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International Council on Social Welfare



Welcome Letter

by Antonio López Peláez, ICSW Executive Director

Dear ICSW members, friends, and interested readers,

Welcome to the March 2026 issue of our newsletter.

There are now only three months left until SWSD 2026, *The Joint Conference on Social Work, Education, and Social Development. Harambee, for sustainable shared futures.* Nairobi, June 26–29, 2026. As we are in the midst of organizing SWSD 2026, I would like to thank everyone involved—from the ICSW, the IASSW, the IFSW, and the local partners—who are making this major global event for social work possible. And I encourage all those interested to register and attend the Joint Conference on Social Work, Education, and Social Development. It is our participation that makes these events possible, and through them we reinforce the importance of social work, well-being, and human rights on the public agenda. In these difficult months, with new wars breaking out and old wars still raging, it is more relevant than ever to refocus on applied research, best practices, social work, and social services. Here is the link to the conference website, and I encourage you to participate: <https://swsd2026.or.ke/> For ICSW members, we will also be holding our General Assembly at this event—a biannual gathering that allows us to discuss, agree upon, and plan our activities for the coming years.

In this March issue of our newsletter, in addition to the President’s Corner, we feature three significant articles closely related to the SWSD 2026. First, the article “Addressing Gender Violence and Beyond in Africa: Pathways for Transformation,” by Christopher Dapaah, ICSW-CWA Regional President, a text that allows us to delve into strategies for addressing gender-based violence in Africa. Second, the article “Advancing the Measurement of Subjective Well-Being: A Review of the New OECD Guidelines,” by Sergei Zelenev, addresses a key issue in the field of well-being policies: the development of data, measurement tools, and appropriate methodology to provide relevant data that can offer qualified information for decision-making. And finally, Professor Emilio Díaz de Mera, from Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid, Spain, in his review of the recently published book “Scientific Foundations of Social Work: Contemporary Approaches and Challenges,” specifically addresses the scientific dimension of the social work profession and the most relevant theoretical approaches.

I hope you find this March 2026 newsletter as interesting as I have. As in all newsletters, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the authors of the articles and to all the members of the ICSW for their commitment to the ICSW and to social welfare around the world.

Take care and stay healthy.

Antonio
ICSW Executive Director

President's Corner



Intergenerational Justice and the Role of Women. Reflections on CSW70

by Sergei Zelenev, ICSW President

Having attended several sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women over the years, I found the seventieth session (CSW70) a powerful reminder of both the breadth of the global gender agenda and the urgency of the unfinished work before us. As always, discussions were wide-ranging, intense, and substantively rich. Yet this session also stood out as one of the most contentious in recent memory. In contrast to long-standing practice—where consensus has typically guided the adoption of agreed conclusions—the outcome this year was reached through a recorded vote. Some delegations opposed references to sexual and reproductive health and rights, underscoring the growing fragility of previously established common ground.*

The adopted text of the respective resolution nonetheless called on governments, international partners, and civil society to address the persistently high rates of new HIV infections among young women and adolescent girls, highlighting both their heightened physiological vulnerability and the structural factors that increase their risk. More broadly, ending violence against women, eliminating discrimination, and advancing gender equality across all spheres of life remained central priorities.

Among the many themes addressed at CSW70, one issue stood out to me as particularly deserving of sustained attention: the intergenerational dimension of women's rights, and especially the often-overlooked situation and role of older women.

What emerged clearly from the session is that injustice is not experienced uniformly across the life course. Women and girls encounter different forms of exclusion depending on their age, social position, and circumstances—yet these experiences are deeply interconnected. From adolescent girls facing online harassment and digital surveillance to older women confronting barriers related to pensions, inheritance, land ownership, and legal documentation, the pursuit of justice evolves over time. Recognizing this intergenerational reality was, in my view, one of the most important contributions of CSW70.

The overall atmosphere of the session was marked by both determination and inspiration. Civil society organizations were not merely present; they were acknowledged as indispensable actors in advancing gender equality. This recognition is well deserved. Much of the progress achieved over recent decades would not have been possible without sustained advocacy by women's organizations. Foundational instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action continue to provide essential normative guidance, and CSW70 reaffirmed their enduring relevance.

At the same time, the discussions made clear that gains once considered secure can no longer be taken for granted. Protections for women and girls are increasingly being contested, weakened, and, in some cases, rolled back. This reality lent the session a heightened sense of urgency.

Violence against women and girls remained at the center of deliberations—and rightly so. Ending such violence is not only a moral imperative; it is also a prerequisite for achieving broader development goals. The nature of violence is evolving, particularly in contexts shaped by conflict, displacement, and rapid technological change. Digital platforms, while offering new opportunities, are also being used to facilitate and amplify abuse. At the same time, women's rights organizations are being asked to respond to growing needs with increasingly limited resources.

* For more details see: <https://press.un.org/en/2026/wom2254.doc.htm>

Yet CSW70 also highlighted tangible progress that should not be overlooked. Advances in global norms and standards, evidence-based prevention strategies, the engagement of men and boys, survivor-centered services, and sustained support for autonomous women's movements all point to meaningful change. Initiatives such as the ACT Programme and the Spotlight Initiative have supported hundreds of organizations and contributed to significant legal and policy reforms across many countries. These achievements demonstrate that progress is possible when political will, institutional commitment, and civil society action converge.

For me, however, one of the most valuable aspects of CSW70 was its emphasis on intergenerational dialogue. The Youth Forum held on 8 March, alongside the panel on intergenerational approaches to access to justice across the life course on 13 March, created a rare and meaningful space for exchange among adolescent girls, young feminists, older women advocates, policymakers, and civil society representatives. Too often, policy discussions segment generations rather than fostering solidarity across them. CSW70 offered an important corrective.

The discussions made it clear that the justice gap is particularly pronounced at the extremes of the life course. Adolescent girls and young women often lack legal literacy and access to safe reporting mechanisms. They may face stigma when seeking sexual and reproductive health services or encounter barriers imposed by family and community norms. In conflict and post-conflict settings, these vulnerabilities are further intensified.

At the same time, older women face cumulative and often invisible forms of disadvantage. Pension insecurity, lack of legal documentation, and barriers to inheritance and property rights are common challenges. The lifelong burden of unpaid care work remains largely unrecognized in legal and economic systems. Elder abuse—frequently occurring within family settings—continues to be underreported and insufficiently addressed.

A key lesson from CSW70 is that inequality accumulates over time. It does not begin in old age, but its consequences become most visible there. Many older women carry the legacy of lifelong disparities in employment, wages, social protection, and access to assets. By the time they seek justice, they often face multiple, intersecting barriers—financial, informational, cultural, and institutional. As one participant aptly noted, systems are often simply not designed to respond to the realities older women face.

It is therefore essential to recognize older women not only as a group facing vulnerability, but also as agents of change. Their lived experiences provide critical insights into how discrimination unfolds across the life course. They bring historical perspective, resilience, and practical knowledge that can strengthen both advocacy and policymaking. Far from being passive beneficiaries, older women are indispensable contributors to the pursuit of justice.

I was equally struck by the clarity and determination of many young participants. Their interventions highlighted issues such as digital harassment, exclusion from decision-making, and the need for accessible legal information in local and indigenous languages. They emphasized that justice extends beyond formal legal systems to include the broader structures that sustain inequality. In this sense, the alignment between younger and older generations is both natural and necessary. Each brings distinct but complementary strengths—energy and innovation alongside experience and continuity.

The recommendations emerging from CSW70 were both practical and forward-looking. They included expanding legal literacy, strengthening gender-responsive legal aid, repealing discriminatory laws, and ensuring the meaningful participation of women across all age groups in justice reform processes. The importance of partnerships—among governments, civil society, UN entities, and development partners—was also strongly emphasized.

Reflecting on CSW70, I am convinced that its intergenerational perspective represents one of its most important contributions. Gender justice cannot be achieved by focusing on a single stage of life while neglecting others. Nor can it advance if older women remain invisible in policy discourse. Their rights, dignity, and contributions must be brought closer to the center of our collective efforts.

In this respect, CSW70 sends a clear message: justice for women and girls must extend across the entire life course. Older women should not be treated as an afterthought, but recognized as central actors in the ongoing struggle for equality.



Addressing Gender Violence and Beyond in Africa: Pathways for Transformation

by Christopher Dapaah, ICSW-CWA Regional President

Across Africa, societies are marked by rich cultural diversity, deep resilience, and strong communal traditions. Yet these same societies continue to face persistent challenges—ranging from interpersonal conflicts and political tensions to deeply rooted gender-based violence (GBV). Addressing these issues requires more than legal frameworks; it calls for transformative approaches that engage both communication practices and cultural structures. Two such pathways—Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and the strategic transformation of patriarchy—offer promising tools for sustainable change.

Nonviolent Communication, developed by psychologist Marshall Rosenberg, provides a structured approach to dialogue grounded in empathy, respect, and mutual understanding. It emphasizes observing situations without judgment, expressing feelings and needs honestly, making respectful requests rather than demands, and listening deeply to others. In contexts where mistrust and miscommunication often escalate tensions, the nonviolent communication toolbox offers a practical framework for de-escalation and reconciliation.

Its relevance across African communities is significant. In regions experiencing ethnic, religious, or political divisions, NVC fosters dialogue that builds trust and reduces hostility. Within families and communities, it strengthens relationships, helping to prevent domestic violence and promote cohesion. Leaders who consistently adopt nonviolent approaches can engage citizens more constructively, enhancing participatory governance and reducing alienation. Importantly, integrating NVC into educational systems equips young people with lifelong skills in peaceful conflict resolution, nurturing a generation of empathetic leaders. These values can be instilled early, beginning in schools.

The broader benefits are equally compelling. Communities that embrace nonviolent communication as both a goal and an operational strategy are better positioned to address the root causes of conflict, protect vulnerable populations, and create stable environments that attract investment and foster economic growth. Moreover, by encouraging respect for diversity, NVC contributes to cultural harmony and social inclusion.

However, communication alone cannot dismantle deeply entrenched inequalities, particularly those underpinning gender-based violence. In countries like Ghana, gender-based violence remains widespread despite progressive legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act of 2007. Harmful practices—including early and forced marriage, domestic servitude, trafficking, and ritual exploitation—continue to affect women and girls, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged communities. Cultural norms, reinforced by patriarchal systems, often silence victims and discourage reporting, thereby perpetuating cycles of abuse.

Yet patriarchy itself—often seen solely as an obstacle—can be reimagined as part of the solution. In many African societies, authority figures such as chiefs, elders, and religious leaders wield considerable influence over social norms and behaviors. Their voices carry moral weight, shaping what communities accept or reject. By mobilizing these figures as advocates against gender-based violence, patriarchal structures can be transformed into instruments of protection and change.



This dual approach—combining empathetic communication with cultural transformation—offers a holistic response to the challenges of violence and inequality.



Imagine a chief publicly denouncing wife-beating as abuse rather than tradition, or a religious leader emphasizing compassion and respect for women as core spiritual values. Envision fathers teaching their sons that true strength lies in care and responsibility, not dominance. These actions, grounded in respected authority, can shift community attitudes in ways that legislation alone cannot achieve.

To operationalize this transformation, several steps are essential. Traditional leaders can incorporate anti-GBV measures into local bylaws, reinforcing accountability at the community level. Religious institutions can integrate messages of equality and nonviolence into sermons and teachings. Male role models can demonstrate positive behavior, while families play a crucial role in shaping the values of the next generation. By reframing patriarchy as a system of responsibility rather than privilege, it can become a force for justice and dignity.

This dual approach—combining empathetic communication with cultural transformation—offers a holistic response to the challenges of violence and inequality. Governments, civil society organizations, and regional bodies have a critical role to play in scaling these efforts. Integrating NVC into peacebuilding initiatives, embedding it in educational curricula, and supporting community-based programs can amplify its impact. At the same time, engaging traditional and religious leaders ensures that change is rooted in cultural legitimacy and local ownership.

Ultimately, the fight against gender-based violence is not only a legal or institutional challenge; it is also a cultural one. Sustainable progress depends on shifting mindsets, redefining norms, and empowering communities to become agents of change. By embracing Nonviolent Communication and transforming patriarchal authority into a tool for protection and inclusion, African societies—and indeed communities worldwide—can move closer to a future defined by peace, equality, and shared prosperity.

Advancing the Measurement of Subjective Well-Being: A Review of the New OECD Guidelines.

by Sergei Zelenev, ICSW President

The second edition of the *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being*, released by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, marks an important step in understanding societal progress and social welfare. It reflects new research and growing policy interest and also confirms that economic indicators alone are not enough to measure well-being.

The report focuses on subjective well-being. This refers to how people perceive and experience their lives. The OECD highlights three core components: life evaluation captures overall life satisfaction; affect reflects daily emotions and feelings and eudaimonia relates to meaning, purpose, and a sense of worth. Each dimension adds a different perspective but together, they complement objective data such as income, employment, and health.

Over the past decade, subjective well-being has become more widely used. Nearly 90% of OECD countries now collect life satisfaction data, demonstrating strong international recognition of its value. At the same time, differences remain. These are most visible in how affect and eudaimonia are measured and the new Guidelines aim to improve consistency.

The updated edition builds on the 2013 version. It keeps key principles but simplifies and clarifies recommendations. The core module is now shorter, including three main measures: life satisfaction, sense of purpose, and a new measure on pain. The inclusion of pain reflects a broader focus on negative experiences.

The report also improves conceptual clarity. It draws a clearer line between affect and mental health. This helps avoid confusion in data collection and analysis. The definition of eudaimonia is also refined, better reflecting its multidimensional nature.

A notable innovation is the introduction of experimental modules. These explore new aspects of well-being. They include balance and harmony in life, connections to future generations, and emotional ties to nature. These themes are increasingly relevant in today's policy debates.

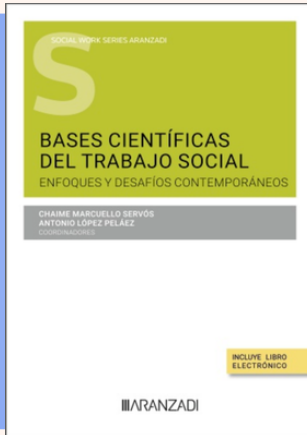
The publication offers strong practical guidance, providing modular survey tools and clear instructions for implementation. It covers survey design, sampling, question wording, and data analysis. The modules are flexible; they can be adapted to different national contexts and statistical capacities.

The policy value of subjective well-being data is clear: apart from complementing traditional indicators, they can also act as an early warning signal. Changes in well-being may appear before shifts in economic or social data. This makes them useful for planning and evaluation.

In sum, the new OECD Guidelines strengthen the role of subjective well-being in public policy. They improve measurement standards and promote international comparability. Most importantly, they help ensure that people's lived experiences are central to how progress is defined and assessed.

For more details: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-guidelines-on-measuring-subjective-well-being-2025-update_9203632a-en.html

Publications in Focus



Book review: Scientific Foundations of Social Work: Contemporary Approaches and Challenges

by Emilio Díaz-de-Mera, associate professor of Social Work, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (URJC) (Madrid, Spain)

Marcuello-Servos, Ch., López Peláez, A. (coord.) (2025). *Bases Científicas del Trabajo Social. Enfoques y Desafíos Contemporáneos (Scientific Foundations of Social Work: Contemporary Approaches and Challenges)*. Madrid: Aranzadi. ISBN: 978-84-1078-921-0

In the months leading up to the major global social work event, The Joint Conference on Social Work, Education, and Social Development: Harambee, for sustainable shared futures (SWSD 2026), to be held in Nairobi from June 26–29, 2026, I believe it is particularly important to revisit a key issue for ensuring the legitimacy of social work as both a scientific discipline and a profession: its scientific dimension. No one is going to hire a social worker based on their intuition or their wits. They will be hired by an institution because they are a rigorous professional, a skilled methodologist, and an expert in social diagnosis and intervention methodologies, whose procedures can be evaluated and supervised. Today more than ever, we need the science of social work to strengthen the welfare state and our own professional practice as social workers.

In this regard, this book makes a highly significant contribution to our discipline from a Latin American perspective (with contributions from both Spanish and Mexican authors), but with a global vision (covering everything from the work of Jane Addams to that of Saul Alinsky), on our discipline, and establishes a very interesting dialogue with similar books published in the Anglo-Saxon world, for example, the book edited by Brekke and Anastas in 2019, titled *Shaping a Science of Social Work: Professional Knowledge and Identity* (OUP, 2019).

The book consists of 14 chapters that address key topics with an eye toward the present and future of social work: Saul Alinsky's innovative contribution to community social work (Chapter 1), communication in social work through reflective practice and critical thinking (Chapter 2), the intersections between theory and practice in social work (Chapter 3), participatory action research in the 21st century (Chapter 4), the future of social work and social services (Chapter 5), social work and the promotion of youth citizenship (Chapter 6), the evolution of social work as a profession and as a scientific discipline over the last 150 years in Spain (Chapter 7), the online interview and its importance in contemporary social work (Chapter 8), the challenges facing social work as a scientific discipline and as a profession in the 21st century (Chapter 9), anti-oppressive social work as a pillar of justice at the intersection of recognition and redistribution (Chapter 10), the roots of social work at the first World Conference on Social Work in 1928 (Chapter 11), models of social intervention in the international protection reception system (Chapter 12), social work and the social economy, addressing moral hazard in social services (Chapter 13), and the ideological and theoretical foundations in the work of Jane Addams (Chapter 14).

I found all the chapters interesting, both from my professional perspective and with my undergraduate social work students in mind. Perhaps a future edition could include a concluding chapter that summarizes the main challenges facing social intervention in a digitalized context. It is true that there are many more topics to address in the field of social work science and methodology, but those covered in this collective work are rigorously analyzed and help reinforce the identity of social work as both a science and a profession.

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More Activity at ICSW- Save the Date!

SWSD 2026 conference in Kenya
26-29 June, 2026

<https://swsd2026.or.ke/>

ICSW ELECTIONS 2026

Electoral process is officially open for the election of a new member of the Management Committee.

- **March 24:** Official opening of the election process.
- **March 24 – April 15:** Submission of Candidacies.
 - Interested candidates must submit a brief biography and a vision statement.
 - All application materials must be sent via email to: administration@icsw.org
- **April 20:** Official announcement of the candidates.
- **May 1 – May 20:** ICSW Election Period.
 - Specific instructions on the voting platform and procedures will be provided following the candidate announcement.
- **June 2026:** Announcement of Results.
 - The final election results will be officially presented during the General Assembly to be held in June.



<https://www.icsw.org>

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome!

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