



**N  
E  
ICSW  
S**

**International Council on Social Welfare**

June 2022

## **Working Together for a Better ICSW**



***Professor Antonio López Peláez,  
Executive Director of ICSW and Professor of Social Work  
and Social Services at the National Distance Education  
University (UNED) (Spain)***

Dear ICSW members, friends, and interested readers,

Welcome to the June 2022 issue of our newsletter.

After four months of war in Ukraine, we can observe a redesign of geopolitical balances in our globalized world. COVID-19 challenged our model of globalization, trade and transportation. At the same time, it made visible the limitations of our social protection systems. The war also introduced new uncertainties affecting sectors essential for social inclusion, such as food security. The blockade of grain exports could severely affect poor populations around the world.

In this context, one of ICSW's hallmarks, working to improve social welfare, working to push social

protection on the public agenda, has become a collective priority. We need to put social welfare and social policies back in a privileged place in our societies. Without social welfare, it is not possible to develop our individual trajectories, and working for social welfare is working for the personal success of each of us.

To do so, we have to give a voice to all countries, to all contexts, to all institutions, we have to include the diversity of our world in our social policies. And we must listen to, promote and energize the concerns of our fellow citizens, learning from the good practices of each country. In this sense, international meeting spaces, multilateral organizations and forums to share, learn and redesign our social protection systems are more necessary than ever. Fortunately, this is what ICSW has been doing for nearly 100 years, and our commitment to social welfare continues amidst the uncertainties that affect us.

This June issue of our newsletter is a good example of ICSW's commitment. We publish articles from our colleagues in the Central and West Africa Region, and from our colleagues in the North East Asian Region. I would like to thank them for their excellent contribution to the social welfare debate. Thank you very much.

The World People's Summit (<https://newecosocialworld.com/>) will begin soon, on June 29. I encourage you to participate. I also encourage you to participate in the international Joint World Conference On Social Work Education and Social Development 2022(<http://www.icsw.org/index.ph>

p/news/167-2022-swesd-world-conference-seoul). Today more than ever we need to debate, share and question the present, and work for a better future. And the World Conference in Seoul is a great opportunity to reinforce our commitment to social welfare. Hope to see you there!

Take care and stay healthy!

### **MENTAL HEALTH AND COVID-19: A NEED FOR ACTION BY ALL**



***Christopher Dapaah,  
Distinguished fellow and Vice President ICSW,  
central and west Africa Region***

A number of paradoxes and contradictions have been highlighted during the Covid19 pandemic for Mental Health. Therapeutic relationships need contact, so they can be compromised by the loss of physical presence materialized.

Social life is hindered by lockdown and by the necessary lifestyle changes that people have been required to make, but community-based services availability has been reduced, outpatient care stopped in many places, and emergency care in hospitals is privileged.

Psychiatric institutions (and all forms of residential care, e.g. nursing homes, social care

homes, especially of a large scale) were in many cases sources of infection, but people are staying longer as they can be hardly discharged, their human rights have been compromised and social contacts are limited.

Whilst the adoption of more hygiene and health protection is necessary, there is an equal requirement for a robust social intervention in response social contracts.

Solidarity (also at the community level) is needed, and has buffered the traumatic impact of Covid-19, but this won't happen per se and requires a catalyst role for all cycles.

Comprehensive responses are proving to be more important than individual approaches, as integrated services respond to whole life needs of the person and the community. Vulnerable people impacted by poverty, racism, ageism, homelessness, isolation and marginalization, especially those with pre-existing Mental Health problems should receive interventions first of all, and the response should be especially tailored to their life needs and social circumstances.

This is a moment of difficulty but also possibility for human endeavor to change and improve mental health around the globe. After the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, governments are called to reformulate mental health policies with realistic investment spaces and accessing needed medications and other requirements to addressing the mental Health challenges.

Health - as a right per se - is included within the wider range of human rights and connected to social determinants and human development (Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs). To achieve these goals, Human investment is key driving force hence the need to embrace all for

accessing the facilities to supporting mental health issues.

The **Access** to health and disorder envisioned in the SDGs, the SDGs allow to broaden the global mental health agenda from a focus on reducing the treatment gap for people affected by mental disorders to the improvement of mental health for whole populations and reducing the contribution of mental disorders to the global burden of disease.

Collective action is needed by all Individuals, communities, countries and their governments to ensure that national mental health plans are designed to manage the mental health consequences of the global coronavirus health emergency.

It is undisputed that the current COVID-19 emergency and other epidemics will have long-lasting consequences and effects on the mental health of all people, affecting the general population with astonishingly heightened stress if pragmatic measures are taken or funding mechanisms are put in place to address emergencies as and when any strives.

The real impact on mental health is occurring today, when people encounter the consequences of human and economic losses together with depressive and anger feelings, post-traumatic symptoms and other conditions.

On the other hand, impoverishment of services, their reduction and mergers, and the shortage of staff that are already present due to the underlying economic crisis in most countries can leave mental health at the bottom of the list of health priorities.

This is especially impacting on people with pre-

existing mental health conditions, where for 20 years so far the International Mental Health Collaborating Network (a voting member organization of the WFMH) aims to bring together good practices and services.

In most developing countries including Ghana, Mental health has not received adequate attention over the years. Following the enactment of the Mental Health Act of 2012, the Mental Health Legislative Regulations, 2019 (LI 2385) has been brought into effect but the practicalities are not seen.

In light of COVID-19 pandemic, there should be more focus on psychosocial support for vulnerable populations, such as PWDs and LEAP beneficiaries as they are more likely to be adversely affected than the general population during the pandemic due to their multiple vulnerabilities. Evidence shows there is likely to be a significant increase in mental health conditions during and after COVID-19 which will require the need for critical mental health services. As such, consideration should be given to ways to integrate the delivery of psychosocial support to LEAP households and other vulnerable groups.

There is the need for a Nationwide Campaign for action to enhance people's mental health, a movement calling for fundamental change in the Thinking, Practice and Systems, made up of national and local Mental Health organizations, an alliance of organizations and individuals from rural to urban communities in Ghana.

**SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT  
IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERIES  
IN THE AFIGYA KWABRE SOUTH DISTRICT'S-  
GHANA-  
(The public hearing on the district's medium term  
development plan- )**



***Christopher Dapaah,  
Distinguished fellow and Vice President ICSW,  
central and west Africa Region***

Like many African nations, Ghana's population is made up of more women and young people. They also form majority of Ghana's voting population. However, these demographic groups do not only seem to lack the space to effectively participate in the democratic corridor; but also, the relevant information, knowledge and skillset for effective participation. The current population of Ghanaian women as per the 2021 Population and housing census -PHC data stands at 15.6 million representing 50.7% of Ghana's total population.

Meanwhile, participation of marginalized groups into mainstream decision making processes have not seen the significant progress it deserves. As a nation, we have not done enough to provide the needed avenues and procedures to allow the optimum realization of inclusive participation.

The participation of women, disabled persons and the youth groups in the decision-making process have relatively been low. This

phenomenon trickles down to almost all districts in the country.

The Afigya Kwabre South district in Ashanti Region of Ghana currently has a total population of 234,667 with 119,600 of the being women representing 51% of the total population and a youthful population of 79198 representing 72% of the total population for the district as per the 2021 Population and Housing census -PHC. Again, persons with disability within the district forms about 4% of the district's population.

In 2015, the Afigya Kwabre South District placed last among all other 43 districts in the Ashanti Region on the Regional district league table. As a matter of concern, Resource Link Foundation in collaboration with Center for democratic development - CDD Ghana and introduced the 'I AM AWARE' project in the district and today, the district has improved on service delivery, social accountability and participation of citizens in planning budgeting as well involvement in decision making to ensuring ownership, involvement, or inclusivity in the local Governance and decentralization systems.

The 'I AM AWARE' project recruited volunteers from all area councils and trained them to monitor and report on the state of affairs within their localities to the district office and demand accountability from policy makers and service providers.

These community volunteers are known as 'Social Action Groups' (SAG). The aim is to promote the inclusion and participation of more women, youth groups, disabled persons and other marginalized groups in the decision making process especially at the local level. This has contributed to institutionalization of gender responsive development plans and budgets. It has also

increased and encouraged persons from marginalized groups to take up roles and participate in decision making and to promote gender equality and inclusive participation at the district level.

The purpose of the Public Hearing is to create space to share inputs in MTDP from all sectors and other stakeholders as well as creating the opportunity to brainstorming and reflecting on matters of mutual interest, discussions district wide implication on development Agenda **for 2022- 2025 cycle**

The occasion was graced by the District Chief Executive, Coordinating Director, Presiding member, departmental heads, Nananom, women groups, youth groups, religious leaders and persons with disability.

The event was opened with a presentation on the background of the Medium Term Development Plan and the purpose of the public hearing by Mr. Dawud Suleiman from Resource Link Foundation.

The DCE, Hon. Christian Adu-Poku gave a warm welcome address and a brief remark on the state of affairs of the district. He acknowledged the presence of his colleagues from the district office, opinion leaders and all other invited guests from the district. The DCE stressed on the importance of such events and encouraged the audience to uphold such gatherings with much importance because he believes it is critical to give citizens the opportunity to know what the assembly intends to do and how it will be done. Having said that, he thanked all district actors for their immense support since his assumption as the Chief Executive for the district. He echoed on the point made earlier by Mr. Dawud Suleiman on the position of the district on the district league table in 2015, the year he was appointed.

Mr. Christian Adu-Poku was with joy and smiles all over his face when he mentioned that the Afigya Kwabre South District placed fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) in the current ranking on the district league table. He commended all citizenry and particularly mentioned Resource Link Foundation for the role they have played through the 'I AM AWARE' project by promoting participation and social accountability in the business of the district.

The DCE added the consolidated plan was arrived by putting together inputs from all five area councils and stakeholders and so encouraged participants to listen attentively to the presentation to able to validate the contents of the plan.

He assured the audience that he is going to do his possible best to make the district the best in the region and beyond. He entreated all participants to support him to push Afigya Kwabre to the promise land.

He ended the speech with an appeal to participants to be good citizens in development interventions. He took the opportunity call on all to support the Green Ghana project tasked to plant 10 million on July 10<sup>th</sup> 2022. and therefore appealed to all participants to support the idea by planting a tree on the scheduled date to contribute to climate change efforts.

Mr. Ebenezer Kojo Quarm, the district planning officer finished the session with a presentation on the Medium Term Development Plan for the period 2022-2025. He dived into all aspects of the plan detailing the intended projects and activities for the period to the understanding of the audience. There was a question and answer section after his presentation where members shared their thoughts and inputs from various sectors like Health, Education, water and

sanitation as well social protections for consideration. The event was successful as participants' expectations were met and concerns were addressed.

Mr. Christopher Dapaah, Country Director of Resource Link Foundation advocated for all involving approach in resource Mobilization and utilization for equity, fairness to ensure holistic development of the district and others in Ghana.

### **The implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ~The Alternative Reports**



***Joyce Yen Feng, PhD***  
***President, North East Asian Region, ICSW***  
***Professor, Social Work Department, National Taiwan University***  
***Director, NTU Children and Family Research Center***

Rapid ageing and super low birth rate made most of the North East Asian countries the Aged or Super-aged societies. Therefore, family supports and child welfare has been one of the most important social policies in this region. Further, there is a paradigm shift from traditional viewpoint of "protecting children since they are not able to protect themselves" to "regarding each child as the independent member of the society" in this century. Take Taiwan as instance,

almost 40 years after the inauguration of Child Welfare Law in 1973, "The Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act" was passed in 2011 as one of the celebrations of its Centennial of the National Founding date. The rights-based child welfare ideology was inspired by the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child.

United Nation General Assembly enacted the Convention on the Rights of the Child on November 20,1989, becoming the most widely accepted one in the international community. For all countries signed the CRC, an official report on the articles of the CRC and an alternative report should be offered every five years for the review process conducted by UN CRC experts. The Alternative Report is an independent report on the current situation of children and youth along with the response to the governmental CRC report, written by civil organizations/NGOs for CRC. These alternative reports are prepared from the first-hand observation of the experienced NGOs working with children and youth and the related fields. Although the CRC national report is compiled officially to conclude the governmental efforts and results by the government, it is usually the alternative reports that provide more insights closer to people for the UN CRC experts to review and provide recommendations for the sake of children.

A simple survey was conducted on April 2022 for members in the North East Asian Region to get a general picture of the Region's implementations of CRC, results are shown as following:

#### **Hong Kong**

The first Hong Kong CRC report was on 2005, the last was on 2013, a new one is under the process of preparation.

The last time alternative reports were offered by 7 NGOs:

1. Hong Kong Coalition for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
2. Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights
3. Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor
4. Hong Kong Unison Limited
5. Society for Community Organization
6. Hong Kong Human Rights Commission
7. Children's Rights Association

In general, the issues concerned by Hong Kong NGOs lately are including:

1. Rights of deprived children
2. Children in poverty
3. Ethnic minority children
4. Social security
5. Education
6. Housing.

### Japan

The first Japan CRC report was out on 1996, the latest was the 5<sup>th</sup> report on 2017.

The 2017 alternative reports were prepared by 7 organizations, such as:

Japan Committee for UNICEF

([https://www.unicef.or.jp/osirase/back2019/1902\\_12.html](https://www.unicef.or.jp/osirase/back2019/1902_12.html))

General Research Institute on the Convention on the Rights of the Child

(<http://npocrc.a.la9.jp/npocrc/activity3>)

Japan Federation of Bar Associations

([https://www.nichibenren.or.jp/activity/international/library/human\\_rights/child\\_report-1st.html](https://www.nichibenren.or.jp/activity/international/library/human_rights/child_report-1st.html))

and four other organizations offered the Alternative Report.

According to the Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Japan in 2019, it was pointed out that urgent measures must be taken in the following areas:

1. Non-discrimination
2. Respect for the views of the child
3. Corporal punishment
4. Children deprived of a family environment
5. Reproductive and mental health
6. Juvenile justice.

Also, it was also emphasized to make efforts with a view to achieving SDGs.

### Korea

The first Korea CRC Report was the earliest on 1994, the latest one is on December 2017.

There were 16 alternative reports from the civil society in the 2017 run of CRC reporting. They are:

1. CIEL, CCSJ, and The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
2. ECPAT International and Tacteen Naeil/ECPAT Korea
3. MinByun Lawyers for Democratic society, DDingDong the LGBTQ Youth Crisis Support Center, and Catholic Human Rights Committee
4. The (UK) National Secular Society
5. Korea NPO Coalition for UNCRC
6. South Korean NGO's Coalition for the Rights of Migrant Children
7. KCOC
8. Human Rights Watch
9. Korea Stand Up Against Sex-Trafficking of Minors
10. The Advocates for Human Rights and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty
11. International Child Rights Center, DDing Dong

The LGBTQ Youth Crisis Support Center, Duroo Association for Public interest law, Alliance for (Candle) Youth Human Rights Act Legislation, Network for the Rights of Children, Adolescents with Migrant Background, Stand Up Against Sex-Trafficking of Minors

12. Global Alliance for Historical Truth
13. Juvenile justice advocates
14. Children Participation Committee, KOCCO
15. Save the Children
16. Child Voice

Issues had been concerned for the CRC implementation by Korean advocates were many, they can be organized into 12 categories:

1. Anti-discrimination legislation
2. Safe abortion for single adolescent mothers
3. Harmonize the age of majority across legislation.
4. Strengthen budget allocations for children
5. Child suicide
6. Extensive use of smartphones
7. Right to be heard to children
8. Discrimination against children based on sexual orientation
9. Eliminate corporal punishment
10. Bullying, Online Violence and Sexual Abuse
11. Promote foster care
12. Access to social protection and health care

### **Mongolia**

The first Mongolia CRC Report was out on 1995, the latest one was on May 2017.

There were 11 alternative reports from the civil society and a Children's report in the 2015-2017 run of CRC reporting. They are:

1. Save the Children

2. National Center Against Violence,
3. Mongolian National Center for the Rights of the Child,
4. Youth Development Center,
5. Center for the Protection of Children from Violence,
6. Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities,
7. School Social Workers Association,
8. Straight line center,
9. Mongolian Students Association,
10. Mongolian Family Psychology Association,
11. Child Advocacy Center
12. Representation of children

The major issues in the CRC Reports at last time could be summarized as:

1. Budget and resource allocation (Article 9),
2. The business sector and children's rights (Article 14),
3. Non-discrimination (Article 16),
4. Family environment (Article 26),
5. Environmental health (Article 35),
6. Economic exploitation, including child labor and child riders

### **Taiwan**

"Implementation Act of the Convention on the Rights of the Child" was passed on November 20, 2014 in Taiwan. The first CRC report was conducted on 2016. Five years later, the second reporting started on 2021.

There were 27 alternative reports on CRC offered by civil organizations, 11 were open data on the official CRC website under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. They are mostly alliance of many civil organizations/NPOs, such as:

1. The League for Persons with Disabilities, R.O.C.
2. Taiwan Fund for Children and Families.



3. Taiwan Residential Child Care Alliance.
  4. National Alliance of Parents Organization.
  5. The Guardian-National Association for Children and Family
  6. Action Alliance of Basic Education
  7. National Alliance of Presidents of Parents Associations
  8. Taiwan NGOs for CRC (12 member organizations)
  9. Covenants Watch (14 member organizations)
  10. CRC Watch, Taiwan (36 member organizations)
  11. Pro Femina Taiwan
- And, other 16 unpublished alternative reports.

Each of the alternative reports conveyed its main concern of the rights of the child, the ones offered by multiple organizations usually carried more comprehensive contents from the CRC. Issues appeared in alternative reports most frequently are including:

1. Lacking of accurate data on the wellbeing of children
2. Children and youth rights of voices been heard
3. Eliminating corporal punishment
4. Family violence by-stander children
5. Cyber bullying
6. Special protection measures for sexually abused children
7. Out-of-home placements and relative placements
8. Children with disabilities
9. Internet addictions
10. Children in the Pandemic/disasters
11. Implementation of the amendment of Juvenile Justice Act (JJA) in the Justice Systems;

In addition, the relative deprivation of children's

rights on education/learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic were mentioned in several alternative reports, which was lacking in the official CRC report.

In summary, it's not surprising that issues of corporal punishment and children's rights of voices been heard appeared repeatedly in the lists due to the oriental cultural tradition of child rearing. Cyber bullying and internet addiction among children and youth seems becoming the trend, especially under the influence of isolation policies of epidemic prevention measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, a panel of "Policies for children and youth of North East Asia in the COVID-19 pandemic" will be proposed by the NEA Regional office for the coming Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development 2022.

### How to achieve smart welfare?



*Yeong-ran Park,  
Professor, Department of Silver Industry, Kangnam  
University*

### Facing the Era of Digital Transformation

Immediately after Korea's presidential election, the social welfare sector paid attention to the presidential campaign promise to 'upgrade existing welfare facilities to digital smart ones'.

The campaign promise contains relatively detailed and comprehensive content regarding the realization of the digital transformation of the social welfare sector: i) evaluation of the digital status of social services and development of digital transformation model, ii) expansion of education to enhance digital competencies of service providers, and iii) expansion of leading smart welfare facilities across the country. While it is nice to expect that the 'smart welfare' agenda, which has been proposed and promoted by the Korea National Council on Social Welfare for the past two years, finally seems to be feasible, the true is that there are also concerns over where and how to proceed with this massive project.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused to a discussion about the need for digital transformation in the social welfare sector, and opportunities for digital transformation of the sector have increased. The Korea National Council on Social Welfare has so far laid a foundation for public debate to emphasize the need to prepare an inclusive social policy for the digitized environment, which has been accelerated by the Covid-19, and shared various information and agenda including: major issues regarding the role of ICT for social integration and social welfare, successful cases of ICT application in the social welfare sector at home and abroad, roadmap for next-generation Korean e-welfare, and the need to build a smart welfare center. The digital transformation of the social welfare sector was not fully considered in the 'Plan for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (I-KOREA 4.0)' announced by the government in 2018. This was to identify tasks required for digital transformation of the social welfare sector, and to emphasize the need to take active measures.

The content of I-KOREA 4.0 was supplemented

with the Digital New Deal policy after the outbreak of pandemic. The Digital New Deal policy contained relevant phrases such as smart home, smart city, smart factory, smart hospital, and smart farm. However, it did not contain the content for digital transformation of smart welfare and social welfare service delivery system. This is because the demand for digital transformation in the social welfare sector was not identified when the policy was developed. The social welfare sector has focused more on informatization of facilities, information inequality, and digital disparity than on digital transformation. Indicators related to informatization are included in facility evaluation, and social workers in the field are using the social security information system. However, there are still few projects approaching from the perspective of the 'social welfare and digital transformation'.

Then, what does the digital transformation of social welfare and smart welfare mean? Digital transformation means more than just providing innovative services or non-face-to-face services utilizing smart devices and platforms, which have been widely used in the field. For corporate management, digital transformation is defined as "the process of improving or creating a new business process, culture, and customer experience with digital technology in order to respond to the changing business environment and market demands" (Source: SAP website in Germany). In other words, it is the concept of defining 'digital transformation as business restructuring'. Based on such concept, the digital transformation of social welfare can be defined as the process of integrating digital technologies and solutions in all areas of business. This is a technological change as well as a cultural change that requires fundamental changes in the way organizations operated and provide services. The advent of the era of digital transformation means

that a technological environment is being created to 'provide client-centered integrated services,' which is pursued by the social welfare service delivery system.

Business operation manuals and social welfare experts are in place in the field to identify/evaluate the needs of service users, provide services tailored to each individual, and build a more effective/efficient service delivery system. Since the spread of computers and the Internet, social welfare institutions have been converting analog information and documents into digital ones and promoting digitalization of work by establishing social security information systems. However, faced with the presidential promise to apply the recently emerged artificial intelligence-based digital transformation model to the social welfare sector, it feels like we are faced with an unknown world, or a high mountain that cannot be climbed in a short time.

### **Writing Scenarios of Change for Digital Transformation**

In order to achieve digital transformation beyond digitizing social welfare work processes, strong policies and scenarios for the great transformation are required. Companies are investing heavily in digital transformation with the clear goal of creating new value and revenue in response to a rapidly changing business environment and customer needs. Since the social welfare sector aims to create social value that is intangible and difficult to measure quantitatively, it is difficult for them to assert or prove the feasibility of a digital transformation project that requires large-scale financial investment. Therefore, the social welfare sector is different from the enterprise resource planning (ERP) market, which requires an investment of billions or tens of billions of dollars. However,

social welfare institutions are already using a kind of ERP for user management, and it is necessary to build an ecosystem that continuously upgrades it.

Social services seek to bring about changes in people and groups. Since they are not an organization making products, there is no standardized work process. In particular, there is a widespread perception in the field that the services provided to humans should be provided by humans, and that using technology to provide services to humans is inhumane. However, this era requires the standardization of social service tasks and institutions. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of individual business and organizational operations, it is necessary to build a cutting-edge digital infrastructure, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of services based on cloud-based service user DB management, task automation, and real-time service user data verification.

In the face of the Covid-19 crisis, cutting-edge devices such as IoT-based sensors, AI speakers, and robots have been distributed, and service models utilizing data collected through these devices have been developed. Services utilizing virtual reality, chatbots, and mobile devices are also provided. Nevertheless, compared to smart hospitals equipped with various devices for patient care and treatment, the social welfare service sector is still at a rudimentary stage.

Now is the time for the social service sector to write scenarios of changes. While the phrase 'we will upgrade welfare facilities to digital smart one' alone is not enough to decide what and where to start, one thing is certain: now is an important opportunity for the sector to promote the digital transformation of social welfare and smart welfare projects in earnest. The concept of smart welfare

and a systematic policy roadmap should be created and put into practice.

### **Creating a sustainable smart welfare ecosystem**

As I mentioned at the beginning, policy of expanding the digital smart welfare facilities presents detailed tasks including evaluating the digital status of social services, developing a digital transformation model, expanding education to enhance digital competencies of service providers, and expanding smart welfare facilities across the country. In order to implement such tasks, followings should be carried out.

First, technologies should be developed and an innovative service delivery system should be established by obtaining a budget for Data, Network, and Artificial Intelligence (DNA) based on the demands from the social service sector. To that end, a proposal request should be prepared to secure the budget. In order to make a proposal request, a new project should be discovered based on data on what is needed in the social welfare sector. In this regard, social welfare institutions should form a digital transformation task force composed of working-level officials of each institution and build a network to support relevant institutions to make proposal requests. Evaluation should be conducted on the Internet environment of the social service delivery system, the status of ICT device usage, and the digital competencies of social service providers/users. Based on the evaluation results, development plans should be established. This is because digital transformation is a sub-concept of organizational/business innovation, and the redesign of the welfare service provision process must be done first. Services should be designed

first, and the digital technology required for those services should be discussed.

Second, it is necessary to nurture professionals with capacities for digital transformation and to improve the digital literacy of service users. Smart welfare cannot be achieved without strengthening the digital capacities of social service providers. However, training on digital competency is rarely provided for social workers. It is necessary to evaluate the digital competency of social service providers and develop education programs designed to reinforce digital competency for each role, establish an education infrastructure for enhancing digital competency, and provide education to strengthen digital competency for social service providers. It is also urgent to develop a specific curriculum, such as smart welfare and ethical issues. In the social welfare sector, the infrastructure for providing digital-based services is not well equipped, and there are many restrictions due to the digital divide among users. While consumer-oriented technology has not been fully developed yet, it is urgent to build an educational infrastructure to improve the digital literacy of social service users.

Third, a sustainable smart welfare ecosystem must be created. The process of smart welfare technology from being developed in a research institute or laboratory to being used in the social welfare service field is very complex and there are various routes. In order for new technologies to be created and procured to the market, the public and private sectors must work together. In order to build a sustainable smart welfare ecosystem, the system needs to be redesigned based on related laws and policies, services and benefits, organizations such as central/local government/delivery systems, and from the perspective of service users and service providers.

**The forgotten need during the COVID-19 pandemic:  
Human sexuality**



***Dau-Chuan CHUNG, PhD,  
Secretary-general, The Council of Social Welfare,  
Taiwan and Associate Professor, Department of  
Social Work, Soochow University***

When the COVID-19 broke out, serious domestic and international restrictions were applied, such as travel restrictions, contact bans, or lockdown of nonessential public institutions. Domestic isolation, and lack of movement and social contact were the standard life style worldwide during the pandemic after serious measures adopted to keep people safe and healthy. The government and society tried their best to find a balance between epidemic prevention and normal life, for example, allowing restaurants provide take out services, or letting people to work or study remotely. The measures adopted generally were for the basic needs of people or society. However, human sexuality, the marginalized or stigmatized basic needs were not recognized and included in these measures.

Sexuality, sexual well-being, sexual health and rights, and sexual satisfaction are critical to people's health. In addition, sex help people relax, escape from stress, survive from unfriendly society, earn money, or build (casual) relationships

with others. Some scholars suggest that sexuality should be considered as basic human needs as well as love and belonging needs.

However, since heterosexual monogamous couple relationships are normalized and idealized in most societies, sex in legally married couples are recognized as appropriate and good. It is assumed that married people can easily have and enjoy sex, so their sexuality needs are meet. Based on this ideology, people are responsible for their sexuality needs or sexual satisfaction. If people are not married, they should be responsible for their choice and sexual dissatisfaction. The government is not responsible for this. Therefore, the human sexuality needs among non-married people are marginalized and stigmatized, and are not recognized and included in policies or government measures.

When serious measures were adopted to reduce the risks caused by the COVID-19, they kept people safe and healthy, but they did prevent people, especially adolescents, singles, and LGBTQ+ -identifying people, from having casual sexual interactions. When casual sexual interactions are meaningful parts of these people, without physical or sexual contacts for weeks and months with others might be terrible for them. Furthermore, when serious measures were recognized as important methods to reduce the risks caused by the COVID-19, the society would likely to encourage or even force people to stop having casual sex. In addition, some people did have less casual sex, more masturbation, telephone and online sex, or sex toy use to keep safe and healthy. Based on these conditions, people whose sexual needs were not met might consider themselves selfish, blame themselves, were not allowed to speak out to get attention from the government and society to recognize their sexuality need, and find a balance between

epidemic prevention and sexual satisfaction. However, what mentioned above exactly reflects sexuality needs are marginalized, and no monogamous lifestyles are stigmatized.

In short, the COVID-19 pandemic makes it clear that sexuality needs are marginalized and stigmatized, and not recognized and included in COVID-19 policies and measures. The fight against Covid-19 would be long-term, not only in the fight for people's physical health, but also regarding people's psychological and sexual health. So we suggest it is necessary and possible to figure out a pragmatic middle ground of risk reduction to find a balance between epidemic prevention and people's sexual satisfaction, and stigma mitigation.

### Future-oriented Transformation of Social Security & Social Welfare in Japan

#### Changes in Japanese Society

In 2040, it is estimated that the ratio of the aged generation ( $\geq 65$ ) and the active generation (15~64) will be 1:1.5 in Japan as the population of the aged will reach the highest, and the population of active generation will steeply decrease.<sup>1</sup> Also at this time, population over 85 ( $\geq 85$ ) will increase to reach 30% of total population of the aged ( $\geq 65$ )<sup>2</sup>, and so-called "employment ice-age" generation with unstable/non-regular employment will become elder, that will cause the increase of poverty of the aged. Consequently, the burden of the

younger active generation will become heavier, and challenges which people have to face will become more serious. Further, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, economic activities shrunk, and the number of non-regular workers increased, and as a result, the total income of active generation was diminished. It means the reduction of capacity of younger active generation to support and maintain the social security system in Japan.

Under such circumstances, both public sector and private sector in Japan work together to tackle various challenges so that social security and social welfare can be transferred to future generation.

#### Reform for Sustainable Social Security System

The traditional social security system in Japan could be characterized by:

- less benefit for the active generation.
- main beneficiaries are the elderlies.
- main burden is imposed on the active generation.

Japanese Government reviewed such traditional social security system, and considers to reform it to so-called "all-generation type social security" system, in which not only the aged generation but also children, parenting generation, active working generation, etc. are supporting each other. This is a reform for everything included under the category of social security such as work style, pension system, medical care, long-term care, etc. as it is predicted that the human life will last about 100 years in the near future.

To reduce the burden of active working generation, it is necessary to increase the number of people who support the social security system together. For this, it is important to promote the

<sup>1</sup> *Population Projections of Japan (2017 estimate)*, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2017

<sup>2</sup> *Annual Health, Labour and Welfare Report 2020*, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2020

employment of those, especially women or elderlies, who miss opportunities to work or who cannot fulfil their competences because of child care or nursing care, etc. Further, it is significant to develop better pension system and tax system not to prevent but to promote employment. Also requested is to expand child care support as well as nursing care service to prevent turnover.

Concerning child care or nursing care working places, the lack of human resource is a significant challenge, and its main cause is lower salary level than other jobs. Therefore, it is necessary to improve working conditions of workers in these fields so that services will be expanded. Based on such circumstances, it is discussed to review the officially-decided payment in fields of nursing, nursing care, welfare for people with disabilities, child care and child education. In February 2022, a special grant was provided for workers in these fields so that they could have 3% additional salary (equivalent to JPY9,000-/month), and now, it is discussed how to ensure the financial resource to maintain this special grant.

**Towards the Prosperous Inclusive Community Society Where We Live Together**

As a private social welfare organization, Japan National Council of Social Welfare (JNCSW) formulated “JNCSW Social Welfare Vision 2020 (Welfare Vision 2020)” in February 2020 to realize “the Prosperous Inclusive Community Society Where We Live Together.” There, community members can collaborate each other, enjoy their own life style, never be isolated even they have any difficulties or problems in their life. This vision parallels to the idea of “all-generation type social security” system of Japanese Government, and shows direction of common cross-cutting efforts of social welfare workers for 10 years (until 2030) looking ahead to 2040.

To reify this Welfare Vision 2020, JNCSW formulated the following 7 Action Guidelines:

**【Action Guidelines】**

- 1) To promote Welfare Vision 2020
- 2) To take various actions to realize an inclusive community society
- 3) To secure/develop/hold human resource supporting social welfare
- 4) To improve the quality and efficiency of social welfare services
- 5) To strengthen the basis of social welfare foundations and social welfare institutions as well as councils of social welfare
- 6) To be well-prepared even in the time of peace to provide prompt support in the time of a disaster
- 7) To manage the organization as a national center of social welfare

Welfare Vision 2020 also parallels to the idea of “a sustainable society with diversity and inclusiveness where no one left behind” of SDGs, and therefore, above-mentioned seven Action Guidelines are deeply related to 17 Goals of SDGs as follows:

Action Guidelines	SDGs
1, 5, 6, 7	Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development
2	Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
3, 4	Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Based on these Action Guidelines, the top priority challenges of JNCSW in 2022 are as follows:

- To strengthen the basis of community welfare to realize an inclusive community society
- To promote disaster welfare support
- To secure/develop/hold social welfare human resource

At the same time various other efforts are made for diverse challenges in social welfare field watching the change of society or social welfare needs in Japan.

### More Activity at ICSW - Save the Date!

#### The People's Global Summit

***Title: Co-building a New Eco-Social World – Leaving No One Behind***

**Date: 29<sup>th</sup> June to 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022**

Organized by IFSW and UNRISD

The People's Global Summit is planning to take place in the late June to early July this year. This event is a response to the need for change in line with overcoming and escaping the global COVID-19 pandemic.

ICSW also plays a role in the summit as a partner organization, and everyone can participate in the event. If you are interested, you can visit the website and register: [Register – Co-Building a New Eco-Social World \(newecosocialworld.com\)](https://newecosocialworld.com)

#### SWESD 2022

***Title: Redefining Social Policy and Social Work Practice in a Post-Pandemic Society – Social Welfare Programs and Social Work Education at Crossroads***

**Date : 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

Organized by IASSW, ICSW and KNCSW

**Abstract Submission Date Extended!!! – 15<sup>th</sup> July**

Please also save the dates for the Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development in October! It will be held from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 in Seoul, Korea. It will be a hybrid format where both online sessions and face-to-face sessions take place.

Presenters can choose which way they wish to present at the conference. We expect most of the presentation sessions to be held online; however, there will also be opportunities to present in the face-to-face sessions.

The **due date for the abstract submission will be extended to 15<sup>th</sup> July**. This update on the extension will be announced next week at the conference website. The final conference website with more detailed information including registration fee, program-at-a-glance, travel information, will be open to the public on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

For more information about SWESD 2022, please visit <http://swesd2022.com/>



The content of the ICSW News may be freely reproduced or cited provided acknowledgment of the source. The views do not necessarily represent policies of ICSW.

News Editor: **Antonio López Peláez,**  
**Executive Director, ICSW**  
**alopez@icsw.org**

ICSW - International Council on  
Social Welfare. Office number 34.  
Department of Social Work, Faculty of Law,  
National Distance Education University  
(UNED).  
C/ Obispo Trejo 2, 28040  
Madrid (Spain).

**Contributions to the newsletter are  
welcome!**