



Annual Report 2021

This report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021, a year that continued to test the resilience and adaptability of the global social welfare community. ICSW's work during this period was guided by six strategic priorities:

1. Promoting social development, social welfare, and social justice;
2. Networking and policy innovation;
3. Communicating with stakeholders;
4. Ongoing global advocacy and socially responsible global governance;
5. Regional-level cooperation; and
6. Knowledge-building, policy dialogue, and capacity development.

Despite the continuing disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, ICSW remained deeply engaged in advancing social development and building global solidarity through partnerships, advocacy, and knowledge exchange.

Highlights of 2021

- **Launch of the Global Agenda 2020–2030:**
The most significant milestone of the year was the launch of the ten-year strategic framework *“Co-Building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind.”* Developed jointly with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the framework offers a unified vision for the global social work and social development community.
- **High-Level Advocacy at the United Nations:**
ICSW continued its active engagement in global policy processes, notably at the **59th Session of the UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD)**, where it co-hosted side events on *digital inclusion* and *a global fund for social protection*.
- **Global Online Conferences:**
Building on lessons from 2020, ICSW successfully organized several major online events, including the **ISWED 2021 Conference** (*“Human Relationships: Keys to Remaking Social Work for the Future”*), and international seminars on *Food Security in Africa* and *New Issues in Social Protection in the Post-COVID-19 Era*. These virtual forums ensured that global dialogue continued uninterrupted despite pandemic restrictions.
- **Regional Focus in Communications:**
A major communication initiative saw each issue of the **Global Cooperation Newsletter** dedicated to a specific region. This provided an in-depth spotlight on the work of ICSW members across Europe, Central and West Africa, Northeast Asia, MENA, Latin America, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and North America and the Caribbean, strengthening regional visibility and cohesion.

Outcomes

1. Promoting Social Development, Welfare, and Justice

- **Learning from Crisis:**
The January 2021 newsletter explored “*COVID-19 and Its Impact on Social Welfare*,” distilling key lessons from the pandemic and underscoring the urgency of building stronger and more universal social protection systems to address deep-rooted inequalities.
- **A Vision for Inclusion:**
The launch of the new *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* marked a renewed commitment to justice and equity. Its guiding theme, “*Co-Building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind*,” has become the foundation for ICSW’s advocacy and programmatic work.
- **Focus on Food Security:**
ICSW organized a major online conference on “*Addressing Food Insecurity in Africa*,” in partnership with UNICEF, FAO, and other stakeholders, to examine policy options for achieving child-sensitive and inclusive social protection.

2. Networking and Policy Innovation

- **A Landmark Collaboration:**
The *Global Agenda 2020–2030* emerged from intensive collaboration between ICSW, IFSW, and IASSW. It stands as a landmark framework for collective global action in the decade ahead.
- **Reimagining Global Conferences:**
Following the cancellation of the 2020 Rimini conference, ICSW co-developed the **ISWED 2021 Online Conference**, a multi-month virtual event that attracted over 1,400 abstracts and numerous global keynote speakers, demonstrating a new, accessible model for international engagement.
- **Strengthening Civil Society Networks:**
At the **59th CSocD**, ICSW deepened cooperation with partners such as the **Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF)** and the **Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)**, advancing joint advocacy for equitable and sustainable social policies.

3. Communicating with Stakeholders

- **Launching a New Vision:**
The November 2021 edition of the *Global Cooperation Newsletter* was devoted to introducing the new phase of the Global Agenda project, effectively sharing ICSW’s strategic direction with its worldwide membership.
- **Amplifying Regional Voices:**
A renewed regional communication strategy was implemented, dedicating each newsletter issue to one region. This approach enabled members to share their perspectives and experiences more widely, fostering a truly global and inclusive dialogue.

4. Ongoing Global Advocacy and Socially Responsible Governance

In cooperation with partners such as **IFAD**, **ILO**, and **UNICEF**, ICSW contributed to global policy development through the **September 2021 online conference “Addressing Food Insecurity in Africa: Strategies for Ensuring Child-Sensitive Social Protection.”** The event brought together experts and practitioners to explore two central themes:

1. **Conceptual and strategic approaches**—including analysis of vulnerabilities, inclusive growth, and stakeholder collaboration;
2. **National experiences and best practices**—demonstrating how countries are responding to food insecurity through policy innovation and community empowerment.

Key findings emphasized that food insecurity is driven by multiple factors—rising prices, conflict, climate change, declining agricultural productivity, gender inequality, and limited access to education and healthcare. Empowering vulnerable communities to improve access to food, income, and markets emerged as a crucial strategy for sustainable recovery.

- **Influencing UN Policy:**
At the 59th **Commission for Social Development**, ICSW co-organized two high-level side events—“*Building Roofs and Raising Floors*” and “*Social Inclusion Through Digital Inclusion*.” These engagements advanced the dialogue on universal social protection and digital equity.
- **Engaging the ILO:**
ICSW contributed to the **109th Session of the International Labour Conference**, submitting policy statements on the strategic objective of social protection and fair globalization, ensuring that social development perspectives were represented in the deliberations.

5. Regional-Level Cooperation

- **Showcasing Regional Diversity:**
2021 witnessed exceptional collaboration across all ICSW regions. Each regional feature in the *Global Cooperation Newsletter* highlighted specific challenges, innovations, and best practices, reinforcing ICSW’s identity as a truly global network.
- **Collaborative Seminar Design:**
The international seminar on “*The Role of ICTs for Social Inclusion*” exemplified effective regional collaboration, with case studies and experts nominated by regional presidents to ensure balanced representation and diverse insights.

6. Knowledge-Building, Policy Dialogue, and Capacity Development

The pandemic underscored the critical importance of strong and adaptive social protection systems. Countries with well-established safety nets were able to mitigate the social and economic fallout more effectively. Many governments expanded food and nutrition assistance and provided direct support to vulnerable populations through public and community-based programmes.

However, these measures were often insufficient to offset the pandemic's far-reaching impacts. Global inequities in vaccine access, loss of over 250 million full-time jobs, and heightened income insecurity revealed the fragility of existing systems. The pandemic particularly affected individuals with lower education levels and those in informal or precarious employment.

ICSW therefore calls for the strengthening of **social protection floors**, the promotion of **decent work**, and exploration of **innovative models of social support**, including pilot experiences with **unconditional basic income (UBI)**. The post-pandemic world requires renewed thinking about the balance between economic flexibility and social stability.

- **Analyzing the Post-Pandemic Landscape:**
Through its international seminars on ICTs (May), Food Insecurity (September), and Social Protection (November), ICSW provided critical platforms for reflection, learning, and capacity building.
- **A Framework for a Decade of Dialogue:**
The Global Agenda now serves as a long-term foundation for policy dialogue, advocacy, and capacity development, providing the ICSW network with shared priorities and a coherent vision for collective action.

The year 2021 demonstrated ICSW's resilience and relevance amid global uncertainty. Through its partnerships, advocacy, and knowledge-sharing initiatives, ICSW helped shape global conversations on social protection, inclusion, and justice. The *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* provides a renewed vision that will guide the organization and its partners over the next decade—toward an eco-social world that truly leaves no one behind.