

The People's Charter for an Eco-Social World: A Framework for Afrocentric Social Work in the Wake of Climate Change

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Abstract

This article argues that environmental citizenship and climate change debates have been an elitist subject, not only because they are embedded in Western ideologies but also because natural and environmental science disciplines dominate them. This hegemony occurs against the backdrop of climate change affecting all nations and people alike, which suggests a need for diversified models and context-specific and inter/multidisciplinary interventions. This article calls for a holistic approach to the achievement of an eco-social world, an approach that acknowledges African values, to curb climate change disasters. Using the conceptual analysis and Afrocentric social work worldview, this article discusses the People's Charter for an Eco-Social World, a framework adopted during the People's Global Summit held online from 29 June to 2 July 2022. The summit focused on the theme 'Co-Building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind,' a central emphasis of this article. The discussion illuminates the nexus between the People's Charter, Afrocentric values and the values of the social work profession. The core values of the People's Charter, including inclusivity, respect, solidarity, ubuntu and *buen vivir*, align with social work principles and offer a path towards environmental justice. This article also highlights the implications of incorporating African-aligned values into an international policy instrument. It thus recommends Afrocentric green social work as a holistic and inclusive approach to climate change debates that are likely to achieve an eco-social world for all.

Keywords: People's Charter; values; Afrocentric social work; climate change; environmental citizenship



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Introduction

The discourse of climate change and environmental citizenship requires collective participation (Lassen et al. 2011). This is necessary because the inherent disasters caused by climate change universally affect every country, profession, community and individual. Despite the universality of the effects of climate change and its broader impact on all, Terblanché-Greeff (2018) reveals in her research that its debate is often an elitist subject discussed in conferences and/or boardrooms at the systemic exclusion of the epistemic values of grassroots African people. As a response to the exclusivity of the climate change debate, the International Federation for Social Workers (IFSW), together with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), co-led a multi-partnered summit (The People's Global Summit) from 29 June until 2 July 2022, that comprised multiple stakeholders, representing diverse international communities, organisations and people. From this summit, an important policy framework was adopted, namely the People's Charter for an Eco-social World (hereafter, People's Charter). The theme of the People's Global Summit and that of the People's Charter was 'Co-Building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind' (The People's Charter for an Eco-Social World 2022). This signifies that the goals of sustainable development as contained in the People's Charter are best achieved through the international involvement of everyone from every class, gender, race, epistemic origin, profession, discipline and location in the world (Lassen et al. 2011).

Literature suggests that the climate change discourse often neglects the voices, circumstances and indigenous values of marginalised grassroots citizens (Kammermann and Dermont 2018; Terblanché-Greeff, 2018). As a result, the People's Charter, through its vision of leaving no one behind highlights values that counter the exclusion of the indigenous erudition and values of people at the grassroots. The inclusion of diverse voices in the processes of development is emphasised by the People's Charter (The People's Charter for an Eco-Social World 2022). On this note, Masoga and Shokane (2019) emphasise the professional embracement of the nexus between indigenous knowledge and climate change adaptation strategies. This signifies the importance of dismantling the elitist nature of the climate change discourse towards the motto of leaving no one behind.

The People's Charter stipulates several values, principles and practice guidelines that should be used for the achievement of the eco-social world, sustainable development and climate change adaptation strategies. Specifically, the values of the People's Charter are *buen vivir* (living well), respect, diversity, ubuntu (humanity towards others), and solidarity (The People's Charter for an Eco-Social World 2022). These values are aligned with the values of the social work profession, which also affirms indigenous knowledge, collective responsibility, social change and respect for diversity (IFSW 2014). Specifically, this article draws on the Afrocentric social work paradigm, which also accentuates the importance of indigenous knowledge.

During the conception of the People's Charter, the IFSW was one of the critical social work stakeholders convening and leading the People's Global Summit, where the People's Charter was developed and adopted. This means that the People's Charter and its principles are endorsed by the international social work community. As a result, this Charter has a direct bearing on the profession. According to Bautista (2022), the People's Charter should be used as an advocacy tool for the advancement of the eco-social world.

The 'eco-social world', as indicated in the Charter, is a concept that embraces the nexus between social systems and the ecological (natural environment) space. Lombard (2022) draws attention to the connection between 'humans and nature' and argues that it should be an important consideration by social workers in their quest for sustainable development. The term 'eco-social' combines the words 'ecological' and 'social' to refer to interconnected human, animal, plant and mineral systems, all of which are influenced by social processes and in turn, affect these material systems (Waxman 2023). Similarly, Afrocentrism embraces the interconnectedness of nature, people and spirits (Asante 2002). Therefore, the connection between the values of Afrocentrism, those of social work and those of the People's Charter are worth the analysis.

While advancing the conceptual comparison between the Afrocentric social work perspective and the People's Charter, this article locates itself within the three ongoing academic debates in social work and social sciences. These academic debates include a) the call for intensification of footprints of social sciences and social work on the discourse and responses to climate change (Dominelli 2014; Lombard 2022); b) the calls for Africanisation, decolonisation, and indigenisation to undo the epistemic injustices of the world's historical past (Makhanya 2022; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018; Shokane and Masoga 2021); and c) the need for achieving an eco-social world, through the acknowledgement of the interconnection between human, animal, plant and mineral material systems (Lombard 2022; Närhi 2004). These debates are necessitated by the growing threats of man-made climate change, the systemic exclusion of certain groups from the climate change discourse and the axiology of decolonial approaches and knowledge in addressing the world's problems. The achievement of sustainable development and the 'eco-social world' require the collective input of the rich and poor, literate and illiterate, the global North and global South.

It is against the noted connection between the People's Charter and social work that this article adopted a conceptual analysis approach to identify, compare and synthesise the essential features of the People's Charter as compared to the values of the Afrocentric social work perspective. The conceptual analysis approach advances the argument that the values of the Charter are relevant for social work in an African context and that the climate change discourse, among other issues of sustainable development, requires everyone's contribution (Dorn 2019). By matching the values of Afrocentric social work with those of the People's Charter, this article endeavours to establish Afrocentric green social work as a useful framework in the discourse of climate change by social

work academics and practitioners, particularly within an African context. This conceptual analysis allows the authors to argue that diversity, inclusivity, respect, solidarity, ubuntu and *buen vivir* must be central in all social work processes, especially in the quest for environmental citizenship and inclusivity in the climate change debate.

This article adopted the conceptual analysis approach to identify, compare and synthesise the essential features of the People's Charter (i.e. values and principles) as compared to the values of the Afrocentric social work perspective. The authors analysed, synthesised and merged the People's Charter with the values of Afrocentric social work to highlight its relevance in the discourse of climate change by African-based social work academics and practitioners as well as the quest for just environmental citizenship for all. According to Windle (2011), the conceptual analysis approach is a method of inquiry that involves identifying the central features or properties of a concept or idea and distinguishing and comparing them with related concepts or ideas. Conceptual analysis typically involves the dissection of concepts, synthesis of comparable concepts and the examination of how these parts relate to one another (ibid). This can involve identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for a concept to be applied, as well as examining the various ways in which the concept might be used in different contexts (Fairfax 2018; Poelmans et al. 2010; Windle 2010). In this article, the authors examine and simplify the contents of the People's Charter in relation to the literature on social work, Afrocentric social work, climate change and environmental citizenship. The article explores the relationship between these concepts, with a particular focus on the relevance of the People's Charter to social work practice, education and research in Africa and beyond.

This article begins with a discussion of the conceptual analysis, followed by a synopsis of the People's Charter. Thereafter, it discusses the connection between the Afrocentric social work perspective, climate change and environmental citizenship. Additionally, it positions the People's Charter within Afrocentrism by providing an Afrocentric view of the People's Charter. Lastly, it endeavours to provide recommendations based on the implications of the People's Charter on green social work in Africa, with a focus on environmental citizenship and an inclusive climate change debate. Global summits often produce several resolutions that remain unimplemented or are not achieved. Therefore, the contents of this Charter deserve this conceptual analysis and consideration. The following section provides a synopsis of the People's Charter.

A Synopsis and Conceptual Overview of the People's Charter for an Eco-Social World

Before comparing and synthesising the People's Charter with the Afrocentric social work perspective, this article first presents an analytical synopsis of the Charter. This includes insights from the United Nations (UNRISD, UNESCO and UNICEF), non-government organisations under the banner of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO) and other

stakeholders. The attendees of the People's Global Summit were symbolic representatives of 'the people' from diverse parts and sectors of the world.

The name of the summit, 'People's Charter', encapsulates the core idea of this important framework. The discussion outlines the value of the People's Charter and then analyses the conceptual building blocks of the title 'The People's Charter for an Eco-Social World.'

The People's Charter was created as a result of the People's Global Summit. The summit brought together international stakeholders in social work, including organisations like the IFSW and others. The term 'People's' in both the summit and Charter emphasises that they were created for and by the people. This signifies that, for practitioners of social development to achieve a sustainable world, the people need to be central in all processes. Additionally, the People's Charter is suffixed by the term 'eco-social world'. As indicated in the introduction, the term 'eco-social', a combination of the words ecological and social, refers to interconnected human, animal, plant and mineral material systems that are influenced by social processes and social processes that are likewise influenced by material systems. The call for an eco-social world is based on the understanding that our current economic and social systems are unsustainable and irreparably harming the planet and its people. The People's Charter for an 'Eco-Social World' aims to transform these systems to ensure they are equitable, democratic and environmentally sustainable.

According to Ioakimidis and Maglajlic (2022, 3073), the People's Charter is a thought-provoking and bold policy that "can offer a crucial space for discussion on how to address and transcend global systems that keep generating structural crises, consistently failing human societies and the natural environment." Essentially, the People's Charter outlines a vision for a sustainable and just society that emphasises ecological sustainability, social justice, participatory democracy and solidarity among diverse people and their natural environment. The People's Charter is built on five interconnected values that should be used by social development practitioners, including social workers, to form a holistic and inclusive practice for their day-to-day interventions, professional relationships and actions. These values are *buen vivir*, respect, diversity, ubuntu and solidarity.

Buen Vivir

The term *buen vivir* is a Spanish one translated as 'good living' (Mercado 2017). According to Ioakimidis and Maglajlic (2022), *buen vivir* can be associated with love for the planet, love for people, care for people, care for the planet, collective rights and holistic rights. Acosta and Abarca (2018, 132) argue that this is a concept that "dismantles the idea of a universal goal" of life as imposed by those who are powerful, influential and self-proclaimed to know better, but it requires a society that would co-build "a rich, complex and dynamic vision that is a path in itself, rather than a

destination.” This value of the People’s Charter signifies the importance of inclusivity, justice and living well through consideration for everyone and everything. For Afrocentric social work, the *buen vivir* value signifies collective responsibility and respect for diversity (Makhanya 2022), which is a call for togetherness, alternatives and inclusivity (Chawane 2016). Therefore, as also suggested by the People’s Charter, the current article calls for the promotion of *buen vivir* as a guiding principle for social and economic development and to promote social and environmental justice (Arkert and Jacobs 2023). The importance of promoting *buen vivir* also relates to addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality and environmental degradation (Ibimilua 2011). It recognises that the prevailing economic and development models have led to the exploitation of natural resources, the degradation of ecosystems and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few, leading to social and environmental crises (Bharadwaj 2016). Through *buen vivir*, Afrocentric social work towards climate change recognises that well-being is deeply rooted in the traditions and cultures of indigenous people and offers a vision of development based on solidarity, cooperation and mutual respect between humans and nature (Arkert and Jacobs 2023). The People’s Charter thus calls for the transformation and the promotion of alternative models that prioritise the well-being of individuals, communities and the environment.

Respect

Another value provisioned by the People’s Charter is respect. There is a plethora of definitions and a presumed general understanding that this concept is affirmed by everyone. However, “respect is something that everyone wants to receive, but some people seem to have a hard time giving” (Burcham 2011, 1). The evolving history of the world has revealed, through slavery, colonialism and the growing levels of pollution, that people often fail to respect where it is due (Makhanya and Zibane 2020). The People’s Charter recognises that respect for the environment and people of all classes is essential for promoting social justice, protecting the environment and building a sustainable and just society (Ioakimidis and Maglajlic 2022). The Charter also views respect as a means to promote dialogue, understanding and collaboration among individuals, communities and organisations while fostering a culture of empathy, compassion and care for others and the environment. The People’s Charter emphasises the importance of respecting human rights, dignity and diversity. It calls for the promotion of social justice, the eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, including the rights of marginalised and vulnerable populations (ibid). It recognises that social justice and human rights are interrelated and that the regard and realisation of one is essential for the realisation of the other.

The People’s Charter further recognises that the environment is essential for human well-being and that environmental degradation can have negative impacts on the health, livelihoods and security of individuals and communities (Ioakimidis and Maglajlic 2022). Therefore, the Charter calls for the respect, protection and preservation of natural resources, the promotion of sustainable practices and the integration of environmental

considerations into policies and practices aimed at promoting social development. Respect, as a value of the People's Charter, is, therefore, crucial in co-creating a world that is considerate of everyone and everything.

Diversity

The People's Charter recognises the value of diversity in promoting cultural, social and ecological resilience to achieve a more sustainable and just society. This is also crucial in issues of environmental citizenship and the climate change debate. The People's Charter views diversity as a critical component in the development of sustainable solutions that are inclusive and respectful of different cultures, values and ways of life. It emphasises the importance of cultural diversity and the need to promote and incorporate indigenous values of different cultures and traditions (People's Charter for an Eco-Social World 2022). It acknowledges that diverse cultures have developed unique knowledge and practices that can contribute to the development of more sustainable and just societies. Achieving this value requires the integration of diverse perspectives and experiences in the design and implementation of policies and practices aimed at promoting sustainability and social justice.

Ubuntu

Another value central to the People's Charter is the value of ubuntu. The Charter highlights ubuntu as a guiding principle for social and environmental justice, recognising its emphasis on the interdependence of humans with each other and the natural world (Makhanya 2022). Later in this article, this ubuntu philosophy is further discussed based on its Afrocentric origins. Ubuntu promotes a culture of cooperation, mutual support and collective responsibility for the well-being of all members of society, including future generations (Makhanya 2022; Van Breda 2019). According to the ubuntu principle, human beings are not isolated individuals, but part of a wider community, and the well-being of each individual is tied to the well-being of the community as a whole.

The Charter calls for the promotion of ubuntu to address the social and environmental crises facing the world today. It recognises that the prevailing economic and development models have led to the concentration of better land, wealth and power in the hands of a few, causing poverty and inequality. Makhanya (2022), in agreement with the above viewpoint, mentions that environmental injustice causes environmental degradation as a means of survival. Therefore, the Charter calls for the transformation and promotion of alternative models that prioritise the well-being of individuals, communities and the environment, grounded in the principles of ubuntu (cf. Mugumbate and Nyanguru 2013).

Solidarity

Like ubuntu, the People's Charter highlights solidarity as an essential value that is also embedded in the ethos of togetherness and/or the interconnectedness of people among

themselves and their connection with their natural environment (Makhanya 2022; Okoliko and David 2020). The Charter recognises that solidarity is essential to creating a world where everyone has access to the resources and support they need to thrive (People's Charter for an Eco-Social World 2022). Solidarity is seen as an essential value in the context of eco-social justice because environmental destruction and social inequality are often closely linked. The Charter recognises that people who are marginalised or living in poverty are often the most vulnerable to the impacts of environmental destruction (ibid). Building solidarity, according to the People's Charter, includes supporting grassroots movements, promoting cross-cultural understanding and collaboration and building networks of support between different communities. Therefore, building solidarity among different communities and social groups is seen as essential to creating a more just and sustainable world.

The following section presents a conceptual comparison between the above principles of the People's Charter and the guiding principles of social work.

Social Work Values and the People's Charter for an Eco-Social World: A Conceptual Comparison

There is a significant overlap between the values of social work and the values of the People's Charter. In the above discussion of principles of the People's Charter, it was noticeable that both the Charter and social work principles emphasise the importance of promoting social justice and protecting the rights and dignity of all people, particularly those who are marginalised and/or oppressed (Dominelli and Vasilios 2015; People's Charter for an Eco-Social World 2022). The social work values and the values of the People's Charter thus equally emphasise the importance of participatory democracy and promoting the active participation of individuals and communities in decision-making processes that affect their lives. The emphasis is on the interconnectedness of human societies and natural systems and the importance of promoting ecological sustainability and protecting the environment for present and future generations (Dorn 2019). Notably, the values of social work and the values of the People's Charter provide a useful framework for promoting a more sustainable, just, and equitable society.

As indicated earlier, the social work value of social justice is central to the principles of the People's Charter. It seeks to address the root causes of social and environmental injustices and to promote a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities (Arkert and Jacobs 2023). The value of human dignity is also reflected in the People's Charter, which recognises the importance of protecting human rights and promoting the well-being of all individuals, particularly those who are marginalised or vulnerable (People's Charter for an Eco-Social World 2022). Respect for diversity is another key social work value reflected in the People's Charter, which recognises the importance of acknowledging and valuing the diversity of cultures, languages and ways of life and promoting inclusive and equitable decision-making processes. This suggests that the promotion of the common good is a value shared by both social work and the People's Charter, emphasising the need for collective action and the importance of promoting the

well-being of all members of society, including future generations. The shared commitment to promoting social justice, human dignity, respect for diversity and the common good can be observed in social work and the People's Charter. This, then, necessitates a call for social workers to play an important role in advancing the principles of the People's Charter through their advocacy and lobbying practices and in promoting a more just, sustainable and equitable world for all (Makhanya and Mzinyane 2024). This is because both social work values and the values of the People's Charter emphasise the interconnectedness of human societies and natural systems, as well as the importance of promoting environmental sustainability and protecting the environment for present and future generations. The below section extends beyond the conceptual analysis of social work and the People's Charter towards the inclusion of Afrocentrism to examine climate change and environmental citizenship for contextualisation of the discussion.

Afrocentric Social Work, Climate Change and Environmental Citizenship

The People's Charter aligns with Afrocentrism in numerous ways. Firstly, it is aligned with the principles of ubuntu (Mayaka and Truell 2021; Makhanya 2022). Secondly, the Charter's focus on the rights and needs of marginalised communities and the recognition of the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism aligns with Afrocentric social work's commitment to centring the experiences and voices of people of African descent (Makhanya and Zibane 2020). Thirdly, the People's Charter emphasises the importance of local and community-led solutions and call for a just transition to a more sustainable and equitable world. This aligns with Afrocentric social work's recognition of the importance of grassroots movements and community-based organisations in promoting social justice (Shokane and Masoga 2021) thus supporting an Afrocentric approach (Shokane and Masoga 2021) in both social work and the climate change debate.

Dominelli (2012, 2013, 2014), in a series of works, has problematised the neglect of climate change by the social work discipline. Social work, as a profession, rests on the premise of promoting social change, empowerment, inclusion, indigenous knowledge, human rights, collective responsibility and social justice. The preceding global definition of social work by IFSW (IFSW & IASSW 2008) states that "social work intervenes at a point where people interact with their environment." Growing research on topics such as green social work and environmental social work motivates the expansion of the discourse of climate change through the disciplinary lens of social work (cf. Dominelli 2014) as well as Afrocentrism (Masoga and Shokane 2019; Ngcobo et al. 2023). Dominelli (2014) argues that the profession has an important role to play in helping people understand the issues of climate change and mobilising people to protect their futures through community social work and proposing solutions. Social workers have an obligation to respond to climate change since climate change often leads to humanitarian crises (Forman 2022; Morton 2019).

It is important to note that the discourse on climate change has been dominated by Western individualistic values, neglecting African values (Okoliko and David 2020).

Although this is a global issue, affecting every class, profession and all persons, the wider African society has been systematically excluded in the climate change discourse, which has been labelled by some authors (Etieyibo 2017; Terblanché-Greeff 2019; Okoliko and David 2020) as a subject hegemonised by a Eurocentric value-approach. Hence, the collective responsibility advocated by the Charter is significant for Afrocentricity/African perspectives and experiences to be equally included in global climate change discussions.

Afrocentricity suggests that Africans must look at knowledge and experiences and use African perspectives to understand them (Kreitzer 2012) through a focus on African viewpoints (Makhanya 2021). Asante (2002, 6) defines Afrocentricity as “placing African culture at the centre of any analysis that involves engaging with African people.” It is a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values and perspectives predominates (ibid). It is an intellectual movement and a political view of the rediscovery of ‘African-centeredness’ (Chawane 2000, 79). Although Afrocentricity is not perceived in this article as the only way to facilitate African progress in issues of climate change, “it is regarded as a necessary mindset for undoing the injustices of the past” (Makhanya 2021, 41). Prah (2017) also argues that Africanisation and African-centred practice are needed for development in Africa. This article uses an Afrocentric paradigm to centre the perspectives of African people in the climate change debate.

According to the Afrocentric worldview, a phenomenon needs to be explored within its location (Asante 2002). This is because the Afrocentric paradigm perceives a phenomenon as diverse and consisting of many dynamics. The issue of climate change is perceived as affecting everyone; hence, there is a need for universal environmental citizenship and collaborative efforts that include diverse viewpoints. Context shapes people’s experiences (Makhanya 2021). The Afrocentricity perspective, therefore, allows African viewpoints to be subjects rather than objects on Europe’s fringes.

Similarly, Masoga and Shokane (2019) view Afrocentricism as an idea and a perspective that African people can and should see, study, interpret and interact with people, life and reality from the vantage point of African people rather than from the vantage point of European, Asian or other non-African perspectives. It is a philosophical perspective associated with the discovery, location and actualisation of African agency within the context of history and culture (ibid). It is thus a non-Eurocentric way of interpreting the history of humanity (Dussel 2012). This suggests that Afrocentric social work is concerned with discovering African’s central place in the struggle for survival in the world, guided by social work values that include respect for the inherent dignity and worth of all people, a commitment to social justice and promotion of human rights, and a focus on promoting the well-being and empowerment of individuals, families and communities (Dorn 2019).

Afrocentric social work is an approach to social work practice that is grounded in African culture, values and traditions (Asante 2002). It emphasises the importance of understanding the historical and cultural contexts in which individuals and communities live and recognises the impact of systemic oppression on people's lives (Makhanya and Mzinyane 2023). In the wake of climate change, Afrocentric social work emphasises the importance of addressing issues of inequality on many levels, including between wealthy and poor countries. It recognises the value of diverse forms of knowledge, such as scientific, indigenous and local knowledge, in building climate resilience. It also calls for engaging citizens who may not understand climate change and partnering with communities to strengthen resilience and address climate change. Afrocentric social work thus emphasises the importance of community-led solutions to environmental problems (Asante 2002). It recognises that communities have a deep understanding of their local environments and are often best equipped to address environmental challenges. Therefore, an Afrocentric social work approach to climate change would prioritise community-based solutions to environmental problems and involve community members in decision-making processes related to environmental policy and planning (Forman 2022). It would also address systemic issues contributing to environmental injustice while advocating for policies and practices that promote environmental sustainability and justice for all communities, aligning with the principles of the People's Charter for Eco-Social World.

Despite the growing movement of environmental social work (also referred to as green or ecological social work), scholars like Nyahunda and Tirivangasi (2021) argue that it has neglected the epistemic values of the African continent. This article proposes that the People's Charter can bridge the gap between Afrocentric theory, environmental citizenship and social work, mainly green social work. The People's Charter shares core values with Afrocentric social work and theory, including ubuntu, environmental justice, social justice, inclusion, interconnectedness, solidarity, *buen vivir* and acknowledgement of the African context. Weaving these elements together can pave the way for a green social work practice that recognises Afrocentrism, potentially leading to the development of Afrocentric green social work. From an axiological perspective, this approach can offer a potentially valuable framework for social work in Africa to advance green social work through a lens that resonates with African ways of knowing and living. Shared principles like social justice and empowerment (social work and the Charter), harmony with nature (Afrocentrism and the Charter), and respect for indigenous knowledge (environmental citizenship and the Charter) highlight potential areas of convergence. This article argues that the People's Charter presents a promising avenue for developing an Afrocentric framework for green social work in Africa. Nevertheless, further research is necessary to explore its practical application and potential for contributing to climate change solutions and fostering environmental citizenship within African social work contexts.

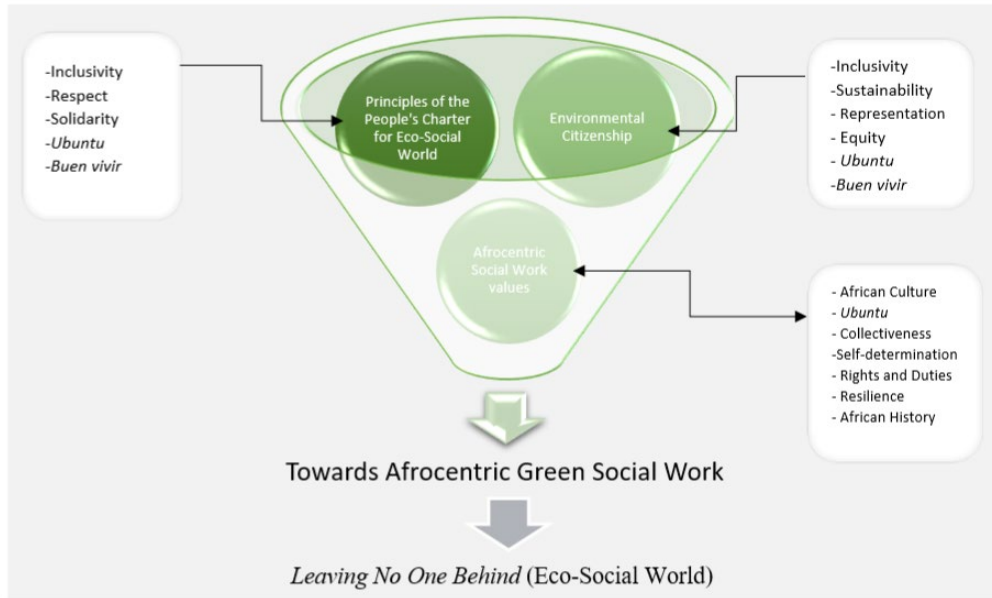


Figure 1: The nexus of Afrocentric social work, the People’s Charter and environmental citizenship

The schematic model above illustrates that, as much as the green social work movement has tried to advance issues of environmental justice and citizenship, the convergence of the People’s Charter and Afrocentrism provide an extended perspective that is relevant to social work in Africa, especially on issues of climate change. Figure 1 introduces the axiology of a potential ‘Afrocentric’ green social work, which could unify the principles of green social work, Afrocentrism and the newly introduced People’s Charter.

Considerations of Implementation and Review: From Paper to Action

While the People’s Charter, as a policy document, outlines a compelling vision for a just and sustainable future, questions remain regarding its implementation strategy and review process. The IFSW Policy Statement ‘Co-building a New Eco-Social World’ (IFSW 2022, 2) echoes this concern, highlighting the need for “concrete and measurable actions.” The Charter’s emphasis on inclusivity suggests a bottom-up approach, with diverse stakeholders like social workers, social movements and indigenous communities playing a crucial role. Social workers, aligned with the IFSW’s call for “advocacy for environmental and climate justice” (IFSW 2022, 2) can be key figures in facilitating participatory needs assessments, mobilising communities and ensuring that marginalised voices, such as African voices, are heard throughout the process. However, the lack of a designated body for monitoring progress and revising the Charter presents a challenge. In their policy statement, the IFSW (2022) proposed a review after six years to monitor the implementation of the Charter. Arguably, the successful implementation of the People’s Charter hinges on a multi-stakeholder approach led by social workers,

including African-based practitioners, who champion inclusivity and establish a robust review process to ensure continuous improvement towards a truly eco-social world. An Afrocentric version of green social work could enhance its effectiveness in African communities to ensure it remains relevant and adaptable in the face of evolving environmental and social realities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The discussion herein has shown that the People's Charter and the Afrocentric social work perspective offer valuable conceptual frameworks for promoting social justice and environmental sustainability in social work practice in Africa and beyond. On the one hand, the People's Charter emphasises the importance of addressing systemic social and environmental inequalities through collective action and transformative change, while the Afrocentric social work perspective highlights the importance of African culture, values and practices in informing social work practice and education. Through the incorporation of these two complementary frameworks into social work education and practice, social workers can contribute to building more sustainable and equitable communities and promoting the well-being of all people and the planet. Additionally, incorporating the principles of the People's Charter, environmental citizenship and Afrocentric social work perspective into higher education and practice means that social workers can promote social justice and environmental sustainability by addressing the root causes (i.e. behavioural issues) of social and environmental problems, through an Afrocentric version of green social work. This includes adopting a critical and intersectional approach that considers the multiple and interlocking systems of oppression that affect marginalised communities. The People's Charter and Afrocentric social work perspective offer valuable conceptual frameworks that can help social workers address the complex and interrelated challenges of social and environmental justice. Based on this conclusion and to truly realise the values of the People's Charter for an eco-social world in African social work, the article provides the following recommendations.

Social work academics should incorporate the principles of the People's Charter and Afrocentric social work perspective into social work education. To achieve an eco-social world and effective environmental citizenship by all, social work programmes should integrate the principles of the People's Charter and Afrocentric social work perspective into their curricula. This can include incorporating readings, discussions, and case studies that highlight the importance of social and environmental justice (cf. Motlounge and Mzinyane 2023), as well as the role of African culture and values in informing social work practice.

Engagements between social workers from diverse communities can also help in the quest to leave no one behind. Social work researchers and practitioners should actively engage with diverse communities to understand their needs and concerns better and to

develop culturally responsive interventions tailored to their specific contexts and values, such as ubuntu.

Social workers must strengthen advocacy for social and environmental justice. They should advocate for social and environmental justice by challenging systemic inequalities and advocating for policies and practices that promote equitable access to resources and opportunities for all.

Social workers should foster interdisciplinary collaboration in their quest for environmental citizenship. They should collaborate with other disciplines, such as environmental science, town planning and criminal law, among others, to develop interdisciplinary approaches that address the complex and interrelated challenges of social and environmental justice.

The conveners of the People's Summit (IFSW, among other role players) should engage in a robust monitoring and evaluation process to gauge the success of the People's Charter in different contexts. Community-based monitoring tools that capture the impact of Afrocentric green social work initiatives on environmental outcomes and community well-being should be developed. This will likely ensure that the approach addresses the specific needs of African communities and remains adaptable.

Afrocentric green social work as a proposed framework should be further explored and pragmatically developed in future research to uplift the voices of the global South and foster interconnectivity of the collective impact of diverse efforts in the fight against climate change and its effects.

Lastly, mechanisms should be established for sharing best practices across global communities, particularly by bringing African epistemologies to the world.

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