

## 'Buen Vivir': The Good Life Theme for Social Work Practice

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### Abstract

World Social Work Day (WSWD), observed on the third Tuesday of March, honours social workers. It is an occasion to reaffirm dedication to well-being programs, universal access and equity, and a fair go for all who receive services from the profession. The concept of harmonious coexistence between communities and nature, as well as the collaboration of social workers and local citizens to create peaceful communities, is critical for a sustainable future. This editorial is a self-congratulatory piece on the identification of the correct theme for future social work, but it also provides a brief explanation of what the 'Buen Vivir': The Good Life theme entails for modern social work practice.

**Keywords:** Buen Vivir: The Good Life Theme for Social Work Practice; Endogenous Discourse; Communities; Ecological Social Work

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## Introduction

World Social Work Day (WSWD) is observed on the third Tuesday of March annually to acknowledge the accomplishments of the social work profession. It is an opportunity for various countries to emphasise their commitment to promoting well-being programs that guarantee universal access and fairness for all individuals, especially those in poverty. There is much to be learned from the pandemic in terms of resource

utilisation (Pulla et al., 2022). The WSWD-2024 has been associated with a new theme of 'Shared Future for Transformative Change'. Joachim Mumba, President of the International Federation of Social Workers, stated that this year's theme aligns closely with the fundamental principles of social work profession that supports the idea of communities and nature coexisting communities essential for a sustainable future (IFSW, 2024).



**Journal Space and Culture, India recognises and appreciates the contribution of social workers worldwide.**

## Post-Development Transformation?

It is fashionable to argue that post-development transformation should look for alternatives for development rather than considering a reformulation of old development. 'Buen Vivir' is one such endogenous discourse, and it is time to return rather than invent yet another stupidity to replace the current neo-liberal excesses being paraded as development (Gudynas, 2013). The subject for this year is 'Buen Vivir', which is all about indigenous wisdom and obviously points towards an ecological approach to social work. It incorporates concepts such as de-growth and austerity, as well as a sharp critique of extractivism, which invokes limits in development (Haq, 2024).

## Anthropocentrism is Selfish

Anthropocentrism is the tragic belief that value is centred on humans and that the rest of the flora, wildlife, and organisms, even viruses, exist solely to serve human purposes. The transmission of the virus from Wuhan laboratories and the manner in which the scientific community, governments, and the World Health Organization played with humanity with little regard for human life is an instance that we lived in over two years in a row in disgust. With an obvious objective to do better for their firm owners and with scant consideration to protect the people and the world. Such avarice, including the abuse of the environment for the very sake of humanity, must undoubtedly stop.

## States of Exception

Cities without drinking water, or the dawn of the long Covid and the accelerated release of lab-based viruses back on humans to test their efficacies must certainly be opposed. In the end, is not the COVID-19 pandemic comparable to the epidemic of racism in terms of specific traits? A better understanding of the disparities that existed across disadvantaged populations during the COVID-19 epidemic can be achieved through the use of concepts like bios, zoe, homo sacer, and states of exception (Agamben, 2020; Espina & Narruhn, 2021; Pulla, 2022).

In an interview, Agamben (2020) said the outbreak proves that governments' state of exception is the norm. So acclimated to frequent crises, humans do not understand their life have become biological and lost their political and human components. A society in constant crisis is not free. Our culture has traded freedom for 'reasons of security,' therefore, we will always be afraid and uncertain (Pulla, 2022).

Conscientisation methodology never sat outside the realm of social work. For some strange reason, we do not carry this in the wherewithal of social work. It appears that the profession prefers to remain silent on human rights.

Conscientisation allows us to remove any structural domination over the people we serve; the term and practice will enable us to actively engage and create resilient and transcending survival for the people we work with. I see a need to return to this as part of critical thinking that our profession seems to incorporate often. But, of course, our critical thinking templates may need to be human-centred and decolonised. Teachers in the field of social work have the ability to alter the curriculum so that it takes into account structural factors rather than the sick paradigm of individualistic, behavioural, and top-down medical models. This would necessitate that we recognise the abuse of biopower in everyday life and transactions via oppressed identities of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation (Espina & Narruhn, 2021).

Social work clearly needs an intersectional perspective that allows us to utilise our agency to reduce issues of inequality.

'Buen Vivir' recognises the significance of holistic well-being, alignment with the environment, solidarity within communities, and the preservation of cultural legacy as essential elements that contribute to a life that is fulfilling. In addition, the themes of this year's WSWD make reference to the necessity for social workers to make investments in innovative, community-led initiatives that are founded on indigenous knowledge. This highlights the importance of the right to self-determination of the people and communities that we serve. Now, that is a core value central to social work. Therefore, social workers should engage with the people to establish what is required rather than merely provide services that people may not prefer as they were not involved in the first place. External aid serves a purpose and is needed in a crisis, but when unsettled lives after calamities, disasters, humanmade or natural, requires resilience, an expression of mutual generosity; in the context of the community, it is remarkable heroism in the face of adversity and crisis; however, this is not an infinite resource that can be drawn upon and is similar to wells that dry up during drought and require recharging of the wells. One needs to replenish resilience. Therefore, it is vital for social workers to consider the following eight-step approach to transforming communities.

- Finding your place in the community
- Recognising the local context
- Sharing the community's future vision
- Working with the inside power structure
- Encourage self-determination
- Assisting with collective petition/ planning and action
- Seeking constructive social transformation from within the communities
- Participating in both action and reflection

## Conclusion

Today, our goal needs to be redirected toward achieving peace with nature, which is frequently and severely disrupted by geopolitical and economic issues. Having said that, it is also important to reiterate that numerous societies throughout history have understood the importance of environmental, social, and economic harmony. What is novel is an expression of these concepts in the context of a global industrial and information society. As a result, there is a need to reassert fundamental conviction in the primacy of the human species in the ecosystem, implying greater environmental participation and collaborative practice, a step in the direction of 'Buen Vivir': The Good Life.

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## About the Author

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