

Foundations of social work

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1. Social work: definitions, history, scope and the profession in India
2. Principles, values and code of ethics of social work

1 Social work: definitions, history, scope and the profession in India

Social work is a professional, scientific helping service that improves the social functioning of individuals, groups and communities; it grew out of the Charity Organisation Society (London, 1869) and the settlement movement (Toynbee Hall, 1884), and became a profession in India with the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work, Bombay (1936), now TISS.

Core facts

- **Friedlander (1955):** social work is a **professional service**, based on **scientific knowledge and skill in human relations**, that helps people, alone or in groups, reach **social and personal satisfaction and independence**.
- **Herbert Stroup:** social work is the **art** of bringing resources to meet the needs of individuals, groups and communities by the **scientific method of helping people help themselves**.
- **Werner Boehm (1958–59):** social work seeks to **enhance the social functioning** of individuals, singly and in groups, by activities focused on their **social relationships**.
- **Mary Richmond:** *Social Diagnosis* (1917), *What is Social Case Work?* (1922); called the **mother of social case work**.
- **Global definition (IFSW–IASSW, Melbourne, 2014):** a **practice-based profession and an academic discipline** that promotes **social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people**; core principles: **social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, respect for diversities**.
- **Elizabethan Poor Law: 1601** (England); **Poor Law Amendment Act: 1834**.
- **Charity Organisation Society (COS): London, 1869** (C.S. Loch, Octavia Hill); first in USA at **Buffalo, 1877** (Rev. S. Humphreys Gurteen). Volunteers called "**friendly visitors**"; the root of **case work**.
- **Settlement house movement: Toynbee Hall, London, 1884** (Canon **Samuel Barnett** and Henrietta Barnett); **Hull House, Chicago, 1889** (**Jane Addams** and Ellen Gates Starr). The root of **group work and community organisation**. Jane Addams: **Nobel Peace Prize 1931**.
- **First training:** summer course (Summer School in Philanthropic Work) of the New York COS, **1898**; it became the **New York School of Philanthropy (1904)**, now the Columbia School of Social Work.
- **Abraham Flexner (1915):** "Is social work a profession?" — answered **not yet**. **Ernest Greenwood (1957):** five **attributes of a profession**: systematic theory, authority, community sanction, ethical code, professional culture.
- **NASW (USA) formed 1955**; first Code of Ethics **1960**.
- **India's first school: Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work, Bombay, 1936**; first director **Clifford Manshardt** (American missionary); renamed **Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in 1944**; deemed university **1964**. TISS started the **Indian Journal of Social Work (1940)**.
- **Central Social Welfare Board: 1953**, first chairperson **Durgabai Deshmukh**.

- **Methods (six):** primary: **social case work, social group work, community organisation**; secondary (auxiliary): **social welfare administration, social work research, social action**.
- **Functions of social work** (Indian texts): **curative, correctional (corrective), preventive, developmental**. Areas of social change named by **Pierce: prevention, reform, re-socialisation, rehabilitation and planning** (2023 key).

Explained

1. What the definitions share. Every standard definition has the same parts:

- a **helping** activity, done as a **profession** (training, knowledge, skills, ethics);
- the client may be an **individual, a group or a community**;
- the aim is **social functioning**: the fit between a person and the demands of his or her social roles and environment;
- it **helps people help themselves** (self-help, not dependence);
- it uses **resources** of the family, agency, community and state.

2. Social work and its neighbours. Exams test the difference.

Term	What it is	Who does it
Social service	help given to a person in need (charity, relief)	anyone, often volunteers, no training needed
Social work	scientific, method-based helping to restore and develop social functioning	trained professional
Social welfare	the organised system of services, laws and institutions for well-being	state and voluntary agencies
Social reform	change of harmful customs and institutions by movements	reformers, leaders

- **Social action** is one method of social work: organised mass effort to change laws or policy.
- **Social security** is protection by the state against contingencies (old age, sickness, unemployment), through social insurance and social assistance.
- Social reform aims at **society**; social work aims at **people and their functioning**, though both seek change.

3. History in the West (stages).

- **Charity and religion:** alms, church relief, guilds.
- **Poor Laws (1601, 1834):** relief by the state through parishes and workhouses; the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor.
- **COS (1869):** "scientific charity": investigate each case, register applicants, avoid duplication of alms, use friendly visitors. Led to **case work** (Mary Richmond, a COS worker in Baltimore).
- **Settlements (1884, 1889):** educated volunteers lived **in** poor neighbourhoods, ran clubs, classes and campaigns. Led to **group work, community organisation** and **social action**.

- **Professionalisation:** schools (1898 onwards), Flexner's challenge (1915), Richmond's *Social Diagnosis* (1917), professional bodies, the NASW (1955) and its code.

4. History in India.

- **Pre-professional roots:** religious charity (*dana*, *zakat*, temple and *dharamshala* relief), caste and village self-help, and the **social reform movements** of the 19th century: Raja Ram Mohan Roy (Brahmo Samaj, 1828; abolition of sati, 1829), Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (Widow Remarriage Act, 1856), Jyotiba Phule (Satyashodhak Samaj, 1873), the Servants of India Society (Gokhale, 1905).
- **Gandhian constructive work:** village uplift, removal of untouchability, Harijan welfare, *khadi*, basic education; trained volunteers rather than professionals.
- **Professional stage:** the Tata school (1936) began graduate training. More schools followed after Independence, including the **Delhi School of Social Work (set up by the YWCA at Lucknow in 1946, moved to Delhi in 1948, part of Delhi University from 1961)** and **Kashi Vidyapith, Varanasi (1947)**.
- **After Independence:** the **Indian Conference of Social Work (1947)**, the **Central Social Welfare Board (1953)**, the Planning Commission's **Encyclopaedia of Social Work in India (1968)**, and UGC review committees on social work education (1965, 1980) and its model curriculum (2001). The Union ministry for welfare is now the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** (name since **1998**).

5. Scope and fields. Social work works wherever social functioning breaks down:

- **family and child welfare** (adoption, foster care, child protection);
- **medical and psychiatric social work** (hospitals, mental health);
- **correctional social work:** probation, parole, prisons, juvenile justice homes, after-care (this post's field);
- **labour welfare and industrial social work** (welfare officers under the Factories Act);
- **community development:** rural, urban and tribal;
- **school social work, youth welfare, gerontology, disability, disaster relief;**
- **social policy, planning and administration.**

6. Links to the society notes. Comte's law of three stages and Spencer's organic analogy are in SOC-BC-01; Ogburn's **cultural lag** in SOC-BC-03; theories of social change and social control in SOC-BC-04. Social work borrows these ideas to explain why problems arise when a society changes faster in technology than in its customs.

Common traps

X "The first COS was set up in Buffalo in 1869." ✓ **London, 1869**; Buffalo (USA) was **1877**.

X "Hull House was the first settlement house." ✓ **Toynbee Hall, London (1884)** was first; Hull House, Chicago, was **1889**.

X "Toynbee Hall was founded by Jane Addams." ✓ By **Samuel Barnett**; Addams founded **Hull House**.

X "TISS was founded in 1936 under that name." ✓ In 1936 it was the **Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work**; renamed TISS in **1944**.

✗ "Mary Richmond wrote *Social Diagnosis* in 1922." ✓ **1917**; *What is Social Case Work?* is 1922.

✗ "Social service and social work mean the same." ✓ Social service needs no training; social work is a **professional, method-based** service.

✗ "Social action is a primary method." ✓ It is a **secondary** method, with administration and research.

✗ "The global definition of social work was adopted in 2000." ✓ The current one is **2014 (Melbourne)**; 2000 (Montreal) was the earlier one.

Quick revision

- Social work: professional help for social functioning; helps people help themselves.
- Friedlander: professional service on scientific knowledge and skill in human relations.
- Global definition 2014: social change, cohesion, empowerment and liberation; social justice, human rights.
- Poor Law 1601; COS London 1869, Buffalo 1877; friendly visitors → case work.
- Toynbee Hall 1884 (Barnett); Hull House 1889 (Jane Addams) → group work, community organisation.
- Richmond, *Social Diagnosis* 1917; Flexner 1915; Greenwood 1957; NASW 1955.
- India: Tata school, Bombay, 1936 (Manshardt) → TISS 1944; CSWB 1953 (Durgabai Deshmukh).
- Methods: case work, group work, community organisation + administration, research, social action.
- Functions: curative, correctional, preventive, developmental.
- Comte, Spencer: SOC-BC-01; cultural lag (Ogburn): SOC-BC-03.

2 Principles, values and code of ethics of social work

Social work rests on values (dignity and worth of every person, social justice), turned into principles for practice (Biestek's seven: individualisation, purposeful expression of feelings, controlled emotional involvement, acceptance, non-judgemental attitude, client self-determination, confidentiality) and written down in codes of ethics (NASW 1960/1996; IFSW–IASSW 2018; India's Declaration of Ethics, 1997).

Core facts

- **Felix P. Biestek** (American Jesuit priest), *The Casework Relationship* (1957): **seven principles** of the case work relationship:

No.	Principle	Client's need
1	Individualisation	to be treated as a unique person
2	Purposeful expression of feelings	to express feelings freely
3	Controlled emotional involvement	to get a sensitive, understanding response
4	Acceptance	to be accepted as a person of worth
5	Non-judgemental attitude	not to be judged or blamed
6	Client self-determination	to make one's own choices
7	Confidentiality	to keep one's secrets

- Indian textbooks add general principles: **communication, participation, social functioning / resource mobilisation**. So "**principle of communication**" is a principle; "**principle of judgemental attitude**" is **not** (2023 key).
- **Acceptance** = accepting the **person** as he is, with strengths and weaknesses; it does **not** mean approving wrong behaviour.
- **Self-determination** = the client's right to make his own decisions; it is **limited** by his capacity, the law, harm to self or others, and the agency's function.
- **Confidentiality** is **relative, not absolute**: it gives way to the law, to a court, and to a serious risk of harm.
- **NASW Code of Ethics**: first **1960**; present code approved **1996**; revised 1999, 2008, 2017 and **2021**. **Six core values: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, competence**. Ethical standards in **six** areas: responsibilities to clients, to colleagues, in practice settings, as professionals, to the profession, to the broader society.
- **IFSW–IASSW Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles: 2018** (replaced the 2004 statement): dignity of humanity, human rights, social justice, self-determination, participation, confidentiality and privacy, treating people as whole persons, ethical use of technology and social media, professional integrity.

- **India:** the **Declaration of Ethics for Professional Social Workers** (1997), drafted through a national consultation led by **TISS**. It is voluntary: India has no statutory council to enforce a code (2026).
- **Professional relationship:** purposeful, time-limited, client-centred, controlled by the worker's knowledge and ethics; its base is **rapport** (mutual trust).
- **Empathy** = understanding the client's feelings **from his point of view** while staying objective; **sympathy** = sharing or feeling sorry, which can cloud judgement. Social workers use **empathy**.
- **Carl Rogers** (client-centred therapy): core conditions **empathy, genuineness (congruence), unconditional positive regard**.

Explained

1. Values, principles and ethics: the chain.

- A **value** is a belief about what is good or desirable (every person has worth).
- A **principle** is a rule for action that follows from a value (accept the client; do not judge).
- **Ethics** are the standards of right professional conduct, written in a **code**, that tell the worker what he owes to clients, colleagues, the agency and society.

2. Core values of social work (common list in Indian texts):

- inherent **worth and dignity** of every individual;
- **self-determination** and self-help;
- **equal opportunity** and **social justice**;
- **social responsibility**: of the individual to society and of society to the individual;
- **democratic** and **humanitarian** values; respect for **diversity**; **human rights**.

3. The seven principles in practice (a probation example).

- **Individualisation**: two boys accused of theft get different plans: one stole for food, the other with a gang.
- **Purposeful expression of feelings**: the worker lets the client speak out anger or fear, for a purpose (to understand and help).
- **Controlled emotional involvement**: the worker is sensitive, understands, and responds with feeling, but does not get carried away.
- **Acceptance**: the client is respected as a person even though the offence is not approved.
- **Non-judgemental attitude**: the worker does not decide guilt or blame; that is the court's job.
- **Client self-determination**: the client chooses among realistic options (which training course, where to live), within the probation conditions set by the court.
- **Confidentiality**: information is shared only for the client's benefit and on a need-to-know basis; the client is told in advance that reports go to the court.

4. Other principles in Indian lists.

- **Communication**: clear two-way exchange, verbal and non-verbal; the worker listens actively.
- **Participation**: the client takes part in finding and solving his own problem.

- **Social functioning / resources:** use and link the client to resources of the family, agency and community.

5. The professional relationship.

- It exists **for the client's benefit**, has a **purpose**, ends when the purpose is met, and carries **authority** that comes from the worker's knowledge and the agency's mandate.
- It is unlike a friendship: the worker avoids **dual relationships** (business, romantic or social ties with clients) and gifts or favours that blur **boundaries**.
- **Transference:** the client directs onto the worker feelings he had for someone else (a parent).
Countertransference: the worker's own feelings towards the client. Both must be recognised and managed.
- Interpersonal relationship is the **enabling factor** in solving a client's problems; that is why the relationship is called the "soul" of case work (2023 assertion–reason theme).

6. Codes of ethics: what they cover.

Code	Year	Key features
NASW (USA)	1960; 1996; rev. 2021	6 core values; standards in 6 areas
IFSW–IASSW global statement	2018 (earlier 2004)	9 principles; human rights and social justice
Declaration of Ethics (India)	1997	TISS-led; voluntary, no statutory body

Common ethical duties in all of them: serve the client's interest, get **informed consent**, keep confidentiality, avoid conflicts of interest, be **competent** and keep learning, respect colleagues, work for social justice, and report unethical conduct.

Common traps

✗ "Mary Richmond gave the seven principles of the case work relationship." ✓ **Felix Biestek** (1957). Richmond wrote *Social Diagnosis* (1917).

✗ "Judgemental attitude is a principle of social work." ✓ **Non-judgemental** attitude is.

✗ "Acceptance means approving the client's behaviour." ✓ It means accepting the **person**, not the wrong act.

✗ "Confidentiality is absolute." ✓ It is **relative**: law, court orders and risk of harm limit it.

✗ "Self-determination is unlimited." ✓ It is limited by **capacity, law, harm and agency function**.

✗ "Social workers should show sympathy." ✓ They show **empathy**: understanding without losing objectivity.

✗ "The NASW Code was first adopted in 1996." ✓ First code **1960**; the present code was approved in **1996** and revised in **2021**.

✗ "NASW has five core values." ✓ **Six:** service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, competence.

Quick revision

- Biestek 1957, *The Casework Relationship*: 7 principles.
- Individualisation, purposeful expression of feelings, controlled emotional involvement.
- Acceptance, non-judgemental attitude, self-determination, confidentiality.
- Also in Indian lists: communication, participation; "judgemental attitude" is not a principle.
- NASW code 1960 → 1996 → 2021; six core values (service, social justice, dignity, relationships, integrity, competence).
- IFSW–IASSW ethical principles 2018; India's Declaration of Ethics 1997 (TISS-led).
- Empathy, not sympathy; Rogers: empathy, genuineness, unconditional positive regard.
- Confidentiality and self-determination are relative; POCSO S.19 duty to report, S.21 punishment.
- Loewenberg–Dolgoff screen: protection of life comes first.
- Transference (client → worker); countertransference (worker → client).