

INTERNATIONAL AND MAINLAND CHINA AFFAIRS

NEWSLETTER (September 2011)

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Call for abstracts - 2012 Joint World Conference of Social Work and Social Development: Action and Impact

Co-organized by IASSW, ICSW and IFSW, the captioned conference will take place in Stockholm, Sweden on 8-12 July 2012. The programme theme is to advance the work on the global social agenda developed for the 2010 conference and beyond by addressing and demonstrating the actions that might be required to develop and accomplish the Agenda. The first call for abstracts is opened with deadline is 30 November 2011.

Further information about the conference, call for abstracts and programme schedule can be found in the conference website: www.swsd-stockholm-2012.org. For questions regarding registration, hotel booking, social events, abstract handling, exhibition management and general information please contact Congrex at socialwork2012@congrex.com.

UN-DESA - Report on the World Social Situation 2011: The Global Social Crisis

The new UN-DESA publication, “Report on the World Social Situation 2011: The Global Social Crisis”, found that many governments did not pay enough attention to the social implications of the recent global financial crisis, and urged that social investments be given priority in recovery programmes.

Global unemployment rose significantly from 178 million persons in 2007 to 205 million in 2009. Such rapid rise in unemployment had triggered an increase in informal and vulnerable employment, especially in developing countries without comprehensive social protection. Governments had great challenge to stimulate job growth when the economy was recovering. Women and youth faced unemployment and underemployment. They were more disadvantaged with regard to job placement, poor work conditions, wages, job security, etc.

The impact of volatile and high food prices, diminishing incomes and rising unemployment led to great burden on households that they need to make changes in household expenditure patterns in the economic crisis. More families relied on underfunded public food assistance programmes. The negative influences on education, health and nutrition might lead to lifelong deficits for the children affected and thus perpetuate intergenerational poverty.

The global economic downturn caused wide-ranging negative social outcomes for individuals, families, communities and societies, and its impact on social progress would become obvious over time. The increased levels of poverty, hunger and unemployment due to the global crisis would continue to affect billions of people for years to come. Therefore, it was essential that Governments take into account the likely social implications of their economic policies.

Increasing expenditure to expand social protection and improve access to education and health services would help ensure more inclusive development with stronger domestic demand and a more solid foundation for future growth. Full and productive employment and decent work for all are critically important for poverty eradication. Universal access to basic social protection and social services was important to break the cycle of poverty and reduce inequality and social exclusion.

The report indicated that governments should rethink the role of social policy and social investment in response to the crisis so as to strengthen and achieve a more sustainable development. They need to be able to pursue countercyclical policies in a consistent manner. Governments in developed countries should seriously evaluate the social impacts of their austerity measures.

[Full Report of Report on the World Social Situation 2011: The Global Social Crisis](#)
(English)

Millennium Development Goals Report 2011

The United Nations launched the Millennium Development Goals Report 2011 in July 2011, showing the progress against extreme poverty in 2015 through achieving the global targets. The report noted that the progress was not universal among nations, and was uneven between and within countries. Although significant progress was found in developing countries, the least developed countries still lag in efforts to improve living standards.

According to the recent projections of poverty rate by the World Bank, despite the economic crisis in 2008, the rate was expected to fall below 15% by 2015. The

fastest growth and sharpest reductions in Eastern Asia, particularly in China, where the poverty rate is expected to fall to under 5% by 2015. However, a slowdown in progress against poverty was reflected in the gentle decline in working poverty after 2007.

While the global economic growth was rebounding after economic crisis, the labour market was still not recovered. The employment rate in developed countries was dropped from 56.8% in 2007 to 54.8% in 2010. Slow employment generation also led to incapability of absorbing the growth in the working-age population in developed countries. Vulnerable employment rate remained roughly the same characterizing by informal working arrangements, lack of adequate social protection, low pay and difficult working conditions.

The report also noted some significant progress to universal education, child health, maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, environmental sustainability and global partnership, but more efforts were required in empowering women and girls, promoting sustainable development, and protecting the most vulnerable from the devastating effects of multiple crises, such as conflicts, natural disasters or food crisis. The report also noted an unfavorable situation, that the poorest and the disadvantaged were tended to have bypassed in the progress against poverty.

[Full report of Millennium Development Goals Report 2011](#) (English)

New international standards for domestic workers: Convention on Domestic Workers (2011)

At the 100th annual Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 16 June 2011, the Convention on Domestic Workers (2011) was adopted with the accompanying Recommendation, which was a significant set of international standards in improving the working conditions of worldwide domestic workers. According to ILO proceedings, the new Convention would come into force after two countries ratified it.

The new Convention clearly defined domestic work, and set out the universal basic labour rights for the people engaging in domestic work in worldwide as those available to other workers: reasonable hours of work, weekly rest of at least 24 consecutive hours, a limit on in-kind payment, clear information on terms and conditions of employment, as well as respect for fundamental principles and rights at work including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. It also provided special measures to protect domestic workers who might be exposed to

additional risks relative to their peers and among others because of their young age or nationality or live-in status.

ILO recognized the new instruments as an achievement in motivating decent work of all workers, gender equality, as well as human rights of migrants or members of disadvantaged communities.

[Full text of Convention on Domestic Workers \(2011\)](#) (English)

[Full text of Recommendation](#) (English)

REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Launching public consultation on initial proposals “Regional Co-operation Plan on Building a Quality Living Area”

To facilitate the implementation of the "Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta (2008-2020)", the Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macao governments jointly compiled the “Regional Cooperation Plan on Building a Quality Living Area” (the Plan) and launched the public consultation on initial proposals for the Plan in September 2011. This is the first regional plan jointly compiled by the three sides.

The overall objective of the Plan is to transform the Greater Pearl River Delta (PRD) region into an exemplar cluster of green cities for quality living through long-term co-operation blueprint of three governments. It suggests initial co-operation directions and proposals in the five areas of environment and ecology, low-carbon development, culture and social living, spatial planning and transportation systems.

For cross-boundary students, the Plan proposes providing safe and convenient cross-boundary transportation to school children, as well as promoting the development and provision of school classes for Hong Kong and Macau children residing in Shenzhen.

Regarding cross-boundary social welfare cooperation, the Plan suggests intensifying the reform of social welfare system in PRD region, facilitating the provision for society-wide old aged benefits in Guangdong, encouraging and facilitating social service providers to operate across boundaries and accelerating the development of these services at regional level, initial proposals include reviewing existing land policies and formulating preferential policies in respect of charges of gas, water, electricity, and tax payment for welfare and non-profit in making elderly homes

and institutions for disabled persons; examining the feasibility and policy direction of welfare portability for bridging old aged social security for the Hong Kong elders living in Guangdong; encouraging cross-boundary training and personnel exchanges; setting relevant information centre; promoting complementary and co-development of the personnel of the three sides; and setting up a cross-boundary reciprocal recognition mechanism on qualifications on social workers and social services sector.

The public consultation exercise will run for three months until 30 November 2011. Views and comments can be sent to the Environmental Protection Department. Detailed information about the Plan can be obtained from the website: www.gprd-qla.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Forum on Regional Child & Youth Residential Care Service

To promote the exchange and enhance the professionalism of child and youth residential care service of Hong Kong, Macau, Shenzhen and Taiwan, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service will organize the captioned Forum during 5-7 December 2011 in Hong Kong.

The Forum will invite government officials, professionals and academics to share the topics on characteristics and needs of children and young people on hostel service, residential care case management, service model evaluation and (or) research, hospital support for residential care service and cross-sectoral collaboration in four places. Field visits to Hong Kong and Shenzhen child and youth residential care service will be arranged.

For further details about the Forum, please contact Ms Hindy Kai, Officer of International & Mainland China Affairs, through email: hindy.kai@hkcss.org.hk.

Shanghai Charity & Philanthropy Partnership Day

With support from the Ministry of Civil Affairs PRC, Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau (SCAB) will organize a NGO Fair namely Charity and Philanthropy Partnership Day from 25-27 November 2011 in Shanghai. HKCSS has been invited to be one of the co-organizers of the event.

About 100 NGOs, companies and foundations will showcase their work and projects at this nation-wide NGO Fair. Their projects cover almost every aspect of

public welfare ranging from community work to environmental protection. Aside from a chance for NGOs to find funding, the fair would also be a great chance for companies and foundations to know more about NGO-Business partnership. As SCAB is keen to learn from Hong Kong experience in promoting NGO-Business partnership, HKCSS is also invited to co-organize a half-day summit forum in the topic of corporate social reasonability and philanthropy work in Hong Kong,