

## **NEWS AND VIEWS . . . Rising to the global challenge: IASSW, ICSW and IFSW join hands to build an agenda for the next decade**

### **Significant moves towards global collaboration**

Significant moves have taken place during recent months to strengthen the global collaboration between IASSW, ICSW and IFSW. The outcome will be the enhanced global influence of the social work profession as we make full use of our joint strengths and networks. This News and Views is the first written jointly by the three organizations, signifying our determination to work together to make a difference.

The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) share a common heritage. As you read in this issue, we grew from the same historical source in 1928. We share many common concerns and have co-operated to different degrees throughout the last 80 years. In view of the escalating social problems and human injustices worldwide, the three organizations are acutely aware of the need for partnership and alliance. We have held annual discussions and co-operated on specific global projects. We have also decided to hold joint biannual conferences and the first will be in Hong Kong from 10 to 15 June 2010. The theme for the conference is: '2010 joint world conference on social work and social development: The agenda'. We plan to orchestrate a global consultation process within and beyond social work, involving social workers at all levels and from all countries, to identify key issues for our profession, to develop our agenda, and to set our priorities for the second decade of the 21st century.

### **2008 global conferences**

During the summer of 2008, our three separate world conferences took place in the months of July and August, involving nearly 5,000 social

workers, social work educators, social service administrators and social development workers.

The ICSW conference in Tours, France focused on: 'The dynamics of social welfare in globalization: Lessons from the past, challenges for today and tomorrow'. More than 600 people from 75 countries took part; the daily themes were 'social work', 'social protection' and 'social development'. Christian Rollet (France) was elected as the new ICSW President and Charles Abbey (Ghana) as Vice President.

The IASSW conference in Durban, South Africa, was entitled 'Transcending global-local divides'. Around 1,500 people participated in what was the first global conference held in the African continent for a very long time. The plenary presentations featured leading academics, practitioners and service users who have been fervent advocates against global-local divides. The discussions were vibrant and the dedication and energy of the South African social work community was a source of inspiration for all participants. Professor Angelina Yuen from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University was elected as the new IASSW President and Professor Helle Strauss of the Copenhagen College of Social Work was elected as Secretary.

The IFSW conference in Salvador, Brazil had the theme 'The challenge of ensuring rights in a global and unequal society'. It attracted around 2,600 people, well over 2,000 of whom came from Brazil. The conference was inevitably dominated by the interests and preoccupations of this large Latin American country, with huge social inequalities and a confident and growing social work profession. The need for a more open dialogue between the seemingly different ideological and practical perspectives of those from Latin America and those from the rest of the world perhaps emerged most clearly at the end of the conference. The IFSW General Meeting affirmed the future course of the Federation and approved new policy statements, making this the most outward looking General Meeting for many years.

### **Global co-operation**

IASSW, ICSW and IFSW decided to work more closely together some years ago. This collaboration has been enhanced as we plan our first joint conference in Hong Kong. Leaders of the three organizations met in Tours, Durban and Salvador to develop plans for global consultations in preparation for the Hong Kong conference. Social work needs to speak with a clearer and more unified voice if we wish to influence social policy and social development across the globe. We need to build on our existing links with UN agencies and develop stronger links

with service user groups and other interested parties to strengthen our message and our campaigning.

We aim to make the Hong Kong process truly global – the first ever for our profession. Every country and region will be actively engaged in the global dialogue and priority shaping process.

## **Hong Kong 2010**

After the Hong Kong conference, and taking account of the conference outcomes, our three organizations will make decisions which will shape our future individual and shared priorities. This has never happened before and is a truly unique and exciting process. However, it will only work if local and national organizations seize the opportunity to participate and make it work. Watch out for information on our web sites and start your thinking now.

With our Hong Kong colleagues, we cordially invite you to join the journey, building a new action agenda, a new direction and shared priorities for social work and social development. The key words are: ‘empower’, ‘renew’, ‘synergy’.

Our organizations are alive and committed to developing our thinking about social development. We know that social work is well placed to play a key role in responding to the individual, community and global social problems facing the world. Ours is a flexible and adaptable profession, accustomed to responding to new situations. We are good at risk assessment and partnership development. Social work is never easy but we know the profession has a confident future. The Hong Kong 2010 process will help us to convey that message across the entire social work community. The process has already started and can involve us all. We seek the engagement of you and your organization in this process and ask that you join hands with all of us to make a difference to the world we share together.

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