

International Federation of Social Workers - Asia-Pacific (IFSW-AP)

IFSW-AP REPORT¹

(From July 2014 to March 2016)

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Disasters as one characteristic of the Asia Pacific Region

Throughout the year, our region was hit by natural and human made disasters. One example is the earthquake in Nepal; another is the earthquake in Malaysia which was also preceded by a flood a few months earlier. As we write this our colleagues in Japan are once again responding to a major earthquake. China is still handling damages from earthquakes, flooding, and a cruise ship accident. Hail hit parts of Australia, train accidents occurred in India and Pakistan, the latter also suffering a mosque bombing. A plane crashed in Indonesia, while Vanuatu was severely ravaged by a hurricane, miraculously claiming only 11 lives thanks to proper risk management measures. Hence the small island nation showed us the true importance of disaster preparedness. Mariko in her role as President has urged donations to one of our newest members, the Social Workers Association of Nepal (SWAN), so that we can help them deal with the aftermath of the devastating earthquake.

¹ Submitted and presented in Seoul, Korea at the IFSW General Meeting (June 21-26, 2016).

We are also aware of the huge and long term humanitarian needs that follow disasters of all types and note especially the current need for assistance in Yemen where about 80per cent of the population are in need of assistance including food, fuel and health services. Our member in Yemen is playing a key role in the UNICEF funded project to establish and maintain safe places for children to enjoy organized activities, learn, express themselves and return safely back into their communities.

Unfortunately this is not an extraordinary year for the Asia-Pacific, since according to UN estimates, more than half of the world's 226 natural disasters in 2014 occurred in our region. That is why this issue is a priority for IFSW-AP and that is why we have been working to raise funds for further disaster related projects, such as workshops in our member countries.

The Asia Pacific Region has started its Facebook page

In February, we launched our Facebook page to be able to engage more efficiently in global communication. Please send any information and pictures you would like to post on our Facebook page to the Japanese Coordinating Body for IFSW Membership and they will arrange the actual upload. We need to do this for information management purposes.

IFSW Executive Committee Meeting in March 2015 and a new undertakings on International Trade Agreement System

In March, the new Executive Committee gathered for the first time in Geneva, Switzerland. During this meeting, we strongly felt that we are still learning to cope with our roles and the workload. While this is the year for regional conferences, we can also find common global issues, such as our work on the Global Agenda. One

new policy development confirmed at the meeting has to do with social workers who work in countries other than where they were trained and are based. Other developments include policies regarding the Social Work Role in Social Protection Systems and position statements on International Trade Agreements/Systems, with Rose Henderson involved in drafting the latter. We recognize that reviewing and updating such policies regularly is necessary to keep up with the rapid pace of globalization. We are also grateful for our members who represent IFSW at the United Nations and our Human Rights and Ethics Commissions. The development of a draft Terms of Reference for an Indigenous Committee is also expected to be discussed at the general meeting in Seoul.

IFSW-AP President's visit to China in April 2015

In April, Mariko paid presidential visits to Hong Kong, Macau, and Mainland China where she had the honor of having meetings with local presidents of social work associations and heads of social service departments. This was the first time for Mariko to visit Greater China in her role as President after assuming the office last year.

India has joined IFSW with full membership

In August, colleagues from India applied for IFSW membership. Since according to our current Constitution social workers from one nation can only join in one umbrella organization, six professional associations in India formed their coordinating body for international membership. Prior to this, these national organizations met in Bangalore (now officially Bengaluru, according to pre-colonial traditional pronunciation) and made their joint decision about IFSW application. After a voting process by ballot by the deadline of October 12, India was accepted as a full-member

of IFSW. The results are scheduled to be announced here at the IFSW-AP meeting in Thailand.

During the same time, the South Asia Social Work Conference was held at the local Christ University, and Mariko attended to represent our federation.

New Social Work Definition and development of the Regional Amplification

With regard to the Global Definition, we have been working towards a regional amplification throughout the year, so that we may come to a conclusion with APASWE at our conference in Thailand. Also, the Hong Kong Association of Social Workers completed the Chinese version of the new Global Definition and it has already been uploaded to the IFSW website. We believe that it will hopefully be of reference to many colleagues who have Chinese cultural origins all over the world. We thank the Hong Kong association for their most meaningful efforts.

Global Agenda and IFSW-AP Regional undertakings

Concerning the Global Agenda, regional progress reports on ‘Promoting the dignity and worth of persons’, the agenda theme in 2015 have been scheduled to this conference during our stay in Thailand. I would like to personally express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Bala Raju Nikku from Nepal representing IASSW and Rose [Henderson](#), our IFSW-AP Member-at-Large, for agreeing to lead this effort.

Since the Global Agenda has entered its second phase, IFSW-AP members made country reports in Bangkok at our Forum. These include case reports on what influence social workers have on people’s lives and social change. We will collect these cases in our Global Agenda Report and make an appeal to IFSW, IASSW, ICSW, as well as the UN and NGOs about the social impact of social work practice!

State of the Global Agenda in the Asia Pacific Region as of now (March 2016)

The final draft of the Global Agenda Report is currently under preparation on the global level.

As mentioned earlier, the Asia Pacific Region organized a Pre-Conference Workshop on “Children’s Right and Child Labor” preceding the Joint Regional Conference in Thailand. We did so with keeping in mind the theme of Phase II, namely “Promoting the dignity and worth of persons”. Also we held an ‘Agenda Forum’ during the conference with twelve countries participating and giving presentations on their domestic social work agenda. Furthermore, we collected country reports from the Asia Pacific Region that are collected in the Regional Agenda Report. The Phase II Report will be disclosed in Korea and the Global Agenda initiative will enter Phase III. As a result of the work that was undertaken in Thailand at the pre-conference workshop on child labour including those of migrant labourers, the following remit will be put to the General Meeting in Seoul.

“That the General Meeting acknowledges that in all corners of the world, child labour is an unacceptable exploitation of the Rights of Children and that such exploitation seriously and negatively impacts on their long term health and wellbeing. We call upon IFSW to develop a position or policy statement against child labour policies and practices.”

The second workshop in Bangkok highlighted poverty, mental health and disasters as key themes affecting the dignity and worth of people for our Global Agenda report. The impact of these themes on indigenous people was also recognized across our region. Once finalized this report will be included in the Phase II report as the Asia Pacific regional contribution.

The Recent Refugee Crisis and its Worldwide Impact

Regarding the recent refugee crisis, we hear news about the constant mass flow of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers to Europe. Several governments, especially EU nations and other European states, as well as North American countries etc. are making statements about accepting these people. Social workers and refugee support organizations will probably be actively engaged in specific assistance in the future. At the same time, we have to watch humanitarian efforts and responses by national governments very carefully.

Regional Human Resource Development and the IFSW Development Fund

Originally utilizing IFSW'S Development Fund, a Disaster Mitigation Workshop was held in Manila in 2013 and another one in Indonesia in January with Japan taking the initiative. During the workshop in Indonesia, a country frequented by disasters, Mariko explained that even though the IFSW Development Fund had ended, disaster workshops would be organized continuously to ensure awareness raising and skill development regarding disaster response among social workers. Indonesian colleagues also stated that they wished to have similar workshops in the future where they can enhance their disaster related skills.

Additional Efforts for Professional Skill Development Workshops funded from Japan

The Japanese Coordinating Body for IFSW Membership applied for grants for social work personnel training in the Asia Pacific Region to the Japanese Center of Social Welfare Promotion and National Examination in February 2015. We managed to receive grants to engage in these projects for at least three years. The first workshops to train disaster relief personnel took place in Jakarta, Indonesia between January 5th and 7th, 2016 and in Palawan, the Philippines from February 29th to March 3rd, 2016. Both countries national associations of social workers helped extensively to organize these events. We had 50 participants in Indonesia and 160 in the Philippines, including professionals from neighboring countries. Hence, we could contribute to development of disaster support networks and the enhancement of disaster assistance skill in these two countries, even extending to professional networks in surrounding ones.

In August 2016, a workshop is scheduled to be held in India on how to support women and children. Similarly to the above, this workshop will be funded from Japan, while local associations of social workers will help organizing. Moreover, a disaster workshop is planned for January 2017 in cooperation with the Malaysian Association of Social Workers.

World Social Work Day Celebration in the Asia Pacific Region

Events celebrating World Social World Day were held in the Asia Pacific Region focusing around March 15th, 2016. In New Zealand, 2014 was an anniversary year for the national organization since its establishment, so special celebrations took place at the end of that year. Social work associations in Hong Kong, Palestine, and Yemen also scheduled events to give special meaning to this day.

In Indonesia, colleagues invited special guests from the Pacific and held an event on this day with special attention to human right in accordance with this year's theme of the Global Agenda.

We should make special mention of Bangladesh. A young social worker, Mr. Habibur Rahman took leadership and fifteen related organizations came together to celebrate World Social Work Day. We look forward to similar lively activities from the country in the future.

Presidential visit to China in March 2016

China is scheduled to host the next Joint Regional Social Work Conference in Shenzhen in October 2017. For this year, the China Association of Social Workers had a celebration in Beijing on March 14th, with 200 participants from all around the country. During this celebration, in addition to presenting awards for exceptional activities by social work organizations and social workers, the IFSW-AP President

was invited too. With regard to the conference in 2017, Mariko made official arrangements with the President of the China Association of Social Workers

In conclusion

Finally, a few words on budgetary matters: Due to limitations in financial resources at the global organizational level of IFSW, the future provision of the Development Fund is not clear. According to the Global President, efforts are being made to look for funds apart from the regular IFSW budget. However, this fund is extremely important to the Asia-Pacific, since our region has a large number and a wide variety of social work organizations, while our members are on very different developmental levels facing very different circumstances. Therefore, on behalf of us, Mariko has humbly asked the IFSW Steering Committee to restart the provision of this fund in the future. At the same time, IFAP should come up with fund raising strategy to assist our regional work. We welcome any suggestions to assist us with this.

There is plenty more to report, but due to the lack of space and time we would like to limit our report to the above for now. With our new members, day-by-day we are strengthening the great diversity embraced by IFSW-AP. As your regional representatives, we wish to continue to attend as many events organized by member associations as possible, get to know to activities carried out by social workers and their organization as much as possible, communicate the unique situation and the common themes to as many member nations as possible and additionally make appeals for our causes to the global organization! Thank you all for the enormous contributions you make to IFSW Asia Pacific!