

## **2010 Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development BUILDING THE GLOBAL AGENDA Preamble**

**Hong Kong, China  
14 June 2010**

**"If you are coming to help me, you are wasting your time.  
But if you are coming because your liberation is bound with mine,  
then let us work together"<sup>1</sup>**

There were several aims for the 2010 joint World Conference, organised by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) held in Hong Kong, China in June 2010:

- To claim/reclaim the priority of 'political' action and to develop a collective voice for social development and social work practitioners and social work educators
- To start a collective process of elaborating and setting a common Global Agenda for years to come that can unite those involved in social work and social development
- To strategise around mechanisms for the implementation of common actions and the development of modalities for monitoring our efforts

The mission of the social work profession and the development of social policy are rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers, social work educators and policy practitioners and developers, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective. The development of a Global Agenda gives us the opportunity to take stock of our past experiences and to articulate a new and crucial vision for engagement that can mobilise our members and partners - and beyond.

The Hong Kong Global Agenda process has provoked an unprecedented level of engagement and debate around the world. There was enthusiastic discussion at the conference in Hong Kong and the first draft of the Global Agenda and the proposed consultation process were warmly welcomed by delegates when presented in the final session. There is also considerable interest within the United Nations and other global agencies.

The 2012 conference in Stockholm will review the implementation strategies of the Global Agenda and explore ways to address the main themes and influence global political, professional and social processes.

The following pages outline the intentions of the three global bodies in respect of the next stages of consultation and the suggested areas for further work and debate.

---

<sup>1</sup> Extracted from a poem by an Aborigine woman

## **GLOBAL AGENDA ON SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT Second Draft**

The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) initiated a discussion to develop a Global Agenda for social work and social development in Hong Kong, China in June 2010. From our previous consultations, and the discussions during the Hong Kong conference, we propose the following four areas as a framework for the first draft of the Global Agenda, to be developed and articulated following further consultation:

### **Social and economic inequalities within countries and between regions**

The recent and continuing economic crises and the modalities chosen by world leaders to deal with them (e.g. using resources to support the financial systems while cutting resources for social support and social development) have led to:

- Growing inequalities and their implications
- The worsening marginalisation of populations and of the working poor
- Increased vulnerability of poor people in countries which do not have an adequate social protection floor
- Community disintegration

### **Dignity and worth of the person**

- Human rights issues in relation to social, economic, cultural and political situations
- Respect for diversity and different belief systems, especially indigenous and first people's voices
- Political instabilities, violence, dominations, and the erosion of peace building processes
- Terrorism and modes of response by states and the modalities of handling global conflicts
- Migration, refugees, trafficking, immigrants, immigration and ways of handling these issues
- The role for social work practice, education and social development

### **Environmental Sustainability**

- Disasters of natural and human origin, management and prevention
- Involvement of local communities in developing responses
- Implications for sustainable social development
- Protecting the physical environment
- Proactive engagement with social, human and ecological development

### **Importance of human relationships**

Family and relationship issues and challenges across the lifespan emerge as a major concern in relation to the transformation of the world. For example the needs of:

- Children and families
- People with Disabilities
- People needing health and mental health services
- People who are ageing
- People with drugs and substance abuse problems
- People suffering from violence within domestic and intimate relationships

## **“NEW CHALLENGES CALL FOR NEW STRATEGIES”**

To address the new global challenges and to achieve the Global Agenda, we believe that new strategies have to be employed. We commit ourselves to develop the following strategies:

### **Extending partnerships**

Our teaching, research, practice and policy development are not mere techniques, but rather bear assumptions of engagement to and with the larger community. We need to strengthen our links with like-minded organisations and representative groups.

### **Building capacity and assets**

The Global Agenda building process will provide us with an opportunity to come together for asset building for the future, to articulate our voices and to elaborate strategies that can serve the larger community in a stronger and more efficient fashion. We need to organise ourselves around major and relevant social issues that connect within and across our profession.

### **Developing a unified professional voice**

While the situation of the world requires more social work unity and engagement, it seems that social work voices are fragmented and our contributions are often not acknowledged. Beyond the shared understanding of the necessity to be organised and relevant in the international arena, we need to develop clear direction as to how to discuss and elaborate strategies at the international level in order to develop action plans which can seriously influence the setting of an international agenda.

### **Engaging with local, national, regional and global bodies**

We collectively regret that the field of social work, (social work educators, social workers and social development practitioners) remains marginalised in many countries, and in relevant regional and international organisations.

For some years we have attempted, with some success, to be present in different international and regional organisations and to influence meaningfully the setting of their agendas and to have them include a social work perspective (for example, different UN agencies, regional bodies like the European Union, African Union, Mercosur, ASEAN, ECOWAS and others). We need to strengthen our engagement with these organisations.

Our organisations have a responsibility to support and facilitate the communication of voices from the margin on issues relevant to the larger community.

### **Strengthening analysis and consolidating evidence to support collective advocacy and action**

We have previously engaged in collective action and developed a vision at local, national and global levels in response to many issues and challenges, such as:

- Poverty
- Social protection
- Disaster prevention and intervention
- Peace-building processes
- Human rights
- Challenges across the life cycle
- Disabilities
- Community development
- Partnership with service users / consumers;
- Interdisciplinary practice and policy development

Many but not all of these are encompassed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are global, time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions - income, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion - while promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability. They also reflect basic human rights - the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter and security, as pledged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>2</sup> (UDHR) and the UN Millennium Declaration<sup>3</sup> (*Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations, 2002*<sup>4</sup>).

Article 25 of the UDHR states:

*"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection" (1948).*

We know that our actions on these and other issues are important and inform policy makers, practitioners and educators. Nevertheless, we have yet to articulate these issues from our perspectives in a strong and persuasive manner to contribute our knowledge, experience and networks to have a major impact. We must integrate the social, economic and environmental factors which are a core part of sustainable development. This interrelationship helps to inform what we do, why we do it and what we expect to achieve.

The decision to organise a joint conference of the three global organisations was a 'political' decision to organise social work and social development practitioners and social work educators; we want to work together to articulate a set of common goals. The challenges which we collectively face are so enormous that there is an overwhelming need for a united voice and solidarity.

The 2010 conference was not an end but rather the beginning of a process: the development of shared engagement. It is a beginning of a larger movement that we aim to lead as international organisations. The foundation has been laid for the Global Agenda. It is now open to the global community of social work and social development practitioners and social work educators to contribute to the process and help to shape the Global Agenda and our agreed strategies to promote it.

September 2010

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/index.htm>



## **MODALITIES OF ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIC ACTION TO DEVELOP THE AGENDA**

We recommend that the following become the focus for our beginning action in the process of achieving our Global Agenda:

### **Developing Common Objectives**

- Strengthen collaboration between social work organisations, their leaders and their members to pursue shared advocacy goals in relation to practice, education and policy development.

### **Inspiring Practitioners and Educators**

- Mobilise social workers and the global social work profession actively to engage in politics, policy development and social action, emphasising the strategic use of power.

### **Demonstrating Competence and Value**

- Empirically demonstrate the competence and value of social work and social policy professionals to society.

### **Strengthening Influence**

- Strengthen the ability of international social work and social development organisations to identify and clearly articulate, with a unified voice, issues of importance to the profession
- Address the impact of racism, other forms of oppression, social injustice, and other human rights violations through social work education, social development and practice.
- Promote development of more culturally relevant social work interventions and research methodologies in the areas of social justice and social well-being, and identify and articulate cost-benefit outcomes.
- Strengthen the ability of social work and social development to influence the corporate and political landscape at the local, national and global levels.
- Assure excellence in skills and competencies at all levels of social work education, practice, research and social development, especially in ageing.

### **Integrating Technologies**

- Integrate technologies that serve social work practice and education and social development in an ethical, practical and responsible manner.

### **Enriching Practice in Social Work and Social Development**

- Develop models of ethical, sustainable business and management practices in social work and social policy making environments.
- Adopt the Social Protection Floor Initiative as part of a common vision in social policy development.
- Build the capacity of civil society to engage actively with national governments.

### **Sustaining Education and Continuous Personal Development**

- Ensure the sustainability of the profession through high quality education and training, strong mentoring, career progression and succession programs.
- Develop capacity and leadership among social work educators, practitioners and social development workers.
- Advocate for and demonstrate the value of the social work profession to students, potential employees and policy makers at the highest levels.
- Embed the value of social work education in the professions and in the global community.

## **WORKING TOWARDS STOCKHOLM 2012 THE TIMETABLE**

The following timetable was adopted by the three organisations as the process for developing the Global Agenda on Social Work and Social Development:

1. A second *revised* Global Agenda will be developed by October 2010 and will be sent to all national, regional and international associations for comment.
2. A revised document will be produced taking into account the feedback.
3. It was announced at the closing ceremony of the conference that on 15 March 2011, World Social Work Day (WSWD), all classes in schools of social work around the world, service agencies, other sites where social work and social development organisations are involved and communities linked to social work and social development will be encouraged to discuss and comment on the Global Agenda.
4. UN Social Work Day 2011 will focus on the Global Agenda, facilitate a discussion of the proposals and consult UN agencies about its content.

Feedback from these consultations will serve to articulate and inform the final document which will be discussed and approved by the three global bodies.

5. On World Social Work Day 2012 - 20 March 2012 - the final Global Agenda will be officially submitted to the United Nations Secretary General.
6. On World Social Work Day 2012 - 20 March 2012, regional groupings will submit the Global Agenda to international organisations, (African Union, European Union, Mercosur, ASEAN etc.).
7. On World Social Work Day 2012 - 20 March 2010, national groupings will submit the Global Agenda to their governments.
8. An information and communication strategy to give increased publicity will be developed and implemented.

June 2010