



International Council on Social Welfare Global Programme 2009 to 2012

The global programme for 2009 to 2012 was adopted by the General Assembly of members in July 2008. The General Assembly reviewed the global programme mid-term in June 2010 and resolved to add The Agenda and in particular the Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPFI) to the global programme. The Agenda was adopted at the final session of the Joint World Conference 2010. The conference was the first time this century that the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the International Council on Social Welfare and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) had met in a combined conference.

Further, the General Assembly asked that:

1. Each of the nine ICSW regions make the SPFI a key part of their social policy agenda and engage national and regional governments in issues surrounding the model, adoption, implementation and sustaining of the SPFI. Civil society should seek membership of joint SPF taskforces. Civil society needs to be aware of government inclination to target (reducing coverage), rationalise (reduce benefits) and undertake pension reform. All can jeopardize a consistent approach to a SPFI.
2. ICSW participates in global discussions on the SPFI and channels knowledge and opportunities to IASSW and IFSW.
3. ICSW act as a clearing house for knowledge and resources for IASSW, ICSW and IFSW.
4. IASSW, ICSW and IFSW develop a media strategy to support the SPFI.

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PART 1: Strengthening civil society's participation in social welfare and social development

A. The objects of the Council are to:

1. Promote forms of social and economic development which aim to reduce poverty, hardship and vulnerability, especially amongst disadvantaged people.
2. Strive for recognition and realisation of fundamental rights to employment, income, food, shelter, education, health care and security.
3. Promote equality of opportunity, freedom of expression, freedom of association, participation and access to human services and oppose discrimination.
4. Promote policies and programmes which strike an appropriate balance between social and economic goals and which respect cultural diversity.
5. Strengthen civil society throughout the world to achieve these objects.¹
6. Seek implementation of these objects by governments, international organisations and non-governmental agencies in cooperation with its network of Member Organisations.

B. How ICSW achieves its objects and implements its Global Programme

ICSW works at three main levels.

1. The first level is national. The work at this level is largely conducted by ICSW National Member Organisations also known as national councils or national umbrella organisations in each country. ICSW considers that a national umbrella organisation with a broad membership of organisations working in social welfare and social development can be the most effective way of influencing national government policies and strengthening civil society through empowering the local level members of those national umbrella/national council organisations.
2. The second level is regional. Using ICSW National Member Organisations grouped into nine regions throughout the world, ICSW seeks to build a combined force of national civil society organisations to influence social welfare and development policies at the regional level particularly through regional groupings of governments including ASEAN, PIF, ECOWAS, EU, Council of Europe, MERCOSUR, SADC and SAARC.
3. The third level is global. ICSW seeks to harness its National Member Organisations and regions to influence global institutions including the United Nations. ICSW's activities at this level are based on research, knowledge and expertise obtained at national and regional levels.

C. What ICSW offers its member organisations

Through their association with ICSW, National Member Organisations gain exposure to social policy and practice beyond their own national boundaries and

¹ Note ICSW seeks to strengthen civil society through:
(i) building the capacity of NMOs/ National Councils; and
(ii) promoting the role of NMOs/ National Councils at national and regional levels.

can be active in international initiatives. Through the ICSW network, members are able to establish coalitions to make their own work and positions stronger.

Many of the members of our National Member Organisations work directly with the people who are the target of our Objects - those who need the fundamental right to food, shelter, education, health care and security. ICSW provides members with a forum to share values and convictions.

International Member Organisations benefit from having access to forums on social policy, beyond the interest groups they represent. They are invited to participate in ICSW's national, regional and global activities.

Members expect that ICSW will represent them at international forums and in global institutions such as the UN Commission for Social Development and in the UNESCO Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme. Creating connections between our global pursuits and members' day-to-day priorities of alleviating poverty and meeting the needs of their communities is a significant challenge for senior ICSW officials and staff. ICSW works to bring the relevance of our activities at regional and global level to all members.

D. Why Strengthen Civil Society?

ICSW seeks to strengthen the capacity of civil society, through its National Member Organisations, to achieve better outcomes and standards for vulnerable people who live in poverty and/or disadvantage all over the world.

This is a particular distinguishing feature of ICSW. Generally, ICSW allows only one Category A National Member Organisation from each country. Whilst ICSW encourages and has a long history of engagement with many Category C (Other Member Organisations) that are non-national level member organisations; the strength of National Member Organisations is that they are umbrella organisations which themselves have many members. This brings together at the national level a wide variety of organisations across the whole service delivery and policy advocacy spectrum to work together to identify and advocate best practice and best policy in social welfare and social development. Such organisations are potentially an enormous force for improvement.

While ICSW has sought to strengthen civil society through its National Member Organisations as a long term aim and activity, this has become more important and immediate under current global development policies.

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action (1995) established a new consensus to place people at the centre of concerns for development.² More recently the Paris Declaration of 2005 on aid effectiveness³ is recognised as a significant juncture in the history of development assistance and cooperation. The concept of General Budget Support gives recipient country governments more scope to make decisions based on their own priorities. The principle is national ownership. More responsibility is placed on governments to encourage and enable civil society input to policy and budget processes. But this is in the context of a civil society that is not powerful and organised. For example, "Civil society tends to be weak across Africa."⁴

Social development ministers through the auspices of UNESCO are giving increased attention to the need to find ways to engage with civil society. Civil

² United Nations. 2007. *Participatory dialogue: toward a stable, safe and just society for all*. United Nations 2007.

³ OECD. 2005. Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Available from: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>

⁴ Hyden, G. 2008. After the Paris Declaration: taking on the issue of power. *Development Policy Review*, 26(3):259-274.

society must therefore have strong organisations capable of identifying and representing issues and interests to governments and of playing a role, not just in delivering services, but also in policy development.

In the ICSW context, strong National Member Organisations and national councils are imperative as a tool to influence government policy, government budgets and poverty reduction strategies. They are also powerful agents for strengthening civil society through their capacity to strengthen and support their own local and national level member organisations.

However a major obstacle to mobilising democratic institutions for poverty alleviation is the organisational weakness of people who live in poverty and disadvantage. ICSW works to strengthen the capacity of civil society to participate effectively in poverty reduction and social development programmes. Strengthening the capacity of National Member Organisations and national councils is the major component of this and will be a central part of this programme over the next four years.

E. Challenges

In the course of implementing this programme, ICSW recognises that it will confront many challenges. Some of the most important that we will need to take account of are:

- the impact of climate change as a result of global warming, particularly on already vulnerable people and communities, and the need to ensure equity in both access to future development and in global responses to climate change;
- achieving sustainable development;
- the impact of wars both internal and cross border that increase poverty and jeopardise social development;
- the continuing trend toward the unfair distribution of global resources and development opportunities between North and South;
- the narrow focus of global effort in poverty reduction through the MDG's and the need to recapture the full vision of comprehensive national social development adopted at the Copenhagen World Social Summit on Social Development;
- the need for significant reform of global governmental structures;
- the need to address endemic corruption that so often prevents development at the national level;
- the need to address ongoing significant gender imbalance in both social welfare and sustainable social and economic development.

PART 2 ICSW Global Programme

1.	Social welfare and social development	ICSW has a commitment to taking a lead in both social welfare and social development issues.
2.	Networking and linking our work	ICSW has a substantial global network of members, related individuals and organisations that are a powerful force for change.
3.	Communicating with our stakeholders	ICSW communicates its message through multiple mediums.
4.	Ongoing global advocacy and socially responsible global governance	ICSW advocates the strengthening of the multilateral system. ICSW is extending its involvement through engagement with emerging processes

		focused on the reform of globalisation and global governance.
5.	Regional level cooperation	ICSW facilitates the cooperation of civil society with regional intergovernmental bodies to achieve better regional social policies and the development and adoption of social programmes in Southern regions.
6.	North-South partnerships	ICSW Northern members seek to engage with national ministries of development to ensure more effective overseas development assistance and a socially responsible approach to globalisation by Northern governments.
7.	South-South social policy dialogue	ICSW enhances the sharing of information, knowledge and experience between South actors. Actors will learn from each other's successful practices in participating in regional governance, new modes of decentralised provision of social services and new approaches to social and economic security.

1. Social welfare and social development

ICSW has a commitment to taking a lead in both social welfare and social development issues.

A key part of this is the role ICSW plays in the sharing of information, knowledge and experience between actors so that they can learn successful practices from each other in social welfare and social development; as well as new modes of decentralised provision of social services and new approaches to social and economic security.

Throughout this programme, ICSW will continue to campaign for universal access to service provision. In undertaking this role ICSW will pay particular attention to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, older persons and women where they are subject to social and economic discrimination.

The ICSW will engage its members in a process of exchange of best practice in these areas. This process started at the 2004 Global Conference in Kuala Lumpur and was extended at the 2006 Global Conference in Brasilia and the 2008 Global Conference in Tours. It will be a continuing part of the ICSW programme. Where practical, members will seek to influence their national governments to adopt a socially responsible approach to globalisation. In this four year programme, partnership with global and regional NGOs will be pursued to achieve these ends.

ICSW is committed to achieving social justice through sound social welfare and social development policies and through sustainable development plans. Member organisations have a strong commitment to retaining the social welfare benefits that have been achieved over many decades. To this end our members work with their own national governments and within regional groupings including the European Union and the Platform of European Social NGOs. In this four year programme, we will continue to encourage and support this important activity.

The overriding focus of ICSW's work is to reduce poverty especially amongst disadvantaged people. After the World Summit on Social Development in the mid 1990s, ICSW adjusted its focus to include social development as a major activity. ICSW seeks to strike an internal balance between the competing pressures within its membership for attention to social welfare and social development. There are cross cutting issues that embrace both social welfare and social development issues. A prime example is ICSW's work to promote and work for the implementation of social protection in both the global North and the global South, work that will be actively continued throughout this programme.

In December 2009 the UN General Assembly passed a resolution agreeing to hold a 'Rio+20' Earth Summit in 2012. ICSW will provide input with a focus on sustainable social development.

ICSW provides the opportunity and facility for civil society organisations, social work and other professionals to learn from each other. The aim is to increase the professionalism of social workers and deepen and improve the practice of social policy.

One particular way that ICSW contributes to progressing social work, social welfare and social development is through its support for the journals International Social Work and Global Social Policy (see section 3).

2. Networking and linking our work

ICSW has a substantial global network of members, related individuals and organisations that are a powerful force for change.

ICSW links policies and activities at various levels. One country's activities can be of interest to other countries. Experiences can be shared at both regional and global level. During this four year programme more will be done to enable senior staff and office bearers of National Member Organisations to learn from each other. The aim is to increase the influence of civil society on governments and regional structures through the development of good policies and through monitoring government activities to achieve good governance.

ICSW has built a network of members, academics and research centres. This network is potentially a powerful force for social change. ICSW brings the networks together in a variety of forums including conferences and expert meetings. In some regions ICSW is moving from conferences to meetings of civil society leaders with the clear purpose of influencing regional policies.

The Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development jointly organized by IASSW, ICSW and IFSW took place in June 2010 in Hong Kong. The conference provided an exciting opportunity for delegates to contribute to setting a shared agenda for each of the three organisations for the forthcoming decade.

The situation of the world requires more social work unity and engagement; if social work voices are unified the combined contributions will be more powerful. Beyond the shared understanding of the necessity to be organised and relevant in the international arena, IASSW, ICSW and IFSW need clear directions on how to discuss and elaborate strategies at the international level and develop action plans which can seriously influence the setting of an international agenda.

IASSW, ICSW and IFSW can serve as major instruments to deliver the voices from the margins on issues relevant to the larger community. The three organisations plan to organise themselves around major and relevant social issues that connect within and across our profession.

The development of a Global Agenda on social work and social development provides the opportunity to take stock of our past experiences and to articulate a new and crucial vision for engagement that can mobilise members and partners to collectively develop the vision for the future.

The Agenda present to the Joint World Conference in June 2010 has twelve themes:

- Poverty eradication;
- Ageing and older adults;
- Service user/consumer involvement and social work;
- Youth issues and social work;
- Disability and mental health;
- Disaster interventions;
- Human trafficking;
- Impact of global financial crisis;
- Social protection floor;
- Gender issues;
- Family issues; and
- Community development.

The Agenda falls into four major themes:

- **Economic and social inequalities within countries and among regions:**

Recent and continuing economic crises and damaging interventions chosen by world leaders in response to these crises have accentuated the tendencies of ever growing inequalities for marginalised populations and the working poor, and have intensified community disintegration. The international social work community needs to advocate for a social protection floor and integrated social and economic policies and interventions to redress these inequalities.

- **Dignity and worth of the person:**

Amidst growing political instabilities, violence and domination, terrorism, forced migration and erosion of human rights in different parts of the world, the dignity and worth of the person is degraded. The international social work community needs to redress human right issues in relation to social, economic, cultural and political situations and insist on the respect for diversity and different belief systems, especially indigenous and first people's voices.

- **Environmental sustainability:**

The world is plagued by man-made and natural disasters. There is an urgent need to protect the physical environment, and to involve local communities to develop responses to enhance environmental sustainability through proactive engagements with social, human and ecological developments.

- **Importance of human relationships across the life span:**

Family issues and life challenges across the life span emerge as the focal concern of the international social work community in our collective effort to transform the world. Issues relating to children and families; disabilities; health and mental health; ageing; drugs and substance abuse; violence within domestic and intimate relationships call for forceful, integrated and creative responses in connection with service, education and policy developments.

Achieving social change and social development

The social work and social development agenda building is not only a process but also a movement to foster significant social change and social development in the coming decades. As such, the process of generating the agenda at the 2010 Hong Kong conference was a beginning and to be successful we need the ongoing involvement and support of members and colleagues in the process.

Members based in the North have different concerns to members based in the South. Different regions have different expectations of grassroots members, National Member Organisations and International Member Organisations.

The ICSW secretariat contributes to events and follows emerging major processes. The secretariat responds to emerging needs particularly in ICSW's nine regions. To move forward a region needs financial resources and strong regional leadership and during this four year programme, ICSW will work to strengthen both of these in all regions.

Within the ICSW structure members have the opportunity to develop their own regional policies and linkages with regional institutions. It is important that ICSW's regions develop their own strength and influence and developing this will be a central thrust of this four year programme.

3. Communicating with our stakeholders

ICSW communicates its message through multiple mediums.

ICSW communicates its objects and activities through multiple mediums including: conferences, expert meetings, seminars, the ICSW website, occasional publications and speeches delivered at regional and international events. ICSW has built links with academic publications. Our main activities are reported through our regular newsletter *Global Cooperation* and regional equivalents.

ICSW is joint owner of the journal *International Social Work*. Our partners are the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers.

ICSW is collaborating with the academic community. ICSW works closely with the journal *Global Social Policy* and sponsors the section *Global Digest*.

All ICSW publications are placed on the ICSW website which has all core information in English, French and Spanish.

A central thrust of the four year programme is to maintain and develop our work with our important collaborators and further develop methods of communications with our stakeholders.

ICSW will explore further the possibility of a special section of the website for members. Regional officers will highlight emerging challenges and share these through the regional newsletters which should be produced in all regions.

4. Ongoing global advocacy and socially responsible global governance

ICSW advocates the strengthening of the multilateral system. ICSW is extending its involvement through engagement with emerging processes focused on the reform of globalisation and global governance.

ICSW takes a stand on the social dimensions of globalisation by emphasising a social rights based approach to globalisation. ICSW has a particular interest in the

Commitments made by governments at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development.

Throughout the four year programme, ICSW will continue to engage in promising new processes in pursuing the reform of globalisation and global governance including, through participation in the UNESCO Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme. ICSW will also continue and strengthen its advocacy on socially responsible global governance in appropriate UN Structures.

5. Regional level cooperation

ICSW facilitates the cooperation of civil society with regional intergovernmental bodies to achieve regional social policy and the development and adoption of social programmes in Southern regions.

ICSW is organised into nine regions. With only a few exceptions these resemble the regional groupings of governments such as SADC, SAARC, ASEAN and PIF etc. The ICSW regions undertake their own programmes in the context of the global programme. The ICSW regions work within the ICSW Objects, the Global Programme and global structure.

ICSW seeks to apply a social rights based approach to globalisation at the regional level and seeks to ensure that regional groupings of governments adopt a regional approach to social policy and social protection based on a social rights approach to complement their trade, security and other agendas.

ICSW's civil society advocates have considerable knowledge as to the causes of government failure to deliver on international social contracts. They recognise that their constraints are related to the neo-liberal and neo-conservative agendas of advanced democracies.

Activities in this area of the programme over the next four years will respond to the strategic input on areas of key concern from members and other partners consulted in regional civil society forums. A major agenda in all regions is the introduction of sustainable social protection floor policies and programmes. After developing advocacy agendas, it is crucial for advocates from emerging networks to increase engagement with regional intergovernmental bodies.

ICSW support for work with regional groupings of government will be a strong component of the four year programme. While the existence of formalised networks have political relevance, these groups will only be considered legitimate representatives of the voices of the poor if they engage directly on behalf of their communities at the level of decision making. ICSW has enhanced and created platforms for recognition by intergovernmental bodies. It is now time for advocates to act and ICSW will seek to encourage and support this action throughout this four year programme.

6. North-South partnerships

ICSW Northern members seek to engage with partners in the South and with national ministries of development to ensure more effective overseas development assistance and a socially responsible approach to globalisation by Northern governments.

ICSW translates its concerns on the impact of globalisation into concrete action at national and regional level within the European Union (EU). ICSW national members in Europe are encouraged to influence national and EU economic and trade development policy in a socially responsible direction.

Other Northern ICSW members are also asked to monitor and influence positively the quantity and quality of overseas development assistance of Northern donors.

Northern members are encouraged to partner with Southern members. The first project in this area is between the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health and the Tanzania Council of Social Development. The project commenced in 2008 with the involvement and support of ICSW. The main purpose of such partnerships is to strengthen the structures, funding and policy work of National Member Organisations and National Councils in the South. National umbrella organisations in the South are generally too weak to maintain a consistent involvement with government and their own members. This creates a vicious circle. Umbrella organisations do not have resources to influence policy and attract members. Thus they do not gain credibility with either members or government. ICSW is trying through North-South partnerships to establish long-term relationships that result in strong, independent and sustainable national councils. A thwarting factor is the short term nature of global donor support. Projects start to strengthen civil society but then terminate after, say, three years. A project to strengthen national councils is more likely to be successful if conducted over ten years. Strengthening of National Councils through sustained long term projects will be an important element of this four year programme.

ICSW's aim is to increase official development assistance and increase the percentage of official development assistance spent on social provision. The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals will be one of the measures of monitoring progress in this collaboration but ICSW also seeks to retain the full vision of the Copenhagen World Summit on Social Development, particularly through the seeking governments' renewed commitment to their 1995 pledges.

7. South-South social policy dialogue

ICSW enhances the sharing of information, knowledge and experience between South actors. Actors will learn from each other successful practices in participating in regional governance, new modes of decentralised provision of social services and new approaches to social and economic security.

Throughout this programme, ICSW will continue to campaign for universal access to service provision and the development of national social protection floors. In undertaking this role ICSW will pay particular attention to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, older persons and women where they are subject to social and economic discrimination.

The ICSW will engage its Southern members in a process of South-South exchange of good practice in these areas. This process started at the 2004 Global Conference in Kuala Lumpur, and was extended at the 2006 Global Conference in Brasilia and the 2008 Global Conference in Tours. It will be a continuing part of the ICSW programme. Where practical, South members will seek to influence their national governments to adopt a socially responsible approach to globalisation through the emerging groupings of G4 and G21. In this programme partnership with ILO will be examined to achieve these ends.

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