



International Council on Social Welfare

Global Programme 2005 to 2008

Mission Statement

The International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) is a global non-governmental organisation which represents a wide range of national and international member organisations that seek to advance social welfare, social justice and social development.

ICSW's basic mission is to promote forms of social and economic development, which aim to reduce poverty, hardship, and vulnerability throughout the world, especially amongst disadvantaged people. It strives for recognition and protection of fundamental rights to food, shelter, education, health care and security. It believes that these rights are an essential foundation for freedom, justice and peace. It seeks also to advance equality of opportunity, freedom of self-expression and access to human services.

In working to achieve its mission, ICSW advocates policies and programs which strike an appropriate balance between social and economic goals and which respect cultural diversity. It seeks implementation of these proposals by governments, international organisations, non-governmental agencies and others. It does so in cooperation with its network of members and with a wide range of other organisations at local, national and international levels.

ICSW's main ways of pursuing its aims include gathering and disseminating information, undertaking research and analysis, convening seminars and conferences, drawing on grass-root experiences, engaging in public advocacy and working with policy-makers and administrators in government and elsewhere.

How ICSW achieves its Mission and implements its Global Programme

ICSW seeks to achieve its Mission through mobilising its members to engage with government at national, regional and global level. Through their association with ICSW, national members gain exposure to social policy and practice beyond their own national boundaries and can be active in international initiatives. Through the ICSW network, members are able to establish coalitions to make their own work and positions stronger.

Many of the members of our umbrella member organisations (Category A), work directly with the people who are the target of our Mission – those who need the fundamental rights to food, shelter, education, health care and security. ICSW provides members with a forum to share values and convictions. International Members (Category B) benefit from having access to forums on social policy, beyond the interest groups they represent. They are invited to participate in ICSW's national, regional and global activities.

Members expect that ICSW will represent them in international forums such as the UN Commission for Social Development. One challenge for senior ICSW officials and staff is to create connections between our global pursuits and members' day-to-day priorities of alleviating poverty and meeting the needs of their communities. ICSW works to bring the relevance of our activities at regional and global level to all members.

How the Global Programme for 2005 to 2008 was developed

ICSW and STAKES, Finland collaborated in the first stage of developing the Global Programme. In April 2004, ICSW and STAKES brought together experts in social policy to review socially responsible globalisation and global social governance reform and the role of civil society within these agendas. Together with ICSW representatives, these experts examined the opportunities for influence at the national, regional and global levels on issues such as: social protection, social development, socio-economic security, human security, poverty alleviation and access to social goods and services. ICSW leaders developed the draft Global Programme using the input from the experts meeting.

ICSW's Committee of Representatives met in Kuala Lumpur in August 2004 and after discussion adopted the Global Programme. The Global Programme is for four years with a mid-term review in 2006.

The Global Programme has seven components which are outlined below.

1 Social Welfare and Social Development

ICSW has a commitment to taking a lead in both social welfare and social development issues.

ICSW in its Mission Statement gives recognition to its commitment to social welfare, social justice and social development. ICSW's origins in 1928 lie in social welfare and social justice. The North members have a strong commitment to retaining the benefits of social welfare that have been achieved over many decades. To this end the Northern members work with their own national governments and within regional groupings including the European Union and the Platform of European Social NGOs.

Particularly since the World Summit on Social Development in the mid 1990s, ICSW has adjusted its focus to include social development as a major activity. ICSW with its limited resources tries to strike a balance between the competing pressures of social welfare and social development.

2 Networking and linking our work

ICSW has a substantial global network of members, related individuals and organisations that are a powerful force for change.

In undertaking our work, ICSW link policies and activities at various levels. One country's activities can be of interest to other countries and experiences can be shared at both regional and global level. ICSW has a considerable network of members, academics and research centres. This network is a powerful force for social change.

ICSW brings the networks together in a variety of forums including regional and global conferences. The themes of the conferences are developed from at least two points of view. First, how can members benefit from networking with other members and second what can members learn from global or regional perspectives to assist them to do their job better?

Social policies are developed at many levels from local through to global. ICSW is structured to advocate for policies based on local and global knowledge and experience.

Members based in the North have different concerns to members based in the South. There is also different emphasis on global and regional activities and different expectations of grassroots members, national committee members and international members.

The ICSW secretariat has a task that extends beyond core member based activities. The secretariat contributes to events and follows emerging major processes. The secretariat responds to emerging needs particularly in ICSW's ten regions. The opportunity to assist in a region may be enhanced by the availability of resources to work in a region, the availability of strong regional leadership or the need to assist a region that has been underserved.

Regional groupings of members provide an opportunity for members to develop their own regional policies and linkages with regional institutions. It is important that ICSW's regions develop their own strength and influence.

3 Communicating with our stakeholders

ICSW communicates its message through multiple mediums.

ICSW communicates its mission and activities through multiple mediums including: conferences, expert meetings, seminars, the website, occasional publications and speeches delivered at regional and international events. Our main activities are reported through our regular newsletter "Global Cooperation" and regional equivalents.

4 Ongoing Global Advocacy and Socially Responsible Global Governance

ICSW will continue its advocacy to strengthen and reform the multilateral system. In addition, ICSW is extending its involvement through engagement with emerging processes focused on the reform of globalisation and global governance.

ICSW will take a stand on the social dimensions of globalisation by emphasising a social rights based approach to globalisation. It will seek to strengthen the role of the United Nations in global governance and in particular the reform of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and implementing UN social rights mechanisms. ICSW has a particular interest in the Commitments made by governments made at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. Finding new sources of finance for the strengthening of the UN will be part of this campaign.

ICSW will seek to engage in promising new processes in pursuing the reform of globalisation and global governance. We will take a role in collaboration within including the follow-up to the Report on the Social Dimension of Globalisation and the Helsinki Process, which is engaging stakeholders in the North and South to seek novel and empowering solutions to the dilemmas of global governance. (The Helsinki Process aims to increase democratic globalisation and equality in international relations by providing a forum for open, pluralistic and comprehensive dialogue on global governance.)

5 Regional Level - Regional Cooperation

At the regional level, and as an extension of the Regional Cooperation Project, ICSW will continue to facilitate the cooperation of civil society with regional intergovernmental bodies to achieve regional social policy and the development and adoption of social charters in Southern regions.

The social rights based approach to globalisation will be applied at the regional level and ICSW will seek to ensure regional intergovernmental groups adopt a regional approach to social policy based on a social rights approach to complement their trade, security and other agendas.

Continued funding will be sought to contribute to the Regional Cooperation in a Globalising World Project with an emphasis on social rights and social policy. ICSW's civil society advocates in the South have considerable knowledge on the causes of government failure to deliver on international social contracts. They recognise that their constraints are related to neo-liberal and neo-conservative agendas of advanced democracies.

Future activities will respond to the strategic input on areas of key concern from members and other partners consulted in regional civil society forums. After developing advocacy agendas, it is crucial for advocates from emerging networks to increase engagement with regional intergovernmental bodies. While the existence of formalised networks have political relevance, these groups will only be considered legitimate representatives of the voices of the poor if they engage directly on behalf of their communities at the level of decision-making. ICSW has enhanced and created platforms for recognition by the intergovernmental bodies. It is now time for advocates to act.

NEW APPROACHES

6 North-South Partnerships - Northern Activism

ICSW's northern members will engage with national ministries of development and trade to ensure more effective overseas development assistance and a socially responsible approach to globalisation by Northern governments.

The ICSW will translate its concerns on the impact of globalisation into concrete action at national and regional level within the European Union. ICSW national members in Europe will be encouraged to influence national and EU economic and trade development policy in a socially responsible direction.

There will be two further components of the North-South partnerships. The first will be for North ICSW members to monitor and influence positively the quantity and quality of overseas development assistance of Northern donors. The second will be the fostering of partnerships between some Northern members and some Southern members. This will be achieved in part through practical interchanges between North-South ICSW members at ICSW global conferences.

ICSW's aim is to achieve increased overseas development assistance and an increased percentage of overseas development assistance spent on social provision. The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals will be one of the measures of monitoring progress in this collaboration.

7 South-South Policy Dialogue - Southern Social Policy Dialogues

ICSW will enhance the sharing of information, knowledge and experience between South actors. Actors will learn from each other successful practices in participating in regional governance, new modes of decentralised provision of social services and new approaches to social and economic security.

ICSW contributed to the United Nations Commission for Social Development 2004 discussions on Improving Public Sector effectiveness. ICSW will draw on its own work and the agreed conclusions of the UN Commission to support the development of universal social provision and education and health and universal socio-economic security in developing countries. In this context, ICSW will continue to campaign for universal access to service provision in the context of development. In undertaking this role, ICSW will continue to pay particular attention to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, older persons and women where they are subject to social and economic discrimination.

The ICSW will engage its Southern members in a process of South-South exchange of good practice in these areas. This process started at the 2004 Global Conference in Kuala Lumpur. Where practical, South members will seek to influence their national governments to adopt a socially responsible approach to globalisation through the emerging groupings of G4 & G21. Partnership with ILO will be considered to achieve these ends.

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