

International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW)
Report of the Human Rights and Social Justice Committee
(April 2025)

The challenges, and opportunities, for social work and social workers can be described as a ‘perfect storm’, with the continuing impact of a series of severe and mutually reinforcing shocks, having a significant impact on the lives of all peoples. Humanitarian disaster; famine, food and energy crises; surging inflation; debt tightening, the climate emergency, (continuing) wars, conflict and instability (for example, in Ukraine; Israel-Gaza; Sudan; DRC; South Asia Region) has severely impacting on the world economy. Evidence of continuing inequality and injustice in countries and across the globe are pervasive; for example, groups such as indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, and ethnic and other minorities continue to suffer from discrimination, marginalisation, and lack of legal rights. Further increasing populism, nationalism and xenophobia mask destructive interests that threaten both planet and people, eroding the solidarity needed for effective global action. The 2024 World Economic Situation and Prospect report (United Nations January 2024¹) calls for urgent action to address these diverse challenges. It emphasises the need for strengthened global cooperation, particularly in areas like climate action, sustainable development financing, and addressing the debt sustainability challenges of low and middle-income countries.

As a social work community and as educators the imperative of responding to the global crisis continues to be a critical focus. We strive to nurture and sustain a focus on the positive contribution of social work to ‘making a difference’ and capable of action in a disrupted world. We continue to promote the social work profession, including recruitment of high-quality candidates for social work education; continuing to support the professionalisation of the social work workforce; providing support to the current workforce, while planning and developing for the future workforce. Pursuing excellence in teaching and research in social work for human rights and social justice requires the continuation of achieving yet greater excellence in teaching, learning and research; supporting and developing sustainability and inclusion, including partnerships that mobilise action; amplifying realities of the lived experiences of ‘others’; representing marginalised voices; and shaping innovative ideas for tackling global challenges, for example as decolonised and indigenous wisdom and harmonious coexistence with nature. Affirming human rights and co building peace, justice and solidarity and realising equality is critical in supporting transformative social work education and practice.

The Workplan for the HRSJ Committee 2024 is outlined in Appendix One; Appendix Two: Membership.

Janet Walker
(On behalf of the HRSJ Committee)

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/goal-of-the-month/>

March 2024

Appendix One
Workplan for HRSJ Committee 2024

Proposed Activity
Coordinate, and work with other IASSW Committees, for example, International Research Projects Committee, to strengthen Human Rights and Social Justice perspectives through joint working/initiatives.
Strengthen liaison with regional and sub-regional groups to support dialogue and representation of HRSJ, including discussion re potential of 'communities of shared knowledge' (spaces where experiences and ideas are exchanged, where collaboration generates innovation and where collective wisdom informs the path to change, empowerment, rights and justice).
Promote and prioritise decolonial thinking, teaching and learning practice and research, prioritising Indigenous epistemologies, knowledges, perspectives, languages, histories, and pedagogies to focalise Indigenous ways of knowing and being.
Promote and prioritise issues of environmental justice

Appendix Two
HRSJ Committee Members

Name	Institution	Comments
Janet Walker	University of Lincoln, England.	Chair Board Member
Anneline Keet	Nelson Mandela University, South Africa	
Edward (Eddy) Asamoah	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Ghana	
Chaitali Das	Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany	
Shirley Gatenio Gabel	Fordham University, New York, USA	
Corlie Giliomee	University of Pretoria, South Africa	
Jessica Jönsson	Örebro University, Sweden	Board Member
Noga Pitowsky	Sapir College, Israel	
Jowima Reyes	University of the Philippines- Diliman, Philippines	
Mohd Haizzan Yahaya	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysia.	