ICSW NEWS
International Council on Social Welfare
June-July 2025

Welcome letter of the ICSW Executive Director

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

Dear ICSW members, friends, and interested readers,

Welcome to the June - July 2025 issue of our newsletter.

The first six months of 2025 have once again highlighted the key role that organizations such as ICSW play in our welfare systems. Geopolitical risks, new and old wars, and competition for scarce resources once again call for collective action, a common, multilateral project to collectively address risks that are systemic for humanity: hunger, violence, catastrophes and climate change... And also challenges generated by technological transformation, the crisis of welfare systems (or directly the absence of welfare systems in many contexts), isolation, loneliness, or isolation....

We are not in an easy world, but it never has been, and ICSW, since its origins in 1928 in Paris, has always worked to put on the public agenda (local, regional and global) the real problems, to make visible what is hidden in plain sight, and to reintroduce the rationality of rigorous analysis, and the will of collective solidarity, as key tools to address our context at every moment of the last hundred years.

In this newsletter we find a good example of commitment to rigorous analysis. In addition to the contribution of our president Dr. Sergei Zelenev, in this issue of the newsletter we publish a brief introduction of the contributions from the North-East Asia region, written by the regional president, Dr. Fen-ling Chen, and three articles on three very relevant topics: The Significance of the Community-Driven Model in Crisis Identification; Challenges in Japanese society revealed after the COVID-19 pandemic and the future development of social welfare policies and support; and ICSW Taiwan Joins the Global Conversation at NGO CSW 69 with a Meaningful Parallel Event.

I would like to publicly thank our colleagues in the North-East Asia region for their dynamism and good work, and for sharing with the global ICSW family their contributions to the current challenges.

I hope that this issue of our Newsletter will be of the utmost interest to all ICSW members, and I take this opportunity to thank you again for your commitment to social welfare.

Take care and stay healthy

Antonio López Peláez
ICSW Executive Director

June-July 2025

ICSW NEWS

President's Corner: On the Road to the Second World Summit for Social Development: A Mid-Point Reflection

Dr. Sergei Zelenev, ICSW President.

Thirty years after the landmark World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, the international community is once again preparing to take stock of global progress and chart a forward-looking agenda. The Second World Summit for Social Development, scheduled to take place in Doha, Qatar, from 4–6 November 2025, represents a pivotal moment in global social policy. However, unlike the extensive and inclusive preparatory process that characterized the lead-up to Copenhagen in the mid-1990s, the current process has been notably shorter and significantly more state-driven. Civil society, which once played a central role in shaping the international social agenda, now finds itself largely on the periphery, as intergovernmental negotiations take precedence and follow the procedural conventions of other recent UN processes.

This shift is not merely procedural; it reflects a drastically changed global landscape. While the 1990s were marked by post–Cold War uncertainties, they also carried a spirit of optimism. There was a sense that multilateralism, bolstered by new development commitments, could deliver balanced progress across economic and social dimensions. Today, the international environment is far more complex and sobering. The world is contending with intensifying geopolitical tensions, deepening social fragmentation, climate and environmental crises, and accelerating technological disruption. Paradoxically, amid these mounting challenges, the demand for effective collective action has never been greater.

As in 1995, a core question remains: how can societies organize themselves to achieve inclusive and equitable social development? How to ensure its sustainability? The aspiration to create policies that enable people to thrive, contribute meaningfully, and be protected in times of need is as relevant as ever. Yet today's policy landscape is marked by additional layers of complexity. In an era shaped by the globalization of values, lifestyles, and technologies, the need to uphold cultural identity, social cohesion, and community resilience has become increasingly urgent. The challenge is not only to improve material conditions but also to prevent new inequities from emerging, while preserving the positive aspects of diverse social traditions.

The recent release, in May 2025, of the zero draft of the Doha Summit political declaration marks the midpoint of the preparatory process. This document—published by the co-facilitators of the modalities and outcome of the intergovernmental process leading up to the Summit—was officially released on the same day by the President of the 79 session of the General Assembly. The presentation of the draft was followed by an informal discussion, during which delegations offered initial feedback, general comments, and proposals.

Though still subject to change as political negotiations unfold, the zero draft offers a valuable glimpse into the prospective contours of the Summit's outcome.

Opening with a reaffirmation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the draft reiterates the urgency of addressing poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion—persistent and central concerns of the global social agenda. It also acknowledges a difficult truth: while some progress has been achieved over the past three decades, the transformative promises of Copenhagen remain largely unfulfilled.

The tone of the draft reflects both a renewed sense of urgency and a clear-eyed recognition of today's realities. It notes several global achievements since 1995—such as economic growth, expanding trade, longer life expectancy, and broader access to health and education—but emphasizes that these gains are uneven and often fragile. The document candidly outlines the scale of the current challenges:

- More than 2.8 billion people live on less than $6.85 per day, with high rates of poverty

relapse.
- Hunger and malnutrition are again on the rise.
- Informal employment remains dominant, accounting for nearly 60% of the global workforce.
- Youth unemployment, child labor, and gender-based income disparities persist at unacceptable levels.
- An estimated 3.8 billion people lack access to any form of social protection.
- The financing gap for social development is growing, especially in heavily indebted developing countries.

This stark picture reflects a broader erosion of trust in global institutions and the fragility of social cohesion in many parts of the world. Yet, the declaration is not without hope. It calls for "genuine solidarity, effective multilateralism, and shared responsibility." The draft underscores the need for policies that are people-centered, transformative, and systemically integrated—anchored in a renewed social contract that brings together inter-ministerial coordination and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

The document reaffirms the three foundational pillars of the 1995 Summit: the eradication of poverty, the promotion of full and productive employment and decent work, and the pursuit of social integration. But it also broadens the framework to address emerging global realities through innovative policy instruments.

I. Eradication of Poverty

The draft adopts a multidimensional understanding of poverty that goes beyond income thresholds. It proposes several commitments, including:

- Expanding investment in universal social protection as a foundation for inclusion and resilience.
- Facilitating the transition from informal to formal employment.
- Scaling up social protection coverage and adopting multidimensional poverty indicators.
- Developing alternatives to GDP to better capture well-being and social equity.
- Mobilizing sustainable and predictable financing mechanisms, particularly for developing countries.

The shift from alleviating poverty to preventing relapse and building long-term resilience signals a more structural and systemic approach.

II. Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All

The draft reasserts the centrality of decent work, with macroeconomic strategies that foster job creation in high-impact sectors such as care services and green industries. Specific proposals include:

- Supporting structural transformation and productivity growth.
- Promoting entrepreneurship, especially among women and youth.
- Investing in lifelong learning and upskilling.
- Strengthening labor institutions and fostering social dialogue.
- Addressing demographic shifts and supporting the inclusion of older workers.
- Advancing the formalization of employment and ensuring fair wages and safe working conditions.

These commitments reflect an evolving understanding of work—not just as a means of income but as a cornerstone of dignity, identity, and societal contribution. The recognition of the care economy's multiplier effects is a noteworthy step toward valuing previously overlooked sectors.

III. Social Integration

The concept of social integration is significantly deepened in the draft. Social cohesion is treated not as a passive outcome of growth but as an explicit policy objective. Key measures include:

- Promoting intergenerational solidarity and inclusive civic engagement.
- Ensuring meaningful participation by all groups, especially those marginalized or at risk.
- Embedding the voices and needs of Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, rural populations, and other underrepresented communities in policymaking.

The emphasis on human dignity, diversity, and participation reflects a growing awareness that exclusion and marginalization are not only social injustices but also threats to democratic governance and sustainable development.

As the international community enters the final phase of preparations for the Doha Summit, it is clear that the global commitment to social development—though enduring—is being tested by

unprecedented challenges. Economic volatility, demographic transitions, environmental degradation, and technological upheaval have produced a "polycrisis" that imperils hard-won gains.

Among the most pressing concerns is the question of financing. In this regard, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)—to be held in Seville, Spain, from 30 June to 3 July 2025—offers a crucial opportunity. This conference is expected to address both longstanding and emerging financial challenges and to align global finance with the Sustainable Development Goals. It must lay the foundation for concrete commitments that will support the Doha Summit outcomes, ensuring that social development is prioritized in both rhetoric and resource allocation.

The messages from preceding global events—such as the Summit of the Future—and the initial draft of the Doha Declaration are unmistakable: while the challenges have grown more complex, so too has our collective capacity to address them. What is now required is not only recommitment but reinvention. Social policies must be bold, evidence-informed, and grounded in genuine solidarity. Most critically, implementation must match ambition.

The road to the Second World Social Summit is not a nostalgic return to Copenhagen. It is an invitation to reimagine social development for a world that is more interconnected, more volatile, and more in need of shared purpose than ever before. The months ahead must not be squandered. They should be used to expand civil society engagement, sharpen commitments, and ensure that the Doha Declaration becomes not merely a checkpoint—but a turning point—on the path to a more just, inclusive, and sustainable global society.

For additional information:

https://social.desa.un.org/world-summit-2025

https://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/109/2025/04/Zero-Draft-clean-as-of-24-April-2025-12pm.pdf

ICSW North East Asia President's Introduction

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This issue of the global newsletter includes three articles from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. These articles present the following common social phenomena and social welfare needs in North-east Asia.

1. Gaps in Formal Systems and the Invisibility of Vulnerable Populations

All three articles highlight how traditional public systems and standardized service models often fail to reach those most in need—such as immigrant women, non-regular workers, victims of domestic violence, and individuals with limited language access.

These groups are frequently overlooked by centralized, data-driven, or rigid welfare structures.

2. The Crucial Role of Community-Based Support

Whether through immigrant support in Taiwan, community-driven crisis identification in South Korea, or local welfare loans in Japan, all three cases stress the growing importance of grassroots involvement.

Local knowledge, trust, and community ties are key to identifying and supporting individuals who fall through institutional cracks.

3. Mental Health and Social Support Are Deeply Interconnected

Each article addresses how mental health challenges are intertwined with social conditions, such as isolation, economic stress, caregiving burdens, and trauma.

They emphasize the need to integrate mental health into broader welfare systems, rather than treating it as a separate issue.

4. The Need for Flexible and Human-Centered Policy Responses

From Japan relaxing loan criteria, to South Korea

advocating for a broader, real-world definition of crisis, to Taiwan and the U.S. promoting trauma-informed, multilingual services, all examples reflect efforts to move beyond one-size-fits-all policies.

There is a shared call for systems that are more adaptable, inclusive, and responsive to real-life complexities.

All three articles call for a shift from rigid, top-down systems to people-centered, community-integrated approaches—so that social support can truly reach and uplift those most at risk.

Article 1: At the 69th NGO CSW Forum in March 2025, ICSW Taiwan and the Garden of Hope Foundation hosted a session titled "Empowering Immigrant Women: Opportunities and Mental Well-being." The event explored the challenges immigrant women face in Taiwan and the U.S., focusing on mental health, legal barriers, and social integration.

Key presentations addressed:

1. Community-based support that fosters trust and social capital in Taiwan,
2. Mental health challenges linked to language barriers, caregiving, and cultural adjustment,
3. Trauma-informed care for Chinese survivors of gender-based violence in the U.S.,
4. Legal and psychological hurdles for trafficking survivors, including isolation and limited job access.

The session emphasized the urgent need for trauma-informed, culturally competent services; multilingual support; and stronger NGO collaboration. By sharing Taiwan's experiences, ICSW Taiwan promoted global strategies for empowering immigrant women and improving their mental well-being.

Article 2: This article highlights the growing importance of community-driven crisis identification as a vital alternative to traditional and automated systems that often miss individuals in urgent need. From pandemics to mental health struggles, recent crises have exposed gaps in centralized systems and data-based detection tools. Despite advancements, automation frequently fails to identify those who don't meet rigid criteria—evident in South Korea's rising suicide rates. In contrast, the community-driven model relies on local residents to recognize and support people in distress, leveraging trust, lived experience, and social cohesion. This approach helps fill systemic blind spots, reduce stigma, and build resilience. Research shows that community participation is among the most effective ways to reach those overlooked by formal welfare systems. To scale this model, the article calls for better training, shared knowledge platforms, and broader definitions of crisis—integrating local insight for more empathetic, responsive systems.

Article 3: This article explores the social and economic vulnerabilities in Japan exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and reviews the government's welfare response—particularly the special loan program managed by the Japan National Council of Social Welfare (JNCSW). The crisis hit non-regular workers, freelancers, the self-employed, and the elderly especially hard, leading to job losses, income instability, and social isolation. Domestic violence also surged during lockdowns. In response, the government introduced public health and economic relief measures, including a revamped welfare loan system originally created in 1955. The JNCSW offered accessible, low-barrier financial aid to vulnerable groups such as single parents, DV survivors, and foreign nationals. However, remote applications limited follow-up support. As loan repayments began in 2023, experts advocated for continued assistance and proposed seven reforms, including better funding, housing integration, and support for self-employed workers. The article calls for a resilient, inclusive safety net beyond the pandemic.

The Significance of the Community-Driven Model in Crisis Identification

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We live in a time where a continuous influx of unforeseen crises and traumatic events has become a regular part of our daily news. Recent developments have unveiled new and diverse types of crises, contributing to a marked increase in social, psychological, criminal justice, and public health

concerns. A considerable number of individuals are impacted by potentially destabilizing events, often finding themselves without the capacity to cope independently. In these circumstances, immediate support from mental health professionals, crisis response teams, or compassionate community members becomes essential.

The global COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 ushered in an unprecedented crisis that affected politics, economies, and societies on a scale not seen since the Great Depression (World Bank, 2020). The resulting economic downturn and labor market volatility triggered a surge in social vulnerabilities, including rising unemployment and poverty. These conditions underscore the urgent need to expand public support strategies to confront growing issues like poverty, social disconnection, and increased suicide rates.

Historically, the foundation of public assistance—originating from the Poor Law—has emphasized 'state responsibility' in addressing poverty. This role became even more critical as traditional community functions diminished under industrialization, leaving emerging labor groups exposed to social risks. Nonetheless, this responsibility has increasingly been undermined in various countries due to automation, privatization, and welfare austerity measures aimed at minimizing financial obligations (Martin et al., 2012).

As a result, the inability of public systems to fully compensate for the weakened communal role has led to more individuals being left outside the welfare safety net, despite evident needs. To confront this issue, South Korea has adopted automated crisis detection systems (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2023), a model seen in countries such as the U.S., U.K., Germany, Australia, and Sweden.

Crisis identification refers to the process of gathering and recognizing information about individuals experiencing crisis but unable to seek help themselves, in order to deliver direct assistance. It is a vital task with real-life impact for vulnerable populations. However, reliance on automated systems—where data from individuals or families is collected and analyzed—introduces potential issues, such as dataveillance, where continuous monitoring may infringe on privacy and autonomy. Moreover, identifying crises based solely on systematized information has limitations. South Korea's experience exemplifies this: although more data has been collected via automation, suicide cases continue to rise, suggesting that the system fails to reach many in need. In response, there is increasing recognition of the value of voluntary, private-sector participation grounded in a communal perspective to ensure long-term welfare sustainability.

Characteristics and Importance of Community-Based Crisis Identification

In the digital era, information technology (IT) has become a central tool in social welfare operations. Countries including South Korea, the U.S., the U.K., Germany, Australia, and Sweden have integrated IT into welfare administration, facilitating faster eligibility verification for welfare applicants (Geoghegan et al., 2004). Yet, this digital transition brings concerns such as dataveillance and the risks of over-relying on numerical data to evaluate welfare eligibility. Despite efforts to widen access to crisis-related information, many still go unsupported, as demonstrated by tragic outcomes including suicide. This highlights the insufficiency of public-sector-digital approaches in recognizing those in crisis.

In contrast to IT-centered systems, community-based participation emphasizes citizen involvement at the community level in crisis identification efforts. Unlike broader civic engagement, this type of participation is rooted in local residency and is closely tied to local governance (Lee & Kim, 2018). Participation in identifying those in crisis reflects a community-centered model focused on creating and maintaining public welfare services.

Community-based crisis identification involves several key activities: (1) residents voluntarily identifying individuals or households facing hardship; (2) referring these individuals to relevant support organizations; and (3) providing follow-up care and assistance.

This model is increasingly used worldwide to prevent severe outcomes such as extreme poverty or suicide and to build community resilience. Resilience refers to a community's sustained ability to adapt and recover from challenges, utilizing both material assets (e.g., infrastructure, services) and intangible resources (e.g., trust networks, communication, and leadership) (Aldrich & Meyer, 2014). A resilient community can withstand and learn from adversity, ultimately promoting collective well-being and maintaining essential functions (Norris & Stevens, 2008).

These community-led strategies have proven effective in addressing the blind spots left by centralized databases. Moreover, community involvement strengthens the system's responsiveness by offering proximity-based monitoring and support. Research by Oh et al. (2016) revealed that both public and private actors in crisis response acknowledged local resident participation as the most effective method of identifying those overlooked by the welfare system. A similar conclusion was drawn by Choi and Heo (2020), who highlighted community participation as essential in locating people experiencing crises.

Future Directions

Community-led crisis identification, rooted in community bond and mutual support, can uncover needs that go undetected by IT systems. This collaborative essence helps reduce stigma and the perceived boundary between service recipients and providers, highlighting the genuine sense of community-based interventions. It also has the potential to address gaps in state-driven crisis identification by anchoring responses in local knowledge and collective empathy. Further, it may reduce risks for individuals who, despite urgent needs, fall outside the criteria for public support (Choi & Kim, 2025).

In South Korea, systems like the National Basic Livelihood Security Program assess eligibility based on income, assets, and family support responsibilities. While necessary, these thresholds exclude many in crisis. Therefore, a broader and more inclusive definition of 'crisis' is required—one that transcends governmental classifications and embraces flexible, community-based interpretations.

Involving local residents in crisis identification also fosters awareness, trust-building, and solidarity within communities (Choi & Kim, 2025). As Glanville, Paxton, and Wang (2016) note, communal values emerge through reciprocal exchanges and trust—both of which are cultivated through community-driven programs. Such engagement can also play a critical role in mitigating the escalation of crises among those hesitant to accept support due to stigma.

Nevertheless, volunteer training remains essential. Given the complexity of real-world crises, it is crucial to share field-based case studies that clarify what crises can look like and how they might be recognized. This highlights the importance of online and offline platforms where volunteers can exchange stories and strategies across regions.

This paper draws on research from the Korea National Council on Social Welfare: “Development of training strategies to enhance crisis identification skills for the Good Neighbors project” (Choi & Kim, 2023).

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Challenges in Japanese society revealed after the COVID-19 pandemic and the future development of social welfare

全国社会福祉協議会 (Japan National Council of Social Welfare : JNCSW)
副会長 古都 賢一 (Mr. Kenichi Furuichi, Vice President of JNCSW)

1. The Challenges Faced by Japanese Society and Responses during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the vulnerabilities within Japanese society. Those facing financial hardship expanded across generations and demographic groups to an unprecedented extent. For example, the government's declaration of a state of emergency led to restrictions on social activities, which initially caused an economic downturn and a decrease in job opportunities and business income. As a result, financial distress spread, particularly among non-regular employees and self-employed individuals. Moreover, the extensive restrictions on movement decreased interpersonal connections, leading to an increase in social isolation and a decline in the physical and cognitive abilities of the elderly. Additionally, teleworking and staying at home also had negative effects on family relationships, and there were reports of domestic violence and abuse cases. The pandemic served as a catalyst that revealed the fragility of people who, despite already facing various life difficulties, had previously managed to lead independent lives. Even now, after the pandemic has subsided, its effects continue to be felt across Japanese society.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a catastrophe for Japanese society, comparable to the spread of the "Spanish flu" about 100 years ago. Initially, there was no clear solution, and like other countries, responses were trial and error. The government's response to COVID-19 began with measures to prevent the virus's spread, followed by the establishment of medical infrastructure, the development of vaccines and treatments, and the promotion of vaccination. Along with the declaration of states of emergency and other restrictions, economic support measures were also implemented. When providing welfare services at facilities or at home, service providers, guided by information from the government, worked to implement infection prevention and management protocols and respond appropriately in the event of an outbreak. Social welfare organizations also provided mutual support. However, the costs of infection control measures, such as disinfection, and the need for staff replacements due to infections led to increased operational costs. For services like day care, there was a sharp decrease in usage due to behavioral restrictions and concerns over infection, leading to some providers suspending or even discontinuing their services. In response to these circumstances, the government continued to adopt various measures. Notably, as part of a safety net policy, cash benefits, subsidies for businesses, relief payments, and relaxed requirements for support measures were provided to individuals, households, workers, and even self-employed individuals.

The following section explains the special loan scheme for living welfare funds that was implemented by the National Council of Social Welfare (JNCSW) at the request of the government.

2. National Emergency Economic Measures and Safety Net Policies

The special welfare loans provided by Social Welfare Councils across the country were among the earliest measures to support the economic hardship faced by diverse groups of people in need during the pandemic. The welfare loan system originated in 1955 as the Household Rehabilitation Fund Loan Program, which was launched as a social welfare initiative based on funds from the national and local governments. This system began at the Prefectural Social Welfare Councils. Although the program has evolved in response to changes in the social environment, it continues to play a significant role in supporting the rebuilding of the lives of low-income individuals and families.

Table 1: Various Profiles of People in Economic Hardship (Estimated by Special Loan Recipients)

Timing of Onset of Financial Hardship	People who fell into hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic People who were already in hardship before the pandemic
Various Forms of Employment	Employees (including non-regular workers, unemployed) Self-employed (e.g., taxi drivers, food service industry), freelancers
Various Household Structures	Single-person households (including victims of domestic violence) Multi-person households (e.g., living with elderly parents, single mothers/fathers)
Wide Age Range	From teens to those in their 60s
Diverse Borrowers	People of various nationalities

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the loan conditions were significantly relaxed and implemented as special welfare loans. Special loans are typically offered during large-scale disasters and are time limited. However, the special loans during the COVID-19 pandemic were an unprecedented relaxation of the conditions. For example, the eligibility criteria were greatly expanded to include "households with reduced income." Additionally, while communication with users is normally crucial for providing life support, due to the need to minimize the risk of infection, applications were also accepted via postal mail. However, this later led to difficulties in providing effective life support. At the government's request, the special loans were initiated quickly, and the Social Welfare Councils responded to repeated extensions and changes in operational procedures. They also provided various independent initiatives and consultation support to individuals in economic hardship who were not eligible for loans. This could only be achieved because Social Welfare Councils have long-standing connections and a history of supporting the community.

The special loans began to be repaid in January 2023, with a repayment period of 10 years. What is most important now is how to support the rebuilding of the lives of those who borrowed the loans. Together with the loan recipients, we must consider their life reconstruction and repayment plans, using various methods, including loan forgiveness, repayment deferrals, and utilizing other systems. Providing continuous support in this way is, in our view, the most important challenge we face today.

3. Future Support for People in Financial Hardship

To analyze the challenges that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Council of Social Welfare convened a committee of academic experts and welfare professionals. This committee analyzed and evaluated the outcomes of the Special Emergency Welfare Loans, the underlying issues revealed, and the practices of welfare workers. Their findings were compiled into the following seven recommendations:

① Based on the actual situation of the COVID-19 special loans and awareness of issues on the ground, the government should promptly consider and implement support measures for people in financial hardship during emergencies and disasters.

② Review the future role of the Public Assistance Loan Program in light of the experience with COVID-19 special loans and develop the support and consultation systems within the social welfare councils necessary for that purpose.

③ Take necessary measures in terms of both funding and personnel to ensure that the public assistance system reaches those who need it.

④ Enhance the foundation of both the Self-Reliance Support System for the Needy and the Public Assistance System and enable them to work together effectively.

⑤ Utilize existing social welfare corporations and social welfare facilities in supporting people in financial hardship.

⑥ Incorporate "housing" within the framework of social security and work towards establishing a "comprehensive support system with housing."

⑦ Expand support for self-employed and freelance workers, who have emerged as a new group facing hardship, and consider introducing

systems such as compensation for business suspension.

Rebuilding the lives of people in financial hardship who are burdened with large loan debts is no easy task. Starting a new life while carrying heavy debt can be seen as starting from a negative position. There are many points to consider regarding how to implement personalized, comprehensive, and continuous support tailored to the diverse circumstances of each individual.

To properly respond to the increasingly complex and serious issues faced by those in financial hardship, it is essential to not only improve policy and system measures but also to rebuild community connections and ensure high-quality social work by welfare professionals. As welfare professionals, we are committed to moving forward by pooling our collective wisdom in pursuit of happiness for all people.

ICSW Taiwan Joins the Global Conversation at NGO CSW 69 with a Meaningful Parallel Event

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Chin-Fen Chang Associate Professor, Department of Social Work,National Taipei University.President, ICSW Taiwan

This March, ICSW Taiwan participated in the 69th session of the NGO CSW Forum in New York, hosting a parallel event that connected with NGOs and civil society organizations from around the world. This article provides an overview of the NGO CSW Forum, highlights Taiwan's active participation in recent years, and shares ICSW Taiwan's achievements at this year's event.

Taiwan's Active Engagement in the NGO CSW Forum

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), established in 1946 under the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), is the UN's principal body dedicated to promoting gender equality and advancing women's rights. Every March, the CSW holds a two-week session at the UN Headquarters in New York, concluding with the adoption of the Agreed Conclusions.

Running parallel to the official CSW session, the NGO CSW Forum provides a vital platform for civil society organizations and activists to engage in the CSW process. Each year, the Forum features hundreds of events aligned with the CSW priority theme, fostering global dialogue, advocacy, and cross-sector networking. Participation in the NGO CSW Forum has become an important platform for Taiwanese organizations to share progress in gender equality and engage in meaningful international exchanges.

Taiwan's involvement in the NGO CSW Forum began in 1999, when Professor Chueh Chang of National Taiwan University was invited to attend the 43rd session of the CSW and the NGO CSW Forum. Since then, Taiwanese representatives have participated in every annual session. This year, 42 Taiwanese organizations participated in the Forum, organizing a total of 32 parallel events. ICSW Taiwan not only hosted a parallel event, but also engaged with domestic and international NGOs through contributions to other sessions.

Pictured: ICSW Taiwan President Dr. Chin-Fen Chang (center), invited as a speaker, and member Prof. Lih-Rong Wang (left), organizer of a session hosted by WFWP Taiwan.

ICSW Taiwan Event: Empowering Immigrant Women: Opportunities and Mental Well-being

The theme of NGO CSW 69 in 2025 is the review and appraisal of the implementation of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. The Forum took place in New York from March 10 to 21, 2025.

In collaboration with the Garden of Hope Foundation, ICSW Taiwan organized a parallel event named "**Empowering Immigrant Women: Opportunities and Mental Well-being"**, gathering scholars, social welfare practitioners, policymakers and other stakeholders.

Below are the abstracts of the four presentations:

A. Building Social Capital of New Residents under the Community-based Services in Taiwan

Presented by **Dr. Wu-Chung Chung**, Assistant Professor at Fu Jen Catholic University, and **Dr. Chin-Fen Chang,** President of ICSW Taiwan, Associate Professor at National Taipei University.

The social inclusion process of immigrants involves not only cultural adaptation but also economic, social, and political challenges. In this process, social capital—defined by the structure of social networks, trust, and reciprocity—plays a crucial role. Research indicates that social capital can facilitate immigrants' connections with local society, providing them opportunities to integrate into the mainstream. Immigrant groups with strong social capital can improve their quality of life, enhance their sense of social participation, and demonstrate greater resilience in facing challenges. Within Taiwan's community-based context, concrete progress has been made in building social capital for new residents through the establishment and strengthening of community centers and service bases.

B. Mental Health of New Immigrant Women: Challenges and Opportunities

Presented by **Ya-Ching Chang**, Ph.D. student at Institute of Health and Welfare Policy, National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University

Taiwan is home to over 600,000 new immigrants, with women making up the vast majority. Many face significant challenges in adapting to life in Taiwan, including language barriers, cultural prejudice, and the demands of caregiving. These factors contribute to mental health struggles, yet access to professional support remains limited due to systemic barriers and cultural stigma. The session explored key findings from literature and real-life experiences, shedding light on the mental health needs of immigrant women.

C. Pathways to Healing: Restoring Mental Health for Chinese immigration women survivors

Presented by **Ruoxi Chen,** Program Manager of Human Trafficking Intervention Program at Garden of Hope

This presentation explores the unique vulnerabilities faced by Chinese immigrant women survivors of gender-based violence in the U.S. Drawing from frontline experience, it examines the psychological impact of immigration trauma, cultural displacement, and systemic barriers that hinder access to support. The discussion will highlight the importance of a holistic, trauma-informed, culturally, and linguistically responsive approach to mental health care. Strategies for effective intervention, including culturally sensitive therapy, community support, and advocacy for social and legal resources, will be shared to foster resilience and long-term healing.

D. When You Are Not Allowed to Work: Legal and Mental Health Challenges Facing Chinese Women Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States

Presented by **Dr. Chiao-Yu Yang,** Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, School of Social Work, Morgan State University. This presentation examines the challenges faced by Chinese immigrant women who are victims of human trafficking in the United States. Drawing from focus groups with women who have lived through these experiences, it explores the difficult circumstances trafficking victims endure in a foreign country with limited support.

These women often face economic hardship due to the prohibition of legal employment, navigate a complex criminal legal system, and contend with language barriers, financial instability, and social isolation.

The fear of deportation and discrimination further compounds their mental health struggles.

This discussion advocates for mental health services that recognize the unique trauma experienced by individuals at the intersection of the criminal justice and immigration systems. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of creating safe spaces where these women can share their experiences and find empowerment.

Summing Up: Insights and Future Directions

In Taiwan, most new immigrants are marriage migrants from China and Southeast Asia, while the Garden of Hope in New York primarily supports Chinese survivors of human trafficking. Although their migration experiences differ, both groups face common challenges, including language barriers, cultural adaptation, and difficulties accessing the labor market. A user-centered approach can be supported by four key strategies: (1) developing culturally competent professionals (2) recruiting multilingual practitioners, (3) promoting collaboration with interpreters, and (4) ensuring trauma-informed practice throughout the system. Dr. Yang's research shows that due to multiple barriers, human-trafficking survivors in New York often distrust formal service systems and tend to avoid interaction with the outside world, resulting in social isolation. Building on the insights of Dr. Chung and Dr. Chang, adopting community-based service models that promote immigrant inclusion is key to helping new residents develop social capital, which in turn can enhance their economic participation and mental well-being.

The event received enthusiastic responses from the audience, with discussions and feedback on topics such as cross-NGO collaboration for policy advocacy, the delivery of mental health services in both urban and rural areas, and mental health support for migrant workers. In a global society that values inclusion, governments must develop supportive models that allow both local residents and migrants—regardless of their citizenship status—to thrive.

At NGO CSW 69, ICSW Taiwan brought Taiwan's experiences in immigrant women's economic and mental well-being to the international stage, promoting policy dialogue and practical collaboration with global partners to explore future possibilities.

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Contributions to the newsletter are welcome!