GLOBAL AGENDA

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.

We commit ourselves to supporting, influencing and enabling structures and systems that positively address the root causes of oppression and poverty and growing inequality.

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;
- cultural diversity and the right to self-expression facilitate a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence, but these rights are in danger due to aspects of globalisation which standardise and marginalise human relationships;
- 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.

Therefore: We commit ourselves to supporting, influencing and enabling structures and systems that allow people to have power over their own lives.

We commit ourselves to supporting, influencing and enabling structures and systems that positively address the root causes of oppression and poverty and growing inequality. We commit ourselves wholeheartedly to leave to future generations a socially-just and fair world that we will be proud of.

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 equality;
- Promoting the dignity and worth of peoples;
- Working towards 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 and the ethical principles of social work.

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 of 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. 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 advises on behalf of 2,000 schools of social work and 500,000 students.

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. In preparing the Global Agenda, the International Council on Social Welfare has 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

Target Group: 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, which includes, for example, the social protection floor initiative, decent work and international labour standards, the WHO initiative on the social determinants of health, and education for all.

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.

Target Group: 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.

Target Group: 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.
GLOBAL AGENDA

OUR ROLE IN ENSURING THE DIGNITY AND WORTH OF THE PERSON

Target Group: 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 children17; older people18; women19; persons with disabilities20 and indigenous peoples21, and the end to discrimination on the grounds of race and sexual orientation22.

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 consequences23.

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 to have access to social services.

We will support measures to reduce and eliminate human trafficking24.

Target Group: 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 trafficking25.

We will partner with international, regional and national entities to promote respect for cultural identity.

Target Group: 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 interventions26, 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

Target Group: 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 process27, World Urban Forum28 and the post-2015 development agenda, including attention to disaster prevention and management29.

Target Group: 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).

Target Group: Our Own Organisations

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.

OUR ROLE IN PROMOTING WELLBEING THROUGH SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Target Group: The United Nations and Other International Bodies

We will promote community capacity building in responding to environmental challenges and human and natural disasters (e.g. flooding, water degradation, food insecurity).

Target Group: Communities

We will work with our own organisations to promote self-organisation and self-help among all persons, including older people and persons with disabilities, mental health needs and/or learning difficulties.

Target Group: 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 encourage and facilitate research into the social work role in relation to disasters and environmental challenges.

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.

Eleanor Roosevelt presenting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the United Nations General Assembly.
The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequalities—the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries.”


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)

In working to achieve its mission, ICSW advocates policies and programmes which strike an appropriate balance between social and economic goals and which respect cultural diversity. It seeks implementation of these proposals by governments, international organisations, nongovernmental agencies and others. It does so in cooperation with its network of members and with a wide range of other organisations at local, national and international levels.

ICSW’s main ways of pursuing its aims include gathering and disseminating information, undertaking research and analysis, convening seminars and conferences, drawing on grassroots experiences, strengthening nongovernmental organizations, developing policy proposals, engaging in public advocacy and working with policymakers and administrators in government and elsewhere.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is a global organization striving for social justice, human rights and social development through the promotion of social work, best practice models and the facilitation of international cooperation.

The International Federation of Social Workers supports its 90 members organizations by providing a global voice for the profession. IFSW has been granted Special Consultative Status by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). In addition, IFSW is working with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Specifically, IFSW aims to:• Promote social work as a profession through cooperation and action on an international basis• Support national organizations in promoting the participation of social workers in social planning and the formulation of social policies, nationally and internationally• Encourage and facilitate contacts between social workers in all countries• Present the viewpoints of the profession on an international level by establishing relations with international organizations

In fulfilling its mission, IASSW adheres to all United Nations Declarations and Conventions on human rights, recognising that respect for the inalienable rights of the individual is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace.

Members of IASSW are united in their obligation to the continued development through the promotion of social work, best practice models and the facilitation of international cooperation.

FOOTNOTES
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.iassw.org
8 www.icsw.org
9 www.unesco.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 distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, which are themselves influenced by policy changes.
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 changes.”