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International Council on Social Welfare

April 2021

Working Together for a Better ICSW



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Dear fellow ICSW members, friends,
and interested readers,

Challenging times can also be exciting times, and challenges have always been a strong stimulus for creativity and innovation. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the weaknesses of our welfare systems. It has obliged us to react in a titanic effort to design new vaccines, and in an equally titanic effort to strengthen our healthcare, social services, and support systems in a lock-downed society and economy. At the ICSW, an organization spanning almost one hundred years of history, we know that an especially important pillar underpinning the legitimacy of welfare systems rests on the visibility of social problems, on the visibility of poverty, and on the visibility of their effects. The global pandemic has compelled us to seek a

global response and more effective and cohesive welfare systems, whose good practices can be replicated in other contexts, while respecting and protecting diversity and human rights. More than ever, the pandemic has shown that these priorities need to be on the public agenda if we are to strengthen the social welfare of all people.

In this regard, our organization, which has been intricately linked to the helping professions since its inception, especially social work, has always networked with other organizations. In fact, we are a network of networks which brings together a multitude of NGOs in each country to collaborate in achieving social transformation and improving people's welfare. In this line, it is important to highlight our capacity to face challenges jointly with the IASSW, such as the suspension of the Rimini 2020 Conference. We have left no one behind. In February and April 2021, together we organized the ISWED 2021 Online Conference and provided all speakers the opportunity to present their findings. Both the levels of participation and the quality of the plenary lectures and researcher presentations were excellent. I would like to thank the co-chairs, Professor Shajahan and Professor Tiong, and our IASSW and ICSW colleagues for their commitment and splendid work.

In 2021, during the lockdown and in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to contribute to the public debate surrounding three key issues: digitalization and social welfare, food insecurity in a context of climate change with a special focus on the situation of children, and structural reforms of welfare systems. Our side event at the United

Nations on these issues is now available on the UN TV website:

<http://webtv.un.org/search/social-inclusion-through-digital-inclusion-in-the-context-of-sustainable-development-trends-and-challenges-csocd59-side-event/6249091437001/?term=%22CSocD59%20Side%20Event%22&sort=date&page=2>

In May 2021 (May 12 and 19), we will be holding our first international seminar on the role ICTs have in social inclusion and social welfare:

<https://www.fundacion.uned.es/actividad/idactividad/24645>

I would like to highlight two aspects about the seminar. Firstly, the relevance of the topic. The purpose of the international seminar “The role of ICTs for social inclusion and social welfare” is to explore a key phenomenon that has been accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis, the digitalization of our societies, as well as one of its effects: the need to design inclusive social policies in a digital environment. Without digitalization there can be no inclusion, and the digitalization model we are implementing in our welfare systems will have lasting consequences. Digitalization represents a collective, global challenge that will redefine the relationships between users, professionals, and the administrations or companies that provide welfare services.

Secondly, it is important to mention the seminar’s participatory, co-design approach. Not only will top-level experts be taking part. We will also count on the collaboration of experts proposed by the regions that make up the ICSW. Our aim is to achieve a shared vision through a collective approach that provides insight into the challenges we face at both the local and the global level. I would especially like to thank all

our regional presidents for their collaboration and effort in helping us to present the challenges of social welfare to a global audience and from a diverse perspective that enables mutual learning and the sharing of best practices.

I encourage all of you to participate in this collective and participatory project that embodies the ICSW’s mission and pursue the same goal as one hundred years ago: to improve social welfare. In this regard, I would like to thank all the regions for participating in this new phase of collaboration in our endeavor to achieve the common good. In the February newsletter our colleagues from the Europe region shared their projects and concerns with all of us, while in this issue we have two contributions from the Central and West Africa region. My thanks to all of you for your collaboration and your commitment to the ICSW.

Take care and stay healthy.

West and Central Africa: For another awakening of the masses to COVID-19



Amacodou Diouf, President ICSW West and Central Africa Region and Head of the Senegalese development association Action humaine pour le développement intégré au Sénégal (AHDIS).

The wave of COVID-19 continues to hit the continent, leading a large part of the population into a quasi general fatalism. This fatalism seems to lead us to forget that during the first wave, some countries such as Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire had managed to contain this evil, to the point of being cited as a reference throughout the world. Today, it is necessary to sound the alarm so that we can regain the collective strength that prevailed in the face of the first onslaught of the pandemic.

In Senegal

As of February 1, 2021, the country's Situation Report No. 80 shows that no region is spared from this scourge. The distribution of confirmed cases of COVID-19 by health district is currently 77/79. That is, a proportion of 97% of health districts have cases, with only two of them spared.

The latest situation report also emphasizes that the age pyramids of COVID-19 cases, showing the most affected age groups during the two waves have been inverted:

- The 25-34 age group was the most affected in the first wave with a Male/Female ratio of 1.4 ;
- In this second wave, the 60+ age group is the most affected and the male/female ratio is 1.3.

Unfortunately, the average age of the deceased is 69 years, with a minimum at 19 years and a maximum at 95 years. Consequently, young and old alike, no one is safe.

In other Central and West African countries

The trends are the same as in Senegal with a unique coordination system through WHO-AFRO (World Health Organization). Paradoxically, the populations generally show fear and concern at the daily reports but do not seem ready to change their behavior in the face of the destructive force of the second wave of COVID-19.

The Vaccines

With limited amount of vaccines received, the health services also suffer from a severe lack of resources. Several intensive care units are outdated and without appropriate equipment. Vaccines and the respect of safety measures, such as hand washing and physical distancing and masks, remain the only hope of the populations.

Through the WHO COVAX initiative, several countries have received and continue to receive the Astra zeneca vaccine. At the same time, the Republic of China has made available to some countries doses of Sinopharm vaccine.

Inequitable access to vaccines, with rich countries obtaining more than poor countries, is a major difficulty in the fight against the pandemic. This demonstrates the precariousness of our social protection systems in Africa.

ICSW appeal - Central and West Africa

Faced with this challenge, the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) calls for the awakening of citizens to the drama that is unfolding. The pandemic is advancing dangerously, decimating populations without distinction of rank or social class, without distinction of age, or political color. We invite populations of urban and rural areas alike, to become more aware of the existence of the disease and to follow safety measures.

It is time to renew community commitment, so that the fight is taken up by the communities themselves, in each locality, in each religious, customary or student community, in each professional, trade union or civil society organization, in each age group, in the public administration, in national and private companies, in hospitals, etc.

We also appeal to scientists to go beyond what is available, by engaging in thorough research, in order to find an adequate response to this pandemic.

West and Central Africa: Expanding ICSW Bases



Amacodou Diouf, President ICSW West and Central Africa Region and Head of the Senegalese development association Action humaine pour le développement intégré au Sénégal (AHDIS).

The International Council for Social Action (ICSW) is expanding its bases in Central Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Congo Brazzaville, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad, with a coordination office in the DRC headed by Mr. Jean Bosco Wasso KAZAMWALI of the NGO called INECOM.

An annual action plan is being shared among civil society actors in the sub-region. This action plan includes three major axes :

- 1.The establishment of ICSW in the different countries of the sub-region
- 2.The mobilization of civil society actors on issues of social protection and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

- 3.The organization of capacity building workshops for ICSW members in the sub region.

ICSW Central and West Africa Region promotes the development of partnerships with institutions of the United Nations system and states, hosting member organizations as well as with any other partner for cooperation to reduce poverty through the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

International Social Work Education and Development Conference (ISWED 2021): A joint initiative of IASSW and ICSW



P.K. Shajahan Ph.D|Dean Academics| Vice President of ICSW and Professor of Social Work at TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, Mumbai, India. Co-chair ISWED 2021

Even after more than one year after the Corona Virus hit the nations and communities across the globe, we continue to live in a world of disruption, uncertainty and concomitant drastic changes unprecedented in human history. Upholding the vision of ICSW in reducing the hardship and vulnerability, especially amongst disadvantaged sections of the population, we continue to work through our members and collaborators amidst this catastrophic conditions. While COVID-19

pandemic has led to the postponement and subsequent cancellation of the Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development 2020 (SWESD 2020) scheduled to be held in Rimini, Italy, the disappointment did not last long. The leadership of IASSW and ICSW decided to make the best use of all the hard work which has gone behind the preparation for Rimini Conference, by reformulating the conference in an online format. Thus the International Social Work Education and Development (ISWED 2021) Online conference was conceived under the co-chairship of ICSW Vice President Prof. P.K. Shajahan and IASSW Treasurer Prof. Tan Ngoh Tiong. ISWED 2021 spanned across 4 months (January – April 2021) in three sessions brought together social workers, social development organizations and social policy practitioners to make an impact on the lives of people and societies in the midst of incredible changes brought forth by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Amidst the backdrop of the global humanitarian crisis, ISWED 2021 was organised under the broad theme of "Human Relationships: Keys to Remaking Social Work for the Future". The conference highlighted the following Axes as Sub-themes;

Axis 1: The Promoting human relationships, global context and sustainable development

Axis 2: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in fostering human relationships

Axis 3: Social policy to enhance human relationships

Axis 4: Gender and minority issues, social inclusion and integration

Axis 5: Challenges and capacities of Social Work education and research in promoting human relationships.

The three sessions of the conferences were as follows:

Session 1: Opening Kick-off Plenary: January 15-16, 2021

The Kick-off plenary was addressed by the presidents Dr. Sang-Mok Suh of ICSW and Prof. Annamaria Campanini of IASSW. In addition to this, Prof. Angelina Yuen (Hong Kong) delivered the Eileen Younghusband Award Lecture on Education for Hope and Transformation: Reflections on a Journey in Co-constructing Local Social Work Education with Implications for International Social Work. Subsequently Prof. Walter Lawrence, Contract Professor at Bozen and Charles University Prague delivered the Opening Keynote address where he focussed on "Social Workers Practising Social Rights Against the Erosion of Social Solidarity – Lessons from the Corona Crisis.

ICSW President Dr. Sang-Moh Suh in his opening address emphasised that the society in a post-COVID world will be highly unequal and polarised and developing economies are going to face much of the brunt of this process. He exhorted that it is the responsibility of ICSW and like-minded organisations to be reminded of their responsibilities in taking concrete measures including setting agendas to address the social problems emerging from the corona pandemic.

Session 2: Workshops / Symposium and Presentations: March 16-18 2021

The March session had the Opening Keynote address by Prof. Manoj Jha who is a social work educator and parliamentarian from India. He highlighted the need for recognising the widening gap between different social groups within the context of populist majoritarian democratic regimes across the world. Wider popular alliances and networks and informed

political action are needed to ensure the exclusion and marginalisation of minority groups who are particularly becoming vulnerable in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Several Workshops and Symposiums were held in this session on a range of themes related to Human Relationships in the context of Social Work and Social Development. In addition to this, the World Social Work Forum, separate regional presidents forum for IASSW and ICSW and discussions on the Global Agenda and Global Standards in Social Work Education and provided opportunities for social work educators and social development practitioners to collectively deliberate on future directions in Social Work Education and Social policy practice in a wide variety of contexts. The session ended with the Closing Plenary by Prof. Sahar Al Makhamreh, German Jordanian University, Jordan. She highlighted the need for social work education to be locally grounded and internationally relevant in a multi-cultural context.

Session 3: Oral Presentations and Student Sessions: April 14-17 2021

A large number of oral presentations grouped under each of the Axes and student sessions were the highlight of the last session of the Conference. The session started with the Opening Keynote address was delivered by Dr. Petronella Helena Masabane, Deputy Executive Director, Ministry of Health and Social Services, Namibia. With her 30 decades of experience in public sector, she highlighted the need to see Social policy as a tool for connecting people and continents. The session also featured the prestigious Katherine Kendell Memorial Award Lecture by Leila Patel, Professor of Social Development Studies, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. In her lecture titled "Social Work and Social Development Responses

to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons from Global South, she highlighted that in the context of significant reversal of social development outcomes of decades due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Social Work profession and social development practice has tremendous responsibilities in addressing social and economic inequalities, increased vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity and resultant increase in violence against women, children and other vulnerable groups such as people affected by mental health.

Conclusion and Next Steps:

The transformation of the cancelled conference to an online format not only made it possible for us to engage with significant intellectual and practice contributions of a lot of participants, but also gave an opportunity to bring extremely powerful and impactful deliberations by a host of keynote and plenary speakers across the three sessions. The conference held at a time when the world is going through the serious social, economic, political and livelihood upheavals, the congregation of social work educators, practitioners and social development professionals deliberated upon the challenges thrown before the world as well as the potential responses social work and social development could engage in ensuring that no one is left behind in the process. The conference also reinforced ongoing collaboration between IASSW and ICSW as global partners in promoting Social Work and Social Development across the globe. The contributions at the conference is scheduled to be converted into multiple publications as edited volumes for which the call for full paper has already been issued. The submissions should be made before May 30th, 2021 to the drop box at: <https://www.dropbox.com/request/geeuAFoOZ4ATUSrMcaj1>.

For detailed author guidelines and other support for publication you may write to pkshajahan@icsw.org.

Addressing food insecurity in Africa and child-sensitive social protection



Prof. Sergei Zelenev, ICSW Special Representative to the United Nations in New York

Like many national governments, international agencies, and civil society organizations the ICSW views food and nutritional insecurity among people as detrimental to the goals of creating well-being and development for all, and such insecurity poses significant challenges to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The change of the ICSW leadership in November 2020 signified increased attention to aligning activities of the global office with those of the organization's regions. Africa ranks high on the priority list. The three ICSW African regions have been consulted regarding the proposed priorities, and a consensus decision was made to

organize, together with partners, the ICSW-sponsored broad-based international online conference in September 2021 to explore and debate new ways of addressing food insecurity and child-sensitive social protection in Africa, to highlight evidence and propose new policy approaches.

The projected outcome could bring an improved understanding of the whole spectrum of policy issues and trade-offs in the above context and could be used by the ICSW and its partners in their advocacy and policy advice. It reflects the renewed emphasis of the ICSW on agenda-setting and capacity-development issues and activities.

Focusing on *the nexus between these two vital policy issues* the organization is striving to address some of the key development priorities in the region, as well as to explore interlinkages pertinent for achieving the goals of Agenda 2030. It could also increase relevance and visibility of the ICSW in the region and beyond.

The COVID-19 crisis has triggered a significant loss of income for various population groups in most African countries and significantly diminished resources for development. The full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is still unclear, but due to this global calamity, the nutritional status of the most vulnerable population groups is likely to worsen and their risk of falling deeper into poverty is likely to increase, adding millions of people to the ranks of the hungry and undernourished.¹ In order to address the impact of COVID-19 on food security in the long term, Africa will need to build productive capacities to address underlying economic vulnerabilities and strengthen the region's capabilities to better manage food,

¹ According to analysis carried out by *Save the Children* and UNICEF, child poverty is likely to have increased 15% due to

COVID-19. Source: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/impact-of-covid-19-on-multidimensional-child-poverty>

pandemic and/or health-related crises.² The pandemic has exacerbated existing systemic weaknesses, and it has had both direct and indirect impacts on food security and economic well-being.

Various manifestations of child poverty and the increased threat of hunger and malnutrition call for a comprehensive review of policy responses in the light of the new circumstances, including better focused child-specific social-protection strategies. The vital role of social-protection schemes, both direct interventions such as cash transfers, and indirect interventions such as social pensions may have positive impacts on children, mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 shock and may result in improving the food security situation for this highly vulnerable population group. Developing and identifying best strategies and tools to deal with these crises aimed at supporting social-protection efforts in the region therefore remains a top priority.

Gaining a better understanding of the *multidimensional nature* of the challenge of food insecurity, especially its complex impact on children, can facilitate concerted actions and better targeting of interventions by national governments, international bodies and civil-society organizations. Several factors, such as rising food prices, the disruption of livelihoods through conflicts, climate change or economic policies, declining agriculture, the growth of informal economies, extreme poverty, inadequate opportunities for education and employment and the absence of affordable health-care, all contribute to the generation and deepening of food insecurity.

Poverty and hunger are closely connected. Inclusive economic growth, along with such factors as literacy, appropriate family policies, access to food, and women's empowerment are important for fighting hunger. Not only the availability of food is important, but also availability at affordable prices.³ The chronic malnourishment of children appears to be a contributing cause of reduced infant and child survival rates. Inadequate access to food, including nutrients, insufficient maternal and child care, and the lack of essential health services represent key factors explaining child malnutrition, but adverse political, economic and cultural environments also play a role.⁴ In view of the above, child malnutrition requires a multidisciplinary approach.

Chronic hunger and food insecurity also imply the violation of human rights, given that food constitutes a basic social and economic right, enshrined in national constitutions and international covenants. More recently, 'Zero Hunger' has been adopted as a key sustainable development goal to be met by all nations over the coming decade, but the world is not on track to reach this goal by 2030 as was anticipated earlier.

The accurate measurement and tracking of food security, hunger and related indicators is important to measure progress and come up with policy adjustments. Equally important is the measurement of the sufficiency of dietary energy consumption relating to both children and adults.

Overcoming food insecurity is impossible without the active engagement and concerted action on the part of all key stakeholders, such as the state,

² <https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-threat-food-security-africa>

³ Shiladitya Chatterjee, Amitava Mukherjee and Raghendra Jha. Approaches to combat hunger in Asia and the Pacific. ADB, 2010

⁴ Ibid

the private sector and civil society. While public policy and action have an important impact on the extent and magnitude of hunger and food insecurity, effective state policies are also essential in promoting child-sensitive social protection. The role of other key partners and stakeholders has also been significant in both areas.

Government involvement and improved public institutional capacity are essential for strengthening food security through fighting poverty, promoting productive employment and policies aimed at reducing social exclusion and inequality, as well as reducing market volatility, better land management, agricultural rehabilitation, water governance and other security-enhancing measures.

Civil-society organizations (CSOs) can play an important role in moving the fight against poverty and food insecurity forward. The ICSW has a special interest in the analysis of their role and potential. Their focus on specific communities and issues gives them the in-depth knowledge and expertise needed to devise practical interventions. Their role in advocacy is also critical in changing existing approaches. The use of evidence is essential when advocacy strategies are conceptualized and implemented. CSOs are typically highly motivated when working together, particularly when joint advocacy activities is undertaken.

When the engagement of non-public stakeholders, such as civil society, and communities results in meaningful involvement in efforts to reduce food insecurity, the results are beneficial for society as a whole. This involvement might be partially effective in addressing the needs of socially excluded groups.

In addressing the existing knowledge and policy gaps, the forthcoming online conference could play an important role in efforts to gain a more nuanced understanding of the existing challenges, different modalities and eventually, more effective policy outcomes aimed at reducing food insecurity and hunger and improving social protection schemes at the local level.

Main expectations and challenges of ECOSOC accredited NGO's



René Schegg, ICSW Special Representative for the United Nations in Geneva

Even though and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic there are some trends visible that global governance has faced a diminished role in the rise of prioritizing national interests, intergovernmental organizations are still a major force for global policymaking. Not only governments participate in these global policies, but increasingly also other stakeholders and most prominently Non-Governmental-Organizations (NGO). NGO's especially assume their responsibilities in becoming proactive voices for creating the environment for the future global challenges. This is certainly true for ICSW as we have a long-standing tradition for a call for more just societies which would make the globe more

resilient in times of crisis. An example is the current pandemic. When on 25 September 2015 the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been adopted by 193 countries, the world didn't anticipate the acute need to address a post-COVID-19 future as a global community and to address multiple challenges simultaneously. During the July 2020 session of the UN High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF), UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed his concerns that COVID-19 could set us back years and even decades, leaving countries with massive fiscal and growth challenges at a time when a "leap ahead" is desperately needed. During his speech he also mentioned that the global community would have been better prepared if the Agenda 2030 would have been further advanced. The world is now facing a situation where poverty, hunger, and inequalities have increased around the world. One of the main priorities for ICSW at its UN representation will be to be one of these proactive voices on how to prepare societies to become more resilient by promoting social justice and social welfare. We will intensify our endeavours to raise its voice as an NGO with high reputation at the UN. To mention just two of the activities ahead of us:

- From June 7 to June 18, 2021, at the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILO), the agenda calls for a discussion on the strategic objective of social protection (social security), under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on social Justice for a Fair Globalization. ICSW will place its request to become involved in this discussion either in sending in a statement or in person.
- Shortly after from June 23rd to 25th we will submit our statement for the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment 2021 on the

topic of innovation as a driver of change and the challenges of a global health protection.

The past year has shown us the differences between being reactive or proactive. While no one ever can be fully prepared for a pandemic, we have learnt our lessons that the voices of NGO's like ICSW is more important than ever to address the complexity of creating socially sustainable societies where everyone is protected. Our vision for our work at the UN is to be this force for systemic changes. We are in a very privileged situation as we bring to the UN best practices from our member organization and the innovative power of so many to play a major role in global policymaking. We will also advocate that returning on nationally focused interests is no longer an option to address globally interconnected challenges.

More Activity at ICSW - Save the Date!

ICSW International Seminar

"The Role of ICTs for Social Inclusion and Social Welfare"

Wednesday, May 12, 2021

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

<https://www.fundacion.uned.es/actividad/idactividad/24645>

The purpose of the international seminar "The role of ICTs for social inclusion and social welfare" is to explore a key phenomenon that has been accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis: the digitalization of our societies. And also one of its effects: the need to design inclusive social policies

in a digital environment. Without digitalization there can be no inclusion, and the digitalization model we are implementing in our welfare systems will have lasting consequences. Digitalization represents a collective, global challenge that will redefine the relationships between users, professionals and the administrations or companies that provide welfare services.

The objective of this international seminar is precisely to address these problems and challenges in greater depth, analyzing the role of ICTs for social inclusion and social welfare, and country cases of successful ICT application in the field of social welfare. To do this, taking advantage of the potential of ICSW as a global NGO, experts from different countries participate in this seminar, allowing a global dialogue on ICTs and social welfare.

More information:

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**Contributions to the newsletter are
welcome!**