



Annual Report 2023

Introduction

This report covers the period from **1 January to 31 December 2023** and provides an overview of the key activities and achievements of the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW). ICSW's work in 2023 was organized under six priority areas:

- Promoting social development, social welfare, and social justice
- Networking and policy innovations
- Communicating with stakeholders
- Global advocacy and socially responsible global governance
- Regional cooperation
- Knowledge-building, policy dialogue, and capacity development

Highlights of 2023

- **Launch of the Windhoek Declaration:**
The year's landmark achievement was the **ICSW Windhoek Declaration on Social Policy and Social Protection in Africa**, adopted during an international conference in Namibia co-organized with the Government of Namibia. Endorsed by the Namibian Government and supported by the African Union, the Declaration provides a **strategic framework for advancing social welfare and social protection across the continent**.
- **Focus on social justice and inequality:**
Throughout the year, ICSW deepened its engagement with key social policy themes. The **January newsletter** set the tone by examining "*Addressing the Inequality Predicament*", emphasizing the need for robust social protection systems and decent work opportunities as tools to combat poverty and exclusion.
- **Regional spotlights:**
ICSW continued to highlight the work of its regional partners. Dedicated newsletter editions showcased developments and perspectives from **Central and West Africa (May)**, **Latin America (August)**, and **North America & the Caribbean (September)**, illustrating the strength and diversity of the global network.
- **Engagement in UN forums:**
ICSW actively participated in the **61st Session of the UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD)**, contributing civil society perspectives to global policy debates on employment, inequality, and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Preparation for the 2024 World Conference:**
Significant progress was made in the **planning and promotion of the 2024 Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development** in Panama, reflecting ICSW's continuing commitment to global knowledge exchange and professional collaboration.

Outcomes by Priority Area

1. Promoting Social Development, Social Welfare, and Social Justice

ICSW submitted a statement to the **61st Session of the Commission for Social Development**, focused on the theme:

“Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

Key highlights included:

- **Advocating for inclusive recovery:**
The January newsletter emphasized the need for comprehensive social safety nets and decent work as central strategies for poverty reduction and social inclusion.
- **Championing social protection in Africa:**
The **Windhoek Declaration (September)** reaffirmed that *social protection is a right, not an act of charity*, and provided a detailed action plan for its implementation across Africa.
The Declaration underscored three fundamental principles:
 1. Social protection is a human right.
 2. Social policy and good governance are essential tools to realize human rights for all.
 3. Social policy is integral to sustainable development.

The Declaration also presented a set of **action points** aimed at accelerating progress toward the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** in the region, calling on governments, civil society, and international partners to strengthen their cooperation in advancing these objectives.

- **Addressing humanitarian crises:**
In collaboration with **IFSW** and **IASSW**, ICSW co-signed the **Lisbon Declaration**, establishing a framework for the role of social work and digital tools in humanitarian action, emphasizing a rights-based approach to disaster response.

2. Networking and Policy Innovations

- **Collaborative innovation:**
The Windhoek Declaration exemplified successful collaboration between **social scientists, government representatives, and civil society actors** from across Africa, demonstrating participatory policy development at its best.
- **Strengthening global partnerships:**
The joint signing of the **Lisbon Declaration** with IFSW and IASSW reaffirmed ICSW’s commitment to coordinated global action on emerging social challenges.

- **Preparing for future global dialogue:**
Networking efforts during 2023 focused on strengthening coordination for the **2024 Joint World Conference** in Panama, reinforcing ICSW’s leadership in fostering global cooperation and policy innovation.

3. Communicating with Stakeholders

- **Leadership messages:**
Regular communications from the **ICSW President** and **Executive Director** kept members informed of major developments, highlighting achievements such as the Windhoek Declaration and preparations for the Panama Conference.
- **Amplifying regional voices:**
Thematic newsletters provided platforms for regional perspectives and in-depth analysis, encouraging dialogue and cross-learning among ICSW members worldwide.

4. Global Advocacy and Socially Responsible Governance

- **Influencing global policy:**
Through active engagement with the **United Nations**, particularly the CSocD, ICSW brought civil society’s voice to international discussions on employment, inequality, and social justice.
- **Advocating for a Second World Summit for Social Development (2025):**
ICSW was among the key advocates calling for a renewed global commitment to social development. The **Windhoek Declaration** strongly endorsed convening the Summit and urged greater attention to the priorities of the Global South.

5. Regional Cooperation

- **Landmark seminar in Africa:**
The **International Seminar on Social Policy and Social Protection** in Windhoek (September) served as a prime example of effective regional collaboration. Organized by the **ICSW East and Southern Africa Region**, it brought together government, academia, and civil society, culminating in the Windhoek Declaration.
- **Regional insights and engagement:**
ICSW newsletters throughout the year provided deep regional analyses — from **gender-based violence in Central and West Africa**, to **post-pandemic recovery in Latin America**, and **community-based initiatives in North America & the Caribbean**.

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

- **Policy analysis and thought leadership:**
ICSW’s newsletters and publications provided analytical insights on topics such as inequality, climate change impacts on social welfare, and the evolving framework of social protection.
- **Academic contribution:**
ICSW announced the publication of a **Routledge volume** featuring collected papers and

findings from international seminars held in 2021 and 2022, contributing to scholarly discourse on the future of social welfare.

- **Facilitating dialogue and capacity building:**

By focusing on both global and regional themes, ICSW strengthened the knowledge base of its members, enhancing their ability to advocate for effective and equitable social policies.