

# News from our societies – ICSW: No one left behind: social welfare for everyone everywhere on the planet

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Over the last 200 years, contemporary societies have been built on two basic principles: welfare and citizenship. It is not possible to be a citizen without guaranteeing full social inclusion, a secure ground on which to develop our life trajectory. As the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset would say, social welfare is our collective project, and it is around this social welfare that we organize our efforts and give meaning to our projects. Now, together with well-being, in our democratic societies the other guiding principle that shapes our model of life is that of “citizenship”. We are all citizens. The social welfare of the entire population has gone from being an ethical imperative to becoming a legal claim (hence the definition of certain benefits as subjective rights). Social policies, social services and the different social welfare systems respond to both principles: welfare (ensuring a set of benefits and professional intervention by social workers to accompany and strengthen the personal, group and community trajectories of citizens). And citizenship, attending to users without discrimination or biases.

The COVID19 pandemic has highlighted that, in the face of the black swan (the unpredictable catastrophe formulated by Nassim Taleb), what allows us to survive as a species is the social support of our fellow citizens, the collective response based on science and technology, and the incorporation of behavioral habits that minimize the chances of infection. In short, a society designed to take care of us, which implies redefining our health and social protection systems, including social services, based on the priority of care. Care that has to be global, like the pandemic, and that has to take Nature into consideration, in order to take care of it also as a condition of possibility of our own existence. In this sense, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia has shown that not only do we have to take care of pandemics, we also have to work very hard to take care of relations between countries, groups and communities, always seeking the peaceful resolution of disputes or differences that place us on opposing sides. All of ICSW’s work over the past 100 years is aimed at highlighting that we are all on the same side: the side of social welfare, social justice and human rights. And that to advance social welfare, we need to work as a team locally, regionally and globally.

When we talk about leaving no one behind, it is important to highlight the key role that older people have to play in our societies. Being older does not mean losing rights. On the contrary, care dignifies us, and the model of care for the elderly is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. In this regard, ICSW has submitted a Statement to the multi-stakeholder meeting on the human rights of older persons (29-30 August 2022), in Geneva. This event was in response to the request of the Human Rights Council to discuss the normative standards and obligations under international law in relation to the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons. The ICSW strongly supports efforts of the international community aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of older persons who in many countries belong to a disadvantaged population group facing multiple discrimination, abject poverty and deeply-entrenched abuse. ISW readers interested in the protection of the rights of the elderly can access this Statement on our website: [www.icsw.org](https://www.icsw.org).

Throughout 2022 at ICSW we are working on different projects. I recommend that you access our website and read the newsletters we publish monthly. There you will find information about the projects we are developing in different areas: mental health and covid-19, social accountability projects, participation, food security, the implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, smart welfare, digital transformation and social well-being, among many other projects in different countries. It is important to highlight the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development 2022, under the theme “Redefining Social Policy and Social Work Practice in A Post-Pandemic Society: Social Welfare Programs and Social Work Education at A Crossroads” (<http://swesd2022.com/>). Hosted internationally by International Council on Social Welfare, and International Association of Schools of Social Work and hosted locally by Korea National Council on Social Welfare, Korean Council on Social Welfare Education, Korea Association of Social Workers, and Seoul Welfare Foundation.

I encourage all ISW readers to register for the congress and participate in the interesting discussions and presentations that will take place at the congress.

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