



General Meeting

Secretary-General's Report for Stockholm 2012



As Secretary-General, I have made it my highest duty to build upon the past successes and ensure that The International Federation of Social Workers is an organization that has meaning for its members, meaning for social workers, and meaning for the people that use social work services.

Dr. Rory Truell, Secretary-General

I am honored to address the IFSW General Meeting in Stockholm and to present you with my report on the work of the Federation.

It has now been almost one year since I have been in service to IFSW, and in this time I have had the great pleasure to meet many extraordinary social workers in every IFSW region. IFSW colleagues have extended their support and welcome to me and through the experience of working with them I have grown in my understanding of international social work, the complex and demanding issues that social workers face, and the strengths of our profession in finding real solutions. There are too many IFSW names to mention them all to thank and acknowledge for past and current contributions – but I hope that I have been able to honor your contributions in our work together, and in other times and places.

I want to commend Gary Bailey our global President on his wisdom, his integrity and his guts - for supporting an organizational change process and supporting me to carry this out.

Also the IFSW Steering Group comprising Fiona Robertson, Charles Mbugua and Gary Bailey who have given constant feedback, advise and guidance in all strategic developments. The Executive Team comprising John Ang, Mariko Kimura, Laura Accotto, Ivanete Salete Boschetti, Charles Mbugua, Daniel Asiedu, Nicolai Paulsen and Anthea Agius and (incoming from North America) Jeane Anastas and Morrel Cassie who have taken on a number of project roles in addition to their governance obligations. A special thank you to Fiona Roberstion who has not only been a great Treasurer but a mentor and support person for me. Also the IFSW President's Special Representative to the Agenda - David Jones who played an indispensable role in making the Agenda real. Nigel Hall, IFSW Publications Officer who always ensures that the IFSW voices are in print. The UN Main Representatives Michael Cronin, Ellen Mouravieff-Apostol, Klaus Kühne, Decha Sungkawan, Georg Dimitz, Omar Ruz, and Charles Mbugua for being the frontline IFSW staff at the UN and leading their teams in influencing international policy. Also a special acknowledgment to Robin Mama who co-chaired the significant event of Social Work Day at the UN in New York. IFSW WHO representative Sabine Bährer for contributing a social work perspective within the ICD10 revision process. IFSW Ambassador Sue Dworak-Peck for promoting the Federation. Ruth Stark the IFSW Human Rights Commissioner for leading Human Rights campaigns on behalf of the Federation. Richard Hugman for overseeing the Ethical Global Standards. Terry Bamford for ongoing advice to ensure that IFSW remains within its constitutional obligations and representing IFSW to Amnesty International, and also Bob Lonne who as the IFSW elections officer who has set the highest standards for the organization's democratic processes. All of the above have acted in a voluntary capacity and without their contributions IFSW would not be moving forward. A special acknowledgement also to the above named peoples families who have had to make sacrifices by allowing their loved one time to fulfill these obligations.

All the above have carried out the duties during a period of change. Organizational change is never only positive. It brings extra work upon people, it causes anxiety, and some important issues get neglected for a while. But it must be done to reposition an organization to be able to effectively face the issues of today and tomorrow.

Shortly after taking on this post I liaised with the executive and representatives of the Federation on how to move the organization forward, and we agreed on the following areas:

- Focusing the organization on targeted objectives/outcomes
- Aligning the work of the Federation
- Relevance to members
- Increased funding
- Active support for potential/new members and other bodies
- Coordinated support of representatives and volunteers

I hope that you will see in the coming pages some of these focus areas being brought to life, and you will also see some areas that need to still start life. Because of time and space I can only touch briefly on each of the major activities of the period since the last General Meeting, but I believe that this period has marked the beginning of significant growth period for the Federation. When I refer to growth, I am not just talking about numbers, although our number have grown, I am also referring to growth in philosophical understanding, our growth as a learning organization, our ability to engage in the United Nations and in international affairs, and growth in our professional identity.

My concluding remarks end with some questions on what vision we want for the future of the Federation. It is important that we set a vision in which the Federation and all its diverse stakeholders can navigate towards. It is not my job to set the vision, that is our joint responsibility, and I look forward to the many discussions we will have in coming to this.

The Agenda



The Agenda for Social Work and Social Development was the biggest global work-stream for IFSW during the last two years. This work started with the five headline priority areas that were developed in the 2010 Hong Kong conference, and were then shaped into The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: Commitments to Action by the three organizational partners. IFSW played a leading role in the process running up to the development of the Agenda Commitments document, the writing of the document and the subsequent worldwide launch.

The Agenda has so far been very successful and has acted at a rallying point for social work activities in every region and in many countries throughout the world. It has enabled social workers from almost every background to see the relevance of their work and their social work approach, alongside the rest of the global profession.

The Agenda Commitments have also elevated IFSW into a partnership status with the United Nations. Helen Clark, Head of UNDP, and Assane Diop, Director of The Social Protection Floor, ILO – stated that our objectives are their objectives - and it is crucial for us to work together to make our joint vision a reality.

This work represents a significant step forward for IFSW in fulfilling its obligation of presenting a social work perspective in world forums. The next major step will be holding a worldwide conference in South Africa enabling people targeted by development policies - their communities, and on-the-ground social workers - to voice their practical experiences and make recommendations on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDG'S) when they expire in 2015.

The proposed conference scheduled for September 2013 will promote the social work perspective that 'people cannot be developed by others'. This will be our opportunity to highlight the experience of frontline social workers and state that: for people to escape from poverty they need to be actively involved in their own futures and need to be able to effectively participate and contribute to best practice ideas, along with the people who manage resources, funding bodies and policy makers. The conference will include: people living in poverty, social work practitioners, and representatives from Governments, the United Nations and other international policy agencies.

The Definition of Social Work

The project to develop a new definition of social work has been a point of discussion since the current definition was adopted in 2002 as it was then stated that a new definition maybe needed in a further 10 years time due to changes caused by globalization. Indeed this has proved to be a correct assumption. Since the 2002 definition there has been many new global voices of social work adding to the published understanding that has traditionally been dominated by Western European countries and North America.



The following Definition of Social Work was discussed among the different Social Work national organizations from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Puerto Rico and Uruguay, with the individual contribution of many professionals from different countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This definition will be proposed as the "World Definition of Social Work" to be adopted by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), to be discussed in the World Assembly in Stockholm, Sweden, on the 07th and 08th of July 2012

DEFINITION Social Work is a profession that falls within the realm of relations among social subjects and their relations with the State in the different sociohistorical settings of the professional activity. It develops a social praxis and a set of socioeducational actions that fall upon life's material and social reproduction from the perspective of social transformation. It is committed with democracy and the fight against social inequalities, by strengthening autonomy, participation and the safeguard of citizenship for the achievement of human rights and social justice.

COMMENTS The construction of a global definition of Social Work adopts the principle of unity in diversity. It recognizes that the existence of Social Work in the world is related to the expressions of social inequality inherent to contemporary societies and to the means to fighting them, which point to: a) democracy and human rights; b) constitution of a public scope (social regulations and policies); c) international solidarity systems, social security and protection; d) social struggles and movements. These means require specific professional actions according to each country/region's socioeconomic, political and cultural characteristics.

VALUES Professional actions are based on ethical values and principles such as: the safeguard of liberty, equality, social justice, pluralism, and citizenship for the purpose of overcoming oppression, hunger, poverty, unemployment, and social discrimination and inequalities.

THEORY Global Social Work is based on social theories and specific knowledge in order to analyze and intervene in reality for its transformation. Its methodology is based on a collection of theoretical and popular knowledge arising from scientific investigation and the socialization of experiences. It enables a critical reading of the historical process from a viewpoint of totality, which

allows for the understanding of how social subjects (individuals, groups, families and collectives) are part of the social process, prompting the understanding of their ways of life, work and their claims.

PRACTICE The professional exercise requires social workers to master the theories and methodologies at issue, and to have technical and operational skills. They must have an ethical stance and specific training to develop the competences and attributions concerning Social Work. The objectives of professional practice are: to strengthen citizenship, the democratic institutions, and the universal human rights; to respect international norms of human rights related to diversity of culture, ethnicity, generation, thought, gender relations and identity, and sexual orientation; to support social actions for the protection of socioenvironmental conditions and the fight against inequalities, poverty, hunger, unemployment, and all forms of violence and injustice, with redistribution of income and wealth. For this purpose, social workers must be critical and propositional, with a sound professional training and academic education, contributing to the promotion, protection, restitution and enforceability of human and social rights and the means of access to them.

The quest for a new definition was accelerated in 2010 when IFSW member CFESS, the Brazilian Association, called for new global discussions on the definition and organized a workshop in February 2012. IASSW were also very active in consulting their members on a new definition and between the two organizations many meetings occurred worldwide.

Feedback from the workshops, meetings and consultations has shown the need to forge a new definition. However some members in Western Europe and North America have argued to maintain the current definition as some

governments in these areas have formally adopted the current global definition of social work.

Reasons for a new definition include, that the current wording does not reflect the different approaches to social work theory and practice. That the 2002 definition is interpreted by some as a form of Western colonialism that negates their indigenous approach to social work, and that new theories such as the social determinants of health and wellbeing have broadened our theoretical underpinnings requiring the profession to update its definition.

Regional definitions and priorities for social work have been identified. For example social workers in Asia Pacific have stated that a regional definition would include disaster management and recovery. In Latin America regional priorities include transformation of societies, and in Africa social workers have stated their priority is to put people who are affected by policies into leadership roles that determine such policies.

The challenge for a global definition will be that it is broad enough so that each region can relate to the statement, and also unique enough, to ensure that our profession identity and role is distinctly different from others related disciplines. I believe this can be achieved, some of the early drafts I have seen are nothing less than dynamic and exciting expressions of social work - they show our ability to engage in the issues of today and tomorrow, while still utilizing our traditional principles from the past.

The initiative from our Brazilian colleagues and also from the Latin American region has resulted in their development of a regional definition and a proposal for a global definition (see box below?). Their leadership on this issue has been acknowledged by IFSW and subsequently the Brazilian Association President Samya Rodrigues was invited by Nicolai Paulsen to join him as co-chair of the Definition Review Committee.

IASSW and IFSW have also agreed on how to proceed with developing a new definition of social work. The next step involves co-authoring a joint draft definition to be tabled for feedback at each of the organizations General Meetings here in Stockholm. The IFSW two co-chairs, and the two IASSW co-chairs will lead this, with a working group comprising of the Regional Presidents of both organizations. It is intended that both IASSW and IFSW General Meetings will formulate plans on how to ratify a new Definition of Social Work later in 2012 once the Chairs and Working Groups have formulated a final draft based on the feedback received at Stockholm.

UN Representation

We, the largest international social work and social development organizations in the world, are responsible for the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development Commitment to Action (<http://www.globalsocialagenda.org>)

As Social Workers, Educators and Social Development practitioners we witness the daily realities of people living in poverty and the multiple systems that alleviate hunger, ill health and exploitation.

We therefore make the following statement to UN member-states that are responding to their people living in poverty and to member-states that benefit from the exploitation of impoverished countries.

The focus for our work at the UN is to maximize social work outcomes through a coordinated worldwide team that effectively develops campaigns, advocates and networks within UN structures; that assists in strengthening networks within CONGO and member states, and promotes the profession by organizing successful Social Work Days at the UN.

We have come along way to achieving the above statement. In the last period there has been attention on sharing and learning between teams and also having joint campaigns across different sites, for example the Agenda launch. This year the UN work was successfully coordinated across five UN sites with significant events in New York and Geneva. Also in the last period a new representation team was formed in Bangkok.

Other changes to take place are that a support team has been created to assist the representative in Santiago de Chile to strengthen their influence. And a new Main Representative has been established in Geneva building upon previous successes.

Our representation in Nairobi has also continued to play an important role. This year our representative facilitated 120 social workers from throughout Africa to be inducted in how to use and influence UN structures and how to be involved with UN campaigns.

Also in April IFSW initiated a joint statement with IASSW and ICSW for a high level summit on poverty eradication, which has now become a part of the official UN documentation, see below. However there are still challenges between coordinating UN representation between the three organizations and issues that urgently need to be resolved.

Human Rights Commission

The Commissioner has started discussions on creating a new vision for the HRC that would see it become more proactive and campaign oriented. This is a logical step especially after the considerable positive feedback IFSW received after engaging in the campaign to withdraw a new law persecuting people in poverty in Hungary. Emails and letters of commendation for IFSW's actions came from many countries, and it is clear that members want to see more such actions from their international body. It would be good to see targeted campaigns that run for a limited time periods. For example the rights of refugees, homeless people, people with disabilities and so on. Such campaigns if coordinated well with the rest of IFSW could include the work of the UN representatives, engaging members in international action, and wider Agenda activities. The quest for a new definition was accelerated in 2010 when IFSW member CFESS, the Brazilian Association, called for new global discussions on the definition and organized a workshop in February 2012. IASSW were also very active in consulting their members on a new definition and between the two organizations many meetings occurred worldwide.

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Regional Conferences

Africa

A successful summit for strengthening African Social Work Leadership was held in Nairobi this year. Attended by more than 150 delegates a number of strategies were developed, including: support for future leaders, the development of regional priorities, and creating systems to share and learn from one another's experiences. The summit concluded by formulating a plan to hold a world wide conference that provides a social work perspective on the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.



Asia Pacific

Despite it only being a matter of months since the Great East Japan earthquake, tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis, the 21st Asia Pacific conference was a great success. 710 participants representing 25 Asian Pacific nations came together under the theme of: Crossing Borders – interdependent living and solidarity. Unsurprisingly there was considerable discussion on the role of social work in the context of natural disasters. Also the Definition of Social Work and the Global Agenda were widely discussed. A further important contribution was the large delegation from South Korea, who informed the conference participants that their government had just passed legislation called the 'Act on Treatment and Status Enhancement of Social Workers'. This Act protects social workers' status and role, and sets out to improve their standing in society.

Europe



Live press conference with Armenian Prime Tigran Sargsyan, IFSW European Regional President Nicolai Paulsen and IFSW Secretary-General Rory Truell

The IFSW regional conference for Europe was held in 2011 collectively with five other European organizations in Brussels. The theme was Sustainable Social Development and Economic Challenges. Much of the discussions centered on how to face the current economic crisis in Europe. The conference followed the European delegates meeting for that year.

A further European delegates meeting was held this year in Yerevan hosted the IFSW Armenian member. This also coincided with Armenian Association's holding of a public forum on Social Service reforms, where they skillfully managed to bring the Armenian Prime Minister and Minister of Social Welfare to listen to what the social workers had to say.



Latin American Delegates meeting Mendoza 2011

Latin America

In 2011 the regional Latin American conference took place in Mendoza, Argentina. It was attended by almost all Latin American and Caribbean IFSW members. A strong theme in the conference was on developing the identity of Latin American Social work, sharing experiences and developing systems to support one another. At the following delegates meeting the participants unanimously passed a resolution to support the Puerto Rican Association's request to independently join IFSW as part of the Latin American and Caribbean region. The delegates also stated they would develop a regional definition of social work and a regional plan for implementing the Agenda.

Publications

Publications will be a big part of IFSW's future. In the last months IFSW has chosen a preferred provider to publish and disseminate books, pamphlets, posters and more. The website will shortly be showcasing IFSW publications and customers will be able to purchase products. Feedback from industry experts and downloading statistics from the website both show that there is significant demand for practical books on social work, as opposed to academic texts. IFSW will shortly be commissioning a series of 'How to' guides to meet this demand and provide a new income stream.

'Social Work Around the World No V' has also attracted excellent contributions and is now in print and available for sale. Shortly it will also be able to be downloaded for a reduced price. Likewise, the ISW journal continues to highly regarded and returns good funding for IFSW.

Finances

There is a comprehensive accompanying Treasures Report outlining in detail the organizational finances for 2010 /2011 and a signed auditors report.

The current financial context of IFSW is weak but moderately stable. The organization is mostly funded by memberships fees, which are subject to longer term fluctuation. All IFSW funding produces a bare minimum that enables:

- Limited regional development funding
- An annual meeting of the Executive Committee
- Events such as Social Work Day at the UN
- A General Meeting every two years
- A secretariat staffing of 1.7 equivalent full time people, website and basic administration
- Limited travel to support regions and member activities
- Scholarships to attend conferences and forums

Past attempts to attract other forms of significant funding have not succeeded. This is partly due to an organizational culture that's focus has been on raising the status of social work; bringing social workers together for learning opportunities, and creating global policies and standards. Such activities are not generally attractive for either project funding or grant funding as the outcomes favor the social work professional rather than a client community. In the highly competitive age of securing project or grant funding, IFSW will need to show which group of people (non social workers) are to benefit and how their lives will be better off as a result of our actions.

To secure other types of funding, such as new commercial funding streams IFSW will need to develop products to sell such as publications and educational packages.

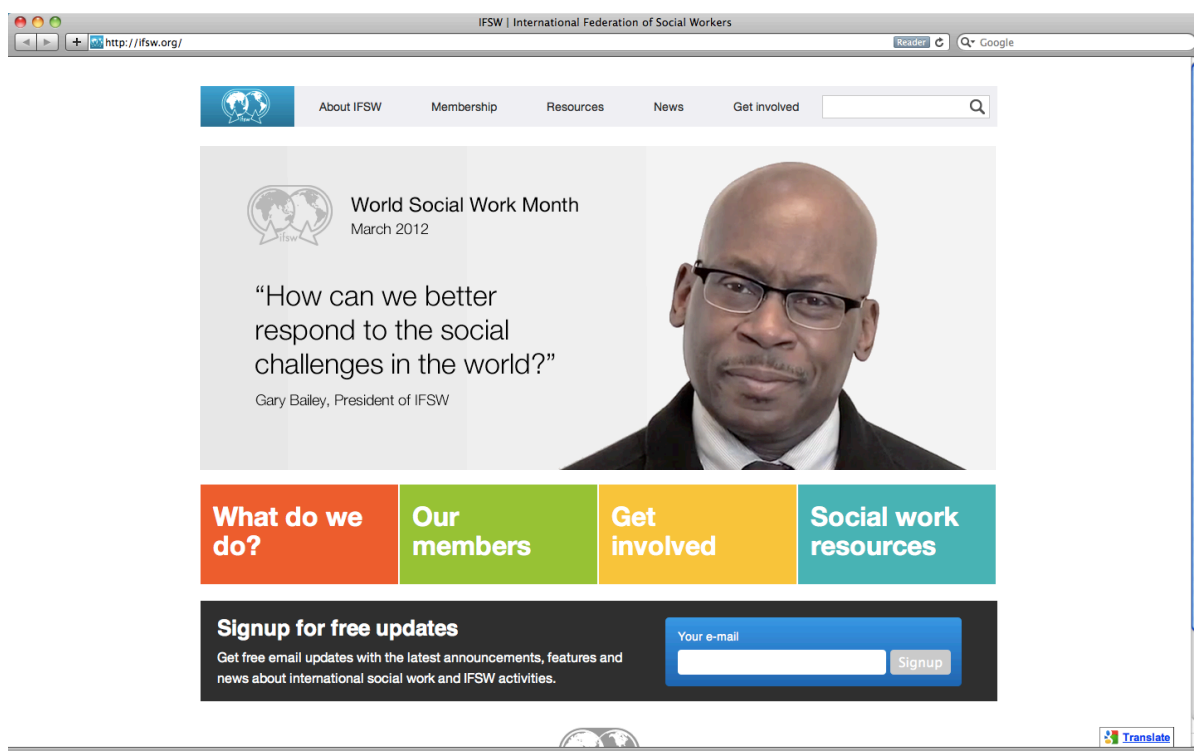
IFSW is moving in both these funding directions by:

- Facilitating events such as the upcoming conference in South Africa, which is focused on putting people targeted by international policy into influential roles affecting such policies.
- Developing a global publications strategy.
- Developing new categories for individual participation in IFSW that provides practical online products that enables social workers to form discussion groups, networks, campaigns, and to share resources on a worldwide level.

Creating additional funding over our current funding base is necessary to enable IFSW to be more effective in delivering identifiable outcomes that would meet external funding criteria. For example funding generated from the above bullet points will enable dedicated staff to plan and execute projects, where as now we have no capacity for such actions.

The Website

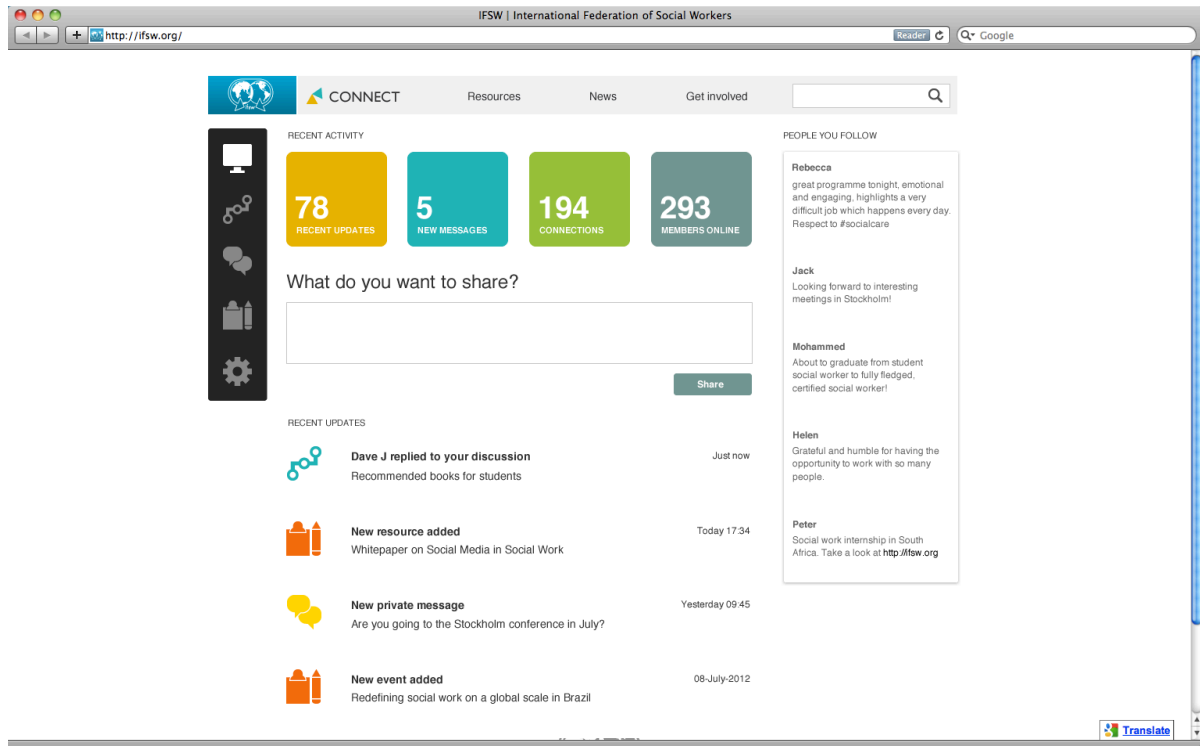
IFSW has updated the website to enable improved accessibility for the user to access information and to engage the user in social work campaigns and actions. The primary audiences for the new website are members, social workers, social work students and partner organizations. We have already started to tell video stories on the website, such as, 'What IFSW does in the UN', and as we grow in capacity we will be able to tell more stories about the positive effects of social work in all parts of the world.



The new website has successfully attracted a new layer of users and over the month of March there were approximately 10,000 users per week accessing information about the World Social Work Week of Action. This volume creates significant possibilities for promoting IFSW policies and procedures and also for marketing publications and other potential income streams.

'IFSW Connect' will be launched at Stockholm. This online platform will enable social work users to form discussion groups, networks, campaigns, and to share resources on a worldwide level. It is proposed that to become a member of IFSW Connect there will be a fee of \$US10 per year, plus bank charges which will entitle the member to receive a profile account in IFSW Connect, an online subscription to ISW Journal, regular newsletters and subsidies at regional and international events (where possible).

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In addition to this being a significant income stream, IFSW Connect creates the opportunity for social workers to collaborate together across borders, interest groups and more. For example recently IFSW was asked if it could facilitate relationships between Armenian and Russian social workers that are working with the same family who are separated because some members work in Russia and other members live in Armenia. IFSW routinely is asked to connect social workers that are working with families who have been separated by economic hardship. And also we receive requests from social workers seeking information about different cultures. IFSW Connect will provide a place where all such connections can be made.

Looking Ahead

Social Work is undergoing significant changes. The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development emphasizes sustainable communities and locates the role of the social work as a social capacity builder. The calls for a new definition of social work challenge the traditional ways of describing social work activities. The rapid increase in globalization means that social workers are working with far more diversity and challenges than in previous decades. The challenges in some countries of austerity require social workers to find new models of practice with fewer resources. The voice of indigenous social workers has become stronger in recent years.

The above factors could potentially be seen as fragmenting IFSW and the identity of international social work. I see them as adding diversity and richness to a collective profession. For the latter to go forward, we would need a common vision that everyone can embrace and see themselves within.

At this point in time IFSW does not have a stated vision, instead it has a set of objectives that center on promoting the profession, rather than promoting the impact of social work. Will such objectives act as a glue to hold the world of social work together? Or is it time to develop a common vision that all social workers can relate to that spells out the effectiveness of social work and acts as a call to collective action? And lastly, would an IFSW vision assist the organization in overcoming some of the difficulties in transitioning in becoming outcome orientated?

I look forward to discussing these issues with you. I look forward to the great years ahead for IFSW, for social work and for impact that social work will have on people's lives.