

Programme Themes

Social Work and Social Development 2012: Action and Impact

The main international organizations representing social policy and social work gathered together in Hong Kong 2010 under the common theme of Social Work and Social Development. This was an important reunion after decades of mainly separate conference meetings for IASSW, ICSW and IFSW. It was the optimal point in time for the forwarding of collaborate themes in a more powerful common agenda.

In the 2012 conference, we wish to advance the work on the *Agenda* (www.globalsocialagenda.org) developed for the 2010 conference and beyond by addressing and demonstrating the actions that might be required to develop and accomplish the Agenda – with regard to methods in practice and research, in social policy and social work education, and in a broader discourse of global commitment and cooperation.

The conference will also provide opportunities to discuss issues which the social work and social welfare sectors face everyday and to ensure a closer link between evidence-based practice, policy objectives and social development goals.

Furthermore, we want to reveal how the actions that were meant to develop and accomplish the Agenda, might impact on the conditions of people and demonstrate how actions in the social work and social development community can contribute to an enduring physical environment and sustainable social development.

We particularly want to leave visible signs for the future in three areas:

1. Human Rights and Social Equality

2. Environmental Change and Sustainable Social Development

3. Global Social Transformation and Social Action

1. Human Rights and Social Equality

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.

Human rights offer a normative base for social work and for the formation of inclusive social policies. We would like to explore the tension between a *normative* and a *political* base of social work and social development and, therefore, to address the question:

How can social work and social policies contribute in the endeavour to respect, protect and fulfil human rights?

Arena for dialogue on the programme - Share your views!

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Please be aware that we will only accept contributions that reflect respect for the basic values and ethics of social work.

Some prioritized themes:

1.1. Active and dignified ageing

It is important for all people to experience a sense of context and meaning throughout their life.

When increasing demands for services and care arise support from society needs to be designed to minimize anxiety and distress and to allow that a social life can be maintained. It is important to grant elderly women and men the right to "live until you die" and that everyday life as long as possible is active, understandable, manageable and meaningful. This requires an emphasis on ethical values and human rights in professional action and in social policy planning.

Many countries face common challenges when it comes to organizing and financing elderly care [Council of European Union/Conclusions on Healthy and Dignified Ageing](#).

1.2. Disability – and the struggle for inclusion

At least 10 per cent of the world's population live with disability, that is, more than 650 million people. People with disability face risk of being marginalized and discriminated. 2008 was an important year when the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability was put into force. The convention makes a clear statement that persons with disabilities have the right to full an equal participation, equal rights and opportunities. But we still have a long way to go working with changing attitudes and increasing awareness of disability. [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [CRPD](#)]

There is an important relation between poverty and disability. Poverty both causes and often is a consequence of disability. The majority of people with disabilities live in developing countries facing both the reality of social and economic disadvantages as well as the denial of human rights. The work assisted by WHO implementing Community Based Rehabilitation makes an important difference by creating access to health care, education and opportunities for inclusion. [WHO | Community-based rehabilitation](#)

1.3. Perspectives on Children at risk

There is extensive publication on and illustration of the Rights of the child with more than 20 years of history. The basic document is of course the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). The newly published Guidelines within UN for the *Alternative care of children at risk*, by SOS Children's villages and ISS ([UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children](#)) is a guideline application of the systematic and documented knowledge so far of the management of children at risk situations.

Other "action and impact evidence based" practice is also being accumulated in reports from international documentation; see e.g. reports from [Better Care Network](#). Instruments for mapping and assessing the condition of the child on national basis, e.g. a toolkit developed by Unicef: ([Child Protection System Mapping and Assessment Toolkit](#))

We welcome contributions on various themes with the child in focus. Contributions on *Children at risk* and on *Child welfare development*, with broad views of the concepts. Especially appropriate are evidence based practice contributions.

1.4. Youth and vulnerability – current challenges

Youth vulnerability gets different description due to time and contextual framework. What are the current challenges worldwide?

Some reappearing themes:

Youth and unemployment;
Youth in migration;
Youth in criminality;
Youth and drug misuse;
Youth in trafficking;
Youth and the HIV/AIDS endemic;

We welcome contributions from all corners of the world, enlightening current local or regional challenges for Youth social policy or social work practice.

1.5. Respect for spiritual rights and religious beliefs

A common way of describing human life is to say that it takes place in four different dimensions simultaneously:

- Physical
- Psychological
- Social
- Spiritual

Some would say that they are ordered in a hierarchy in which one is more important than the other, and some would say they are not. Still, regardless of this, a holistic way of understanding human life involves all four.

The spiritual realm is home for religious beliefs.

Human Rights are inseparable from Human Life, needless to say, and this would imply that there are rights linked to each one of the four dimensions of it, the spiritual included. This is confirmed by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

The purpose of incorporating this theme in the conference is to allow space and opportunity for reflection on the 'hows and whens' of respecting spiritual rights and religious beliefs in societies which have developed into something far less homogenous in this respect than in times gone by. How does this affect, and in what ways does this challenge social policies, social work and social workers in this day and age?

1.6. Violence against women

Violence against women (VAW) and girls is a fundamental violation of human rights. VAW is a complex and multifaceted global issue, which includes elements of legal, social and health aspects. VAW includes: "physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse and it cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography. It takes place in the home, on the streets, in schools, in the workplace, in farm fields, refugee camps, during conflicts and crises. It has many manifestations – from the most universally prevalent forms of domestic and sexual violence, to harmful practices, abuse during pregnancy, so-called honour killings and other types of femicide." (www.unwomen.org)

VAW has severe socio-economic consequences, but above all it involves extensive suffering and high costs for the survivor/victim and her children.

The United Nations Secretary-General's campaign *UNiTE to End Violence against Women* is an effort aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls in all parts of the world ([UNiTE To End Violence Against Women](http://www.unwomen.org)).

UN Women, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, focuses

on Violence against Women as a priority area, aiming at the implementation of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW and United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008) and 1960 (2010)

Partnership, political will and accountability are needed to meet the challenges to eliminate VAW.

We welcome contributions on VAW in peace and conflicts, focusing on prevention of violence as well as protection of and care for survivors/victims.

1.7 To fulfil lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights

Stigmatisation and discrimination of LGBT people occur in all countries in the world. It has been said that LGBT people today experience the best of times and the worst of times, depending on where they live. In many countries same sex relationships are prohibited, in the worst case even punishable by death. While on the other hand in many countries same sex activity is legal and discrimination is prohibited, there is still a lot left before stigma and discrimination of LGBT people are things of the past. Examples of hate crime against LGBT people are widespread all over the world.

Heteronormativity means that heterosexual orientation is taken for granted and forms an implicit understanding of the relation between persons. Alternative life-styles become invisible.

The international statement of ethical principals in social work (www.ifsw.org/p38000398.html) states that social workers have an obligation to challenge negative discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as sexual orientation. Despite this, it is a fact that heteronormativity still dominates in social work practice. This is also the situation even in countries with strong protection of the right of LGBT persons.

We welcome contributions to developing non-discriminatory professional practice and research and practice that contribute to the fight for equality and LGBT rights.

1.8. The right to health and social equality

Everyone has the right to the highest attainable standard of health. Not only access to health care determines the standard of health for a person.

Poor social and economic circumstances affect health throughout life. Poverty and social exclusion have a major impact on health and premature death. (Social determinants of health: the solid facts. 2nd edition, WHO Europe, 2003)

[www.euro.who.int/ data/assets/pdf file/0005/98438/e81384.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/98438/e81384.pdf)

Social justice and social equality affect the way people live, their chance of illness, and risk of premature death.

Social and economic policies have a determining impact on whether a child can grow and develop to its full potential and live a flourishing life, or whether its life will be blighted. (Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health: final report of the commission on social determinants of health. WHO, 2008)

www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/SDH_SDH_FinalReport.pdf

We invite contributions to shed light on the struggle for social justice in a health perspective. Contributions exploring how social work and social development interact with health care and the right to health are also welcome. A gender perspective of this theme is crucial.

2. Environmental Change and Sustainable Social Development

With global warming and the increase in natural disasters due to the emission of greenhouse gases, an alternative approach to the natural environment is vital. The main focus of this sub-theme is to emphasize the person-in-environment concept and to find measures for implementation of it. The conference will address the following questions:

How does climate change affect social work and social development?

What actions are needed to integrate the three pillars of Economic development, Environmental development and Social protection?

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Some prioritized themes:

2.1. Disaster management: Perspectives for social work and social development

This is relatively a new field of action for social work. See the [International Strategy for Disaster Reduction](#) (ISDR).

During the last years interest has strongly increased among professional social workers in being part of the responsible actors in prevention of disasters and in acute disaster management.

The need for psychosocial support has been highlighted by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=90972rLink.

This kind of support is very appropriate for professional social workers and training courses are being offered in some institutions [CSWE - Disaster Management](#).

The necessity of a holistic view of people in natural disasters is creating a basis for inventions of crisis management, networking and psychosocial solutions, suitable for the social work profession.

This new development of social work methodology was very obvious in the Hong Kong conference 2010, where surprisingly many contributions were presented under this theme. We expect a lot of documented experiences of disaster management also in Stockholm.

2.2. Indigenous understanding of environmental change and its social consequences

Indigenous peoples are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change, due to their dependence upon, and close relationship, with the environment and its resources. Indigenous peoples and the role they may play in combating climate change are rarely considered in public discourses on climate change. UNPFII ([United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#)).

Indigenous understanding of the world is holistic. All parts of the natural habitat is considered "sacred" and to be preserved for future generations.

What can we learn from the indigenous experiences of surviving in a symbiosis with an ever changing natural environment?

2.3. Integrating economic, environmental and social perspectives

Economic Development, Environmental Development and Social Protection are the three fundamental "pillars" for the integration of sustainable development, according to UNCSD 2012 (United Conference on Sustainable Development). The UN Rio summit (Rio +20) is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the first UN climate summit establishing the agenda 21, held in Rio de Janeiro 1992. The UNCSD will be held close in time to our own conference in Stockholm (www.uncsd2012.org).

We emphasize the actions and impact of Social protection and the Millennium Development Goals (www.un.org/millenniumgoals).

2.4. Social action for clean water

The UN General Assembly declared on the 28 July 2010 that Safe and clean drinking water and sanitation is a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights ([General Assembly declares access to clean water and sanitation is a human right](#)) What will be the role of social work and social policy to respect, protect and fulfil the right to clean water?

2.5. Social economy and sustainable social development: local lessons – global challenges

Social economy has emerged as a grass-roots entrepreneurial, not-for-profit sector on the basis of people's needs and democratic values. Social economy has an impact on growth, employment creation and welfare striving to enhance social, economic, and environmental conditions of communities.

Social economy comprises a kind of buffer between the market economy private enterprise and the public sectors. It also furthers new forms of partnerships between public, private and nonprofit actors.

Institutional diversity may be as important as biological diversity for our long-term survival. Within this theme we welcome contributions showing actions empowering people and local organizations in environmental change.

2.6. Sustainable social development: research, education and practice

Social Development was launched in the Copenhagen UN summit, 1995, with *Sustainable development* being the follow up in Johannesburg, 2002.

Resource conservation, economic development and social justice being the most important aspects of the concept of sustainability. The integration of the three pillars of Economic development, Environmental development and Social protection seem to be the urgent challenge now? Where do we stand in research? What kind of implementation is reached in the curriculums of social work? We also need examples of social work practice.

3. Global Social Transformation and Social Action

Global social transformation calls for global social action. By raising the living standards of the poorest nations we can limit the population growth. One billion of the world population is trapped in poverty, without being able to survive on own work. The global financial crises have set in motion the Social Protection Floor Initiative.

The increasing migration in the world is an important issue for social work and social policy action. Migration movements go from rural areas to urban areas, from Global South nations to Global North nations. Two hundred million people are estimated to be on the move without a stable home. The urbanization has raised the population living in cities to over fifty percent globally.

The conference will forward the following questions:

How can social work and social policy actions contribute to closing gaps of inequality within and between regions?

How can social work and social policy actions contribute to the fulfilment of migrants' rights and to bridging transnational relations – as consequence of border-crossing migration?

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Some prioritized themes:

3.1. Fighting poverty and developing social protection

Eradication of poverty in all its forms is the ultimate goal of social work and social development.

In the midst of an ongoing recession and a scenario of multiple crises, the international community is challenged to combine efforts to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goal e.g. to halve absolute poverty rates globally until the year 2015. With increasing inequalities in and between countries, there is a need of social protection policies grounded in values of social justice and human rights with a strong state commitment towards universal programmes (UNRISD.org).

(See also Gapminder.org and Social Protection Floor (www.ilo.org/qimi/qess/ShowTheme.do?tid=1321))

3.2. Social work in contexts of political and military conflicts

Civilian populations are increasingly exposed to different political or military conflicts in many parts of the world. Women, children and elderly are targets of violence in war. Rape, forced recruitment of children as soldiers and destruction of means for survival are common. Houses and infrastructure are damaged.

Vulnerable people are those most affected by war and violence. The civil society is in many cases in jeopardy and people are forced to flee. Even when the war is over and the conflict is resolved, traumatic consequences might remain for a long time. Social work in context of war and conflicts is both about handling practical situations of survival and protection during war and conflicts, but also to treat trauma and psycho-social problems in the population in war stricken countries.

Social workers direct attention to children and adults in different settings where their actions are essential, such as refugee camps, schools, hospitals, public institutions and civil society. Management and distribution of basic necessities, e.g. through Social Service Centers, for vulnerable categories of the population in war.

For more reading on children and armed conflict see the website of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (www.un.org/children/conflict/english/index.html)

3.3. Migration: challenges and possibilities

The contemporary pattern of migration is complex and challenging, taking many different courses, mainly due to influence of globalization and decolonization. There are an estimated 214 million migrants in the world. *Refugees, Asylum seekers, Undocumented migrants and Internally displaced persons* are currently in focus of the discourse. Remittances, money sent back home, by migrants is estimated to 414 billion USD and what is sent to developing countries could be estimated as much as three times the size of official development aid. ([iom/facts-and-figures](#))

Global social transformations cause increasing inflow of migrants into national states, preferably the developed countries, resulting in regulations and control at the borders of the national states.

Refugees can claim their right to protection from persecution in any country according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml.

Other asylum seekers are referred to "no-mans-land", or to illegal settlement. Internally displaced persons have not crossed an international border to find refuge but have remained within their home countries. They may have migrated or are fleeing for similar reasons as refugees or may have become homeless due to natural disaster or war:

UNHCR estimates the numbers of Refugees in the world to 15 millions and internally displaced persons to around 27 millions. (www.unhcr.org)

Secondary consequences of migration movements are increasing racism and xenophobia in the civil society of receiving countries and communities. An increasing number of undocumented migrants risk generating a new class composed of an underpaid work force lacking social, economic and health security.

We welcome contributions that through case studies or other reports illustrate contemporary migration movements.

3.4. Families in transition

The postmodern family pattern discourse is about *individualization* and *care*. Through globalisation, the closed family system is dissolved, and a plurality of cohabitation alternatives is emerging. On a global level, transnational families are keeping proximity through cross-borders networking. Patterns of traditional patriarchy are challenged through institutionalized individualization and gender discourse. Care of children and care of elderly become an institutionalized responsibility.

Different kinds of Family themes were developed and attracted much attention in the workshops in Hong Kong. We naturally take over the baton, and expect lots of contributions, witnessing about changing family patterns in the ongoing global transitions.

3.5. International NGOs in transnational social action

We want to highlight the increasing transnational role of the international non-governmental organizations, INGOs. The movement is recognized as a "bottom-up"- directed framework in action within the social development field. This is a contrasting movement in comparison with the traditional "top-down" approach. International non-governmental organisations work together progressively and more efficiently in networks with local organisations in development projects.

There are plenty of examples from the well-known INGOs on the global arena, e.g. [The Salvation Army International](#), [International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement](#), [Save the Children International](#), [UNICEF](#), [Plan International](#), [Childwatch](#), [SoS-Childrensvillages](#).

3.6. Social media and its impact on social development

Social media are media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media use web-based technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue (Wikipedia, accessed 24 Jan 2011).

People – especially young people – have friends, interact and present their profiles and themselves more and more via different social media. Status among young people is related to the number of friends on Facebook, the number of followers of your blog, etc.

Social media are also modern tools for abuse and harassment, especially among young people. Publishing films on Youtube of young peoples' private lives, of assaults and rape etc has devastating effects on the individual and his or her development. Social media are powerful.

Social media has become a huge and fascinating platform with a interesting population of informants for an increasing attention of social scientists.

It is time for social work and social policy to direct attention to social media.

Twitter, Facebook, blogging and other social media can help social work. www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2011/01/19/116099/time-for-social-work-to-embrace-social-media.htm

Can we look into the virtual future of social work? www.communitycare.co.uk/static-pages/articles/into-the-virtual-future/

What are the implications for social work ethics when we "facebook" our clients? 6

How does and will in the future social media affect social development?

3.7. Transforming organisations for creative practice

The ability to do social work in an ethical and humane way is guided and constrained by [agency procedures and management styles](#). What are the characteristics of a good social work agency? How can social workers 'survive' and flourish in hostile management environments? What are the extra skills needed by those working in multi-professional settings?

The current service environment demands "[evidence](#)" of effectiveness and efficiency. The public, funders and politicians demand 'evidence' to justify continued [support](#). This is a big challenge for social work. What counts as "[evidence](#)"? All around the world, [managerialism](#) and public sector management techniques have been applied to social work practice in an attempt to gather evidence and manage scarce [resources](#). Yet there is also evidence that [burn-out](#) is a significant issue for social workers but also that [agencies which are managed](#) in ways which respect social work values and principles provide better services for users/clients/consumers

and attract and keep more competent, more effective and more contented staff. How can we demonstrate that [social work works](#)? Is [evidence-based practice](#) a possibility for social work? Do [management and social work values](#) have anything in common?