

LYNNE MOORE HEALY

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# INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

T H I R D   E D I T I O N

*Professional Action in an Interdependent World*

OXFORD

# International Social Work



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## *Professional Action in an Interdependent World*

THIRD EDITION

LYNNE MOORE HEALY

*University of Connecticut*

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*University of Connecticut*

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*Dedicated to my husband, son, and grandchildren for their  
love and support.*  
Lynne Moore Healy

*Dedicated to my mother, Lizzie Thomas, who encouraged me  
to learn, listen to others, practice humility, and to be kind.*  
Rebecca Leela Thomas



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## FOREWORD

The third edition of *International Social Work: Professional Action in an Interdependent World* is a much-anticipated seminal publication that addresses the realities and challenges of our global context and the strategies for international professional action in a most passionate and forceful manner. Building on the solid foundation of the earlier versions, Lynne Healy and Rebecca Thomas have further enriched this third edition by adding significant contents on important changes in the larger environment, innovative theories and interventions developed to address emerging issues, and global platforms initiated to steer international collaboration to confront critical global challenges. All members of the social work community around the world, including social work practitioners, educators, students, and policymakers, should benefit from this masterpiece and be critically challenged to reflect on their own concepts and values toward international social work and be positively inspired to engage in international professional action to build a better world for tomorrow.

Professor Healy is a world-renowned pioneer in the field of international social work, particularly in human rights policy advocacy, and has been zealously involved as main representative to the United Nations of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and a member of the NGO Committee for Social Development for many years. Professor Thomas's extensive teaching and research in international social work and development have been enhanced by her active engagement in the Committee on Migration at the United Nations and her extensive practice in India and Armenia, on issues relating to human rights, refugees, and migration. Not only have they acquired ample experience and knowledge in international social work through these engagements, but also they have developed critical insights and pragmatic strategies for professional intervention at local, regional, and international levels. In every chapter of this book, the authors have brilliantly blended their academic knowledge and direct practice experience with research discoveries in the selected case examples to illustrate the dynamics, complexities, and opportunities for international social work practice. These vivid examples help to illustrate the powerful ways in which theories and concepts of international social work could be actualized in real-life contexts through mutual respect, inclusion, collaboration, and the genuine commitment to global core values relating to peace, justice, equality, and basic human rights. The book has successfully amalgamated academic rigor with down-to-earth practice wisdom

and should be an ideal text for students, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers interested in international social work across the globe.

Professors Healy and Thomas are fervent advocates for international social work, and they subscribe to the view of Lorenz (1997) that “all social work is enmeshed in global processes of change” (p. 2). They have taken a positive and proactive stance toward the issue of globalization, and they believe that “globalization has created significant areas of international responsibility as well as new opportunities for social work impact by reshaping the social work environment” (p. 2). They have forcefully argued that social workers should rise to the occasion and respond to the challenge of globalization in four important ways. First, international social forces have changed the pattern of domestic social work practice, and there is an urgent need for social workers to be equipped with new knowledge and competencies to cope with the social problems and conditions resulting from global interdependence. Second, the prevalence of common social problems across nations, whether developed or less developed, has made the development of a shared agenda for social work action across nations as well as a renewed focus on the core values of social work more necessary. Third, since the actions of one country directly and indirectly affect other countries’ social and economic well-being, there is no longer a clear division between what is foreign and what is domestic; international professional action is essential since no single nation (and the professional groups therein) can solve these problems alone. Fourth, advanced technologies have drastically changed the patterns of global communications and created enhanced opportunities for international sharing, exchange, and professional action among social workers on a global scale.

This new edition of *International Social Work* is launched in a most appropriate and desirable point in time when the world is facing seemingly insurmountable critical challenges. One decade has passed since the publication of the second edition of *International Social Work* in 2008. Since then, many critical changes in the profession and in the larger environment have transpired. Among these are the increased attention on climate change and the physical environment, political conflicts in numerous countries that have led to increased migration and flows of refugees, a global fiscal crisis and the ensuing pessimism in global economy, escalating inequality both within and between nations, the growth in populism and its potential threat to the global human rights regime, and intensification of terrorism and xenophobia across the globe. Political issues like “Brexit” have definitely affected international political dynamics and further aggravate regional stability and international economics. The strings of protests by students, populists, ethnic separatist groups, and diverse interest groups have almost become daily occurrences around the globe, and their aspirations and demands are being communicated worldwide through social media. These challenges have created much turmoil, instability, and uncertainty in not only the locations where these problems have originated but also all across the globe.

In view of this analysis, how can social workers remain detached and disconnected with these global issues and continue to bury ourselves with our heavy domestic chores and caseloads? Do social workers have the moral courage to step out of our comfort zones to understand the underpinnings of these global issues and take ethical professional action to confront some of these issues?

Despite the difficulties and challenges associated with international social work, it is heartening to learn that many social workers from different times and locations and with diverse backgrounds have taken courageous steps to confront some of these seemingly overpowering global issues with determination and persistence, and in close partnership with colleagues from across the globe. Our early social work pioneers were quick to become aware of the need for international collaboration to find solutions for urgent social issues.

As early as 1893, an International Conference of Charities, Correction, and Philanthropy was held in Chicago and brought together a good number of charity workers and philanthropists from a variety of countries to discuss issues of common concern. In 1928, some 3,000 social welfare practitioners from 42 countries met in Paris to search for a new and improved approach to humanitarian work. It was at this meeting, under the visionary leadership of Dr. Rene Sand of Belgium, that two significant nongovernmental international organizations were founded: the International Conference of Social Work (later renamed as the International Council on Social Welfare) and the International Committee of Schools of Social Work (later renamed as the IASSW).

During this groundbreaking conference, there was a sense of urgency among participants to address social issues through international collaboration. Among the major themes for discussions were the importance of interdisciplinary work in social welfare, the need for international work that also respects national values, the move toward increased emphasis on professionalism for social work and social work education, and the importance of personal relationship building among social workers across the globe (Kuilema, 2016).

The subsequent international social work conferences held in Frankfurt (1932), London (1936), and Atlantic City (1948) were concerned with urgent social issues resulting from the aftermath of the World Wars and the Great Depression, including unemployment, refugees and migration, emergency relief, and families and children in poverty. These conferences were problem based, solution focused, interdisciplinary in nature, and collaborative in spirit, and they set the scene for subsequent international social work conferences that have become excellent platforms to facilitate international dialogues on social issues and generate international professional action to enhance national, regional, and international social policies.

The establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 provided a permanent international platform and a huge impetus for social workers from across the globe to contribute to humanitarian efforts to deal with the massive social problems caused by World War II and its aftermath. All the major voluntary social work organizations, together with key governmental agencies, came together to work with the United Nations and promote continuing international cooperation in the field of social welfare through a permanent Committee on International Organization for Social Work. The Social Commission (now the Commission for Social Development) assumed responsibility for the humanitarian programs of the League of Nations together with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Because of their professional knowledge and skills in working with disadvantaged groups, many social workers were engaged in direct relief work and support services for the orphaned, displaced, and disabled masses in UN-related relief activities. Other than the United

Nations, social workers were also actively involved in voluntary organizations such as the Red Cross, the International YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association), Save the Children Fund, International Social Service, and more that were actively involved in providing aid to those displaced by wars and other major calamities.

In 1959, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) expanded its interest in social work and asked the UN secretary general to do "everything possible to obtain the participation of social workers in the preparation and application of programs for underdeveloped countries" (Garigue, 1961, p. 21). This recommendation resulted in many social workers, mostly Americans, being recruited to provide consultation and training for colleagues from abroad in social welfare exchange programs to support the social development effort in less-developed countries. Although these intensive international involvements were later criticized as social work imperialism and inappropriate imposition of American educational structures and values, "This was probably due to insufficient knowledge of other cultures and their social and economic forces rather than a determined desire to propagate American casework" (Kendall, 2001).

Though the United Nations "was unquestionably the most significant of the internationalizing influences on the social work profession, not only in [the U.S.] but throughout the world" for at least two decades following World War II, unfortunately, the influence of the social work profession on the United Nations has gradually declined (Kendall, 1994, p. 6). "One reason for this could be the United Nation's shift in emphasis away from human resources to economic development, a field to which social work has less to offer. Moreover, even as the focus moved toward social development, social work was slow to adapt to the development movement and unable to compete in the interdisciplinary environment" (Healy and Thomas, 2020, p. 238).

This phenomenon is indeed alarming and calls for a critical rethink among the social work community on our seeming disinterest in the international arena and our declining visibility and influence not only in the United Nations but also in the world as a whole. Perhaps we should reflect on the prevailing attitude of our profession toward international engagement and collaboration, which has naturally influenced our approach to advocacy. Are we so obsessed with the numerous domestic problems that we have no spare capacity to take interest in the problems of others? Perhaps the personal and family orientation that has dominated social work practice and education in developed countries over recent decades has contributed to the general apathy and detachment from human rights and humanitarian issues that affect populations and countries beyond our own national borders. We may have sometimes ignored the need to critically reflect on our own cultural biases and presumptions and to ensure that we respect diversity and embrace cultural differences in our professional actions and international collaborations.

Fortunately, however, there are many indications that the social work community is regaining its visibility and collective voice in global development issues. In order to increase social work's impact on global social development, the leadership of the IASSW, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), and International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW) initiated a joint project to articulate a Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development as a common strategy and action plan to raise international debate and concern on pressing social issues and seek solutions

from social work and social development perspectives. The Global Agenda intends to “create a space for debate within the profession and beyond with all those committed to social, economic and political justice” (Tasse, 2014, p. 283). The views and recommendations solicited through the participatory process are jointly proposed to policymakers at different levels, including community, governments, international organizations such as the UN system, and national bodies. Four themes have been identified as priority goals, namely, promoting human dignity and worth, promoting social and economic equality, promoting environmental sustainability, and strengthening human relationships.

The Global Agenda was officially launched in 2010 during the international conference jointly organized by the three organizations at Hong Kong. A policy and action document of the Global Agenda was formally adopted by the three social work international organizations in 2012, and the agenda has become one of the major organizing and structuring frameworks guiding the strategic development and programs of the three international social work organizations. The Global Agenda’s commitments are aligned with the ambitious measurement-driven 2030 Agenda and 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the governments of the United Nations in 2015 with the aim to transform the world to a more “just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met” (United Nations, 2015, p. 4).

Moreover, there is increasing evidence indicating that the social work community is taking more proactive steps to respond to global issues and develop innovative theories and interventions, such as the newly defined “green social work” to address climate and environment. The global crisis caused by climate change, environmental degradation, and food and water insecurity has accelerated global inequalities. Advocates of green social work argue that the role of social work in intersecting between people and policy can ensure that the human rights of the most vulnerable are protected and that socially just solutions are enacted. Professor Lena Dominelli, the earliest pioneer of green social work, has forcefully explored (2012) the concept and its role in using environmental crises to address poverty and other forms of structural inequalities, obtain more equitable allocations of limited natural resources, and tackle global sociopolitical forces that have a damaging impact on the quality of life of poor and marginalized populations at local levels.

I totally concur with the view of Professors Healy and Thomas that globalization is a powerful force that will continue to reshape the nature of the world’s problems and the institutions addressing them, and that international social work is simply the reality of social work in the twenty-first century. In the concluding chapter, they passionately appeal that

Social work has been involved in global movements to improve human well-being and social conditions almost since its inception. Now in its second century, the profession must exert expanded leadership for humane global change, human rights, and development. The agenda of global social issues needing social work attention is long and challenging; the viability and standing of the profession in the globalized world require bold and vigorous pursuit of opportunities for international professional action. (p. 448)

I salute the authors for putting together such a comprehensive and stunningly captivating publication covering the history, concepts, theories, policies, practice, and ethics relating to international social work. It is not only a thoroughly researched and well-written publication that will attract voluminous readers from across the globe, but also a masterpiece filled with passion, encouragements, expectations, and hopes for the social work profession to effect transformative global change in the international arena, advance social justice, and improve human well-being.

Angelina Yuen-Tsang, PhD, RSW, MEd, MSW  
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## PREFACE

As the book was moving through the production phase, the world was hit with a major new threat, the Covid-19 outbreak. It will be months before the consequences can be fully analyzed, but it is clear that this virus will be devastating to people and to economies. These cannot be covered in this text, as production is well underway. However, we add this note to guide readers who use our book while experiencing the aftermath.

The pandemic underscores that we live in a globalized world; borders and border restrictions cannot protect a country from events occurring in far distant countries. As was true for AIDS (discussed in Chapter 2), the virus spread rapidly to most countries. Life as we know it was quickly greatly altered. The huge impact on workers across the world demonstrates that health, social, and economic issues are intertwined. We can expect impacts from Covid-19's economic disruptions at least as serious as those from the 2008 fiscal crisis, discussed in Chapter 2. Can the lessons from that crisis combined with the United Nations 2030 agenda's promise to leave no one behind prevent the heaviest consequences from falling on the poor and increasing inequalities? Most likely the impact will exacerbate many of the social issues discussed in Chapter 5. Challenges for development practice (Chapter 11) will intensify as the health "tsunami" of Covid-19 reserves progress made. The potential roles for social work are also expanded. For a health crisis for which there is no prevention or cure at present, the changes needed to protect populations are largely behavioral in nature. Inevitably, the crisis will put new strains on families and communities and those who are particularly isolated. Mental health issues, family violence, and other problems will increase. Therefore, there are huge opportunities for social work contributions at the micro practice and policy levels in this and future pandemics. Increased use of the internet, forced by quarantine orders, may accelerate for service delivery as well as education and exchange (as discussed in chapter 14). Solidarity and humanitarianism have never been more important and the need for worldwide cooperation, leadership from global bodies, and sharing of knowledge is accentuated (emphasized in chapter 15).

More than a decade has passed since the second edition of this book was published. In many ways, even without the pandemic, the world is not the same place as it was in 2008, necessitating significant changes in the text. The world has struggled to recover from a major fiscal crisis that began just after the second edition was published. Inequality had increased and is recognized as a threat to human well-being in

most, if not all, countries. War in Syria has caused large flows of refugees into Europe, and continued violence in Central America accelerated the numbers of asylum seekers at the border of the United States; these events have led to increased xenophobia and pushback against migrants in many places. There is greatly heightened awareness of the threat of climate change and the need for significant changes in human activity to prevent further damage to the environment. In Europe, “Brexit”—the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union—poses threats to the regional body and further unsettling of the global economy. Populism now threatens the global consensus, and there are signs of disenchantment with the global human rights regime. These are just a few of the threats facing the world. The decade has also been a time where many “givens” are being challenged, and the world seems to be in a state of flux. Although we hope for significant improvements in the global situation as the book goes to press, we also hope that the text will help readers make sense of current and future events.

There have also been positive global developments and new opportunities for social work involvement and contributions. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals program has been completed with both successes and disappointments, and in 2015, the new and more ambitious 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals were adopted. Social work has responded by engaging with new problems and developing innovative theories and interventions, such as the newly defined “green social work” to address climate and environment. The three major international professional associations (International Council on Social Welfare [ICSW], International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASSW], International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW]) launched a Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development in 2012, identifying promoting human dignity and worth, promoting social and economic equality, promoting environmental sustainability, and strengthening human relationships as priority goals. This key document now provides a framework for social work action and advocacy at all levels from the local to global. Social work education continues to expand throughout the world, indicating widespread acknowledgment of the value of the profession. This volume addresses the new realities of the global context and the profession’s current and future responses.

## CONTENT AND EMPHASIS

The third edition of *International Social Work: Professional Action in an Interdependent World*, like the earlier versions, provides a comprehensive treatment of the topic of international social work. It builds on an action- and practice-focused definition that is spelled out in the first chapter and includes chapters on relevant theory, global social problems, the history of the development of the social work profession around the world and global professional action, internationally linked aspects of domestic practice, development practice, ethical principles for international practice, and global policy advocacy. The final section addresses international exchange and additional recommendations and mechanisms for advancing the profession’s impact in the global arena. Several carefully selected resources are included in the appendixes to augment the text.

All statistics and factual information have been updated. Areas of new content have been developed from the authors' own research and involvements with international social work and social development organizations.

Part I of the book introduces important theories and concepts underlying international social work. Beginning with a chapter that gives an expanded discussion of globalization and the recent antiglobalization populism, separate chapters follow on development and on human rights. This section concludes with a chapter on selected global social issues or problems and a chapter describing the major international organizations that address these issues. Part II covers the global history of social work and a selective treatment of the profession's involvements in international action. It concludes with a chapter examining similarities and differences in social work as it is practiced around the world, drawing on seven countries as examples. Part III addresses social work values, practice, and policy. The chapters in this section focus on professional ethics, international relief and development practice, practice at the domestic/international interface, and engagement in global social policy. The final section of the book (Part IV) features a chapter on diverse forms of international exchange and a concluding chapter with additional recommendations for professional action.

In the second edition, a single chapter addressed development and human rights. Recognizing the importance of development and human rights as theory and practice arenas for international social work, the book now presents these topics in separate and expanded chapters. Chapter 3 on development addresses the growing emphasis on climate change and efforts to achieve environmental sustainability. After coverage of the history of development, this chapter assesses the experience under the UN's Millennium Development Goals and introduces the newer United Nations 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. Advances and challenges in measurement of development progress are included. The chapter emphasizes the physical environment and social work's growing awareness of the essential links between the quality of the environment, development, and human well-being. As noted, it includes discussion of environmental degradation and climate change—labeled the “existential challenge of our era”—and efforts to achieve sustainability by global intergovernmental bodies and through social work interventions.

Human rights remain an important theme in the book and are covered in both a separate chapter (Chapter 4) and woven throughout the book as an essential element for international social work. Since 2008, there have been advances as the United Nations has begun to act on rights of sexual minorities and expanded the process of Universal Periodic Review to examine the human rights record of all nations. At the same time, however, there has been pushback against the very idea of rights. Readers will also see considerable attention paid to migration and refugees in several chapters of the book. Practice and policy issues concerning international populations remain an important focal point for international social work.

We have drawn on the burgeoning literature on international social work and have cited many new reports and publications from international intergovernmental bodies. Among these publications are numerous UN materials. One of the major contributions of the United Nations is its research and publication program. Almost all UN documents are available free online, and we believe that it is important for

social workers to be aware of availability of these materials and to become familiar with the policy proposals emanating from global organizations. We have also drawn on our experiences. Both of us engage in nongovernmental organization (NGO) representation at the United Nations, Lynne Healy with the NGO Committee on Social Development and Rebecca Thomas with the NGO Committee on Migration. We are able to glean valuable insights from this direct engagement with UN commissions and relationships with other NGOs. We have also participated in international and regional social work meetings. These exchanges with numerous colleagues from all continents through our involvement with the IASSW and the North American and Caribbean Association of Schools of Social Work have enriched our scholarship and our lives.

## AUDIENCE

This book is intended for all readers who would like to increase their knowledge about international aspects of social work and others who are interested more broadly in global social issues, developments, and institutions. It is aimed at a global audience, drawing examples from numerous countries and using global literature. Although the largest group of readers will most likely be from North America, we hope that students, faculty members, and practitioners from many countries will find the book relevant for their work. We have added brief biographical sketches of two additional social work pioneers, one each from Egypt and South Africa, and have added new case examples to further diversify the geographic coverage in the book.

## APOLOGIES

As mentioned, the intent of the book is to provide a comprehensive introduction to international social work in all its dimensions and to provide a grounding in essential knowledge of theories, issues, and policies essential for practice in our global era. As with the earlier editions, comprehensiveness is an impossible goal, and therefore the intent to be comprehensive is both a strength and a limitation of the book. International social work covers a vast area of inquiry, and readers will undoubtedly find topics that are omitted or covered in less depth than desired. We have undoubtedly left aside many important issues and policy developments and shortchanged the many organizations that are making a difference on the international level.

It is hoped readers will be encouraged by their new knowledge to continue their journey into the international literature for additional information on included and new topics.

Regarding the tone of the book, although as individuals we have strong opinions on many of the issues discussed in the book, we have worked to avoid a one-sided treatment of the issues. We hope a balanced presentation of the complexities of topics such as globalization and development will allow readers to formulate their own informed opinions. Readers will observe that we have made considerable use of UN

publications and policies. This is not to suggest that the United Nations is the final authority on these topics or that the profession should adopt the United Nations' priorities as its own. However, we believe that social workers need increased familiarity with these global-level guidelines. Policies and initiatives of the United Nations and World Bank often influence the priorities of NGOs and shape even the protest movements of grassroots groups. We also believe that it is important for social work to be represented and to engage at the level of intergovernmental bodies as long as this does not mute our voices to raise objections and advocate for the rights and well-being of the vulnerable. It is important for social workers to serve as the conscience of international policy, serving as critics and participating in protest movements to further professional values.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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There are many people to acknowledge for their assistance with our research. As noted in the second edition, it has been our good fortune to meet and learn from leaders, scholars, practitioners, and activists from many countries and our interactions with them have contributed to our scholarship. First, we would like to pay tribute to Katherine A. Kendall, who wrote the forewords for the first two editions. This remarkable pioneer in international social work and social work education passed away in 2010 at the age of 100 after nearly seven decades of work to expand and improve the profession. We especially appreciate Katherine's generosity in sharing her knowledge and encouraging younger colleagues. We also thank Angelina Yuen-Tsang of Hong Kong, former president of the IASSW, for agreeing to write the foreword for this edition. We are honored to have this present-day pioneer contribute to our book. Dr. Yuen-Tsang is particularly noted for her leadership in expanding social work education in China and capacity building in other parts of Asia.

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# 1

## INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

### *CONTEXT AND DEFINITIONS*

I imagine centuries in which in the higher minds in the States a noble sense of world duty, a world consciousness, will struggle with mass mentality and gradually pervade it.  
—Jane Addams, 1930, p. 8, quoting George Russell

Social workers around the world have numerous opportunities for international action:

- A social worker administering a shelter for battered women in Massachusetts is asked to admit an undocumented immigrant from El Salvador whose husband has threatened to kill her.
- Social workers in Greece organize to respond to the influx of refugees from Syria.
- Social workers from Mexico and Texas meet to work out policies to deal with parents who move their children back and forth across the border during ongoing child abuse and neglect investigations.
- A young social worker from Germany, assigned to Uganda as part of the overseas development program, develops training programs in conflict resolution and the do no harm approach in an area recovering from conflict.
- Representatives of the International Association of Schools of Social Work at the United Nations (UN) lobby for inclusion of a separate Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on inequality within and between nations.
- Institutional social workers and social pedagogues from Denmark and Germany introduce child-care institutions in New York to a professional model of child care.
- Social workers in Jamaica organize a coalition on the Rights of the Child and prepare an alternative report on their country's progress to submit to the UN Center for Human Rights in Geneva.
- Social workers from Barbados and Trinidad provide disaster relief services in Grenada after the island is devastated by Hurricane Ivan.

In each brief vignette, social workers, individually or through their agencies and organizations, have engaged in international action, action that requires knowledge about international relations, about the realities of other nations, and about the

profession of social work as it is practiced throughout the world. The range of action is broad—from full-time professional overseas practice to domestic practice in which an occasional case with international dimensions is encountered. Still other actions call on the advocacy responsibilities of the profession and its members and are often carried out in addition to regular employment duties.

This book is based on a number of assumptions about the importance of international learning in social work and about the nature of the social work environment. Globalization has grown enormously over the past several decades to the point that its general acceptance has become almost a cliché. But in spite of Jane Addams's early embrace of global-mindedness (as shown in part by her selection of "Growing World Consciousness" as the subtitle of her second autobiographical book), social work has not fully recognized the extent to which its practice and professional environment are shaped by interdependence, and the profession has not seized available opportunities for increasing its impact internationally. This text provides knowledge of the international dimension of social work—to strengthen the ability of social workers to contribute to and benefit from international developments in the profession and to improve social workers' competence in their everyday practice in the context of global interdependence. Globalization, in all its complexities, is, therefore, an overarching theme in the pages that follow.

Another theme is international professional action. Considerable emphasis is put on the responsibilities of the social work profession as a whole and of individual social workers for action related to global injustice, global social problems, and practice challenges. For many, this is a new idea. What is meant by *international responsibilities* is explained briefly in this chapter and in depth in the chapters that follow.

## GLOBALIZATION: WHY INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK?

As expressed by Walter Lorenz (1997),

"Going beyond the national level" in social work cannot be the personal hobby of a few specialists who are dealing with migrant and refugee groups or with ethnic minorities . . . or of a few idealists who want to promote international exchanges to widen their horizon and to learn more about methods and practices in other countries. On the contrary, all social work is enmeshed in global processes of change. (p. 2)

Globalization has created significant areas of international responsibility as well as new opportunities for social work impact by reshaping the social work environment in four important ways.

1. International social forces and events, most dramatically the movement of populations, have changed the makeup of social agency caseloads and affected domestic practice in many countries, including the United States. Competent social work practice in most countries now demands new knowledge and competencies to cope with the social problems and conditions emerging from interdependence.

2. Social problems are now shared by more and less economically developed countries far more often than in previous decades, making mutual work and exchange more desirable. Increasingly, it is as likely that practice innovations and potential problem solutions will be generated in places previously labeled less developed, as in the industrialized nations. This aspect of globalization has led to a growing shared agenda for social work action. Most nations are currently struggling with homelessness and street children, growing numbers of aged, changes in family patterns leading to less available family care, unemployment and underemployment, and many other social problems. In addition, as Lyons (1999) pointed out, an understanding of global problems “can contribute to a refocusing on the core values of social work, as concerned with human rights and social justice” (p. 163).
3. The actions of one country—politically, economically, and socially—directly and indirectly affect other countries’ social and economic well-being and the overall social health of the planet. As US President Clinton (1993) noted in his first inaugural address, it is difficult to identify a purely domestic problem: “There is no longer a clear division between what is foreign and what is domestic. The world economy, the world environment, the world AIDS crisis, the world arms race—they affect us all” (p. A15). Thus nations increasingly share social problems, and the actions that any nation takes can directly affect the well-being of the population of other nations. The nuclear accident at Chernobyl in the Ukraine in 1986, which spread radioactive material over much of Europe, was a dramatic, but by no means isolated, example of this fact. Similarly, the 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., led to deepening poverty across the Caribbean as tourists stayed home; the “fallout” included wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The rise of populist attacks on migration in the second decade of the twenty-first century spread rapidly to many countries. Logically, then, no single nation or the professional groups within it can solve these problems by acting alone.
4. Finally, there are enhanced opportunities for international sharing and exchanging made possible by rapidly advancing technological developments in areas such as communications. Computer and video linkages, for example, have dramatically changed global communications (Asamoah, Healy, & Mayadas, 1997). Social media is having a profound effect on public opinion and policy. The dimensions of globalization are explored in more depth in Chapter 2.

Appropriate goals for the social work profession and individual social workers across the globe grow out of these trends. Thus it is important that social workers be prepared to (a) address internationally related case and community problems that arise in their domestic practice, (b) contribute to mutual problem-solving on global social problems, and (c) monitor the impact of their own nation’s policies on other countries’ and peoples’ well-being. In addition, they need to develop the capacity to benefit from and contribute to international dialogue and exchange to support the achievement of the three main goals cited previously (Asamoah et al., 1997). Each of these goals moves beyond awareness to professional action—professional action that will require new knowledge and attitudes.

## WHAT EVERY SOCIAL WORKER NEEDS TO KNOW

Awareness may well be the starting point for international action. Noted experts in the field of higher education have long argued that a general worldview achieved through education in the history, literature, art, religions, and cultures of the world is an essential part of being an “educated person.” UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) called for higher education to “lead society in generating global knowledge to address global challenges” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 2). Recognizing serious gaps in graduates’ knowledge of the world, many colleges and universities in the United States have adopted requirements that students take at least one course in “non-Western” studies. In spite of these efforts, education for global awareness seems to have been less successful in the United States than in many other countries. A study of university professors in 14 countries (England, Russia, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Chile, Israel, Australia, Brazil, Mexico, Sweden, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, and the United States) found that “with the exception of the United States, international mindedness in the surveyed countries is quite high” (Lewis & Altbach, 1996, p. 33). More than 90% of American professors surveyed expressed no need to read books or journals published outside their own country to keep up in their fields—a quite astounding finding of disinterest in their professions beyond national borders and possibly indicative of ethnocentrism. More recently, Ibrahim (2017) found “a general lack of motivation to keep abreast of developments in social work at the international level and few opportunities for interaction and connection at the international and national levels” among faculty at the 22 universities in the eight Arab countries that he studied (p. 1403), suggesting that the lack of interest in global issues is more widespread.

Social work is an applied profession, and the emphasis of its baccalaureate- and master’s-level educational programs is on preparing students for effective practice (although in some countries where the baccalaureate degree is the primary social work degree, master’s-level education is more research focused). For this reason, the majority of social work students, practitioners, and faculty do not define acquisition of a worldview as a priority educational outcome. Although it is hoped that students and practitioners will in fact gain a worldview from reading this book, its emphasis is on the international knowledge that is specifically focused on social work and that prepares the reader for professional action. Readers will gain the following essential professional knowledge from the chapters that follow:

- familiarity with the history, scope, and functions of social work around the world, including a discussion of its similarities and differences
- knowledge of ways the profession is organized for international action through the major professional organizations
- knowledge of the major agencies involved in international social work and social welfare and their functions, including the social welfare responsibilities of the United Nations
- familiarity with key theories and concepts, including globalization, development, human rights, sustainability, and transnationalism
- awareness of practice roles and opportunities for social work in international relief and development

- awareness of aspects of global interdependence that affect domestic social welfare issues and related knowledge to improve international aspects of domestic social work practice
- knowledge of the role of the United Nations in setting standards for international social welfare policy
- awareness of the impact of national policies on social welfare conditions in other countries and the reciprocal impact of other countries' policies
- appreciation of the international aspects of cultural diversity to facilitate enhanced service to international populations
- knowledge of the major sources of global and cross-national data on social work
- examination of value dilemmas in international work

Throughout the book, applicability of these knowledge areas to practice and other forms of professional action is discussed.

## WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK?

The definition of the term *international social work* has been the subject of much debate. First, there may be confusion over the use of the terms *international*, *global*, and *cross-national*. Beginning with the Merriam-Webster dictionary definitions (2018), *global* means “of, relating to or involving the whole world,” whereas *international* means “of, relating to or affecting two or more nations,” having members or activities in several nations, or transcending national boundaries. Stein (1990) agreed with this distinction, noting that though the terms are often used interchangeably, the more technical usage of *global* “signified phenomena affecting the entire planet” (p. 13). *Cross-national*, too, is sometimes used interchangeably with *international*. When it is differentiated, cross-national has a more limited meaning and is used to apply to comparisons or transactions of or between several or a limited number of nations (Estes, 1984).

Beyond these simple definitions, international social work remains a complex concept, actually comprising a number of component concepts. It is used to refer to comparative social welfare, international practice, cross-cultural knowledge and understanding, intergovernmental work on social welfare, concern and action on global social problems, a worldwide collegiality among social workers, professional exchange activities, and a general worldview. At least one author argued at one point that the concept is so complex and amorphous that there may be no such thing as international social work (Akimoto, 1995). Was he correct? Or is international social work any one of the previously listed concepts, a combination of several, or perhaps an umbrella concept that can encompass all these ideas?

## EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT

In 1956, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in the United States formed a working committee to develop a definition of international social work. Committee

members wrestled with the question of narrow versus broad interpretation and examined at least six different usages of the term *international social work*, “ranging from social workers working in other countries to refugee services to common professional concerns with social workers in other parts of the world” (Healy, 1995, p. 423). The committee opted for a narrow definition, thus ruling out most of the aspects of international work noted previously in this chapter.

It was the consensus of our sub-committee that the term “international social work” should properly be confined to programs of social work of international scope, such as those carried on by intergovernmental agencies, chiefly those of the U.N.; governmental; or non-governmental agencies with international programs. (Stein, 1957, p. 3)

Others, earlier and more recently, have favored a broad definition. Kimberly (1984) argued that international social work, as a relatively new field, should be left open for broad interpretation rather than prematurely limiting its scope. Sanders and Pederson (1984) also used a broad definition: “International social work means those social work activities and concerns that transcend national and cultural boundaries” (p. xiv).

Many recent writers have assumed that international social work is a new term and have neglected historical sources. In fact, in a paper delivered at the First International Conference of Social Work in 1928, Jebb (1929), from London, used the term and discussed the conditions needed for such work to be practical. Articles titled “International Social Work” appeared in the *Social Work Yearbook* beginning in 1937. Selecting a broad view of the international field, Warren defined international social work as follows in his 1939 article in the *Social Work Yearbook*:

International Social Work includes four main types of activities: a) international social case work; b) international assistance, public and private, to disaster or war sufferers and distressed minority groups; c) international conferences on social work; and d) international cooperation by governments and private bodies through the medium of the League of Nations, the International Labour Organization and the Health Organization of the League, in combatting disease and securing social and political peace and harmony throughout the world. (p. 192)

It is interesting to note that this early definition includes the exchanges of ideas by social workers at international meetings as well as intercountry work, intergovernmental work, and relief work.

In a survey of member schools of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) in 1989–1990, educators were asked to identify the component concepts they considered essential to the definition of international social work. Respondents from over 200 member schools from all five regions of the world (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, North America, and Latin America) selected the following concepts as essential, in descending order: cross-cultural understanding, comparative social policy, concern with global problems, a general worldview, knowledge of a

common profession worldwide, international practice, intergovernmental social welfare, and a sense of collegiality with social workers in other countries (Healy, 1990). The number of educators selecting the concepts ranged from a high of 59% identifying cross-cultural understanding as key to only 15% selecting a sense of worldwide professional collegiality. This indicates that no concept was viewed as essential by all. Similarly, in a 2015 three-country study of social work students' view on international social work, responses included working with people from other countries, communicating with professionals from various countries through technology, "addressing worldwide social problems," and "unity of the social work global values, ethical principles and professional standards," continuing to show a lack of consensus (Lalayants, Doel, & Kachkachishvili, 2015, pp. 103–104).

Critical of the often apolitical conceptualization of international social work, Haug (2005) advocated clear emphasis on social justice and human rights. Her definition, which expands beyond the recognized profession, is, "International social work includes any social work activity anywhere in the world, directed toward global social justice and human rights, in which local practice is dialectically linked to the global context" (p. 133). Cox and Pawar (2013) endorsed aspects of previous definitions, but emphasized building a "truly integrated international profession" to address "the various global challenges that are having a significant impact on the well-being of large sections of the world's population" (p. 29).

Their inclusion of profession building is in keeping with developments by the international professional associations to promulgate a global definition, ethical guidelines, and an action agenda for social work from local to global levels, the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development*.

Hugman (2010) links the definition of international social work to the crossing of borders: "International social work' refers to practice and policy concerning situations in which professionals, those who benefit from their services or the causes of the problems that bring these two actors together, have travelled in some way across the borders between nations" (p. 20). Akimoto (1995) raised challenging questions about the relevance of border crossing to the concept of international social work. Because most definitions of international social work include a social worker working in another country or a social work researcher collecting data in another country, he asked whether it is appropriate to call it *domestic social work* if a Japanese person does something in Japan while labeling the same activity international social work if it is performed in Japan by a Kenyan or an American. At the end of the book, an answer to this question is attempted, although the issues raised by Akimoto remain thorny ones for those concerned with definition.

What is clear from a review of recent and historical literature and research is that the concept of international social work is complex and can be defined either narrowly or broadly. It is not a new idea, having been explored in some detail for more than 80 years, yet it remains open to further work and interpretation.

## AUTHORS' DEFINITION OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

In this book, *international social work* is defined as international professional action and the capacity for international action by the social work profession and its

members to promote human dignity and human rights and enhance human well-being. International action has four dimensions: internationally related domestic practice and advocacy, professional exchange, international practice, and international policy development and advocacy. Each is explained in what follows and is illustrated in an accompanying case example.

*Internationally Related Domestic Practice and Advocacy.* The first dimension is social work competence in internationally related aspects of domestic social work practice and professional advocacy. Social workers are increasingly called on to deal with problems that have an international dimension, meaning that two or more countries are involved in some way in the case or policy issue. There are many examples of internationally related domestic practice problems, including refugee resettlement, work with other international populations, international adoption work, and social work in border areas. Although some social workers specialize in these areas, all social workers may encounter international issues in carrying out their professional responsibilities.

Case 1.1 shows an example of internationally related domestic practice. The vignette describes the challenges faced by a young refugee boy in an urban, Western school system and those of the social worker assigned to help him.

To assist this student—who could be encountered in the United States, Canada, Denmark, or many other places—the social worker needs knowledge about life in Somalia, Somali family patterns, and the migration experience of Somali refugees, including transit camps and their resettlement challenges. In such circumstances, international knowledge is necessary to provide competent social work services to cases in the domestic caseload.

A related “domestic” professional responsibility requires the capacity and willingness of the profession to develop and promulgate positions on social aspects of their own country’s foreign policy and aspects of national policy that affect people in other countries, such as legislation on immigration. It is logical that as part of accepted advocacy responsibilities of the profession, social workers have an obligation to monitor such legislation as it is being proposed, to follow impending votes at the United Nations and foreign policy directives, and to ensure that social work’s voice is heard on relevant issues. Case 1.2 discusses an example of advocacy following World War II.

Case 1.2 is drawn from social work history and demonstrates that the social workers who attended the 1947 delegate meeting of their professional organization engaged in discussions of important international issues of their day. They were sufficiently educated on the issues and on their potential impact to take a policy position for the profession and to advocate for their position with national decision makers.

*Professional Exchange.* The second dimension of international action is the capacity to exchange social work information and experiences internationally and to use the knowledge and experience to improve social work practice and social welfare policy at home. This includes a range of actions, such as reading foreign periodicals and books in one’s field, corresponding with professionals in other countries or hosting visitors, participating in professional interchange at international meetings, and identifying and adapting social welfare innovations in other countries to one’s own setting. Increasingly, professional exchange is facilitated by technological advances in computer-assisted communications and teleconferencing.

**CASE 1.1 WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL POPULATIONS:  
MUSSA—A SOMALI BANTU BOY IN AN AMERICAN  
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

A social worker at the Family Assistance Center (FAC) at a middle school in a northeastern US city was assigned to work with a 12-year-old Somali Bantu refugee boy, Mussa. He was referred to the FAC by his English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher, as she felt participation in the New Arrivals support group would be helpful. His ESOL and special education teachers agreed that Mussa wasn't understanding much English, and that he was getting nothing out of school. Yet, the school seemed to be doing little to remedy his situation; the other students in the ESOL class and the teacher were Spanish speakers, further impeding his learning of English.

The social worker began with individual work; she discovered that although Mussa's English was limited, he was able to communicate better in a one-on-one situation. She also recognized that it was important to gain some understanding of the history and experiences of Somali Bantu refugees and began her own research. Mussa had come to the United States with his mother and older siblings and lived in the third floor of an apartment in the city. In Somalia, the Bantu were targets of severe violence. Thus, "for his entire life in Somalia, Mussa had been surrounded by war, violence, destruction, starvation and disease." When Mussa talked about Somalia with the social worker, he usually looked down and said sadly, "It's bad." What he remembers most about living in Somalia was running—running from animals and running from people with weapons. He had seen a number of people killed before he and his family decided to leave and seek refugee status in Kenya. Although safer, resettlement in the United States has also been difficult. The Somali Bantu were completely unprepared for life in an American city, having never experienced electricity, appliances, traffic, or winter weather. Resettlement workers reported having to teach the refugees basic skills for using kitchen appliances and heating systems.

As the social worker recounted, "The school system was grossly underprepared for Mussa and his needs. . . . Teachers are overwhelmed and frustrated by his presence" as he had never been to school and could not follow the bilingual classes (not surprisingly, as they were conducted in English and Spanish). In addition, teachers and other staff, burdened by large and diverse classes, seemed to have no appreciation of the trauma and loss that Mussa had experienced.

Working as Mussa's caseworker has involved many different practice approaches. The first step was self-education. I needed to gather information and teach myself about Somalia and about the collective experience of Somali Bantu refugees. Without an understanding of his background and his life, I was unable to comprehend Mussa's struggles. I would have risked retraumatizing Mussa.

With self-education an ongoing process, the caseworker engaged in advocacy on Mussa's behalf. She educated his teachers and organized meetings with his teachers to brainstorm ways to meet his needs. She held one-on-one sessions with Mussa in which she used drawing and looking at pictures in books and on the Internet to engage him and get him to express some of his feelings. At one point, they came across a photo in a refugee magazine, and he began to shout, "Kakuma, Kakuma," in an agitated voice. She thought perhaps this was a word in his language that meant some dreadful thing. Research after the session revealed that *Kakuma* was the name of the refugee camp where he had stayed in Kenya; it was evident that his memories were not happy ones. She realized that it was difficult to engage Mussa in learning English using the standard ESOL textbooks, as the pictures did not interest him. She suggested using some alternative materials, and Mussa began to make progress with the language.

Although Mussa has a long road ahead, the advocacy efforts of the social worker, along with involvement in a New Arrivals support group at the middle school, provides some hope for the future. Indeed, an administrator at the Central Office of the school district commented, "without that young social worker, no one was showing any interest in helping this young refugee."

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Adapted from a case contributed by Amanda Mihaly (2005).

Case 1.3 describes borrowing and adapting an innovation to address extreme poverty: the well-known Grameen Bank concept. The importance of the microcredit approach popularized by the Grameen Bank was underscored when its founder Muhammad Yunus and the bank won the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize.

The ability to transfer international human service innovations to one's own setting first requires knowledge of social welfare developments in other countries. Successful transfer also requires sophisticated understanding of the similarities and differences between the "exporting" and "importing" countries to determine needed adaptations. Indeed, "borrowers" of the Grameen concept in the United States and other industrialized countries realized that among the conditions making microlending successful in Bangladesh were "unregulated market conditions that thrive on low-skilled enterprises; absence of income maintenance programs; availability of free health care; and a lower cost of living" (Banerjee, 1998, p. 79). But other cultural and structural differences favored successful adaptation, such as the relatively better social position for women and acceptance of their free movement in society. Increasingly, potential innovations can be found in industrialized and developing countries alike, making knowledge of other systems more valuable for its potential for domestic applicability.

*International Practice.* The third dimension of international action is the preparation of some professional social workers to contribute directly to international development work through employment or volunteer work in international development agencies. Success in this sphere depends on the extent to which international knowledge can be blended with social work skills. Case 1.4 briefly describes an intervention

### CASE 1.2 INFLUENCING FOREIGN SOCIAL POLICY

In 1947, a number of important policy issues before the US Congress were matters concerned with international social welfare. One of the most urgent was a requested appropriation for continued postwar relief. Others included matters relating to immigration—especially the relaxation of US immigration limits to permit resettlement of displaced persons—and to US participation in the emerging international organizations being organized under the UN umbrella.

The pending appropriations bill was to approve \$350 million for relief to Austria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and China. The issue was brought to the 1947 Delegate Conference of the American Association of Social Workers (AASW), one of the predecessor organizations to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). The delegates passed a resolution urging Congress to appropriate the money at once to continue to provide basic supplies of food, clothing, shelter, and medicines to Europe and China. The resolution continued:

Be it further resolved that this and any other funds appropriated be made available to countries in proportion to their need as appraised by competent international instrumentalities such as the Technical Committee of the United Nations, and regardless of political or other considerations. (American Association of Social Workers, 1947)

The resolution indicated that social workers in 1947 advocated sound principles for foreign aid. They were concerned that need take precedence over politics and that aid be fairly distributed. “This government should spare no effort to assure fair and non-discriminatory administration not only between groups within a given country but also between one country and another” (Howard, 1947, p. 5). They also recognized the advantages of multilateral aid rather than aid given specifically from one country to another. “The U.S. government . . . should do all in its power to strengthen and make more effective all international agencies responsible for social welfare services, thus speeding the day when unilateral approaches to world needs may be abandoned in favor of world cooperation” (Howard, 1947, p. 4).

The AASW resolution was sent to the secretary of state, the chair of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate, and the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives.

designed and carried out by an interdisciplinary team at a nongovernmental development agency with several social workers as staff members. The social workers in this case used their knowledge of human behavior, skill in community organizing, and practice skills in planning, management, and evaluation to contribute to the development project in war-torn Bosnia.

Thus, social workers in international relief and development work utilize many of the skills learned in their professional training. They combine these with specific skills

### CASE 1.3 INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE AND BORROWING

International exchange among social workers can yield many benefits. Perhaps the highest order of exchange is what is called *international technology transfer*—the identification, adaptation, and transplantation of innovations from one country to another. This case discusses transfer of innovations in microlending from Bangladesh to India and mentions how it has been transferred widely, including to the United States.

#### CASE

The Grameen Bank is world renowned for its success in encouraging small-enterprise development among impoverished and powerless women in Bangladesh. Founded in 1976, the Grameen Bank (*Grameen* means “rural” in Bengali) introduced a “peer-lending banking approach geared to improving the human rights of mainly poor women” (Jansen & Pippard, 1998, p. 104). Through provision of very small loans without collateral and through collective “savings clubs,” poor women have been able to start small businesses, gain at least minimal financial security, and, as a result, improve their status in the community. Its successful model has been adopted by organizations as large as the World Bank and the United Nations and as small as community-based NGOs. In fact, this model has established a new way of providing credit services for the poor in market economies and even among the very low-income working poor in the United States (Thomas, 2012).

Using the model of the Grameen Bank, several social workers created the NGO Prana International and created a capital fund in 2009 in order to offer microloans to very poor and working-poor women in Kolkata, India. The fund is implemented in partnership with an established development-oriented non-profit. The fund is disbursed using an adapted version of the Grameen Bank group-lending model.

Prana has intentionally partnered within developing countries in order to build the capacity of local NGOs that are already providing services to local community members. In this case, Prana provided the startup capital and supported recruitment and trainings, including travel expenses, of individuals to provide the microcredit operations. The program is assessed in person annually and quarterly via written reports and email. Prana supports a second project, funded through both an external grant and contributions. The second project was to support the development of a “stitching” center in a rural and highly inaccessible region, which enlists women with skills in indigenous weaving and stitching. Prana compensates part-time staff to develop and recruit participants, help develop a business model, and provide feedback in order to create distinctive garments that will be saleable in an international market. In these projects, Prana works closely with the partnering organizations in India by providing limited staff compensation, training, as-needed technical assistance, and program evaluation. This partnering is an example of a working collaboration (see <http://prainternational.org/projects/overview.html>). The emphases on partnering and capacity building ensure sustainability.

### CASE 1.4 INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN IN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

DAVID BOURNS

An emergency education program initiated in the then war-torn country of Bosnia demonstrates the usefulness of social work skills in overseas work with international relief and development organizations. This program sought to provide support to preschool-age children who had been exposed to the violence of war and to begin to normalize their chaotic existence amid the destruction. The program, a neighborhood preschool, not only needed to meet local educational standards but also had to address the specific needs of war-affected children. Many skills were demanded of the international staff working on the program. They worked closely with Bosnian educators, establishing constructive cross-cultural communication to develop a mutually acceptable curriculum. The staff's experience with abused and traumatized children and knowledge of child development were essential to program success. Although individual counseling could not be provided within the scope of the project, staff did refer children in need of special services wherever possible.

Community involvement was key to ensuring that the program could be sustained. A safe structure had to be located, and community members had to be mobilized to help clean war debris from bombed-out buildings. Teachers had to be identified among the local population; if trained teachers were not available, then other adults who were willing to volunteer and be trained had to be found. Motivating people suffering from the effects of a protracted conflict required solid community organizing skills. The task of the international staff, as in most development projects, was to help build local capacity, not to do the job. There were also many administrative and logistical support tasks. From the delivery of material supplies to the monitoring of project funding in each location and to enhancing and monitoring the personal security of all staff working in the field, constant vigilance of well-designed administrative systems meant the difference not only between success and failure but also between life and death.

in development work, knowledge of the international context, and well-honed sensitivity and communication skills for cross-cultural work.

*International Policy Development and Advocacy.* Finally, the capacity of the social work profession as a worldwide movement to formulate and promulgate positions on important social issues and make a contribution to the resolution of important global problems related to its sphere of expertise is the fourth component of international professional action. Case 1.5 describes social work involvement in professional advocacy through collaboration with a major international intergovernmental organization, UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS). In the activities

### CASE 1.5 INFLUENCING GLOBAL POLICY THROUGH COLLABORATION

#### Working on HIV/AIDS with International Organizations

From an initial meeting in March 2014, members of the IASSW developed a joint plan of action on HIV/AIDS with UNAIDS, the official lead body on AIDS within the United Nations. In October 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the IASSW president (Vimla Nadkarni of India) and the deputy executive director of UNAIDS at UNAIDS headquarters in Geneva. It committed the two organizations to work together to achieve the goals of “getting to zero” spearheaded by the United Nations. At least two major accomplishments grew out of the joint work. The first was a large seminar, “Ending AIDS, Promoting Dignity and Respect for All,” held in Geneva to mark World Social Work Day in 2015. In addition to participants from IASSW and the United Nations, the seminar drew participants from two sister social work organizations, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), and included representatives of the World Bank, International Labour Organization, World Food Programme, and the UNDP. The need for a range of actions was affirmed, including “restoring and promoting dignity, guaranteeing access to social protection, scaling up access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for all, and accelerating actions for developing an HIV vaccine and a cure” (IASSW/UNAIDS, 2017, p. 8).

*Getting to Zero: Global Social Work Responds to HIV*, a jointly published book, was the second major joint product. Drawing on social work expertise from around the world, the volume documents social work perspectives and experiences in addressing HIV/AIDS through direct services, advocacy, and policy development. In the Foreword, the UNAIDS executive director describes the important stories of the AIDS epidemic and praises the contributions of the social work profession. He wrote, “Few can tell these stories better than social workers. Social workers are the conscience of the AIDS response. They are peer educators, researchers and decision-makers. They work at the centre and the margins of communities” (IASSW/UNAIDS, 2017, p. 5).

This case example demonstrates how social work experts can influence global policy by collaborating with lead international organizations.

in this project, social work experts linked their work to the priorities of the global movement to eliminate new infections and deaths and discrimination against those with HIV. Through partnering with UNAIDS, the experiences of social workers on the ground were brought into policy discussions and shared through an important joint publication.

To summarize, the definition of international social work used in this book encompasses four areas for action: internationally informed domestic practice and related policy advocacy, participation in and utilization of international exchange,

international practice, and international policy formulation and advocacy. The first two potentially involve all social workers; the third will involve only a small percentage; and the fourth, though involving all social workers indirectly as part of the profession, may directly involve relatively few. This four-pronged definition will serve as the theme for the book—international action for the profession—along with globalization. The themes, issues, and examples addressed in the book also make it clear that international social work is value-driven action aimed at promoting human rights and human well-being globally.

## KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK—MAJOR CONCEPTS

*International social work* can also be defined as a composite of the major concepts that inform its practice. Along with the body of social work theories and practice skills, concepts central to international social work are globalization, development, human rights, transnationalism and sustainability. These are elaborated in further chapters.

Globalization provides the context for twenty-first-century practice. Understandings of theories and manifestations of globalization are essential components of understanding the social environment. Increasingly, the forces of globalization affect human well-being and influence human behavior in both positive and negative ways. More recently, an antiglobalization movement has brought further threats to human well-being.

Development and human rights are the two major thrusts of international social and humanitarian action in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Both are compatible with social work values, mission, and practice. Development, as most commonly understood, is a major focus of international practice roles for social workers, directed at poverty alleviation and improving human social and economic well-being. Human rights treaties and perspectives provide standards and goals that can be applied internationally and domestically. Theories of development and human rights are elements of the core of international social work.

For those social workers who emphasize practice and policy with international populations, transnationalism provides a new lens for understanding current migration patterns and relationships. Recognition of the importance of the physical environment to human survival brings renewed emphasis to the concept of sustainability. In the chapters that follow, globalization, development, human rights, sustainability, and transnationalism are examined in more depth.

## TERMINOLOGY

Terminology in international social work can be confusing and, at times, controversial. Throughout the almost 60 years of the development movement, terms used to classify nations have changed several times, and there is still no agreement on optimal terms.

The terms *first world*, *second world*, and *third world* were common descriptors in the 1960s. Describing the mostly Western industrialized nations; the Soviet Union and its satellite nations; and the newly independent and nonaligned nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, respectively, these terms had some relevance during the Cold War era. The term *third world* increasingly was viewed as a negative term, implying to some the idea of third rate or last in consideration, although the actual derivation of the term is from a phrase describing the Third Estate in the French Revolution.

*Developed* and *developing* or more developed and developing were the most commonly used replacement terms for first and third world, respectively. The labels *North* and *South* are also used. These terms refer loosely to geography, as generally more of the developed nations are in the Northern Hemisphere and more of the developing nations are in the Southern Hemisphere. Where used, North and South should be viewed more as political terms than geographic ones; Australia, for example, is in the North.

In the second edition of the text, the terms *industrialized* and *developing* were used to roughly classify countries in the discussions. The rationale for using these terms was that they were the current terms used by major international social development organizations such as UNICEF and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and therefore in harmony with one purpose of the text—to introduce readers to the work of mainstream development organizations. The term *industrialized* is no longer in use, and organizations have reverted to using either developed and developing or the labels high income and low income. The extent of confusion over terminology was demonstrated in a 2017 press release from the World Bank in which the same group of countries was referred to as “developing,” “poor,” and “low income” (World Bank, 2017). UNICEF (United Nations Children’s [originally International Children’s Emergency] Fund, 2017) also used both sets of terms on the same page of a recent report (p. 43). Although many limitations are acknowledged, we use “high income” and “low income” in this text where it is helpful to broadly group countries, but at times probably replicate the confusions evident in many publications by using the older terms.

Many statistics are cited in the book. Readers are cautioned that international statistics are often only approximations and estimates. Methods used to collect statistics are imprecise. Recently, for example, some experts are questioning whether rates of infection for HIV/AIDS have been overstated, especially for the most severely affected African countries.

## COUNTRIES SELECTED AS SPECIAL EXAMPLES FOR THE TEXT

Studying international social work requires examination of individual countries as well as the global picture to understand and assess the global profession. Although the book refers to many different countries, seven have been selected for special purposes of comparison: Armenia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Japan, and the United States. As explained in the Preface, the countries were selected for their

diversity and because we had access to needed data. These countries' experiences in social work are discussed in Chapter 9 to aid the reader's understanding of international social work. In many places, comparisons with other countries are also provided.

The countries selected vary along many dimensions, including factors related to their state of development and their experiences in the establishment and current status of the social work profession. Table 1.1 compares the countries on a number of dimensions. Readers are encouraged to refer to the table periodically to relate social work comparisons to levels of human well-being and population characteristics of the example countries.

One way of comparing countries is to use rankings of well-being developed by the international intergovernmental agencies of the United Nations or the World Bank. For example, the countries selected range in their rank (of 189 countries) on the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI)—an index of progress on well-being—from a best of 11th for Denmark to 173rd for Ethiopia, putting Ethiopia near the bottom of the group of low human development countries (UNDP, 2018). The group labeled low human development is made up of those countries that have the worst performance on the index comprising measures of per capita gross national income (GNI), life expectancy, and literacy and school enrollment. UNICEF emphasizes a single measure for assessing a country's progress in meeting human needs—the under-5 (U-5) mortality rate. On this measure, Japan leads the way with a rate of only 2.7 deaths before age 5 per 1,000 live births; this compares to 6.5 for the United States. For others from among our example countries, Ethiopia's U-5 mortality is 58.4—a strong improvement over the last decade—Jamaica's is 15.3, and Costa Rica's rate is 8.8, only a little worse than the United States in a country with much fewer economic resources. Summary statistics for the seven countries are given in Table 1.1.

Population statistics give only a limited picture of national differences. National aggregate data are limited by being just that, national aggregates. They fail to express the range of experiences within a country and cannot capture important dimensions of culture and history. Within-country differences among the population in levels of well-being can be great. Denmark is characterized by fairly equitable distribution of social benefits, and only a small percentage of the population lives in poverty. In the United States, income disparity is great, as it is in Jamaica. Thus, though overall levels of health and educational attainment may be satisfactory, sectors of the population live in severe poverty. The majority of Ethiopia's population are not only poor but also food insecure, meaning that any misfortune can tip a family into hunger. More than 38% of young children suffer from moderate-to-severe stunting (UNDP, 2018).

The countries selected represent many geographic regions—Asia, Central and North America, Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe. Each has had a unique history, which has shaped its national culture and population, including experiences with colonization, mass immigration, and struggles for independence. Jamaica was colonized by Great Britain and experienced many years of slavery and colonial rule prior to the independence movement that was finally successful in 1962. Costa Rica was a colony of Spain through a conquest that nearly annihilated the indigenous population, now less than 3% of the total. Costa Rica achieved independence in 1821, only a generation after the United States war for independence. Although never colonized, Ethiopia was squeezed between the Italian colonies in Somalia and Eritrea and was

Table 1.1 Country Comparisons

	Population (in Millions), UNDP 2018	GNI per Capita, UNDP 2018	Infant Mortality, UNDP 2018	Under 5 Mortality, UNICEF 2018	Life Expectancy, UNDP 2018	% Population Over 60 UNDESA 2017	% Population Under 15 UNDESA 2017	Human Development Index Rank UNDP 2018	Date of National Independence	Date of First Social Work	Social Work Professional Organization
Armenia	2.9	9,144	11.9	13.4	74.8	17%	20%	83	1991	1990	Armenian National Association of Social Services, Social Work Section, 1998
Costa Rica	4.9	14,636	7.7	8.8	80	14%	22%	63	1821		Costa Rica Association of Social Workers, 1967
Denmark	5.7	47,918	3.7	4.4	80.9	25%	16%	11		1937	Danish Association of Social Workers, 1938
Ethiopia	105	1,719	41	58.4	65.9	5%	41%	173		1959	—
Jamaica	2.9	7,846	13.2	15.3	76.1	14%	23%	96	1962	1961	Jamaica Association of Social Workers
Japan	127.5	38,986	2	2.7	83	33%	13%	19		1921	Japan Association of Social Workers 1960
United States	324.5	54,941	5.6	6.5	79.5	22%	19%	13	1776	1898	National Association of Social Workers, 1955

Sources: UNDP (2018), UNDESA (2017), UNICEF (2018).

Note: GNI = Gross national income; UNDESA= UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs; UNDP = UN Development Program.

invaded and occupied by Italy from 1935 to 1941. Armenia was part of the Soviet Union until it gained its independence in 1991. Countries also vary in their levels of ethnic, religious, and racial diversity. The United States, having experienced many waves of large-scale immigration from many parts of the world, has a highly diverse population. Armenia, Denmark, and Japan, on the other hand, have had considerable homogeneity within their populations, although migration to Denmark has increased.

Among the countries included, religious traditions vary widely. Buddhism and Shintoism are practiced by most of the population in Japan, almost equal numbers are followers of Islam and Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia, and there are large majority religions in Costa Rica (76% Roman Catholic) and Denmark (91% Lutheran). Although Armenia is considered 94% Armenian Orthodox, Armenia was subsumed into the Soviet Union from 1921 to 1991 and endured 70 years of religious suppression.

These brief comments on history and population diversity only suggest the richness of differences in national experiences of the countries highlighted. The important lesson is that the variety of national characteristics and histories of the countries discussed assist in examining social work in its international context. Through gaining an understanding of social work's development, current definitions and practice, and future challenges in these national contexts, comprehension of the profession in its global reality can be approached.

In the next chapters, theories underpinning international social work are examined. International social work requires understanding of theories and concepts of globalization, development, sustainability, and human rights. Although other concepts, such as human security and social inclusion/exclusion, are important, globalization, development, human rights, and, more recently, environment and sustainability, are at the core of international social work. When added to more traditional social work theories of human behavior and the social environment, these redefine "social environment" for the twenty-first century.

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Part I

THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL  
SOCIAL WORK  
CONCEPTS, ISSUES, AND ORGANIZATIONS



## 2

# THEORIES AND CONCEPTS UNDERPINNING INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

## *GLOBALIZATION*

There is no point to a globalization that reduces the price of a child's shoes, but  
costs the father his job.

—Philippine citizen, cited in World Commission on the Social  
Dimension of Globalization, 2004, p. 13

Globalization, its realities, positive and negative impacts, and the reactions it causes all form the context for international social work in the twenty-first century. By the end of the twentieth century, there was increased recognition of the realities of globalization and its impacts across all sectors—economy, security, culture, and environment. Along with many advances that could be attributed to globalization, critics pointed out harms it produced and those left behind. Antiglobalization movements grew and staged protests against the institutions identified as the main forces of globalization; these included the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), blamed for policies that left a number of low-income countries deeply in debt. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the world had experienced major shocks to the global economy—a food crisis of extreme price increases and the 2008 fiscal crisis. These crises caused the collapse of some leading financial institutions and caused misery to families who suffered malnutrition or lost their housing. Soon, deepening inequality was blamed on globalization, sparking a new surge of populism and growing influence of far-right political groups. Faith in traditional established global institutions had been shaken.

In this chapter, the scope and reach of globalization are defined, and some of the positive and negative consequences are summarized. The twenty-first century crises are addressed, as are much earlier crises of energy prices and country debt. While these broader forces and events have important implications for social work, the chapter concludes with two examples closer to social welfare, exploring migration and HIV/AIDS, as exemplars of an increasingly globalized world.

## GLOBALIZATION

Globalization sets the context for present-day international social work. Most writers agree that forces of globalization have intensified, and that globalization has transformed economic and social institutions at global, national, and, sometimes, local levels; the impact is felt in many aspects of daily life, leaving few beyond its reach. As Wilson stated, “Because of its broad implications for human and environmental well-being, globalization is of vital importance to social work” (Wilson, 2012, p. 16).

The debate over globalization is often a polarized one. It helps to understand that “globalization is not new, and it is inherently neither good nor evil” (Wilson, 2012, p. 21). Globalization has been portrayed as the avenue to improved living standards throughout the world, and as the intrusion of aggressive capitalism and cultural homogenization into all corners of the world. Rather than yielding to glorify or vilify globalization, social workers must instead understand the forces of globalization and gain sufficient knowledge to be able to separate widely accepted myth from verifiable impacts.

### DEFINITION: WHAT IS GLOBALIZATION?

Although the term *global interdependence* was widely used in the 1980s and early 1990s, the current discourse emphasizes globalization. “Globalization is a package of transnational flows of people, production, investment, information, ideas and authority” (Brysk, 2002, p. 1). “A more globalized world is simultaneously more connected, cosmopolitan, commodified, and influenced by communication” (p. 6). Although Brysk discussed three arenas or streams of globalization—the interstate realm, global markets, and global civil society—the theme of commodification suggests that global markets and emphasis on consumption are dominant.

Brysk (2002), as well as other authors, suggested that globalization is not a new phenomenon, but what is new is that its forces are now “stronger and faster” (p. 1). We are reminded of earlier eras of globalization by the comments made in a speech to the First International Conference of Social Work:

In the last hundred years, the technical application of human invention has wrought nothing short of a revolution in international relations. . . . Ships, railways, aeroplanes, telephones, wireless telegraphy, broadcasting—all these have made the world smaller, have brought us into close contact with one another for better or for worse. (Jebb, 1929, p. 637)

In the social work literature, *globalization* has been described as “a process of global integration in which diverse peoples, economies, cultures and political processes are increasingly subjected to international influences” (Midgley, 1997, p. xi). Additionally, and quite positively, Midgley suggested that globalization indicates “the emergence of an inclusive worldwide culture, a global economy, and above all, a shared awareness of the world as a single place” (p. 21). Social work literature has paid considerable attention to the negative impacts of globalization. According to Rowlands and