



**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS**  
**REPORT FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**  
**2014-2016 PERIOD**

**Regional Context**

In the 2000s, our region has undergone a period some intellectuals describe as a “Latin American Spring” (Gonzalo Abad Ortiz, 2011:12). This name stems from factors such as: greater autonomy for countries, social policies with a rights-based focus, recovery of politics as a tool for social transformation, Human Rights taking a central role in State policy, the integration of regional blocks such as CELAC and UNASUR, etc. Years of economic growth and the implementation of income distribution policies, above all in some countries, allowed poverty levels to be reduced and greater access among the population to education and health services.

However, these achievements remain insufficient and have not been implemented evenly in all countries. Furthermore, the quality of social services has not attained the necessary standards. With the exception of Haiti, international agency publications classify Latin American and Caribbean countries as middle-income countries. However, this category does not consider the notable differences in income distribution in the region, which is manifested in the persistence of problems such as the lack of education, insufficient access to health systems, unemployment and the lack of job security. The end of this decade saw economic slowdown, increased national public debt, the influence and affluence of multinational corporate capital, and the continuation of unresolved political conflicts, such as the colonial case of Puerto Rico.

In the current decade, and mainly in the period this report covers (2014-2016), the situation has become more difficult and complex in our region, and has also seen the return of neoliberal governments in some countries. The public policies rolled out by such governments directly and indirectly, overtly and covertly, benefit concentrated economic groups, harming large sectors of the population. In this period, at IFSW-LAC, we have worked a great deal on several actions



aimed at securing the following objectives: a) strengthening of member organizations of the LAC – IFSW Region; b) increasing participation of our organizations in the Global Assembly, democratizing information and decision-making; c) a greater say in public policies in our countries; d) strengthening the channels of communication; e) improving the working conditions for social workers; f) active participation in the IFSW Constitution reform proposal; g) carrying out activities commemorating World Social Work Day; and h) contributing to the global Social Work debate, promoting success stories from professional practice. With regard to the latter objective, we have called for social workers in the region to take part in achieving this, raising awareness of their professional practice in the different contexts and work areas.

### **MAIN ACTIONS 2014-2016**

In July 2014, the Global IFSW Assembly was held in Melbourne, Australia, which elected Dr. Silvana Martínez (Argentina) as President for the 2014-2018 Period, and maintained Mr. Rodolfo Martínez (Uruguay) as a board member until 2016. The Global Assembly incorporated two new members from the LAC region to the IFSW. Firstly the Asociación de Trabajadores Sociales Mexicanos, A.C (Mexico) and the Association of Social Workers of Grenada. This represented a major event for the LAC region, as one of its main objectives is to add new members in order to have more regional presence at Global level, to exchange very different experiences, strength the international professional collective and grow as a global organization. The regional currently has 16 member countries:

*Argentina; Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Cuba, the Dominican Republic; Nicaragua; Mexico; Costa Rica; Puerto Rico; Grenada: Bolivia; Colombia, Peru, Panama, Haiti.*





The Federation took part in the Annual Meeting of the Global Executive Committee on July 8, 2014, which focused on the proposed objectives and actions to be undertaken in each Region. The proposed objectives included:

- a) Strengthening the IFSW-LAC Region member organizations,
- b) Increasing participation of our organizations in the Global Assembly, democratizing information and decision-making,
- c) Having a bigger say in countries' public policies,
- d) Strengthening the channels of communication,
- e) Carrying out actions aimed at improving working conditions for social workers,
- f) Contributing to the global debate on social work, showcasing the success stories of professional practitioners,
- g) Creating mechanisms for members to pay their fees to the IFSW

This report sets forth the most relevant actions undertaken as a Region in the 2014-2016 period:

### **GLOBAL EXECUTIVE MEETING, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

In March 2015, a meeting of the IFSW Global Executive Committee took place, with the presence of the President, Dr. Silvana Martínez and Committee Member Mr. Rodolfo Martínez from the LAC Region. The meeting focused on issues such as the budget, the option of creating new regions, the activities plan and each member's responsibilities, among other areas.







## WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY

On March 17, 2015, as part of World Social Work Day, the President and Committee Member for the LAC Region, Dr. Silvana Martínez and Mr. Rodolfo Martínez, respectively, took part in an activity undertaken at the UN in Geneva, Switzerland, which focused on the problem of HIV-AIDS.



On March 15, 2016, as part of World Social Work Day, several activities were carried out (press conference, marches, meetings, etc.) in different countries in the region, which looked at the meaning of World Social Work Day, the topic proposed for this year by the Global Agenda, the working conditions for social workers, professional training, etc.





## **SOME IFSW MEMBER ASSOCIATION ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **Argentina**

In August 2014, with the aim of taking part in the public presentation of the Federal Social Work Law drafted by the Argentine Federation of Professional Social Services Association (FAAPSS), the President and the Committee Member attended in representation of the LAC Region to offer support. On this occasion, Mr. Rodolfo Martínez explained, in a panel, the law's importance and the need to repeat it in other countries where professional legislation does not exist, as is the case in Uruguay.

On December 10, 2014, the Federal Social Work Law No 27072 was passed. This was a historic event for Social Work in Argentina, because the profession had fought for over 60 years for this moment. This Federal Law is public policy and applies throughout national territory. It establishes new professional powers, aimed at fundamentally strengthening the working conditions of all Social Workers in Argentina.





## **Chile**

The Chilean Association of Social Workers managed to arrange a meeting with the Health Minister to discuss issues aimed at improving working conditions and professional practice in this field. It also took part as a Guild in the search and discovery of the remains of fellow worker Elizabeth Cabrera Balarritz, after 40 years of searching. It also managed to ensure the passing of a new Code of Ethics for the professional group, again after more than four decades of fighting on this front.

## **Colombia**

The Colombian Social Workers Federation has passed a new Code of Ethics for the Profession. Organization of the 15th COLOMBIAN SOCIAL WORK CONGRESS: *Learnings for Peace Dilemmas and Challenges* that will take place in Neiva, Huila, on August 17, 18 and 19, 2016. The Colombian Social Work Congress was announced as a partnership between the National Board for Education in Social Work –CONETS–, the Colombian Social Workers Federation – FECTS–, the National Social Work Board and an academic unit affiliated to CONETS, located in the city where the event will take place. On this occasion, the Workers Association of Huila –ATSHU– will also be in attendance.

## **Puerto Rico**

The Professional Association of Social Workers of Puerto Rico has submitted a new Draft Law regulating the professional practice of Social Workers in Puerto Rico, which is currently pending approval in the Capital Building. We have also increased our presence and are the professional organization with the highest level of participation in the public debate on social problems in the country. We are currently part of the majority of social groups fighting for human rights in the country (Enlarged Committee in Search of Equality, United Front for Resolving the problem of Political Status, Alliance for Health, etc.). Lastly, we are in the process of reviewing the Code of Ethics.

## **Panama**

Joint work was carried out with the Ministry of Labor of Panama, which established a salary scale for all Social Workers in Panama. Additionally, for 2016, an activity is being organized in conjunction with this Ministry and the Panamanian Association of Social Workers.



## **INCLUSION OF NEW REGIONAL MEMBERS**

In 2014, contact was established with new organizations with the aim of including them as new IFSW members. The organizations were from the following countries: Panama, Haiti and El Salvador.

After the arrangements made, sending the documentation requested and consideration from the IFSW members, the following were accepted as full members of our Federation: Haiti and Panama. This is genuinely an event of great importance for the whole region, because it without doubt strengthens our organization and enriches the collective actions we have been carrying out. Greece, and recently India, was incorporated. Votes from countries in our Region were very important in this sense.

Work remains underway with El Salvador aimed at achieving its inclusion as a full IFSW member. In 2016, contact was also established with Venezuela aimed at starting work seeking its inclusion in the medium-term as a full IFSW member.

The inclusion of French and English-speaking countries from the Caribbean region creates new challenges for our work, seeking on the one hand to increase the number of national organizations in the countries comprising the IFSW, but above all, to increase the exchange between Spanish and Portuguese speaking social workers with English and French speaking social workers.

These challenges are underpinned by the need to find a joint work space and learning opportunity between all our countries, which share a single history of colonization, being born from slavery, and fights for independence and economic and cultural independence from central countries, and where linguistic differences are mainly due to the colonial past.

It is in this sense that, in a globalized world where instant communication through social media is a culturally transforming reality, the currently almost non-existent link must be transformed into a fluid and committed relationship with the best principles of Latin American and Caribbean social work expressed in our regional definition of Social Work: a perspective of social transformation engaged with democracy and tackling social inequalities, strengthening





autonomy, participating and exercising citizenship, in the defense and conquest of human rights and social justice.

### **IFSW-LAC ETHICS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

In 2014, Dr. Jorge Arturo Sáenz Fonseca (Costa Rica) was elected to the position of global Ethics Committee Coordinator for a two-year period. This represents the first time a member of the LAC Region has held such an important position in an area relevant for social work. The Region was further represented in the Ethics Committee with the appointment of Ms. Marisa Kovensky (Argentina) and in the Human Rights Committee by Ms. Verónica Silva (Uruguay).

In 2015, our Region has contributed aspects for the reflection and amendment of the Ethical Principles of the IFSW. The LAC Region's Human Rights Commission has also started to work on a study of actions aimed at strengthening and vindicating Human Rights in each LAC country.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER SOCIAL WORK ORGANIZATIONS**

Our region has been making a sustained effort to work alongside other Social Work organizations, such as, at the time, the Mercosur Committee of Professional Social Work Organizations, and currently the Latin American and Caribbean Social Work Committee (COLACATS), with the Latin American Association for Teaching and Research in Social Work (ALAIETS) and with the International Social Welfare Board through the Uruguayan Social Welfare Board (CUBS).

Over these two years of work, we have continued to construct the link between our organizations through participation in COLACATS meetings in Chile 2014 and Puerto Rico 2015; joint work with ALAIETS at the Regional Observatory of the Global Agenda; sharing and disseminating pronouncements to contrary to the commercialization of training in Social Work and of promoting the constant link for participation in events organized by one or another organization.



## **IFSW WORK MEETINGS IN PREPARATION FOR THE IV LAC REGIONAL MEETING**

### **Argentina**

In September 2014, the first regional presidency and committee member work meeting was held in Paraná, Argentina, in the framework of the XXVII National Social Work Congress in Argentina. This was a joint work meeting with our strategic partner, COLACATS, with whom we worked on a common schedule of activities for 2015, which includes its participation in the IV Regional Meeting in Puerto Rico, where the agreements between representatives from national organizations will be made. One of the main works to be presented is the study of Working Conditions for social workers in Latin America and the Caribbean that has been carried out during 2013 and 2014.

One of the issues to be debated revolved around a financing and debt reduction policy for LAC Region associations. This meeting gave rise to the proposal to *create a solidarity fund* involving each event held in region with IFSW contributions retains 1% of the event registration fee, which goes to a solidarity fund used to pay the quotas of countries in debt with the IFSW. The money raised would be sent by the organizing entity directly to the IFSW treasury. This proposal was put forward in the Global Executive Committee in Geneva, expanded on in the regional meeting in Puerto Rico, and is still being implemented.

In November 2014, a meeting was held via Skype with the Regional President, Committee Member and other members of the IFSW, such as Brazil and Puerto Rico which handled several issues, including: the Regional Observatory, the proposal to reform the IFSW Constitution.

In December 2014, several Skype meetings were held with the Global Executive, which saw the participation of the President and the Committee Member of the LAC Region IFSW. The work proposal was considered at global level, and strategies and responsibilities were established for the tasks assigned.



## **Brazil**

In order to continue working on the preparation of the IV Regional Meeting, the items on the agenda included a meeting in São Paulo (Brazil) on June 13, 2015, which included: the Vice President of the CFESS and Coordinator of COLACATS, Dr. Esther de Souza Lemos and other members of the Federal Social Service Board, the President of ADASU and member of the LAC-IFWS Regional Committee, Rodolfo Martínez, the President of the FAAPSS and President of the LAC-IFWS Region Silvana Martínez and, even if for reasons of force majeure he could not attend in person, the President of the Social Workers Association of Puerto Rico and current Secretary of COLACATAS Dr. Larry Alicea took part in the debate via Skype. The coordinator of the research in the Study on working conditions, Esterla Barreto and the Vice President of the Social Workers Association, Miguel Morales, also took part in Puerto Rico.



Issues debated:

- Presentation of reports by each organization
- Organization of the IV Regional Meeting, to be held in Puerto Rico on October 27 and 28, 2015, and participation in the II International CPTSPR Congress, from October 29-31, 2015.
- Production proposal of a printed document prepared by COLACATS to be distributed at the event in Puerto Rico.



- IFSW Executive meeting reports from Geneva/Switzerland (fees, relationships, statutes, etc.)
- IFSW Elections/2016
- Regional observatory
- Working Conditions Study
- COLACATS website based on the outline presented by Esther de Souza Lemos (previous display <http://www.webfans.com.br/>)
- Reports on Regional Meetings and National Seminars on Social Service, Border Relations and Migratory Flows in July 2015 and June 2016.
- Proposal of the V Meeting of the LAC region in 2016 in Recife, Brazil.

#### **IV REGIONAL MEETING IN PUERTO RICO 2015**

On October 27 and 28, 2015, the IV Regional Meeting took place in Puerto Rico and the organization was in charge of the Social Workers Association of Puerto Rico (CPTSPR). We have also taken part as exhibitors in the II International Social Work Congress in Puerto Rico, which was held after our meeting. The Regional Meetings constitute the main IFSW-LAC event, and the leading lights of national Social Work organizations from South American, Central American and Caribbean countries, members of the IFSW, took part.



In the IV Regional Meeting held in Puerto Rico, 13 of the 16 members took part:

- Argentine Federation of Professional Social Services Association (FAAPSS)





- Uruguayan Social Assistants Association (ADASU)
- Federal Social Service Council (CFESS), Brazil
- Workers Association of Chile
- Cuban Society of Social Healthcare Workers (SOCUTRAS)
- Asociación de Trabajadores Sociales Mexicanos, A.C. – ATSMAC
- Dominican Association of Social Workers (ADOTRASOP)
- Costa Rican Social Workers Association
- Social Workers Association of Puerto Rico
- Colombian Federation of Social Workers
- Grenada Association of Professional Social Workers (GAPSW)
- Haitian Association of Social Workers (AHATRAS)
- Social Workers Association of Panama



The IV Meeting also saw the participation of the General Secretary of the IFSW, Dr. Rory Truell and the President of the Americas Region, Dr. Morel Caissie. We would like to give thanks for the participation and contributions made in the debates given by our Region. The invitation of different members of other IFSW Regions is a policy for our region to share experiences, points of view, strengthen institutional bonds and consolidate International Social Work.



## IFSW-LA and COLACATS work agenda October 27 and 28, 2015- Puerto Rico

Day	Time	Activity
Monday, October 27, 2015	On the day	Arrival of COLACATS representatives
	7:00 pm	Dinner at night in the Hotel with CPTSPR members
Tuesday, October 27, 2015 <b>COLACATS meeting</b>	8:00 am	Breakfast
	09:00	Welcome and presentations, Larry Alicea (20 mins) Management Report, Esther Lemos (20 mins) Presentations from 9 countries (10 mins per country) Suggested content for the presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social context</li> <li>• Current social work news</li> <li>• Areas of progress and strength in the profession</li> <li>• Areas of progress in terms of the COLACATS objectives</li> <li>• Current goals of the profession in the country</li> <li>• Opinion related to professional training</li> <li>• Contributions for the LAC Region Observatory</li> </ul> Equipment will be available for Power Point presentations. 10 to 12 slides are suggested to keep us up-to-date
	12:00 noon	Lunch
	1:00 pm	Presentations from 3 countries +6 (IFSW) (10 mins per country)
	2:00 to 3:00 pm	Develop collaboration plans to move the COLACATS objectives forward. Establish political strategies to strengthen the regions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mercosur</li> <li>• Andean Region</li> <li>• Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean</li> </ul>
	3:30 – 5:30	Report publication: Working Conditions Study of the Region, Proposals for countries and dates for a new publication
	6:00	Departure to the Association of Social Workers of Puerto Rico
	06:30 – 09:00	Dinner
Wednesday, October 28, 2015 <b>IFSW-LA meeting</b>	08:00 am	Breakfast
	09:00 am	Welcome to the IFSW Works - Latin American Region
	09:30 am	President Report, Silvana Martínez
	10:30	Committee Member Report, Rodolfo Martínez
		ISSUES: Fees, solidarity fund, grants, lecturers, Observatory, Global Agenda, Preparations for Seoul 2016. Assembly and election of the Committee Member for the LAC Region
	12:00	Lunch
	13:00	Continuation of IFSW issues Committee Member elections in Seoul 2016
	16:30	Routing, Commitments and Declaration
	17:30	Close of works
	19:00	Dinner in the Hotel

### **PARTICIPATION IN THE CUBA CONGRESS**

In May 2015, following an invitation made by Ms. Odalys González Jubán, President of the Cuban Society of Social Healthcare Workers, the President of the LAC region, Dr. Silvana Martínez, participated in representation of the Region in the VII International Social Work Congress, the IX National Congress of Social Healthcare Workers and the III National and International Congress for Social and Occupational Rehabilitation, under the slogan “Social Work and social and occupational rehabilitation, its role in the



processes of social transformation. These events took place from May 25-30 in Havana, Cuba. The event saw the participation of around 500 colleagues from different countries in the region, as well as social workers from Spain and the United States. It should be noted that the IFSW financed the travel of Dr. Silvana Martínez and the Cuban Society of Social Healthcare Workers covered food and accommodation. The conference focused on the challenges facing



professional organizations in our Region and at Global level in the current social and political context and in the framework of the work we've been carrying out in the IFSW. We congratulate Odalys for the organization of such a major event.

### **PARTICIPATION IN CHILE**





In 2014, a Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Social Work Committee (COLACATS) was held, organized by the Social Workers Association of Chile, which worked towards constructing a work agenda, the election of the Coordinating Board and secretary of this organization, the planning and strategies of our region, the study on working conditions, and we participated as lecturers in the First Latin American Seminar organized by COLACATS.







In November 2015, the President of the LAC Region, Dr. Silvana Martínez traveled to Chile to take part in the events held to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the profession's creation and 60th anniversary of the Social Workers Association of Chile. In this framework, a major act took place in the Hall of Honor of the University of Chile, for the first time in 42 years of the Association's institutional life. In turn, an activity also took place which paid homage to all the students and colleagues assassinated and disappeared during the Pinochet dictatorship at the Memorial in the General Cemetery. Lastly, we want to highlight the major recognition this Association has received: a letter sent by the President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet and the medal awarded by the Grand Lodge of Chile. These actions from such important figures and organizations represent deserved recognition of the work carried out by the Association of Social Workers of Chile.





## **LAC REGION OBSERVATORY**

In January 2015, a proposal was put forward for the creation of the LAC Region Observatory, which was approved. Organizations involved in the Observatory:

- IFSW - Latin America and the Caribbean Region
- ALAEITS - Latin American Association for Teaching and Research in Social Work
- CIBS Latin American Committee for Social Welfare in the LAC Region and CUBS - Uruguayan Social Welfare Committee
- COLACATS- Committee Social Work/Social Service.
- CONICET/UNaM Research Council for Science and Technology/National University of Misiones

In order to collect information about the “Good Practices of Social Workers in Promoting the value and dignity of people” a call was made through a survey prepared by Dr. Esterla Barreto (Puerto Rico) and was disseminated by the member organizations and via social media.

After collecting this information, it was analyzed and a final report was prepared, sent to the IFSW in February 2016. The report includes topics on the Global Agenda for the 2014-2016 period. The report was prepared with contributions from Silvana Martínez and Rodolfo Martínez, President and Committee Member of the Latin America and the Caribbean Region of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW-LAC); Amelisse de Jesús Dávila, deputy treasurer of the Latin American Association for Teaching and Research in Social Work (ALAEITS); Luz M. Cordero Vega, President of the National Association of Social Work Schools (ANAETS) and representative of the Association of Social Workers of Puerto Rico (CPTSPR); Nilsa Burgos, President of the Latin American Association for Teaching and Research in Social Work (ALAEITS) and Juan Omar Agüero, director of the Institute for Social and Human Studies of the National Scientific and Technical Research Council and the National University of Misiones (CONICET-UNaM). We would like to highlight the involvement of Esterla Barreto Cortés, professor of the University of Puerto Rico, who we thank for designing the survey used to reveal the data that were employed to prepare this report, and her ongoing support and commitment with the Federation’s tasks in the region.



## **Methodology**

In order to prepare this report, the experiences and professional practices linked to the area were revealed, in relation to promoting the dignity and value of people, as defined in the Global Agenda. A qualitative methodology was used, and a list of free response questions was prepared, which must be answered electronically. The following dimensions were included therein: a) social problems professionals face; b) link to the professional practices with the promotion of dignity and the value of people(s); c) organizations taking part; d) place occupied by the subjects in the intervention process; e) methods, techniques and procedures used; f) theoretical frameworks in which the professional practices are registered and g) results of the professional practices. This pools efforts towards the objective of adding to the global Social Work debate, looking at the success stories of professionals practicing in our region. The call for participation in this study was disseminated to professional bodies, and social workers from the LAC Region responded to the call by providing information about their professional experiences in different types of documentation, including links.

## **General trends of the experiences presented**

162 professional experiences were revealed from around the Region. Responses came from Puerto Rico (54), Colombia (34), Mexico (16), Chile (11), Uruguay (10), Argentina (8), Costa Rica (6), El Salvador (5), Honduras (4), Venezuela (4), Bolivia (3), the Dominican Republic (2), Brazil (1), Ecuador (1), Guatemala (1), Nicaragua (1) and Peru (1). Most of those who put forward their experiences were Social Workers; the others were advanced Social Work students. They perform their professional work in the following main areas: primary education, secondary and advanced education; health; research; social action and mobilization; mental health; community development; social security and protection; social and economic promotion; social violence; social infrastructure and quality of life.

In terms of the main population sectors they work with: childhood and adolescence (37); adults (27); communities (25); families (21); older adults (10); women (7); territorial organizations (4); social movements (1); and others (30).



## **REFORM OF THE IFSW CONSTITUTION AND REGULATION**

The Region shares the need to initiate a process to review the IFSW Constitution and regulation as part of the debate ongoing since 2012. In this sense, we submitted, to the General Secretary and Global President in November 2014 and March 2016, a proposal with the main issues 1) the election of supervision of the results of elections for global authorities, and 2) the election and work proposals of the representatives before United Nations bodies, 3) the handling of finances in a shared manner between the general secretary and the treasurer, among other relevant aspects

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Several announcements were prepared during the period in question, including:

- Announcement on the outbreak of the Ebola disease
- Announcement on the Genocide of the Palestinian People
- Announcement in Solidarity with the People of Bangladesh
- Announcement on the disappearance of 43 Students in Mexico
- Announcement on the death of thousands of humans migrating to Europe
- Announcements on International Women's Day
- Greetings were prepared to Social Worker's Day in different countries in the Region
- Announcement by the World Summit created by the Excellency Group
- Announcement on the serious political and institutional situation many LAC countries are facing

The announcements prepared have been well received by our members and by the Global Executive Committee, highlighting the importance in terms of belonging and the content thereof.

## **PROPOSAL**

In 2015, work was carried out on a BUDGET proposal for the functioning and strengthening of the region.

However, in light of the financial difficulties of the IFSW in 2014, it was reported that for 2015, there would be no financing for strengthening





the regions. This created complications for us, and disputes within the World Executive. Following a series of conversations via Skype and email, we finally secured for the Region a sum of USD 7,000 to cover some airfares so our members could attend the IV LAC Region Meeting. The other expenses were absorbed by the Association of Social Workers of Puerto Rico, to whom we are profoundly grateful, without whose enormous human and financial effort it would not have been possible to carry out the IV Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Our region has been working tirelessly to increase and consolidate members up-to-date in their annual fees, but this is a direct result of holding and consolidating Regional Meetings every two years. If we do not receive this fund from the global IFSW fund, holding these Regional Meetings would be seriously compromised, meaning the IFSW globally needs to consolidate the Regional Development Funds, viewing this as a global growth and not an expense without returns.

#### **REGULARIZATION OF IFSW FEES**

In 2014 and 2015, our management has worked tirelessly to raise our members' awareness concerning the importance of regularizing fees owed to the IFSW. Our organizations have invested heavily and have ensured most of the IFSW - LAC members are up-to-date. This allows us to vote in the Global Assembly and therefore strengthen our voice and decision-making role in the Meeting to be held in Seoul in June 2016.

A strong spirit of solidarity has been seen among our members in terms of collaborating with Associations and/or Federations with greater debts with the IFSW. In this sense, many members have offered to give ad-honoren conferences and organize activities to raise funds to pay fees on behalf of those behind with their payments.



### **IFSW BOOKSHOP**

In 2015, to collaborate in the increase of IFSW finances, the regional President, Dr. Silvana Martínez sent two books for sale in the bookshop created by the IFSW on its website.

### **FACEBOOK PAGE AND WEBSITE**

In 2015, a Facebook page was created to strengthen the channels of communication and the sharing of information. The ifsw.org website is also operating for our region, and attempts are made to upload all translated documents. Additionally, there is an IFSW-LAC space for the COLACATS website

### **WORLD CONFERENCE: Social Work, Education and Social Development**

The World “Social Work, Education and Social Development” Conference will be held from June 27 to 30, 2016, in Seoul, South Korea. The Academic Committee of the World Conference has invited the IFSW-LAC President and President of the Argentine Federation of Professional Social Services Association (FAAPSS) Dr. Silvana Martínez as a speaker to represent the Latin America and the Caribbean Region.

### **STUDY ON WORKING CONDITIONS**

In 2014 and 2015, we worked with the Latin American and Caribbean Social Work Committee (COLACATS) on a comparative study on *The Working Conditions for Social Workers* for the LAC Region, which will be published and released for presentation to local Governments in each participating country. This study is the first of its kind and represents a major step in highlighting the working conditions and the impact on the professional practices of social workers. It was coordinated by Dr. Esterla Barreto of Puerto Rico. A second part of the study was prepared, including countries not involved in the first publication.

### **FINAL WORDS.**

As shown in this brief report, we have worked greatly towards strengthening our professional organizations and Social Work in our Region. We actively participate on a global level and



are setting an agenda. We put forward global candidates (presidency and treasury) and dispute each vote in each case; we have added new members from countries not previously strongly involved, such as Haiti and Grenada; we have obtained global coordination of the Ethics Committee through Jorge Arturo Sáenz Fonseca and seek to ensure that the Federation has a new Global Code of Ethics that reflects the content of the new Global Definition of Social Work.

We play a significant role in the World Conference through the Regional President's participation as a main lecturer. We are actively taking part in different key political documents globally, e.g. Political Position on Global Trade agreements. Preparation of political announcements that had an important impact globally, we are actively participating in reforming the Constitution and Statute of the IFSW with proposals aimed at major transformations in the Federation's life, such as having an Oversight Committee, granting new powers to the treasury and working to make the election process more transparent, preparation of the Study of Working Conditions, presentation and implementation of the Regional Observatory, among other areas.

We still have a lot of work to do, e.g. ensuring the active participation of all our members, being up-to-date with IFSW fees to have a voice and to be able to vote at the next World Assembly, producing political strategies to establish a hierarchy for the profession and improve working conditions; and strengthening ties with other Social Work organizations and other regional and international bodies. We would like to thank each and every one of you for your invaluable contributions and work. We know that the only way to move forward is through fighting collectively, because history has shown that all social conquests came from collective fights, and never individual battles. Therefore, we invite you to continue along this path towards consolidating COLACATS and IFSW as strategic spaces for resistance and fights for the whole professional group.

**Dr. Silvana Martínez**  
**President. IFSW-LAC**

**Mr. Rodolfo Martínez**  
**Committee Member-IFSW**