

NEWS AND VIEWS . . . from ICSW

The International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) is a global non-governmental organization which represents a wide range of national and international member organizations that seek to advance social welfare, social justice and social development.

ICSW's basic mission is to promote forms of social and economic development which aim to reduce poverty, hardship and vulnerability throughout the world, especially among disadvantaged people.

How ICSW achieves its mission and implements its global programme

ICSW seeks to achieve its mission through mobilizing its members to engage with government at national, regional and global levels. Many of the members of our national umbrella member organizations work directly with the people who are the target of our mission. ICSW provides members with a forum to share values and convictions. International members, including the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers, have access to forums on social policy, beyond the interest groups they represent.

Members expect ICSW to represent them in international forums such as the UN Commission for Social Development. One challenge for senior ICSW officials and staff is to create connections between our global pursuits and members' day-to-day priorities of alleviating poverty and meeting the needs of their communities.

ICSW's four-year global programme has seven components which are outlined below.

1 Social welfare and social development

ICSW has a commitment to social welfare, social justice and social development. The North members are committed to retaining the

benefits of social welfare that have been achieved over many decades. To this end the Northern members work with their own national governments and within regional grouping, including the European Union.

Particularly since the World Summit on Social Development in the mid-1990s, ICSW has adjusted its focus to include social development as a major activity. ICSW tries to strike a balance between the competing pressures of social welfare and social development.

2 Networking and linking our work

ICSW links policies and activities at various levels. One country's activities can be of interest to other countries and experiences can be shared at both regional and global levels. ICSW's network of members, academics and research centres is a powerful force for social change.

ICSW brings the networks together in a variety of forums including regional and global conferences. In developing the themes for conferences we seek to find ways for members to benefit from networking with each other. Through its 10 regions ICSW members have the opportunity to develop their own regional policies and linkages with regional institutions.

3 Communicating with our stakeholders

ICSW communicates its mission and activities through multiple media, including conferences, expert meetings, seminars, our website, occasional publications and speeches delivered at regional and international events. Our main activities are reported through our regular newsletter *Global Cooperation* (on the ICSW website in English, French and Spanish).

4 Global advocacy and socially responsible global governance

ICSW takes a stand on the social dimensions of globalization by emphasizing a social rights based approach. It seeks to strengthen the role of the United Nations in global governance and in particular the reform of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). ICSW has a particular interest in the commitments made by governments at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development.

ICSW seeks to engage in promising new processes in pursuing the reform of globalization and global governance. We are following up the Report on the Social Dimension of Globalization and the Helsinki Process. (The Helsinki Process aims to increase democratic globalization and equality in international relations by providing a

forum for open, pluralistic and comprehensive dialogue on global governance.)

5 Regional co-operation

ICSW seeks to ensure that regional intergovernmental groups adopt a regional approach to social policy based on social rights, to complement their trade, security and other agendas.

Our advocates in the South have considerable knowledge on the causes of governments' failure to deliver on international social contracts. They recognize their constraints are related to both the neo-liberal and the neo-conservative agendas of advanced democracies.

After developing advocacy agendas, it is crucial for advocates from emerging networks to increase engagement with regional intergovernmental bodies. While the existence of formalized networks has political relevance, these groups are only considered legitimate representatives of the voices of the poor if they engage directly on behalf of their communities at the level of decision-making.

6 North–South partnerships, Northern activism

Northern ICSW members are being asked to monitor and influence the quantity and quality of overseas development assistance of Northern donors. We are fostering partnerships between some Northern and some Southern members. This is to be achieved in part through practical interchanges between North–South ICSW members at ICSW global conferences.

ICSW's aim is to achieve increased overseas development assistance together with a higher percentage of overseas development assistance spent on social provision. The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals is one of the measures of monitoring progress in this collaboration.

7 South–South policy dialogue

ICSW is enhancing the sharing of information, knowledge and experience between our South actors. Actors are learning successful practices from each other in participating in regional governance, new modes of decentralized provision of social services and new approaches to social economic security. This process started at the 2004 Global Conference.

ICSW is continuing to campaign for universal access to service provision in the context of development. In undertaking this role, ICSW continues to 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 Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) are supporting the work of ICSW in the South.

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