



International Federation of Social Workers
Fédération internationale des travailleurs sociaux
Federación internacional de trabajadores sociales

P.O. Box 6875, Schwarztorstrasse 22, CH-3001 Berne, Switzerland
Tél (41) 22 548 36 25, Fax (41) 31 382 11 25, E-mail: global@ifsw.org – Web: www.ifsw.org

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Contact:
René Schegg rene.schegg@ifsw.org

Phone: (41) 22 548 36 25

SOCIAL WORKERS RESPOND TO GLOBAL SOCIAL CRISES

Social Workers in All Nations Called to Promote International Poverty and Human Rights Agenda on World Social Work Day

BERNE, Switzerland—Social Workers around the world will join together to celebrate World Social Work Day on March 15, 2011. This annual event, celebrated on the third Tuesday in March, focuses on social work contributions to society and is part of an on-going dialogue about how to address challenging social conditions worldwide.

The theme for World Social Work Day 2011 is “Social Work voices responding to global crises: Together we develop the Agenda!”

Every day, Social Workers respond to individual and family crises—they open doors for service users and offer solutions for a wide range of problems. But social workers are also skilled in analyzing the frameworks of social conditions, and know how to change them to foster a more dignified life for all people, in all communities.

The Social Work profession helps nations respond to economic and social changes that disproportionately affect vulnerable people and communities. Working in partnership with many other professions, Social Work promotes the social welfare of individuals, groups and communities, facilitates social cohesion in periods of change, while supporting and protecting the most vulnerable members of society.

True social development can only come through global interaction. Although most social work practice is local, the impact of social work leadership is inarguably international. Those suffering the most under the current global financial crisis are the poorest people in every country—those least likely to recover from the devastation.

“Billions have been spent saving banks across the world. It is unfair and outrageous that the price for this bailout is to be paid by the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world. For example, while billions have been spent to stabilize banks, the total budget for the UN World Food Programme has been reduced by half.” says Gary Bailey, president of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).

IFSW and its member organizations believe that efforts made to save the banks have resulted in very few financial commitments by the industrialized world to reach the UN's Millennium Development Goals for ending world poverty.

At the 2010 Hong Kong World Conference, Social Workers from all over the world gathered to begin a process to develop a [Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development](#) for the next decade. Thousands came together with the belief that the world can be changed for the better if the profession stands together—advocating for the dignity and worth of every person, calling for a more just world, and celebrating the importance of human relationships in a healthy environment.

This [Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development](#) challenges the profession's leaders to:

- Ensure nations meet the most basic human rights to food and shelter, clothing and medical care for all their people.
- Raise awareness about poverty as a human rights violation in all countries.
- Implement the IFSW Policy on Poverty Eradication.
- Champion the Social Protection Floor Initiative of the UN which ensures universal social protection to health, education, shelter and security, as pledged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Demonstrate improvements in people's lives.

The Agenda is a joint effort between the [International Federation of Social Workers \(IFSW\)](#), the [International Association of Schools of Social Work \(IASSW\)](#), and the [International Council on Social Welfare \(ICSW\)](#).

Next year, on World Social Work Day 2012, the Social Work Global Agenda will be submitted to the United Nations Secretary General. At the same time, regional social work groups will submit the Agenda to international organizations, such as the African Union, the European Union, Mercosur, ASEAN, and others. National social work groups will also be called upon to submit the Global Agenda to their respective governments.

IFSW invites its membership, service users, colleagues in other professions and all those with a concern for the health of local, national and global communities on March 15th, 2011 World Social Work Day 2011 to not only celebrate the many achievements of the profession on all continents, but also to help build interest in making the [Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development](#) a reality.

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Gary Bailey, MSW, ACSW is an award-winning social worker who has played top leadership roles in the social work field. In June 2010 in Hong Kong, he was elected as the new president of the International Federation of Social Workers representing over 500,000 thousand social workers from over 80 countries. He is the first person of color to hold this position and the first North American in over 20 years. Bailey has served as president of the National Association of Social Workers-USA (NASW) and is currently a Clinical Associate Professor at the Simmons College School of Social Work in Boston Massachusetts-USA

Note for editors:

IFSW is the global federation of national social work organizations in more than 80 countries representing over 500,000 social workers. IFSW has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and is also accredited to the International Labour Organization, UNICEF and the Council of Europe. IFSW is a UN Habitat partner organization.