

# Statement of Ethics for the International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD)

*Background:* In June 2019, Professor Manohar Pawar, President of the ICSD, constituted a committee, comprising Prof. Richard Hugman, University of New South Wales, Prof. Manohar Pawar, Charles Sturt University, and Prof. Vijayan K. Pillai, University of Texas at Arlington, to develop a draft statement of ethics for the ICSD. The statement was circulated for ICSD members' feedback. The feedback received from members, including, Drs. Michael A. Dover, Gokul Mandayam, and Francis Okello, was used to revise the statement. The following statement of ethics for the ICSD is an evolving document for the benefit of development practitioners and it is hoped that ICSD members would further refine and strengthen it periodically.

## 1. Introduction

A statement of ethics for any profession or occupation must address several related elements, which include its purposes, actions, and the character of its members. Ethics is the value connection between the definition of ends (intended outcomes) and the means of achieving them (practices). Therefore, a profession's ethics should attend to the following:

- Goals
- Roles and tasks
- Methods
- Character

This could be achieved using two elements. First, a statement of ethics should consider the principles guiding action. Second, it should provide a framework to reflect on the character of practitioners. These elements are complementary and together ensure that the ethical basis of social development covers all dimensions of theory, knowledge, and practices.

In the contemporary world, models of such ethical statements can be drawn from various cognate disciplines, notably social work, health (including medicine), and education. In different ways, these disciplines bring together insights from the ethical approaches of considering inherent moral duty (deontology), consequences (utilitarianism), and character (virtues). These are supported in doing so by the following statements: *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations 1948), *Declaration of Helsinki* (World Medical Association [WMA] 1964, 2014), *Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles* (International Federation of Social Workers/International Association of Schools of Social Work [IFSW/IASSW] 2004/2018), and *Declaration on Professional Ethics in Education* (Education International [EI] 2001).

As an interdisciplinary field, social development appropriately draws on the above-mentioned statements. At the same time, because of its distinctive goals, roles, tasks, and methods, it is necessary that a specific statement be made to guide and support this field.

## **2. The Goals and Tasks of ICSD**

The ICSD has set out the goals for the promotion of social development through the following principles:

- Realization of humanity
- Satisfaction of human needs
- Human rights
- Equality
- Social, economic, and environmental justice
- Peace

These goals are identified as the necessary conditions for sustainable social development. The goals establish the practice basis for social development and express values necessary to underpin good practices.

## **3. An Ethical Framework**

### **3.1 Humanity Dignity and Worth**

Social development seeks to achieve the dignity and worth of all humanity. Therefore, social development practitioners should have the following roles:

- 3.1.1 Act in such a way as to demonstrate respect to all people, irrespective of their social identity or status (including social class, sex, race, culture and ethnicity, sexuality, age, physical or mental abilities, or religion).
- 3.1.2 Treat each person as an individual with their own dignity and worth.
- 3.1.3 Ensure satisfaction of basic needs through institutional provisions.

- 3.1.4 Respect the self-determination of all people who are involved in or affected by social development and seek to ensure that all views and interests are carefully considered—this includes obtaining informed consent.
- 3.1.5 Seek to facilitate the active participation of all people in social development as it affects them.
- 3.1.6 Oppose (including withdrawing from) actions or projects that might cause harm to people, whether physical, mental, cultural, or spiritual.

### 3.2 Satisfaction of Human Needs

The goals of social development require the satisfaction of those universal human and psychological needs required to avoid serious harm, ensure full social participation, and achieve human wellbeing. Therefore, social development practitioners should ensure the following:

- 3.2.1 Promotion of understanding and community dialogue about of the relationship between human needs, human rights, and social injustice.
- 3.2.2 Recognizing that universal human needs are addressed in culturally varying manners that also respond to local differences in physical and natural environment.
- 3.2.3 Engaging in primary prevention by ensuring that unjust social systems such as oppression and exploitation do not create systematic inequality in the opportunities people and communities should have to address our human needs.
- 3.2.4 Engaging in secondary prevention by responding to wrongfully unmet needs with services and benefits that can restore basic levels of need satisfaction.
- 3.2.5 Engaging in tertiary prevention with those who have suffered serious harm by ensuring restoration of their full social functioning.

### 3.3 Human Rights

Social development seeks to achieve human rights. Therefore, social development practitioners should:

- 3.3.1 Act in such a way as to promote the human rights of all people irrespective of their social identity or status (including social class, sex, race, culture and ethnicity, sexuality, age, physical or mental abilities, or religion).
- 3.3.2 Not participate in actions or projects that breach human rights (such as those that might lead to enslavement or torture of whatever kind).
- 3.3.3 Promote and support the empowerment of individuals, groups, and communities as a means of social development and as an end in itself.
- 3.3.4 Recognize the rights of communities and cultures and to seek to reconcile individual and collective rights.

- 3.3.5 Work to promote existing human rights, strengthen their provisions, and ensure their enforcement at the local, national, and global levels.

### 3.4 Equality and Justice

Social development seeks to achieve equality and justice for all people. Therefore, social development practitioners should:

- 3.4.1 Seek to oppose social inequalities and exclusions throughout their work.
- 3.4.2 Challenge injustice whenever this is encountered.
- 3.4.3 Promote equitable access to resources across communities and societies, taking into account the relative needs of individuals, groups, and communities.
- 3.4.4 Achieve balance in the needs and interests of the present and future generations, for example, in the social, economic, or environmental impacts of the choices made to achieve social development.

### 3.5 Integrity (Character)

Social development cannot achieve its goals unless practitioners possess moral qualities that would enable them to demonstrate the ethical principles defined in this statement. Therefore, social development practitioners should:

- 3.5.1 Be honest and trustworthy, maintaining their own integrity and that of their relationships with the beneficiaries of their work in all aspects.
- 3.5.2 Be competent by seeking to maintain their knowledge, skills, values, and understanding, and using these in ways that are accountable.
- 3.5.3 Seek to serve the individuals, groups, or communities with whom they work without seeking to use this primarily as a means for their own gain or benefit.

### 3.6 Peace

Social development cannot be optimally achieved in the presence of war, repression, terrorism, violent crime, gang violence, racially and ethnically motivated violence, family violence, and nuclear weapons. Therefore, social development practitioners should:

- 3.6.1 Promote using lobbying- and advocacy-specific measures at local, national, and global levels that advance peace.
- 3.6.2 Engage in peace-building at local level by reducing sources of violence such as poverty and inequality and lack of full equality for women and the healthy development of children.
- 3.6.3 Engage with faith-based efforts at intergroup dialogue and efforts to encourage respect for the human rights of women, religious and

ethnic minority groups, and other historically oppressed and vulnerable populations.

- 3.6.4 Promote social solidarity and harmony with and effective rehabilitative services for the victims of war and violence.

#### **4. Plurality of Responsibilities**

Social development occurs in a world of plural relationships between people of different cultures who hold different values and whose interests may even be in conflict. At the same time, social development also occurs in a world with finite resources. For these reasons, all social development practitioners have a responsibility to share in the examination and advance of theory, knowledge, skills, and values, and in the education of new and emerging practitioners.

Furthermore, there may be reasonable differences of view between social development practitioners concerning the importance of particular ethical principles or virtues in circumstances when particular values are incompatible. Therefore, all social development practitioners have a responsibility to engage in dialogue on such matters with respect. The ethical principles and virtues of social development apply to relationships and actions within the field as well as between practitioners and beneficiaries.