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OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Course for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Professional Social Workers
Understanding Care and Support Systems –
Opening a Social Worker’s View/Vision on this Global Concept

Care and support¹ systems are essential for all of us, as professional Social Workers and in our private lives - caring for ourselves, supporting others and the environment in which we co-inhabit our well-being.

While the United Nations develops new frameworks and tools for care and support systems, Social Workers are deeply involved. This professional development course focuses on understanding and co-creating care and support systems locally, nationally, and globally. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) cordially invite you to participate this second co-designed course.

Please register here:

<https://ifsw-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/PuU6WhBgQ4q9HeNEBmaBaQ>

Date	Topic
<p>26 March</p> <p>12:00- 13:30 (CET)</p> <p>virtual</p>	<p>Session 1 – Defining care and support in the social workers community. Finding a common ground by getting various perspectives and insights from ILO, OHCHR, WHO and IFSW.</p> <p>Opening remarks: Joachim Mumba, President IFSW Peggy Hicks (Director) or Pradeep Wagle, Chief of ESCR Section OHCHR</p> <p><i>Keynote speakers:</i></p> <p>ILO understanding of the care economy. <i>Laura Addati, Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Branch, ILO</i></p> <p>The human rights dimension of care and support. <i>Asako Hattori, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR</i></p> <p>Relationality in Community Engagement. <i>Asyia Odugleh-Kolev, WHO.</i></p> <p>Social work as facilitators for care and support systems. <i>Joachim Mumba, President of IFSW</i></p> <p>Round table: The audience are invited to contribute to the discussion</p>

¹ UNSDG | Transforming Care Systems: UN System Policy Paper, and A/HRC/58/43



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<p>02 April 12:00- 13:30 (CET) virtual</p>	<p>Session 2 – The human rights dimension of care and support. Role of social workers for people requiring care and support and people providing care and support. What is the common environment and what are supportive factors.</p> <p><i>Keynote speakers:</i> Perspective of those receiving care, Mark Mapemba from Malawi Inclusion International/Down Syndrome International.</p> <p>Perspectives of those providing unpaid care and support: <i>Mrs. Afaf Abounouadar, Executive Director Make Mothers Matter (MMM) and Raina Bhattacharya, International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)</i></p> <p>Perspective from Social Work. TBC</p> <p>Round table: The audience are invited to contribute to the discussion</p>
<p>09 April 12:00- 13:30 (CET) virtual</p>	<p>Session 3 – Social Work as a care and support profession. Key challenges in working conditions and ways to change it.</p> <p><i>Keynote speakers:</i> Study on labour conditions for social workers. Paula McFadden and Jermaine Ravalier, Bath University.</p> <p>Social Workers experience of labour conditions in different regions. Speakers TBC</p> <p>Working conditions for care and support workers. Maren Hopfe, Sectoral Policies Department, ILO</p> <p>Labour Rights and Social Security for Care and Support Workers and Givers. Narmeen Mohammed, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR</p> <p>Round table: The audience are invited to contribute to the discussion</p>
<p>16 April 12:00- 13:30 (CET) virtual</p>	<p>Session 4 - Chances in politics for a strong care and support system. Introducing the evolvement of the care and support system, and the understanding of the eco-social contracts of UNRISD and Peoples Charter as a guiding document for a global transformation.</p> <p><i>Keynote speakers:</i> Eco-Social Contracts. Francisco Cos Montiel, Senior Research Coordinator, Gender Justice and Development UNRISD.</p> <p>People's Charter. Rory Truett, Secretary General, IFSW.</p> <p>GVA-based Permanent missions: TBC.</p> <p>Capacity building and integrating the rights of people with disabilities. Representative of the Moldavian government.</p> <p>Bridging local Social Work and Global Policies. Representation of IFSW to the UN</p>



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Round table discussion

Summary of the four sessions

Background

Care and support systems is reflected in the A/HRC/58/43 as a set of multi-sectoral laws, policies, programs, social and physical infrastructure, provision of services, goods, devices, technologies and information, financing and governance for their implementation, as well as social norms that influence care and support.² Therefore the “care economy” comprises care work, both paid and unpaid, and direct and indirect care to other people and the natural environments in which we live. It is provided within and outside the household, as well as the people who provide and receive care and the employers and institutions that offer care.³

The care and support sector, as it is understood by the policy world, is experiencing unprecedented growth, driven by profound social and demographic changes, including aging populations, shifting family structures, and rising demand for childcare support for persons with disabilities and older persons. This trend has been further accentuated by global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed both the critical role and the vulnerabilities of care and support systems worldwide. These concepts, coupled with the sustainability agenda, need to be brought to the forefront of global and local political decisions due to its *fundamental importance as a cornerstone of societal well-being and an indispensable element of resilient economies. The level of exploitation of the labour of women and girls in the current social organization of care, particularly of those belonging to ethnic and racial minority groups, migrant women and women working in informal settings is known.*⁴

Recognizing this, international entities, including many of the United Nations⁵, have increasingly prioritized care and support systems in their agendas, advocating for sustainable investments, policy reforms, and improved working conditions for care and support workers. Such efforts include the work of the International Labour Organization⁶, UNRISD, UN Women⁷, UNICEF⁸, UN Economic Commission for

² A/HRC/58/43

³ ILC resolution on decent work and the care economy, para 9.

⁴ [UNSDG | Transforming Care Systems: UN System Policy Paper](#). pp.4-5, and www.undocs.org/A/HRC/52/52 paras 11-16

⁵ [Ibid](#)

⁶ ILO (2024). <https://www.ilo.org/resource/record-decisions/resolution-concerning-decent-work-and-care-economy>

⁷ UN Women, [Care: A critical investment for gender equality and the rights of women and girls | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

⁸ UNICEF and FCDO, UK, [Age Sensitive, Disability Inclusive, and Gender Responsive Care and Support Systems Evidence Note](#)



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Latin America and Caribbean (ECLAC)⁹ the World Health Organization¹⁰, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – OHCHR).¹¹ In 2023 and 2024, the UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) have adopted resolutions on care and support systems. In particular, the Human Rights Council resolution 54/6 underscores the centrality of care and support from a human rights perspective¹².

Care and support systems are deeply interconnected with *social work*, which plays a multifaceted and indispensable role. Social workers operate and facilitate at the intersection of care and support provision, policy development, and community advocacy. In the care and support sector, they address the complex and evolving needs of individuals and families, including supporting persons in vulnerable situations as children, older persons, and persons with disabilities and mental health problems. Their work extends beyond direct care and support to include crisis intervention, the coordination of services, and advocacy for systemic change to improve the accessibility and quality of care and support services. By leveraging their holistic and ecological approaches, social workers play an important role in building partnerships that create change and promote rights and opportunities for all¹³, including through ensuring to those requiring care and support, supporting unpaid carers/supporters, and promoting decent work for care and support workers.

Moreover, social workers bring a unique perspective to the ongoing global debate on care and support work by emphasizing its profound social and economic significance. Rooted in human rights and principles of social justice and human dignity, social work highlights the inequalities often faced by care and support workers, who are predominantly women and disproportionately represented by migrant and marginalized communities. Through research, policy advocacy, and practice, social workers contribute to reframing care and support work as a public good and a cornerstone of societal well-being. They amplify the voices of both people requiring care and support and people providing care and support, advocating for fair wages, improved working conditions, and recognition of care and support as vital to sustainable development and social cohesion. By linking the lived experiences of individuals, families, and groups to broader policy discussions, social work ensures that the development of care and support systems aligns with the principles of leaving no one behind, human rights-based, state accountability and universality, reinforcing their role as an essential pillar of resilient societies.

⁹ ECLAC, [Care society | CEPAL](#)

¹⁰ [WHO works on care and support in various workstreams – it would be good to check with WHO which ref would be the best]

¹¹ A/HRC/58/44 (forthcoming), A/HRC/52/52, A/HRC/55/34

¹² UNHRC. [Resolution 54/6 Centrality of care and support from a human rights perspective](#). 11 October 2023.

¹³ IFSW. [The role of social workers in advancing a new eco-social world. International Federation of Social Workers](#). 24 May 2022.



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Objectives:

The course aims at building a shared vision and understanding among social workers on their role in promoting and protecting human rights-based care and support systems and developing a common language in this field. As such, the course has the following specific objectives:

1. Foster understanding on the conceptual framework on human rights-based care and support systems among the social workers.
2. Build a common understanding on the key role played by social workers in advancing human rights, achieving social justice, dignity and well-being of individuals and communities, that aligns closely with the ethical principles of social work¹⁴ and the challenges faced by the sector and its workforce.
3. Raise awareness on the role social workers can play in the care and support sector in upholding the human rights of those providing and requiring care and support so that social workers can:
 - a) Advocate for the recognition of the key role played by unpaid carers in achieving individual and societal well-being and for their rights.
 - b) Promote and claim their human rights of care and support workers, including social workers, and both in the formal and informal sector.
 - c) Contribute to legal and policy changes that comply with international human rights standards in care and support systems, including the promotion of community-based care and support services and the elimination of institutionalized forms of care
4. Share examples of programming and co-building activities at the national level that correspond to human rights-based care and support systems, including its economy and services.

Logistics

Those who attend all sessions will receive a certificate.

Language

The CPD will be held in English.

Note: At the expert workshop on care and support, the terms “those providing care and support” and “those requiring care and support” were suggested instead of “giving care” and “receiving care” to avoid giving the impression that care and support are “given” for free and that those “receiving” care are passive dependents.

¹⁴ IFSW. [Global Social Work Statement of ethical principles](#). International Federation of Social Workers. 2 July 2018.