



**N
E
ICSW
S**

International Council on Social Welfare

March 2025

**Welcome letter of the ICSW
Executive Director**



Professor Antonio López Peláez, Executive Director of ICSW, Professor of Social Work and Social Services at the National University of Distance Education (UNED), Spain

Dear ICSW members, friends, and interested readers,

The first few months of the year, as every year, are a hectic time for international organizations involved in social welfare. In February, the United Nations Commission for Social Development was held, where ICSW, together with IASSW, organized a seminar entitled *Fostering Inclusive Communities: Addressing Barriers to Social Participation*, which is available on our website. I would like to congratulate all the participants, and also thank the organizers of the Digital Social Work channel for their support in posting the video of the seminar and making it accessible to anyone interested. This Digital Social Work channel was created in the midst of the pandemic in Spain, and has been recognized as an innovative resource, for example by P. Fronck and K. S. Rotabi-Casares. S. Rotabi-Casares in their book *Social Work in Health Emergencies: Global Perspectives* (Routledge 2022). From now on, in addition to numerous interviews and seminars published in Spanish, we will also be allowed to publish ICSW seminars and events in English.

Collaborative work, one of the hallmarks of social work as a scientific discipline and as a profession.

The ICSW global office is also working intensively on the organization of the world congress in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2026, and on the working group created to advance the preparation of the world congress in Paris in 2028 (where we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the three sister organizations, ICSW, IFSW and IASSW). Both projects, very demanding in terms of time, were carried out, as could not be otherwise, with our sister organizations, IFSW and IASSW, and I want to record my appreciation for their commitment, their ability to work, and the search for a consensus that always improves the initial proposals.

Finally, on April 24 and 25, 2025, we will be holding the second international seminar in Ronda, entitled *ICSW International Conference on Participation, social welfare and local administration in times of AI*. From a global perspective, citizens are at a crossroads in the field of social welfare and social services. On the one hand, social welfare is anchored in citizen participation, which allows us to participate in decision-making processes, and to exercise our rights. On the other hand, the accelerated digitalization of our administrations after the COVID-19 pandemic, is reinforced by the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence. In this process, people living in rural, depopulated and isolated environments cannot be left behind. This international conference will address the challenges of participation in the field of social welfare, with special reference to local government, the administration closest to the citizens and responsible for social services in many countries.

What path should we take, in a context where new technologies can reinforce participation, or can they

reinforce hierarchization and surveillance? How to redefine and reinforce citizen participation in a context of digitization and Artificial Intelligence? What is our model of digitization? What are the key competencies we need to be effective in a social environment that is physical, but also reproduces itself in the metaverse? What role can co-design and co-creation methodologies play in the field of citizen participation? How to strengthen intergenerational solidarity? How to address the problems of isolation and loneliness in rural and isolated environments?

To this end, we are counting on the special participation of ICSW Europe, which is organizing one of the sessions of the conference. Based on the results of the international meeting on participation held in Ronda in 2024, the final version of the ICSW Ronda Declaration, the result of a long participatory process in 2024 and 2025, will also be presented at this conference. I would also like to express my special thanks here for the commitment of all the participants, and of the presidents of ICSW, IFSW and IASSW, who will participate in the seminar, and who will endorse the Ronda declaration. This is further proof that together we can go further, and that by participating collectively we can reach sustainable

President's Corner: Key Outcomes of the 63rd Session of the Commission on Social Development



*Dr. Sergei Zelenev, ICSW
President.*

The 63rd session of the Commission on Social Development (CSocD) took place from February 10 to 14, 2025, at UN Headquarters in New York. As a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), CSocD serves as a key intergovernmental body focused on social development issues. This session reinforced the global commitment to social cohesion, inclusion, and resilience, with a strong emphasis on solidarity

agreements that improve our collective well-being.

In an effort to turn our newsletter into a platform for disseminating research and best practices in the field of social welfare, based on the work of our members, we are fortunate to publish in this newsletter an interesting article presenting the discussions held at the seminar on Mental Health - Human Rights and Participation (29 November 2024), where ICSW Sweden was the host of the seminar (thank you very much for hosting the seminar). The seminar was held in cooperation with ICSW Europe, and with support from National Association of Social Work, Sweden and The Swedish Association of Social Managers. At the end of this newsletter, we also provide you with a link to an interesting document, which contextualizes the debates on the financing of social security in developing countries.

Take care and stay healthy

Antonio López Peláez
ICSW Executive Director

and preparations for the Second World Summit for Social Development, to be convened later this year in Doha, Qatar.

The session was guided by the priority theme: "Strengthening solidarity, social inclusion, and social cohesion to accelerate the delivery of the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Discussions revolved around enhancing inclusive societies and fostering international cooperation in addressing social challenges.

A highlight of the session was an interactive dialogue with senior UN officials, moderated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development. The discussion, titled "Preparations for the Second World Summit for Social Development," featured insights from regional UN economic commissions, the International Labour Organization, and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. Participants analyzed global social policy challenges and the

evolving role of international cooperation.

The Multi-Stakeholder Forum focused on "Promoting Solidarity and Social Cohesion through Cooperatives and the Social and Solidarity Economy as a Path for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals." Participants highlighted the crucial role of cooperative enterprises and social economy initiatives in enhancing economic resilience and reducing inequalities worldwide.

The Commission addressed key social policy issues by reviewing and adopting several resolutions. These included: "Policies and Programmes Involving Youth," which underscored the need for youth-centered development strategies, as well as "Modalities for the Fifth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002," reaffirming the commitment to addressing the needs of an aging global population.

Two panel discussions explored pressing social policy challenges:

1. "Policies to Bolster Social Resilience in the Context of More Frequent and Complex Crises" brought together national and international stakeholders to discuss strategies for strengthening community resilience.
2. "Universal Rights-Based Social Protection

Systems That Adapt to Evolving Risks and Support Social Resilience" emphasized the need for adaptive and inclusive social protection measures to safeguard vulnerable populations.

The International Council on Social Welfare actively contributed to the work of the Commission by submitting a written statement and delivering an oral statement advocating for inclusive, integrated, and resilient social policies (attached). ICSW also co-organized a side event with the International Association of Schools of Social Work titled "Fostering Inclusive Communities: Addressing Barriers to Social Participation." This event, attended by over 100 participants online, explored the role of inclusive participation in building equitable and cohesive communities.

The 63rd session of CSocD reaffirmed the international community's commitment to advancing social development. By fostering dialogue, adopting key policy resolutions, and promoting inclusive economic models, the Commission took significant steps toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthening global social cohesion.

Mental Health - Human Rights and Participation Seminar
29 November 2024, Stockholm



Axel Ågren

February 2025

Norrköping, Sweden



On 29 November 2024, ICSW Sweden hosted the seminar Mental Health - Human Rights and Participation, in collaboration with ICSW Europe and with support from the National Association of Social Work, Sweden, and The Swedish Association of Social Managers. This report summarizes the key lectures and discussions from the event.

Introduction

The seminar aimed to explore diverse perspectives on mental health, recovery, rehabilitation, and opportunities for social participation for individuals with mental health challenges. Additionally, it sought to identify effective methods for advocating users' rights at a societal level.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as:

A state of well-being that enables people to cope with life's stresses and realize their potential. It is influenced by individual, social, and structural factors and can be promoted, protected, and restored through various strategies and services. It is a basic human right and crucial to personal, community, and

socio-economic development.

Mental health is a critical issue worldwide, increasingly affecting welfare states, social work organizations, and individual. Reports indicate a decline in mental health across different age groups, often attributed to factors such as increased individualization, the COVID-19 pandemic, societal pressures, and unrealistic social media norms. The consequences of poor mental health include diminished quality of life, reduced workforce participation, social isolation, suicide, declining physical health, and increased mortality.

Despite its significance, mental health is predominantly framed as a medical issue, limiting its integration within social work. Austerity measures further constrain social workers' ability to address mental health from a social perspective. However, social workers play a crucial role by offering holistic interventions, coordinating with other professionals, and providing empowering support to individuals in need.

Although ICSW addresses key social welfare issues in policy, research, and practice, mental health has received limited attention in recent years. Given its growing importance, ICSW Sweden chose this theme for the 2024 General Assembly, with a focus on rehabilitation, participation, and peer support—core components of social work.

Seminar Proceedings

The seminar opened with a welcome address by Eva Holmberg Herrström (ICSW Sweden, former Global President, and member of the program committee). She emphasized the need to enhance societal participation and rehabilitation for individuals recovering from mental health challenges. She underscored that mental health should be recognized as a human rights issue, highlighting the insufficient acknowledgment of the voices and rights of affected individuals.

Max Rubisch (President, ICSW Europe) expressed gratitude to ICSW Sweden for organizing the seminar and reiterated the timeliness of the topic, given ongoing EU discussions and policy developments on mental health. He noted that such seminars foster knowledge exchange, influencing ICSW Europe's future publications and policies.

Key Presentations*Mental Health in Europe*

Karl Lavo (Policy and Communications Officer, Gamian, Brussels) provided an overview of mental

health trends in Europe. According to 2021 EU data:

- 5.33% of Europeans experienced depression
- 6.19% had anxiety disorders
- 0.8% had bipolar disorder
- 0.3% were diagnosed with schizophrenia

Lavo highlighted regional variations, with higher depression rates in Western Europe compared to Central and Eastern Europe. Underreporting remains a concern due to stigma, limited resources, and low awareness. Key findings included:

- Older adults face isolation and undiagnosed conditions.
- LGBTQ+ individuals report higher anxiety, depression, and suicide ideation due to discrimination.
- Young people struggle with social media pressures and body image concerns.
- Migrants and refugees face trauma, cultural barriers, and limited access to care.
- People with disabilities experience stigma and social exclusion.

Lavo concluded that while AI offers potential for early detection and diagnosis, it raises privacy concerns. Economic inequality and climate change also exacerbate mental health challenges, particularly among younger populations. He called for cross-sectoral collaboration to address these issues effectively.

Mental Health Strategies in Finland

Kristian Wahlbeck (Professor, MIELI, Finland) discussed Finland's mental health framework and the role of MIELI, an umbrella organization comprising:

- 55 local member organizations
- 22 free crisis help centers
- 31 organizational members
- 130 employees
- 3,500 volunteers

Wahlbeck stressed that mental health is influenced by social structures, stigma, accessibility, socioeconomic disparities, and cultural norms. Key challenges include poverty, lack of mental health literacy, systemic inequalities, and workforce shortages. Notably, ADHD diagnoses among Finnish children (7–17 years) have risen sharply, with boys overrepresented.

His recommendations included:

- Raising awareness of mental health's socio-economic value.
- Combating stigma and discrimination.
- Expanding mental health services as part of

universal health coverage.

- Strengthening intersectoral policies across education, workplaces, social welfare, and justice.
- Empowering individuals with lived experience of mental disorders.

Peer Support and Rehabilitation

Loes Vollenbroek (Peer Support Sweden) presented the Värdefull project, which promotes active participation in rehabilitation by centering the lived experiences of individuals recovering from mental health issues. Key aspects include:

- Training participants in storytelling, writing, and public speaking.
- Minimizing professional intervention to enhance peer-led knowledge-sharing.
- Ensuring participants receive payment for their contributions.

Outcomes included:

- Employment of two participants as peer supporters.
- Expansion of project assignments beyond the initial target group.
- Establishment of a local non-profit organization (RSMH – National Organization for Social and Mental Health).
- Strengthened social networks and friendships among participants.

Mental Health and Economic Hardship in Sweden

Mårten Jansson (The Swedish Partnership for Mental Health, NSPH) presented findings from the report "It Gets More Expensive to Live the Sicker I Am." Based on 2,300 survey responses, key insights included:

- Only 35% of respondents had stable employment.
- Over 30% struggled financially.
- 70% of caregivers (primarily parents) reported financial strain due to supporting family members with mental health issues.

Mental Health in Ireland

Nicola Byrne and Gloria Kirwan (Shine, Ireland) outlined the mental health landscape in Ireland:

- Over one million people in Ireland (21% of the population) had a mental health disorder in 2019.
- Suicide rates have declined 12% in the past decade, partially due to Ireland's Connecting for Life strategy.
- Demand for mental health services is surging, leading to long waiting times for specialist

care.

- The waiting list for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) exceeded 4,300 children by early 2023, a 60% increase since 2020.

They emphasized Ireland's strategic focus on:

- Recovery-oriented care.
- Respect for human rights.
- Trauma-informed policies.
- Meaningful participation of service users in decision-making.

The seminar featured a series of thought-provoking presentations and discussions. One of the highlights was the presentation by Jeroen de Haan-Rissmann from the organization Movisie in the Netherlands.

Jeroen began with an emotional account of his own life, sharing insights into his difficult childhood. Using vivid imagery, he described how he discovered music and engaged in a peer-support project that profoundly impacted his personal journey. Today, he dedicates his work to supporting others facing mental health challenges through peer-based initiatives.

His approach centered around fostering meaningful discussions in round-table settings, where participants were guided through a structured process of reflection and exchange. The discussions followed these key steps:

1. Who is sitting around the table? – Encouraging participants to recognize the diversity of experiences and backgrounds present.
2. What does the theme mean to you? What do you connect it with? – Prompting individuals to share their personal perspectives and associations related to mental health.
3. What would you like to submit to the others? Or share? – Providing a space for participants to voice their thoughts, experiences, and insights with the group.
4. What do you take home from this session? – Encouraging reflection on key takeaways and how the discussion might influence future actions.

Jeroen's session underscored the importance of personal storytelling and collective dialogue in addressing mental health issues. By creating an inclusive and participatory environment, his approach empowered individuals to find common ground and gain new perspectives on their experiences. His work with Movisie continues to strengthen the role of peer support in mental health,

reinforcing the value of lived experience in shaping supportive communities.

Conclusion

The seminar underscored the urgent need to reframe mental health as a human rights issue,

ICSW News

Celebrating World Social Work Day

ICSW is proud to co-host World Social Work Day 2025 alongside our global, regional, and local partners. This occasion serves as a vital opportunity to recognize the invaluable contributions of social workers—providing essential services, advocating for social justice, and enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities. Social work is a profoundly humanistic and people-centered profession, and social workers deserve recognition not only for their role in social welfare and service provision but also for fostering social cohesion.

In 2025, the celebration in Bangkok, Thailand, on March 24 took place under the theme “Strengthening Intergenerational Solidarity for Enduring Well-being.” This event, along with similar gatherings worldwide, reflects our shared commitment to social welfare and development. We deeply appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with social work networks across the Asia-Pacific region in advancing this mission.

As part of the opening ceremony, we are pleased to share a video address from ICSW President, Dr. Sergei Zelenev, available at the link below.

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/tr5bam0hvwqaimmn2wo8m/Sergei-Zelenev-Bangkok-remarks-HQ.mov?rlkey=86jotz657mlxbgqp4d9qa33v9&st=toa6lfq3&dl=0>

Challenging the ILO's cost estimates for universal social security

In this new Pathways' Perspectives piece, a team of experts examines the ILO's claim that universal social security would cost low-income countries 19.8 per cent of GDP. Their research reveals this figure is

integrate it within social work, and foster participation and rehabilitation. The discussions highlighted the importance of intersectoral cooperation, policy reform, and peer-led initiatives in improving mental health outcomes across Europe.

significantly inflated due to methodological challenges. Using more realistic transfer values, the authors demonstrate that universal social security could cost less than 4 per cent of GDP in low-income countries if implemented immediately and much less if undertaken gradually.

https://www.developmentpathways.co.uk/publication/universal-social-security-is-feasible-in-low-income-countries-a-critical-review-of-the-ilos-calculations-on-the-cost-of-bridging-the-gap/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_campaign=3aff1d7db2-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_10_06_09_07_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-9a454ae3c3-448357697

ICSW International Conference on Participation, social welfare and local administration in times of AI

Ronda (Spain), 24-25 April 2025

Goals:

Address the most effective participation strategies in local Administration from a comparative perspective. Analyze the demands of all the actors involved in the participatory processes from a co- design methodology.

Analyze good participatory practices in the international environment from a comparative perspective.

Develop the key elements of the Ronda Declaration on citizen participation.

On April 15, 2025 we will share the link on the ICSW website.

**Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General
6 November 2024

English only

Commission for Social Development**Sixty-third session**

10–14 February 2025

Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:

Priority Theme: “Strengthening solidarity, social inclusion and social cohesion to accelerate the delivery of the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

Statement submitted by the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The three core, interrelated themes addressed in the outcome documents of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) in Copenhagen – poverty eradication, full and productive employment, and social integration – remain highly relevant. The key messages of the WSSD significantly advanced global dialogue on social development, shaping the framework for promoting social progress at both national and international levels. The UN General Assembly’s decision to convene a Second World Summit for Social Development is timely, providing an opportunity to assess progress and address gaps in the implementation of prior commitments. Since 1995, however, new challenges have also emerged, requiring serious attention.

We live in a rapidly changing world. Global challenges – socioeconomic instability, climate and environmental crises, rapid technological change, conflicts and wars, political tensions, and growing mistrust in social institutions and governance – have exacerbated inequality, intensified human vulnerability, and threatened social cohesion. Reports from ICSW-related organizations worldwide confirm the urgent and often severe impact of climate change, with adverse effects on food security, health, livelihoods, and human life itself. The welfare of billions, particularly the marginalized and underprivileged, hangs in the balance.

The cost-of-living crisis, visible globally, has heightened poverty, inequality, and exclusion. Even in regions where economic growth remains resilient, concerns over rising prices and stagnant wages persist. Declining incomes have driven millions into poverty, while wealth continues to accumulate at the top. This widening gap calls for urgent action.

As a global civil society organization dedicated to promoting human dignity, well-being, inclusion, and social justice, ICSW believes it is crucial for the international community to embrace forward-thinking, equitable, and inclusive social policies. Human dignity and worth must guide these policies, which should address the realities of today’s interconnected world. We call on governments and international institutions to honor the commitments made in Copenhagen and to make every effort to translate them into concrete, inclusive actions. Addressing the root causes of mistrust is essential to breaking the vicious cycles it perpetuates. Designing well-thought-out, realistic, yet bold and sustainable social policies is imperative in the current context.

The complexities of today’s world demand innovative and flexible social policies to address the converging multiple crises. National governments must embed social dimensions into macroeconomic policies from inception, ensuring economic growth benefits all citizens. Social policies must also address the realities of demographic transitions, including aging populations, and in this light incorporate an intergenerational focus; meanwhile, digitalization should empower rather than marginalize.

At the national level, three principles should underpin and form the foundation of desirable social policies: inclusive growth, universal social protection, and human empowerment. Numerous studies confirm that sustainable development relies on inclusive growth, meaning economic progress must be shared by all citizens, especially marginalized groups – women, youth, vulnerable older persons, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities. Governments have multiple tools for promoting inclusive growth, such as progressive taxation, fair wages, and investment in public infrastructure, particularly healthcare, education, and housing. By ensuring equitable access to opportunities and inclusion, we can prevent widening social and economic divides.

Universal social protection is not a luxury but a necessity. Social protection systems must be comprehensive, covering individuals throughout their life cycle. They should not only respond to crises but also anticipate risks, providing security amid life's uncertainties. This includes unemployment insurance, quality healthcare, pensions, childcare, services for people with disabilities, and affordable housing.

Fiscal limitations remain one of the primary challenges for governments delivering social protection. Many countries, particularly in the Global South, face budget constraints that necessitate difficult decisions about the scope and reach of their programs. With insufficient funds for universal coverage, governments often ration benefits, excluding some of the most vulnerable. These exclusions are compounded by the complexities of identifying eligible beneficiaries, hampered by poor information, weak administrative systems, and political interference. Institutional weaknesses, like poor coordination between national and local governments, further hinder program delivery.

Our experience on the ground shows that creating fiscal space for social protection is primarily a political decision, driven by the presence of political will. Universal social protection guarantees that no one is left behind or excluded, particularly during economic crises, health pandemics, or periods of personal hardship. It can also address issues like drug abuse and the mental health crisis. Social protection schemes offer numerous economic, social, and political benefits, making it imperative to shift the conversation from "*why social protection*" to "*how to deliver it most effectively*".

We firmly believe that social policies must prioritize human potential, enabling individuals to thrive in today's rapidly evolving world. Quality education, vocational training, and lifelong learning are essential tools for human development. Policies must also support job creation, entrepreneurship, and skills development, particularly for women, youth, and people with disabilities, who face the greatest barriers to economic participation. Women, comprising half of the global population, are still often overlooked in policy, and gender equality remains a distant goal in many regions. Additionally, around 16% of the world's population – estimated at 1.3 billion people – live with a disability, making them the largest minority globally, with 80% in the Global South.

Governments must adopt redistributive measures that directly address wealth imbalances to promote security, reduce inequality, and ensure inclusion. Equitable tax systems, where wealthier individuals and corporations contribute more, while alleviating the tax burden on lower- and middle-income citizens, are essential. Progressive taxation allows governments to fund public services and social protection schemes, while reducing income inequality and exclusion. Tackling wage inequality and ensuring living wages through regular adjustments to minimum wage standards are also vital for workers to meet living costs.

In addition to income support, universal access to basic services – such as healthcare, education, housing, and clean water – is essential for reducing inequality. Governments must ensure these services are accessible to all citizens, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, worldview, or political orientation.

Addressing environmental sustainability is equally crucial in social policy planning. As we transition to a greener economy, governments must prioritize job creation in industries that contribute to environmental sustainability, like renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and waste management. This transition will address climate change while providing secure, long-term employment for millions, including the most vulnerable.

Populist approaches in current politics reflect a lack of public trust in institutions, often posing a threat to democratic structures. Effective social policies require transparent, accountable institutions. Empowering local institutions with resources, autonomy, and decision-making power to address community-specific needs leads to more effective responses to social challenges. Our global experience highlights the importance of capacity-building in governance and public administration. Stronger governance frameworks prevent inefficiencies and corruption, ensuring social policies reach their intended beneficiaries.

Collaboration is more vital than ever. A multilevel governance approach – bringing together local, regional, national, and international institutions – fosters policy alignment and reduces fragmentation. Effective social policies require accurate, reliable data to monitor impact and enable continuous improvement. Governments must invest in data collection, analysis, and transparency to build public trust and encourage accountability. Inclusive digitalization enhances multilevel collaboration and full participation across society.

From a policy perspective, social protection must not be seen as charity, but as a human right. Well-designed social protection systems foster social cohesion, strengthen economic resilience, and uphold human dignity. These programs should offer financial support and access to quality education, healthcare, and housing. By addressing poverty, inequality, and exclusion, they prevent social unrest and build trust between citizens and the state, essential for stable, democratic governance.

One of the most effective strategies for socially sustainable development is adopting participatory approaches that enhance citizens' voice and power. Participatory governance ensures that people have a direct role in shaping policies that affect their lives. Governments and international bodies must engage local communities through mechanisms like consultations, participatory budgeting, and citizen assemblies, ensuring policies reflect ground realities and have local buy-in. All marginalized groups should be included in decision-making to address society's diverse needs. Regular dialogue between institutions and the citizens they serve is essential for building trust and accountability.

The ultimate responsibility for investment in social sectors, identifying gaps in service provision, and developing inclusive policies to bridge disparities in access rests with national governments. Addressing these disparities requires not only financial resources but also political commitment to ensure that quality services reach every community, especially those historically underserved. At the national level, promoting equitable access to social services may involve adopting policies that subsidize crucial social sectors such as education and healthcare, implementing comprehensive health insurance programs, and strengthening public school systems in rural or marginalized areas.

However, collaboration among all stakeholders is essential to tackle pressing social challenges. Equally critical is fostering this collaboration internationally, where sharing best practices allows countries to learn from each other's successes and setbacks in social policy implementation. Regional cooperation, often facilitated by multilateral institutions, enables policymakers to address cross-border challenges like infectious disease control and educational inequities worsened by migration and poverty.

Multilateralism is indispensable for addressing shared global challenges, and ICSW strongly supports multilateral collaboration in social sectors and beyond. For instance, countries with successful reforms in health, education, or social protection can serve as models that other nations adapt to their contexts. As ICSW's experience demonstrates, regional multilateral agreements can promote uniform standards, encourage resource-sharing, and help prevent disparities arising from differing

national capacities. Ultimately, the effectiveness of multilateralism in shaping social policy depends on the commitment of nations to implement agreed-upon standards equitably and to leverage multilateral support efficiently. Through such actions, countries can strengthen their social infrastructure and expand inclusive opportunities for all citizens.

The vision of social development outlined at the Copenhagen Summit, “*A Society for All*”, remains highly relevant today. Yet, as key stakeholders, we must advance this agenda. Expectations for the Second World Summit on Social Development, to be held in Doha in November 2025, are high. The persistent global challenges of poverty, inequality, exclusion, and social fragmentation demand that we rethink and reshape our social policies. Business as usual is not an answer. Greater accountability from publicly financed bodies and bold policy action are urgently needed. By embracing inclusive growth, expanding universal social protection, and fostering empowerment and participatory governance, we can work together to build a more equitable, just, and secure world for all.

The time to act is now, and International Council on Social Welfare stands ready to support these efforts.

The content of the ICSW News may be freely reproduced or cited provided acknowledgment of the source. The views do not necessarily represent policies of ICSW.

News Editor: **Antonio López Peláez**,
Executive Director, ICSW
alopez@icsw.org

ICSW - International Council on
Social Welfare. Office number 34.
Department of Social Work, Faculty of Law,
National Distance Education University
(UNED).

C/ Obispo Trejo 2, 28040
Madrid (Spain).

**Contributions to the newsletter are
welcome!**

March 2025

ICSW NEWS