

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND JUSTICE

Organized by: Department of Social Administration & Justice

Sponsored by: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Speech of the Keynote Speaker

Distinguished Chair, Honorable Chief Guest, Respected Leadership of the University of Malaya, Renowned Opening Speakers, Eminent Special Guests, and Participants of this international conference....Asslamu Alaikum and Good Morning!

It is my distinct honor to join you all in this very timely and important conference on Social Administration and Justice organized by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya in partnership with and other relevant organizations. I am very delighted to see here some of my very good friends and leaders of global social work education and practice, and of course, it is always a pleasure meeting new friends and fellow social workers from around the world.

Introduction: Inequity in the Global Village

Indeed, the world is becoming flat and smaller, in terms of virtual boundaries. We live in a huge global village, but the gap between rich and poor is ever widening. A multiplicity of social problems exacerbates this situation, both at micro and macro levels. Consequently, there is an unadorned political chaos in the majority world.

Societies are claiming economic growth, but the uneven distribution of resources makes poor people poorer and rich people are becoming richer. Midgley (1997) denotes this as distorted development, i.e. a mismatch between economic growth and social development. Both physical and social environmental degradation are at the highest level. Gender disparity still exists even in the developed countries, with a woman's earnings being two thirds of a man. Consequently, international migration, displacement, and dislocation are on the rise. Massive corruption and greed for wealth among the educated class in society is further worsening this situation.

United Nations and its affiliated agencies are working hard to eradicate poverty, but the result is still distant. Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus noted that poverty is perhaps the most serious threat to world peace, even more dangerous than terrorism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic hatred, political rivalries, or any of the other forces that are often cited as promoting violence and war (Yunus, 2007).

Technology and Social Work

Social problems can be difficult for social work, especially those in remote outstation areas, but the social work profession can use technology as a way to bring some services closer to populations in these areas. Social work staff need to be familiar with existing services that can help these areas, such as tele-medicine, e-banking, counselling or online education, and they can also advocate for increased services to assist people in these areas. For example, here in Malaysia, your Central Bank provides outstation banking services through BNMTELELINK which offers face-to-face services and BNMLINK which offers services through “SMS, telephone calls, facsimiles, letters and electronic mails; and Complaint Management and Advisory, which among others, facilitates resolution of the public, including SMEs, complaints against institutions under the purview of the Bank.”¹

Countries are aiming to minimize the digital divide and trying to bring technology to the doorstep of people, but still, technology is a fashion for the privileged class. However, although people are becoming more familiar with the latest inventions of technology and all its offerings through information medias, they can hardly afford them, in what I call an attitudinal crisis.

¹ <https://www.bnm.gov.my/introduction> (accessed August 16, 2022)

Corona Virus Pandemic

At this point, I need to mention Coronavirus, which has complicated providing social services and just about every facet of services to human lives. “Since December 2019, the world has been [is] concerned about the devastating effects of a pandemic caused by Coronavirus, also known as Covid-19 or CV-19. So far, the results have been the most dangerous situation the world has seen in modern history. There is no doubt that Corona has taken so many lives, and as far as we can see, it will continue to do so.”² The global economic impact of the virus and the effects on humans of lockdowns, illness and deaths will linger for many years. Consequently, the global need for social work practice and mental health counseling is ever-increasing.

The Corona virus has presented many challenges around the world. As it took a toll on humans and ravaged communities, the most vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and chronically ill, were most affected. Particular to Bangladesh were pandemic issues affecting the Rohingya refugee population. “These camps are very densely populated, and, within the camps, there are inadequate facilities for life, including sanitation and medical units. The virus infection was on the rise because of the density of the population in these camps, and there were insufficient medical facilities in the camps.”³

² Some Positive Hopes from COVID-19 in Bangladesh, Golam M. Mathbor and Krishna Kumar Saha
11 June, 2020 12:00 AM Daily Sun, Dhaka, Bangladesh

³ Rohingya crisis and the COVID-19, Golam M Mathbor and Krishna Kumar Saha

Around the globe, economies suffered, with healthcare workers stressed and medical systems strained. Economies in South Asia suffered when foreign remittances from overseas workers dwindled. For instance, like other countries of South Asia, “The government of Bangladesh did [does] not have any proper planning for these returnees and lacked [lacks] a reintegration program for these workers back into Bangladeshi society.”⁴

Governments also had to deal with increased costs and supply chain issues. Many of these pandemic issues still exist 2 years later, although some in diminished ways. “The world will never be the same again after the pandemic, and the experience of transformative change is teaching us how to treat people and nature.”⁵ Because of this, social administration has had to adapt, and in many cases with limited increases in financing for social services.

Macro Social Work

Think about this statement, “Social work services are needed everywhere on the globe.” Besides formal practice, there is much that happens informally through individuals and communities, as well as through NGOs, religious and charitable organizations. For formal systems,

⁴ The Asian Age: Op Ed on August 6, 2020, Bangladeshi migrant workers and their homecoming
Golam M Mathbor and Krishna Kumar Saha

⁵ Some Positive Hopes from COVID-19 in Bangladesh, Golam M. Mathbor and Krishna Kumar Saha
11 June, 2020 12:00 AM Daily Sun, Dhaka, Bangladesh

individual countries set up their own systems nationally, often devolving some authority to regional, provincial or state levels. Areas around the world set up regional organizations similar to ASEAN and SAARC, where their member states set policies for order and cooperation, as well as cooperation with other regional entities. The United Nations is the umbrella organization for many policies around the world. Funding opportunities are provided from banking in individual countries and regional consortiums to global giants such as the IMF, ADB, UN and WORLD BANK. I mention these organizations, because many social work programs touch them through funding and policies.

I am in full support of the macro movement initiative that includes Social Administration, the Network of Social Work Management, Influencing Social Policy, the Macro Social Work Student Network and Social Justice initiatives. Their commitment and steadfast agenda, for rebalancing macro and micro education and practice and increasing macro social work specialization that focuses on organizational-level, community-level, and policy-level interventions in addressing tragic realities of recent human rights violations across nations, is timely and pivotal.

Social Work Curriculum

Social work used to be considered as a profession to only work with beggars and vagrants in a particular region. In early days, this may have

been the case, but today social work services can be needed by anyone, at any stage of life and crossing all socio-economic classes. We cannot predict the future to know when services will be needed.

Social Work plays a critical role in human development. With many humans living to 70+, social problems can develop from birth onwards that require intervention during a lifetime: intermittently, once or permanently. Not all interventions are totally successful, but society can provide continued intervention for changing situations. Here are five examples of how the human condition can be affected.

1). First example is a single mother with 3 children who finds herself penniless and homeless. Her Social Worker helps her to find housing, training and a job. She goes on to achieve her degree in mechanical engineering and then secures a job in her field.

2). What about the young man arrested at age 15 for theft and sent to a juvenile detention facility. The Social Worker encourages him to achieve his high school diploma whilst in detention. After his release, he opens a small store with financing the Social Worker informed him about.

3). Another case is a young soldier who loses his leg in a military accident. The hospital Social Worker works with the hospital medical team to help him obtain a prosthesis, benefits and housing. He goes on for a degree in Informational Technology and opens his own home-based IT business.

4). This case involves a rural family. They live in a simple house without electricity, using oil lamps and candles for light. Cooking is

done outside on an open fire. The husband cultivates land as a tenant farmer, and his wife takes care of 2 small children and the family cow, goats and chickens. They live in a flood zone and the property and house recently suffered severe damage. They must relocate as they can no longer pay for the land, and they have no savings due to limited income. Their relatives and the local mosque cannot help as they also were affected by the disaster. The social worker, who also was affected by the flooding, guides them in this process of relocation.

5). Finally, what about the elderly couple who are having trouble maintaining their lifestyle? They have the means to support themselves, but do not seem to be making rational decision-making. In consultation with the couple, their doctors and their family, the social worker arranges home help, and when they can no longer stay in their own home, facilitates placement in an alternative living arrangement with perhaps family or in a suitable facility.

Social Work as a Profession

Social work is a professional discipline deeply grounded in human rights and social justices since its inception. Social workers have a role to offer in ensuring that progress is made in addressing systemic inequity, inequality, and injustice. Ignorance, prejudice, bigotry, and stereotypes are socially constructed problems that continuously threaten our human

rights, as well as social, economic, and environmental justice until addressed.

Social Work education prepares us not only by providing the necessary knowledge base and skills, but also by enabling us to become advocates for the vulnerable constituents of our global population. As a professional discipline, social workers promote individual, family, and community well-being in behavioral health care, child welfare, schools, hospitals, local social services, community agencies, advocacy organizations, and with veterans across the United States (CSWE 1/18/2021). Recognition of social work as a profession in South Asian countries, as well as globally, is pivotal to ensure quality social services that empowers vulnerable population.

However, where social work education does exist, many university-trained social work graduates with Bachelor and Master's degrees take other positions in the civil services and are reluctant to join as social workers, even with some positions available. Social work curriculum in the South Asian region is mainly focused on community development approaches because of the history and long tradition of the regional culture. Receiving mental health treatment from an institution is still seen as a stigma in the region. These are the issues that Social Administration can review for solutions.

The Case of South Asia

As you are aware, I am originally from Bangladesh, so I will now discuss the situation in South Asia. South Asia comprises the following eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. One fourth of the world's population lives in this region. This region is situated between the Himalayas on the North and the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal on the South. It houses peoples of many ethnic groups, linguistic communities, major religious persuasions, and numerous economic and professional categories. Its songs and dances, its poetry and literature, its folklores and philosophies, its sages and saints draw on a tradition that is thousands of years old.

The land of South Asia has been conquered many times for its riches but never completely defeated. The Pathans, the Mughals, the British have all had their day, but people have stood firm, fought back, and in the end prevailed. British colonialists ruled this region for more than 200 years. The language, the literature, the arts, the culture, and the people as a whole are richer because of those contacts. This region has been able to hold on to its democratic processes, in spite of the numerous obstacles thrown at it periodically.

However, currently there is a resurgence of nationalism, fundamentalism, and fascism in this region. Some political parties are using religion as an instrument to divide people and to stay in power by taking advantage of this mechanism. People with a fundamentalist

agenda are further taking advantage by dividing people, both within and between the countries. Nationalism is another technique countries are trying to utilize to cause severe tension on borders between and among the countries. “Along with the world, Bangladesh has been facing the threat of pandemic effects, and this has made the country more resilient and sensitive towards poor people. Since there are people on the streets with no home and earnings were sufferings due to the lockdown. We have seen examples of social collaboration and solidarity after the government started to lockdown throughout the country in March 2020.”⁶ All these elements have severe consequences for the social safety net prevalent in the region.

Resurgence of Nationalism, Fundamentalism, Fascism

Social work is well-positioned to address the global resurgence of nationalism, fundamentalism, fascism, etc. and to provide comprehensive responses grounded in social work ethics and practice. Inherent in social work practice is the fact that services are provided to all. The focus of social work is practice for the good of humanity, and discrimination is not an option. Social work provides services to people from all different backgrounds, and there must never be practice based on nationalism, fundamentalism and fascism.

⁶ Some Positive Hopes from COVID-19 in Bangladesh, Golam M. Mathbor and Krishna Kumar Saha
11 June, 2020 12:00 AM Daily Sun, Dhaka, Bangladesh

However, within practice, both domestically in South Asian countries and globally, social workers will face these issues and must be trained in how to work in any type of discriminatory environment. Besides meeting the needs of the population of a country, social workers can support people to act accordingly to be good citizens of their countries. We have seen some political solidarity during the Corona times, which is often rare in the politics of Bangladesh. Most of the political parties and their wing organizations have gone on the streets to people's homes with the relief goods and food products.⁷

It is a delicate balance to create harmony between the dissidence of extremist views and the Rule of Law, but with proper training, social workers should be able to meet the challenge. Social work education prepares us not only by providing the necessary knowledge base and skills, but also by enabling us to become advocates for the vulnerable constituents of our global population. Solidarity among professional organizations throughout the region needs to be fomented in order to stop the violation of human rights predators' misdeeds that are causing deprivation among billions of people in the region.

⁷ Some Positive Hopes from COVID-19 in Bangladesh, Golam M. Mathbor and Krishna Kumar Saha
11 June, 2020 12:00 AM Daily Sun, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Economies suffered

Professional Social Work Organizations

There are three global institutions founded and led by social work professionals: International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) serves and represents social work education globally; the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) represents the interests of social workers around the world; and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) monitors and influences social policy directives globally. These organizations require more collaboration and partnerships to influence social and economic policies to safeguard the interests of vulnerable populations globally. Unless we work together, our world will remain endangered. Residual approach of use of social safety nets is a major impediment to social development in the world. This is because most countries in the region have never recognized social work as a profession. Evidently, in some countries, there are a limited number of professional organizations or none exist at all that can advocate on behalf of the vulnerable constituents of the world. The result is that the population is becoming gradually marginalized, disenfranchised, and disentitled.

Vision for the Future

In leading Social Work in the 21st century, we must be equipped with the appropriate knowledge base and skills to address the needs of diverse constituents. We need to be skillful, gaining trust from various

stakeholders and building consensus on shared interests. Partnerships at all levels from local to international are crucial to leaving no one behind and to achieve community resilience and achievement of SDGs in such a globalized world.

Social Administration must empower social workers to maintain socio-economic justice at the heart of our value driven profession, and expand the vision of social work's role in stages of social development. There is also the need to be more vocal promoting gender equality. We should continue to advocate for vulnerable populations and influence social policies in addressing the vast inequality, acute inequity, and social injustices in the 21st century and beyond. Let us be more dynamic, imaginative and proactive envisioning the role of the Social Work profession in establishing the rights of people hitherto excluded from the benefits of development. I firmly believe that communication provides connectivity and connectivity results in productivity, an essential element to foster solidarity co-building a new eco-social world.

I hope that each of you will become part of the change needed to strengthen social solidarity by participating in productive community resilience discussions, and by accepting that all countries and their populations can be more productive when they are globally connected.

Thank you very much for your attention. I wish you all a productive conference.

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International Conference of Social Administration and Justice (ICSAJ)

*To nurture and empower a new generation
of scholars*

Organised by : Department of Social Administration and Justice, Universiti Malaya

Supported by : Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya

Keynote Speakers:



Professor Dr. Golam M. Mathbor

Professor, School of Social Work
Monmouth University, New Jersey,
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Professor Dr. Azrini Wahidin

Professor of Criminology and
Criminal Justice,
University of Warwick United Kingdom

Date : 24th & 25th August 2022
Venue : Faculty of Arts and Social
Sciences, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia

Conference description:

The aim of this early scholar international conference is to nurture and empower a new generation of scholars and practitioners equipped to engage in social services practices with relevant knowledge, and with a range of conceptual as well as practical tools.

Conference themes:

Social and cultural well-being of individuals, families and communities
Catastrophic effect of the pandemic
Poverty, inequality and vulnerability
Health and social disparities
Criminal justice
Sustainable and safe physical environments
Security and protection on social and economic initiatives
Sustainable and ethical practice in human services
Educating for change, human rights and equality

Important Dates:

Deadline for abstract submission	16th May 2022
Notification of abstract acceptance	25th May 2022
Deadline for submission full paper	30th June 2022
Registration commencement date	15th June 2022
Conference Date	24th & 25th August 2022

Publication opportunity:

- Special volume of a Web of Science cited Journal
- Edited book
- Malaysian Journal of Social Administration (MJSA)

Conference fees:

Presenter	USD60
Participant	USD30



Abstract submission : <https://umevent.um.edu.my/ICSAJ2022>
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