



## Concept Note

*At the global level, in the North as well as in the South, women continue to be at a disadvantage to men, socially, politically and economically<sup>1</sup>. These structural inequalities are manifested, for example, in gender-based violence occurring in the domestic and family sphere, in public spaces, and systematic rape of women and girls as a weapon and tactic of conflict and war. A range of initiatives are intended to combat gender-based inequality and discrimination, such as the creation of UN Women<sup>2</sup> or the recognition of women as a major interest group<sup>3</sup> in discussions leading to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

Growing awareness of gender inequality has been accompanied by greater visibility of the multiple discriminations faced by LGBTQI+ people. Legal, social, political and economic difficulties increase the prevalence of mental, psychological or psychological illnesses, which are detrimental to their quality of life and increase their risk of suicide. While women and LGBTQI+ people are groups with their own specificities, they also share common demands, such as the full enjoyment of their human rights including sexual and reproductive health and rights, contraception, equal participation in all social, political and economic spheres, and access to public resources.

The inclusion and equality of women and LGBTQI+ people in all social spheres is crucial for social work, as is the fight against discrimination related to gender and sexuality. The social disadvantages that affect these groups are manifested, for example, in LGBTQI+ people being criminalized, misgendered, imprisoned or denied medical care; in their under-representation in decision-making processes and spheres of power; and in the terms of their

participation in the labour market-lower wages, precarious employment status, and unequal participation in voluntary care tasks, for example<sup>4</sup>. People from marginalized and vulnerable groups also tend to be disproportionately affected by phenomena such as migration, ecological, economic or political crises, demonstrating the intersecting and multiplying nature of discrimination and inequality. In spite of some improvements in some spheres, for example in the wake of the Beijing Conference on Women (1995)<sup>5</sup> and as a result of campaigns in support of LGBTQI+ people's rights<sup>6</sup>, the situation remains largely unsatisfactory. The focus of World Social Work Day 2019 at the UN in Geneva on Gender and Sexuality: Towards Equality and Inclusion sends a strong signal on the need to redouble efforts to advance and substantiate human rights for all.

## Global agenda for social work and social development

In 2012 the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) together with the International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW) developed a Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development. This initiative provides a common basis for joint action addressing the major challenges of our societies and identifying relevant social issues for our profession and beyond. The Global Agenda is a strong commitment to promote social and economic equality, the dignity and worth of people, environmental and community sustainability, and the importance of human relationships.

Celebrated worldwide since 1983 at the United Nations in New York and since 2012 in Geneva, **World Social Work Day** aims to highlight the achievements of social work, to raise the visibility of social services for the future of societies, and to defend social justice and human rights. World Social Work Day at the UN was born from the initiative of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), which have special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). The Day has been celebrated since 2012 in Geneva with the collaboration of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland –Social Work, Geneva (HETS GE), since 2017 with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), and since 2018 with the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland –Social Work, Fribourg. World Social Work Day has the following objectives:

- Strengthen cooperation, partnership, existing contacts - or establish new ones - with United Nations organizations and international NGOs;
- Spread knowledge about social work, its values, principles and methods (practical and theoretical) among UN organizations and allied international NGOs;
- Highlight social work actions, policies and achievements in the pursuit of common goals;
- Disseminate knowledge about UN activities, goals, programs and campaigns among social workers and social work organizations and schools

The focus in 2019 is strengthening capacity for action, inclusion and equality<sup>7</sup>. The celebration of World Social Work Day at the UN in Geneva is part of this approach, putting at the heart of its proposal **the inclusion of women, as well as marginalized genders and sexualities, in all spheres of society**. The event will pay special attention to strategies and policies to combat the discrimination and inequality of these groups in all societies.

## International definition of social work

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.

*Definition of social work adopted in 2014 by IASSW and IFSW.*

1. <http://www.unrisd.org/research/gender/report;>  
[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFramePDF?ReadForm&parentunid=BEF34BA6E16C7A05C1257F9C00519A3B&parentdoctype=brief&netitpath=80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpAuxPages\)/BEF34BA6E16C7A05C1257F9C00519A3E/\\$file/RPB21-VAW.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFramePDF?ReadForm&parentunid=BEF34BA6E16C7A05C1257F9C00519A3B&parentdoctype=brief&netitpath=80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpAuxPages)/BEF34BA6E16C7A05C1257F9C00519A3E/$file/RPB21-VAW.pdf)
2. <http://www.unwomen.org/fr>
3. <http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/>
4. [http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/\(httpPublications\)/25697FE238192066C12576D4004CFE50?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/(httpPublications)/25697FE238192066C12576D4004CFE50?OpenDocument) ; <http://indicators.report/targets/5-4/>
5. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/>
6. Discours, en 2010, de Navy Pillay, Haut-Commissaire aux Droits humains<sup>1</sup>, et du secrétaire général Ban Ki-Moon et publication par le HCDH de la brochure Nés égaux, en 2012, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/BornFreeAndEqualLowRes\\_FR.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/BornFreeAndEqualLowRes_FR.pdf)
7. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>