

**Report of
The International Federation of Social Workers
(IFSW) World Conference 2006
A world out of Balance—Working out of
Balance for a New Social Equilibrium**

**30 July to 3 August 2006
Munich, Germany**

Prepared by

**Prof. Tang Kwong Leung Chair Professor and Head of Social Work Department
Chinese University of Hong Kong**

**Mr. Johnny Tsang Executive Secretary
Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association**

I. Introduction

The First International Conference on Social Work (ICSW) was held in 1928 in Paris and they suggested forming of an international association of social workers; then at the second ICSW held in Frankfurt in 1932, the International Permanent Secretariat of Social Workers (IPSSW) was formed with agreement made by eight founding members—Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

Finally at the Fifth ICSW held in 1950 an agreement to form a new body was approved and the International Federation of Social Workers was formed in Munich in 1956 which was an international body of professional social workers. A new Secretariat was established in New York.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is a global organization striving for social justice, human rights and social development through the development of social work, sharing of best practices and international cooperation among social workers and their professional organizations.

Now the IFSW is having member organizations from 80 countries and is serving as a platform for professional identity across borders. Through a number of world and regional conferences, the development of core international documents to guide social work concepts and practices and ongoing representing at the United Nations and other international organizations.

The 2006 IFSW celebrated their 50th anniversary in Munich where the revitalized IFSW convened in 1956.

The theme for this conference” A World out of Balance: Working for a New Social Equilibrium” aims at bring out discussion about tolerance, understanding and elimination of discrimination, poverty and disadvantage.

Imeld Dobbs, the President of IFSW, wrote before the Conference: “Finding a shared, unambiguous understanding of a goal is central to the achievement of social equilibrium. The failure to do so no doubt contributes to “a world out of balance.”

She also made the point: “The IFSW will celebrate its 50th anniversary in Munich in 2006. It is only fitting that we return to the city were the revitalised IFSW convened 9 August 1956. During the intervening years we have grown steadily from having member organisations in 12 countries to 78.”

More than 1, 700 social workers or social work educators from 85 countries joined the conference.

II. Objectives of the HK Contingent

1. To learn about new skills and techniques of social work interventions;
2. To Share professional views and knowledge with our counterparts;
3. To learn latest the research on social work practices and
4. To establish linkages and partners with our counterparts.

III. Membership of the HK Contingent

1. Professor TANG Kwong Leung, Chair Professor and Head of Social wWork
Department of Chinese University of Hong Kong
2. Mr. Johnny TSANG, Executive Secretary, Hong Kong Young Women's Christian
Association
3. Other participants from Hong Kong but without sponsorship from HKCSS:
CHAN Yuk Chung, CHUNG Kim Wah, Pauline Sung. CHUA Hoi Wai,
Justina LEUNG, LAW Koon Chui, LEUNG Yee Ping, YIU Ching Man and Karen LEE

IV. The Programme

The 6 Thematic Areas of the World Conference

1. The Balance of Generations: Youth and Aging— Around the world, rising life expectancy and declining fertility have led to rapidly shifting demographics. The impacts on the relationship between generations are to be reconsidered. Families are struggling to keep up with the changes in family. Scarce resources are putting pressure on financial, social security and service delivery systems for young and old.
2. Physical, Emotional and Mental Health---The gross inequalities in health and life expectancy between and within countries are alarming. The connections between the physical, emotional and psychological consequences of health inequalities in people's life should be addressed. Working with marginalized and disadvantaged populations should be advocated in social work profession.
3. Between Inclusion and Alienation: Migrants, Refugees and Displaced Persons---The main threat to social cohesion is an increase tendency that groups of citizens are marginalized and facing poverty and severe social problems. Governments are cutting down the social benefits for the permanently unemployed but not so for people with disabilities.
4. Between Globalization and Marginalization--- The globalization of economic problems and reactions to these problems seriously affect social work. Budget cuts, compulsory saving affect even highly affluent societies. Principals of social justice and the welfare state are threatened.
5. Social Systems between Demands—Basic needs and minimum standards of social security—from absolute dependence to partial dependence to toward independence or interdependence. There are lots of popular “myths” about welfare recipients. Rights be

supported by law, social work be more political, Unconditional Income Guarantee, Equal Shares of National Income Scheme

6. Social Work as Profession: 50 years of Progress and Visions for the Future

V. Programs Attended with Comments/Evaluations

Part I: Key Note Presentations, Round Table Symposium, Panel Discussion, Paper presentation and Workshops

Session title	Content in brief with comments/evaluation
Opening Ceremony— 50 years of world-wide social work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Besides from welcoming speech made by the President of IFSW (Imelda Dobbs) and the President of German Social Work Association, there was a talk with the founding members and personalities of IFSW about their experiences and engagement in half a century of international social work. • The “Most Distinguished Social Worker of IFSW” was awarded to Ms Irena Sendler, a social worker and nurse from Poland, who saved 2,500 children from the Warsaw Ghetto and found them new homes with foster families. • A warm and artistic opening ceremony, with VIPs to tell the development of the IFSW and the Award goes to a Lady who risked herself to save others. It reminded social work participants the commitment of the profession. • The Opening was marked by music and acrobatic shows, which gave a very distinctive feature to the Ceremony. • A little surprise to see the Ceremony was late for some 20 minutes before it was kicked off as we presumed the German had special attention to order and timing.
Social Work as Profession: 50 years of Progress and Visions for the Future	<p>Walter Lorenz gave an enlightening talk on “Doing History: Memory and Contemporary Professional Practice”. In his talk, the pertinence and usefulness of history was highlighted. In our daily teaching or practice, more people tended to forget about the historical perspective that is often embedded in social work analysis. Dr. Lorenz, who is Professor at the Free University in Bolzano, Italy, was a well-respected scholar in Europe pertaining to social work profession development.</p>
Women’s right and gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharon Templeman and Stephen F. presented their qualitative study involving interviews with 15 Russian males with emphasis on gender issues. They suggested that gender equality is more talk than action. Stereotype expectations are still common. • Emma Gross suggested that social development had to be supported by economic growth and believed that affluent with democracy and education are the pillars of gender equality. • Findings are not conclusive, no new insights and presentation are

Session title	Content in brief with comments/evaluation
	rather vague
Social Work as Profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vivienne Cree talked about the tension between profession of social work and social movement . She used Scotland as an example, highlighting the development of social work profession .A historical dimension was built into her study. She well argued that such a perspective is now needed to help us understand better how a social balance might be achieved.
Human Rights – Racism in Hong Kong: Prevalence and Response	<p>Prof Tang’s research adduces evidence-based views and suggestions concerning the racial discrimination in Hong Kong. Essentially, the study is (1) to determine the prevalence and forms of racial discrimination facing ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong; (2) to assess the impacts of racial discrimination and the coping strategies used; and (3) to explore appropriate policy/service program needed to deal with racial discrimination.</p> <p>The study incorporates a survey of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, focus groups of ethnic minorities, social work and social service professionals, human rights activities and interested community members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The survey collected 135 ethnic minorities’ opinion on racial discrimination; • Focus groups and in-depth captured a variety of views on racial discrimination and appropriate policy and services • The main forms of racial discrimination confronting ethnic minorities are unable to benefit from their rights (43%), the hatred towards different races (42.2%), being ignored (40.7%) as well as the misunderstanding of culture(s) (40%). • Two-thirds of the respondents felt that the ethnic groups in Hong Kong are often discrimination because of their race. • Regarding their experiences in discrimination, the most series discrimination occurred in employer’s treatment of employees and treatment in shops.
Social Work Education Around the World: Current Issues and Future Trends in Australia, England, Japan, Korea and USA	<p>Different presenters were there: Elaine Congress, Ravinder Barn, Richard Hugman and Hisashi Harayami, along with Susan Soong from Hong Kong.</p> <p>There was one shocking news from Elaine Congress: the decline of MSW students in USA but no reason was advanced. Britain and Australia are making changes to their accreditation system. On the other hand, the number of new social work students in Germany has reached 14.000 for the first time in 2004. In the Schools of Applied Social Science, the number stays the same, but in the Universities the number rose by more than 15 % from 2001 to 2002. In 2002 about 60.000 students were in the field of social work. Each year about 9.000 - 10.000 social work students (80 %) complete their studies. Most of them are women and the average age of the graduates is 30.</p>

Session title	Content in brief with comments/evaluation
<p>Social Systems Between Demands: Basic needs and minimum standards of social security—different social system and models of society in Europe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge human rights and social rights be protected by law • Collective actions from NGOs are suggested to fight against employers and institutions. • NGOs have to work close with politicians and gain their support • European Court of Justice should give priority to unemployment problems in Europe. • Problem of poverty has its roots not only in the social structure but also in the political structure. • It seems hard to have a united front in Europe because of diversities in Europe. • Social workers should seek their representation in social development. • Lots of sound ideals proposed but without discussion on how to make them happen and how to make non-social workers agree or aware of the importance of justices and negative impacts of poverty to societies. • “One Europe” is too ideal and lots of differences could and should not be standardized.
<p>Between Globalization and marginalization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief introduction of the Global Marshall plan was made. • Stressed that every child should have the right to full education. • To achieve full education requires US \$ 100 billion and suggested to be funded by the WTO • Balais Serrano from Philippines commented that 2/3 of global population explosion has been absorbed by the cities in their slum areas. • Support and funding did not reach the poor but went to the Government and big NGOs. • Suggested that “ you pretend to help and we pretend to reform” was the attitude of foreign assistance and response from local government • Idealistic approach shared but without sufficient sharing of how to make it happens.
<p>Social Cohesion: the impact of changing social systems on the social work profession in Europe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel speakers from Denmark, France, Romania and Spain presented their social problems and reported how the local social workers reacted to help. • Problems of people facing including unemployment, housing, immigrants, drug abuse, aging population, violence against women and elderly and family violence etc. • Social work needs to work together with other professions to protect the rights and wellness of people under changing of social systems. • Social work has to be more political, should emphasis social cohesion, develop good practice showcases, suggestions be supported by relevant statistics, ready to promote and celebrate their success and get support from the public.
<p>Social work ethics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent Theories about ethics were shared; such as ethics of care—attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness, ethics of emotion---which reflects the

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	<p>underlying values and postmodern ethics—which is a revision of virtue ethics, west and East differences and moral indeterminacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pluralism in practice---Striving to balance competing values, such as rational vs relational, objectivity and subjectivity, what are primary and secondary values, incompatible and incommensurable values are in inevitable conflicts • The Australian Association of Social Work Practice Standards : achieving outcomes 2003 were developed to guide ethical, effective and accountable standards. The standards outlined expectations on social workers. How to use the standards and guidelines were discussed. Under economic and political environments which do not share social justice aims, how the guidelines help social workers maintain professional practices become great challenges. • Is it possible by articulating professional standards to guarantee services outcomes becomes another challenge to social workers.
Poverty and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty measurement in Lithuania was treated more as a political tool instead of an objective measurement. • It was reported that when the poverty rate increased 29% at one year, then the Government stop the measurement and made no more survey or study about poverty
Women—violence and poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capabilities approach concerned with the unique situation of women in the context of social development • Other approaches may focus on the utilitarian views, they emphasised on the ends/goals/result/income—such as getting a job will help. • Capabilities theories see poverty as a result of capabilities insufficiency. They concern about process that allow freedom of choice and opportunities. • Literature review disclosed that violence against women affects women’s access to institutions, affects health mental health and ability to generate income.. • Why can’t we meet lone mothers’ economic needs? • It is suggested that through 1990s employment options tend to be distorted toward low paid with part-time and multiple job holding, irregular hours, shift works and on-call demands. Such demand marginalized the lone mothers both socially and economically
Basic needs and minimum standards of social security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Survey of American’s Families (NSAF) which was administered three times, in 1997, 1999 and 2002, asked about respondents’ perceptions toward welfare recipients and found that public perceptions toward public-assistance recipients are rather negative such as lazy, blacks, irresponsible motherhood, immigrants.. • Working family with low-end jobs earns minimum wage but

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	<p>lives under the poverty line</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From absolute dependence to partial dependence to toward independence or interdependence should be the way out • Need to differentiate different unemployment problems—long term or short term, caused by sickness, caring duties or insufficient job skills...etc
Closing Ceremony	<p>It was nicely arranged. The visionary Jakob von Uexdull who founded the Right Livelihood Award (often referred to as the “Alternative Nobel Prize”) gave an enlightening talk on the improvements that could be made to foster social work profession and advance social justice. His “Nobel Prize” honours people and institutions who are developing solutions to the problems of our time. The Right Livelihood Award is popular in the Third World because it emphasizes and supports the perspectives of these countries and their justified interest in self-determined development.</p>

Part II: Field Visits

Field Visit One –Housing for Homeless Men

- Locates near the city centre, just a few minutes walk from bus and train station
- A nice building with 5 floors and a small backyard
- 6 rooms on each floor, everyone has a separate living unit and share a common room with kitchen
- For men only, no drugs, alcohol is acceptable
- One social worker is assigned to each floor, there are six rooms on each floor
- Longest stay is one year in principle
- Individual counseling, group sessions, group activities, volunteer work for the community
- Encourage group help and mutual help
- Living standard is OK
- Violence happens while people get drunk
- No performance criteria set for the service as it is a pioneer project
- No benchmarking of service achievement / results were made

Field Visit Two – All-in-one Centre

- This follows the idea of one-stop and integrated service now popular with the rest of the world
- This was introduced only a few years ago and now there are a couple of centres spreading throughout Munich
- It was a multi-storeyed housing various services (distributing benefits, providing employment assistance, offering counselling service, etc.).

- The workers first took us to the conference room and highlighted the main features of the center, followed by floor-to-floor visits.
- The caseload seems to be decent as the workers had not raised any issue on this
- Not many clientele was encountered.
- The workers though drew our attention to the prevalence of aged poor in Germany
- The centre is located near the Central Train Station, which should be convenient to the clientele
- No benchmarking of service achievements/results were made.

VI. Summary/Conclusion

- (1) Often the IFSW was paired up with the IASSW Conference. This time, the IFSW Conference went ahead on its own and we must say the Conference was a success, in terms of the number of participants and delivery of the key messages. All the logistical supports and content delivery were up to standard. The Conference facilities were generally good while the location of hotel is convenient. The conference venue is easily accessible by public transport.
- (2) It was easy to make friends and establish networks with conference participants, daily and during the Conference Dinner.
- (3) Participants would not have missed the European elements displayed in this Conference. One would not have missed the large number of European social workers and scholars joining the Conference.
- (4) The European social workers often have their own and singular views on social issues. In fact, a number of social work initiatives (Global Marshall Plan and Jakob von Uexbill's idea of alternative Nobel Prize and "Right Livelihood Award") were put forward by them and shared with us during the conference. These initiatives were rather unique.
- (5) Other than the European favours, one cannot miss the internationalizing aspects of the Conference, as the participants came from all over the world. They came to present their practice experiences, research findings or association reports on selected issues (e.g., NASW). The discussions were genuinely international.
- (6) The important role of IFSW could not be underemphasized. As Imelda Dobbs nicely put it, "We have over the years established a solid framework and moved IFSW from being a cooperation tool for a limited group of western colleagues to a global body of social workers serving as a platform for professional identity across borders. Through a number of world and regional conferences, the development of core international documents to guide social work concepts and practices and ongoing representation to the United Nations and other international bodies, IFSW is today the global voice of social work practice."
- (7) As Hong Kong successfully has bid to host the 2010 IASSW and IFSW joint conference, it was a useful opportunity to publicize what Hong Kong and China will offer in the coming conference and for social workers and scholars to network with fellow social workers, introducing Hong Kong and China's social development. Thus it was impressive that both Mr. Choi Hoi Wai and Ms. Justina Leung were able to give some 10 minute publicity on 2010 conference.
- (8) In light of the usefulness and eye-opening nature of attending this Conference, we suggest the HKCSS continue to sponsor two delegates to the next IFSW conference.