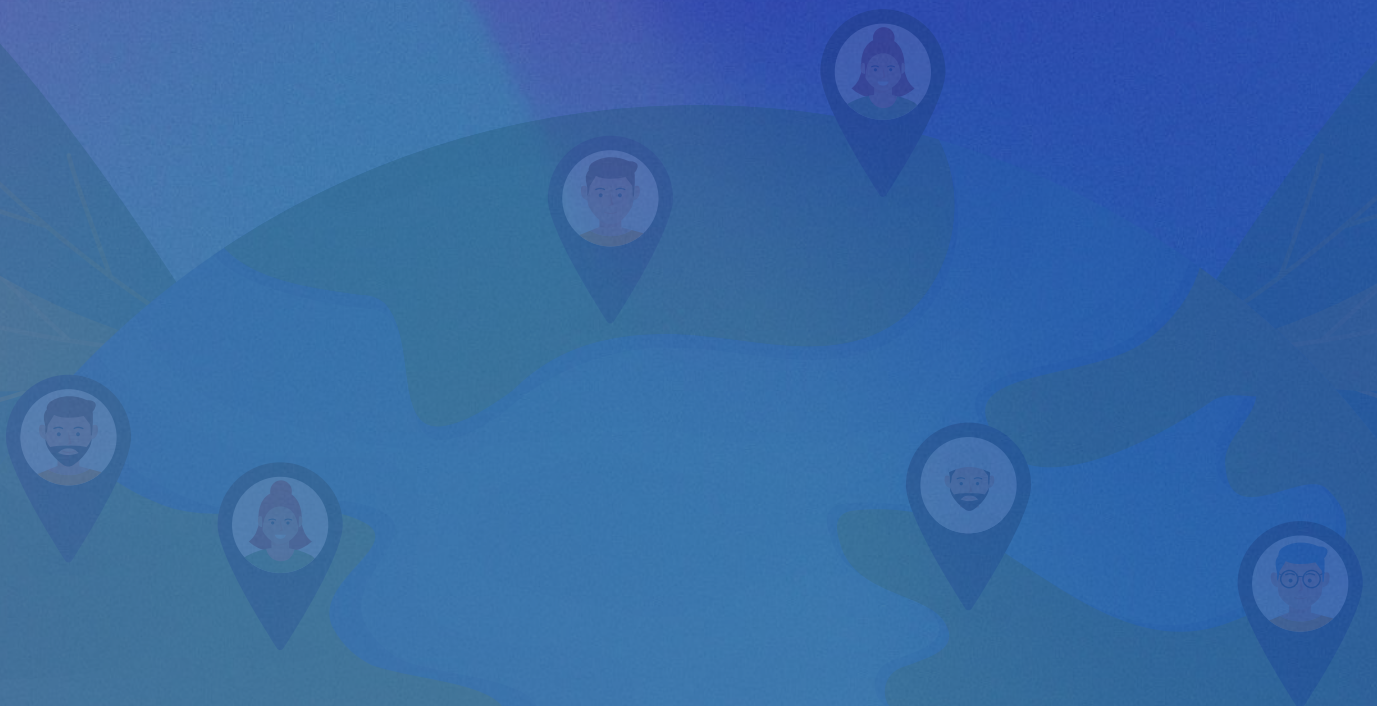




**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
SOCIAL WORKERS ASIA PACIFIC REGION
(IFSW-AP)**

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1, JUNE 2023



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS ASIA PACIFIC REGION (IFSW-AP) NEWSLETTER

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Machiko OHARA, Ph.D.

Message from the President

President of the International Federation of Social Workers Asia Pacific Region

As President of the International Federation of Social Workers Asia Pacific Region (IFSW-AP), it is my sincere pleasure to publish this newsletter. The IFSW Asia Pacific Region is currently comprised of 31 members, with many national/regional associations as our members. I am delighted that two new countries, Afghanistan and Kazakhstan, have joined us this year.

We in the Asia-Pacific Region have developed over the past quarter of a century to become a driving force in the world economy. We also expected to play an increasingly larger role globally by contributing more and more to the international community. Nevertheless, our region faces many transborder and global-scale problems that cannot be solved within the framework of individual nation-states. These include poverty, environmental problems, infectious diseases, educational disparities, immigrant and/or refugee issues, as well as conflicts.

Recognizing this situation, social workers in the Asia-Pacific need to embrace the diversity and potential of our region, including the various challenges that the world faces. There is a strong understanding of the need for social workers in the Asia-Pacific region to work together beyond national boundaries and to solve these challenges. In addition, the world as a whole has been engaged in establishing and advancing the global governance framework of the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) to solve such challenges.

To this end, the International Federation of Social Workers Asia-Pacific Region would like to join forces with all of you, our members, to accomplish the following two goals.

First, IFSW-AP hopes to continue strengthening networks and partnerships with our member social worker organizations; thereby improving communication and promoting mutually supportive relationships on both sides. I am confident that this will contribute to the development of our region, as well as social work worldwide, through collaboration between social work practitioners, social work educators, and researchers across the region and the globe.

Second, I wish that social workers in our region will further unite to foster social worker resilience. I believe that, by doing so, we can contribute to building better and more effective social work strategies to improve the quality of life of people in the Asia-Pacific and around the world.

I truly hope that publishing this newsletter will give you the opportunity to learn about social work in our member countries/regions and the activities of our colleagues throughout the region, and that it will be a tool to connect social workers in the Asia-Pacific Region as one.

Message from the Vice President's Desk



Sriganesh M V
Regional Vice President
IFSW-AP



Social work profession needs to be further strengthened to make it more visible and strong in many countries, so that it can play a significant role in influencing pro people social policies and programs.



It gives me an immense pleasure to write a few lines to the Newsletter of IFSW-AP being published with Dr Nattapat Sarobol, who are taking over as the Head of the Publication Committee.

Asia Pacific is a very large and highly diverse region in the world in terms of people, religion, beliefs, race, cultural practices, food preferences, governance and climate. It includes the most populous countries of the world such as India and the People's Republic of China, to very small countries such as Brunei, Maldives, and Singapore. Social work profession is highly recognized in some of the developed countries such as Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea. It has also made significant presence in countries such as India, Phillipines, the People's Republic of China, and Iran through quality and standard Social Work Education. In some countries, it is in a nascent stage.

IFSW-AP, for over a decade, has been able to work with many national social work associations and facilitate them to be a part of IFSW. Presently, there are more than 30 members in the region. The former Presidents of IFSW-AP, Prof Mariko Kimura and Ms Rose Henderson have worked intensely to build the IFSW movement in the region. Also, the current President, Prof. Machiko Ohara, has been putting all efforts to further strengthen the organization through her dynamic and inspiring leadership.

Social work profession needs to be further strengthened to make it more visible and strong in many countries so that it can play a significant role in influencing pro people social policies and programs. This also involves learning from innovative policies and programs that are implemented in different parts of the region. I am hopeful and confident that this newsletter gives an opportunity for both sharing & learning.

IFSW-AP

Introduction

Background and Characteristics of Asia-Pacific Social Work and Organizational Structure of the Region

The Asia-Pacific is geographically the largest and culturally the most diverse among the five regions of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). We are proud of this diversity with 31 regional members, representing 41 professional associations. Our westernmost and easternmost members are Palestine and Fiji, respectively. Meanwhile, our northernmost member is Kazakhstan, with Aotearoa New Zealand as our southernmost. This represents a significant area encompassing many-many cultures. For example, this diversity is well demonstrated by the fact that major world religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam have their roots in our region.

The immense diversity of our region is shown not only by its geographical vastness, but also by the Asia-Pacific Regional Amplification of the Global Definition of the Social Work Profession. We have worded and adopted this document in 2016 together with the Asian and Pacific Association for Social Work Education (APASWE). In addition to the already mentioned cultural and religious diversity, it also points out economic diversity (in terms of developmental levels) and political diversity (in terms of ideology and systems of government), as well as the celebration of this diversity necessary for peace. Regarding religion, it particularly states that social work in the region has an emphasis on recognizing the importance of faith and spirituality.

According to the evidence from the Global Definition's Regional Amplification, the fact is that the Asia-Pacific has a lot to offer in terms of indigenous and eco-social approaches to social work. It shows that since



**Viktor Virag,
Regional Treasurer**



The Asia-Pacific Region on the IFSW Website

the region has been shaped by both indigenous and colonizing histories, Asia-Pacific social work also emphasizes the affirmation of indigenous and local knowledges and practices. Furthermore, the amplification encourages sustainable social work to preserve our environment. It is in view of that the region has been severely impacted by natural or man-made disasters and other environmental issues such as climate change. On the other hand, people in the region have also demonstrated strength and resilience by overcoming these again and again.

The regional team shows our diversity too. IFSW-AP is led by Regional President Machiko Ohara. She is based in Japan and serves as the Vice President of the Japanese Association of Social Workers in Health Services (JASWHS) and the Chair of the International Committee at the Japanese



Our regional IFSW logo

Federation of Social Workers (JFSW). The Regional President is aided by our Regional Vice-President, Sriganesh MV. He is also the Secretary General of the India Network of Professional Social Workers' Associations (INPSWA). The Regional Executive Committee includes our Honorary Secretary, Amran Jamil (Singapore), and Viktor Virag (Japan) acting as Treasurer for the region. We have a Publication Committee too, responsible for this newsletter and headed by Nattapat Sarobol from Thailand.



**Machiko Ohara, Japan
Regional President**



**Sriganesh MV, India
Regional Vice-President**



**Viktor Virag, Japan
Regional Treasurer**



**Amran Jamil, Singapore
Honorary Secretary**

Our Regional Executive Committee on the IFSW Website

In addition to the Executive Committee, we have Regional Representatives on each of IFSW's five global commissions. A Regional Commissioner leads the team of Regional Representatives for every commission. Our Regional Commissioner for the Education Commission is Mariko Kimura (Japan). The Asia-Pacific Regional Commissioner on the Ethics Commission is Hassan Mousavi Chelak from Iran. Reaed Amira (Palestine) serves as the Human Rights

Commission's Regional Commissioner for us. Regarding the Indigenous Commission, Carole Tana-Tepania is fulfilling the role of our Regional Commissioner from Aotearoa New Zealand. Finally, the United Nations Commission's Asia-Pacific Regional Commissioner is Sebastian Cordoba (Australia). We are planning to have introductions and reports from the regional members of these global commissions in upcoming newsletters.

IFSW Asia Pacific Publication Team

On behalf of the Publication Team, I would like to inform all members that, with the vision of Professional Machiko OHARA as the President of IFSW Asia Pacific and board members, there is a great desire to establish a channel for gathering information and disseminating news to member organizations to exhibit the great effort of each country in driving social works for social mobilization and the awareness on social issues in various dimensions that social workers need to play a role and participate in solving problems.

The communication also helps create a strong network coordination that reflects the continuous work and demonstrates the power of the members in the Asia-Pacific region.

Due to this, the IFSW-AP President and the committee has established the Publication Team led by representatives of Thailand and Singapore, to create a team to work for corporate communications.

The main objective of this function is to disseminate information, operation, and activities of the working groups and members in the Asia-Pacific region. The recipient target group is IFSW-AP members, members of countries groups, professional social workers, and related professionals. The channels include Facebook, Website, E-mail, and Line application.



Nattapat Sarobol
Publication Leader

Publication Secretaries

Daranee Narudomphong (Thailand)
Vasudeva Sharma (India)
Saowatarn Phoglad (Thailand)
Nattapat Sarobol (Thailand)

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This newsletter is the first fortnightly newsletter of the year 2023 for the month of June. And the second-fortnight publication will be published in December 2023, two issues released per year.

Regarding this, the Publication Team would like to publicize and invite all members and member countries who are interested, to send your organization's operation information, such as annual activities, occasional activities, or special events; articles or columns that drive the work or operational issues of the organization; academic conference report, or any news that you require to publish, in the

form of Microsoft Word **with no longer than 300-500 words**, along with photos to <nattjcsw@gmail.com>.

The Publication Team strongly hopes to receive the interest from members to jointly create a space for creative communication and benefit the development of our profession together.



If you have any questions, suggestions, or feedback, you're welcome to send a message to <nattjcsw@gmail.com>.

Diversity and Climate Action

International Federation of Social Workers United Nations Commission

The World Social Work Day theme this year comes at a pivotal time for the region and the planet. As we continue to see the ongoing impacts of Covid-19, inequality and climate change, the theme recognises that collective issues require collective action. The theme, “Respecting Diversity through Joint Social Action”, represents many of the core ethical values of the social work profession and identifies what have been some of the barriers towards meaningful reforms in the region. For social work, diversity is central to all social action given no single group or profession having the solutions to all major issues. It recognises that the crises we face are in part due to systems of inequality that favour and hear the voices of a select group of people, at the expense of individuals, communities and planet.

As part of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, the theme is also a reminder for all social workers of the importance of celebrating diversity. As a potentially normative profession entrenching the status-quo, social work has sometimes had a complex history with ideas around diversity. While there has been continued progress in how social workers understand



**Dr. Pushkar Sebastian Cordoba,
Regional Commissioner**

key social issues, the theme serves as a reminder that this must be an ongoing process of learning, reflection and development. As social work continues to become a more global profession, it is also a recognition that no single region should be able to define the profession and how much we all benefit from international cooperation and diverse perspectives.

My work as part of the IFSW United Nations commission has provided me a deep appreciation of the immense contribution that diversity brings to any situation. While united in our commitment to social justice and human rights, as social workers from all over the world we each bring unique experiences and voices that greatly assist our UN advocacy efforts. The UN in many ways captures the complexity of modern social action given that for an institution built on partnership, diversity and collaboration; we do not tend to see a lot of that in practice. This is best exemplified by the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and the limited progress in meeting the 2030 targets. As a framework, it is a practical representation of social work values that recognise the inherent interconnectedness of all social and environmental issues, and that sustainable social transformation needs to be structural and collaborative. In practice, it can be a deeply top-down structure with UN member states themselves being the biggest barriers to achieving the UN agenda.



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As social workers, it is a reminder that we are key partners in this global action and we must continue to be committed to working with communities at all levels as agents of change.

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The challenges we face are best captured by the climate crisis. Every month there is a new report highlighting the urgency of the situation, yet we see limited reform and largely unaccountable commitments from member states. It is also a stark reminder of the social justice dimensions of global warming as the lowest polluters continue to experience the most significant impacts. Social workers are seeing the consequences

first-hand and working with communities in response to the effects, especially in the Asia Pacific region. Government solutions to the climate crisis so far are rooted in systems and thinking that are built on societal and environmental exploitation and inequality. Social work has a proud legacy of social action, and we are needed now more than ever to hold governments to account to stop greenwashing and commit to clear targets. Diversity of voices is also central to climate action as it must prioritise listening to and working with Indigenous peoples all over the world who have lived sustainably with the planet for over thousands of years.

As embedded in our ethical principles, social workers understand the need for diversity, inclusion and partnership and in this regard the UN and member states have a great deal to learn from our profession. The magnitude of the crises we face can only be addressed if we collectively centre diversity as a core tenet of all social action. Not only diversity is an appreciation of the numerous ways the current crises impact groups but also that solutions and reforms can only be sustainable if people are active participants and that their voices are heard. As social workers, it is a reminder that we are key partners in this global action and we must continue to be committed to working with communities at all levels as agents of change.



World Social Work Day 2023

Event in Iran Report

Iran Association of Social Workers has several different activities for the world social work day every year. This year, there were also several activities as follows:



- Translating of the world social work day poster to Persian/Farsi and widely disseminating it virtually and printing it on big banners.

- Holding the world social work day event in person in the venue of “national humanity house of thinkers” with participation of professors, pioneers, students, associations volunteers and members. In this event, those families who lost a family member last year were tributed.

- Holding the 5th International and 37th National Social Work Conference in the theme of “Social work and Social Diversity” with participation of IFSW Secretary General, Dr.Machiko Ohara, IFSW-AP President, President of IASSW, Executive Director of ICSW, IFSW UN Commissionaire, professors and practitioners from 17 countries and 70 ministries, NGOs and GOs, universities. Some presenters were Dr. Lawrence Shulman, Dr. Sarah Banks, Dr. Stephen Merson, Dr. Ian Milligan, Dr. Edward Kruk, Dr. Linda Briskman, Dr. Morley D. Gilicken, Dr. Vishanthie Sewpaul, Dr. Antonino Lopez Plaez, Rose Henderson, Presidents of National Social Work Associations of Italy, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Armenia, etc.

- Awarding the 12th National Social Health Medal to Dr. Lawrence Shulman.

- Doing several media interviews to disseminate the world social work day theme.

- Holding several celebrations for the world social work day in different provinces and cooperating for celebrations in different ministries including Ministry of Oil, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Science, Research and Technology etc.

- Holding a gathering with the association’s volunteers.

Summary of the World Social Work Day 2023 in Thailand



On 21 March 2023, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security through the Department of Social Development and Welfare hosted a virtual academic conference on social work and social welfare to celebrate the World Social Work Day 2023. This was the fourteenth time in Thailand and the sixth time for the Asia and the Pacific Region, with the theme “Respecting Diversity through Joint Social Action” via Zoom Cloud Meeting platform and Facebook Live of the Department of Social Development and Welfare. The Conference was attended by executives from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and the Department of Social Development and Welfare, social workers and social work practitioners from the public and private sectors, academics and social work educators

as well as interested persons totally 1,899 persons. The Conference was presided over by H.E. Mr. Chuti Krairiksh, Minister of Social Development and Human Security. In his opening remarks, he highlighted the social work definition as the profession that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. He also emphasized the crucial role that social workers and social work practitioners play in improving people's quality of life and fostering social development. The Conference included events such as keynote addresses and panel discussions on social work and social diversity by representatives of social work organizations and institutions at the national and regional levels.



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Social workers play a crucial role in promoting peaceful coexistence and creating social justice since they work closely with people at the community level by advocating for and solving their problems and their work has also eliminated all forms of discrimination to ensure that no one is left behind.

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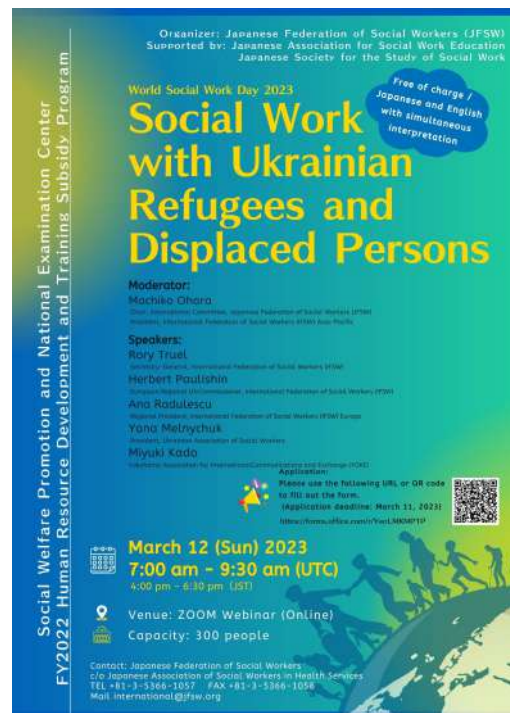
A keynote address on the topic “UN's Roles in Promoting Coexistence in Diverse Communities” delivered by H.E. Mrs. Gita Sabharwal, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Thailand

Japanese Federation of Social Workers

Japanese Federation of Social Workers (JFSW) has been dealing with themes regarding immigrants, refugees, and cultural diversity each of the last couple years when celebrating World Social Work Day. For this year's theme, the committee decided to hold a symposium about social work with Ukrainian refugees and displaced persons on March 12th, 2023.

It is well known that Japan has had many issues regarding refugees; however, there is little social concern amongst the general population due to the small number of refugees present in Japan and a dearth of social workers familiar with refugees, immigrants, or displaced person. In response to this situation, the JFSW's international committee decided to hold this symposium so many social workers could hear some practical stories from actual social workers in Ukraine and Europe, helping to reify the issue as a matter of concern.

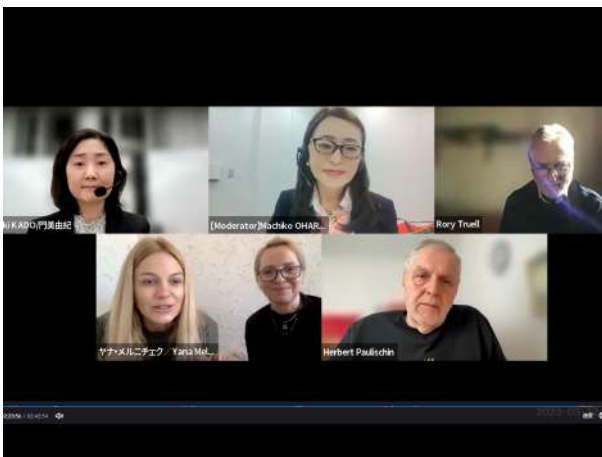
Over 400 peoples from 46 countries registered for the symposium. Yana Melnychuk, Ana Radulescu, and Herbert Paulischin, social workers currently working in Ukraine, talked about the current situation on the ground, programs provided at social support centers, and how to support local people from Europe. During the symposium, Yana and Ana lost their internet connection and we heard the evacuation sirens, which impacted the attendees and emphasized the



reality of their daily life during this difficult time. Participants also mentioned in feedback that they learned the differences between humanitarian aid and social work, as presented by Rory Truell, the Secretary-General of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).

We also provided video materials in Japanese, made by researchers, practitioners, and refugees themselves to help others learn general information about refugees. These videos will be made available for a full year to reach as many social workers as we can and help them to learn more about this underserved community.

Due to the changes in the social situation in the World and Japan, it is necessary to consider issues related to refugees and immigrants, and it is expected that the intervention of us social workers will be essential. We are confident that this symposium provided the participants with many opportunities for learning and realization, and we will to keep working for and learning about refugees to make our society more sustainable and diverse together.



Upcoming Conference in 2023

A TIME TO COME TOGETHER ONCE MORE: AN INVITATION TO THE 27TH ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2023

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Halfway Point: Social Work's Contribution to Social Development

Three years since the Covid 19 Pandemic stopped the world in its tracks, economies fell and gatherings banned; the world has now slowly but surely began recovering. Travel has once again peaked and the need to come together is in demand.

This year, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)/Asia Pacific (AP) in partnership with APASWE and the Philippine Association of Social Workers, Inc. (PASWI) will hold the 27th Asia-Pacific Regional Conference in the beautiful Queen City of the South, Cebu, Philippines. Slated in November 5-7, this conference promises to be the convergence of social workers from Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Philippines coming together as colleagues of one profession as well as brothers and sisters of common visions.

With the theme, **“The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Halfway Point: Social Work's Contribution to Social Development”**, there will also be attendees from the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as well as dignitaries and experts, both foreign and national.

This year's theme is based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also known as the Global Goals adopted by all member states of the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Moreover, “the 17 SDGs are integrated – recognizing that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.”

The three-day Conference broadly aims to focus on the critical role and significant contributions of social workers in the Asia Pacific region towards the achievement of the SDGs. It also promises to be

jampacked with discussions focusing the topics related thereto, while highlighting country experiences and challenges experienced in their pursuit.

As a result, the Conference will serve as a platform for social workers and allied professional to share their perspectives and experiences on the roles and contributions of social work in achieving the SDGs; the possibilities, opportunities and challenges faced by social workers in working towards achieving SDGs and specific areas of strength or weakness of the social work profession as it continually seeks to contribute to the achievement of these goals.

Each SDG shall have subthemes and subtopics in order to delve more deeply and into the subject. An example of this is Social Work and Zero Poverty and Hunger which in turn can be juxtaposed with

Assessing the Effectiveness of Poverty Reduction Strategies, Emerging Roles of Social Work in Promoting Food Security and discussions on Systems Perspective on Poverty Causes.

At the forefront of these discussions, plenary sessions and workshops are professionals in their field of expertise who have been meticulously chosen in order to ensure that the participants will glean the most lessons despite the short amount of time.

All these while in the midst of a bustling commercial and tourist hub in the City of Cebu, dubbed as the Philippines' Queen City of the South. The venue is the Waterfront Hotel, grandly situated in this gem of a City and accessible to many of its tourist destinations as well as its shopping and gastronomic delights. Participants can expect a truly memorable experience that is filled with lessons while enjoying what the City has to offer.

The time has come to once again strengthen ties, forge new friendships, build bridges, mitigate the challenge of distance and learn from each other as we strive to continuously be a driving force in the service of humanity.

SAVE the DATE!

IFSW IFSW APASWE APASWE

27TH ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2023

November 5-7, 2023
Waterfront Hotel, Cebu City, Philippines

The Sustainable Development Goals
Halfway Point: Social Work's
Contributions to Social Development



ifswapconference2023@gmail.com

Please note that the bidding to host the 2025 Regional Conference will start soon. Kindly wait for the announcement from the President's Office.

