) present three theoretical approaches to migration developed by Checa (2002, in García and Restrepo, 2019), in their doctoral thesis and which are a good point of analysis for the processes that occur in Latin America:

1. Individualistic approach: understand migration as the result of free decisions of individuals, therefore, focuses on motivations and

expectations, coexistence within the framework of the microcontext. This approach starts from the following premise "... migrations are a factor of equilibrium in the world market, which is governed by the game of supply and demand ..." (Czech, 2002, pp. 39-40).

2. Historical-structural approach: consider migration as part of a system "... characterized as a dynamic group, made up of two or more points –countries, counties, regions– linked by human flows" (Checa, 2002, p. 41).

3. Integrated approach: it proposes a broad perspective on migration, which uses different perspectives for its understanding, including: historical analysis, structural analysis (political economy), ideological-cultural analysis (social discourses) and migratory social networks (Czech, 2002).

In fact, the differentiation between the countries from which people move and those to which they are directed is not given: although the most important movements of people still take place from the poorest areas, from those in situations of war or famine, many countries are at the same time the port of departure and arrival. Or countries that were once a springboard for the emigration of a large number of people can now be destinations for many others, who choose them as their residence (Castaldi, 2011).

"Migration experiences have different motivations and outcomes," says Martha Cecilia Ruiz (2002), referring to the massive departure of Ecuadorians abroad at the beginning of this century. This migration involves a large and heterogeneous group of the population: professionals and people with little qualification, men and women, mixed-race and indigenous people, migrants in a traditional sense and a large group that lives and works as "undocumented". The various social and individual contexts that surround each of these people determine their motivations for leaving the country and influence their migration experience, which is also determined by the specific contexts of the host nations. This perspective approaches the migratory process from diversity and specificities, thus avoiding a neutral analysis that may limit our understanding of certain social processes in Latin America. The access of migrants to the labor markets, the social networks that they maintain and, in general, their experiences in the receiving countries are not experiences that everyone perceives equally, but are marked and differentiated by

gender, class specificities, ethnicity, national origin, level of education or by the migratory status of these people (Ruiz, 2002; pp. 88-97).

The migratory / transmigratory movements carried out in Latin America during the first decades of the twenty-first century require new analysis strategies for their approach, since the current economic-political system has created diverse and novel forms of submission and exploitation, such as work analogous to slavery, forced recruitment, symbolic "rubbish", among other forms of violence against certain groups of migrants stigmatized by the inhabitants of countries of transit and stay where they are denied in practice the human rights that every subject has (Mancillas-López, 2015).

Environment and climate change

From the Latin American and Caribbean context, climate change has been approached from the recognition of the complexity that is intrinsic to it and from a critical perspective that reveals its inescapable link with capitalist production processes. From Postigo's (2013) perspective, "climate change, both as a consequence of capitalism and as an acceleration in the speed, extent and sharpness of its effects, is a novelty for society and the nature of the planet. (p. 15). In this regard, the author expands on how the current form of "production, circulation and consumption of goods and services is taking the planet on a trajectory of transformations never before seen, the consequences of which will tend to the conformation of new vital conditions that are outside the range that we currently perceive "(Postigo, 2013, p. 15).

In a linked way, Cortés (2013) highlights how "climate change is the most fundamental global issue of our time and the greatest challenge facing public policies. The fate of the planet literally depends on how society, in this generation, responds to climate catastrophe. " (p. 11). In the opinion of this author, the effects of climate change, among which stand out the "progressive increase in sea and temperature levels, increasing climatic phenomena that plague communities and ecosystems, accelerated environmental degradation that threatens the supply of water and food, among others "(p. 11), constitute a global threat, both for the economic system and for humanity's very subsistence. Despite the global impact of climate change, it is expected that the nations under economic oppression will suffer disproportionately its consequences, bearing between 75 and 80% of the damage (Cortés, 2013, p. 11). As Cortés (2013) elaborates, even

though Latin America and the Caribbean generates less than 10% of global emissions, "projections indicate that a gradual but persistent increase in the average temperature will continue, with serious consequences for ecosystems and inhabitants of the region" (p 11).

Going deeper into the link between climate change and the current capitalist production model, Cortés (2013) highlights how this phenomenon is framed in the "crisis of a supposedly infinite pattern of civilization of growth" (p. 13), a crisis that faces the world population with a radically new dilemma "or it is answered with a profound transformation of such dominant patterns, with their conception of wealth and progress, scientific-technological patterns, conception of the use, preservation and distribution of goods or continue to move towards global barbarism." (p. 13)

Based on an analysis anchored in the Latin American decolonial epistemological perspective, Cajigas-Rotundo (2007) presents the concept of biocoloniality of power, through which he refers to "the existence of a colonial power pattern still in force over nature" (p. 60). The author expands on how this concept develops

the junction between political ecology and the modernity / coloniality research program. If the notion proposed by Quijano denotes coloniality as a pattern of power articulated around the idea of race that produces subjectivities and exercises control of work and territory, biocoloniality emphasizes the production of natures in the context of one of the manifestations of contemporary capitalism: ecocapitalism (p. 60).

In this way it is understood that biocoloniality "updates the power asymmetries present in modernity / coloniality; that is, it reconfigures coloniality in contemporary capitalism (Cajigas-Rotundo, 2007, p. 60).

If the "coloniality of power" refers to the asymmetries of power present in the economic, social, cultural, subjective, epistemic and political relations between the centers and the peripheries of the modern / colonial world system that enables the ethnic and epistemic subordination of the local populations, that is to say, to the inequalities and hierarchizations inscribed in these relationships articulated around the idea of race –privileging whiteness– the biocoloniality of power aims to make visible these asymmetries –or

structural heterogeneities– within the framework of ecocapitalism in its postmodern phase / postcolonial (Cajigas-Rotundo, 2007, pp. 62-63).

It could be highlighted how, in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, one of the main power devices of biocoloniality has been the commodification of nature. Franceschi-Barraza (2014), when quoting Gudynas, highlights how this commodification advances by fragmenting nature into “the so-called environmental goods and services’ and into different merchandise to insert it into production processes. The components of ecosystems, whether they are species of fauna or flora or, even, their genes or their ecological cycles, become merchandise subject to the rules of trade, which may have owners and economic value (p. 92).

Faced with the above, Franceschi-Barraza (2014) raises the question of whether the environmental issue should be considered as a “contemporary social issue”, given that “the structural and conjunctural dimensions of current capitalism, as well as its manifestations in the environmental field, are based on antagonistic inequalities between social classes which confront them in the struggle for access and management of natural resources” (p. 92).

When elaborating regarding the class conflict that affects climate change, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) highlights how

The globalized neoliberal position has not only alienated the human, disaffiliating him, displacing him, disassociating him from his social and natural fabric, but also altering the self-regulating process of nature. The climatic problem transcends the labor-capital dialectic, and the increasingly polarized structure of social classes and even the environment. (pp. 37-38)

In this way, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) highlights how, in the neoliberal global economic system, the environment is constituted as a scene of conflicts and is inserted in a dynamic of appropriation of resources to generate capital in a model of excessive exploitation “(p. 12). To which is added “the culture of consumption that has pushed to the critical limit the possibility of future generations to have the opportunity to enjoy the world as we enjoy it today” (p. 12). Faced with this, we agree with the author in proposing that

The excessive dynamic of inequality in globalization is not only increasing unemployment and exacerbating social fragmentation, but it is now threatening the human capacity to perpetuate itself as a species. The capital structure is built on the basis of fossil energy consuming and transforming companies. This implies that the battle for planetary sustainability is the battle against globalized neoliberal capital and industrialized nations as its main allies (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, pp. 158-159).

Deprofessionalization and working conditions

The effects of de-professionalization have recently been established as a focus area. A phenomenon that transcends different professional fields, including social work. Benito and Chinchilla (2005) establish that "job flexibility has been used as a method to fragment the social work professions" in Costa Rica. These authors expand that deprofessionalization "is a process aimed at deliberately disqualifying professional rank and competence. It aims to gradually reduce the qualities and qualities that characterize a profession of training and university career" (p. 1). Deprofessionalizing implies reducing and eliminating the characteristics that make a profession, precisely, a profession. Likewise, Hernández (2017) defines it as "the process tending to disqualify a profession and which results in the loss of autonomy in their professional practice, of the control of their monolithic knowledge and of their social recognition, which leads us to unfavorable working conditions " (p.164). Germán Reyes (2015), in an analysis on the invisibility of labor rights as part of human rights in Mexico, affirms that collectively "there is widespread discontent with the conditions in which labor and production relations are found, and work in general " (p. 76).

This result in the workplace does not arise spontaneously or without predetermination. The consensus established in professional literature is that the main cause behind the phenomenon of de-professionalization are the movements of neoliberal globalization. "It is necessary to specify that globalization has a clear and dominant economic component, which is limited to capitalism, particularly in its neoliberal expression" (Benito & Chinchilla, 2016). In a case study on union perspectives on globalization and on how it is reflected in labor regulations, Bouzas, Evaristo and Vega (2015), establish that

Globalization is a process that began in the seventies and is still under construction, which strikes us in the face with countless evidences in the world of work and one constant: the flexibility of work, which comes to transform it, workers and even the organizations they create (p. 158).

Social work has not been exempt from the effects of neoliberalism, with its corresponding effect on the precariousness of the profession. Huertas-Sosa and Ramos-Cruz (2015) point out, in their reflections on how the practice of independent social work, that social work "does not work independently of historical or social determinations, and requires consideration in the context of economic processes and current politicians to understand the why, how and why of the profession" (p. 26). Therefore, globalization has allowed changes to be made in the public policies through the States themselves, in which neoliberal notions permeate the labor conditions and the services they provide. In investigations carried out as part of the development of the professional ethical-political project for social work in Puerto Rico, López, Barreto and Rivera (2014) established that

Given the current labor conditions, the quality of services that, by virtue of social rights, were conquered by the working class and various sectors of civil society throughout the 20th century, is impoverished. Today these are threatened by the impact of neoliberalism on social policy (p. 38).

Benito and Chinchilla (2016) identify the different disadvantaged areas that characterize the de-professionalization of social work as

intervention methodologies, particular knowledge, presence of epistemological and ontological paradigms that underpin the body of knowledge and intervention, reality research methods, capacity for interpretation, professional identity, philosophical principles and ethical values, political and professional organization, among others (p. 71).

On the other hand, the same profession is facing a possible disappearance as part of the capitalist demonstrations. López, Barreto and Rivera (2014) explain that

the de-professionalization or break with social work as a profession, the targeting and precariousness of social services and the

displacement of social work to the private sector as an alternative to commercialize services, bring with them new tensions and, in turn, greater vulnerability of rights human for all subjects involved (p. 38).

This extends and begins from the stages of creation and then contracting of such services. Neoliberals understand that the employee must be hired while he can offer the expected performance and when said "capacity" decreases, the State should have the power to replace him with a more "capable" one (Huertas-Sosa & Ramos-Cruz, 2015, p. 27); creating then new transformations in the profession in an emergent and responsive way before the new precariousness.

Emerging service contracts, self-employed workers, fixed-term contracts, the use of figures such as scholarships and internships, in short, new legal forms to circumvent the traditional employment relationship. So less and less are hired in the classic salaried job (Huertas-Sosa & Ramos-Cruz, 2015, p. 30).

This instability is transmitted in the wage labor condition. Due to the displacement of professional social work positions, the lack of legitimization of the profession and the replacement by other positions, have created the production of services at lower costs, for "cheaper" wages; feeding convenience for corporations that tow capitalism (Nieves-Rolón, et al., 2019; López, et al., 2014; Benito & Chinchilla, 2005; 2016).

Finally, technological evolution is taken into account as an instrument, but more importantly, as a replacement for service positions; modifying and distorting them. In an investigation on labor conditions for young people in Mexico, María de Jesús (2015, p. 202) exposes how the "technological, productive and organizational transformations" make spaces (channeled in companies) and the labor competencies that take root to complex these. He then proceeds to explain how this evolution, through a Marxist interpretation, can lead us to professions of "dead work" (where face-to-face and force production is not needed) resulting in increased unemployment, structural job insecurity, wage cuts, loss of rights, etc. (p. 204).

This last technological aspect takes a central place in this moment of world crisis; in which, globally, a health pandemic is experienced with COVID-19 (coronavirus). The emerging adaptive changes in the profession that are carried out in the services must be considered, taking into account the

above. Without ruling out the possibility of acceleration that technology may have in minimizing the profession, one can research and analyze the benefits and advances that technology can develop for the performance of the social work profession.

We are facing an extra-economic crisis, caused by a virus that spreads on the planet and that affects at the same time the supply and demand for goods and services, the real and the financial economy, which occurs along with the insufficiency of scientific knowledge to face it (Neffa, 2020, p. 10)

Therefore, we must take advantage of this crisis to rethink the profession and its involvement in new forms of development.

The world to come will be very different. Theoretical and ideological barriers have fallen that allow us to think as an alternative to a new possible mode of development, even if the current mode of production is not modified, because the way out of this crisis will not be provided by the market. [...] The democratic state emerges again in front of the market as the dominant institutional form and in this case it is not perceived as the cause of the problems (p. 11).

What in your professional view are the essential policies that will effectively address these problems? Where do relationships need to improve?

Poverty and inequality

Poverty as a manifestation of the social question in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean is a topic that continues to be the axis of discussion and debate in relation to the notions of it. According to Pérez (2013) "talking about poverty implies understanding development, whatever the construction of this controversial concept." (p.43). Similarly, Muñoz-Erao (2015) states that "the complexity of the term 'poverty' is evident in the range of references that are made of it and that reflect the difficulty in finding a formal interpretation of this concept." Based on the foregoing, the relationship between poverty and the development of public policies implemented by the State will be based on "the interpretation and representation that poverty and the poor are made" (Muñoz-Erao, 2015, p. 101).

The aforementioned leads us to reflect on the fact that the concept of poverty, beyond being “controversial” and “complex”, is manipulable, thus promoting the fact that it is the State that defines those who fall within the spectrum of said social problems and as a consequence the how these will be impacted by public policies.

The issue of poverty, more than any other, has been marked by political connotations, given that the different interests of social and political groups strongly influence models of wealth distribution (Pérez, 2013, p. 50).

Given this, Leyton and Muñoz (2016) elaborate that

The difficulties that Latin American states have experienced in establishing a social contract or a citizenship pact that guarantees universal insurance mechanisms for the entire population have reinforced exclusionary dynamics in the region, prioritizing policies focused on the poorest and most vulnerable (p. 55).

Furthermore, these authors conclude that

This, as they fundamentally restrict the possibilities of action by the State to improve the quality of life of the population in poverty by not worrying about the structures and mechanisms that reproduce and keep this population excluded from the society to which they belong (p .58).

Coincidentally, Del Valle and Oliva (2014) agree that

In reality, it is rather a question of "poverty" policies, which do not seek to overcome the problem but rather enclose it in a delimited and coded social space in order to broaden the margins of social tolerance and thus avoid altering the normal functioning of the "healthy" part of society (p.8).

In summary, based on the authors quoted above, public policies in the Latin American context promote exclusion and perpetuate inequality in society, because capitalist and neoliberal ideas, despite collective efforts to eradicate them, are present. Johnson and Da Silva (2019) elaborate that "on this path, the increase in misery and unemployment worldwide is interpreted as temporary discomfort to be mitigated with compensatory policies" (p.73). Furthermore, they point out that “these policies complement the insistent commercialization of access to social goods,

such as education, health and pensions. These economic measures are implemented in a heterogeneous and persistent way in Latin America, since they are part of the set of neoliberal policies". They also highlight that the Anglo-Saxon and Eurocentric model is emulated in Latin American public policies (Johnson and Da Silva, 2019).

Considering that neoliberal, capitalist and Eurocentric thinking stands out in public policies against poverty in the Latin American context, a rethinking of them is imperative. In other words, it is necessary to develop policies that adapt to the reality of Latin America and the Caribbean. Given this premise, Gómez (2013) proposes the idea of developing critical public policies.

From a liberating point of view, policies must be formulated in a way linked to the context of realities on which they act; without falling into particularism, public policies must respond to the characteristics of the place from which they emerge and for which they are thought (p. 96).

Under the same argument of critical public policies, Barragán (2011) proposes that

Liberation theory is a Latin American ethical-political project that is presented as a valid alternative for a new development of politics in the region, redirecting state actions in favor of more inclusive and responsible public administrations with oppressed populations affected by the phenomenon of misery, supporting the prosperity policy as proposed by Enrique Dussel (p.106).

Migratory processes

Between the different nations there are migratory models that have the purpose of outlining some legal-political solution to the challenges that this phenomenon represents. But, in addition, it reflects the country's political will, supported by a certain ideological bias that, at the same time, establishes the type of relationship that is intended to be established between migrants and the society and institutions of the host country. In short, immigration policies establish the eligibility conditions for population groups, identifying the number and composition of candidates to enter, transit or leave the territory (Navarrete, 2017). The elaboration of these policies is the power of each nation. A series of internal and external political, social and economic factors intervene in this process, as well as the competing migratory patterns and the intentions of the rulers to

attend, promote, regulate or restrict international migrations (Muñoz-Bravo, 2016)

In the case of Mexico and its prominent migration to the United States, it has had different agreements and policies between both nations, for decades, from the Bracero Agreement, in the middle of the last century, to the current criminalization measures of the Trump administration in the United States. The immigration issue is a constant topic on the US-Mexico bilateral agenda. It is an aspect of the formulation of external and internal policy that largely defines the dynamics of the relationship between the two countries. Mexican migration to the United States has represented a series of social and political challenges for both states, but it has also generated the average income of more than 21,000 million dollars a year to Mexico, as a result of remittances, while the United States obtains economic benefits and demographic, since it is thanks to immigrants that this country can maintain the current system of production and life in its society (Muñoz-Bravo, 2016, pp. 333-366).

On the other hand, in the case of the political, humanitarian and migratory crisis of the Honduran and Central American exodus, the direct responsibility of the United States in its area of influence and regional political control cannot be avoided (Durand, 2019). In Chile, reflection on the need for a migration policy according to the times is a fundamental question. The sustained increase in the immigrant population in recent decades has brought new questions about how to legislate the phenomenon. Given this, the opinions and attitudes of the national population are important vehicles regarding how to adapt their policy to the new reality (Navarrete, 2017).

Carmen Norambuena and Rodrigo Matamoros (2017) make an analytical study of Argentine migration policy from the theory of historical institutionalism where international migrations represent one of the most relevant processes in its history and whose institutionality has been latent for the last decade. A journey is made from restrictive policies of the 20th century to new policies based on human rights. The Migration Law of 2004 in Argentina, has been recognized by scholars as an open door immigration law and has the merit of being the first law in the world to recognize the human right to migrate, a fundamental question if one considers the perception restricted to the migrations that had characterized the Argentinean migration policy of the 20th century, based on a notion of

national security. For its part, this law was designed with a view to strengthening regional integration, aiming at achieving the free movement of people in Mercosur (Norambuena and Matamoros, 2017).

In the case of Venezuela, Tomás Muñoz Bravo (2016) analyzes that there is currently a non-political policy that lies in the lack of recognition of the existence of a Venezuelan cross-border community, which has increased significantly in the last three decades, as a consequence of the political polarization that the country is experiencing, crime and the worsening of the crisis that the Venezuelan economic model suffers, based largely on the income generated by the sale of oil. The model of former President Hugo Chávez managed to lower poverty rates between 2003 and 2009, but currently, this model participates in promoting emigration due to the pauperization of jobs or the lack of them, the lack of basic products and the inflation that exceeds two annual digits (Muñoz-Bravo, 2016).

It is inevitable that migration policies must be adjusted to the circumstances, but they must maintain a base of fundamental principles in accordance with the law and in accordance with Latin American history and present. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, signed in Marrakech, Morocco, in December 2018, requires the application of a basic principle, already stipulated in multiple international forums: that of "shared responsibility" (UN, 2018). That principle obviously has no empirical correlation, neither in the Central American countries of origin nor even less in that of destination, the United States, whose government, for the time being, has already formally withdrawn from this pact. On the other hand, the other basic principle of the United Nations and the Global Compact is that of "institutional coherence", which, in other words, means being equitable between what is required and what is practiced. In the case of Mexico, this principle was put to the test with the 2018 caravans and, with the exception of various errors and omissions on the part of government authorities, an attempt was made to safeguard the human rights of migrants and to solve the conjunctural crisis of receiving en masse to about a tens of thousands of migrants in transit to the border (Durand, 2019). It should be noted that the policies of border closures and the persecution of migrants, both in Europe and in the United States, are largely based on new forms of racism where the figure of the immigrant prevails among negatively racialized subjects like the others and the others from the nation (Lao-Montes, 2008).

Environment and climate change

Several studies highlight how, in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, public policies to reduce or adapt to the effects of climate change have not been exclusively under the control of the states, but have also been influenced by the mercantilist logic. In this regard, Cortés (2013) states that "the State has been suffering a loss of control and power over the public in the midst of the dilemma that everything state is public, but not everything public is state" (pp.12-13). He further points out that "the central function of the neoliberal paradigm has been to pass elements from the state sphere to the private (market) without removing them from the public sphere" (p. 13). The author, addressing the historical context of exploitation of the Latin American and Caribbean region, argues that a new public policy to stop climate change

It not only implies recovering citizen prominence, but also the continent's own history of resistance. It is true that the effects of climate change have precipitated in recent decades, but this phenomenon is not limited to this period. As various historians of our region have highlighted, over five centuries, entire ecosystems were devastated by the establishment of export monocultures. Fauna, flora, humans, were victims of biological invasions of European conquerors or diseases. In short, this dramatic crisis situation requires a substantial change in the way we conceive climate change and the ways of thinking about our individual and collective actions (Cortés, 2013, p. 15)

Coincidentally, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) stands out as "public policy in favor of sustainable development and preservation of the natural environment has been swollen by the ideological struggles of various interest groups, mainly in aspects tangent to economic growth" (p. 143). The author expands on how the notion of growth "is the neoliberal ideological product that seeks to break the shackles of protectionist regulation" (p. 143). Furthermore, it stands out as "neoliberal growth lobbies and finances public policies antagonistic to the sustainability and preservation of biodiversity via the deregulation or elimination of protective laws (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, p. 144).

Cajigas-Rotundo (2007) points out how, despite the above,

Faced with the hegemony of scientific / business knowledge present in global and state biodiversity policies, the possibility of an epistemic polylogue and a transmodern and post-western praxis emerges, that

is, a non-Euro-centered knowledge and practice in which the various sources of power / knowledge establish minimum agreements around the conservation of the common, of the reproduction of life; and specifically, it is possible to establish a knowledge platform that gives equal validity to scientific knowledge and local knowledge (p. 70).

Also framed in the criticism of Eurocentric human rights, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) outlines how “beyond voluntary treaties, little has been achieved in the field of establishing responsibility for damages to population groups or countries. Here the link with the human rights of vulnerable and non-vulnerable populations around the world shines through” (p. 4). Given this, it stands out as “the development of policies for sustainable or sustainable growth based on community experience is an idea that must be reincorporated into public discussion” (p. 8). It also highlights how community movements in Latin America allow the identification of “climate adaptation strategies tailored to our needs and cultural conformation in the context of recent climate changes experienced” (p. 9).

The use of natural spaces as an incentive to stress or thermal stress, solar energy at the domestic and community level, electric vehicles, increase of collective transport routes, use the bicycle as a means of transport, the reforestation of forests, green buildings and the Green public space per capita are just some of the most popular measures in the context of a sustainable city (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, p. 9).

Furthermore, the author, a specialist in social work, social policy and climate change, points out to us as necessary the development, implementation and evaluation “of public policy to work in phase for the prevention, intervention and mitigation of extreme natural events. Some of these extreme events are intense flash floods, prolonged droughts, heat waves and other dangers associated with cyclonic climatic phenomena” (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, p. 9).

Ortiz-Mojica (2019) concludes by highlighting the need for social work to take an environmental approach aimed at inserting itself “in the elaboration of social policies not only from the legislative desk but also focusing its analysis of social reality on emerging community projects, strengthening , nurturing and nurturing in the process ”(p. 154). He expands that to achieve this end, “the analysis of the problem to be addressed must be a comprehensive one with a socio-critical perspective that allows the influx of knowledge for a transdisciplinary practice” (Ortiz-

Mojica, 2019, p. 154). Therefore, the need to establish public policies that recognize nature as a legal figure endowed with rights and to include vulnerable groups in the planning, implementation and evaluation of public policies aimed at stopping climate change is highlighted.

Deprofessionalization and working conditions

Considering that neoliberal globalization is the main element that tends towards de-professionalization through changes in the capitalist economy, questions arise about the States that allow these changes to be interwoven from the public policies that regulate Latin American and Caribbean countries. Cruz and López (2019) point out that "public policy is conceived as the responses that are generated by the State that are implemented or materialized by institutions in response to the needs and demands of a society" (p. 94). De Jesús (2015) agrees and adds that public policies are one of the main tools for managing these economic / labor phenomena, exposing that

Globalization is an innovative process that is making it possible to discover the two sides of the coin: exploitation and subordination, equality and opportunities. There are no magic recipes, initiatives for change can be started with the instruments provided by public policies (p. 220).

However, it is recognized that despite being able to establish the needs that social problems create, the public policies that are developed are inconsistent with the needs identified.

Cruz and López (2019) elaborate as

In Colombia, the design of district public policy tends to be coherent compared to the structure of programs that want to optimize the service and support the needs of the population. This policy complexly conceptualizes social realities beyond the consequences or explicit results of a need, systematically relating aspects such as the environment, the family, the community, among others, that allow the articulation of an interdisciplinary field of knowledge such as epidemiology, psychology, social work, sociology and others, to provide answers to these needs. However, when implementing the different management models, incoherence with the reality supported by problems of managing the concept of need or problem in public

policy, of the institutions that implement the models, and of the community that is focused is visible (p. 94).

Indeed, it is established that the same labor policies are the means for the deterioration of the professions. In the case of deprofessionalization, different "reforms" have been created in the workplace in countries such as: Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Mexico, Costa Rica and Puerto Rico (Aravena-Carrasco, 2020; Benito & Chinchilla, 2016; De Jesús, 2015; García-García, 2017; Lucena, 2020; Neffa, 2020; Pucci, 2020; Reyes, 2015), which are promoted as of substantial benefit to those involved, both professionals and recipients of the service. However, when analyzing its content and studying its effects, labor conditions and rights become even more precarious, together with the delegitimization of professions, including that of social work. This ultimately benefits the corporate and business employer. García-García (2017), when preparing an analysis of the labor reform carried out in the Puerto Rican context during 2017, highlights that it was

negative for employees and beneficial for employers because it was designed with the aspiration that this will lead to greater job creation. We will have to wait to see if the objective is achieved. Meanwhile, the island's working class sector will depend on employers' good faith in hiring and granting terms and conditions of employment. Otherwise, in the era of the technological revolution we will have returned to the times before the industrial revolution (Benito and Chinchilla, 2016, p. 1166).

Even Benito and Chinchilla (2016) criticize the delegitimization of the social work profession, and that by hiring unskilled or uneducated employees for the position, one of the ways to fragment the same profession is specified. This creates the context for lower losses and more capital benefits (for companies, corporations and agencies) through the commercialization of the profession.

The Executive Power [of Costa Rica] presented to the Legislative Assembly the harmful Draft Law known as the "Law of Transformation of the Non-State Public Sector". Among its multiple negative implications, the minimization of social work as a discipline stands out, deregulating it in such a way that one does not necessarily have to be a social worker in order to intervene in this disciplinary field (Benito & Chinchilla, 2016, p. 68).

This is a process of labor flexibility in which

the incorporation of non-professionals in the execution of social services leads to a progressive degradation of the intervention and consequently, of its image, legitimacy and social credibility, insofar as its work will respond to personal good intentions, and not to a process methodological and accumulation of knowledge and experiences that guarantee a higher level of effectiveness in the intervention (Benito & Chinchilla, 2005, p. 4).

Therefore, the trend to commodification of services, supported by neoliberal policies, allows the dynamics of professional fragmentation to occur. López, Barreto and Rivera (2014) highlight that

the de-professionalization or break with social work as a profession, the targeting and precariousness of social services and the displacement of social work to the private sector as an alternative to commercialize services, bring with them new tensions and, in turn, greater vulnerability of rights human for all subjects involved (p. 38).

So, to counteract de-professionalization, the protection of labor rights is essential. Protection that must be established as part of the agreements, resolutions, treaties, articulations, covenants and constitutions; As part of the efforts to guarantee not only the equitable opportunity to join the workforce, but also to ensure that the parameters of work dignity and quality in the provision of services are met.

What do people (clients, service users, citizens, beneficiaries) with whom you work want to see improved?

Poverty and inequality

Social movements in Latin America and the Caribbean have been present in different periods of our history in response to various problems, including the dynamics of oppression and exclusion that perpetuate poverty and inequality. Martí (2004) suggests that social movements

are a form of collective political action that implies the pre-existence of a conflict that tries to resolve itself through mobilization. Talking about social movements today indicates that something is wrong (at least for a few) in "our" new global order. and with a special emphasis on the Latin American region (p.80).

In the Latin American context, such mobilization may arise in response to neoliberalism and capitalism that perpetuates economic inequality and exclusion in our context. Along these lines, Centro Social Ruptura (2016) invited the mobilization against the capitalist system because “it has been a predatory social system of life and nature. Therefore, we think that it is necessary to do something against this predatory and criminal dynamic of capitalist logic (p.138)”.

Society is not static. If not, it is constantly changing through time. Social movements are not the exception to such changes. According to Lago and Marotias (2006), the internet and networks are part of the new forms of mobilization against neoliberalism and inequality. These authors state that:

The network organization model, from which the main activities of the information society are structured, is also a referential model for movements and social networks of resistance and opposition to the process of neoliberal globalization (p.2).

In response to the conditions of poverty and economic inequality, community-based movements arise. An example of this are the movements of community tourism in the regions of Cuzco, Peru. Casas, Soler and Pastor (2012) state that

This type of tourism is based on the local community that aims to reduce the negative impact and reinforce the positive impacts of tourism on nature. It allows wealth to be generated in rural areas of developing countries, through the participation of the local community in tourism management, so that the benefits are passed on to the community itself (p.93).

In Puerto Rico, the Center for Urban, Community and Business Action (CAUCE) is a project of community outreach that promotes the social, physical and economic rehabilitation of the urban area of Río Piedras and neighboring communities (Pérez, Ponce and Matos 2016). Meanwhile, in Mexico, social workers have developed impact projects for economically disadvantaged communities. An example of this is the project Reconfiguration of Axes and Community Ties (Galeana & Sainz, 2018). These authors argue that

Based on the interventions carried out in the first region, processes, strategies and actions were articulated, with a focus on social promotion centered on social rights and on the construction of groups,

where the following are emphasized as social work functions: education, organization, management and social mediation, aimed at mobilizing the community to address the problems of their locality (p. 70).

Migratory processes

In the migration policies that are being generated in the region, it is important to broaden the perspective of vulnerabilities and diversity aspects. One of the problems to be dealt with and that may be invisible in the political discussion of migration processes is the gender perspective. We know that a significant number of women cross borders every day for different reasons: poverty, lack of opportunities, environmental deterioration, natural disasters, persecution, gender violence and other reasons that affect their well-being or that of their families. In this sense, States and support organizations need to understand the care and protection requirements of the different groups that make up migratory flows, as well as those family members who remain in the places of origin, to think about policies, regulations and programs relevant to your needs and also opportunities. Women face contexts of vulnerability associated not only with irregular migration, but also with discrimination and gender-based violence. Women, regardless of their immigration status, can suffer double discrimination: for being a woman and for being a migrant. It is also known that women are exposed to sexual, physical and psychological violence throughout the migration process (OIM, 2016).

Another vulnerable group is the LGBTI community. A person with a sexual identity different from the imposed social norm, possesses a lacerated and second-class citizenship against the privilege of heterosexuality. This political, economic and social context since the rejection, receives the emigrant with a homosexual sexual orientation. Both the status of immigrant and homosexual person is what we can interpret as the intersection of human identities, which in this case doubly validates exclusion (López, Toro & Nieves, 2012). Violence against this population migrating to other countries does not automatically stop when crossing a border, and national protection instruments vary in the region. Thus, while Belize penalizes homosexuality, El Salvador and Honduras do not have protection mechanisms; and although Mexico DF recognizes same-sex marriage, Amnesty International reported that the majority of LGBTI people who have mobilized from North Central America to this country continue to experience high rates of discrimination and violence, both by

civilians and by governmental authorities; Costa Rica, through social security, admits the assurance of same-sex couples, and its Ministry of Labor allows the benefit of their widow's pension; and Nicaragua has legislation that penalizes discrimination against LGBTI people and an Office of the Attorney for Sexual Diversity. LGBTI migrants should not be discriminated against, and there are things that States can do, this implies training and awareness, as well as understanding the risk points for discrimination against LGBTI people in order to adapt measures to safeguard their safety and dignity (IOM, 2016).

On the other hand, Leticia Calderón (2006) states that, because the majority of international migrants are workers, the workplace is the most immediate and sustained contact they have in the society they join. Such is its importance in the lives of the subjects that this space sometimes constitutes the global idea that migrants establish about the new country. Unionization is, therefore, one of the ways par excellence to analyze the experience of all ethnic groups in their different destinations and in the search for solutions to the problems inherent to immigration. Also, it includes activism in ethnic groups and electoral participation, as forces both to protect themselves in a new scenario, and to build social networks that allow the migratory circuit to be consolidated (Calderón, 2006).

"The phenomenon of caravans in Central America is another expression of a migratory process that the region has been facing for a time," explains Marcelo Pisani, IOM Regional Director for Central America, North America and the Caribbean. "It constitutes a mixed migratory flow, driven by economic factors, family reunification, violence and the search for international protection, among others" (IOM, 2018). In general, many migrants understand that going by caravan can protect themselves from violence and capture the assistance that countries are willing to offer, according to international agreements.

Environment and climate change

As part of the results of an investigation focused on community organization and environmental social work, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) compiles several recommendations aimed at addressing climate change. These recommendations were based on the input that the researcher received from community leaders, social workers with environmental practices, and municipal legislators. As recommendations, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) highlighted the need to carry out the assessment of the environmental vulnerability of

vulnerable communities. To do this, efforts must be made to establish alliances between academic sectors for the articulation of free or low-cost research. In addition, he pointed out as urgent the development of proposals to local and international organizations focused on research, prevention and conservation of ecosystems, with the involvement of the impacted communities. It also highlights the participation of government agencies to assess the impact of climate change on water, soil and air. The author emphasizes the need to identify critical structures exposed to the coast or in flood areas. It also proposes the replacement of fossil fuel energy with renewable energy.

Additionally, Ortiz-Mojica (2019), when pointing out the relevance of community groups for the adequate attention to climate change, states that permanent consultation mechanisms should be established that allow communities to identify areas of need and risks related to climate change. This, together with the creation of advisory committees made up of professionals from the Social and Natural Sciences, which incorporate community leaders to advise on aspects related to public policy.

Likewise, by emphasizing recommendations linked to the theoretical-methodological development of Environmental social work, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) emphasizes the need to promote training processes in social work with a transdisciplinary approach, integrating the theme of the environmental crisis as part of the Community social work curriculum and link training in the field of social policies with the environmental crisis and the spatial contribution that can be made from social work.

Deprofessionalization and working conditions

First, it is identified that we must accept the problem of deprofessionalization as a dynamic that directly affects the profession of social work, and not only as an external problem that is worked on in its practice, through the service provided to other people. López, Barreto and Rivera (2014) trace that

It is necessary to recognize that the labor scenarios where social work is inserted have undergone transformations and changes that in turn impact the quality, availability and access and enjoyment of the social services offered by virtue of and as a guarantee of acquired social rights (p. 23).

Thus, in general, Reyes (2015) identifies that the most affected areas are unemployment, informal work, loss of purchasing power of wages and lack of labor justice (p. 70). Benito and Chinchilla (2016) identify that the effects that occur in the social work profession are: the delegitimization and social credibility of the profession, mobility, fragmented job markets, labor movement or professional structural rise, the reduction of union development and distortion in policy discussions and the social work profession (pp.72-73). More specifically, they argue that these effects on the profession are concretized through: vocational training as a business, instability in employment contracts, income levels and the hiring of unprepared professionals in the area of social work (pp. 71-72). This last effect agrees with the arguments of De Jesús (2015), who highlights that "the changes in the forms of contracting, increasingly flexible, are another component that gives functionality to the production system in the current economic model" (p 206), referring to neoliberal and capitalist globalization.

In order to achieve social and public policy changes that ensure labor rights and also eradicate neoliberal capitalist policies, more participation is needed inside and outside the social work profession. On the one hand, Reyes (2015) establishes the importance of "international denunciation to recognize the problems of de-professionalization" (p. 78). In the case of professions, public policy networks are required to weave the supports and provide opportunities from the different agents involved in the subject. "These policies should not be the sole responsibility of the State, but must have a broad participatory spectrum" (De Jesús, 2015, p. 220). This, considering that national movements are those that directly affect these conflicts.

Only the strength of a united and organized collective will be able to defend our own conquests and future projects, and to put ourselves in a position to respond to the demands of the interior of the union, as well as those of the emerging social movements (López, Barreto, Rivera, 2014, p. 40).

Therefore, it is pointed out about social work professionals and their involvement in organizations, unions or unions, which not only legitimize the profession and its practice, but create movements to get involved in the improvement of working conditions. Huertas-Sosa and Ramos-Cruz

(2015) support measures such as compulsory membership to precisely promote these changes collectively.

Compulsory membership and the support of all the professionals who are exercising social work is extremely necessary. This compulsory membership cannot be limited to the payment of an annual fee, as we understand that the active participation, support and integration of the members of the association is vital to the processes and struggles of the CPTSPR (College of Social Work Professionals in Puerto Rico), of which, ultimately, we will all favor each other, since we are all the College (p. 35-36).

On the other hand, in a study to examine concrete strategies to improve the current working conditions of social work professionals based on an ethical practice and guarantor of human rights, De Jesús-Rosa, Ortiz-Mojica, Gayol-Santana, Cruz- Sánchez and González-Parés (2016) found discrepancies in the verbalizations of their participants about the satisfaction of their school. Some expressed a feeling of absence from school to handle this problem (pp. 51-52). So there must be synergy between both bodies (those of the union, organizations, schools or unions, with the practitioners of the profession) in order to overcome the concerns that both clearly establish about the profession and its practice. Therefore, the authors recommended that "the efforts made by these bodies study and analyze the multiple proposals outlined by the participants regarding specific strategies to overcome the precariousness of the working conditions of social work" (p. 55).

Benito & Chinchilla (2017) caution that

Deprofessionalization, in addition to deepening the conditions outlined above, seeks to break up any process of union development that involves articulating union efforts aimed at developing a better professional practice, critical and committed to social development. It seeks to castrate any attempt at practice and political action from social work (p. 73)

Based on this analysis, professional collective participation is absolutely necessary to prevent professional organizations dedicated to protecting the social work profession from becoming obsolete and as a consequence eliminate the same profession of social work.

Who are the actors/stakeholders/partnerships currently involved in addressing these issues and who should be involved?

Poverty and inequality

In relation to the aspects related to the participation of social actors, it is necessary to return to the issue of public policies, specifically those of a focused nature, since it is these policies that abound in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean. In response to targeted policies, there are also efforts by economically disadvantaged people to be included in such policies. Given this, Cortés and Zárata (2019) state that "the various strategies they use to be included in these programs is a very present issue among marginalized groups, and with which evaluations of the fight against poverty are confronted time and time again (p.88)." Which leads us to conclude that such policies, far from addressing poverty, perpetuate the conditions of inequality in society.

Poverty and inequality impact multiple aspects in society, among them the right to health. According to Rivera (2015)

Social determinants of health are defined as the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system. These life circumstances are the result of the unequal distribution of money, power and resources at the global, national and local levels (p. 124).

In the case of Puerto Rico, both the health and health systems show reforms based on neoliberal ideology. Rivera (2015) criticizes the fact that "the Health Services Reform that had the purpose of providing health services to the indigent medical population through a modality of care management with private providers and the payment of a 'capitation' per patient "(P.132). In other words, those groups that do not have the purchasing power to pay for health services, if they fall within the spectrum of what the State considers to be "poverty", are at the mercy of the services and decisions made by the state. Among the services that are affected are mental health services. At the moment, the "capitation" system (Rivera, 2015) is still in force and the specific services that will be provided are previously established. In the case of those who belong to the State Health Reform, if they have any psychiatric emergency, they have to go through the so-called "stabilizing rooms" in the country. In them, it is observed how in Puerto Rico a system based on fast-acting drugs is responded to and the macro-structural factors (example of this economic

inequality and unemployment) created by the social question are ignored. Regarding education, it is identified that the administration of public funds has been characterized by an implementation “indicated at various times with deficiencies both in the management of funds and in the results obtained by schools, in the academic achievement of their students and in the increase in school dropout (Rosado, 2014, p.143).

In view of the foregoing, the need to develop critical policies that are thought from our Latin American context and that are tailored to the needs of the collective of our times and does not lose perspective of the scope and impact of macrostructural factors on individuals, families, is reiterated. and communities with which it intervenes. Therefore, it is understood that

the State, the market and civil society are central to any reconstruction of a truly democratic political project that seeks to solve many of the problems, and especially those of poverty, which comprise the contemporary social question (Pérez, 2013, p. 61).

Migratory processes

There is a gap between the conditions of oppression and the deeds of liberation, a fundamental fabric of historical mediations (cultural, political, circumstantial) and dimensions of subjectivity (affective, ethical, identity, epistemic, symbolic, of desire) that are essential to explain why collective actions emerge and social movements emerge at particular junctures and places (Lao-Montes, 2008).

There are several international, regional and national initiatives to collaborate in the study of migration processes, proposals to create fairer public policies, programs to meet humanitarian needs, and centers for migrant assistance. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is committed to the principle that migration in an orderly and humane manner benefits migrants and society. As the main international organization for migration, IOM works with its partners in the international community to:

- Help address the growing challenges of managing migration to operative level
- Promote understanding of migration issues

- Encourage social and economic development through migration and ensure respect for human dignity and the well-being of migrants.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), an independent non-governmental organization that strives to provide humanitarian protection and assistance to victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence, takes measures to respond to emergencies, migration processes. At the same time, it promotes respect for international humanitarian law and its application in national legislation.

The Migrant House, which is located in several countries in Latin America and the United States, arises with the aim of dealing with the study and application of pastoral care for "people on the move": migrants, exiles, refugees, fugitives, fishermen and sailors, travelers and aviation personnel, those belonging to road transport, nomads, those active in circuses and amusement parks, pilgrims and tourists, as well as for all groups of people who for various reasons are related to the world of human mobility, such as students abroad, specialists and technicians who, because of great works or for international scientific research, must move from one country to another.

US Democratic Senator Bernie Sanders, who was also running for president of his country, presented a migration plan to transform that system in the United States. Under the motto: "a welcoming and safe United States for all," it aims to reverse all initiatives on that front by US President Donald Trump. Among his ideas, Sanders would create a "fast and fair" path to US citizenship, decriminalize immigration, demilitarize the border with Mexico, and protect and strengthen the labor rights of immigrants in the United States. In addition, it includes ensuring that asylum seekers can file their petitions in the United States, end family detention and separation, reunite families, eliminate the veto on travelers from Muslim countries, and stop the construction of the border wall (Noticel, 2019).

In June 2019, the governments of Mexico and the United States agreed on a series of measures to reduce irregular migration flows. These include: increasing immigration control in Mexico; carry out joint operations against smuggling; expand the Migrant Protection protocols (MPP informally known as "Stay in Mexico"), a program that sends asylum seekers to Mexico while waiting for their asylum hearing in the United States; and commit to addressing the root causes of migration through development investment in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, the

countries of the so-called Northern Triangle of Central America. Both governments also agreed to consider negotiating a secure third country agreement in the future that would require asylum seekers to apply in the first country they reached. However, Andrew Selee and others from the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) (2019) are not very convinced of the sustainability of these agreements, "due to chronic institutional weakness and poorly planned public policy structures in both countries" (Selee, et al., 2019). MPI makes five recommendations on how both countries could address migration in a more effective way to discourage irregular migration and, at the same time, ensure that those seeking protection have a fair process:

1. Reframe asylum status
2. Strengthen migration institutions
3. Develop a regional approach to deal with smuggling networks
4. Create legal pathways for migration
5. Investment in development and public safety

On the other hand, the UN General Assembly meeting in Marrakech, Morocco in December 2018 approved the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which is not binding, but governments agree to implement the agreements. "The present Global Compact expresses our collective commitment to improve cooperation on international migration. Migration has been part of the human experience since the dawn of history, and we recognize that it generates prosperity, innovation and sustainable development in our globalized world, and that these positive effects can be optimized by improving the governance of migration. In today's world, most migrants travel, live, and work in a safe, orderly, and regular manner. However, there is no doubt that migration has very different and sometimes unpredictable effects on our countries and communities and on migrants and their families" (UN, 2018).

The IOM Regional Office for Central America, North America and the Caribbean has implemented a series of initiatives to combat xenophobia collaboratively, particularly through outreach and community communication campaigns. Community outreach projects involve creating events and activities that strengthen ties between migrants and host communities (Astles, 2016).

Environment and climate change

Cordero Ulate (2017) points out that the study of environmental movements in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean allows us to “understand their diversity, and how multiple perspectives translate into differentiated political-organizational discourses when it comes to initiatives or struggles related to the environment ”(p. 448).

In a linked way, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) highlights as a critical look at climate change “it configures a complicated social question as a result of the unresolved dialectic between those who appropriate natural resources to the point of extinction under the neoliberal regime, and those who are from the other side seeing their sustainability decrease ”(p. 5). The author expands on that other side "there are countries under economic oppression, labeled as 'developing' or 'underdeveloped' that make up a bloc at the mercy of international financing and continue to provide fertile ground for toxic and unsustainable industrial capitalism" (p. 5). In this way, it stands out how, both in industrialized countries and those in economic oppression, communities vulnerable to the effects of climate change are observed. Also, it stands out as "in these geographical units the consequences of the economic process are evident, not only in urban or territorial morphology in general, but in the human and environmental conditions of daily living" (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, p. 5).

Highlighting the role that community organization assumes in the fight for environmental justice, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) highlights that “the work that takes place in the community is in itself an answer to complicated questions about citizen interest in designs of public policy that sometimes neglect the inclusion of community actors” (p. 20). Given this, the author criticizes how

some legislative processes follow an almost expeditious process, leaving interest groups stranded waiting for participation to depose or contrast ideas. However, it is precisely in the communities where multiple day-to-day working groups make reality what some public policies on climate change plan to resolve (Ortiz-Mojica, 2019, pp. 20-21).

Polastri (2012), when examining the role of environmental social movements in the Latin American context, highlights how these

have diverse claims, such as the claims of the indigenous peoples, that of the urban movements (focusing on the demand for public services, land and water), also in demonstrations in favor of democracy against military dictatorships, feminist movement and recognition for sexual, ethnic and cultural identities. All have been taking a really important and increasing emphasis since the 1930s and 1940s (p. 7).

For his part, Cordero-Ulate (2017) emphasizes how the ecological perspective of social movements in Latin America and the Caribbean "tries to understand ecological problems by relating them to an unequal and unjust social order that makes irrational use of natural resources" (p. 448), highlighting how for these groups "the idea of a real improvement in the environment is deeply linked to a profound change in the social and political order" (Cordero-Ulate, 2017, p. 449). Faced with which, Polastri (2012) highlights how the countries of our region "have historically been reproducers of the looting imposed by developed countries. We have been assigned a role in the international division of labor and we are recipients and depositories of waste and factories that in the northern hemisphere consider pollutants" (Polastri, 2012, p. 10). Therefore, it raises the need to consider that

Contextualizing the demands of the different social movements in some countries supposes the dialectical feedback that has been given over time, in order to achieve demands and propose different lifestyles from those proposed in capitalism. Although not linearly or exhaustively, they have contributed to the organizational base of what would become known in recent decades as environmentalism or environmental movements (Polastri, 2012, p. 7).

This leads Polastri (2012) to raise the current need in the Latin American and Caribbean region to

strengthen the organizational bases, of diffusion and reflection of the theoretical and methodological postulates that allow the construction of ways of life different from those imposed by the hegemonic power, and of more collective and organized action against this system of exclusion and domination, to begin with to rebuild ourselves in an alternative rationality (Polastri, 2012, p. 10).

Deprofessionalization and working conditions

Having established the importance of the participation of professionals in social movements and as part of their union, it is then recognized that

These problems are not created by people in their individual character and are the product of the social / economic / political context, which means that they cannot be addressed and solved with individual actions. It is only by creating a broad front of professionals and a common professional project that it will be possible to improve the working conditions of social workers, fight to guarantee the human rights of our participants and achieve more inclusive social policies, equitable and transformative (Huertas-Sosa & Ramos-Cruz, 2015, p. 31).

Since, according to Cruz and López (2019)

deliberation rests on the participation with decision-making power of ordinary citizens, in officials, in reasoned deliberation processes that delegate decision-making and implementation powers to local action units, transforming and colonizing institutions, producing equality in power among the participants. Thus, social work, from its work, promotes the development and participation of communities in the construction of real democratic structures (pp. 103-104).

Based on the "intrinsic nature" of the community practice of social work, the same authors reflect that social organizations can develop a legitimate path for the reconstruction of the social fabric through spontaneous and community-based forms. (p. 106). "In this way, the social work profession can achieve restructuring by remedying the failures of the entities that provide these precarious services" (pp. 98-99).

In the study carried out by De Jesús-Rosa, et. to the. (2016) found that

Research is another element of relevance. They pointed out that it was necessary not only to investigate, but also to share this new knowledge for the enrichment of the profession. They stated that research can serve to raise awareness about working conditions in social work and improve the image of the profession (p. 51).

In addition, they found a consensus among their participants about other strategies that can help the profession and its condition. As previously identified on the technological movements that are increasingly inserted in

the workplace, they expressed "the use of the media as a useful tool, dual purpose, which would make it possible to publicize the precarious conditions of professional practice , on the one hand, and on the other, it would serve to publicize what social work is and its importance for society" (p. 51).

Another analysis carried out by the authors is the search and integration of other professions that, in union, can lead to the same "utopian labor" desires (Pérez-Sáinz, 2020), which guide the establishment of human rights, in this case labor and / or professionals. As far as I know

it must continue to have among its main priorities the strengthening of its various organizations (commissions, chapters and board of directors) through significant participation in numerical and ideologically diverse terms. It must also try to establish links with other professional groups and civil society that also aspire to combat the postulates and consequences of neoliberal politics and economy (De Jesús, 2016, p. 54).

Hernández-Echegaray (2018) in his analysis of the de-professionalization of social work, expressed some recommendations similar to the previous ones, stressing the importance of focusing on "strengthening discipline." Therefore, in the same search for knowledge about the working conditions of the profession, the practices that have been developed in recent times as a result and survival strategy of the social work profession are established.

The role of resource manager and work overload have generated a conflict between what is done (practice) and what should be done (values), which has generated discomfort and frustration for social workers. It is proposed to incorporate professional care actions aimed at improving professional self-esteem and empowerment as a group, such as permanent training and learning from practice, verifying procedures that feedback professionalism and give synergy to professional work. By highlighting good practices, the social utility of the profession is emphasized (p. 149).

Likewise, new forms of professional practice that emerge from the same dynamics of deprofessionalization are explored and articulated. One of the professional aspects that emerge, and that has been of concern, are independent practices. "Other motivations that encouraged social work

professionals to practice independently were: unemployment and the freedom to exercise methodologies, theories and autonomous interventions outside the protocols established in the agencies." (Huertas-Sosa & Ramos-Cruz, 2015, p. 33). In the same way that the authors invite to have a critical approach with this modality of practice, it can be had with any of the other varieties of the profession that continue to emerge. So these practices alone are not "complicit or allied", but rather, "all the professionals and all the professionals of social work who support the neoliberal premises previously exposed, regardless of the labor scenario, contribute to the neoliberalism taking strength , or those who understand that their professional practice is decontextualized" (p.28).

Once the aforementioned ideas have been put in order, it is possible to include new emerging practices and the professionals who practice them under the protection of the unions, organizations or unions of the profession.

Only the strength of a united and organized collective will be able to defend our own conquests and future projects, and to put ourselves in a position to respond to the demands of the interior of the union, as well as those of the emerging social movements (López, Barreto, & Rivera, 2014, p. 40).

What are people doing about these problems? What is the evidence that social work and social development interventions are having a social, economic and/or political impact?

Poverty and inequality

Throughout the literature, it is notable that the issue of poverty has been present in research processes in social work. From studies that address community initiatives in marginalized sectors to studies that identify the impact of economic inequality on families and public policies.

Romero Plana (2018), in his research on family and coping strategies in the face of poverty in the city of Colima, identifies that the entire family nucleus, including children, contributes either "with their work, their income or their resources" (p. 92). On the other hand, it highlights the existing sense of belonging among the families of the community. Add that

This context creates a sense of community and neighborhood that goes beyond the fact that the conditions are not the most appropriate

at certain times for the growth of said population. Many of the members who have been interviewed, despite seeing the difficulties that exist in the neighborhood, maintain the discourse of not wanting to leave there, because they already know it and know how it works, in addition to the love they have taken to the house and the neighbors (p. 98).

Regarding community-based initiatives, Galeana and Sainz (2018) in their study implemented an intervention model called "Reconfiguration of Axes and Community Ties" in two communities in Mexico. They add that

In this sense, its actions are aimed at mobilizing the population, promoting structures of social participation and the formation of a network of social programs aimed at generating and enriching social capital, collective sense and social participation, in order to address the priority problem of the locality, with the ultimate aim of counteracting the adverse conditions for their social development (p.77).

There is also research in Argentina on studies of perception of the general population about poverty: between "laziness", injustice and failures of social programs. Some of the findings delve into aporophobia, such as "an attitude that leads to rejecting people, races and ethnic groups that usually have no resources" (Adela Cortina, 2017, p. 21; quoted in Abramo, Cecchini and Morales, 2019, p. 34).

In Venezuela, the current curricular project of the UCV School of social work is created, allowing from the professional practices and community service the closest approach of students with organized communities and groups. The communal councils are taken specifically, which are entities of citizen participation aimed at solving the needs of the community that forms and integrates them (García-Palma, 2017).

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) created a draft policy document on poverty alleviation and the role of social workers. Also, some 17 innovative projects for young Latin Americans were selected by ECLAC and América Solidaria as key proposals to overcome poverty and protect the environment in the region. These projects will be developed by "young people from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, the United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela who were selected as

winners and will participate in a week of training activities that will allow them to expand their knowledge of the 2030 Agenda” (Norway, 2018).

Migratory processes

It is essential to take a look at the phenomenon of migration from the perspective of social work, from the intervention itself, in all modalities (individual, family, community), the analysis of reality, the social diagnosis, the proposal and participation in social policies. On the other hand, the theoretical contribution of professionals contributes to increasing the scarce bibliography that has been published to date on social work and migration (Delgado Ortega, et al., 2017).

From a notion of defense of human rights, migration as an alternative life for people, should be presented as a challenge for nations and countries in protecting the diversity of human conditions. The challenge is to apply international norms and principles to guarantee respect for human rights in a globalized world (López, Toro and Nieves, 2012). Currently migration has become an alternative for human beings facilitated by globalization - which in a contradictory way also facilitates great differences between nations and human beings - impacting public policies on the management of migration that are outlined much more restrictive (Niera & Giraldo, 2006). It is through the states or nations that migratory flows are regulated, showing differences in the treatment and management of the so-called immigrant minorities. With the caveat that the discourse of the supposed "majority" denotes an imposition of power that can be conditioned by the subjectivity and exclusion of those who call themselves natives, often loaded with prejudice and stereotypes. According to Quiñones and Barreto (2000) the sum of the prejudices and the power of some people, sectors or groups translate into oppression, given the conditions then exposed, the regulations of migratory flows have the elements to embody manifestations of oppression. Oppression implies depriving a person or group of the conditions of freedom, happiness, or access to resources by other people and institutions; it occurs in a process where there are two parts, one with power and privilege over the other (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2009).

When we consider the aid relationship with migrants, we always analyze in depth one of the two actors involved in the process (the migrant). However, it is also necessary to ask ourselves what happens to us and we social work professionals, how we position ourselves in front of a person

who has different cultural registers, how these registers influence, what aspects of our vision of life are threatened and why what in this presence. In short, what are the specificities that must be studied and managed in the helping relationship with people from different cultures. (Delgado Ortega, et al., 2017). Therefore, it is not enough to know the culture of the other, you must be aware of your own culture, of prejudices, preconceptions, guide images, which are filters that will clearly mediate our professional relationship with migrants, since they are going to guide our perception of the behavior of people with different records. Being aware of what our sensitive areas are, what causes us rejection because it does not fit our way of seeing the world.

Environment and climate change

Reflecting on the role that social work should assume in addressing climate change in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, Franceschi-Barraza (2014) highlights that both in the academic and professional dimension it is necessary to place the environmental discussion “in the current context of neoliberal economic globalization and clarify its particular expressions in each specific society. It implies conjuncture analysis, which allows us to understand the determinants and conditioners of environmental problems” (p. 96).

In a linked way, Ortiz-Mojica (2019), in what constitutes one of the most significant contributions to the analysis of the role of social work in the context of climate change, points out that, from the profession, they must

increase research that tends to its theoretical and practical development to address the problems of the global climate crisis. This represents a shift from the typical referents of the social question to an unknown terrain that has only recently begun to manifest itself. In addition, in the different community settings it will involve opening up to diverse knowledge represented by interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary work groups, a field that is known for social work (p. 2).

Ortiz-Mojica expands that, from social work, one of the main routes to be addressed is the fight for environmental justice, this recognizing the implications that this phenomenon has for "health, food, security, rights, citizenship, in short, his general well-being" (p. 20). The author highlights that, in order to achieve this environmental justice, given the inherent complexity of climate change, the use of knowledge from different

disciplines is necessary. In his opinion, "beyond the occasional link between social work and sociology, psychology and anthropology, the obtaining of information from research in biology, ecology, physics, chemistry and oceanography, among other sciences, is expanded" (p. 4). This transdisciplinary approach would allow "the influx of concrete actions from various perspectives that enrich the conceptual frameworks of analysis and even those in development used in community projects by local and international organizations" (p. 4).

Before which, Ortiz-Mojica (2019) concludes that

The praxis of social work in the scenario of the climate crisis should not be considered as simply the application of models in scenarios of natural disasters or contemporary risk management. It is a comprehensive work that begins before extreme events occur, collaborating with the communities in the development of actions that allow them to mitigate impacts and become aware of the level of risks to which they are exposed. In addition, this work should be guided through a transdisciplinary approach where social work takes shape in each experience and defines an original action framework by nourishing itself from the multiple orientations of reality that work in the same scenario (p. 21).

Deprofessionalization and working conditions

What is intended, within the efforts against neoliberal ideas, is to hold the State responsible as the "center of rights" (Reyes, 2015, p.74). Through the National Development Plan 2010-2014, in Colombia, for the implementation of a series of measures to reduce professional informality, the employing agencies are able to directly hire workers; eliminating external or tertiary contracts. This measure helps "provide salary stability with permanent jobs and the benefits that may come with it to guarantee the satisfaction of the needs of the hired professional" (Bermúdez-Alarcón, 2015, p. 126).

Since Mexico was included in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), finding itself with the lowest rate of the minimum wage within the 37 countries around the world that participate in this organization, efforts have been made to allow changes substantial in the workplace.

Since then, various political and social actors have expressed their positions on the matter. For its part, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) drew attention to the magnitude of the wage deterioration in Mexico and announced the holding of an international seminar on the subject next August. All of this is encouraging news about the possibility of effectively opening a national debate and achieving the necessary reforms to begin the recovery of wages, and thereby boost economic development and improve social coexistence in the country (Gravito & Olguín, 2015, p. 66-67).

The authors explain that the head of the Federal District government launched the initiative to begin the recovery of the minimum wage (p. 66) as an advance to improve working conditions.

In Uruguay it is recognized "internationally as one of the countries that has most advanced in the conquest of labor rights" (Broad Front, 2018). Changes were generated that allow the recognition and expansion of labor rights. Among some of the achievements made are: a 55.5% salary increase (placing Uruguay as the country in its region with the greatest decrease in wage inequality), growth in retirement and pensions above inflation, the creation of the law that regulates domestic work, the Criminal Liability Law for employers was approved, the Youth Employment Law was approved and the National Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (INEFOP) was created.

Torado-Cavallero (2016) and De Jesús (2015) are some of the authors who point out how women suffer more due to the changes produced by job insecurity and precariousness, as a result of the neoliberalism that the global capitalist system allows. Gender intersectionality is characterized by the demands placed on this particular group; where labor and domestic compliance are required, without providing spaces that allow you to execute assertively or satisfactorily. Globally you can establish the movements of feminist groups, and those that support them, that are carried out to promote gender equality that are projected in global social movements, changes in public policies from the educational and legislative spaces, organizations that promote and protect labor rights for women, among others.

In Puerto Rico, the creation of a professional social work project begins to strengthen efforts against de-professionalization. The construction of this

project would have three core issues, namely: 1) improvement of working conditions for male and female social workers; 2) the defense of human rights; and 3) the creation of social policies aimed at social justice and equity (De Jesús, 2016; Huertas-Sosa & Ramos Cruz, 2015; López, et al., 2014).

In 2019, The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) in association with the University of Bath Spa Health and Cognition Center (in association with the University of Ulster Department of Social Work) conducted a global campaign on conditions of social workers. Research was taken as a central element to obtain the first global vision of the working conditions of social workers, with the aim of highlighting the daily work environments of social workers around the world.

Different investigations and analyzes on the problem have been carried out to understand this problem and overcome it. De Jesús-Rosa, Ortiz-Mojica, Gayol-Santana, Cruz-Sánchez and González-Parés (2016), carried out an investigation to examine concrete strategies to improve the current working conditions of social work professionals based on ethical practice and guarantor of human rights. Research is also documented for the purpose of obtaining valuable information related to the core objectives of the professional project. In the first, a profile of the working conditions in which the collegiates of social work are found. The second investigation is on the state of social rights in Puerto Rico (López, et al., 2014). Also, Huertas-Rosa and Ramos-Cruz carried out an investigation for the thesis entitled *A Search for Autonomous Spaces*, which had the intention of exploring the debates, challenges and experiences of the social work professionals who exercised the profession in a professional way. Independent. In Colombia, Cruz and López (2019) investigated seeking a better “understanding of social work as a field of interrelation of public policies from two positions, the first from the role of the social worker in understanding the role of organizations grassroots, leadership development and empowerment of community initiatives; and the second in the role of the social worker in the design, implementation and monitoring of institutional interventions” (p. 89); focusing it on the different scenarios where the district plans contain social work interventions aimed at strengthening social actors.

Final thoughts

The literature review carried out as part of the writing of this fourth report for the global agenda allows us to verify the destructive effect that coloniality continues to have for the establishment of healthy human relations in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Five hundred years after the process of European conquest of the original peoples of our region, the notions proposed by coloniality in the fields of family, work, nature, knowledge and spirituality, among others, continue to cross-cut all areas.

The analysis carried out here allowed us to verify how in the area of poverty and inequality, the region continues to present itself as the most unequal in the world. Inequality strongly mediated by race, sex, and national origin of the affected population groups. The dynamics of poverty and inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean are strongly linked to Young's (1990) arguments regarding how people or countries under oppression suffer a high degree of inhibition in their ability to develop and exercise their capacities, and to express their needs, thoughts and feelings, being able to identify in Latin America and the Caribbean all the different faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, lack of power, cultural imperialism and violence, which, from the process of European conquest of our region, they work in a connected way to keep non-European population groups under oppression.

Regarding migratory processes, it is observed with deep concern the increase in racism and xenophobia on the part of sectors within the migrant recipient countries. Despite the fact that, to a large extent, migration in our region is a corollary of the economic oppression experienced by our countries by the great owners of global capital, it continues to criminalize those families who, in order to leave poverty, they are forced to migrate. In recent years, according to Amnesty International (2019), this has led to

- 1) mass illegal expulsions of asylum seekers on the border between the United States and Mexico; 2) thousands of illegal family separations, with which the Trump administration has deliberately inflicted extreme suffering on families, a form of ill-treatment that has reached the level of torture in some cases, and 3) increasingly arbitrary and indefinite detentions of asylum seekers without the possibility of parole, which constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading

treatment or punishment (ill-treatment), strictly prohibited by international law.

In a linked way, coloniality has terribly affected our relationship with nature. The incorporation of Eurocentric religious notions, which place nature according to the interests of humanity, establishing a false dichotomy between humanity-nature, has led to the massive destruction of fundamental environmental resources for the subsistence of life such as we know today. This destruction has been determined by the processes of capitalist accumulation, which are willing to sacrifice life itself in order to continue with the excessive enrichment of a few.

Finally, from the Latin American and Caribbean social work we observe with deep concern the processes of de-professionalization and the precariousness of working conditions in the spaces for the provision of social services where most of our colleagues are located. We consider that this precariousness is aligned with the neoliberal project of dismantling the government institutions that are part of the already diminished welfare state. The new neoliberal policies aim to bring us back to the rule of law prior to the Great Depression of the 1930s, in which the State was only responsible for facilitating the processes of capital accumulation and the internal and external defense of the nation, without recognizing its human rights to the population. This is obviously an issue that, due to its ethical nature, deserves a deep attention from social work and other international organizations related to the subject.

Despite the profound challenges identified in this report, we believe that we must see the future with judicious hope, precisely because of the human relationships that, with increasing roots and commitment, are articulated to face the aforementioned ills. This, taking into account the multiple struggles aimed at achieving social justice that have been undertaken in recent years by the economically marginalized sectors, women, youth and indigenous peoples in the region. We believe, as Martínez and Agüero (2017) point out that, assuming social work in a decolonial perspective implies

understanding the process of construction of social order in the world and in Latin America, while overcoming the colonial-historical matrix of power and freeing subordinate subjects from that matrix, is equivalent to transforming the social order through processes of social

emancipation that involve construction of social subjects, worlds of life, identity processes, social ties and citizenship (pp. 109-110).

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Chapter 6

North America and Caribbean

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¹⁹ Council on Social Work Education

²⁰ North American & Caribbean Assoc. of Schools of Social Work

²¹ Canadian Association of Social Workers

²² National Association of Social Workers (USA)

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Introduction

The North American and Caribbean Region consists of 23 countries, almost 600 million people, and more than 350 languages spoken across its 24,230,000 square kilometers (Watson, Schaetzl, Hoffman, & Zelinsky, 2020). Bounded by oceans in all directions and interlaced with mountains, desert, prairie, tundra, and seashore, the continent of North America has rich diversity in its climate, its economy, and its people. As diverse as the region's makeup is the diversity of the challenges that face individual countries, cities, and communities, particularly through the lens of human relationships. Yet it is also human relationships that bind these differences together and provide an opportunity for enriched connection and well-being.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), as well as social work tenets in the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean, defines social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, and the importance of human relationships as the cornerstones of the social work profession. IFSW states that "principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work" (IFSW, 2018). The 2012 Global Agenda's fourth pillar, "Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships," captures the global social work sentiment that our connections with others are paramount and should be a priority in social work practice.

Serving as the regional coordinator of the global observatory, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the U.S.-based association for social work faculty and social work education accrediting body, conducted a survey to garner responses from social workers in the region on the fourth pillar theme, "Strengthening the Importance of Human Relationships." Social worker educators, researchers, and practitioners have offered critical perspectives on how the region views and integrates the importance of human relationships into social work. . This report is a summary of feedback received and contributions from the report's authors and is not therefore comprehensive. It was written in the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic and well before the Black Lives Matter and anti-racism protests which are highly significant in the region with potentially long-term consequences.

between differing political ideologies (Bush, 2019). President Trump has boldly said, “Whether it’s asylum, whether it’s anything you want, it’s illegal immigration. We can’t take you anymore” (Bush, 2019). This statement is in direct contravention of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees to which the US is signatory (United Nations General Assembly, 1951).

The Caribbean

The Caribbean region has seen an overwhelming influx of Venezuelan migrants escaping the on-going economic and social crisis facing that country. It is recorded that as many as 50,000 migrants have entered the region by legal and illegal means, sparking public outcry prompted by the added strain on an already depleted job market and social sector. The Trinidad and Tobago government granted a two-week registration period in June 2019 giving persons a one-year amnesty to live and work. Migrants continue to be vulnerable to human trafficking, abuse and exploitation. There are widespread concerns for ‘children on the move’ who have been traumatized by the migration process, separation from families, living conditions, stigma and discrimination in the host country, and lack of educational opportunities.

Canada

Canada’s southern border with the USA has become a point of “irregular” entry for some migrants leaving the USA for Canada due in part to the Safe Third Country Agreement which blocks migrants from claiming circumstances in the USA have made it unsafe for them. Such crossings into Canada allow migrants to claim refugee status and obtain a hearing about whether they will be allowed to remain or be deported. This has extended wait times on hearings for all applicants, including those who made application legally. Legal challenges to the Safe Third Country Agreement continue with the increasing concern about the safety of those deported to the USA. In Canada, the cost of citizenship application increased threefold under the previous government; the current government has yet to reduce the fees. Canada has a system of application categories and fees for temporary and permanent residence, family sponsorship and citizenship.

Crime and Violence

The Caribbean Council (2019) has identified crime and violence as having a significant damaging effect on development in the Caribbean region. It causes human insecurity and suffering, but also contributes to ‘brain drain’ across the region as skilled labour seeks sustainable career opportunities in more certain environments. Increasing crime rates have reduced investor confidence in regional opportunities due to the additional high costs of security, thereby reducing regional competitiveness. This is compounded by the diversion of public funds away from health and education to national security which, according to research by the University of the West Indies and the Inter-American Development Bank, also threatens social development. Jessop (2019) writes “the last two and a half decades have seen murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, organized crime, narcotics trafficking, the sale and smuggling of arms, piracy, money laundering, people trafficking, extortion and corruption, in almost every nation in the Caribbean”.

Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women is a pervasive problem for the Caribbean region, according to a report by UN Women. Violent crimes against women have seen a steady increase over the last four years, including murder and murder-suicides associated with intimate partner violence. The situation is compounded by ineffective policing and judicial processes with lengthy court matters. Additionally, the Caribbean has some of the highest rates of sexual violence against women in the world, and adolescent girls are at high risk of forced sexual initiation. There is a reported connection between social drinking and substance use and intimate partner violence, and seeming tolerance of domestic violence and adversarial intimate relationships can contribute to silence on the issue. Consequently, there is under-reporting, reluctance to intervene on the part of law enforcement and other service providers and therefore the statistics may not provide a true picture of gender-based violence in the Caribbean.

In 2006, civil rights activist Tarana Burke founded the “me too” movement to “help survivors of sexual violence, particularly Black women and girls, and other young women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing” (About the Me Too Movement, n.d.). The affirming movement has supported victims to come forward with their stories and receive support from the community. High-profile cases, including the

convictions of Bill Cosby, Larry Nassar, and most recently, Harvey Weinstein, have brought global attention to the issue.

Poverty

United States of America

Research indicates that in the United States the wealthy continue to accumulate wealth and there is little opportunity for lower socioeconomic groups to advance (Nicolaci da Costa, 2019). For perspective, in 2018 the richest 10% of the population held 70% of the total household wealth. Of that 10%, the top 1% held 32% of the total household wealth (Nicolaci da Costa, 2019). This glaring gap in wealth leads to parallel gaps in access to services, health care, and even life expectancy (Fadulu, 2019). Former Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders said “poverty is a life-threatening issue for millions of people in this country,” and the data shows this is precisely the case.

Statistics Canada (2020) reported in February 2020 that the median income of Canadians remained largely unchanged between, 2017 and 2018. The overall poverty rate as measured by the ‘market basket measure’ declined slightly from 9.5% in 2017 to 8.7% in 2018. The poverty rate for children under 18 decreased slightly to 8.2% while the official number of children living below the poverty line was 566,000, down from 1 million in 2012. While these numbers appear to show a positive improvement, the reality is that children in female headed lone-parent families experience poverty at nearly five times the rate of those in couple headed families; 26.2% versus 5.8%. Poverty is also higher for unattached seniors (7.9% compared to 1.7%) than for seniors living in families. Canada is following the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and supports reporting of Sustainable Development Goals which include eliminating poverty and reducing inequality. Inequality remains a serious issue for Indigenous people with respect to income and to food insecurity, especially for children and for families living in remote areas.

Racism

United States of America

Respondents to CSWE's regional survey were overwhelmingly distraught about race relations and White Supremacy. Globally, political polarization, White nationalism, and hate crimes have resurged. The North American region, particularly the United States, is implicated (Feinberg et al., 2019). The immigration debate, gun violence, and poverty are elements of a racist environment and affect people and communities in all demographic categories (Silverstein, 2020). VandeHei and Fisher (2019) argue that "racial resentment and anxiety have been a central appeal for Donald Trump and his rhetoric among the working-class, forgotten Americans who put him over the top, and who are at the core of his re-election strategy." Darrick Hamilton, Executive Director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University and economic influence states, "race is a stronger predictor of wealth than class itself," underscoring the connection between the region's issues of poverty and racism (Hamilton, 2017).

Canada

The Race Relations in Canada Survey for 2019 (Neuman, 2019) shows that the reality of racism in Canada is widely acknowledged with only 5% saying that racialized Canadians never experience discrimination. There is approximately 75% agreement that Indigenous Peoples, Black people, and South Asians experience discrimination while 54% believe that this is true for Chinese people in Canada. As described by Dr. Lillian Ma of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, the need for evidence-based data on race relations is emphasized by the global emboldening of hate speech and the increasing importance of civil dialogue. The study results indicate that there was optimism that all racialized groups will be treated with respect during the lifetime of those surveyed; this optimism crossed all racial groups and was strongest among younger Canadians (Neuman, 2019).

Environmental Justice

United States of America

Climate change and environmental justice have been debated across the region for decades, but with natural disasters multiplying, causing irrevocable harm, and natural resources becoming increasingly depleted, the conversation has shifted to center stage, including on the presidential debate stage in the United States. Agriculture and food security are certain victims of climate change, affecting urban and rural areas alike (Chappell, 2018). Environmental hazards worsen already precarious health conditions in low-income communities, hindering communities' ability to rebuild and thrive following natural disasters. Further compounding the environmental situation was President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, a globally supported commitment to reduce carbon emissions, in 2017 (McBride, 2017).

Environmental justice embraces the principle that all people and communities are entitled to equal protection of environmental and public health laws and regulations.

Robert D. Bullard, American Environmental Activist

Bullard & Johnson, 2000

Canada

As in the USA, environmental issues are coming to the forefront for the same reasons identified above. Recently, federal government approval of a pipeline caused a firestorm of protest from First Nations whose traditional lands would be impacted and also from First Nations supporting expected jobs from the pipeline. This issue encapsulates the history of Canada as a resource-extraction and exporting nation, the rights of Indigenous Peoples regarding their traditional lands and the interests of First Nations and other Canadians in creating employment. Additional concerns arise from environmental disasters in Canada's recent history of shipping toxic and flammable products by train and/or pipeline for long distances. Foreign control of extraction industries and shipping 'product' to other countries contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, effectively exporting pollution to others. Failed extraction sites are often abandoned, leaving clean-up costs to government.

Substance Use

United States of America

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimates that 20 million people in the United States, aged 12 and older, had a substance use disorder in 2017 (Thomas, 2020). Almost 50% of this population also suffered from a co-occurring mental health disorder. Of particular concern in the United States is the opioid overdose crisis, which claims 120 deaths in the country every day, an increase of almost six times the overdose rate since 1999 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2019). This rise can be attributed to over-prescription of drugs and misrepresentation of how quickly and severely patients can become addicted (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2019).

Canada

Similar to the United States, Canada has an ongoing problem with illicit drug use. The use of opioids is at an epidemic level with increases in hospitalization and deaths due to heroin, fentanyl, and other opioids. Nearly a quarter of Canadians identified this as a crisis, while nearly half of Canadians believe it is a serious problem. In general, cannabis was the most used 'illicit' prior to its legalisation, followed by hallucinogens, cocaine, and ecstasy (Statistics Canada, 2020). Not all addictive drugs are illicit; the ongoing opioid crisis had origins in prescriptions originally intended to deal with pain without an accompanying potential for addiction. The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction has identified an "urgent challenge" to ensure that prescribed drugs are used appropriately and the risk of related harms reduced (Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2020).

COVID-19 Pandemic

United States and Canada

At the time of this report preparation, the entire Region is involved in efforts to respond to conditions created by the COVID-19 virus. Social workers in both the US and Canada are preparing families, clients, workplaces and communities for new routines. Efforts include adapting

many areas of practice to a virtual format for social workers, especially in mental health practice. Social workers are being called upon to help individuals and families understand options available and assist them in obtaining what they need to cope. Hospital social workers are on the front lines of caring for individuals who have been exposed to the virus as well as those who have been diagnosed. They are serving as key members of health care teams who are working to respond to community needs. School social workers are helping schools manage meal contingencies for students in homes with food insecurity. Gerontology and child welfare social workers are ensuring the well-being of the most vulnerable older adults and children.

The National Association of Social Workers and the Canadian Association of Social Workers are both working to support social workers in their respective countries by:

- Identifying implications for social workers in aging, schools, mental health and health care settings by providing guidance via web, email, webinars and digital publications.
- Taking action at various levels of government to promote sound COVID-19 policy responses.
- Taking measures to postpone or cancel events in order to protect the health of participants.
- Promoting online networking opportunities to share perspectives and resources on the developing health crisis.

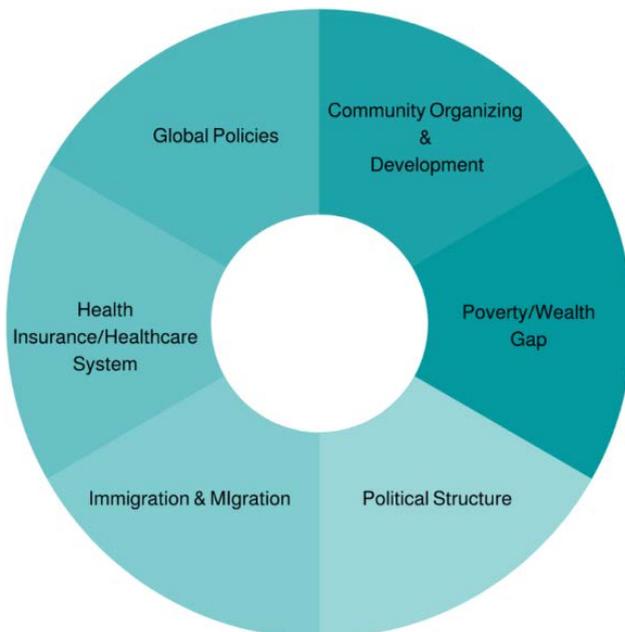
The virus is also creating several educational barriers as programs close or move to virtual learning. Most notably, students are facing barriers to completing course and field requirements. The Council on Social Work Education has taken several steps to address to response to the pandemic, including-

- Launched webpage for centralized COVID-19 information - <https://www.cswe.org/News/News/CSWE-Responding-to-Coronavirus>

- Guidance on accreditation standards including a hosted a webinar on 3/19/20
- Pulse survey of all accredited programs
- Partnering with major social work organizations, released a press release on 3/20/20 (see Appendix)

The Council on Social Work Education will continue to work with programs, students, and faculty to identify and eliminate unnecessary barriers and develop creative solutions to help social workers students meet competency requirements.

How to Improve Human Relationships



CSWE's survey respondents say that leveraging human relationships through policy, community organizing, education, dialogue, and

collaboration is vital to improving these core issues affecting the region. Explicit in the guiding doctrines for social workers, including NASW's Code of Ethics and CSWE's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, is the call to be engaged in policy.

The opportunity for engagement exists in numerous ways. Social workers must be aware of legislative issues at micro, mezzo, and macro levels and can be connected to their elected leaders and engaged in political outcomes. Although the political environment is difficult, social workers have the skills needed to participate in critical conversations and affect change.

Through community organizing, social workers can build relationships with community partners and offer venues and events for community members. Participating in local politics and elections, supporting grassroots efforts, and understanding the specific needs of a community are important to consider because community-based change is a step toward larger-scale shifts.

Social workers are in a unique position to help educate the public, through various forms of practice that include advocacy. Social workers can promote access to health care and resources and involve the public, including those with whom they work, in critical issues policy and practice-related issues.

Caustic rhetoric, often stemming from the current White House administration and its supporters, does not allow for appropriate discourse, creating an even greater divide among individuals of opposing political ideologies. Respondents noted that dialogue and collaboration were important avenues through which to harness the power of human relationships and create connection, empathy, and mutual understanding. Engaging in conscious dialogue could disrupt the challenges and tensions regarding political divisiveness and foster collaboration across the political spectrum, and, perhaps, bend the conversation toward healing and restorative justice.

In the Caribbean, general apathy and distrust of formal systems, attributable to widespread reports of corruption in public office and inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities, have eroded norms around social interaction. There seems to be a declining level of tolerance

and trust in the formal and informal sectors due in part to media influences, party politics, economic decline, and life stressors. There is great potential for community activism and empowerment, but community organizing efforts have waned over time as economic and other individual concerns have taken priority over popular participation. At the same time, the region has shown overwhelming support to neighbours affected by natural disasters, although there has been a mixed response to migrants; nonetheless there seems to be a willingness to connect across national, language, religious and class lines in times of need.

What Are the Essential Policies That Will Effectively Address These Problems? Where Do Relationships Need to Improve?

Global Policies

The regional attitude toward policies to effectively address these problems is that there needs to be a stronger acknowledgment of and adherence to global human rights policies put forth by the international community. United global groups, such as the United Nations, are deliberate in their policies and guidelines regarding protecting human rights; protecting women, children, and older adults; and admonishment of hate crimes. The region must participate as a member of the global community and recognize those global initiatives in its own policies. Further, by eliminating structural or systematic inequality such as institutional racism through mechanisms such as policies on reparations, universal income, or minimum wage increases, longstanding discrimination and unequal opportunity could be redressed.

Health Insurance/Health-Care System

Access to quality health care and affordability of services that lead to a life of dignity is a primary concern of the region. Although individual countries within the region have differing health-care systems, the concerns about overall well-being of the population remains constant. In the United States the health-care debate has gained much attention since the passing of the Affordable Care Act under the Obama Administration and continues to be scrutinized by politicians on both sides of the political aisle. Although the question remains whether universal health care is the best option, there is agreement that current health-care systems are inefficient and ineffective. Policy change is needed to assure that people have access to health care, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or citizenship.

Immigration and Migration

The survey results indicate that immigration and migration are chief concerns in the region, and thus, policy change on this topic could effectively address many of the underlying concerns. Harrowing conditions at the border and family separation, and the trauma resulting from these conditions, were identified specifically as problematic, but there are far more complexities that stem from this issue.

Political Structure

People of the region, particularly in the United States, are disillusioned with the current political structure and the uncertain political environment. Many respondents in the United States believed that a change in White House administration would greatly benefit the country and felt that the whole political system needs an overhaul. Social workers are aware of how social and economic forces contributed to the rise in nationalism in the United States including income inequality, globalization, technology and rural blight. Additionally, several survey respondents from the United States noted the flaws of the electoral college and its negative impact on the voting process. Flaws include voter suppression which prevents individuals' access to cast ballots through legal and illegal means. By establishing new policies for voting, including addressing voter suppression, elections could more accurately represent the votes of individuals.

Poverty/Wealth Gap

Poverty and the wealth gap are symptoms of systemic issues set in motion hundreds of years ago, codified by federal and state policies. Modern-day power dynamics, political structure, and social epidemics contribute to the increasing discrepancy between the wealthy, working class, and poor. Related issues, such as affordable housing, homelessness, health care, environmental issues, minimum wage, criminal justice, educational opportunities, and immigration also contribute to the poverty/wealth gap discussion.

Clearly, there is significant room for improvement in policies to help address these social concerns throughout the region. Respondents note that to improve relationships and influence policy change, there must be a diversity of voices, respect, local political engagement, and improvements to health care. Some argued that policies to support these issues simply do

not exist, so people must initiate policy change by creating new laws altogether.

Community organizing and development

There is great potential for community activism and empowerment and a noticeable gap in macro-practice education and interventions for social workers. Communities are resource rich and are eager for opportunities for meaningful popular participation beyond quasi-democratic processes at election time. Community organizing and development has been responsible for social development in the Global South, but seems subordinated to individualistic approaches in the Global North. Some of the more sustainable and impactful social work interventions have used community development methods which elevate empowerment and mutuality over beneficence or control.

What do people (clients, service users, citizens, beneficiaries) with whom you work want to see improved?

Clients, Service Users, Beneficiaries

Clients, service users, and beneficiaries' top priority for what should be improved is access to quality, effective services and equal distribution of those services. While access to mental health services is of particular concern as such difficulties often co-occur with other health-related problems; of equally pressing concern in the right to safe and affordable housing, the right to education for their children and access to a living wage and equal economic opportunities all human rights spelled out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Healy & Links, 2011). The Caribbean region is afflicted with severe scarcity of resources and it follows that clients could suffer as a result. In parts of the Caribbean, agency responsiveness and timeliness of service delivery are also major concerns.

Citizens and Noncitizens

People living in the region, including citizens and noncitizens, would like to see safety, health care, human rights, education, faith in elected leaders, and the workforce improved. Specifically, they wish to be safe from gun violence, terrorism, and law enforcement (police brutality). In terms of health care, people want to have better access to services and lower the financial burden of health-care costs, especially for those without sufficient or any health insurance. Similarly, respondents expressed that education is too expensive and not available to all people living in the region. The region would benefit from a reduction of cost for higher education,

increased opportunities to learn, and higher-quality information shared through channels, including the media.

Colleagues and the Social Work Workforce

Social workers and their colleagues would like to see increased job opportunities, including minimizing the wealth gap, employers paying living wages, and expansion of reimbursement opportunities through government-sponsored health care (Medicare and Medicaid). Moreover, social workers insist that there be more public recognition of the profession and wages that are commensurate with the expertise and dedication required by the job.

The workforce echoes clients' attitudes toward access to resources. Social workers would support the increased availability of mental health providers, fewer restrictions with Medicare and Medicaid, and increase the amount and kinds of support offered at the southwestern border of the United States in response to the immigration crisis.

In the Caribbean, social workers lament the unstable work environment, lack of knowledge of and regard for the profession, lack of resources for social work activity, subordination to other helping professions, and high unemployment and under-employment among qualified social workers.

Government Officials

The region is highly skeptical of government officials, and many of those surveyed report that they are unsure exactly what government officials wish to see improved. The reactive political environment further muddies constituents' understanding of baseline political beliefs and goals. It seems that elected officials are solely, or at least primarily, concerned with power and reelection, so other central issues become less of a priority.

"We all pay lip service to diversity, dialogue, bipartisanship, respect, equity and fairness, and I believe that there is some desire for these goals to be realized--by someone else. Moving that desire just a few miles closer to our own relationships, beliefs, and actions will help us as a society to tiptoe outside of self-interest, fear of others, rigidity of thinking, and preserving the status quo." Survey Respondent

What are people doing about these problems? What is the evidence that social work and social development interventions are having a social, economic, and/or political impacts?

Social workers in the North American and Caribbean region are doing important work to face these social challenges through advocacy, client-based interventions, direct practice, education, policy practice, and community organizing. Of those who indicated that there was a regional focus on these challenges, their regions do so through the government, social work organizations, community organizing, and policy. Alternatively, some respondents expressed that social workers are marginally involved, or not involved at all, in helping address these problems. This may be the result of regional barriers, government oversight, economic distress, and other social conditions that prohibit social workers' involvement.



In social work practice in the United States, the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) Code of Ethics provides guidance for social work practice, emphasizing the importance of human relationships as the basis for social work practice and education. The U.S. Council on Social Work Education parallels these sentiments in its Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), which encourage the integration of human relationship into education. Social workers also leverage the strength of human relationships in community partnerships, research, and advocacy. Regional social workers may also adhere to the IFSW [Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles](#) as an additional guiding doctrine for practice.

NASW has advanced social justice and social welfare by offering informative education knowledge-building webinars on topics including voting rights, gun safety, family separation, and the opioid crisis. Also, NASW hosts the

[NASW Social Work Talks podcast](#), which offers listeners an opportunity to explore topics that social workers care about and to hear from social work experts and practitioners. Topics have included suicide prevention, bringing mindfulness practices to prisons, domestic violence, and the immigration crisis. In addition, NASW has developed the following resources as [Media Toolkits](#) for social workers and the public:

- [Aging](#)
- [Child Migrant Protection](#)
- [Domestic Violence](#)
- [Foster Care](#)
- [LGBTQ](#)



Members of the Environmental Justice Curricular Guide Taskforce at the CSWE Offices in Alexandria, VA, November 2019

Recently, CSWE has collaborated with its membership and community partners to develop three [curricular guides](#) on substance use, environmental justice, and infant and early childhood mental health. These guides provide direction and resources for undergraduate and graduate level education for social work faculty members across the country. CSWE has also established new initiatives highlighting the importance of human relationships, including *Integrative Approaches for the Future of Social Work Education* and *Leading Critical Conversations: Religion and Spirituality in Social Work Education*. CSWE's [Annual Program Meeting](#) theme for 2020 is "Leading Critical Conversations" and will focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in social work education.



The [International Council on Social Welfare](#) U.S. chapter (ICSW-US) is also very engaged on these topics and has numerous initiatives to collaborate with and support social workers.



Dr. Cudore Snell of Howard University (Washington, D.C.), South African Embassy, 2019



Yoliswa Mvebe, Minister Plenipotentiary and Deputy Chief of Mission, South African Embassy, 2019

In 2018, ICSW-US, in partnership with NASW and CSWE, hosted an event that included the International Association of Schools of Social Work and IFSW at the South African Embassy in Washington, DC, to build relationships among government officials, social workers, and friends. The event featured presentations from Howard University's International Service Learning Program and the Salvation Army, both of which underscored the value of human relationships and incorporating the global perspective into cross-cultural programs. Additionally, in April 2020, ICSW-US will host an educational event focused on social protection.



Helen Whetzel, Patricia Martin-O'Meally, Michele Matthews, Cudore Snell, Berniece Harper, Bob Arnold, Joyce Higashi of ICSW-US, South African Embassy, 2018

[The National Council for Behavioral Health](#) is a nonprofit behavioral health association in the United States that focuses on providing support to organizations that provide mental health and addictions treatment services. The Council offers Mental Health First Aid USA, which is an educational course that teaches the skills to “identify and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges” (About the National Council, n.d.). More than 2 million Americans have been trained using this course, and the Salvation Army and ICSW-US are exploring how to use and offer the training to their communities.

In September 2019, The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine published the report *Integrating Social Care into the Delivery of Health Care: Moving Upstream to Improve the Nation’s Health*. The study and report, led by an interdisciplinary committee, focused on needs and trends in healthcare delivery. The findings demonstrate the importance of social care and could have critical implications for social work, both in practice and policy.

Individual social workers in the region also contribute to efforts related to strengthening the importance of human relationships. Respondents shared resources, studies, and personal experiences that indicate that work is being done at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. For example, Dr. Janice Carello shared a one-sheet she created that illustrates examples of trauma-informed teaching and learning in college classrooms (see Figure 1). Lauritzen et al. wrote *The SINGLE Most Important Thing: Why Singles Who Want to Marry Are not Marrying* in fall 2019. They conducted a study on interpersonal romantic relationships, concluding that “a serious deficit in

basic interpersonal skills, mental health issues, and other barriers create significant challenges for individuals as they attempt to interact and create meaningful, lasting relationships,(p.16)” and offer some suggestions for how to address these concerns. Published in the *Journal of Indigenous Voices in Social Work*, “Gathering, Telling, Preparing the Stories: A Vehicle for Healing,” “connects the process of healing for women of color and indigenous people with the process of sharing their oral stories” (Starks, Ofahengaue Vakalahi, Comer, & Ortiz-Hendricks, C. 2010, p.1).

Conclusion

It is clear that human relationships are the vital thread that connects social workers to their communities as well as the world at large. The social issues discussed in this report are interconnected with the regional and global challenges discussed in previous reports, and many of these challenges, such as climate change, act as force multipliers. These conditions expose the fractures in our social systems and shortcomings of our safety nets. Yet social workers are uniquely poised to face these challenges with an unparalleled perspective. By engaging social work skills and the ecological perspective, those in the profession can grasp the systemic issues that manifest in tangible problems in their communities. Although some respondents were less hopeful than others, by strengthening and leveraging the importance of human relationships, social workers have an opportunity to participate in the social change needed to improve social conditions in the region.

Figure 1

EXAMPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED TEACHING AND LEARNING IN COLLEGE CLASSROOMS

Janice Carello, PhD, LMSW

<https://traumainformedteaching.blog/resources/>

<p>Physical, Emotional, Social, & Academic Safety</p>	<p>Efforts are made to create an atmosphere that is respectful of the need for safety, respect, and acceptance for all class members in both individual and group interactions, including feeling safe to make and learn from mistakes.</p> <p><i>For example: scaffolding or integrating low-stakes assignments that provide opportunity to receive feedback and learn from mistakes prior to evaluation; adopting an authoritative teaching style; modeling assertive, non-violent communication skills; providing content warnings prior to viewing discussing sensitive material</i></p>
<p>Trustworthiness & Transparency</p>	<p>Trust and transparency are enhanced by making course expectations clear, ensuring consistency in practice, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and minimizing disappointment.</p> <p><i>For example: articulating clear policies and implementing them consistently; providing detailed assignment sheets and grading rubrics; responding promptly to email; avoiding all-or-nothing or zero-tolerance policies that are difficult to enforce consistently; creating class routines or rituals</i></p>
<p>Support & Connection</p>	<p>All class members are connected with appropriate peer and professional resources to help them succeed academically, personally, and professionally.</p> <p><i>For example: providing referral information for campus and community resources such as counseling, health, and tutoring services; announcing campus and community events; facilitating peer groups and peer workshops; inviting guest speakers</i></p>
<p>Collaboration & Mutuality</p>	<p>All class members act as allies rather than as adversaries to help ensure one another's success. Opportunities exist for all class members to provide input, share power, and make decisions.</p> <p><i>For example: weighting grades to emphasize learning objectives rather than individual instructor preferences; implementing policies and practices that foster success rather than "weed out" weak students; involving students in creating or revising policies, assignments, and grading; doing with rather than doing for students (e.g. editing papers for students); facilitating student-led discussions and activities</i></p>
<p>Empowerment, Voice, & Choice</p>	<p>All class members emphasize strengths and resilience over deficiencies and pathology; they empower one another to make choices and to develop confidence and competence.</p> <p><i>For example: building in choices where possible (e.g. seating, lighting, readings, paper format); integrating authentic assignments and active learning; implementing realistic attendance policies; allotting late days students can use to submit work past the due date without question and without penalty; facilitating large and small group discussion so students have multiple opportunities and modes to speak</i></p>
<p>Social Justice</p>	<p>All class members strive to be aware of and responsive to forms of privilege and oppression and to respect one another's diverse experiences and identities.</p> <p><i>For example: using correct pronouns; addressing microaggressions; being aware of personal and disciplinary biases and how they impact teaching and learning (e.g. privileging or disparaging certain dialects, writing styles, or research methods); using progressive stacking during discussion, employing alternative grading methods</i></p>
<p>Resilience, Growth, & Change</p>	<p>All class members recognize each other's strengths and resilience, and they provide feedback to help each other grow and change.</p> <p><i>For example: providing both formative and summative assessments; pointing out what was done well; assigning multiple drafts; holding one-on-one conferences; facilitating peer feedback; rewarding success rather than punishing failure; soliciting feedback from students to improve the current course; conveying optimism</i></p>

(Principles adapted from Fallot & Harris, 2009; SAMHSA, 2014)

Updated March 2020

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Appendix Press Release: Response to COVID-19

Social Work in this Unprecedented Time

3/20/2020



The three largest social work organizations in the United States are calling social work practitioners, students, faculty, employers, regulators, policy makers, and all interested parties to action.

The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) acknowledge that we are all living in a very tumultuous time. Clear thinking is essential but can be made more difficult because of overwhelming emotions - our own and those around us. ASWB, CSWE and NASW encourage everyone to take the time necessary for self-care and to prioritize the needs of your own health, the health of your families, and the safety of our communities.

The supply chain for the next generation of social workers entering the field has been disrupted and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Given the need for social distancing, students are facing challenges in completing course and field requirements. Creating even more difficulty, testing sites are closing, and when they reopen, it will likely take months to address the backlog.

We hold social workers up as a valuable resource during this public health crisis. We must all work together to develop solutions that are creative and flexible to manage the current disruption in the supply chain that will lead to a shortage of social workers. This virus and our understanding of it is evolving much more quickly than regulation or policy can. We need a competent social work workforce to be available now and to be prepared to enter the workforce in a timely manner to meet the growing need for

health and human services. Whatever barriers that threaten the supply of social workers entering the field must be evaluated to determine their necessity in this time of crisis. We ask employers, regulators, social work educational programs, and policy makers to identify and eliminate unnecessary barriers and to develop creative solutions to help social workers meet competency requirements.

- Accredited programs could exercise flexibility in the delivery of field education.
- State licensing bodies could be more flexible with time frames for acquiring and maintaining a social work license.
- Employers could consider allowing a grace period for license-eligible individuals to start employment with the understanding that they need to earn their license within a specified period.

We call for these actions so that social workers are available to provide the services that are so needed during this global pandemic.

About ASWB

The Association of Social Work Boards is the nonprofit association of social work regulatory bodies in the United States and Canada. Members include 50 U.S. states, Washington, D.C., the U.S. territories of the Virgin Islands and Guam, the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and all 10 Canadian provinces. ASWB's mission is to provide support and services to the social work regulatory community to advance safe, competent, and ethical practices to strengthen public protection.

About CSWE

Founded in 1952, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the national association representing social work education in the United States. Its members include over 800 accredited baccalaureate and master's degree social work programs, as well as individual social work educators, practitioners, and agencies dedicated to advancing quality social work education.

About NASW

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is a membership organization that works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards for all social workers, and to advance social justice. Founded in 1955, NASW advocates on behalf of the 700,000 social workers in the United States. Our goal is to enhance the quality and effectiveness of social work practice to support the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Addendum

Additional Responses and Resources Provided by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) – United States

What are the current social challenges affecting our country or region now? Examples are welcome. You may also include concerns for larger global challenges that impact your region.

Gun violence

Social Justice Issue Briefs – *Tools for Social Workers to Prevent Gun Violence: Safe Storage of*

Guns in the Home, Extreme Risk Protection Orders, and other Methods of Gun Violence

Prevention <https://socialworkers.org/Advocacy/Social-Justice>

Opioid epidemic

NASW Virtual Forum – *Opioid Crisis: No Community Is Immune*, November 14 & 15 2018

Immigration Reform

Social Justice Issue Brief- *Migrant and Asylum-Seeking Families: Analysis of Federal Government Policies and Procedures*

Social Justice Issue Brief – *Unaccompanied Migrant Children: Overview of Recommendations*

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Advocacy/Social-Justice>

The NASW California and Texas Chapters are on the front line of many immigration issues. There is often a disconnect between state policies and federal policies. The US federal government puts up barriers on government land to keep people out, and any social workers want to help. The chapters provide advice for those who want to volunteer. Workshops and have been held for volunteers who are encouraged to work with existing non-profits on the border.

S. 2113/H.R. 3918 – Stop Cruelty to Migrant Children Act

NASW support of this Act, the purpose is to reaffirm that the Federal Government is responsible for the health, safety, and well-being of children and families in its custody.

Racism

Undoing Racism: How the Social Work Profession is Working Toward Healing and Equality,

[https://worsocialworkers.org/News/Social-Work-advocates/2019-August-September/Undoing Racism 8/30/2019](https://worsocialworkers.org/News/Social-Work-advocates/2019-August-September/Undoing-Racism-8/30/2019)

Other significant issues:

Abortion rights

Health care reform

Health disparities

Economic justice

Voters Rights

Criminal Justice/Juvenile justice

2020 National Elections - US

How can these social challenges be improved by creating or strengthening human relationships?

Human relationships are fundamental approaches to social work for creating change and improving people's lives. NASW has advanced social justice and social welfare by offering informative educational and knowledge building webinars: voting rights, gun safety, family separation & virtual forum on opioid crisis.

Advanced ethical social work practice through robust ethics and practice programing: virtual forum-Ethics Roundtable, published *Ethical Standards in Social Work & Social Work Ethics Casebook*.

NASW Practice Perspectives:

“Violence and Bullying in Schools: Tips for Students and Social Workers”

Practice Alert: "Elder Abuse Prevention" provides resources and engagement opportunities to prevent and address elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. [bitly/NASW-WEAAD2019](https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Health/Health-Tools)

Improving Transitions for U.S. Military Veterans. The document described federal initiatives that help support existing service members and connects them to health resources.

(<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Health/Health-Tools>).

NASW developed social justice issues briefs and toolkits on:

Tools for Social Workers to Prevent Gun Violence: Safe Storage of Guns in the Home, Extreme Risk Protection Orders, and other Methods of Gun Violence Prevention

The Color Juvenile Transfer: Policy & Practice Recommendations

Migrant and Asylum-Seeking Families: Analysis of Government Policies and Procedures

Unaccompanied Migrant Children: Overview & Recommendations

Child Migrant Protection Toolkit

<https://www.socialworkers.org/News/1000-Experts/Media-Toolkit/Child-Immigrant-Crisis> The toolkit includes information on legislation to help migrants; a form letter to send to state government and state legislators to urge them to take action; NASW social Justice Briefs, statements and research regarding immigration; and links to NASW partner organizations.

Care Coordination Issue Brief – NASW contributed to the development of a care coordination issue brief recently released by the Eldercare Workforce Alliance (of which NASW is a member)

NASW has supported important social policy concerns:

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) – NASW is a supporter and encourages the use of the Elder Justice Roadmap.

International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) makes ending violence against women and girls a top diplomatic, development and foreign assistance priority by ensuring the US government has a strategy to efficiently and effectively coordinate existing cross-governmental efforts to prevent and respond to GBV globally (www.endGBVnow.org) NASW is part of the coalition dedicated to building a world where women and girls live free from violence.

“Addressing Domestic Violence Through the Social Work Lens,” NASW Virtual Forum, October 16-17, 2019

Social Work Speaks, 11th Edition (2018-2020) consists of NASW’s Policy Statements on a range of issues that promote the importance of human relationships covering topics such as: adolescent, aging, behavioral health, child welfare, community discrimination and equity issues, education, employment, ethnicity and race, families and children, family planning, gender issues, health, political action, substance use and violence. Macro issues include: child welfare workforce, crime victim assistance, disasters, economic, environmental policy, homelessness, immigrants and refugees, racism, rural social work among others. www.naswpress.org

In your professional view, what are the essential policies that currently, or could potentially, address these challenges? Do these policies currently exist in your country, or do they need to be created.

Introduction of the Workplace Violence Prevention for Healthcare and Social Service Workers Act, (S.851/H.R.1309) NASW is working closely with a broad range of health, human services and labor organizations to advance the bill.

Older Americans Act (OAA). NASW is working to have this act reauthorized, as well as other Aging Services Programs.

The Equality Act- NASW is working to ensure that this much-needed legislation will remedy many of the social injustices faced by the LGBT community. Among other things, the bill would ban sexual orientation and gender identity bias on the job, and by public accommodation providers such as hotels, restaurants, and health care facilities.

Advocacy for compassionate immigration policy (as noted in previous answers).

Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 782/HR 1533): NASW continues to promote this bill as a priority focus in the 116th Congress. The legislation will provide a crucial step forward in access to mental health care for Medicare beneficiaries and in advancing pay equity for social workers. <https://cqrcengage.com/socialworkers/app/write-a-letter/10&engagementId==498565>

Congressional Briefing on Youth Decarceration – in recent years, increasing numbers of transition age youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities and mental illness have become incarcerated in US county and city jails. Although no federal data are available on this issue, the best field estimates are that these youth now represent between 5-10% of the jail population. Some of these youth have complex health problems, including mental illness. Most have fallen off the radar of local health and human services programs. Almost all have failed to make the transition from youth to adult services. This May 15 briefing covered decarceration and diversion of strategies prevention of incarceration through better outreach and care coordination, and better use of home and community-based services.

Important fact: the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world—a rate five to 10 times higher than those of countries like Canada, France and the United Kingdom. A black man is six times more likely to be incarcerated in the United States than a white man is. The United States is the only democracy in the world that has no independent authority to monitor prison conditions and enforce minimal standards of health and safety. (American Civil Liberties Union. www.aclu.org)

Social Justice Briefs focus on juvenile incarceration and immigration – *The Color of Juvenile Transfer: Policy and Practice Recommendations* explains that Black youths are disproportionately in adult court—and eventually incarcerated in adult prisons—at some of the highest percentages seen in 30 years. (*Social Work Advocates*, February-March 2019, p. 30).

Migrant and Asylum-Seeking Families: Analysis of Federal Government Policies and Procedures.”(*Social Work Advocates*, February-March 2019, p. 30) examines the complexities of the human rights crisis and the challenges

it poses related to “ground-level” systems of adult and child detention procedures: social work involvement in both adult detention and child-welfare policies and service delivery; legal due process protections for affected families and minors: scope and capacities of family detention facilities and challenges related child welfare, foster care and family reunification. Mel Wilson, NASW Senior Policy Consultant and Guadalupe G. Lara, NASW board of directors discuss the immigration crisis in the NASW Social Work Talks Podcast (www.socialworkers.org/news/nasw-social-work-talks-podcast) episode 10.

Child Migrant Protection Toolkit. Deeply concerned about how children who have migrated with or without their families from the Northern Triangle countries in Central America and seeking asylum NASW created the Toolkit that includes ways social workers can assist in this area by advocating for reform and urging legislators to take action. Lawmakers have introduced numerous bills aimed at promoting the humane treatment of child migrants. NASW members through the toolkit and the legislative alert section of the NASW website, members are provided with updated information on issues and encouraged to contact legislators to advocate for important social issue reform.

<https://www.sociaworkers.org/Advocacy/Legislative-Alerts>

NASW addressed challenges of vulnerable populations through active and timely advocacy on pressing social issues. Congressional briefings were conducted on Innovations & Opportunities to End Child Maltreatment Fatalities and Opioid Crisis. Briefings included gun violence and schools and decarceration for people with intellectual disabilities.

NASW has worked in coalition with over 20 organizations to amplify voices on key issues. In November 2019 NASW joined the Mental Health for US Coalition, a coalition working to ensure that improving treatment for mental health and addiction is a top priority during the 2020 election.

<https://www.socialworkers.org/News/News-Releases/ID/1994/NASW-joins-Mental-Health-11/19/2019>

NASW signed on to coalition letters with coalition partners to demonstrate unity on an issue and to push for change. In 2018 NASW signed on to 66 letters. As of November 2019 NASW signed on to over 60 letters.

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Advocacy/Sign-On-Letters-Statements/Sign-On-Letters>

Publications have included Practice Perspective: *Strengthening Communities for Elder Justice* and Issue Brief on *Migrant and Asylum-Seeking Families: Analysis of Federal Government Policies and Procedures*. In addition, NASW has worked to advance ethical social work practice with the publication of *Social Work Ethics Casebook* and *Ethical Standards in Social Work: A review of the NASW Code of Ethics*.

Press releases have included: Black youth and the criminal justice system, LGBTQ discrimination in foster care, Opportunity Starts at Home housing initiative, workplace violence prevention, and Affordable Care Act court challenge.

NASW took a leadership role in developing the Eldercare Workforce Alliance's policy principles supporting the role of immigrants in the health care workforce serving older adults.

NASW is involved in key policy and social justice issues by being actively engaged in supporting the Geriatrics Workforce and Caregiver Enhancement Act, Senior Scams Prevention Act, CMS proposed rule addressing Medicare drug pricing changes, NASW advocated to maintain beneficiaries' access to prescription medication.

NASW Foundation administers Social Work HEALS, in collaboration with the Council on Social Work Education. Social work HEALS was created to strengthen the delivery of healthcare services in the United States and build the next generation of social work academic and practice leaders by advancing education and training of health care social workers in the BSW, MSW and PhD/DSW levels.

If the policies exist, how could they leverage human relationships to improve?

Issues: gun violence, voting rights, immigration reform

Across the profession NASW is recognized as a confident and courageous leader working on these social justice issues through advocacy efforts and educational materials, conferences and webinars

Through NASW's advocacy program the organization has aggressively pursued NASW's public policy priorities, which is exemplified by the filing of the Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 782/H.R. 1533) and the Workplace Violence Prevention for Healthcare and Social Service Workers Act (S. 782/H.R. 1533). NASW has championed three bills introduced into Congress to advance the interest of clients, the profession and the Association. The bills address reimbursement, access and safety. The Association is also working to enact a workplace safety bill.

NASW has mobilized members to take action to protect immigrant children. Effort has been made to urge lawmakers to cosponsor the "Stop Cruelty to Migrant Children Act." (S. 2112/HR. 3918). Social workers nationwide have expressed their concerns about the unacceptable conditions of some of the immigration child and family detention facilities that are administered by the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and Health and Human services (HHS). The Stop Cruelty to Migrant Children Act is an important step in ensuring appropriate and human care and treatment of children and families who are seeking asylum. The purpose of this Act is to reaffirm that the Federal Government is responsible for the health, safety, and well-being of children and families in its custody.

The Opioid Crisis: Social Work Solutions, *Social Work Advocates*, February-March 2019, p. 12

Focus on the issue of suicide, *Social Work Advocates*, October-November, 2018 pg. 12-20

NASW teamed up with the Brady Center on Gun Safety, - In the 20 years since the mass shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, gun violence has gripped the nation's attention. Between 1999 and 2016 there have been over 572,000 gun-related deaths in the United States--- an average of 38,800 deaths per year. Of those numbers, 58.85% were suicides and 37.2% were homicides. From a public health and psychosocial standpoint, these statistics cannot and should not be ignored--- "Tools for Social Workers to Prevent Gun Violence Safe Storage of Guns in the Home,

Extreme Risk Protection Orders, and Other Methods of Gun Violence Prevention,” buff.ly/2FGqSSU.

Worked on National Consensus Project *Guidelines on Quality Palliative Care*, and the National Consensus Project of National Academy of Sciences on Social Needs in Healthcare.

NASW leadership testified on Capitol Hill on Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social service Workers Act (H.R. 1309, which is intended to reduce the staggering and increasing number of assaults on social workers and health care professionals.

We would like to know what various stakeholder groups want to see improved. Please describe the desired improvements for any of the following groups that are applicable (i.e.: describe what your clients, service users, citizens, etc. want to see improved in relation to the social challenges you identified)?

The NASW Policy Statements, Practice and Legislative Alerts, coalition work and sign-on letters provide more detail on the improvements and change that the stakeholders want to see.

In addition, NASW Practice Standards & Guidelines provide benchmarks that describe the services that social workers should provide; that employers should support and that consumers should expect. Standards/guidelines reflect current and emerging best practice trends and are a critical component of the professional social workers toolkit. Standards include: best practices in social work supervision, school social work services, practice with family caregivers of older adults, palliative and end of life care, practice in health care settings, practice in child welfare, social work with service members, veterans, and their families, practice with adolescents, among others. For a complete list visit: <https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Practice-Standards-Guidelines>

How are social workers in your country helping face these social challenges?

There are 12 Grand Challenges for Social Work that were initiated by the American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare. The initiative seeks to

address society's toughest social problems through numerous organizations. The Grand Challenges Committee on Values and Principles issued a statement outlining its vision, mission, domain, guiding principles and guidepost to action to serve as a guide for a national initiative to address each of the 12 Challenges. The commitment to ending racism and other injustices is fundamental throughout the Grand Challenges for Social Work.

NASW is an active partner in promoting the Grand Challenges

The NASW Press recent release of "Grand Challenges for Society: Evidence-Based Social Work Practice," highlights the evidence base of each of the grand challenges. Issues included in the 12 Challenges are: Ensure healthy development for all youth, close the health gap, stop family violence, advance long and productive lives, eradicate social isolation, end homelessness, created social responses for a changing environment, harness technology for social good, promote smart decarceration, build financial capability for all and achieve equal opportunity and justice.

Focus on *Undoing Racism: How the Social Work Profession is Working Toward Healing and Equality*. August, September 2019 *Social Work Advocates*.

MeToo Movement, *Social Work Advocates*, April-May 2019, p. 12-19

Approximately 6.9 million women and 5.7 million men experience rape, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner every year, (Rachel Graber, MSW, director of public policy for the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.) Social workers serve as the voice of victims and the voice of communities on this issue. Social Workers can be the life raft to help people through this experience.

Supervisory Leaders in Aging Training Program- NASW conducted with the support of the John A. Harford Foundation grant to the NASW Foundation. The program advances skills in individuals and group supervision, ethical practice and promoting culturally competent gerontological practice.

<https://www.socialworkers.org/careers/continuing-education;socialworkrs.org/practice/aging>

NASW 2019 Virtual Forum: Trauma: Through the Social Work Lens, June 19 & 20, 2019. Personal response to traumatic events widely varies, some deep rooted and hard to heal. Forum provided essential info for social workers to develop a deeper understanding and knowledge base of how past traumas impact a client's current level of functioning.

NASW-USA is a member of Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Steering Committee (www.socialserviceworkforcealliance.org)

NASW is represented on the International Council of Social Welfare-USA Board. (www.icsw.org)

NASW-USA is a member of InterAction a “convener, thought leader, voice for nearly 200 ngos working to eliminate poverty, strengthen human rights and citizen participation, safeguard a sustainable planet, promote peace and ensure dignity for all people.” (www.interaction.org)

NASW-US has served on the IFSW Executive Committee, and NASW President Kathryn Wehrmann served as President & Vice President respectively of the IFSW North American Region. NASW-USA CEO, Angelo McClain was a keynote speaker at the IFSW Africa 2019 Regional Meeting, “Strengthening Human Relations for Social, Economic & Political Transformation,” in Kampala, Uganda, October 28th-30th, 2019.

NASW-US member, Mark Lusk serves on IFSW North American Region Human Rights Commissioner. NASW-US Director of Ethics & Professional Review served as IFSW Commissioner for the Ethics Commission Review of the Statement of Ethical Principles

NASW hosts international delegations. *Social Workers Across Borders*, a social work delegation from Hong Kong visited NASW in May 2019. The group provides psychosocial support for people in need of assistance after a disaster. The organization works in Hong Kong and mainland China.

Please share any stories that highlight the importance of human relationships from your or our organization's social work education, research and/or practice.

Networking with coalitions. There is power in numbers. NASW's coalition work helps amplify messages. In addition, NASW's work with international organizations where ideas are exchanged, helps strengthen the social work profession.

Chapter 7

Evaluating the first decade of The Global Agenda

*David N Jones²⁴ and P. K. Shajahan²⁵
with Avadh Bihari²⁶ and Samadrita Das³*

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²⁴ Global Agenda Coordinator, IASSW, ICSW, IFSW

²⁵ Tata Institute of Social Sciences & ICSW Member of the Global Agenda Task Force

²⁶ Research Scholar, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

Introduction

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development was launched 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 global bodies) at the conclusion of the 2010 world conference in Hong Kong, following several years of planning and a period of consultation. It has formed the centre and focus of the activity and advocacy of the three global bodies over the past decade.

At the start of the process of planning for the second decade of *The Global Agenda*, the three global organisations established a Global Agenda Task Force and asked the members to undertake an evaluation of the impact of *The Global Agenda*. This was intended to support self-evaluation of their own activity by each organisation and also to underpin the work on developing the framework for *The Global Agenda* in the next decade.

This evaluation was taking place in a global context which included worldwide commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030, reduction in the numbers of people suffering absolute poverty, the rise of populism and resurgence of nationalism in many countries and growing disparities and inequalities between richer and poorer people across the world. At the very end of the period, the coronavirus pandemic had a further impact on all these elements and also on the evaluation process itself.

The three global bodies decided to rely on the experience and resources of the Task Force members for this evaluation, some of whom had not been involved in early phases of *The Global Agenda*. The Task Force made a formal request for an evaluation by the leadership of each of the organisations. Each organisation was also asked to approach a sample of members for their evaluation. A small team at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai undertook a literature review of the more than 100 articles and other published material referring to *The Global Agenda* and also a review of the global and regional conferences. This chapter presents the history of *The Global Agenda* and the outcome of this evaluation.

The Global Agenda process

The Global Agenda process grew out of discussions between the three global bodies after 2000 and became more formal as a proposal after 2006 (Correll 2011; Hadorn 2012; Jones et al. 2012; Lyons et al. 2013; Abye

2014; Lombard 2015; Truell et al. 2015; Abye 2016; Truell and Jones 2017; Truell, Jones, et al. 2017). The organisations recognised a need to provide stronger global leadership for the social work profession and to link that with social development. A strong and unified partnership between the three global bodies was also seen as essential to developing the strength and credibility of the professions. This involved a plan for joint conferences from 2010, a common policy platform as a basis for global advocacy and linked themes for World Social Work Days (International Federation of Social Workers 2020) including Social Work Days at the United Nations (Kendall 2008). A network of regional observatories was also to be formed, together forming a global observatory on social work and social development. The leadership had confidence that this would inspire local and regional activity and stimulate a grassroots mobilisation around a common vision and purpose. Whilst the themes were established in 2010, it was recognised that this would be an iterative process with elements unfolding as grassroots consultation continued.

The vision for The Global Agenda remains the same as at its inception:

- Increase our visibility
- Increase our influence
- Strengthen and promote social work & social development
- Increase social worker self-confidence
- Challenge established ways of thinking
- Support national associations, member bodies, networks and regions
- Strengthen global bodies

The 2010 world conference on social work and social development in Hong Kong (Jones et al. 2008; Sha 2010) was the first fully integrated, joint conference organised by the three global bodies for several decades; the Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development²⁷ was the result of several years of negotiation and planning. It was preceded by a global consultation process informed by discussion papers disseminated by the three global organisations (International Federation of Social Workers 2010). The emerging ideas were explored and developed during the conference, culminating in the identification of four pillars for an agenda for social work and social development, which were endorsed in the final

²⁷ <http://www.swsd2010.org>

plenary by acclamation (International Association of Schools of Social Work et al. 2010). These were subject to further global consultation and refinement, concluding with the following pillars:

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

The 2010 conference was held as the first review of progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals was published (United Nations 2010; World Bank 2010). The synergy between the Millennium Goals and *The Global Agenda* was noted and welcomed by UN leaders and others (Sha 2010; Clark 2012). The debate about what should follow the UN Millennium Goals continued through the early years of *The Global Agenda* process (Fukuda-Parr 2012; High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda 2013). It is significant and encouraging to note that, whilst the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) 1987) had linked environmental concerns with sustainable development several years earlier, *The Global Agenda* process explicitly connected social development and environmental sustainability before this surfaced as a significant feature in the mainstream debate about what the shape of the Sustainable Development Goals should be (Dominelli et al. 2012; High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda 2013; United Nations 2015c) (see *SDGs* below).

The leadership of the three global organisations published a statement of commitments related to the promotion and implementation of the four pillars of *The Global Agenda* (IFSW et al. 2012). In a rousing opening statement the three organisations stated:

‘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 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’.

IASSW, ICSW & IFSW

The document set out commitments in respect of their roles in promoting each of the four pillars in relation to engagement with ‘the United Nations and other international agencies’, ‘communities and other partners’ and ‘our own organisations’. There were also commitments relating to ensuring an appropriate environment for practice and education including ‘development, dissemination and exchange of knowledge’ and ‘encouraging research to identify work environments which promote positive outcomes in social work and social development’.

The Global Agenda was disseminated and presented to global bodies including the United Nations. In a wide ranging speech at Social Work Day at the United Nations, which addressed all the elements of The Global Agenda, the second most senior UN official said:

‘It is an honour for me to accept the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development on behalf of the UN, and to congratulate the International Federation of Social Workers, the International Association of Schools of Social Work, and the International Council on Social Welfare on developing the Agenda

‘For more than a century, the social work profession has been at the forefront of promoting human rights and supporting people to realize their full potential.

‘The United Nations highly values partners like you who share its norms and values, and seek to uphold the substantial body of human rights law which has been developed

‘By coming here each year, you remind us of the vital role the social work profession plays in building a more equitable and sustainable world. This year, the formal presentation of your Global Agenda also reminds us of the shared vision and values we have, and of the importance of working together for a better world.’

(Clark 2012)

On the same day *The Global Agenda* was presented to the Director of the Commonwealth Foundation in London (International Federation of Social Workers 2012).

During the decade Social Work Days at the United Nations, which had been launched in New York in 1983, have spread to include events at the UN bases in Geneva, Nairobi, Bangkok, Vienna and Santiago de Chile all themes to connect with *The Global Agenda*.

The 2012 conference in Stockholm (Second Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development 2012: Action and Impact²⁸) reviewed, refined and reaffirmed the four pillars proposed at the Hong Kong conference (Stockholm World Conference 2012), endorsed the commitments (see above) and laid the foundation for the second phase of the process linking each pillar in turn to the global and regional conference themes, the focus of World Social Work Days and the publication of regional and global reports.

For this second stage, the three global organisations invited bids or proposals for leadership of five Regional Observatories (Zelenev 2013). It was hoped that this process would not only identify organisations and individuals who would take on the research challenge of gathering information about practice across those regions but also that they would attract new resources to underpin and strengthen the process. Bids were received from all regions and Regional Observatories and lead people were identified. The final regional structures were very different from each other. These structures subsequently agreed to take on the responsibility for collating regional reports on each of the pillars. As the process continues, more work is needed to identify resources to provide robust, sustainable structures to undertake the full remit of Regional Observatories on Social Work and Social Development.

The Regional Observatories gathered information from across their regions to illustrate how social work and social development are addressing each pillar in turn. They chose to do this in a variety of different ways, sometimes in different configurations, such as organising a regional conference which examined the pillar and its implications for practice, a qualitative on-line survey, a call for direct submissions of practice examples and/or relevant studies or publications, and a consultative process

²⁸ <http://www.swsd-stockholm-2012.org/>

between national or regional groups of associations and/or academic institutions. The regional reports drew on published and unpublished papers, videos, poster presentations, course syllabi, website links and conference literature, ranging in scale from very local community projects to ambitious national strategies and political lobbying by a professional association. However this was limited by the reality that those involved did so on a voluntary basis alongside their main occupation. The process did not fulfil the hope of attracting new resources to undertake systematic research into aspects of social work and social development in each region.

World Social Work Day had been launched by IFSW in 2007, providing the first platform for worldwide coordination of activity to celebrate and promote social work, building on national social work days in some countries and the European Social Work Action Day. This linked with Social Work Day at the UN which had been started in 1983²⁹. European Social Work Action Day had been a recommendation from an IFSW Europe project, funded by the European Commission, on '*Social work and social inclusion*' (Jones 1997) and had been launched in 1997 (International Federation of Social Workers 2020). IASSW and ICSW provided support and the events rapidly took on their own life attracting wide support.

The 2014 conference in Melbourne (SWSD 2014 - World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development 2014) focussed on the first pillar ('*Promoting social and economic equalities*') including the launch of the first report (Bailey 2014; IASSW et al. 2014). Activity during the two years leading up to the 2016 conference in Seoul (Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development 2016³⁰) focussed on the second pillar ('*Promoting the dignity and worth of peoples*') with the launch of the report at the conference by the three Presidents of the second report (International Association of Schools of Social Work et al. 2014; IASSW et al. 2016; Ioakimidis et al. 2016; Nadkarni et al. 2016; Stark 2016a; Stark 2016b; Zelenev 2016). The third report focused on the third pillar advanced during 2016-2018 ('*Promoting community and environmental sustainability*') (IASSW et al. 2018) was launched at the 2018 conference in Dublin (Social Work, Education and Social Development:

²⁹ For example watch <http://webtv.un.org/watch/social-work-day-2019-at-the-united-nations/6021318335001/?term=>

³⁰

http://people-x.co.kr/past_homepage/2016/SWSD2016/eng/sub01_0.php

Environmental and Community Sustainability - Human Solutions in Evolving Societies³¹). This fourth report (*'Strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships'*) will be presented at virtual conferences and general meetings of the three organisations in 2020.

The Dublin conference also launched the consultation process about the shape of *The Global Agenda 2020-2030*, with each organisation starting internal consultations and publishing information on their websites. A Task Force was appointed with two members from each organisation working with the Global Agenda Coordinator 2010-2020, David N Jones and the Global Agenda Coordinator 2020-2030, Abye Tassé.

It was originally planned that this fourth report would be launched at the IASSW and ICSW conference in Rimini, Italy and the IFSW conference in Calgary, Canada during 2020, when the conferences would also debate and propose agenda themes for the next decade. Final decisions about the five pillars or themes of *The Global Agenda* were to be made at a Tripartite meeting of the leaders of the organisations by December 2020. These plans were upturned by the restrictions on travel and meetings because of the coronavirus pandemic. The organisations decided to consult on a pillar related to issues of 'solidarity' to cover the period 2020-22 and to continue the consultation on pillars for subsequent years with a decision to be made before the planned 2022 conference. This decision was made in recognition of the reality that the pandemic had upturned many established policies and ways of thinking and that time was needed before deciding the focus for social policy and social action for the rest of the decade.

Organisational perspectives on the impact of The Global Agenda

Each of the global bodies involved samples of their members in the evaluation. IASSW consulted a sample of member organisations and schools and its Board. ICSW also consulted its Board and member organisations. IFSW consulted executive members, IFSW representatives to the Global Agenda, a sample of IFSW member associations and past IFSW Presidents.

The Global Agenda (GA) was seen by all as having shaped the activities of the organisations; it had an overwhelmingly positive impact on the three

³¹ <https://www.ifsw.org/event/swsd-2018-social-work-education-and-social-development/>

global bodies and on the worldwide position of social work and social development. The confidence in the process, the experience and the outcomes resulted in a commitment from all three global bodies to consult about a second decade of *The Global Agenda* and to build on the co-operation and partnership.

Actions taken to address the 2012 Global Agenda Commitments

The evaluation showed that *The Global Agenda* had been integral to the outreach of the three bodies, including engagement with other stakeholders such as the United Nations and its agencies and regional bodies such as European Social Platform. The link with World Social Work Days and Social Work Days at the United Nations (Kendall 2008; Clark 2012; International Federation of Social Workers 2020) had been effective in spreading the core messages and the link with regional and global conferences had worked well. The coherence of vision and strategy made a difference to the approach and action strategies of the three organisations and their regional and national counterparts

IFSW reported that the GA had explicitly influenced the development of new policies and that many national organisations had highlighted the four GA pillars in national activities. The three organisations commented that the emphasis on sustainable communities and environment in the third pillar had been particularly influential in stimulating new thinking and expanding the perceived scope of social work.

IASSW observed that *The Global Observatory* and its regional elements help build international partnerships and collaboration in collecting data and reporting on the themes. In many schools of social work the (GA) themes had been integrated into the social work curriculum, teaching and learning and community engagement/fieldwork. Students contributed papers at student conferences and displayed their work in poster exhibitions. The GA themes also stimulated postgraduate studies on masters and doctoral levels and scholarly publications. The GA reports and text books developed by the International Federation of Social Workers and International Association of Schools of Social Work were used as study material and research resources.

ICSW had made a link between the GA and its flagship campaign to promote Social Protection Floors.

‘We have based part of our ongoing work as a Core Group member in the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors on the Global Agenda and found it useful in many ways.’

Organisations reported positively on the participation of social workers and social development professionals, academic staff and students in World Social Work Days. Over the decade, WSWDs expanded from a small group of enthusiasts to a worldwide movement with its own energy and dynamic. Apart from providing a core theme and a poster, all the creativity and action planning happens locally in schools, offices and networks. WSWD started as an event requiring a lot of facilitation but has become a global activity with its own life and energy.

The first poster ‘in 2011 had three (centrally commissioned) language translations, the 2019 poster was spontaneously translated into 70 unique languages.’

Academics presented conference papers, including plenary and keynote addresses related to the GA themes at national and international conferences.

IFSW observed that the GA had been a key element in strengthening the global identity of the profession resulting in an increase in countries in membership from 90 members in 2011 to 141 in 2020.

The GA has also helped non-social workers to understand the unique political and holistic approach of social work as opposed to the siloed social service systems that dominate in many countries.

The GA promoted international social work as a distinct and relevant area of knowledge, encouraging international collaboration on teaching and evidence-based research, and resulting in several research collaborations at both national and international levels. ‘The limitations and advances of a *Global Agenda* on national and regional level and how themes relate to different fields of social work contributed to stimulating debates on various platforms.’

Countries and organisations used the GA differently in their engagement with central governments to enact policies to promote the development of professional social work, which is crucial to facilitate the sustainable social development.

‘Having a Global Agenda has enabled us to take a more generic approach to social work in our country. We have done this by bringing stakeholders together for workshops among other activities.’

‘The impact of the GA on our association has reinforced the GA pillars of good practice as a tool for global social work. It also acts as guiding principles when speaking out on social work issues and conferences.’

Activities related to The Global Agenda and achievements

IFSW commented that the GA has been ‘strategically driven to create a more outward and action-oriented Federation’. Examples of excellent social work practice from the GA reports and other sources were constantly featured to build professional confidence and gain the interest of governments and UN agencies. This has resulted in the widespread adoption of social work models, such as developed in Costa Rica and Romania, which have lifted many 100,000s of people out of poverty and transformed social services from agencies that provide last minute support to proactive community centres that engage people in shaping better futures.

‘In many ways, the GA has enabled our values and our principal guiding documents - the ethical principles and definition of social work – to be ‘translated’ into concrete examples of social work in practice.’

IASSW referred to the impact of the GA on qualification curricula, references being included in assessed work by students, development of short courses and links with research proposals. One school mentioned that students had engaged in awareness campaigns by: holding public marches; producing banners and posters; giving talks on each of the pillars; holding celebrations on campus with student produced videos, music, posters, banners and T-shirts and promoting social work through media coverage in different newspapers.

One school referred to making links between the GA themes and curriculum transformation, involving activities undertaken by educators to engage with issues related to the historic problem of colonial hegemony in social work education, and exacerbating the ongoing historical legacy of colonial and apartheid race-based power relationships.

In one country the GA had inspired work on translation of textbooks and development of new teaching materials, for example on rural social work and disaster work.

Improving The Global Agenda process

The feedback from the organisations about *The Global Agenda* process tended to comment on challenges producing the regional reports rather than on activity and influence. It was suggested that there needed to be a clearer connection between the reports and action – how the findings were influencing action. Seeking greater impact for the launch of the reports is a challenge to be addressed in the next decade, as suggested in the following comments:

‘A condensed report summary or infographics with concrete recommendations’

‘Planning to launch the reports with a press conference, press release (with a summary of key findings and recommendations) and copies to key international leaders would increase our global impact Informing our member organisations of the key themes/messages in ways which their organisations can pick up and spread in their networks would also help our member organisations.’

‘The SDGs have emphasised the inter-connectivity of the elements by using graphics – logos or emojis – which can be grouped together. It should not be difficult to design similar graphics for the Global Agenda and we should aim to do that; it is all part of improved promotion of the agenda.’

A continuing challenge had been the presentation of focussed campaign messages, as presented in the four pillars, whilst also emphasising the importance of a broad, holistic approach. Finding ways to integrate a holistic approach, whilst identifying distinct elements for campaigning themes, remains a challenge to be confronted in the 2020-2030 process. It was argued that the framework of the 2020 Agenda needed to be sufficiently flexible to take account of unexpected events, such as the migrant crisis and pandemic.

The process of compiling the reports was seen as onerous by many, which is not surprising given that the regional coordinators/editors accepted a significant workload usually on a voluntary basis. This had not been the

original intention but regions did not secure new resources to support the process. Securing adequate resources for an ambitious global programme is perhaps the greatest challenge to the sustainability of *The Global Agenda* process.

‘There needs to be a clearer purpose for the report and concrete actions based on report data.’

A deliberate decision was taken to facilitate a ‘bottom-up’ process of information gathering, shaped by global guidance, rather than a more rigid evidence template. This presented challenges of data consistency and undermined the potential for regional comparison but did yield valuable qualitative data.

Some argued that a closer connection between the GA and the UN Sustainable Development Goals would enhance the perceived relevance of the process.

The feedback also identified gaps in the GA, for example management and supervision of practitioners was thought to have been ignored. Others suggested that there need to be more reflection on the positive and negative implications of involvement in social protest actions. Another person commented on the need for a stronger focus on climate change and the role of social work in addressing this issue with specific reference to vulnerability and resilience of individuals, families, groups and communities.

A more fundamental critique of the concept and legitimacy of *The Global Agenda* and similar international frameworks is considered in the section on publications.

Overall impact of The Global Agenda and the development of the profession(s)

The overall impact was judged to be strongly positive, considering the global relevance of the pillars and its ability to reflect varied developmental contexts of the organisation memberships.

The GA process helped to connect different countries in the regions and underscored the interconnectedness of our region. It helped forge relationships that will be long-lasting, beyond the GA process.

‘Informative to work with our global neighbours and recognise similarities and differences, what is regionally-specific or universal: the “we’re not alone” mentality.’

The GA was seen to have played a major role in heightening consciousness about each of the four pillars, increased awareness about the profession of social work, and has served to validate social work and social workers; it contributed to students being more aware on contextual and global social work issues. The GA supported the learning outcomes of students aiming to be social workers as a global and international actor of social justice and human rights. Some students were very critical about the role which social work can and should play in improving the life of vulnerable groups.

‘The Global Agenda is giving social work a stance in the communities we serve and substantiates the work we do. The Agenda thus impacts directly on the identity and the credibility of social work, to act and work as a global collective.’

The GA gave added reality to social work as an international profession. It created a platform for social work to contribute to social change globally and promoted unity between social work educators and practitioners which strengthens the visibility and impact of social work.

‘GA themes strengthen the collective impact of social work in contributing to social change.’

‘The most significant impact of the GA on the Canadian Association for Social Work Education is that it provides us with an international vision. It guides our attentions for combing social work education with social sustainable development, which means a lot to the great contribution social work education can make to social sustainable development’

Finally, there was discussion in the evaluation about the benefits and risks of expanding *The Global Agenda* partnership beyond the original three global bodies. Some argued that there should be strong links with service user/client/community groups and the global social action movement. This is being explored in the 2020-2030 GA process.

Academic publications and professional conferences about The Global Agenda

Publications

The *Global Agenda* process was designed to both unify the profession and to stimulate a global debate among practitioners, academics and managers within social work and social development, recognising the diversity of perspectives and the value of critical reflection and debate. One test of the extent of the influence of the GA process is a review of citations in published academic books and articles: well over 100 citations of *The Global Agenda* and related articles (written by representatives of the global bodies) in English were discovered, with several in other languages. Some are papers about the process itself and critiques of the approach adopted, others specifically addressed the relevance of *The Global Agenda* themes to specific local and regional issues and many refer to the GA as a relevant statement of the global context affecting different fields of practice. The literature review and review of conferences were assisted by scholars at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. This section examines some of those publications and events which specifically refer to the GA.

The International Social Work journal, owned by the three global bodies, has carried several articles related to the GA. Special issues have examined the evolution of the GA and its core themes. The relationship between the core policies of IASSW, ICSW and IFSW and the emerging *Global Agenda* were explored in 2012 (Dominelli et al. 2012). The 2014 special issue focused on promoting social and economic equalities (Abye 2014), the 2016 issue on the challenges of dignity and worth for all (Ioakimidis et al. 2016) and the special issue in 2018 addressed environmental issues (Jones 2018). The newsletters and communications of the three global bodies also carried reports on the GA.

The Global Agenda addresses the global context as one element shaping practice in social work and social development. It is critical of the current global social and economic order for promoting inequality and failing to address key social and environmental challenges. Several publications refer to this element in discussions about social policy. For example, the implementation of neoliberal policies, including imposition of 'austerity' in many countries following the financial crash of 2008, is found to have had a serious impact on social work and social inequalities and has weakened

the ability of governments in many countries to respond to social problems and mitigate poverty (Chenu et al. 2012; Truell 2013; Bailey 2014; Spolander et al. 2014).

The four pillars of *The Global Agenda*, and the links between them, are examined in several papers which also frequently draw comparisons with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000-2015 (United Nations 2000) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015-2030 (Clark 2012; United Nations 2015b; United Nations 2015a; Jayasooria 2016; Healy 2017). The first pillar focuses on promoting equality. Fish et al. (2013) examine health inequalities and the adverse impact on individuals and communities, arguing for the inclusion of health as a separate subject in social work education. Lombard et al. (2014) explore social workers' contribution to social justice and social development in South Africa and Uganda. A specific focus on wellbeing, connecting the four pillars, has been emphasised by Gamble (2012).

The agenda is inclusive and calls for participation from all the stakeholders. The GA supports the view that interventions need to go beyond remedial interventions, which are less empowering and do not tackle the inequalities and poverty faced by the populations (Higashida, 2018).

A number of studies have explored the local relevance of the global themes. Raniga et al. (2014) explored the four pillar framework of the GA with students in South Africa. The majority related positively to the GA as it provides a platform for influencing local policies, although the lack of a specific reference to health aspects was a concern. Sogren et al. (2015) presented the responses from frontline social work practitioners, administrators and educators in Trinidad to the GA. 'The findings supported The Global Agenda as culturally relevant to the social realities facing Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean region at this time', but country-specific mandates were seen as taking priority. Spitzer et al. (2014) refer to the GA in the context of discussing the development of professional social work in East Africa and Ruiz (2015) describes a case study of the role of women's social movements and their relationship to social development and social work in Tanzania.

Çoban et al. (2018) discuss the relevance of the GA to social issues in Turkey while Costello et al. (2015) consider the relevance of the GA to the forms of social work which are relevant to Myanmar in its context as an emerging democracy in the Asia-Pacific region and de la Fuente et al.

(2018) studied the role of social problem-solving abilities in the coping strategies used by 310 female social work students from Spain. Levická et al. (2013) consider the potential of the GA document from the perspective of the professional identity of Czech and Slovak social workers. Sipahi (2019) examines the significance of community centres, in the context of the GA: they 'keep people in the centre of development as they have a commitment to regional intervention'.

Sims et. al. (2014) consulted 400 students from six universities in the UK who found the GA to be 'a valuable pedagogical tool, generating reflection on social work values, diversity, neo-liberal agendas and international social work'. There was critical evaluation of terms used in the GA, such as 'help' and 'working in an equal partnership'. Students suggested that social workers need to think globally to answer multi-faceted problems faced by today's society which is multi-cultural in nature.

Mugumbate (2016) described World Social Work Day events in Zimbabwe, linked to the GA, which 'provides a platform to various stakeholders to share social work problems, disseminate solutions, and increase cooperation'. Truell (2013) reported the consultations on the GA at the African regional conference and the conclusion that 'it is not acceptable that regional economic growth has not translated into positive social outcomes'.

The burgeoning field of environmental or green social work has generated several publications linked to the GA including Powers (2016); Rinkel et al. (2017); Powers et al. (2018); Rambaree et al. (2019) and Dominelli (2018). Androff et al. (2017) examine the significance of the link between social work and environmental issues for social work training and Masoga et al. (2019) note the Global Agenda reference to migration and to indigenous knowledge systems, social work and environmental sustainability. Kime et al. (2018) examine 'Wise Practices' of Indigenous Australians and Schusler et al. (2019) explore youth participation and ecosocial work. (Lombard 2016) suggests that the GA offers a path toward sustainable social work. *The Global Agenda* clearly points to the synergy required for promoting social and environmental justice (Shajahan et al. 2018).

Modderman et al. (2018) discuss the global migration of social workers between countries and their experiences working in different systems, with reference to the GA, emphasising that local and national systems still vary significantly despite the worldwide professional identity.

The growing literature around social work following natural and social disasters also links to the GA. Nikku (2020) explores the social work role in building disaster-resilient communities in South Asia and a chapter in Stark (2019) examines the social work role in the aftermath of a disaster in Japan and Kruk et al. (2015) propose a social work charter for unexpected disasters based on lessons from the earthquake in Bam, Iran.

Healy et al. (2014) discuss the capacity of social work educational programmes to prepare graduates to contribute to the human, social and environmental challenges outlined in the GA whilst Gray et al. (2014) take issue with the premise on which the GA was developed. They discuss the way in which the GA positions social work 'as part of a global civil society network somewhat removed from grassroots social work and raise concerns about its failure to address the causes of or possible solutions to social and economic inequality'. Brown (2019) uses examples from practice to 'identify two key challenges associated with transferring innovative social work models between countries, namely demonstrating effectiveness in an evidence-based context and managing cultural adaptation'.

The commitment to address the working environment for social workers has received less attention during this period but in 2019 IFSW and Bath Spa University Centre for Health and Cognition (in association with Ulster University Social Work Department) announced a research study to explore the everyday working environment of social workers around the world (International Federation of Social Workers 2019), the first results to be published in 2020.

Palattiyil et al. (2019) note that 'the protection of human rights and the promotion of social justice is a shared spirit manifested within all social work and the GA has created a space for repositioning social work globally in addressing these challenges'.

Key leaders in the three organisations have written several publications on the GA which can be found on the websites and are not all listed here.

Conferences and events

Five global conferences have been the focus of *The Global Agenda* process: Hong Kong (2010), Stockholm (2012), Melbourne (2014), Seoul (2016) and Dublin (2018). Two conferences were planned in 2020 Rimini (IASSW, ICSW) and Calgary (IFSW) but did not go ahead because of the coronavirus

pandemic. IFSW held an online virtual conference in July 2020 focused on a consultation about the themes for *The Global Agenda 2020-2030*.

Several regional conferences in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America were planned around the GA themes in alternate years to the global conferences. These events fed into the GA biennial reports.

Given that the issues identified in the GA are topical and widely debated, it is no surprise that other events have been organised at global, regional, national and local levels exploring GA themes, not necessarily explicitly linked to the GA process.

The Global Agenda has been able to achieve the basic objective laid out at the start of the process. The organisations have been able to translate the language of the themes into avenues of discussion, to stimulate debate and create new narratives, ensuring social work and social development practitioners have been able to explore relevant issues and develop strategies and practices for action.

Conclusion

Creating, sustaining and developing *The Global Agenda* process has been an astonishing achievement which reflects positively on the three organisations. A solid foundation has been laid with significant structures already in place. The challenge of how to develop, resource and embed *The Global Agenda* cannot be ignored in facing up to the challenges of the second decade.

The organisations have sustained the partnership and held to the core elements, reinforcing them through their workplan. This was not at all inevitable at the outset; it has been a strategic choice taken by each organisation. Given the tensions and different interests and lack of resource in the organisations, it would have been easy to do what has been done before, to keep changing focus with each new enthusiasm, and to fail to develop a consistent policy framework. In a way, the nature of the framework is less important than the fact it exists and has been democratically endorsed and implemented. This feels like a real sign of growing political and organisational maturity.

The key challenges for the next decade seem to be:

1. To agree a framework of themes to inspire social workers and develop commitment to international social work and social development
2. To further develop the capacity of the organisations to engage with global bodies and decision makers in order to promote the experience of practitioners and the policy recommendations which flow from them
3. To explore innovative and more effective ways of publicising the achievements of social work and social development practitioners
4. To expand the partnership to engage more actively with the wider public, especially people who use or are served by social work and social development
5. To develop a realistically funded infrastructure to sustain such an ambitious, global project (which will not survive if wholly reliant on volunteer commitment).

Against all the odds and in a time of considerable global risk and uncertainty, *The Global Agenda* process appears to be in safe and creative hands with exciting potential as it moves into its second decade. *The Global Agenda* continues to be a guiding process for social workers, social development practitioners and policy makers.

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Chapter 8

Looking forward

*Abye Tassé*³² and *David N Jones*³³

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A new context in a new decade

The three global partners in *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* (GA) announced in 2018 that there would be a process to develop the themes or pillars for the second decade 2020-2030 concluding with the world conferences in 2020. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic made it appropriate to implement some changes to the consultation arrangements.

The *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* is the main platform for advocacy and action of the three global bodies. It provides a unique opportunity for social work and social development practitioners and social work and social development educators to unite, promote, voice, articulate and agree priorities in social, economic, political, and environmental areas.

The organisations reflected on the process for developing the second decade of the GA during the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and noted the major social, economic and political changes taking place so quickly. The long-term consequences were not fully understood but it was clear that the pandemic had severely disrupted social and economic life and would continue to do so. Things would not be the same and this had to be taken into account. It was essential to take account of the unprecedented disruptions and ensure that the *Global Agenda* themes covering the following decade were relevant to the changed circumstances.

The three global bodies stated that they were determined to continue working together on a shared *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* throughout the decade, not only in response to the impact of the pandemic but also to the duty to uphold and promote the core values and priorities of the global organisations and their members. The GA brought together the main concerns of the three organisations and was therefore even more important as a basis for advocacy and action during the current global social, economic crisis.

Given the global crisis, and the necessary focus on managing the consequences of the global pandemic, it was decided that it would be impossible for many individuals and organisations to devote time and energy to the process required to reach agreement about the themes for the next ten years. The organisational leaders also believed that there

would be risks in trying to do so because there was so much uncertainty about the future shape of politics, the economy and social relationships.

The organisations were nevertheless confident that the experience of the pandemic so far had confirmed and re-emphasised the relevance and timeliness of the messages from the Global Agenda 2010-2020. The global definition of social work and the shared ethical principles remained sound and must be assertively promoted in this new context.

The organisations also recognised that, whilst the four pillars had continuing relevance, the global community also needed to reflect and to identify a structure of pillars that make sense in a new decade and a new environment.

The organisations had no doubt that the global shock of the pandemic would be long-lasting and probably transformative. The nature and scale of the shock was expected to vary according to the circumstances in each country but would have an impact on economic activity, levels of poverty and social relationships. That shock would be made more profound by the global failure to address the social inequalities and vulnerabilities identified by social workers and others in previous GA reports and many other documents, as well as reports of the United Nations and its agencies.

All these and many other consequences of the pandemic pointed to the need to take stock of the new context and to allow more time for reflection and consultation on the precise formulation of *The Global Agenda* themes for the next decade.

Rediscovering the importance of global solidarity

The organisations suggested that the pandemic had highlighted the reality of global inter-connectedness and the value of social solidarity and noted that pandemics do not respect borders. For most people the main social support during the pandemic had been their immediate community, whether geographical, familial or intellectual. The value of public services had been recognised with renewed enthusiasm by people in many countries. Social solidarity within communities, countries and regions and across the world has become more real but was also being strongly tested; global solidarity in protecting our collective futures had become the need of the hour.

The three global partner organisations therefore proposed to recognise the value of solidarity as the foundation for *The Global Agenda 2020-2030* but

also as a specific focus of the GA in 2020-2022, recognising not only the impact of and learning from the Covid-19 pandemic but also the long-standing realities of economic and social inequalities, failures in social protection and continuing social injustice.

Reflections on Social Solidarity

The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic is already showing us that another form of societal organisation is needed, that respects human rights, equality and social justice. We also see, in the rapid social and economic responses of governments to this crisis, that a different form of organisation is both possible and desirable.

The three organisations believe, based on research and practice experience, that this different social order can be created if all social forces at international level are engaged collectively and work together for thriving societies.

At this particular time of human history, with the unprecedented scale of the global pandemic being reported all over the world through social media, it has become obvious to everyone that the interconnectedness of societal life at a global level is more than a subject of academic discussion. It affects daily life for millions around the world. While at some level, the need for organic solidarity at a family and group level is demonstrated, on another level, the need for a global, multi-layered solidarity is being shown to be essential for everybody's health, safety and wellbeing.

Therefore, in these exceptional days of our history, it seemed important to the global bodies that we they work together to address, articulate, conceptualize and practice all forms of solidarity at all levels.

Solidarity can take many forms and is understood differently in different cultures. For example, basic human solidarity can involve interest groups, family and friends who share a common purpose and outlook and it can also be created in human institutions, such as community organisations and professional bodies.

The global bodies invited people to send suggestions about the elements of solidarity which could provide a focus for World Social Work Days and for national and international organisational activity during 2020-2022 leading up to global events in 2022.

Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development 2020-22

The suggested pillar for the first two years of the decade recognised the importance of social solidarity as the foundation of social work and social policy and as a worldwide experience in the context of responding to the pandemic. Comments were invited.

Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development 2022-30

The organisations proposed that *The Global Agenda* for the whole decade should be grounded in the concept of solidarity but also said that integrated but separate pillars or themes would need to be identified as a focus for World Social Work Days, conferences, publications and advocacy. The intention was to agree four more pillars covering each two year period for the rest of the decade. These pillars will be endorsed by mid-2022. The consultation on those pillars would therefore continue

The intention announced was to identify thematic pillars that have global relevance. Each pillar should relate to the different groups of service users and to the range of social problems which can be listed as sub-themes.

Conclusion

This whole report has illustrated the breadth and range of activity of social work and social development at practice, organisational and government levels. It has acknowledged debates about the *Global Agenda* process and illustrated how that process has evolved and been developed over the decade by the three global bodies but also hundreds of other individuals and organisations. The GA has inspired World Social Work Day activities, research projects, academic studies, political activism, professional reflection and organisational development.

As the world moves into a new decade in the middle of an unprecedented, shared pandemic experience, at least in living memory, the value of a common platform and a shared agenda for action is seen to be highly relevant. The three global bodies invite their members and stakeholders to join the discussion and look forward to continuing the partnership with each other and with others to serve the world, to struggle for social justice and to promote human rights.

The Partner Organisations

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 (IASSW) is the worldwide organization of schools of social work and educators. It has represented the interests of social work education and the values of the profession globally for nearly 90 years.

IASSW aims to promote and develop excellence in social work education, research and scholarship across the globe, in pursuit of a more just and equitable world. Visit <http://www.iasw-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

The International Federation of Social Workers comprises 141 national associations of social work representing over five million professional social workers. IFSW facilitates the global professional standards for the social work profession along with promoting best practice models and facilitating international cooperation and advocacy for social justice. Visit www.ifsw.org

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Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: the Commitments

THE GLOBAL AGENDA

FOR SOCIAL WORK AND

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITMENT TO ACTION

March 2012



IASSW AIETS



ICSW



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), recognise 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 recognise 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 non-compliance with international standards for labour conditions and a lack of corporate social responsibility, have damaged the health and wellbeing of peoples and communities, causing poverty and growing inequality¹;
- cultural diversity and the right to self-expression facilitate a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence², but these rights are in danger due to aspects of globalisation which standardise and marginalise peoples, with especially damaging consequences for indigenous and first nation peoples³;
- 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 wellbeing 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 relationships⁴.

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 prioritise our endeavours to these ends.

We intend during the period 2012-2016 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

The commitments are guided by and consistent with our core statements on the definition of social work⁵ and the ethical principles of social work⁶.

OUR ORGANISATIONS

This Global Agenda is the product of a three year 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 Federation of Social Workers is the global federation of national social work organisations in 90 countries representing over 750,000 social workers⁷.

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 students⁸.

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 justice⁹.

In preparing the Global Agenda, we have consulted extensively with social workers, social work educators and social development practitioners. In 2010, at our joint conference in Hong Kong, the Global Agenda received overwhelming support from approximately 3,000 delegates. Consultation has culminated in the following specific Commitments to Action.

OUR ROLE IN PROMOTING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALITIES

The United Nations and other international agencies

We commit to support, influence and promote global initiatives aimed at achieving social and economic equality. We will accomplish this by using and strengthening our established relationships with the UN system and other international agencies. We will support the Millennium Development Goals. Our major focus is to prepare for the post- 2015 development agenda¹⁰, which includes, for example, the social protection floor initiative¹¹; decent work and international labour standards¹²; the WHO initiative on the social determinants of health¹³; and education for all¹⁴.

We will strive with others for a people-focused global economy that is regulated to protect and promote social justice, human rights and sustainable development.

Communities and other partners

We will support and work in collaboration with others for the development of strong local communities that promote the sustainable social wellbeing of all their members. Our major focus is to strengthen the capacity of communities to interact with their governments to extend social and economic development.

Our own organisations

We will work within our own organisations to promote education and practice standards in social work and social development that enable workers to facilitate sustainable social development outcomes.

OUR ROLE IN ENSURING THE DIGNITY AND WORTH OF THE PERSON

The United Nations and other international agencies

We seek universal implementation of the international conventions and other instruments on social, economic, cultural and political rights for all peoples, including, among others, the rights of children¹⁵; older people¹⁶; women¹⁷; persons with disabilities¹⁸ and indigenous peoples¹⁹, and the end to discrimination on the grounds of race and sexual orientation²⁰.

We will promote social strategies that build cohesive societies and remove the seeds of conflicts. We seek renewed commitment to the peaceful prevention and resolution of conflict and adherence to international agreements which can reduce violence and its consequences²¹.

We will work with our partners to challenge violent state responses to actions by people in defence of their rights.

We will advocate for the right of people to move between and within countries and for the right of documented and undocumented migrants to have access to social services.

We will support measures to reduce and eliminate human trafficking²².

Communities and other partners

We will support communities and organisations that are engaged in the prevention of violent conflict both between and within countries.

We will support actions taken by partner organisations to enhance the rights of internal or trans-national migrants.

We will partner with international, regional and national entities to combat human trafficking.

We will partner with international, regional and national entities to promote respect for cultural identity.

Our own organisations

We will ask members of our three organisations to work together to ensure that legislation and practices do not prevent or limit the right to undertake legitimate, democratic social development activities.

We will promote respect for diversity and advocate for education and training programmes that prepare social work and social development practitioners for ethical and informed interventions²³, for example in relation to gender, sexual orientation and culture.

We will work to promote education and practice standards that prepare social work and social development practitioners to be effective in the areas of conflict management, human trafficking and responding to the consequences of migration.

OUR ROLE IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE DEVELOPMENT

The United Nations and other international agencies

We commit to aligning our activities and programmes to development initiatives that are sustainable and which integrate the human dimension. We will strengthen our established relationships with the UN and other international agencies in order to reaffirm our support for initiatives aimed at protecting the natural environment. Our major focus will be on the Rio +20 process²⁴, World Urban Forum²⁵ and the post-2015 development agenda, including attention to disaster prevention and management²⁶.

Communities and other partners

We will promote community capacity building in responding to environmental challenges and human and natural disasters (e.g. flooding, water degradation, food insecurity).

Our own organisations

We will promote within our own organisations, standards in education and practice that facilitate sustainable social development outcomes, including the prevention, mitigation and response to disasters. We will encourage and facilitate research into the social work role in relation to disasters and environmental challenges.

OUR ROLE IN PROMOTING WELLBEING THROUGH SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

The United Nations and other international bodies

We commit to working with the UN and other international bodies to promote the importance of sustainable, interdependent communities to achieve social development and wellbeing. We will advocate for methodologies which support community empowerment.

Target Group: Communities

We will work in collaboration with others to promote strong inclusive communities that enable all members to participate and belong. We will promote policies aimed at social integration and cohesion as a means for achieving the economic and social wellbeing of all persons, including older people and persons with disabilities, mental health needs and/ or learning difficulties.

Our own organisations

We will promote within our own organisations the importance of reducing social isolation and building social interaction through social relationships, embedding the principles of social cohesion, development and inclusion in any published policies and standards relating to education and practice.

ENSURING AN APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENT FOR PRACTICE AND EDUCATION

We will promote the development, dissemination and exchange of knowledge between all social professionals through established and innovative channels of communication.

We will support the development of regional research centres for social work/development and encourage research to identify work environments which promote positive outcomes in social work and social development.

CONCLUSION

The three organisations are firmly committed to the implementation of The Agenda Commitments in a planned programme from 2012-2016, aiming to work alongside others who share these commitments. We will establish an implementation plan with arrangements for monitoring and review. We will provide regular reports on the implementation to the global community of social workers, social work educators and social development practitioners - and beyond.

6 January 2012

- 1 International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2008)
Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization
- 2 United Cities and Local Governments (2004) -
Agenda 21 for culture
- 3 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)
- 4 Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development
- 5 International Definition of Social Work (under review)
- 6 Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles
- 7 www.ifsw.org
- 8 www.iassw-aiets.org
- 9 www.icsw.org
- 10 UN General Assembly (2011) Accelerating progress towards the Millennium
Development Goals -Annual report of the Secretary-General
- 11 The term "social protection" is used to mean protection provided by social security systems in the case of social risks and needs. Social protection is often interpreted as having a broader character than social security (including, in particular, protection provided between members of the family or members of a local community).
<http://www.social-protection.org>
- 12 ILO (2008) Decent work agenda
'Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.' (See ILO (2008) Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization above.)

- 13 World Health Organisation (WHO) (2008) *Commission on Social Determinants of Health*
‘The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, which are themselves influenced by policy choices. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries.’
- 14 UNESCO (2000)
Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments
- 15 United Nations (1989)
Convention on the Rights of the Child
- 16 Global Action on Aging (2009)
Toward a Human Rights Convention for Older Persons
- 17 United Nations (1979)
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- 18 United Nations (2006)
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- 19 United Nations (2007)
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
- 20 UN Human Rights Council (2011)
Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity
- 21 For example United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (2011) *Towards an Arms Trade Treaty* and United Nations (1997)
Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction
- 22 United Nations (2003)
Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime – see also <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>
- 23 See for example IASSW/IFSW (2004)
Global Standards For The Education And Training Of The Social Work Profession
- 24 United Nations (2011)
Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) (Rio +20)
- 25 United Nations (2011)
World Urban Forum 6
- 26 For example United Nations DESA (2011)
Settlement Planning: UN-HABITAT in disaster and conflict contexts and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)



Appendix IV

Agenda Coordinators

GLOBAL PRESIDENTS

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GLOBAL COORDINATORS

David N Jones until 2020

Abye Tassé from 2020

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IASSW, ICSW, IFSW (2020) *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: Fourth Report Strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships*. (Ed. David N Jones) IFSW, Rheinfelden, Switzerland.

Strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships is the fourth pillar of The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development. The significance of human relationships is central to social work values and at the heart of practice, whether direct work with individuals, engagement with communities or macro-social work with politicians and policy makers. This theme is not a new concept for social work but many in practice and in the literature talk about ‘rediscovering’ relationship-based social work. This is in part a reaction to the impact of ‘managerialism’ on social work agencies, sometimes putting money before people, but also reflects a wish to rebuild human relationships after the pain of the pandemic lockdowns.

This is the fourth of a series of four connected reports on The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development from IASSW, ICSW and IFSW. It presents the findings of five Regional Observatories that have examined social work and social development practice around the world. These observations are set in the context of social, political and economic realities of 2018-2020 and were mainly collated before the full impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

This report is the last in the series covering 2010-2020 so it also includes reflection on the global impact of The Global Agenda on social work practice, research and organisation as well as on our associations, schools of social work and policy environments.

