

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN SOCIAL WORK

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THE THREE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Organizing into associations is one of the hallmarks of the professions. Although his use of the term is outdated, Abraham Flexner pointed out in a 1915 speech to the U.S. National Conference of Charities and Correction that a profession is a "brotherhood" and tends to self organize (Poppo 1995). Within just a few decades of the first offerings of social work education in Europe and North America, social workers and others interested in social welfare came together for professional meetings and began to organize what are today the three major international organizations in the field of social work and social welfare. This chapter will describe the International Federation of Social Workers, the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Council on Social Welfare. Beginning with a discussion of the First International Conference on Social Welfare that gave the organizations their impetus, sections on each of the organizations will describe their history, mission, membership, and major programs and initiatives. Areas of collaboration and conflict will be addressed and the article will conclude with brief forward-looking recommendations. A few key leaders will be mentioned, although it is not possible to give adequate attention to their contributions to the international character of social work in these few pages.

The First International Conference and its Antecedents

There is no firm date to mark the beginning of social work. Better documented are the beginnings of social work education and here it is known that by the very late 19th century, social work courses had been offered in England, the United States and the Netherlands, with Germany following in the early years of the 20th century. Social workers were active in important international movements of the early 20th century, especially movements for peace, women's rights, and improved labor conditions. As leaders in social welfare from various countries met each other, the benefits of exchanges of ideas became evident. This led to a proposal for an international conference on social work and social welfare, an idea that originated when European and Japanese social workers participated in the U.S. National Conference of Social Work in 1919. The official proposal for a conference was made in a letter from Dr. Rene Sand of Belgium to Julia Lathrop of the U.S. in 1923. Endorsement by national associations and by the League of Red Cross Societies followed.

In 1926, an organizing committee met in Paris; the Committee was comprised of representatives from 17 countries in Europe, Asia and North America and from a number of important international organizations. Among these were the League of Nations, the International Labor Organization, the League of Red Cross Societies, the International Migration Service, and the Save the Children Fund. Leading the way were Dr. Alice Masarykova of Prague as President and Dr. Rene Sand as Secretary General of the conference. Plans grew until the final event spanned two weeks and included international meetings of a number of organizations. The first International Conference of Social Work was held from July 8-13 1928 in Paris and was attended by 2,481 delegates from 42 countries (Organization of the International Conference of Social Work 1929, p. 14). It is

remarkable that so many traveled great distances almost 80 years ago. Yet, one of the conference speakers applauded the ease of travel in the day:

“In the last hundred years, the technical application of human invention has wrought nothing short of a revolution in international relations. The high seas—obstacles for so long to the free interchange of goods and ideas—have become a great medium for the exchange of both...Ships, railways, aeroplanes, telephones, wireless telegraphy, broadcasting—all these have made the world smaller, have brought us into close contact with one another” (Jebb 1929, p. 637).

The Conference was only the first of what became the international social work and social welfare conferences. Two more were held before World War II interrupted international collaboration: 1932 in Frankfurt and 1936 in London. A planned conference for 1940 was never held; a planning meeting in Paris in 1946 and much less grandiose conference in 1948 in Atlantic City, New Jersey in the U.S. began the effort to rebuild the international social work/social welfare movement.

Particularly significant is that the 1928 conference “gave birth” to the three international organizations that are the topic of this chapter. Although they have been slightly renamed, both the IASSW and the ICSW have been in continuous existence since the 1928 meeting. The IFSW, originally the International Permanent Secretariat of Social Workers, disappeared for a time, but was officially reconstituted in 1956, as will be described below.

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (IFSW)

Mission and Purpose

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is a global organization striving for social justice, human rights and social development through the development of social work, best practices and international cooperation between social workers and their professional organizations. Association members work together through the international organization towards developing the common goals of the profession and in working on issues of concern to social workers globally. IFSW tries to achieve this international identity by:

- encouraging co-operation between social workers of all countries;
- providing means for discussion and the exchange of ideas and experience through meetings, study visits, research projects, exchanges, publications and other methods of communication;
- establishing and maintaining relationships with social work organizations and their members and representing them to international bodies relevant to social development and welfare;
- sponsoring biennial international symposia and conferences;
- developing and publishing policy statements to guide social work practice worldwide;
- advocating for the protection of human rights of practicing social workers; and
- providing consultation to the United Nations on issues of human development and human rights (www.ifsw.org).

History and Activities

The IFSW celebrated its 50th jubilee in Munich in 2006, having grown from just 12 member organizations in 1956, to over 80 today. However, as noted above, the heritage of the modern IFSW stretches back to the First International

Conference on Social Work held in Paris in July 1928, where it was agreed that an international association of social workers be formed. At the 1932 Second International Conference on Social Work held in Frankfurt, provisional statutes of the International Permanent Secretariat of Social Workers (IPSSW) were agreed. The IPSSW operated from Berlin, Geneva and Prague until 1956 when the International Federation of Social Workers was formed in Munich with 12 national member organizations and a new Secretariat was established in New York, sharing office with the National Association of Social Workers.

Of major concern to the new organization was the question of ethics and in 1957 work began on the establishment of what has become today 'Ethics of Social Work – Statement of Principles' (IFSW 2006). The President and Executive promoted the voice of social work at the United Nations and its bodies so much that by 1959, just three years after re-establishment, the IFSW was approved for consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with a special relationship later extended by UNICEF and the International Labor Organization (ILO). Teams of representatives are in action at the United Nations in Geneva, Nairobi, New York and Vienna. IFSW now also has formal partnerships with Amnesty International, CONGO (Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the UN), Council of Europe; European Union, Habitat, IASSW and ICSW.

Encouraging a discourse of international social work was greatly strengthened by the decision to launch the Journal of *International Social Work*. IFSW joined its partner organizations, ICSW and IASSW in sponsoring the journal in 1959. The Journal remains one of the most significant refereed journals on international social work available today. While early conferences were held jointly, by the mid 1960's it became apparent that for various reasons the three foundation organizations, IFSW, IASSW and ICSW, had begun to move in their own directions; since then, some of the conferences have been held separately and some together. Regional IFSW seminars and conferences have been a strong

feature, particularly of the European region, and have extended with differing levels of success across all IFSW regions. The IFSW Executive Committee decided to establish a permanent and paid secretariat in 1972 in Basel, Switzerland, appointing Catherine Chuard (1972-1974), followed by Andrew (Andy) Mouravieff-Apostol as the Secretary General (1975-1992), assisted in his work by his wife Ellen. Both enjoyed extensive networks within the United Nations system and Ellen remains today as the IFSW Main Representative to the UN Geneva.

From 1975 to 1992 Andy was IFSW Secretary General, and was elected lifelong Honorary President when he retired in 1992. For IFSW, Andy was the cornerstone. He communicated with social workers of all countries with warmth, knowledge and diplomacy and became like a father for the international social work community. His lifetime spanned close to a century and his history and background reflect the international character of the profession. Born in France in 1913 of Russian/Ukrainian parents, his family were abroad when the 1917 revolution in Russia broke out it was impossible for the aristocratic family to return home; Andy was only able to return to Russia at the time of perestroika in the late 1980s. Working first as a journalist and then as a foreign correspondent in England before and during World War II, he also served in the Free French military forces. After the war Andy left journalism and took up a position with the World Council of Churches and later with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He served in many countries, but mainly in South America, where he met his future wife Ellen. The couple settled in Geneva, where Andy until his death worked as a professional interpreter at the United Nations and other international bodies.

The strengthening of the secretariat also heralded an era of increased activity in membership levels and by IFSW through its representative status with various organizations. The secretariat later moved to Oslo, Norway in 1992 and then in

1999 to Berne, Switzerland, where it is located today, with Tom Johannesen as the Secretary-General.

The late 1970's saw considerable work undertaken on the definition of social work. This document was endorsed at the Brighton Conference in 1982 and remained unaltered until 1996 when a committee was established to revise and prepare a new definition of social work, ultimately adopted by both practitioners and educators in 2001 (IFSW 2002a).

The 1980's were particularly active years for the IFSW in the area of human rights and social justice. By this time the IFSW had well established representative teams to the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Vienna. This focus of concern led the Federation to a strong engagement in the UN International Year of Peace 1986, recognized by the UN officially declaring IFSW a 'Peace Messenger'. Eight years later the United Nations designated IFSW as 'Patron of the International Year of the Family' for exemplary support of the UN program. Many outstanding social workers have contributed over the years to IFSW and its development. Among these are Jane Hoey whose major contribution to social work was in the establishment and enforcement of standards in public welfare administration in the United States, and in whose name a fund has been established to promote social work in developing regions of the world. Another is Chauncey Alexander who served as the first US President of IFSW 1980-1982, developing the concept of global policy papers, the international code of ethics, and mentoring and promoting other social work associations.

Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. IFSW promotes human rights by publishing statements on human rights issues and related matters and by raising awareness within the profession about the

profession's commitment to its human rights heritage. IFSW has adopted an International Policy on Human Rights describing its commitment and giving guidance to social workers and social work organizations on human rights policy matters. To implement the human rights agenda of IFSW a special commission has been set up – the Human Rights Commission. Apart from its work on behalf of imprisoned and persecuted social workers around the world, the Commission has successfully developed two landmark publications with international partners, on human rights and social work and social work and the rights of the child (IFSW 1994; 2002b).

IFSW and its member Associations have also produced other academic publications from time to time. *Social Work and Globalization* was produced as a special issue on the occasion of the IFSW and IASSW joint Conference in Montreal, 2000. Other publications include a series of edited books on social work in different countries, *Social Work Around the World*, which is now on its fourth issue (Hall 2006). Regional newsletters and journals are also published wherever possible. A series of international policy papers has been developed and are regularly revised. Current policy papers cover Displaced Persons, Globalization and the Environment, Health, HIV/AIDS, Indigenous Peoples, Women, Migration, Older Persons, Peace and Social Justice, Protection of Personal Information, Conditions in Rural Communities, Refugees and Youth (view at www.ifsw.org).

A highlight in the 1990's was IFSW's strong involvement in the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995. A special issue of the *IFSW Newsletter* was presented to a broader audience focusing on social work contributions to a new world order for social development in the areas of poverty eradication, unemployment, social integration and transition in Eastern Europe. Also the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing the same year had a strong IFSW presence.

The start of the new century brought with it a significant range of challenges for the social work professions. A worldwide shift in political orientation towards conservative and in some instances ultra-conservative governments has meant that working to develop social services has been particularly difficult in more developed countries. Issues concerning the alleviation of poverty, human rights and HIV/AIDS continue to be major concerns. IFSW has responded to some of the major international issues experiences in recent years such as the Asian tsunami, serious human rights violations in the Sudan and the challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children in Africa, through projects initiated by its regional bodies and in cooperation with partner organizations.

Membership

IFSW is the international organization representing professional social workers, although membership is through national social work organizations, not individual status. Only one national professional organization in each country may become a member of the Federation. Such an organization may be a national organization or a coordinating body representing two or more national organizations. Each member association or coordinating body must observe the IFSW Constitution and should require from its members regular professional training based upon an organized sequence of social work education incorporating ethical standards of practice and a body of knowledge compatible with social work principles. At present, there are national organizations in 84 countries in membership, representing just under 500,000 social workers across the world. Association members collaborate together through IFSW towards developing the common goals of the profession and in working on issues of concern to social workers internationally.

IFSW is divided into the five geographical regions of Africa; Asia-Pacific; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; and North America, each of which is represented by a regional president. An international elected executive

committee steers the work of the Federation with a global President and Secretary General heading the body. The general executive meets every two years at the same time as an international Conference, at times held jointly with IASSW and ICSW.

IFSW also has a very successful program called 'Friends of IFSW,' providing affiliating social workers, social work students and organizations a link to international social work.

Challenges: Past and Future

IFSW has faced significant challenges at various times in its history, often due to political and ideological differences among its many members. However the international executive committee and the General Meeting of the member associations has made every effort to work in as harmonious a way as possible and to reconcile and overcome these issues. Serious problems have ranged from conflicts in places as varied as the Middle East, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. However the contentious issue of South Africa was one of the most significant, when by 1963 the attention of the world began to focus on South Africa and its Apartheid policy. The South African European Social Workers organization was a member of IFSW at that time and despite continued work on their part to establish a coordinating body of European and non-European social workers, due to government policies in that country, such an organization could not be established. The principles of non-discrimination are foundation principles for social work and after many years of agonized debate and attempts to resolve this very difficult and delicate situation South Africa was expelled from membership in 1970 and was not eligible to re-enter membership again until 1998. In fact, South Africa has yet to achieve membership of IFSW due to the persistent problem of being able to form a coordinating body between the white, colored and black South African social work associations.

There are various future priorities and challenges that face IFSW, including:

- A core concern is to ensure that key policy statements are up-to-date and relevant. In this context both IFSW and IASSW have agreed a four-year process for the review of the international definition of social work and the international statement of ethical principles, leading to the 2010 joint conference in Hong Kong. Thereafter these core statements will be reviewed every 10 years.
- Social work practice is becoming increasingly international with the migration of social workers from many countries in the developing world to the developed. A challenge for IFSW is to link with other organizations that are trying to improve conditions in the originating countries and stem this migration as far as this is possible.
- Conflicts and consequent human rights abuses have intensified throughout many regions of the world in recent years and this challenges IFSW to take an even higher profile in defense of human rights. IFSW already issues statements of concern where violations of peoples' rights occurs, such as in Darfur, but the challenge for IFSW is to ensure that these words are translated into actions.
- A similar challenge for IFSW is to respond as effectively as it can to natural disasters such as the Asian tsunami of December 2004.
- The IFSW's engagement with debates on poverty, ways to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and tackle the consequences of HIV/AIDS remain important areas of concern for the organization.

An enormous commitment by many volunteers and a small but dedicated secretariat has over 50 years given rise to a significant organization with good

reason to celebrate its achievements. Through a number of world and regional conferences, the development of core international documents to guide social work concepts and practices, and ongoing representation at the United Nations and other international bodies, IFSW is today a key global voice of international social work practice.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK (IASSW)

The International Association of Schools of Social Work is the main organization representing social work education and educators around the world; in 2008, it will celebrate its 80th anniversary.

Mission

The primary mission of the IASSW is to strengthen social work education around the world. This has remained constant since the founding. The most recent formal review of the mission statement took place in 2000 and resulted in the following mission statement:

“The International Association of Schools of Social Work is an international association of institutions of social work education, organizations supporting social work education and social work educators. Its mission is:

- To develop and promote excellence in social work education, research and scholarship globally in order to enhance human well-being;
- To create and maintain a dynamic community of social work educators and their programs;
- To support and facilitate participation in mutual exchanges of information and expertise;
- To represent social work education at the international level.” (www.iassw-aiets.org)

The statement also commits IASSW to adhere to UN human rights declarations and conventions and to pursue social justice and social development.

History and Activities

A special section of the 1928 conference focused on social work education and was led by Alice Salomon of Germany. The delegates at the conference decided to “*write to all the training schools of social work asking them whether they would be prepared to become members of an International Association of Schools*” (Fifth Question, 1929, pp. 233-234). In addition to Alice Salomon, the founders of the International Committee of Schools of Social Work, as it was originally called, consisted of representatives from the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland, soon joined by the United States, France, England, and Poland (Kendall 1978). Of the 111 schools of social work identified at the time, 46 schools from 10 countries agreed to become founding members of the new association. By 1939, membership had grown to 75 schools from 18 countries; by then, however, all German schools had withdrawn from membership.

In the early years, the International Committee sponsored seminars to exchange knowledge and strengthen social work education, including “summer schools”—seminars that intensively explored significant topics for social work. The organization continued to be led by Alice Salomon as President. She was pressured by her colleagues in Germany to resign after the Nazis came to power; Salomon was suspect for many reasons, including Jewish ancestry and her commitment to peace and internationalism. She resigned several times as President, but each time, her IASSW colleagues renamed her President. Just before she was expelled from Germany, Salomon completed the first world survey of social work education, published by the ICSSW in 1937. She produced an in-depth sociological and comparative analysis of social work education in 32 countries (Salomon, 1937).

The International Committee established working relationships with the ILO and with the Commission on Social Questions of the League of Nations. A particularly important achievement was that the ILO set up a Center of Documentation for schools of social work in 1929 (Kendall, 1978). “*For the next ten years the ILO*

attempted, with moderate success, to collect and index the statutes, programmes of study, annual reports, publications, research and seminar reports, and lists of theses or other student reports from more than 100 schools of social work” (Kendall, p. 174).

As was true for each of the 3 organizations, World War II had a devastating effect. Not only were communications disrupted for the war period, but many teachers and students died and educational facilities destroyed. The plight of the school at Warsaw is recorded in early letters of the IASSW:

“I appeal most warmly in the name of the Board...to make their members send all they possibly can collect, books, papers, reports, etc. regarding social work to Mrs. Helena Radlinska, one of the founders of our Committee, professor of the State University of Lodz (Poland). Mrs. Radlinska had the great misfortune to see destroyed besides her private house, the School of Social Work, founded by her at the University of Warsaw as well as the University itself, and to lose by death two-thirds of the teaching staff. In spite of this great misfortune starting anew at the age of 75 years Mrs. Radlinska does what she can to rebuild a School of Social Work at the University of Lodz” (Moltzer 1948, p. 2).

Kendall (1978) labeled the years 1945-1954 the “Restoration Years”. A small conference was held in Atlantic City in the U.S. in 1948 and Rene Sand had agreed in 1946 to take on the Presidency of the International Committee of Schools of Social Work. Ironically, although devastation was significant, Kendall reports that the war and its aftermath created a new demand for social workers and thus, “by 1948, 359 schools were counted in 41 countries” in a report issued by the new United Nations. (Kendall, p. 177). Social work as a profession and social work educational institutions began to disappear in the Communist countries, but grew substantially in the newly independent countries in Asia and Africa.

In the 1950's and 1960's, IASSW extended its outreach to programs in developing countries. The Congress was held in Madras, India in 1952, marking the first time the conference was held outside of Europe or North America. By 1956, the board of directors included members from Australia, Guatemala, Japan and India. The name of the organization was officially changed to the International Association of Schools of Social Work, although many member units are not independent schools but programs within larger institutions.

A major, but sadly temporary, milestone was the establishment of a Secretariat in 1971 with a paid Secretary General. Katherine Kendall served as the first paid Secretary General from 1971-1978. Originally in New York, the Secretariat moved to Vienna in 1978. Kendall was succeeded by Margarite Mathieu of Canada and then Vera Mehta of India. In the early 1990's, the organization experienced financial difficulties caused by the increased expenses of maintaining the Vienna office. A decision was taken by the Board to return to a volunteer-run organization and the Secretariat was closed in 1992. While finances have since permitted the hiring of an Administrative Assistant based in the office of the President, from 1993 IASSW has functioned without a professional executive officer.

As is true for ICSW and IFSW, IASSW holds a biennial world conference. These have been held regularly since 1928 except for the war years. At various times, the conferences have been held jointly with IFSW or with both IFSW and ICSW; in 2006 and 2008, the 3 organizations held/will hold separate conferences before joining in 3-way collaboration in 2010. It might be argued that the Biennial world conference with its call for papers and the co-sponsorship of the journal, *International Social Work*, are particularly important to the mission of the IASSW as both address the purpose of advancing scholarship and research in social work and social work education. IASSW played a lead role in the establishment of the journal and guided it in its early years. To further this objective of encouraging scholarship and research, IASSW has recently expanded its

publication activity and has launched a book series through Venture Press. IASSW also assisted the Caribbean sub-regional group to launch *The Caribbean Journal of Social Work* in 2002.

In the 1970's IASSW secured significant funding to pursue a 6 year multi-country project on family planning and social work education. The project was implemented in 20 countries—as diverse as Iran, the Philippines, Kenya, and Jamaica. Curricula, field placements, project reports and a number of important publications resulted from the effort. The family planning project put IASSW on the forefront of a cutting edge issue and reflected sound working relationships with major governmental and private funding bodies (Healy, 2001).

While no initiative of this scale has been implemented since then, IASSW was active in the 1980's and 1990's to promote and assist the development of social work education in Eastern Europe, Russia and China. Consultations and seminars were sponsored to help countries establish or re-establish social work. Through recent efforts to strengthen the regional association of schools of social work in Africa and assistance in the establishment of sub-regional organizations in the Caribbean in the 1990s and in Southeast Europe in 2006, promotion of the growth and development of social work education continues to be a program priority of the IASSW.

In an effort to promote international exchange and innovation, IASSW began a program of small projects in 2004. A consortium of at least 3 schools in two or more countries with different cultures or social work educational systems may apply for funding for a project that advances social work education internationally. The projects must enhance international and cross-cultural collaboration. To date, among the projects that have been funded are one to develop a website on field education for Chinese schools of social work; a collaboration of schools in Kenya, the Philippines and England to develop a module on disaster management; a project sponsored by 18 schools in 9

different countries on indigenous social work education and practice; and a 10 country project on international social work and political conflict resolution that is setting up a network to enhance social work education and research in conflict and post-conflict situations (www.iassw-aiets.org).

IASSW led the effort to develop *Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training*, adopted by both IFSW and IASSW in 2004. This comprehensive document is the first set of standards for social work education at the global level. Although compliance with the standards is voluntary, they have been hailed by schools of social work—especially in the developing world—as helpful targets that will contribute to upgrading of social work training. IASSW also joined with IFSW in developing and endorsing the Global Definition of Social Work and the Statement of Ethical Principles, described in the earlier section.

Membership and Organizational Structure

There are two categories of membership in the IASSW: school members and individual members. Social Work educational programs at the tertiary level are eligible to join as school members. Individual educators may also join, but individual member votes count as 1/10 of a school vote. Currently, there are member schools in more than 70 countries spread across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North American and the Caribbean. Schools are also organized into regional associations. Although the regions differ greatly in their degree of formality and organization, each regional President serves on the IASSW Board and Executive Committee as a Vice-President. The Board of Directors is large and includes the elected officers of President, Secretary and Treasurer; 4 elected at-large members; regional representatives, including the Vice-Presidents; and national representatives. Chairs of task forces and committees also attend board meetings where they have a voice, but not a vote. Current committees and task forces include the International Exchange Task Force, the Nominating Committee, an award committee, the World Census

Committee, the Women's Caucus, Publications, Human Rights, the Projects Committee, and the UN representatives team.

Challenges: Past and Future

IASSW has faced several challenges over its almost 80 years of existence. Among them were the devastation and disruption caused by World War II and the financial difficulties of the early 1990's that led to the loss of Secretariat. In the 1980's, the organization faced a different kind of struggle over the membership of South African schools. The world's attention on the evils of the South African apartheid system intensified during the late 1970's and 1980's. A major initiative was to isolate the South African government by expelling South African organizations from participation in world bodies and events (although South Africa continued to be a member of the United Nations). The issue extended to social work education. Throughout the 1980's there was extensive work to assess the degree to which the South African schools were working to oppose apartheid and to ensure multiracial social work education. When the IASSW leadership decided to work with the reform-oriented South African schools and allow the JUC to retain membership, the schools in the Nordic region withdrew. Although reconciliation and re-entry of the Nordic schools occurred after the end of apartheid, the struggle over South Africa had a long-lasting effect on the organization (personal communication, K. Kendall, January 23, 2007).

Future challenges include pressures arising from changes in the educational sector, where mergers of social work programs into larger departments with other disciplines are becoming more common. When social work has less autonomy and less visibility, there is diminished allegiance to the profession and schools are less likely to maintain membership in social work organizations such as the IASSW.

While the *Global Standards* are a major advance, they are voluntary and some are concerned that free trade regulations will lead to externally-imposed criteria for social work education. IASSW needs to carefully monitor such developments and be prepared to respond. The process of developing the standards also gave renewed attention to the continuing challenge to achieve some universality—definition of what is essential and core education for professional social work—while encouraging diversity and indigenization of curricula.

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WELFARE (ICSW)

The International Council on Social Welfare differs from the IFSW and IASSW because it is interdisciplinary and includes lay as well as professional members. The ICSW is “a global non-governmental organization which represents a wide range of national and international member organizations that seek to advance social welfare, social justice and social development” (Correll 2005, p. 688).

Mission

ICSW describes its mission as: *“to promote forms of social and economic development which aim to reduce poverty, hardship and vulnerability throughout the world, especially amongst disadvantaged people”* (www.icsw.org, 2006). The statement continues: *“It strives for recognition and protection of fundamental rights to food, shelter, education, health care and security. It believes that these rights are an essential foundation for freedom, justice and peace. It seeks also to advance equality of opportunity, freedom of self-expression and access to human services”* (ICSW 2006).

History and Activities/Programs

The ICSW, under the earlier name of the International Conference on Social Work, was formed in 1928 out of the Paris conference with Rene Sand, a chief organizer of the 1928 meetings, as its founder and Alice Masarykova as first president. Sand soon succeeded Masarykova as President in 1932. Organized to promote the interests of the social welfare sector and to ensure international exchange of information and views, the ICSW held international conferences in 1932 and 1936, resuming in the post-World War II years. Records of the planning for a 1940 conference and all records of the early ICSW were destroyed in the bombing of London (Katzki, 1988). Rene Sand's own story illustrates the disruption of organizational activities during the war years. He was taken prisoner in 1940 when the Nazi army invaded Belgium and was held in Tyrol, Austria until he was liberated in May of 1945 (Obituary of Rene Sand, 1953). He resumed his active presidency of ICSW until 1948 when he encouraged younger leaders to take over.

ICSW regrouped after the war, focusing initially on relief for war-torn areas. A special meeting was held in Holland on the theme: "Urgent Social Problems in the War Stricken Areas of Europe" (Katzki 1988). The ICSW was one of the first NGOs to gain consultative status with the United Nations. Conference locations marked progress of the ICSW in the post-war years. The 1952 conference in Madras, India, was the first held outside the West. In 1956, the conference was held in Munich with participants from 55 countries. As Katzki observed, support for the conference in Germany showed that "*participants recognized in ICSW a force that could help heal wounds and contribute to a better understanding amongst peoples*" (1988, p. 15). Geographic reach was extended through the 1962 conference in Brazil and the 1974 conference in Nairobi, Kenya.

It is worth noting that ICSW gave early recognition to human rights. The 1968 conference theme “Social Welfare and Human Rights” supported the United Nations International Year of Human Rights. The papers delivered at the conference contain messages relevant to this day. The human rights theme was echoed in 1976 in Puerto Rico: “The Struggle for Equal Opportunity-Strategies for Social Welfare.”

The organization sought ways to expand its activities beyond the biennial conferences. In 1966, the name of the organization was changed to the International Council on Social Welfare to more accurately convey that membership and scope of activity are not limited to social work. Katzki records that by 1968, ICSW had almost 50 national committees in membership and that many of these were in developing countries. Efforts continued to strengthen national committees and build regional networks.

A particularly important area of activity is consultation at the United Nations. ICSW has the highest level of NGO consultative status with the United Nations and relates to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as well as to the ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO and other bodies. The Category I consultative status allows ICSW to attend ECOSOC meetings, circulate written statements to members, address a council committee, and submit items for ECOSOC consideration (Willetts 1996).

For at least 25 years, ICSW has emphasized social development. In 1982, ICSW officially described itself as: International Council on Social Welfare: A World Organization Promoting Social Development (Katzki 1988). The emphasis on social development intensified in preparations for and participation in the 1995 United Nations World Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen. ICSW participated in the preparatory meetings for the Summit and organized a global NGO preparatory meeting. More than 60 NGO leaders attended this meeting in Helsinki in 1994. (ICSW 1995). Over several years prior to and during

the Summit, ICSW distributed copies of its policy papers on poverty and other Summit issues, monitored the official deliberations, and worked collaboratively with other NGOs. The Chair of the ICSW Summit Working Group, Julian Disney, reported success: *“ICSW widely circulated about a dozen policy papers and proposals for inclusion in the Summit agreements and we are pleased that many of our recommendations are reflected in the final documents”* (ICSW 1996).

After the Summit, the organization has continued to participate in the activities of the Commission on Social Development and to monitor progress on the commitments agreed at the Summit. In 1997, ICSW signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UNDP to ensure closer cooperation on matters related to civil society, poverty eradication and social development. ICSW has continued to represent issues of social welfare and social development at numerous international meetings, including the World Economic Forum, the International Labor Conference, WHO, and the UN Commission for Social Development.

More recently, ICSW has been critical of the narrow definition of poverty expressed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and called for inclusion of the ideas expressed in the Summit Commitments (ICSW 2005). ICSW identifies employment as an important component of the fight against poverty, yet employment is neglected in the MDGs. The emphasis of the 2007 Social Development Commission UN meeting is on decent work for all, a theme actively supported by the ICSW.

ICSW makes its contribution through research and dissemination of information, exchange through conferences, and development of policy recommendations based on its research and linkages with local and national organizations.

ICSW experienced leadership difficulties early in the 21st century, when the elected President was harassed and jailed in his home country of Bangladesh. This coincided with a time when the organization was also without a permanent

Executive Director (ICSW 2005). Nonetheless, programs have continued. Global conferences were held in Malaysia in 2004 and in Brazil in 2006, with more than 1000 participants from 44 countries. A four-year plan for ongoing programs was adopted in 2004.

Regional activities have intensified as ICSW carries out its goal of “strengthening civil society in all parts of the world” (ICSW 2005, p. 2). Initiatives included efforts in Central and West Africa and the Black Sea area. In Europe, work at the European Regional Conference emphasized a “European Social Model” to promote balanced social and economic progress, equal rights, and solidarity. A link with the South Asia Partnership has worked on such critical issues as trafficking, democracy and disasters (Correll 2006a).

Membership

There are several different membership categories. National Committees of ICSW are country level bodies that represent non-governmental organizations in the social welfare/social development field. There are currently national committees in 32 countries that are members. In addition, ICSW has International Member Organizations—global and/or regional organizations that support ICSW goals; and a number of members classified as Other Organizations who can affiliate within regions; and finally, Government Associates. There are currently member organizations in at least 50 countries.

Challenges: Past and Future

The disruption caused by the arrest of the President of the ICSW in 2000 was described above and obviously posed a serious challenge to the organization. But, the ICSW has recovered and is actively pursuing an ambitious program. In 2004, ICSW adopted a 4-year global program with seven areas of work. These are: social welfare and social development; networking; communicating with

stakeholders; global advocacy on “socially responsible global governance”; regional co-operation; North-South partnerships; and South-South policy dialogue (Correll 2005).

A challenge is the lack of strong national committees in some countries. According to the Executive Director, “*the emphasis of ICSW’s current global programme is to strengthen national umbrella organizations in the South. This is fundamental to achieving our goal of influencing governments to take seriously the road to reducing poverty in their countries and their regions*” (Correll 2006b, p. 668). While establishing strong and sustainable national civil society organizations in the Global South may be particularly difficult, the problem also exists in industrialized countries. The United States, for example, no longer has a strong national committee and its participation in the ICSW has diminished.

AREAS OF CONFLICT AND COLLABORATION AMONG THE THREE ORGANIZATIONS

The three organizations have many common areas of interest and activity. All hold conferences, support the journal *International Social Work*, maintain consultative status at the UN and aim to represent social work and social welfare at a number of NGO committees and activities. All emphasize the value of international exchange and communication and all have continued to seek ways to strengthen their organizational activities and contributions between and beyond conferences. IFSW and IASSW have successfully collaborated in and sponsored an annual Social Work Day at the UN in New York. In 2007, a World Social Work Day has been launched by the IFSW and creates additional opportunities for collaborative efforts.

At some points in history, there have been conflicts within and between the organizations, especially over the status of apartheid South Africa. At other times, disagreements or barriers to collaboration have been more mundane—

disputes over conference locations, expenditures, or hurt feelings over failure to give due credit to contributions of the collaborating partners. While mundane, these can be difficult to resolve and can pose obstacles to successfully speaking with a unified voice on the international scene.

Perhaps more distressing have been the consequences caused when the organizations and their leaders have been persecuted for their advocacy work. Over the course of history, each organization has suffered. In the 1930's, the President of IASSW was pressured by her own German colleagues to resign as she was deemed unfit by the Nazis. More recently, the elected President of the ICSW, Qazi Faruque Ahmed of Bangladesh, was unable to fulfill his duties as he and his local organization were persecuted by the government of the country. While pressure from ICSW members and others resulted in his release from jail, Dr. Ahmed was unable to serve as President due to this situation. Oppression and conflict have taken their toll many times, including the early 1990's when the head of the IFSW's Kuwait Association of Social Workers was captured and later killed by the Iraqi invaders. As a profession concerned with social justice and human rights, social work is seen as highly political and therefore as a threat to oppressive governments. This continues to put social work organizations and their leaders in danger.

The commonality of goals and program priorities suggest that the organizations can share successful strategies and lessons learned. All three organizations are working to strengthen the regions, identify and encourage growth of membership in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and promote increased communication and networking. Now that the organizations have agreed to co-host their world conferences, more emphasis on sharing information and successes can begin.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Collaboration is important, but often challenging. IFSW, IASSW and ICSW have agreed that future world conferences will be jointly planned and held. There is a danger that a large and commonly planned conference will result in loss of important elements of each organization's needs and program. It is interesting to note that in a 1996 analysis of the contributions of the journal *International Social Work*, John Lawrence called for ICSW to discontinue its co-sponsorship to allow social work to strengthen and unify its voice. In a combined effort, care must be taken to ensure that attention to both education and practice is ensured and that participants who are not social workers are not overwhelmed by professional considerations.

In spite of dangers, collaboration is more important than ever. There is a compelling need to speak with a unified voice in order to represent social work and social welfare concerns more forcefully on the world scene. The impacts of neoliberalism and globalization have only intensified the need for progress on issues of poverty and human rights. For IFSW and IASSW, a future challenge will be to see how with ICSW the organizations can promote social welfare and social development without losing the professional focus, and a key consideration will be to ensure that the definition of social work remains up-to-date and relevant to global concerns.

It is important for social workers and those devoted to social welfare and social development to remember the enthusiasm of the founders as they succeeded in organizing the first world conference and then the new organizations. Rene Sand pursued his belief in the importance of international communication and contact in the field of social work. Of the first conference, he said it had "conferred on the social work profession a dignity and an authority that it had not enjoyed previously" (Anciaux, 1988, as translated from French). That dignity and authority

is as important as ever as IFSW, IASSW and ICSW work to represent social work, social welfare and the people served by the field on the global level.

Notes:

1. The founders of the International Committee of Schools of Social Work, as it was originally called, were: Dr. M.J.A. Moltzer (Netherlands); Mme Mulle (Belgium); Mme Wagner-Beck and Mlle M. de Meyenburg (Switzerland). Soon thereafter, the leadership group expanded to include Miss Sophonisba Breckinridge and Mr. Porter Lee (United States); Miss Elisabeth Macadam and Miss Elinor Black (England); Mme Edouard Fuster (France) and Professor Helena Radlinska (Poland) (Kendall, 1978).

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