

IASSW President's Report: 1 January to 30 June 2025

IASSW BOARD MEETING

27 – 28 June 2025

Salzburg, Austria

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of IASSW engagements and activities during the period 1 January to 30 June 2025. It includes feedback on key initiatives, collaborations and outreach efforts. During this time, strategic planning discussions were consolidated in preparation for final discussion and adoption at the June 2025 Board meeting. This report also provides an overview of invitations received to participate in conferences and workshops—both in person and via pre-recorded messages. It also outlines meetings and joint planning activities held with the Presidents of IFSW and ICSW on the co-owned International Social Work Journal, the upcoming joint World Conference in Kenya in 2026, and preparations for the 2028 World Conference. Additionally, it reports on requests for in-principle support for joint partnership projects.

2. Delhi Board Meeting, Strategic Planning Meeting, and Capacity Building Workshop

The IASSW held its Board Meeting and Strategic Planning session respectively on 14 and 15 January, 2025 at the India International Centre in New Delhi, India. Following the Board Meeting, a Capacity Building Workshop titled *“In Pursuit of Sustainable Futures: Perspectives from Social Work”* was held on 16 January, 2025. This international workshop was jointly organised by Prof Pamela Singla and team from the Department of Social Work, University of Delhi, and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW).

3. Executive meetings

The IASSW Executive Committee (Exco) had four online meetings during this period (5 February, 27 March, 27 April, and 4 June 2025).

4. Tripartite meetings and planning

The Presidents (IASSW, ICSW, and IFSW) had online and in person meetings during this period. in April in Ronda, Spain 2025.

4.1 International Social Work Journal

The annual (online) meeting with the presidents, along with their representatives with Sage and the journal's editors, took place on 10 March 2025. Joining the presidents was Prof Janestic Twikirize (IASSW), Dr Pascal Rudin (IFSW), and Antonio Lopez (ICSW).

In summary, the following was discussed:

- The impact factor dropped from 2.2 to 1.2, but the journal remains in the Q1 category. The decline was reported by SAGE being related to few post-pandemic citations, as COVID-related previously boosted the numbers. One third of peer review invitations declined. Challenges to secure reviewers persist, with up to six invitations often yielding no acceptances. Editors may step in to prevent delays. Brief notes and essays are fast-tracked for engagement. The reviewer database showed that many previous reviewers were unavailable to review. When authors use artificial intelligence (AI), including editing, grammar improvements, or literature searches, it must be acknowledged in submitted manuscripts, however, not many authors do so.
- The publisher suggested mentorship programmes to involve early-career researchers in the review process. Sage offers webinars on reviewer training, research integrity, and submission processes. Measures have been implemented to expedite the reviewing process, including quicker decisions on weaker submissions. Some journals have implemented review boards or reward systems for active reviewers, with mixed success.
- The rejection rate of manuscripts is 28%; based on quality, not quotas. The journal prioritises rigorous academic standards. Some papers are too localised for global social work practice and should be directed to regional journals. The journal's international reach is expanding across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and South America. Open access (OA) content is growing due to more Sage agreements.
- The 2024 and early 2025 publisher's data on manuscript submission trends, shows a slight drop in 2024 submissions, but acceptance rates and output increased. By January, 31 submissions were received of which 13 were accepted for publication. The speed from first received to final decisions on manuscripts, increased slightly in 2024, but dipped early in 2025.
- Top country submitters (2024) are: China, India, Turkey, USA, Israel.
- Countries with high acceptance rates are the US, Australia, China, Spain, Germany. The US and UK readership is declining while Australia and Germany are stable or growing.
- In June, the current publisher, Lizzie Brophy, notified the presidents that she is moving into a new role in a different team at Sage. The new publishing editor for the journal is Charlotte Stanton.
- The Tripartite owners' income from the journal declined from \$10 461 in 2024 to \$6, 149 in 2025. The three organisations discussed the *International Social Work Journal*, SWSD 2026, SWSD 2028, and ways to enhance mutual cooperation among the three organisations.
- The journal's centenary in 2028 was discussed. A virtual issue could be a possibility featuring key articles from the past 100 years with reflections from societies involved.

4.2 Social Work and Social Development (SWSD) World Conference 2026

Date: 26th – 29th June 2026

The Presidents met with David Androff while being in Ronda, Spain in April 2025 (see below). He agreed to take on the international coordinator role for the tripartite group. He immediately connected with the Local Organising Committee to plan and organise the conference for 26 – 29 June 2026 in Nairobi, Kenya. While in the meeting, we connected with Charles Mbugua, the Chair of the Local Organising Committee to discuss progress. Prof Janestic Twikirizi and Rashmi Pandey represent IASSW on the International Steering Committee.

The presidents are eager to collaborate with IASSW in relevant joint projects. The IFSW President. The IFSW is marketing the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training and programme on their website since 22 March 2025 which has contributed to increased registrations.

A tentative date for the next annual meeting is March 9, 2026, subject to future scheduling.

4.4 Joint Social Work and Social Development Conference in 2028

Prof Abye Tassé is the Tripartite Group's coordinator for the 2028 world conference. He met with the President of the Association of Schools of Social Work in France, Marcel Jaeger, and subsequently prepared a letter of request to co-host the 2028 world conference in France. He will discuss it within the Association. The Tripartite contract with co-hosts is in process of being translated in French.

5. Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training E-Series Programme

See the independent report submitted to the Board. The President's message has been prepared and will be recorded for upload to the E-Programme series.

6. Formal invitations and collaborations

I represented IASSW in various platforms and collaborations. These include formal presentations, discussions and capacity building sessions.

6.1 Bangkok, Thailand

I participated in the second International Conference of The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Social Work and Social Development, themed "Social Work Horizons: Charting the Path with Research and Practice" held on 9 and 10 January 2025. More than 210 participants attended from across the ASEAN region. I delivered a plenary paper on the topic: *Integrating global-local perspectives in social work: Building resilient and sustainable communities through eco-social justice*.

On 11 January, also Children's Day in Bangkok, Prof Eric Chui from the Department of Social Sciences, Polytechnic University, and I facilitated sessions at a capacity

building workshop on child protection organised by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Bangkok. My topic, was: “Strengthening Zimbabwean migrant families and protecting their children in South Arica: Lessons learnt from second generation perspectives”. I co-authored this paper with Dr Sheron Mpofo (PhD graduate and postdoctoral fellow) and Dr. Dorothee Hölscher (Queensland University, Australia). Prof Chui’s session was on *Alternative Care for Children*.

6.2 Peking University, Beijing, China

The Chinese Association of Social Work Education (CASWE), represented by Prof. MA Fengzhi, and the Keswick Foundation, represented by the Chair and two past president, Prof. Angie Yuen, hosted the following events:

21 March 2025: Capacity Building Workshop and launch of the Doctor of Social Work (DSW) Education programme in Mainland China. Along with other speakers, Host: I presented a paper on the topic: “A global perspective on doctoral training in social work”.

Participating universities in the workshop formed regional working groups based on regions and had to submit reflections on their vision and planning for a DSW programme. My (IASSW’s) collaboration continues in giving feedback to group five’s (7 universities) reflections on their planning and participation. An online feedback session to these universities are planned for 15 and 16 July, before the second in-person capacity building workshop will take place later in July 2025.

22 March 2025: The 13th Lam Woo Distinguished Social Work Awards Ceremony and Symposium on the topic: *Urban-Rural Integration in the Path of Chinese Modernization and the Development of Social Work in the New Era*. I delivered a brief message prepared by the Polytechnic University to congratulate the award winners on behalf of IASSW.

6.3 Ronda, Spain

The ICSW invited the Tripartite Presidents to participate in a round table discussion at the ICSW International Conference on the topic: *Participation, Social Welfare, and Local Administration in Times of AI* held in Ronda, Spain, from April 24–25, 2025. It was a hybrid event and part of the ICSW’s preparations for the upcoming Social Development Summit in November 2025.

The Presidents brief was to speak from their organisation’s perspectives on the topic: “Participation and Well-Being: Perspectives from the IASSW/IFSW/ICSW”, followed by a joined panel discussion in interaction with the audience.

The Presidents of IASSW, IFSW, and ICSW co-signed and adopted the Ronda Declaration for submission to the Social Development Summit in November 2025.

6.4 Kampala, Uganda

The International Social Work Conference on the theme: “Building resilient communities to promote equity and social inclusion for the attainment of Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs)” was hosted at Makerere University, Uganda, from 16 to 18 June, 2025. The conference was co-hosted by the East Africa Social Work Regional Resource Centre and the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA), under the auspices of the RESILIENT project (<https://resilient.uia.no/>). I delivered the keynote address on the topic: “From crisis to cohesion: Building resilient communities for an inclusive and sustainable future” and participated in a vibrant three days of expert plenary presentations, parallel session, networking and cultural experiences. Dr Eric Awich, who is the Chair of the organising committee The Resilient project is conducted in collaboration between the Department of Social work at the University of Rwanda (UR), the Department of Social Work and Social Administration at Makerere University in Uganda, the Institute of Social Work in Dar esSalaam, and the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Abdar (IOA), The local organising Committee was chaired by Dr Eric Awich, and co-chair by Prof Janestic Twikirizi, both from Makerere University.

6.5 HAN University, Arnhem

HAN University launched the programme: International Social Work programme and first Learning Lab on the theme: International solidarity for sustainable equity, 22-27 June 2025. I presented a guest lecturer on the topic: “Climate action for inclusive, just and sustainable communities: An international social work imperative” on 25 June 2025.

7. Recorded messages for activities / events

I send an IASSW welcoming message to the participants of the 9th International Academic Forum of the Asian Research Institute for International Social Work (ARIISW) on 15 February 2025. The goal was to move to the next phase in exploring the intersection of Buddhist social work and mainstream social work in both global and local contexts. I attended the keynote address online by Prof Abye Tassé on the topic, “Deglobalising International Social Work”.

World Social Work Day (WSWD) messages via video clips were recorded as follows:

- Recorded message on WSWD, 18 March 2025: The message on the topic: “Strengthening Intergenerational Solidarity for Enduring Wellbeing”, is available on IASSW YouTube Channel: <https://shorturl.at/1SAE9>
- Recorded message for the 2025 United Nation’s WSWD celebration at the UN in Bangkok: The recorded message topic was: “Global Perspective and Chinese Path: Innovation and standards in Doctoral Degree Education for Social Work”.
- I attended the online celebration of the 2025 United Nations Social Work Day in New York on 4 April, hosted by IASSW, IFSW and ICSW. The theme was: “Looking back to move forward: Celebrating social work at the United Nations”. Prof Lynne Healy presented an interesting paper on this topic. The United Nation’s IASSW team co-facilitated and organised this event which continued after the event at the UN headquarters at the University of Fordham.

- I could not attend an in-person request from Prof Jie lei of Nanjing University, to join the international conference on the topic: “Global Perspective and Chinese Path: Innovation and standards in Doctoral Degree Education for Social Work” held on 10-11 May at Nanjing University, China. I contributed a 10 minute address on the topic at the opening session of the conference on 10 May 2025. Many IASSW members, including previous and currently Board members, and the immediate past president serve on Nanjing University’s Doctoral Standards’ Committee and presented papers at the conference, either in-person or online.

8. Social Development Summit

Prof Lynne Heally and her team members have been working diligently over months to prepare submissions and participated in UN events in preparing for the 30 years onwards Social Development Summit which will take place in November 2030. I have attended some of these events online. The International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD), and the Centre for Social Development, Brown School at Washington University, partnered with IASSW to get access to UN civil society events in preparation for the upcoming summit in November 2025..

9. Partners, and prospective partner collaborations

Continuing and prospective partnerships are reflected in the following activities:

- I attended the first day of the Council for Social Work Education’s Katherine Kendall Board meeting online in March 2025. The appointment of Prof Golam Mathbor on his appointment as Chair of the Katherine Kendall Institute will further strengthen the partnership and collaboration of IASSW with the Institute and the CSWE. The paper submitted by Lynn Healy, Shirley Gatenio Gabel, and myself on the title: “United Nations Second World Social Summit: Implications for Social Work Advocacy” was accepted for the Partnership Session of CSWE Conference in Denver, Colorado in October 2025.
- Prof. Riccardo Guidi, Department of Political and Social Sciences (DSPS), University of Florence reached out to IASSW for in principle support of the project PRO-DEM-SKILLS - Erasmus + Cooperation Partnership KA220-HED 2025. The IASSW would join the project as an Associated Partner, especially supporting the implementation of activities. The call deadline was 5 March 2025.
- The Director of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Hani Mansourian, required a partnership with IASSW to invite Schools of Social Work, Social Work Departments and Social Work academics to contribute to a collaborative sharing initiative by submitting existing learning materials such as curricula, training modules, case studies, etc. that focus on research, education, and practice on the protection of children in emergencies (natural disasters, conflict, etc). They are particularly interested in receiving materials created in low- or middle-income countries, localities experiencing humanitarian crises, as well as those engaging indigenous epistemologies. See the attached co-signed letter of request for discussion at the Board meeting. This collaboration was facilitated by Martha Bragin, Professor at Hunter College in New York. She is also a member of

our IASSW Team of Representatives at the UN. She has been working with the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Actions for many years.

- IASSW expressed its support for the SoWE-MAP (Social Work Education and Research Map) to Prof Melisa Campana Alabarce, Institute of Knowledge Technology, Faculty of Social Work, Complutense University Madrid. The envisaged SoWE-MAP project will provide a comprehensive view of social work education and research across the world. It intends to address a vital gap in global knowledge by systematically mapping university-level social work education and research across diverse regions.
- IASSW will partner with Singapore University of Social Sciences on the Practice Research Conference in 2026 in Singapore, organised by Prof Timothy Sim.
- An IASSW letter was submitted to Dr David Jones, Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work and Main Representative to the Commonwealth Institutions to welcome the members of the New Council of the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work. Furthermore, the letter confirmed IASSW's interest to engage in a partnership with the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW). IASSW's representation at COSW will be discussed at June 2025 Board meeting.
- A letter of support was request for the "Framework for Global Portal of Social Work Gatekeeping Mechanism". It will be discussed at the January Board meeting.
- Prof Sue-Ann MacDonald, School of Social Work, University of Montréal reached out to partner with IASSW on a bigger more transnational green social work project. Her research team, which include Prof Lena Dominelli, is at the end of a first research grant exploring 'greening social work' in Québec, Canada. I met with her online on 12 June 2025 to discuss the envisaged project and provide . IASSW will have the opportunity to contribute to the research proposal for the funding application.

10. Publications and opportunities

Work in progress include the following:

- Prof Tiong reported that the final proofs of the Advancing social Practice volume as part of the Springer Book Series is in print. He intends to step down as series editor.
- Call for abstracts. Professor Emeritus, Dr Monika Alamdar-Niemann, were supported through IASSW's networks to communicate a call for abstracts on the project: "Heroines of change: Great women in social work on five continents"
- Prof Richard Ingram, Co-Editor in Chief of the international journal, Social Work Education, reached out to IASSW and Prof Eric Chui of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) to collaborate on a special issue on the Global Standards for Social Work. Prof Eric Chui prepared a special issue proposal in collaboration with Prof Lombard and Prof Varosh Nadesan which was accepted. A special issue is also in the planning for the Kenya Conference.

11. Conclusion

I appreciate the support of the Executive Officer, Ms Rashmi Pandey, the Executive members, Regional Presidents, and the entire Board of Directors for a productive term.

Respectfully submitted,

Antoinette Lombard

President, International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW)

25 June 2025