



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL
ON SOCIAL WELFARE
A World Organisation Promoting Social Development

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WELFARE
GLOBAL PROGRAMME 2020–2024

CONSIDERATIONS

The ICSW global programme for 2020–2024 is shaped by three considerations:

- a) The founding objectives of the ICSW,
- b) The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development,
- c) The new global economic and political circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Climate Crisis.

A. OBJECTIVES

1. Promote forms of social and economic development which aim to improve human well-being, reduce poverty, hardship and vulnerability, and build up effective empowerment and resilience, especially amongst disadvantaged sectors of the population;
2. Strive, in a spirit of solidarity and dignity, for recognition and realization of all human rights, including fundamental rights to employment, income, food, shelter, education, health care and security;
3. Promote equality of opportunity, freedom of expression, freedom of association, participation and access to human services, and oppose discrimination, stigmatization and prejudice of any kind;
4. Promote policies and programmes which strike an appropriate balance between social and economic goals, embrace human resource development and institutional building, and which are geared at socio-economic inclusion and upholding the principle of “leaving no one behind”;
5. Strengthen civil society throughout the world to achieve these objectives;

6. Seek implementation of these objectives by governments, international and intergovernmental agencies, and non-governmental organizations in cooperation with its global networks, partners and alliances.

B. THE GLOBAL AGENDA FOR SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The joint Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development has been a pillar in the cooperation between the IASSW, the ICSW and the IFSW since it was launched in 2010. As we now enter the second decade of the Global Agenda we should continue and intensify our contribution to this instrument. Focus has been on strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships. Solid reporting has been provided and considerable interest shown around the world. It has stimulated reflection and helped shape the global discourse.

The consultation process on theme(s) for in the first instance the period 2021–22 is ongoing and is expected to reflect the ongoing pandemic and its consequences. From our side, solidarity in a broad sense is a main angle.

C. THE NEW GLOBAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION: A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

The year 2020 will go down in history as the year in which the pandemic spread over the world.

The pandemic itself poses a massive challenge for humanity. But the consequences of the pandemic are equally or even more serious. The pandemic has directed the spotlight towards deficiencies and inequalities that we have known about but ignored for decades, such as deficient health care systems, shortcomings in social safety nets, structural differences, environmental destruction and the climate crisis.

The work on fighting poverty that has been going on around the world has in only a short period of time been thrown back several years. COVID-19 has caused the deepest collapse in the world economy since World War II and the biggest collapse of incomes since 1870. Around 100 million people may end up in extreme poverty. A famine of historical proportions may be upon us.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has said: ‘COVID-19 has been likened to an x-ray revealing fractures in the fragile skeleton of the societies we have built. It is exposing fallacies and falsehoods everywhere. The lie that free markets can deliver healthcare for all. The fiction that unpaid care work is not work. The delusion that we live in a post-racist world. The myth that we are all in the same boat. Because while we are floating on the same sea, it is clear that some are in superyachts while others are clinging to drift debris. Inequality defines our time.’

The causes of these great inequalities lie not just in differences in income. The opportunities you get in life also depend on your gender, your family's ethnic background, whether you have a disability or not, your religion and other factors. What life becomes and what expectations you have of life depend on the circumstances under which you are born. Big differences in income and social security create unrest in the development of society. Major social inequalities entail greater economic instability, increased corruption, financial crises, more crime and inferior physical and mental health in the population. Millions of people live under discrimination and exploitation and lack of access to justice. Especially for indigenous populations, migrants, refugees and minorities, this is a reality. Such inequality is a direct violation of human rights.

The political structures we live under today do not succeed in supplying important global structures such as public health, sustainable development and peace. To achieve a more equal world it is time to write a New Social Contract. A New Social Contract that gives young people a life of dignity, ensures that women have the same rights and opportunities as men, and defends the sick, the weak, and minorities.

What today divides the world into different parts of knowledge are access to technology and the internet. A qualitatively good and free education for all is the key to eliminating inequalities. Education should not only include basic knowledge but also offer education in digital technologies. All education should cover life-long learning, from preschool throughout life. The digital revolution's artificial intelligence is going to change the world in ways that we cannot imagine today. This is why governments must invest in both education and digital infrastructure.

A New Social Contract between governments, citizens, civil society and the business world needs to include an economic system that works for all. And influence for the citizens. The contract needs to encompass the right to work, sustainable development and social protection based on equal rights and opportunities for all. A changed world requires a different way of thinking when it comes to social protection and what new safety nets should look like, including universal health care and the possibility of a universal basic income. We also need to create programmes that address historical differences such as gender, race and certain social norms. In the New Social Contract, taxes also play a large role; all individuals and organisations need to pay their fair share.

COVID-19 puts the spotlight on the inequalities and the great deficiencies of the global welfare system, but in the shadow of this shining light something is happening that in the long run is more dangerous for democracy and world peace. Under the pretence of taking action to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and of governments taking their responsibility, regulations are introduced that restrict freedom of movement and give the police increased authority to interfere with the population. An advancement or, rather, a restriction of rights is something that the world has seen

several times throughout history. The changes tend to become permanent after the situation for which they were implemented has disappeared. What we have learned is that when the authorities slowly shrink people's freedom of movement and democratic rights, an anti-democratic social system is snuck upon the inhabitants.

2020–2024 GLOBAL PROGRAMME

To achieve maximum efficiency, the organization's activities and suggested policies are to be focused. The ICSW's main function is to spread knowledge about the socio-political situation nationally, regionally and globally, to work on disseminating its members' knowledge and experiences, to work in partnership with other organizations and in cooperation with stakeholders.

The ICSW is a global NGO. As such the ICSW has extensive knowledge of how COVID-19 has affected different nations. We have first-hand knowledge, thanks to our members, of where the holes in the social safety nets are. In addition, already prior to COVID-19 members worked extensively with refugees, with poverty, with education, with gender issues and so on. The whole social field is covered. Through this broad knowledge, the ICSW is unique.

To make an impact on the debate, the members' activities should be coordinated, i.e. the ICSW members' work should be thematic with one theme per year. The UN's Agenda 2030 to fight poverty in the world offers a practical guide with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Out of these 17 goals, the following four sub-goals which are in line with the ICSW's values are suggested, as well as Articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Goal 1: NO POVERTY

Poor people can be found in rich countries, middle-income countries and developing countries. It is therefore important that all countries regardless of their economic status are included in work against poverty. Poverty has more dimensions than just economic ones. Poverty entails lack of freedom, power over one's life, health, education and physical safety. One can speak of so-called multidimensional poverty. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to poverty.

A fundamental precondition for achieving people's full enjoyment of human rights is the eradication of poverty. The right to social security is a human right. However, a large part of the world's population lacks social security.

Goal 5: GENDER

EQUALITY

A precondition for sustainable and peaceful development is that equality is achieved between men and women, girls and boys. When women and men,

girls and boys, have equal rights, conditions and opportunities to shape their own lives and contribute to the development of society, equality has been achieved. Power, influence and resources need to be distributed fairly in society. Women's and girls' inferior positions of power in relation to men and boys must cease. Violence against women and girls that affects both individuals and society in general is an obstacle to equality and development. Women's and girls' opportunities to educate themselves and participate in the labour market and society on the same terms as boys and men needs to be improved. Poverty decreases and economic productivity and growth increases when women participate in the economy and the labour market on equal terms.

Goal 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

With the COVID-19 pandemic, this may be one of the most significant Sustainable Development Goals. Inequalities are rooted in structural conditions and this means that it is the responsibility of the states to eliminate these differences. Economic development has drastically fallen back several years in time. An equal society is among other things a matter of equal rights for all regardless of gender, sexual orientation, religion or other belief, disability and national or ethnic origin. The equal rights of all form the basis for a fair distribution of resources and both economic and political influence in society. Reducing the differences means that after COVID-19, states will have to cooperate nationally and internationally to prevent widespread poverty and to support democratic development, which is a precondition for lasting peace and economic well-being.

Goal 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Communities without violence or threats of violence are both a means and an end for sustainable development. The basis for good governance consists of a well-functioning state administration with responsible institutions, transparency and the rule of law. All people must have equal access to justice and be equal before the law and have the opportunity to exert influence and accountability. An important challenge for Agenda 2030 is to reduce and prevent violence against women and girls in particular, as well as violent conflict between states.

A society without violence is a prerequisite for people to be able to make free decisions for their own part and for society's development and governance.

ICSW at the Global Level

At the global level the ICSW will use its UN ECOSOC NGO consultative status to advocate for its policies within the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and other organs under the auspices of the UN, as well as in other global policy spaces within both the UN system and other international bodies.

Successful advocacy requires improved visibility. During the COVID-19 pandemic we have created a 'Corona-section' on our website where our members have shared their experiences and knowledge of work with COVID-19. We also have a section where we publish members' articles on social policy. This form of membership activity on the website will continue and gradually be strengthened. We also need Newsletters that are published both globally and regionally. The Journal that we own together with the IASSW and the IFSW could play a stronger role in promoting our mandate. Stronger engagement with the Journal of Global Social Policy will also be pursued.

Successful advocacy always implies the building and maintaining of strategic partnerships. Our partnership with the IASSW and the IFSW leads to a biannual high-profile global conference which has to be maintained. Our membership in the Social Protection Interagency Board (SPIAC-B) makes us a respected player in the global social protection world; we need to maintain and intensify this. Our membership in the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors provides us with a voice in the NGO community and beyond. We need to continue to play an active role in the Coalition.

ICSW Regional

The main task of the regions is to support existing members and to work towards recruiting more members. By engaging in an active dialogue with our members, we are able to learn early on where the deficiencies in the socio-political system may lie within the region. In order to support our members, we should also organize expert seminars and regional conferences every other year. All regions should publish regional Newsletters with a periodicity that depends on and is determined by their resources. Such Newsletters would help to build alliances within civil society organizations, create visibility and improve horizontal links within the organization.

ICSW National

The national committees and organizations are the core of the ICSW. They should endeavor to become a leading force advocating empowerment, resilience and social protection. They should seek cooperation around the Agenda 2030 goals and also include the ILO recommendation 202 in their work. Among other policy goals, they should contribute to building national social protection floor coalitions and contribute to national dialogues on the Sustainable Development Goals and Social Protection Floors. To share their experiences and knowledge, it is of the utmost importance that all national members actively participate in the expert seminars and conferences that are arranged by the region.