



# Social Workers Code of Ethics

## **Background of APSWC**

The Association of Professional Social Workers of Cambodia (APSWC), established and officially registered in May 2015, is the first registered social work professional association and network in Cambodia. The main goal of the APSWC is to see social work become a profession in Cambodia with a high Code of Ethics, a strong support network, and a commitment to excellence in practice.

Social workers work to bring positive social changes, support individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to enhance social welfare of society including social justice, the rule of law, respect, dignity and compassion while APSWC is committed to strengthening the profession of social work as a whole, to implement its key priority sufficiently.

## **Vision**

To see social work become a profession in Cambodia with a high Code of Ethics, a strong support network and a commitment to excellence in practice.

Note: To align with regional context, we largely adopted from the ASEAN Social Work Code of Ethics which was adopted at the 4th ASEAN Social Work Consortium Conference, dated 6 August 2015.

## **1. Rationale and Background**

We, the ASEAN social work profession care about people life and wellbeing, especially those who are poor and vulnerable. We work together to understand each other's strengths and challenges and to help one another to improve service quality in practice with cultural and gender sensitivity as ASEAN community. We, together ensure better quality of life of our people in ASEAN Community.

**2. Global definition of social work profession of 2014** [Lifted from global definition at the IFSW General Meeting & the IASSW Gen. Assembly]

Social Work is a Practice based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of Social Work, social science, humanities and indigenous knowledge, Social Work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

## **3. Purpose**

The Social Workers Code of Ethics sets forth the general professional values, principles, and standards to guide social workers' conduct and allow social workers to make professional judgements and responses when ethical issues arise. The Codes applies to all APSWC members and all social work professionals or para-professionals affiliated with APSWC.

## **4. Core Values and Principles**

### **4.1 Human Rights and Human Dignity**

#### **Core Values**

*Social work is based on respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people, and the rights that follow from this. Social workers should uphold and defend each person's physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being.*

#### **Principles**

*1) Respecting the right to self-determination – Social workers should respect and promote people's right to make their own choices and decisions, irrespective of their values, beliefs,*

*ideology, and life choices, provided this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others.*

*2) Promoting the right to participation – Social workers should promote the full involvement and participation of people using their services in ways that enable them to be empowered in all aspects of decisions and actions affecting their lives.*

*3) Treating each person as a whole – Social workers should be concerned with the whole person, within the family, community, societal and natural environments, and should seek to recognize all aspects of a person's life.*

*4) Identifying and developing strengths – Social workers should focus on the strengths of all individuals, groups and communities and thus promote their empowerment.*

*5) Recognizing diversity – Social workers should recognize and respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they practice, taking account of individual, family, group and community differences.*

## **4.2 Social Justice**

### **Core Values**

*Social workers have a responsibility to promote social justice and to challenge social injustice in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work.*

### **Principles**

*1) Promoting social justice- social workers should exert efforts to promote social justice and address any social injustice that negatively impact people.*

*2) Challenging any form of discrimination –Social workers have a responsibility to challenge social injustice, unfair treatment, and social discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age, culture, gender or sex, marital status, socio-economic status, political opinions, skin color, racial or other physical characteristics, sexual orientation, or spiritual beliefs.*

*3) Distributing resources equitably – Social workers should ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.*

*4) Challenging unjust, policies and practices – Social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful.*

*5) Working in solidarity – Social workers have an obligation to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatization or subjugation, and to work towards an inclusive society.*

## **5. Professional conduct**

APSWC has the responsibility to regularly update this Codes of Ethics or ethical guidelines, to be consistent with the ASEAN Code of Ethics and IFSW/ IASSW statement and to disseminate to social workers about these codes or guidelines. The following general guidelines on professional conduct apply:

- 1) Social workers are expected to develop and maintain the required skills and competence to do their job.
- 2) Social workers should not allow their skills to be used for inhumane purposes, such as torture or terrorism.
- 3) Social workers should act with integrity. This includes not abusing the relationship of trust with the people using their services, recognizing the boundaries between personal and professional life, and not abusing their position for personal benefit or gain.
- 4) Social workers should act in relation to the people using their services with compassion, empathy and care.
- 5) Social workers should not subordinate the needs or interests of people who use their services to their own needs or interests.

- 6) Social workers have a duty to take necessary steps to care for themselves professionally and personally in the workplace and in society, in order to ensure that they are able to provide appropriate services.
- 7) Social workers should maintain confidentiality regarding information about people who use their services. Exceptions to this may only be justified on the basis of a greater ethical requirement (such as the preservation of life).
- 8) Social workers need to acknowledge that they are accountable for their actions to the users of their services, the people they work with, their colleagues, their employers, the professional association and to the law, and that these accountabilities may conflict.
- 9) Social workers should be willing to collaborate with the schools of social work in order to support social work students, educators, to get practical training of good quality and up to date practical knowledge
- 10) Social workers should work together with social work practitioners in ASEAN countries and others.
- 11) Social workers should foster and engage in ethical debate with their colleagues and employers and take responsibility for making ethically informed decisions.
- 12) Social workers should be prepared to state the reasons for their decisions based on ethical considerations, and be accountable for their choices and actions.
- 13) Social workers should work to create conditions in employing agencies and in their countries where the principles of this statement and those of their own national code (if applicable) are discussed, evaluated and upheld.