ICSW NEWS
International Council on Social Welfare

Welcome Letter

by Antonio López Peláez, ICSW Executive Director

Dear ICSW members, friends, and interested readers,

Welcome to the April 2026 issue of our newsletter.

The Joint Conference on Social Work, Education, and Social Development: HARAMBEE, TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE AND SHARED FUTURE (https://swsd2026.or.ke/), is fast approaching. It will be held in Nairobi, Kenya (June 26–29, 2026). For ICSW, this conference represents an important opportunity to come together, discuss, and plan our activities for the coming years. During this time, we will hold our General Assembly and strengthen our bonds with one another, as well as between ICSW, IFSW, and IASSW. I encourage you all to register and participate in a future that will only be sustainable if we build it together.

In this issue of the Newsletter, in addition to the President's Corner, we feature an article by Enrique Delamonica (UNICEF) on "Children and Social Protection: Intra-Country Disparities," and a contribution by Chaime Marcuello, a professor at the University of Zaragoza (Spain), on "Artificial Intelligence, Digital Vulnerability, and Social Work: The Challenges of Yesterday's Future." And Professor Emilio Díaz de Mera (UJCR) also shares with us a review of the book published in 2025, "Social Welfare Programs and Social Work Education at a Crossroads: New Approaches for a Post-Pandemic Society." I sincerely thank them for their commitment to the ICSW, and for allowing us, through these articles, to delve deeper into strategies for addressing the challenges that threaten social welfare.

To all of you who are involved in teaching and research, I wish you a successful end to the semester, and I hope to see you in Nairobi. And, for all of you working in public administration, international organizations, NGOs, or social services, I encourage you to set aside a few days and participate as much as possible in the World Congress in Nairobi, Kenya, June 26–29, 2026. I hope we can meet there and work together to improve the ICSW, and above all, share best practices to address the challenges of social welfare in the age of AI.

Take care and stay healthy.

Antonio

ICSW Executive Director

President´s Corner

Digital Transformation and Digital Vulnerability

by Sergei Zelenev, ICSW President

Many of us remember when a telephone was tied to a wall, when a map was a folded paper object kept in a glove compartment and when buying a train ticket meant standing in line at a station. Today, we can book international travel from a mobile phone. We can consult a digital map while walking in an unfamiliar city. We can transfer money across borders in seconds and communicate instantly with people on different continents. What once seemed extraordinary has become ordinary. That, in essence, is the story of digital transformation; the remarkable speed with which innovation moves from wonder to routine.

This transformation is not merely technical; it has changed the texture of daily life. It has altered how we work, learn, shop, govern, communicate, and even how we imagine the future. The rise of mobile phones, the internet, online banking, digital marketplaces, and now artificial intelligence and robotics has expanded human possibility. Much of this would have been difficult to comprehend only a generation ago. Digital technologies have opened access to knowledge. They have improved productivity and facilitated social connections. They have made services available to people once excluded by geography or some circumstance.

I see this transformation as one of the defining narratives of our age. It carries with it a spirit of ingenuity that deserves admiration. In many ways, digital progress has democratized opportunity. A student in a remote community can access educational materials once available only in major universities. A small entrepreneur can reach global markets through digital platforms. Public services can, at least in principle, become more efficient and responsive. In fields from medicine to climate science, digital tools have enhanced human capacity to analyze, predict, and solve problems.

And yet, as we have observed in many areas of social progress, every advance carries contradictions. The same technologies that empower can also exclude. The same networks that connect can also expose. Alongside digital transformation, often hidden behind the language of innovation, another reality has emerged: digital vulnerability.

I have come to think of digital vulnerability as the shadow side of digital progress. It is not simply about lacking access to technology, though that remains important. It is about exposure to risks that arise from the systems on which modern life increasingly depends. Sometimes this vulnerability appears in simple form. A person may be unable to recognize an online scam or a living alone pensioner deceived by a fraudulent email or a user manipulated by misinformation. But often vulnerability runs deeper: it touches questions of power, inequality, privacy, and security.

Digital vulnerability is closely linked to social conditions. Poverty, exclusion, and marginalization do not disappear in the digital age. They often reappear in new forms. A household may have internet access but struggle to afford reliable connectivity. A person may own a smartphone but lack the skills to use digital tools safely. A community may be formally connected to the digital world yet remain excluded from its benefits. Infrastructure may be poor. Services may be inaccessible. Educational opportunities may be limited.

This is why I have become cautious when I hear digital access presented as the sole measure of progress. Access matters, but access alone does not guarantee empowerment. True digital inclusion requires capabilities, protections, and trust.

Cybersecurity is one area where vulnerability has become impossible to ignore. Hardly a day passes without reports of data breaches, identity theft, ransomware attacks, or financial fraud. For many individuals, these threats feel abstract until they become personal. A stolen password, a compromised bank account, or misuse of personal information can have serious consequences. The digital realm, for all its convenience, has also become a terrain where criminality adapts quickly and often outpaces regulation.

Privacy presents another profound challenge. Many people participate in digital life without fully understanding how much of their personal data is collected, analyzed, and monetized. In this environment, vulnerability is not always dramatic or visible. It may take the form of quiet surveillance. It may involve subtle manipulation or the erosion of autonomy through opaque systems that shape what people see, buy, or believe. This is why debates about digital governance are not merely technical matters. They are questions about freedom, rights, and democratic accountability.

I believe digital literacy remains the most important defense individuals can cultivate. To be digitally literate today means far more than knowing how to operate devices. It means understanding risks, evaluating information critically, protecting personal data, recognizing deception, and engaging online with judgment and caution. In a world saturated with information, discernment has become a civic skill.

The old dictum that knowledge is power has lost none of its relevance. In fact, in the digital age, it may be more true than ever.

But responsibility cannot rest solely on individuals. The role of the state is indispensable. Governments have obligations to protect citizens. They must establish regulatory safeguards, invest in reliable infrastructure, and ensure that digital transformation serves the public interest. At the same time, this role must not slide into unchecked surveillance or concentration of power under the guise of security. This is a delicate balance. Societies need digital governance, but they also need protections against what some have called surveillance capitalism, where personal data becomes a commodity and citizens risk being reduced to data points.

I believe public policy must approach digital vulnerability as a social question, not only a technical one. It touches education policy, consumer protection, labor markets, human rights, and social welfare. It requires cooperation between governments, civil society, educational institutions, and responsible private actors. No single institution can address it alone.

And what can ordinary users do? More than we sometimes assume.

As consumers and citizens, we can cultivate habits of digital caution. We can use stronger security practices. We can question suspicious messages, verify information before sharing it, protect privacy settings, and continue learning. We can resist the temptation to treat convenience as the highest value. Sometimes the easiest digital choice is not the safest one.

We can also support a broader culture of digital responsibility. Families can help older generations navigate digital risks. Schools can treat digital literacy as essential education, not optional instruction. Communities can create spaces where those left behind by rapid technological change are supported rather than stigmatized. Solidarity, a concept we have long valued in social policy, has relevance here too.

I do not think that we need to see digital vulnerability as an argument against innovation. Far from it. I remain deeply impressed by human ingenuity and optimistic about what digital transformation can contribute to human progress. Artificial intelligence, robotics, and emerging technologies may improve healthcare, strengthen education, and help address problems that have long seemed intractable.

But optimism must be accompanied by vigilance.

The deeper lesson, as I see it, is that technology does not eliminate the moral and social questions societies have always faced. It reframes them. Questions of justice, inequality, rights, participation, and protection do not disappear in digital spaces. They become more urgent.

Digital transformation is writing a new chapter in human history, page by page, often faster than institutions can adapt. But whether this chapter becomes a story of shared progress or widening vulnerability depends on choices we make now.

I return, in the end, to a simple conviction: technology should enlarge human dignity, not diminish it. It should empower, not exploit. It should connect, not marginalize.

Technology should enlarge human dignity, not diminish it. It should empower, not exploit. It should connect, not marginalize.

Addressing digital vulnerability requires a holistic approach because vulnerability itself is multidimensional. It involves cybersecurity, privacy, literacy, infrastructure, and inequality. But beyond these dimensions, it requires something even more fundamental. It requires an informed public, ethical governance, and a commitment to ensure that digital progress serves people rather than the other way around.

The digital age has brought extraordinary possibilities. It has also brought new forms of exposure and risk. Both realities are true. To acknowledge one without the other is to misunderstand our moment.

If digital transformation is one of the great opportunities of our time, then reducing digital vulnerability may be one of its greatest responsibilities. I believe we must pursue both together. Only then can innovation become not just a marvel of technology, but an instrument of human advancement.

Children and Social Protection: Intra-Country Disparities

by Enrique Delamonica

Introduction
The Ronda Declaration emphasizes the importance of participation and shared values in the pursuit of universal access to social protection. Among these, equity and inclusion are explicitly affirmed. This note examines the most recent available evidence on intra-country disparities in children's access to social protection.

Social protection programmes are intended to be universal. Yet, despite the recognition of the right to social security in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), coverage remains far from complete. Nearly half of the world's population—and most children—are still excluded (ILO, 2024). This gap reflects a range of barriers, including geographic isolation, gender and racial discrimination, and limited access to services among parents with lower levels of education.

Low coverage and persistent disparities endure despite extensive evidence of the benefits of social protection and the relatively modest resources required to achieve universality (DESA, 2018; Cattaneo et al., 2024; ILO, 2025; DESA-WIDER, 2025). Children benefit significantly when adults in their households are covered by programmes such as unemployment insurance, cash transfers, or pensions. Particularly important are interventions that support parents in balancing work and caregiving responsibilities. Childcare services, in this regard, are central both to children's well-being and to the broader construction of a care-oriented society (ECLAC and ILO, 2025).

In addition, a range of interventions directly target children, including child benefits, school meals, health insurance or free healthcare, and education support—delivered in cash, in kind, or through integrated "cash-plus" approaches (Paruzzolo et al., 2025). Evidence shows that universal child benefits are typically used by parents to meet essential needs—such as childcare, compensating for income loss due to caregiving, or purchasing necessary goods for children—needs that would otherwise remain unmet (UNICEF-ODI, 2020; ILO, UNICEF, Learning for Well-Being Institute, 2024).

Data Coverage
UNICEF supports countries in collecting data on multiple dimensions of social protection, ranging from health insurance to cash assistance and school feeding, primarily through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS). These surveys include a dedicated module on social protection, covering awareness and access to programmes such as pensions, disability benefits, in-kind educational support, and unemployment insurance.

This analysis draws on rounds 6 and 7 of MICS conducted between 2018 and 2024. The seventh round introduces additional questions on intended beneficiaries, decision-making authority over transfers, periodicity, and perceived adequacy. These dimensions, along with intra-household disparities, are not examined here.

Among the 43 countries that implemented the MICS social protection module during this period, the median level of coverage reaches approximately 42 per cent of children. While coverage ranges widely —from 1.6 per cent to 90.4 per cent—half of the countries fall within a band of 30 to 60 per cent. The analysis focuses on disparities along four key axes: sex of the household head, parental education, urban–rural location, and first-level subnational administrative divisions.

Results Across Four Axes of Disparity
Of the 43 countries, 38 provide sufficiently disaggregated data for analysis. The exclusion of five countries does not significantly affect overall distributions.

In 34 of the 38 countries, children in households headed by women are more likely to receive social protection than those in male-headed households. In 19 countries, the difference exceeds five percentage points, and in nine countries it surpasses 15 percentage points, with a maximum gap of 30 points. By contrast, in countries where male-headed households have higher coverage, the difference is minimal—never exceeding 3.5 percentage points.

A similar pattern of progressivity is observed in relation to maternal education. Median coverage among children whose mothers have not completed primary education is 56 per cent, compared to 34 per cent for those whose mothers have completed post-secondary education. The maximum ratio between these groups reaches 5.5, meaning that for every child covered among the most educated group, more than five are covered among the least educated. The median ratio is 1.5, and in fewer than one-quarter of countries does the advantage favour children of more educated mothers.

However, this gradient is not always linear. In some low-income contexts, children of mothers with some primary education exhibit higher coverage than those whose mothers have no education at all. This may reflect barriers related to awareness or administrative access rather than programme design.

Disparities by location also suggest a degree of targeting toward need. The maximum ratio of rural-to-urban coverage is 4.7, with a median of 1.1. Nonetheless, this pattern is less consistent than for education. In 15 countries, coverage is equal or slightly higher in urban areas, although typically by modest margins. In an additional seven countries, near parity is observed.

Geographic disparities across subnational administrative units are often more pronounced. In several countries, the ratio between the best- and worst-covered regions exceeds six to one. The median ratio, close to two, is higher than for other axes. While this may partly reflect the greater number of subnational units, it also indicates uneven territorial diffusion of social protection programmes. Such disparities may arise from targeted efforts to prioritize the poorest regions under resource constraints, or from structural inequalities—including political favoritism or discrimination. In fewer than one-third of countries is the disparity below a 30 per cent difference, underscoring the persistence of inequity alongside limited overall coverage.

Comparing and Integrating Disparities Across Axes

To better understand the interaction among different forms of inequality (Crenshaw, 1989; Therborn, 2013), countries are grouped into quartiles based on their level of disparity along each axis. Their positions across quartiles are then compared.

Only one country falls into the most equal quartile across all four axes. At the other end, a small group of countries consistently ranks among the most unequal quartiles. Between these extremes lies a diverse distribution: some countries display moderate disparities across most axes, while others exhibit uneven patterns depending on the dimension considered.

When this classification is compared with overall coverage levels, a complex picture emerges. Six countries combine high coverage with low disparities. At the opposite end, two countries exhibit both low coverage and high disparities. A significant number of countries fall into “mixed” categories—either achieving relatively equitable distribution at low coverage levels or attaining higher coverage alongside greater inequality.

These combinations resist simple ranking. It is not evident whether broader but more unequal coverage is preferable to more equitable but limited provision (Fattore and Arcagni, 2021). Moreover, some observed disparities reflect progressive targeting toward disadvantaged groups, suggesting that inequality in coverage may, in some cases, signal efforts to expand provision from the bottom up.

Concluding Remarks

Across most countries with available data, social protection coverage appears broadly progressive, often favouring households headed by women and those with lower levels of education or living in rural areas. However, such patterns may also reflect programme designs that reinforce traditional gender roles—an issue that warrants further investigation.

At the same time, significant disparities persist across geographic areas and intersecting dimensions of inequality. The coexistence of low coverage and high inequality in many contexts highlights the dual challenge facing policymakers: expanding social protection systems while ensuring equitable access.

Analyses such as this, supported by improved and more detailed data, can inform the design and implementation of policies aimed at achieving both universality and equity in social protection for children.

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Dr. Enrique Delamonica is Senior Adviser at the Office of Strategy and Evidence – Innocenti, UNICEF. He is also one of the authors of the forthcoming Routledge publication, Participatory Governance, Social Work and Social Policy in Times of AI, sponsored by ICSW. This article is based on the chapter he has contributed to that volume.

Artificial Intelligence, Digital Vulnerability, and Social Work

The Challenges of Yesterday´s Future

by Chaime Marcuello-Servós

Introduction
The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) is outpacing the social frameworks designed to manage its consequences, deepening structural inequalities in access to computational power that fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable. Building on the concept of digital vulnerability — encompassing data privacy, unequal access, digital literacy, online harms, and algorithmic discrimination—— this essay argues that Social Work must move beyond reactive intervention to actively shape the co-design of AI-driven systems, advocate for inclusive digital policies, and reposition digital well-being as a central axis of professional practice across the life course.

Yesterday's Future
Nowadays, the future arrived before we finished imagining it. What social thinkers, policymakers, and practitioners envisioned as the technological horizon of tomorrow has already become the operational reality of today, and is accelerating still (Marcuello-Servós, 2024). The AI that yesterday seemed a distant prospect is now embedded in hiring algorithms, welfare eligibility systems, healthcare diagnostics, and educational platforms. Yet the social imagination, the regulatory frameworks, and above all the professional tools of Social Work have not kept pace.

This gap —between the speed of AI deployment and the speed of social response— is itself a form of inequality. It is not merely a technical lag; it is a structural asymmetry that falls hardest on those with least power to absorb its consequences. Access to AI's computational power is profoundly unequal: while corporations and wealthy nations leverage vast processing capacities to optimize decisions, predict behaviours, and generate value, individuals and communities in vulnerable situations interact with the outputs of those systems without understanding them, without influencing them, and without meaningful recourse (Ottmann and Noble, 2025). In the field of social intervention and the construction of social well-being, this asymmetry translates directly into a deepening of existing inequalities; those who most need the benefits of technological progress are precisely those least equipped to access, navigate, or contest its mechanisms.

Digital effects
Digital vulnerability, as a framework, moves well beyond the classical notion of the digital divide. As defined in the context of digital Social Work, *«Digital vulnerability in the context of digital Social Work can be defined as the increased susceptibility and risk faced by individuals or communities in the digital realm»*, (López-Peláez & Marcuello-Servós, 2025, p.250). This definition captures a multidimensional reality that unfolds across five interconnected domains. First, threats to data privacy and security place personal information, digital identities, and sensitive records at risk of exposure, misuse, or breach, undermining individual autonomy and well-being. Second, unequal access to digital resources and opportunities deepens pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities, preventing entire groups from participating fully in digital society. Third, insufficient digital literacy and competence leave many people ill-equipped to navigate online environments critically and safely, making them more susceptible to misinformation, manipulation, and exploitation. Fourth, exposure to online risks and harms (including cyberbullying, harassment, and hate speech) carries serious consequences for mental health and social development. Fifth, algorithmic bias and discrimination embedded in AI-driven systems can systematically reproduce and intensify the marginalization of already vulnerable populations.

When AI amplifies these dynamics —through opaque decision-making systems, biased training data, or automated gatekeeping in public services— vulnerability is no longer an individual condition. It becomes structurally produced and institutionally reinforced. Social work cannot afford to treat this as a peripheral concern.

In the short term, one of the most pressing challenges is the digitization of public administration and welfare services. As governments deploy AI-driven platforms to allocate benefits, assess eligibility, or manage casework, the risk of reproducing and deepening existing inequalities is substantial. Individuals with low digital literacy, limited internet access, or distrust toward institutions face compounded barriers. Social workers must become active participants in the co-design and evaluation of these systems, advocating for transparency, human oversight, and genuine citizen participation. Projects oriented toward reducing bias in digitized administrations —such as those strengthening participatory mechanisms— point in the right direction and deserve both institutional support and systematic replication.

In the medium term, the profession faces the challenge of integrating digital well-being into the life-course perspective that has long been central to Social Work practice. Digital vulnerability is not a fixed condition confined to specific populations; it is dynamic and context-dependent, affecting different people at different biographical moments, i.e. childhood, youth transitions, working life, old age. Social policies should be redesigned with this temporal dimension in mind, ensuring that interventions address vulnerability as it evolves across the life span rather than targeting isolated episodes. Research agendas, training curricula, and service models all need to incorporate this longitudinal sensitivity.

Final remarks

Equally important is the development of a critical and proactive stance toward artificial intelligence itself. Social work has historically engaged with the unintended consequences of social and technological change. That tradition must be reinvigorated. The profession should contribute to ethical debates about AI design, press for regulatory frameworks that protect the most vulnerable, and build alliances with digital rights organizations, researchers, and policymakers.

Ultimately, the goal is not to resist technological change, but to ensure that it is inclusive, equitable, and reversible where necessary. AI can support human flourishing, but only if Social Work helps shape the conditions under which it is deployed. The window for meaningful influence is open now; the decisions made in the short and medium term will define the digital landscape for generations to come.

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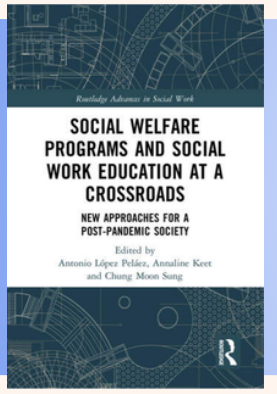
Publications in Focus



Book Review:
Social Welfare Programs and Social Work Education at a Crossroads
New Approaches for a Post-Pandemic Society

by Emilio Díaz-de-Mera

Book review: López Peláez, A., Keet, A., Sung, Ch. M. (eds.) (2025). Social Welfare Programs and Social Work Education at a Crossroads. New Approaches for a Post-Pandemic Society. London: Routledge. ISBN: 978-1.032-62303-0. DOI: 10.4324/9781032655536

As we approach The Joint Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development, SWSD 2026, in Nairobi, Kenya (June 26–29, 2026) (https://swsd2026.or.ke/), it is worthwhile to look back and analyze the contributions of previous World Social Work Congresses. The debate on the challenges we face in the fields of social welfare, social policy, and social protection must directly address the technological revolution, AI, and the impact of COVID-19 on the redefinition of our societies and the well-being of citizens (López Peláez, Marcuello-Servos, Kalenda, & Castillo-de-Mesa, 2026). From teleworking to the prevention of new pandemics (in April–May 2026, for example, the case of Hantavirus infections on the cruise ship MH Hontius)[1], we are facing new challenges in the field of social work and social services.

In this regard, the SWSD 2022, held in Seoul[2], addressed these issues from a very interesting perspective: analyzing the intersection of social welfare systems, social work education programs, and the professional competencies of social workers in a changing context. This is an issue that has been addressed from various perspectives in the field of social work education (Latzer and Shklarski, 2024; Ottmann and Noble, 2026), health (López Peláez, Erro-Garcés, and Pérez-García, 2026), and generally across the entire field of what we might call Digital Social Work (López Peláez and Kirwan, 2023).

The three co-chairs of SWSD 2022—Professors Antonio López Peláez, Annaline Keet, and Chung Moon Sung—have co-edited this book, *Social Welfare Programs and Social Work Education at a Crossroads: New Approaches for a Post-Pandemic Society*, which features the main papers presented at that global conference. This book features 28 authors from 14 countries. The chapters are organized into three sections: Theory and professional practice in post-COVID social work (four chapters), New challenges for social welfare programs, data, and social welfare research (four chapters), and Social Work Education (five chapters).

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1 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/may/10/hantavirus-cruise-ship-tenerife-evacuate-passengers-mv-hondius

2 https://www.iassw-aiets.org/swesd-2022-joint-world-conference-on-social-work-education-social-development/

Chapter One addresses the crossroads at which social work education currently stands. Chapter Two, titled "The Theory of Rupture Frames: A New Map for Social Work Education and Practice to Understand, Explain, and Address Urban Conflicts in Vulnerable Neighborhoods with High Sociocultural Diversity," analyzes the Theory of Rupture Frames (TRF) and its application in social work. The third chapter, titled "'Leave No One Behind.' Leveraging the Power of Hope in Social Work and Social Development: A Theoretical Approach," delves into social work's commitment to leaving no one behind in this AI-driven society. The fourth chapter, titled "Digital Human Rights, Metaverse, and Spaceship Earth: Rethinking Social Policies and Social Work Practice after COVID-19," addresses new challenges for social inclusion in the metaverse.

Chapter 5, titled "Challenges to the Scientific Practice of Social Work: Historical Tensions between Cause and Function," examines the historical tensions between cause and function in the professionalization of social work. Chapter 6, titled "Women's Recovery rather than Identification within Women-Only Alcoholics Anonymous Mutual-Help Groups," explores women's motives for choosing to attend women-only AA meetings and identifies the barriers that women with alcohol addiction face in recovery. Chapter 7, titled "Analysis of Social Exclusion Using Social Services Data Records Based on the SiSo Tool," presents the results of the SiSo statistical tool, which allows for the assessment of different levels of poverty within the population. Chapter 8, titled "Emotions of Social Workers: The Cognitive and Motivational Potential of Reflective Micro-Stories," examines the role of emotions in the professional practice of social workers.

Chapter 9, titled "Moving forward the social protection agenda: international cooperation and beyond," examines the role of international cooperation in social welfare systems. Chapter 10, titled "Transforming the social work supervision core competence framework after the COVID-19 pandemic," examines the changes in professional supervision resulting from digitalization, AI, and COVID-19. Chapter 11, "Remote Community Organizing Strategies During the Time of the Pandemic: Introducing Change Through Model-Building," examines the key role that online intervention plays in strengthening community ties. Chapter 12, titled "Introducing Shared Decision Making as a Core Skill for Social Work," analyzes how to strengthen the participation of all stakeholders in the field of social work by improving social work students' competencies in this area. Chapter 13, titled "PhotoVoice in Social Work Research, Practice, and Education: Challenges and Possibilities," discusses the critical role of participatory action approaches—PhotoVoice methodology in particular—in social work education. Chapter 14, titled "Virtual exchange in a Nordic context: New pedagogical strategies for improving digital interaction between Nordic social work students," analyzes a case study of best practices in the field of digital social work.

Finally, Chapter 15, titled "Beyond COVID-19: Priorities for Social Welfare Programs and Social Work Education," examines some of the key challenges we must address to strengthen personal well-being and social protection systems in post-COVID-19 societies.

From my perspective, I would like to highlight, first and foremost, the description of the crossroads at which we find ourselves, as outlined by the three editors in Chapter I of this book: "This is a crossroads where, on the one hand, we must face an accelerated process of digitalization and a reorganization of social programs, while on the other hand, we are confronted by the fundamental challenge of designing social policies and their evaluation methods—that is, the generation of robust data that will enable better evaluation of social projects and programs. Furthermore, we need to update the educational offerings of schools of social work to prepare 21st-century professionals for a practice environment transformed by pandemics, AI, and geopolitical tensions that strongly impact social inequality" (p. 2).

Second, in the brief concluding chapter, the three editors address the priorities that should guide social work education programs in a context of widespread digitalization and the application of AI: "The first is the importance of citizen participation in the design and evaluation of social policies (and the need for training in competencies and skills related to participation). And second, the importance of developing a digitalization model grounded in human rights" (p. 189).

In line with these priorities, they present a set of strategies for designing social services in our current context: “Some strategies must be considered in the design of post-pandemic social services: 1. The first is to include all stakeholders in the definition of social policies, both in their design and in their development and evaluation. 2. Strengthen the competencies and skills of social welfare professionals in the field of participation. 3. Raise the visibility of groups at risk of social exclusion, including those affected by digitalization processes. 4. Implement an inclusive digitalization system, based on citizens’ digital rights, that enables better service delivery to citizens. 5. Promote, in the training of social workers, digital competencies and competencies in participation, including participatory evaluation.” (p. 190).

This is a highly recommended book, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. I think it’s very important that the conferences organized by the ICSW, the IASSW, and the IFSW bring crucial issues in social work to the forefront, and that they are also published in books like the one I’m reviewing here, published by Routledge

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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

Candidates for the Management Committee:

Amacodou Diouf
Gloria Kirwan
Marcelo Luciano Vieira
Vertti Kiukas

VOTING PERIOD CLOSES ON MAY 20TH

The final election results will be officially presented during the General Assembly in June.

DON´T FORGET TO VOTE

TO ICSW Europe Members!

Open call for nominations for the upcoming two-year-period (2027-2028)

In the European Region this year we have to elect the Regional President, Regional Vice-President, Regional Vice-President, Regional Treasurer and the members of the Regional Board.

The election process of ICSW Europe starts on 30 March 2026.

Important dates:
-The deadline for sending the nominations - until **31 May 2026**;
-In case of insufficient nominations, we have a possibility to manage a specific regional process;
-Voting will be in an electronic way in September - October 2026;
-The results of the electronic voting will be announced and approved at the General Assembly in Vienna on **13 November 2026**.

For the documents required to be completed, please, contact the Secretariat of ICSW Europe: gabriela.siantova@ icsw.org

https://www.icsw.org

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome!

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