

News from our societies – ICSW: Beyond the pandemic: Challenges for social welfare

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In times of pandemic, it is especially important not to lose sight of the essential role of our social welfare systems. The collective fragility brought on by the COVID-19 crisis has been a stark reminder of the enormous differences in the welfare services available both among and within countries. Since its beginnings, one of the challenges of the ICSW has been precisely to foster the debate on social welfare, and to make it a priority on the public agenda – a priority that must be global, just as the pandemic is global. It is a debate that must be articulated through multilevel alliances between individuals, groups, communities, countries, companies, multilateral organizations, and NGOs.

The dysfunctions and inequities of our welfare systems, our social policies, and our social services have been exacerbated by the terrible effects of the pandemic on our lives. A particularly relevant problem, namely food security, is receiving special attention, both by the United Nations and by NGOs as ICSW (we organized last year an international seminar on this topic in September 2021, *Addressing food insecurity in Africa: Strategies for ensuring child-sensitive social protection*, coordinated by Sergei Zelenev).

Food security is clearly linked to the former's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and it has a key role in people's well-being. The most vulnerable groups, such as children and countries with fewer resources, are particularly affected by the food crisis, in a context also influenced by climate change. The 60th session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD60) took place largely online from 7 to 16 February 2022 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Its priority themes were the following: Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

One of the United Nations Commission for Social Development Online Side event in 2022 (February 9), titled *Reaching nutritionally vulnerable social groups: the quest for multifaceted policy response* was co-hosted by the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), Korea National Council on Social Welfare (SSN), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW).

The Social Work Day at the United Nations in 2022 (March 15), co-hosted by ICSW, IFSW and IASSW for nearly four decades, has been focused on this topic too, under the title *Moving Toward Food Security for All: The Role of Social Work*. It is a great satisfaction for the entire ICSW that our seminars and conferences are aligned with the main challenges that we address in today's society, and that we can include in the public agenda our perspective committed to social welfare.

In this sense, Routledge has published a book with the papers presented at the international seminar organized by ICSW in May 2021 on digitalization and social welfare: *Digital*

transformation and social well-being: Promoting an inclusive society. This is the first book to show how digitalisation and the better provision of ICTs can improve access to a wide-range of social services, as well as make them more inclusive. Overcoming disparities across social groups using contemporary digitalisation models will have lasting consequences on social well-being and human welfare. Reflecting on current trends the authors vividly illustrate the collective, global nature of the challenge that digitalisation represents for providers, administrators and users of welfare services. It is important, therefore, to bear in mind the following for research design and practice:

- Citizens' rights must be protected.
- Consideration should be given to how the services provided can be improved by more effective use of ICTs.
- Digital interventions require better service coordination in the setting of priorities and specific training in digital skills for service providers and service users.

The chapters in this book address these problems and challenges in great depth, analysing the role of ICTs in promoting social inclusion and social welfare, drawing on examples of successful ICT applications around the world. The book contains country case-studies from the USA, Brazil, India, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong (China), Zimbabwe, Morocco, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Singapore and will be of interest to all scholars and students of social policy, to social work educators, and social care providers.

In the coming months, together with the IASSW, we will continue to promote discussions on social welfare, sustainability, social justice and humanitarian aid (in contexts of disasters or wars), in a social context severely affected by the pandemic, and also by the war in Ukraine. In this sense, I would like to invite all ISW readers to participate in the two major international meetings in 2022: *The People's Global Summit. Co-building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind* (29 June to 2 July 2022), and the Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development 2022, *Redefining Social Policy and Social Work Practice in A Post-Pandemic Society: Social Welfare Programs and Social Work Education at A Crossroads* (26 - 28 October 2022, Seoul). Today, more than ever, we need to share best practices and design together the new social welfare systems for the 21st century.

Take care and stay healthy!

2022 World Conference SEOUL (ICSW and IASSW)

Joint World Conference On Social Work Education and Social Development 2022

*Redefining Social Policy and Social Work Practice in A Post-Pandemic Society:
Social Welfare Programs and Social Work Education at A Crossroads*

Call for papers

Date: October 26–28, 2022

Method: Largely Online with Partial Offline Events for Opening and Closing Ceremonies

Official Language: English

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 all around the world, we are now facing newly emerging social problems and social demands. Inequality, exclusion, discrimination, global unemployment and food insecurity has been intensified, and it is expected to be increased even more as the

COVID-19 pandemic continues for over two years. Considering the changing environment of global society, the title for 2022 SWESD conference is “Redefining social policy and social work practice in a post-pandemic society: Social welfare programs and social work education at a cross-roads.” In the face of the pandemic era caused by COVID-19, and in the preparation for a post-pandemic society, we would like to discuss what new social problems are emerging and what political, educational and practical strategies social workers and social welfare institutions should establish to solve social problems and social demands of citizens. Through this event, various fields of social policy, social work education and social welfare practice will be dealt. We also intend to provide a discussion forum for policy makers, social work educators, social workers and scholars all around the world to examine the elements necessary to prepare for a post-pandemic society and to discuss strategies and capabilities to achieve well-prepared post-pandemic society.

The conference presentations will be done on the basis of written submissions. Abstracts should be submitted in English before 1st July 2022. Notification of Abstract acceptance: 29th July 2022. The abstracts should be sent to the reviewing committee at the following addresses: swesd2022@gmail.com

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