

News from our societies – ICSW: From the Windhoek Declaration on Social Policy and Social Protection in Africa, to the Lisbon Declaration for the Development of Social Work and Humanitarian Action in the 21st Century: a global project to achieve social welfare for all

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These are difficult times for social welfare in many countries of the world, in a post-pandemic context, with serious armed conflicts and a process of de-globalization and geopolitical rearticulation that places us before an uncertain future. And just as *International Council on Social Welfare* (ICSW) did almost 100 years ago, at ICSW, we work for social welfare to be a priority in all societies, and for people to have decent lives, decent livelihoods and social protection systems adequate to their needs and demands. Among the challenges we face, of which there are many, two challenges of particular concern must be highlighted, which ICSW has addressed in 2023 from a cooperative perspective, working together with different partners. First, social welfare and social protection in the global south. Second, humanitarian crises and the necessary professional qualification of those professionals, including social workers, who intervene in contexts of catastrophes or humanitarian crises.

In relation to social protection systems in the global south, it is important to note the breakthrough that ICSW has piloted in the African context: the *ICSW Windhoek Declaration on Social Policy and Social Protection in Africa* (<https://www.icsw.org/index.php/news/190-icsw-windhoek-declaration-on-social-policy-and-social-protection-in-africa>). As part of the activities of the *International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW) Seminar on Social Policy and Social Protection in Africa* (28th and 29th September 2023, Windhoek, Namibia), ICSW Africa Region convened local and global social scientists and professionals from state and non-state agencies together in Windhoek to deliberate on social policy and social protection issues in the African Region and to draft a road map towards accelerated progress in achieving the SDGs in the Region. The participants concluded that social policies and social protection programmes are a necessity for human, social and economic development and ecological sustainability and issued the Windhoek Declaration, endorsed by the Ministry of Health and Social Services, Namibia, the Africa Union and ICSW as global organization.

The *ICSW Windhoek Declaration on Social Policy and Social Protection in Africa* sets out an ambitious framework for promoting social welfare in Africa, from a perspective based on co-design, co-creation and the involvement of all stakeholders in building a common future. And it establishes four principles and 10 action points for the next few years:

Principles: (1) Social protection is a right – not an act of charity. (2) Social policy and good governance are key tools for realizing human rights for all. (3) Social policy is a necessary element in advancing sustainable development goals. (4) Social policies and social protection would help in reaching the African Union vision of silencing the guns by 2030 in the Region.

Action points: (1) Include social policy in general and social protection, in particular, in development policies. (2) Advance ‘Smart welfare’ making full use of cost-effective ICT. (3) Strengthen the resilience and elasticity of social protection systems. (4) Be also aware of slow emergencies such as climate change. (5) Gender responsive system includes men, as well as women. (6) Promote a ‘Well-being Economy’ – approach that puts people’s wellbeing at the centre. (7) Put children at the centre of sustainable development policies. (8) Encourage Corporate Social Responsibility commitments. (9) Fight tax avoidance and evasion. (10) Promote the Social Summit 2025.

In relation to the humanitarian crises and disasters we face in different parts of the world, the strategic contribution of *the Lisbon Declaration for the Development of Social Work and Humanitarian Action in the 21st Century* should be highlighted too (<https://www.icsw.org/index.php/news/189-lisbon-declaration-for-the-development-of-social-work-and-humanitarian-action-in-the-21st-century>). On 16 November 2023, in Lisbon, within the activities of the ISCTE Winter School, and as one of the main outcomes of the Erasmus+ INOVHUMRE project, involving partners from Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Colombia and Brazil, the presidents of IFSW, IASSW and ICSW, and the representatives of ISCTE and UNED, have signed the *Lisbon Declaration for the Development of Social Work and Humanitarian Action in the 21st Century*. It is a declaration that puts on the table the strengthening of humanitarian aid, the improvement of the competencies and skills of social workers, the design of new training programmes, and the need to bet on participation and co-design as strategies to improve social inclusion. In this sense, this declaration is a very relevant contribution to social work in the field of humanitarian aid, approved with the unanimous consensus of IFSW, IASSW and ICSW.

The Lisbon Declaration for Development of Social Work and Humanitarian Action in the 21st Century establishes seven action points:

1. The need for technical literacy that is accessible and understood by all those involved in social policies, programmes and responses.
2. Deepening a collaborative, participatory and co-design integrated methodology that is better suited to responding to the specific challenges observed; rehabilitating survivors with the support they require.
3. Implementing innovative advanced training plans that propose new approaches and methodologies for teaching, learning and research, based on evidence from professional practice.
4. A funding plan for research in these areas, promoting the development of new learning tools that incorporate the contributions of the knowledge produced, technologies and models of practice supported by both public and civil society partnerships.
5. The creation of a digital platform that promotes the dissemination of knowledge in these areas, encourages the promotion of study and research networks between partners and countries and promotes information on advanced training plans in Social Work and Humanitarian Action.
6. The inclusion of Social Work and Humanitarian Action in the European Agenda as a training and research priority, and in the agenda of other countries and regions worldwide.
7. The internationalization of universities makes it possible to strengthen the dissemination of good practices in the field of humanitarian aid, and to contribute to the creation of a global network of universities working in humanitarian aid. As the world’s largest provider of

development aid and humanitarian aid and currently also hosts many refugees and immigrants who are victims of war or conflict or natural disasters, European schools of social work must be at the forefront of innovation in the field of humanitarian aid.

Both Declarations are available on our website, and I encourage all ISW readers to consult these documents and use them to guide their projects and activities.

Take care and stay healthy!

Antonio López Peláez
ICSW Executive Director

Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development 2024 will be hosted in Panama City, Panama, from 4 to 7 April. The SWSD2024 will be jointly hosted by International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Federation of Social Workers and International Council on Social Welfare.

SWSD 2024 will be a hybrid conference with both online sessions and face-to-face sessions in Panama. If you wish to register for either online pass or in-person pass, please visit the below link for register online.

Registration – SWSD 2024 – Panama: <https://swsd2024.org.pa/registro/>