

New visions of social work advocating for environmental justice

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Social workers have long been critical to the healthy functioning of societies. Through the years, the important roles they play had to adapt and synchronise with the times. In today's world of climate crisis and its unequal impacts on people, animal and plant lives, the social work profession is rising to meet new challenges that affect humanity. Social workers already play a vital role in disaster relief, although that focus has been more on helping individuals, families and communities to lessen the impacts in the aftermaths of natural or man-made disasters. The increasing incidences of intense weather events and predictions of what's to come, demand that modern disaster management interventions encompass not only reactive but proactive responses. Like most countries, South Africa experiences a shortage of social workers, yet their role is vital in creating a more just, healthy, safe and sustainable environment. These drivers of social change are highlighting social work as one of the most crucial and globally relevant careers.



Sacap (The South African College of Applied Psychology) is bringing together a panel of experts to discuss new perspectives about the profession, and the ways that social work education needs to transform to deliver new-generation practitioners, in tune and in touch with the contemporary needs and threats facing local communities and the world. The one-hour **Promoting Environmental Justice through Social Work webinar** will take place on **Tuesday, 11 May 2021** from **6pm to 7pm**. **Attendance is free** and you can **register [here](#)**.

One of the Sacap panellists, advocacy specialist Abigail Dawson, says: "Historically social workers have responded to disasters in a reactive manner, but now we are talking about our roles needing to change towards preparing for and/or preventing disasters from happening with such devastating, life-threatening effects. Climate change and its resulting disasters are going to increase, and so our response as social workers needs to be appropriate and preparatory. Social workers have a role and responsibility to educate the masses about the negative impact of climate change and advocate for relevant policies to minimise the impact. Proactively, they need to harness the power of the masses by building solidarity through networks that promote community resilience and foster the well-being of communities and the environment."

There's an increasing call for educational institutions to develop and deliver curriculum that focuses on disaster management courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level to ensure social workers are knowledgeable and skilled in promoting sustainable community development. Social work intern and PhD candidate, Molly Shayamano, says: "We need to have the conversations that lead to actions such as formulating training guidelines on disaster-oriented social work practice. Social workers are working in areas that are often most susceptible to varied disasters resulting in severe and longer lasting impacts. Therefore, social work training needs to ensure that practitioners have thorough knowledge and skills to engage in the prevention, preparedness, response and rehabilitation phases of the disaster management cycle, where they are needed most."



EDUCATION

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SACAP 5 Feb 2021



A highlight of the upcoming webinar will be the insights of Sacap's head of faculty of social work and community development, Dr Poppy Masinga, who will share her insights about Sacap's curriculum and the focus on green social work. "This is a practice model and framework to empower social workers to be more involved in the environmental issues that exacerbate communities' vulnerabilities. It's a compelling educational opportunity and new-generation area of specialisation for those who want to make a difference when it comes to the world's major environmental threats but may not have considered yet that they can achieve their goal and passion through a rewarding career in social work."

Join the conversation to find out more. Attendance is free. Register [here](#) for the Sacap webinar:

Theme: Promoting Environmental Justice through Social Work

Date: Tuesday, 11 May 2021

Time: 6pm to 7pm

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