



Japanese Society for the Study of Social Work
International Research Seminar

Social Action on the International Stage UN Advocacy by Social Workers and the SDGs

Asia Pacific Regional Report
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UN Advocacy by Social Workers and the SDGs Asia Pacific Regional Report

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 - SDGs and social work
2. IFSW UN Commission Asia Pacific
 - Overview
3. Key issues in the Asia Pacific region
 - SDG 2021 report
4. IFSW UN Advocacy in the Asia Pacific
 - Examples
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Background in context

- Social work & the SDGs





Social work and the SDGs

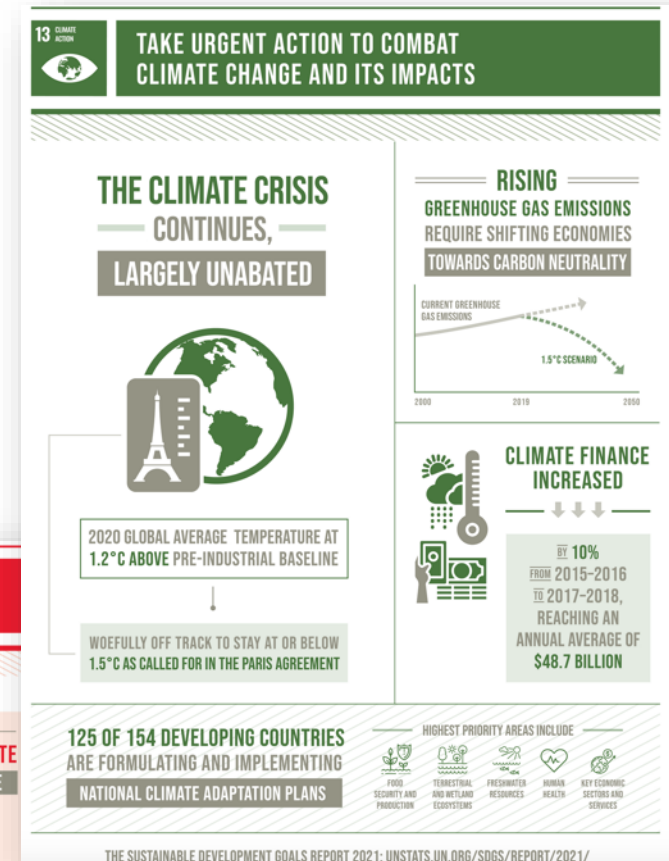
- As a human rights profession, social workers all over the world can (and do) play a key part in meeting the SDGs.
- Similar language of the SDGs and social work which both promote inclusion, equality and justice, and a holistic appreciation of sustainability
- Criticised for their oversimplification of complex issues, empty symbolism and perpetuation of Western colonialism
- Lack of bottom up approaches, member states who are responsible for the implementation of the SDGs are the main barriers of action
- Not on track to meet the goals



Social work and the SDGs

The COVID-19 pandemic is a **setback for sustainable development everywhere**. For the first time since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, the global average SDG Index score for 2020 has decreased from the previous year: a decline driven to a large extent by increased poverty rates and unemployment following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

UN Sustainable Development Report 2021





IFSW-AP UN Commission



IFSW-Asia Pacific UN Commission

- IFSW has special consultative status to the UN to advocate on key issues and the social work profession.
- The IFSW UN commission aims to bridge the gaps between UN agendas and community aspirations by written & verbal submissions, responding to consultations, events to highlight social work.
- Formed in 2019, 7 IFSW AP UN representatives to the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which is the United Nations' regional hub.

Asia-Pacific Region

W. Kotbungkair
Regional
Commissioner



✉ [Email Bio](#)

Zhe Wang
Representative



✉ [Email Bio](#)

Sup Pyo Kim
Representative



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Representative



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Jude Douglas
Representative



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Suresh Pathare
Representative



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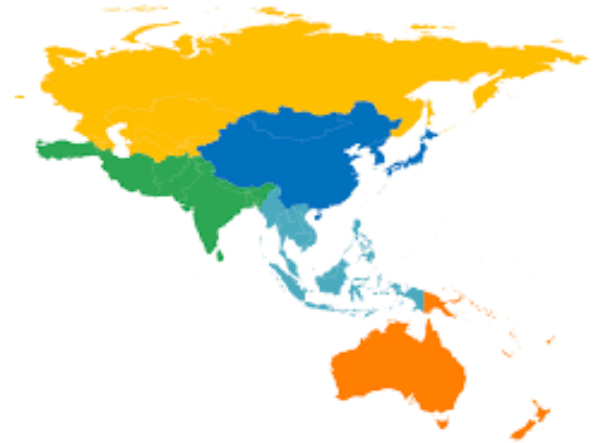
Hamed Olamaee
Representative



✉ [Email Bio](#)

UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

- ESCAP is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations, main office in Bangkok, Thailand.
- 53 member States and 9 associate members in pursuit of solutions to sustainable development challenges.
- ESCAP supports regional cooperation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- ESCAP pursues this objective by carrying out work, in close cooperation with civil society groups (like the IFSW).





Key issues in the Asia Pacific region



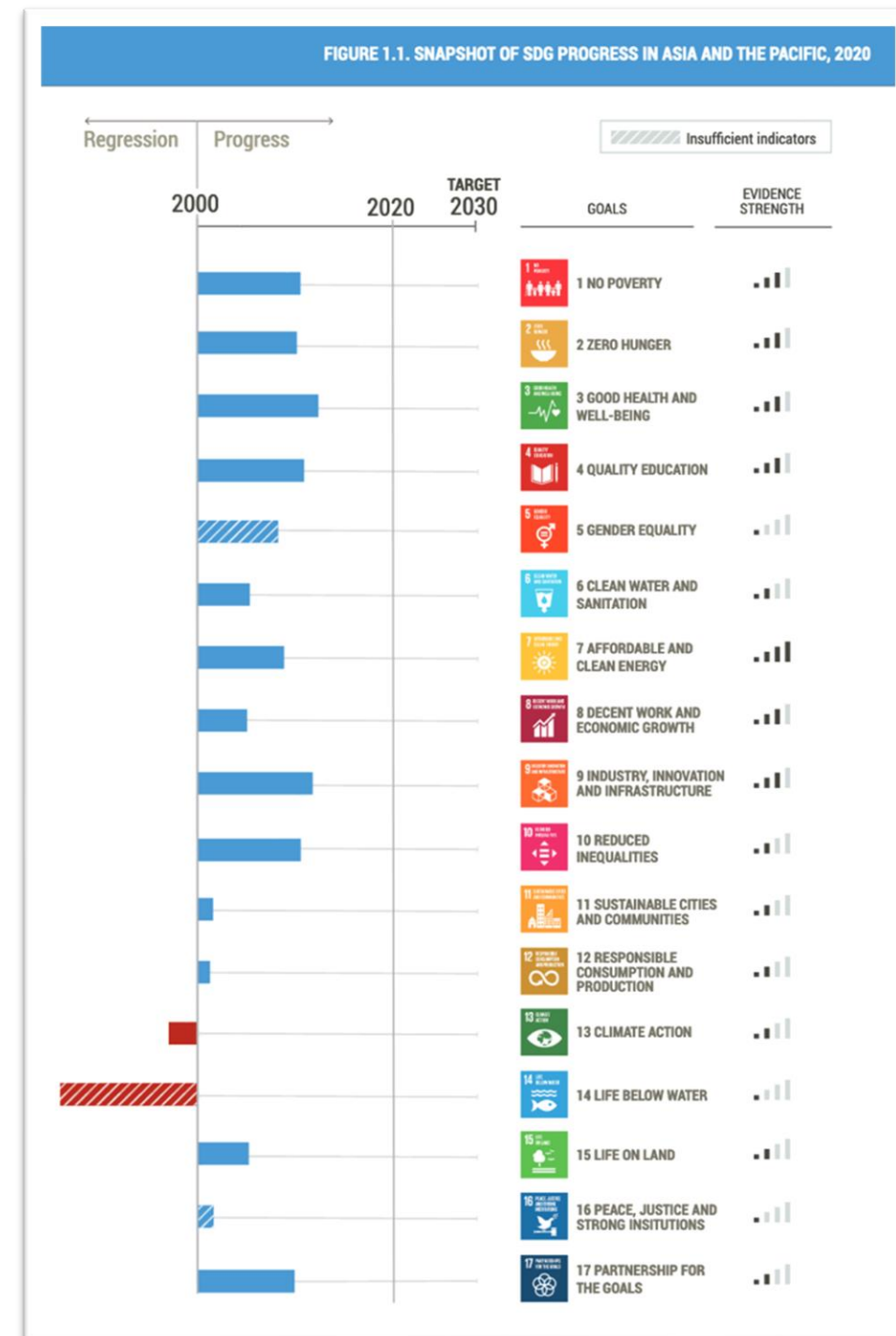
Key issues in the Asia Pacific region

- **The Asia-Pacific region is not on track to achieve any of the 17 SDGs by 2030.**
- On its current trajectory, the region **may achieve less than 10 per cent of the SDG targets.**
- COVID has significantly impacted the region, especially in relation to poverty and inequality.
- In some areas there is a foundation for achieving the goals. The most promising are goals for **good health and well-being (Goal 3)** and **industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9)** where the region has progressed the most.



Key issues in the Asia Pacific region

- The region is regressing on critical goals of climate action (Goal 13) and life below water (Goal 14).
- Some subregions are well positioned to achieve a few of the goals. For example, East and North-East Asia is on track to eradicate poverty (Goal 1) and provide clean water and sanitation for all (Goal 6) while South-East Asia is on track to promote sustainable industry and innovation (Goal 9).
- Advocacy is needed to assure governments take meaningful action.





IFSW UN Advocacy in the Asia Pacific



IFSW UN Advocacy in the Asia Pacific

- Over the past 2 years, IFSW AP UN Representatives attend key forums and meetings advocating for human rights, social and environmental justice.
- Focus on building partnerships and collaborating with member states and NGOs in the region.
- The work has included written statements, oral statements, formal correspondence, and participation in regional summits and workshops.



IFSW UN Advocacy in the Asia Pacific

- In the last year this included:
 - Submission of formal IFSW position statement on key regional issues to ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Alisjahbana
 - Advocating and being granted for UN ESCAP Observer Status for the IFSW
 - World Social Work Day Panel, in partnership with UNICEF
 - **Formal written statements** submitted to:
 - Committee on Environment and Development, Sixth Session
 - Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2021
 - Committee for Social Development Sixth Session
 - **Addressing the UN through oral statements** at the:
 - Committee on Environment and Development, Sixth Session
 - Committee for Social Development Sixth Session
 - Numerous workshops and panel discussions
 - Attendance of the 77th session of the Commission on the 2020 & 2021 UN Global High Level Political Forum



IFSW UN Advocacy in the Asia Pacific

Example: Committee on Environment and Development, Sixth Session

- Key meeting for the region.
- Formal written and oral statement calling for greater action on climate change a bottom up approach.
- Member states (many who are the world's largest polluters) openly celebrated their efforts on climate change, despite clear evidence to the contrary.
- Highlights the important role of the NGO sector in the UN system and continued advocacy.





Upcoming actions





- Limits to the UN system, can be impenetrable and a very top down approach
- Who has a seat at the table?
- What happens when those in charge of the solutions are the main barriers or the perpetrators?
- Clear role for the NGO sector and collective actions.
- Clear role for social workers and social work approaches, especially political action

Upcoming actions

- Greater engagement with the UN ESCAP system as official observers
- Continued representation at key meeting and events, with formal statements.
- Networking and collaboration with member states
- Partnership with NGOs
- World Social Work Day event in the Asia Pacific for 2022





Thank you

