

# THE GLOBAL AGENDA

FOR SOCIAL WORK AND  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITMENT TO ACTION

March 2011



IASSW AIETS



## | 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 inequality<sup>1</sup>;
- cultural diversity and the right to self-expression facilitate a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence<sup>2</sup>, 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 peoples<sup>3</sup>;
- 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<sup>4</sup>.

### **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.

# THE GLOBAL AGENDA

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 work<sup>5</sup> and the ethical principles of social work<sup>6</sup>.

## | 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 workers<sup>7</sup>.

The International Association of Schools of Social Work is an international community of schools and educators in social work, promoting quality education, training and research in the theory and practice of social work, administration of social services and formulation of social policies. IASSW speaks on behalf of 2,000 schools of social work and 500,000 students<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup>.

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 agenda<sup>10</sup>, which includes, for example, the social protection floor initiative<sup>11</sup>; decent work and international labour standards<sup>12</sup>; the WHO initiative on the social determinants of health<sup>13</sup>; and education for all<sup>14</sup>.

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 children<sup>15</sup>; older people<sup>16</sup>; women<sup>17</sup>; persons with disabilities<sup>18</sup> and indigenous peoples<sup>19</sup>, and the end to discrimination on the grounds of race and sexual orientation<sup>20</sup>.

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 consequences<sup>21</sup>.

We will work with our partners to challenge violent state responses to actions by people in defence of their rights.

# THE GLOBAL AGENDA

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 trafficking<sup>22</sup>.

## **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 interventions<sup>23</sup>, 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 process<sup>24</sup>, World Urban Forum<sup>25</sup> and the post-2015 development agenda, including attention to disaster prevention and management<sup>26</sup>.

# THE GLOBAL AGENDA

## **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](http://www.ifsw.org)
- 8 [www.iassw-aiets.org](http://www.iassw-aiets.org)
- 9 [www.icsw.org](http://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).
- 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 GLOBAL AGENDA

‘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 \(OCHA\)](#)



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