



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 November 2022

English only

Commission for Social Development

Sixty-first session

6–15 February 2023

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
Priority Theme: Creating full and productive employment
and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities
to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development**

Statement submitted by International Federation of Social Workers, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



The International Federation of Social Workers is committed to creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Our federation encompasses 146 country-members; we strive for social justice, human rights, sustainable social development through social work best practices and engagement in international cooperation. Our 2021 Policy Social Work and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals affirms our support for, and role in, achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through sharing knowledge and continuing to collaboratively create and establish solutions that promote social change and social development while standing against exploitation of people and nature and against unjust structures that allow for wealth concentration in the hands of the few.

Our commitment to co-building an eco-social world, grounded in a holistic human rights framework that encompasses human rights, cultural rights, ecosystem rights and the broader rights of nature, is reflected in our policies, practices and partnerships across organisations, workforces, UN partners, and social movements. The 2022 People's Global Summit was initiated by our federation and 26 global organisations representing different faiths, philosophies, rights movements, and workforces to create a living document, The People's Charter for an Eco-social World. The Charter calls for unions and social movements to work with governments, public services, and the business sector in implementing fair practices and agreed international standards to secure sustainable and fair markets that will foster recognition and respect in people's lives.

Our commitment to full and productive work, accelerating recovery, overcoming inequality and achieving the 2030 Agenda is grounded in our philosophy of co-building an eco-social world with special attention to the needs of marginalised communities. Co-building transformative social protections (SDG #1, SDG #3), standing with workers to ensure collective worker rights, protections, and decent pay (SDG #8) in the context of jobs and industries that do no harm to the environment (SDG# 12) are strategies central to our holistic human rights framework and our goals of co-building an eco-social world.

Transformative Social Protections and Workers Rights: A Necessity for Equality, Employment and Decent Work

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns, conflicts, and climate change have led to employment loss, a global cost-of-living crisis, increasing debt burdens necessitate increased minimum wage and social protection benefits (ILO calls for universal social protection, 2022). These crises have revealed the fragility of global trade and the importance of well-functioning supply chains in which workers have access to social protections, safe working conditions, and rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining (ILO calls for universal social protection, 2022).

Our commitments to local living wages and socially just fair and sustainable world trade agreements (Policy for Socially Just, Fair and Sustainable World Trade Agreements, 2019) and transformative social protection as a public investment in well-being is in alignment with these recommendations. As a human-rights based profession working in solidarity with communities, we work towards realising the rights to safe working conditions and the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining through policy, practice and community organising for every worker.

Our vision of transformative social protection is one that supports communities to meet their aspirations of overcoming oppression, marginalisation and eradicate

poverty (SDG #1). In response to intersecting crises, social workers and other partners have renewed their focus on co-building social protection systems, health, education and other social services for preventative and responsive support systems that fulfil the rights and meet the needs of people. Governments need to join and invest in this new strategy to support communities and be better prepared for future crises (People's Charter for an Eco-social World, 2022), such as labour and community displacement and interruption of employment due to climate change.

Transformative social protection can provide women with time outside of unpaid care work to pursue employment as they are disproportionately burdened with caregiving of sick, disabled and elderly family members, burdens that are increased due to pandemics, conflicts and growing poverty. Women's employment is differentially impacted by climate change because agriculture is the most important employment sector for women in low- and lower-middle income countries. During weather patterns such as drought, flooding and erratic rainfall, women have to work harder to secure income and resources which puts added pressure on girls who often have to leave school to assist their mothers with the increased burden (UN Women, 2022 How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected).

Standing with Workers in the Informal Economy

The informal economy is the diversified set of economic activities, enterprises, jobs, and workers that are not regulated or protected by the state (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing & Organizing, n.d.). Globally, 61% of the world's workers earn their livelihoods in the informal economy; in developing countries, the percentage of women workers who are informally employed (92 per cent) is substantially higher than the percentage of men workers (87 per cent) (Bonnet, Vanek & Chen, 2019). During the COVID-19 lockdown, there was an income drop among 98% of informal economy employees globally (National Library of Medicine, 2022).

The carbon footprint from informal workers and enterprises is often smaller than that of their formal counterparts, so enabling transformative social protections and policies that support these workers is essential. For instance, social workers work with waste-pickers in the informal economy to form worker cooperatives (Truell, 2015) and provide opportunities to upgrade the skills of waste-pickers so they can become service providers in organic waste management and recycling entrepreneurs, thus increasing economic security, dignity (Das, 2012), social support, and knowledge and skills to help to mitigate climate change. Empowering waste pickers has become an effective strategy to address the issues of climate change.

The informal economy also includes workers in child-care and home cleaning services in which workers are paid in cash and have no benefits. Social workers provide technical and legal assistance to migrant women to form worker cooperatives in childcare and home-cleaning services that provide decent work, and build community, and provide greater economic security (Matthew & Bransburg, 2017). ILO considers cooperatives, as member-owned, democratically-controlled enterprises, among pathways to transition informal economy workers to the formal economy through strengthening their collective voice and representation, securing jobs and incomes and facilitating access to basic services and social protection (ILO: The informal economy and decent work 2015).

Cooperatives not only increase social protection but they are also grounded in the Global Agenda of Social Work's value of Ubuntu, "I am therefore we are". Strengthening the skill sets of waste pickers promotes Buen Vivir (People's Charter, 2022), by caring for their work ethic, dignity, and increasing passion to participate in the fight against climate change (SDG #13). IFSW supports social workers creating

worker cooperatives for men and women (SDG #5) as a way of increasing both their economic and job security through decent work (SDG #8).

Recommendations

In order to create full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, engagement from all local, national and global stakeholders is required. IFSW makes the following recommendations:

- Invest in and support technical assistance and training for the development of worker cooperatives in employment arenas that have a low carbon footprint;
 - Support and invest in the work that communities and professionals have been doing in co-building social protection systems of health, education and other social services that fulfil the rights and meet the needs of people;
 - Begin an international dialogue that calls on employers to ensure transparency and accountability for workers, the right to bargain collectively, and the right to social security and benefits.
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