



February 2017



The February edition of the Global Cooperation Newsletter is traditionally devoted to ICSW activities at the global level in New York, in connection with regular session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD). This year, through various channels, ICSW took an active role in the work of the most recent 55th session of the CSocD convened from 1 to 10 February: submitting a statement to the Commission, taking part in the Civil Society Forum immediately preceding the session and shaping its outcome documents, participating in several side-events and organizing its own side-event together with several partners. The sessions of the Commission also provide an opportunity to continue networking and plan joint activities with other civil society organizations.

The ICSW statement devoted to the priority theme of the Commission "Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all" contained the politically innovative proposal to the Member States working within the remit of the Commission that the Commission should consider elaborating a draft ECOSOC resolution on social protection systems. A dedicated UN resolution would bear testimony to a high-level political commitment to advance social protection at all levels.

The full text of the ICSW statement is published in this edition, along with the Declaration adopted by the Civil Society Forum. The information on the ICSW-organized side-event is also presented in the Newsletter.

*Sergei Zelenev, Executive Director and Editor of the Newsletter*

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### ICSW speaks out on the strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all.

The priority theme of the 55th session of the Commission for Social Development -- *Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all* is stimulating and inspiring, as it firmly puts anti-poverty efforts undertaken globally and nationally in the context of the SDG framework. Striking a balance between social, environmental and economic goals is essential in order to ensure that the benefits of growth reach all people, especially the poor. When poverty is rampant, forcing people to survive from one day to another, then the lofty goals of "green growth" and sustainable development pale in comparison with the immediate needs of the poor and marginalized. It is widely admitted that efforts aimed at poverty eradication are closely linked with mitigation and adaptation policies. At the same time, existing evidence confirms that the eradication of poverty can bring numerous opportunities and benefits to society, facilitating concrete actions on the road towards sustainable development.

The International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) is one of the oldest non-governmental organizations. Dating back to 1928, it has been active within the general areas of social development, social welfare and social justice. We strongly support the efforts of all stakeholders participating in the work of Commission aimed at finding new policy solutions that have an immediate as well as a longer-term impact on poverty and inequality.

Addressing poverty effectively has been a challenge for most nations. Social exclusion and inequality, emanating from the various dimensions of social, economic and political domains of life, has made poverty a complex multifaceted phenomenon, thereby demanding a nuanced approach when looking for solutions. While in some countries the



state-centered approach to poverty through various poverty eradication programs has brought limited and impermanent results; in other cases, micro-initiatives at local levels do not offer the scale and proportion needed to make a significant improvement in the conditions leading to poverty. It is in this context that a facilitated promotion of people's initiatives to address their daily livelihood vulnerabilities becomes important. The promotion of the entrepreneurial potential of people living in poverty and vulnerability is gaining importance in many countries, but such efforts must be nurtured and supported in society. People-centered policies that prevent and reduce poverty and uphold the dignity of vulnerable individuals, families and groups are empowering and forward-looking. Such policies, when properly conceived and implemented, clearly make economic sense, allowing individuals to enhance their human capital, employability and productive assets, and at the same time facilitating more effective government involvement and better trade-offs in the quest for inclusive growth, productive capacity and sustainable development.

The ICSW has a long history of advocacy and policy action on social protection. We approach social protection as a human right and an investment in people, seeing it as one of the proven ways for ending poverty, insecurity and exclusion. In this light we support the *Global Partnership for Universal*

*Social Protection* initiative unveiled during the UN General Assembly on 21 September 2016. Supported by the ILO and the World Bank and bringing together several development partners, including intergovernmental bodies, international agencies, and non-governmental organizations, this global partnership aims at increasing the number of countries that provide universal social protection, as well as at supporting countries in the design and implementation of universal and sustainable social protection systems. This is an excellent and timely move, enhancing political momentum for social protection world-wide and building up on important recent political achievements in this area.

The ICSW recognizes that the key word in this context is the **universality** of social protection. The need to provide social protection to all members of society, fostering social justice, cohesion and resilience, is widely recognized internationally, but much more needs to be done at the national level to ensure that one of the core political principles of the new 2030 Agenda, namely, that "nobody is left behind", does not remain only on paper. There is still a wide gap between the uplifting recognition that social protection is a development priority, and the sober reality on the ground, when almost three-quarters of the world population are deprived of adequate social protection, when millions of men, women and children do not have secure income and access to essential public services.

In this light the ICSW reiterates its support for ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202). While the initiative for establishing national floors of social protection was put forward in 2009 by the UN Chief Executive Board, ILO Recommendation 202 provided practical guidance for setting such floors and building comprehensive social security systems for all. It is an important tool for promoting a rights-based approach to social protection. At the same time we fully support the growing system-wide cooperation

among UN agencies in this area as well as the active participation and involvement of other stakeholders. Together with our partners in the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, which brings together more than 80 members from civil society organizations worldwide, we are exploring synergies and other ways to enhance international collaboration in the area of social protection in the longer run. Creating a platform for learning experiences, including the development of appropriate tools, as well as establishing collaborative links with national and regional social protection platforms and/or coalitions, members of the Global Coalition focus on promoting the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social protection floors.

The ICSW concurs with the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, who noted: "Implementation of the right to social protection through the adoption by all States of social protection floors is by far the most promising human-rights inspired approach to the global elimination of extreme poverty. In essence, those floors are guarantees of basic income security and access to essential social services for the whole population. No other operational concept has anything like the same potential to ensure that the poorest 15 to 20 per cent of the world's poor enjoy at least minimum levels of economic, social and cultural rights" (United Nations General Assembly. Extreme poverty and human rights. Note by the Secretary-General, A/69/297, 11 August 2014).

Our organization strongly believes that addressing the issues of inequality and poverty reduction in a comprehensive manner requires linking human rights with the social protection of individuals and communities. Social protection is a very important, truly vital element of progressive social policy attuned to the needs of people both today and

projected to the future. Universal social protection is an important enabling-factor conducive to protecting human rights, developing human potential and reducing income inequalities. Highlighting the importance of essential material conditions required for living with dignity, social protection facilitates the upholding of human dignity as a value and a legal principle, firmly linking it with social and economic rights. Moreover, it is an essential material prerequisite for the effective empowerment of people.



Social protection financing remains one of the key challenges on the road to universal coverage. Spending priorities are established at the national level, reflecting different values, different social histories and different political trade-offs among competing needs. Creating a financing mix for both contributory and non-contributory programmes can facilitate implementing “nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors” as specified by the Sustainable Development Goal 1.3. This protection could be delivered through social insurance, tax-funded social benefits, social assistance services, public work-programmes and other schemes guaranteeing basic income security. The ICSW reiterates that access to social protection, including basic income security and essential health care, should be

guaranteed to anyone who needs such protection, taking into account specific national priorities and constraints.

The ICSW believes that strengthening social protection is not only one of the best ways to reduce insecurity and deprivation in the world, but also an effective means for strengthening social approaches that add to economic dynamism and allow for the preservation and sustainable use of the environmental commons.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provided a boost to the social protection discourse, moving it forward on both the national and the international levels. The international community recognized the most important role played by social protection in eradicating poverty and achieving various sustainable development goals. Social protection was referred in the Agenda as a fundamental element contributing to outcomes across the areas of health, gender, decent work and inclusive growth and inequalities. The impetus created by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda signifies a new window of opportunity for all stakeholders for finding innovative solutions to the most pressing development challenges, including universal social protection.

The ICSW affirms that a new high-level political “push” at the international level aimed at upholding social protection as a stand-alone issue would be highly desirable, particularly in the context of the intergovernmental policy dialogue and negotiations conducted at the United Nations in the wake of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such an outcome of the multilateral negotiations would make it possible to capitalize on the growing recognition of the significant role that social



protection systems, including floors, play in societies. In that vein, a proposal is hereby put forward by the ICSW to the UN Member States working within the remit of the 55th session of the Commission for Social Development, namely, **to consider elaborating a draft ECOSOC resolution on social protection systems, including floors, as a necessary political step towards universal and comprehensive social protection for all.** We urge delegates to take into account the existing nexus between social protection and sustainable economic growth, noting that once social protection floors are established and become operational at the national level, the achievement of several core targets of the SDGs, starting with the reduction of poverty comes within reach.

We propose that the following elements, comprising basic social security guarantees and constituting a nationally defined set of essential goods and services, be included in such a resolution: a) essential health care, including maternity care, that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality; b) basic income security for children, assuring access to nutrition, education and care; c) basic income security for persons of active age, with particular attention to the added needs brought on by sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and d) basic income security for older persons.

The adoption of a dedicated ECOSOC resolution on social protection systems would be most important in focusing attention to some key issues pertinent to universal social protection, including floors, and its multiple benefits for society, thus reinforcing a political impact of ILO Recommendation No. 202. Such a dedicated resolution would serve as

testimony to the high-level political commitment to advance social protection at all levels. At the same time, the UN-negotiated resolution would address a different political constituency. Such a resolution would fit well with the Follow-Up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, and would be essential in embedding social protection on the agenda of the Commission for Social Development, thereby facilitating national implementation and consistent system-wide monitoring of the agreed conclusions.

### **Civil Society Declaration: Social Protection Floors as the Preeminent Strategy**

**Submitted to the 55th session of the Commission for Social Development.**

The statement in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that poverty is “the greatest global challenge facing the world today” has rightfully caused the international community to ask questions about its root causes and stubborn persistence. Understanding genuine causes *and* solutions to the various poverty traps demands a dispassionate and objective reflection on the inadequacies of longstanding development policies and practices, and calls for innovative structural and systemic changes. Similarly, situating development at the heart of the UN Agenda calls for a new understanding of the role of the State as an enabler of ‘a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive.’ At one time defined by a shared ethnic identity, and at others defined by borders, language and the authorized use of force, **the State must now be defined as the catalyst for the transformative and participatory change envisioned in the 2030 Agenda.**

The institution of social protection, including floors, is one of the clearest means of fulfilling the vision of eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development for all. The concept of protecting at risk or vulnerable citizens is rooted in the recognition of the equal moral worth of all members of society – in short, it **puts people at the center and leaves no one behind**. Every member of society has the human right to social protection, which must translate into the establishment and maintenance of social protection floors as a fundamental element of national social security systems. Progressively, social protection - in order to fulfill its potential to involve all people in the development of their communities - must gradually extend beyond the implementation of floors towards ever more comprehensive systems.

Moreover, social protection is a vital mechanism for providing citizens with the opportunity to develop their inherent capacities for the advancement of their own communities and nations. **Inclusive dialogue preceding implementation of social protection policies fosters cooperation between institutions and empowers all to contribute to the well-being of all citizens**. Such processes are based on and reinforce values such as equality, solidarity, and inclusion, and capitalize on the cultural diversity of communities as a tool for coherent development.

#### **A strategy to eradicate poverty**

Goal 1, Target 3, of the 2030 Agenda, namely, 'to end poverty in all its forms everywhere', calls for the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection

systems for all, including floors. Social protection and decent work policies have emerged as fundamental tools for ending poverty, reducing inequalities and building socially inclusive societies. Social protection and decent work policies operate as complementary sides of a single coherent development strategy. It is incumbent upon all governments to implement social protection, including floors, nationally and endorse them globally, seeing them not as financial commitments, but as investments that will reap rewards for all. In this light, they rely also on the shared commitment of the people's representatives in government to implement them at appropriate levels, corresponding to the principle of subsidiarity. With the adoption of Agenda 2030, efforts must now shift from declaring commitments to developing concrete strategies for implementation.

**Social protection is a proven, successful strategy for reducing all forms of poverty.** Studies in Africa and Asia, for example, have indicated that cash transfer schemes show much faster results in poverty reduction than those expected from "trickle-down" effects of economic policies. Conversely, studies show that the risk of falling into poverty is very high where social protection floors do not exist. This illustrates the capacity of social protection policies as a tool of poverty prevention. They also hold the promise of being able to draw upon the wide range of talents and skill-sets from all people, especially those who experience marginalization. As people are provided with opportunity, the capacity for development is raised within a society, creating new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

Beyond their instrumental role in eradicating poverty, these policies lay a foundation for the greater involvement of people in the development of their own communities and the advancement of their country at large. In this light social protection policies should gradually move beyond the implementation of safety nets, which merely treat the symptoms of poverty, to addressing the root causes of poverty and vulnerability.

### **... and for achieving sustainable development**

Lying behind many challenges to sustainable development is the root issue of inequality. The international community has, for example, acknowledged that economic growth on the global scale has not been shared equally within or across countries. As a multidimensional issue, inequality affects people in vulnerable situations at much higher rates, which exacerbates and intensifies existing injustices and power imbalances and, in the long run, contributes to social instability.

Social protection paves the way to more sustainable action across various fronts. Social insurance and long-term cash transfers provide people with stability and confidence regarding their decision making processes. A safer economic reality often results in people investing in their family's health and education ensuring that they are better able to leverage the potential of all family members and ensure that succeeding generations have greater capacities to meet their needs. When utilized effectively, the negative feedback loop of poverty and lack of opportunity can be ended.

### **Financing social protection should be understood as a wise investment opportunity rather than as short-term service delivery.**

Low-income countries can afford basic social protection; even small programs produce positive benefits that can accrue over time. For example, the cost of extending health insurance to the entire population in Rwanda has been about 1 per cent of total GDP, the same percentage that Ethiopia is spending on its Productive Safety Net Program, which reaches 8 million food-insecure rural households. Social protection programs can start with relatively modest initial allocations and continually expand their expenditures in an organic process, building on past success with renewed investments. Moreover, **consultations on the fiscal capacity of a country to implement social protection floors should also consider the costs of inaction.** The ILO estimates that the level of poverty and inequality in OECD countries today would be twice the current rate, were it not for social protection services. OECD countries have to continue improving their social protection schemes and avoid austerity measures that affect the funding of social policies. Higher rates of poverty would represent a far larger fiscal burden than the implementation of the policies. Thus, the relevant question might not be whether countries can afford to implement social protection plans, but whether they can afford not to.

### **... for all!**

To ensure that development reaches all people, **people themselves have to be active participants in the process, from planning and implementation to monitoring and review.** Rather than

approaching citizens as mere recipients of assistance, social protection efforts hold the potential of empowering all members of society to become active agents in development efforts. Citizen engagement in analyzing policies, reflecting on the capacities and realities of local communities, and engaging in and monitoring the implementation of policies will allow for greater transparency, policy effectiveness, and trust among all members of society. Similarly, experiences from the grassroots should inform the drafting of new, forward-looking strategies and ensure that no population is excluded from development or becomes stigmatized by it. Efforts to raise participation in this way will also provide a valuable opportunity to change the relationship between citizens and institutions – a critical yet often overlooked necessity. A coherent and integrated approach, together with people-centered policies, can convert social protection into “an instrument of social and economic transformation to redress conditions of injustice and exclusion that perpetuate poverty”.

### **A call to action**

The transformative potential of social protection floors depends on the specific design of its policies, the way in which they take account of structural, institutional and political dynamics, and the extent to which they address the underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability. The NGO Committee on Social Development, with constituencies spanning the globe, declares its commitment to support social protection as a means to ensure that all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality. We therefore call upon Member States:

- to put forth a resolution in the Commission for Social Development focusing on social protection, including floors, as a necessary step towards the universal eradication of poverty,
- to conceptualize and implement social protection floors as a means to build socially just societies that provide all people with the opportunity to live in dignity,
- to combine social protection with decent work policies and foster pro-employment environments,
- to do so in accordance with international human rights and to apply the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination, participation, transparency, and accountability,
- to put people at the center of policymaking,
- to seek maximum participation in dialogues so as to identify specific needs and avoid the exclusion of any group,
- to aim policies at reducing inequalities and power asymmetries across sectors of society,
- to enshrine social protection in national law,
- to develop concrete and feasible financing plans that include social protection in national budgets,
- to acknowledge social protection as a beneficial investment for sustainable development and as an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty,
- to consider the cost of inaction when evaluating fiscal capacity for social protection floors,
- to allocate a percentage of Official Development Assistance for social protection globally,



- to consider the different dynamics of poverty and to adapt policies targeted at poverty *prevention*,
- to foster inclusive dialogue with citizens, civil society, and activists,
- to coordinate with UN agencies regarding the implementation of these objectives and to enhance the knowledge sharing processes on a global level,
- to build present and future strategies on past achievements and lessons learned,
- to gradually extended social protection floors, both in quantitative terms (number of people covered; benefit levels) as well as in qualitative terms (range of services).

### Thinking long-term: Making poverty eradication and environmental policies mutually supportive



The side-event organized by the ICSW, in cooperation with Permanent Missions of Finland and Namibia, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the UNESCO—MOST Programme, and the International Association of the Schools of Social Work, sought to highlight the compatibility of the poverty eradication efforts and environment-friendly policies, as well as existing opportunities and challenges in this regard. It is widely recognized that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions represents not only the greatest global

challenge but also an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

The quest for mutually supportive transformative policies in this context is essential: poverty eradication ensures a basic standard of living for all and facilitates efforts aimed at preventing environmental degradation and protecting the global environmental commons.

The participants of the side-event highlighted various facets of pro-poor social policies in conjunction with incentives to promote sustainability. Fighting poverty and building the resilience of people living in poverty to economic, social and environmental shocks are key tasks on the road to sustainable development.

In his presentation, Mr. **Vilbard Usiku**, Employment Equity Commissioner of the Republic of Namibia, described how the 5<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan of Namibia was conceived, taking into consideration the views of all key stakeholders. This inclusive policy process was aimed at addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, also preventing some of the devastating impact of climate change. It recognizes that poverty threatens employment opportunities, and that fighting poverty is therefore a crucial development priority at the national level. Advancing sustainable development requires the combination of policy efforts on all fronts, including the education sector.

Dr. **Paul Ladd**, Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), spoke about how to catalyze processes of change that result in transformation in all three dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: economic, environmental and social. In the

context of the indispensable “eco-social turn”, which requires coherence in global governance and improved coordination on the part of all stakeholders, responses to the call for a global partnership must go beyond current approaches to public-private partnerships and participation. People and the planet must be put before profits. Less powerful stakeholders should be allowed to have voice and influence, and civil society actors could increase their policy impact using various forms of social innovation.

Professor **Lynn Healy** from the International Association of Schools of Social Work spoke about environmental challenges facing people living in poverty. The impact of the lack of environmental policy protections on the well-being of people living in poverty is visible in exacerbation of poverty itself, first of all loss of income, lack of access to water and sanitation, greater susceptibility to disease, as well as increased vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters. The examples from both developed and developing countries provide vivid illustrations of the multiple costs of environmental degradation. On the other hand, there are numerous grassroots examples of synergy—from efficient cook stoves in Pakistan to establishing a craft industry using discarded plastic trash in Fiji—that can lead to win-win solutions. Moving forward should involve changing the narrative from environment **or** development to environment **and** development as complimentary and achievable. It is necessary to continue working on ways to scale up local projects that work to reduce poverty while preserving environment.

Mr. **Ronald Wiman**, Chief Expert, National Institute for Health and Welfare, Finland, spoke at length about the efforts of his country

aimed at achieving sustainable development. Finland can be proud of its multiple achievements in this field, with high international rankings. The population in general sees sustainability efforts as a crucial policy objective. Small towns are striving to achieve sustainability as vigorously as the big cities are, and can demonstrate remarkable achievements in this area. Finland is an active player in the international field, consistently supporting the quest for policy shifts towards greater consideration of ecological and social objectives.

Professor **Rebecca Davis**, Director, Center for Global Social Work, Rutgers University, USA, concentrated in her presentation on educational policy and on advancing social work’s commitment to environmental and economic justice. Social work, a global profession, is concerned with vulnerable groups. Those living in poverty are highly vulnerable to climate events and have fewer options in crisis situations. Social workers face major challenges in the next decades—how does a helping profession such as social work respond? The profession’s commitment to human rights and justice, reflected in its description of pertinent competencies, emphasizes the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations. This new policy expands our responsibility beyond economic and social injustices to include environmental injustices and violations. Teaching the 2030 Agenda should seek to raise awareness, advocacy and practice, with a sufficient level of knowledge of all three areas. There is a clear need to develop curriculum and teach the SDG’s that link sustainable environment and economic security.

Ms. **Cecilie Golden**, Programme Specialist, UNESCO, emphasized that environmental issues must no longer be seen as peripheral or impacting externally on societies. Quite the contrary, environmental change is interconnected with a multitude of other crises, risks and vulnerabilities that confront every society today. So these issues must be understood together in order to be addressed together. The social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development form a single agenda. The gap between what we know about the interconnectedness and fragility of our planetary system and what we are actually doing about it is alarming, and should be addressed.

Understanding and responding to climate change requires strong input from the social and human sciences. We must be well-informed in order to understand what is happening to our mother Earth, and how we can facilitate adaptation and mitigation efforts more effectively.

Through its intergovernmental social science program on the Management of Social Transformations ([MOST](#)), UNESCO works to make the knowledge it provides available to governments, and to support policies in favor of positive, transformative adaptation. Overcoming barriers between disciplines and methods, we are moving towards more integrated knowledge systems – towards what is sometimes called “sustainability science”.

The side-event and the discussion afterwards was moderated by Dr. **Sergei Zelenev**, Executive Director, ICSW

### ICSW President meets the ICSW-US Committee



*Group photo: Patricia Martin-O'Meally, Cudore Snell, Ken Carpenter, Eva Holmberg-Herrstrom, Bernice Catherine Harper, Joyce Higashi, Bob Arnold*

On 4th February 2017 ICSW President Eva Holmberg-Herrstrom visited Washington DC and had a working dinner with the ICSW-US committee. The President used this opportunity to present the Distinguished Fellow Certificate to Mr. Ken Carpenter of the US committee.



*Ken Carpenter and Eva Holmberg-Herrstrom ICSW  
6 Feb 2017*

## Useful resources and links – the find of the month.

### Leaving no one behind: the imperatives of inclusive development.

Report on the World Social Situation 2016, New York, 2016.

The report, published by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, brings social inclusion into focus. It illustrates who is being left behind and in what ways,

identifying patterns of social exclusion and considering whether development processes have been inclusive. In particular, the



report examines the linkages between exclusion, poverty and employment trends.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csocd/2017/rwss2016-ppt.pdf>

### Caring for Quality in Health,

*Lessons Learnt from 15 Reviews of Health-Care Quality*

**OECD, Paris, 2017**

This book, published by OECD, summarizes the main challenges and good practices involved in supporting improvements in health-care quality, and seeks to help ensure that the substantial



resources devoted to health are being used effectively in supporting people's efforts to live healthier lives.

For additional information:

[http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/social-issues-migration-health/caring-for-quality-in-health\\_9789264267787-en#.WKDsQm8rKUK#page2](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/social-issues-migration-health/caring-for-quality-in-health_9789264267787-en#.WKDsQm8rKUK#page2)

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