



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

NEWSLETTER

Issue 3, December 2024



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Message from The Regional Vice President Teoh Ai Hua, PH.D.

“Greetings colleagues and friends.”

As 2024 draws to a close, it is opportune to look back on the path we have taken together this year. First and foremost, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you who placed your trust and confidence in me during my nomination for the Regional Vice President position this year. Your support humbles me, and I will do my best to continue serving our profession with dedication and integrity in our region.

While it may seem that things have been relatively quiet since the Joint World Conference in Panama, I assure you that the Executive Committee, under the diligent leadership of our Regional President, Prof. Machiko Ohara, has been tirelessly working behind the scenes. Our efforts have been focused on organizing several key events, including our upcoming Regional General Meeting, a series of webinars, and most significantly, our highly anticipated Regional Conference in Sri Lanka in 2025.

In addition to these exciting developments, I would like to inform you that following my election as Regional Vice President, I have stepped down from my previous role as the Regional Representative to the Education Commission. We have successfully conducted interviews for several candidates who will work alongside Prof. Mariko Kimura, our dedicated Regional Education Commissioner, to continue advancing our educational initiatives. We have given our recommendations to the Global Education Commission and will keep you posted once we have received the endorsement.

Following a motion passed in the 2024 General Meeting in Panama, the Executive Committee of IFSW Global has established a Good Governance Working Group to review governance structures and processes within IFSW Global, and to develop policies and procedures for their implementation. The aim is to present a full report on good governance developments, matters for decision, and proposals for future developments at the 2026 General Meeting. Mr. Roy Luntayao, former President of the Philippine Association of Social Workers Incorporated (PASWI), and I have been appointed as representatives of the Asia Pacific Region to the Working Group. A couple of meetings have taken place, and we will start working on specific areas soon.

Looking forward to 2025, we are poised to address several critical issues and embrace new opportunities for social work in the Asia Pacific region. We are thrilled to note that some of our esteemed members have already planned an array of stimulating seminars and conferences for the coming year. These events promise to offer valuable opportunities for professional development, knowledge sharing, and networking across our vibrant community. We will assist in disseminating this information to the region periodically to encourage exchanges and build stronger solidarity among the social work profession in the region.

As we move forward, let us continue to build on our collective strengths, share our knowledge and experiences, and work collaboratively to create a brighter future for the communities we serve. I am confident that together, we can make a significant impact and drive positive change in the Asia Pacific region.

“Thank you.”

The 15th Eurasia Forum of Social Workers 2024 marks a historic milestone for the social work profession

The conference, titled “Buen Vivir: Shared Future for Transformative Change from the Perspective of Social Work in Eurasia,”



The 15th Eurasia Forum of Social Workers 2024 marks a historic milestone for the social work profession, as it is the first occasion in which social workers from 21 countries have gathered to exchange knowledge, present academic works, and showcase innovations in the field of social work. This event emphasizes the significance of collaborative learning in the dimensions of intercultural work, particularly in relation to global climate change and its impact on people's quality of life. Mr. Varawut Silpa-archa, Minister of Social Development and Human Security, presided over the opening ceremony, while Mr. Anukul Peedkaew, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, conducted the closing ceremony.



The conference, titled “Buen Vivir: Shared Future for Transformative Change from the Perspective of Social Work in Eurasia,” was held from March 20 to 22, 2024, at the Learning and Training Center for Older Persons in Bang Lamung District, Chonburi Province, Thailand. It was organized by five collaborative organizations: the Social Work Professions Council, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Eurasia Forum of Social Workers, the Philippine Association of Social Workers Incorporated (PASWI), and Pattaya City. The conference aimed to provide a platform for the exchange of knowledge, sharing of professional skills, and presentation of new innovations in the field of social work.

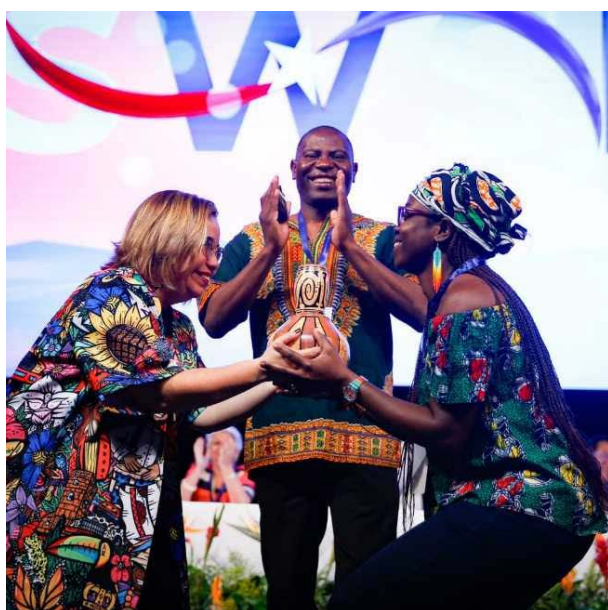
Participants included social work professionals from executive, academic, practitioner, and working group levels, totaling 230 individuals from 20 countries and one special economic zone. This diverse representation included attendees from Russia, the Philippines, India, the United Kingdom, Italy, Mongolia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Iran, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Armenia, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Singapore, Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia, China, and Thailand.



“The conference aimed to provide a platform for the exchange of knowledge, sharing of professional skills, and presentation of new innovations in the field of social work.”

Prof. Rapeepan Khamhom, President of the Social Work Professions Council, stated that this event marks the first occasion in which the number of participants has achieved a record high. Typically, attendance ranges from 5 to 10 countries, totaling approximately 50 to 100 individuals. Notably, more than 10 participants from the Arctic traveled for over 35 hours and incurred expenses exceeding 50,000 baht on airfare to attend this meeting. Importantly, this forum facilitated a significant phenomenon of collaboration among high-level leaders with decision-making authority from 8 countries, who collectively signed 8 memorandums of cooperation in the field of social work. The Social Work Professions Council established agreements with four countries: (1) India, (2) CSWPD Bangladesh, (3) AASW Armenia, and (4) IrASW Iran. Furthermore, the 16th Eurasia Forum of Social Workers is scheduled to take place in Korea in 2025 and in Mongolia in 2026.

Report on the 2024 Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education, and Social Development



The 2024 Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education, and Social Development was held in Panama from 4 to 7 April 2024, co-hosted by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). The theme for this year's conference was "Respecting Diversity in Social Work."

The event brought together approximately 1,500 social workers from 81 countries across five continents. Preceding the conference, the IFSW General Meeting took place over two days, beginning on 2 April, where representatives from more than 30 national social work organisations gathered both in person and online to deliberate on IFSW governance matters.



Machiko OHARA Ph.D.
President of the International
Federation of Social Workers
Asia Pacific Region

A particularly significant agenda item for the Asia-Pacific region was the membership applications of Taiwan and Cambodia to IFSW. Following thorough discussions, both countries' memberships were approved by a majority vote.

*The theme for this year's
conference was "Respecting
Diversity in Social Work."*

During the opening address of the main conference, Ms. Kenya Batista, President of the Panama Association of Social Workers, warmly welcomed attendees and emphasised the importance of solidarity and collaboration among social workers worldwide to tackle diverse social issues. She underscored the necessity of sharing experiences, learning from one another, and developing innovative solutions that respect the unique diversity of each community. Highlighting the persistent challenges of economic inequality, drug-related violence, migration issues, and human trafficking in Latin America, she called for continued efforts to address these problems and break free from the lingering effects of colonialism.

The conference also celebrated a significant honour for Professor Itsuki Akimoto of Shukutoku University, who was awarded the Katherine A. Kendall Memorial Award. Presented biennially by IASSW, this prestigious award recognises individuals with outstanding achievements in research and education in international social work. Professor Akimoto's groundbreaking work on Buddhist social work theory, which emphasises the importance of respecting regional and ethnic identities, as well as his contributions as a former Vice President of IASSW and President of the Asia-Pacific Region, earned him this accolade.

Looking ahead, the next Joint World Conference is scheduled to take place in

Kenya, marking a return to Africa. Mr. Joachim Mumba, IFSW President and a representative from Zambia, highlighted the critical need for community-based social work practices to build inclusive societies where no one is left behind. Quoting an African proverb, "Wisdom is like a baobab tree; no one individual can embrace it," Mr. Mumba stressed the importance of collaboration among social workers globally and pledged his efforts to ensure the success of the 2026 conference in Kenya.

Lastly, in 2025, the Asia-Pacific region will host the Asia-Pacific Social Work Conference in Sri Lanka. We warmly invite everyone to join this significant regional event.



*"Wisdom is like
a baobab tree;
no one individual
can embrace it,"*



Association of Professional Social Workers of Cambodia (APSWC) and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030



University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), in partnership with the University of Washington. In 2009 a Master's degree program started, under the managerial and technical support of ESWHA Woman's University of Korea. Two more bachelors' degree programs of social work were also then created, a program belongs to the National Institute of Social Affairs in 2011, and another program by the Saint Paul Institute began in 2013.

About the Association of Professional Social Workers of Cambodia (APSWC) and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030

APSWC was founded in January 2014 by a group of professional social workers as an independent and autonomous body with non-political or religious affiliation.

It is the only existing independent body with the primary goal to upholding the code of conduct, values, and practice in social work.

Introduction

In Cambodia, social workers are often misunderstood with other more commonly known professions and referred to as charitable-related activities or humanitarian work; they are addressed as "teachers" or "NGO staff". This is still little public awareness about the uniqueness of this profession.

The first professional social work education program, a 4-year Bachelor degree was introduced in 2008 by the Royal

APSWC proudly represents social workers at national and international platforms, aiming at attaining the SDGs 2030, goal 16 "to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".



Events

(i) BUEN VIVIR ‘shared future for transformative change’: In March 2024, the APSWC, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) and key NGOs organized the Social Work Day with 300 participants. The digitalization world has changed many aspects, impacting on social, economic and environment – the work of social workers is a pivotal in meeting the emerging needs of clients, especially women, children, people with disabilities and vulnerable groups, for updating themselves with new knowledge and skills continuously.

(ii) Approximately, 180 social workers participated in the first time ever; a series of training workshops organized by APSWC throughout the year. This provides a foundation skill to social workers applying in their daily work with clients and as a review for their skills. The course topics include (i) introduction to social work values, ethics and core principles; (ii) social work theories and helping process; (iii) basic counseling skills; (iv) case management in child protection; and (v) self-care for social worker.

Upcoming Events

In partnership with Association for International Social Work (AISW) a two-day Child Protection Workshop will organize in March 2025 in Cambodia. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, development partner, key non-governmental organizations, educational institutes and international lecturers will be the guest speakers to share knowledge, practices, researches, and lessons learned for the improvement of social work profession and excellent service delivery in addressing challenges faced by children and promoting their well-being toward obtaining the sustainable development goals by 2030. Around 50 social workers are expected to gather at this event where the Toyota Foundation will fund this initiative.

website: <https://aisw2023.org/>



The Upcoming 28th Asia Pacific Social Work Conference IFSW-AP & APASWE

THE 28TH ASIA PACIFIC SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE

***Social Work Responses to Climate Change
and Other Environmental Issues***

18 - 21 November 2025

Organized by Sri Lanka Association of Professional Social Workers (SLAPSW)
Collaboration with National Institute of Social Development (NISD)

About The Conference

Join us at the Asia Pacific Social Work Conference: Social Work Responses to Climate Change and Other Environmental Issues, held at the prestigious Bandaranayke Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) and Taj Samudra Hotel in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from November 18 - 21, 2025.

This conference brings together social work professionals, academics, and advocates from across the Asia-Pacific region to explore and address the pressing challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation. Through a series of keynote presentations, panel discussions, and interactive workshops, participants will engage with innovative approaches and best practices in integrating environmental issues into social work practice.



This International Conference offers a unique opportunity to network with peers, share experiences, and gain valuable insights into how social workers can contribute to creating sustainable, resilient communities. Don't miss this chance to be part of a transformative dialogue on the intersection of social work and environmental justice.

Participating in the APSWC 2025 Offers Opportunities

Networking with Professionals: Connect with social work practitioners, academics, and advocates from across the Asia-Pacific region, building a network of contacts and collaborators.

Learning and Development: Gain insights from leading experts on innovative approaches and best practices in addressing climate change and environmental issues within the field of social work.

Skill Enhancement: Participate in workshops and panel discussions that provide practical skills and knowledge, enhancing your ability to integrate environmental concerns into social work practice.

Global Perspectives: Explore diverse perspectives and strategies from various countries, enriching your understanding of global challenges and solutions in social work.

Contributing to the Field: Share your experiences and research, contributing to the broader conversation on the role of social work in addressing environmental and climate challenges.

Professional Recognition: Presenting at the conference can enhance your professional profile and provide recognition for your work in the field.

Cultural Exchange: Experience the rich cultural heritage of Sri Lanka and engage in cross-cultural exchanges with peers from different backgrounds.

Conference Sub Themes

- Social Work Ethics in Community Resilience Building
- Climate Change & Environmental Justice-Impact of Climate Related Extreme Weather Events on Vulnerable Communities and their Livelihoods
- Rights in the Climate Crisis: Social Work's Role in Environmental Justice
- Policy Advocacy and Legislative Action
- Cross-Sector Collaboration for Sustainable Solutions
- Education and Awareness Campaigns
- Cultural Competence and Indigenous Perspectives in Climate Actions
- Youth Engagement and Intergenerational Equity
- Empowering Hope: Psychosocial Interventions for Climate-Anxious Communities
- Wellness in Crisis: Integrating Health and Psychosocial Support for Climate- Affected Communities
- Disaster Response and Recovery
- Social work in Economic Crisis



Call for Papers

We are calling for papers to bring together novel solutions to development issues through social work and social development practices related to the above sub themes. All kinds of innovations will be considered, whether theoretical, social, technological, policy, practice-based, or organizational and are of local relevance and/or have the potential for large-scale replication. Lessons learned from implementing evidence-based solutions, interdisciplinary approaches, and critiques of current solutions also will be considered on approval of abstracts.

Guidelines for Abstract Submission

We are now receiving abstract submissions. To apply, please fill out the following Abstract Submission Form.

Abstract Submission Link:

<https://forms.gle/FEVNqeiKUAjHeTfn7>

Abstract submissions should include the following: Title of the presentation, Name and affiliation of the author(s), 3-5 keywords.

The abstract body (300 words) should follow as much as possible the below structure:

- Background/Context
- Research objective
- Methodology
- Main results and/or implications for social work education, practice and/or research
- Conclusion

For more details visit the conference website: <https://ifswapap2025.slpsw.lk>

