

(Opening Session: The Aims of the Forum 説明参考資料)

## Reference 1

Akimoto, T., et al. "Objection to WPSW: To make social work something truly of the world—Indigenization is not the answer." [edit.] In Gohori, J. (Ed). (2020). *The Journey of Buddhist Social Work*. (The 4<sup>th</sup> ARIISW International Academic Forum Proceedings). Asian Research Institute for International Social Work (ARIISW), Shukutoku University. pp.62-65.

21 December 2019

*Dear Western-rooted Professional Social Work,*

*We respect your efforts and achievements until the present and look forward to further development.*

*However, please do not proclaim that the only Western-rooted Professional Social Work, or what professional social workers do, is social work, disregarding other "social works" which other people do. You are not entitled to monopolize social work. There could be other social works, too. On this earth, there are enormous numbers of people who have difficulties and problems in their lives. In most countries and regions, areas and districts, you are not there, or your social work doesn't fit them. You seem to pacify non-Western-rooted Professional Social Work people using the term of "indigenization", but indigenized social work is still Western-rooted Professional Social Work.*

*Social work is social work, whoever does it. Rely on various indigenous social works. Otherwise, we cannot deliver social work, which we love, to the overwhelming majority of people with sufferings in the world.*

*Social work would like to serve people. We would like to make social work something truly of the world. Let's lead social work to its next stage together, not to the globalization of Western-rooted professional social work.*

*In solidarity,*

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## Objection to WPSW

# To Make Social Work Something Truly of the World

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We would like to make social work, which we love, something of the whole world. Social work should exist to serve all suffering people in this world.

The dissemination of current social work (Western-rooted professional social work; WPSW) is not able to make social work the social work of the whole world. It is simply the globalization of WPSW. Its indigenization—a popular word these days—is not the answer, either. Indigenized social work is still WPSW. The exploration and establishment of an indigenous social work, which is different from but equal in status to WPSW, is necessary to achieve our goal. WPSW must be modest; indigenous social work must catch up WPSW.

### 1. “Social Work Is One Entity”

Wherever we go in Asia, Africa and Latin America, we hear the chorus of professionalization. We constantly hear such terms as human rights, social justice, empowerment, self-determination, and social reform. It sounds as if we, those in social work, were all one. Some people even state, “We are a global profession.”

What is social work? It’s easy to get an answer. Just ask the social workers and social work teachers around you. All would say the same, most typically, “Look at IASSW/IFSW’s Global Definition of Social Work Profession.”

*Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.*

*The above definition may be amplified at the national and/or regional level.*

All the following are included in it: “Social work is a …… profession,”<sup>1</sup> “an academic discipline,” “social change and development,” “the empowerment,” “social justice,” and “human rights.”

## 2. “It’s Theirs.”

Wherever we go in Asia, Africa and Latin America, we also hear other voices: “Something is wrong,” and “This is theirs,” “The West’s,” “developed countries’,” and “It does not fit us.” “Our culture is different.” “Our tradition, life and society are different.”

In the statement that the culture, tradition, life and society are different, there is a mix of two different ingredients, that is, 1) the difference of the degree of industrialization, and 2) the difference of “intrinsic” or “indigenous” culture and traditional life and society.

1) The distribution among the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> industries varies. In some countries’ economies, the agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries comprise 60 percent or 70 percent while in some other countries only a small percent. Could the same narrow definition of social work be applicable both in post-industrial societies and pre-industrial societies? The structural development of occupations and their classifications, the level of urbanization, and the percentage of students in higher education are all different. For example, it is not realistic even to imagine “professional social workers” in some countries. There are no—or not sufficient numbers—of professional social workers in most of 200 countries and regions in the world. “This “difference of culture” in this sense may diminish over the time, though.

2) The “intrinsic” or “indigenous” culture is different. Once I said that we could read “individualism”, “modernism”, and “Christianity” between lines in the previous IASSW/IFSW’s international definition of social work. Spontaneously a Buddhist professor in Japan responded, “This is ‘individualism’, ‘modernism’, and ‘Christianity’ themselves.” Theirs are binary thinking (e.g. people vs. the environment, human beings vs. nature), Maslow-like self-actualization, wants/needs, putting yourself at the center, starting with yourself, discarding the “inner” aspect…… Ours are harmony, respect of others and elders, help without expecting returns, Buddhism, Hindu, Islam and coexistence/living together, aren’t they?

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<sup>1</sup> The author of this paper proposed a motion to replace “is” with “could be” in the first sentence, “SW is a ……profession……,” of the IA/IF’s global definition in the IA general meeting in which we discussed adopting it in 2014. However, the chair and other leaders around her ignored the motion against the Robert Rules of Orders.

### 3. The Response from “Them”

This social work does not fit us—it is of “‘developed’ countries” and “it is the West’s.” Mainstream social work would respond: If “you don’t have any or sufficient professional social workers, import them from us,” or “Produce them”. They know that this is impossible. If “your culture is different,” then “Change your culture,” or—a little modestly, “Indigenize the social work.” They know that indigenized social work is still WPSW. These sound like colonialists and imperialistic demands and the demand for the globalization of the WPSW itself. In short, social work means WPSW, and must be WPSW. The intention is to make WPSW that of the world with or without modification.

Actually, many professional social workers from the West have worked and are working in social work “undeveloped” countries under colony managing governments, UN programs such as UNICEF, ODA of “developed” countries, international NGO projects, and university programs, or with personal voluntary initiatives. “Social work colonialism!” would be shouted back from the non-Western-rooted social work camp.

While there are at best few professional social workers, people in those “developing” countries have enormous numbers of the same or similar difficulties and problems in their lives as in social work “developed” countries, and also have different problems and difficulties. There is an urgent demand for “social work”. So, then, quickly create huge numbers of professional social workers in countries where only a small percent of young people go to colleges and there is little financial resource. “It is impossible!”

If your culture is different, “Change your culture,” said the then President of IFSW, Ruth Stark, in an international seminar on social welfare held in Tokyo on 10 December 2016 hosted by the Japan College of Social Work. Some participants were frightened.

Another alternative is “Indigenize social work” so that social work could be accepted and would function effectively. Wherever you go these days, you hear the chorus of “Indigenization”, which is another popular word today in the social work community. But can “indigenization” make social work that of the world? The indigenized social work will be still WPSW, won’t it—even if you indigenize much of the WPSW? Can we wait for the accomplishment of the law of conversion from quantity to quality? Remember Christian missionaries who proselytized in Latin America, Africa and Asia a few centuries ago or just several decades ago. They indigenized, for example, decorations of churches, clothes of the priests and the parables they spoke. But the core of what was transmitted was still Christianity.

### 4. No Thanks for the Globalization of WPSW

WPSW proponents have not even been conscious of the globalization of social work itself.

Countries of the WPSW are the absolute minority in the world, only a handful among 200 countries and regions—Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The overwhelming majority of countries and people on the earth belong to the non-WPSW world. This is a definition of globalization given by a Japanese author (Ohno, K. 2000. *Globalization of Developing Countries—Is the self-sustainable development possible?* Toyo Keizai Shinposha. (in Japanese)):

“Globalization is a process, with a clear direction and hierarchical structure. It values and favors systems of the country at the center over other regions, which tend to either follow or are coerced. It is “self-evident” in the central country’s eyes that their civilization is superior. Globalization implies both a sense of superiority and sense of mission to extend the benefits to regions which have not enjoyed them yet.

Furthermore, it cannot be denied that globalization has shown a pattern where the central country forces other countries to participate in fields where it has already claimed advantages under rules it has laid down, and then perpetuates that superiority on a progressive scale.” [translated by T. Akimoto]

Was this definition written to describe today’s social work?

[Continued to Reference 1 for ARIISW session]