INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WELFARE
A World Organisation Promoting Social Development

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➢ Social Challenges in Europe in time of refugee crisis

by Miloslav Hettes

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The huge scale of the recent refugee crisis and the massive movement of tens of thousands of people from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere into Europe has triggered very different feelings in the host countries—from empathy and sadness to outright fear. It is true that Europe is not the only destination for the refuges and migrants—in 2014, according to the UN, there were 60 million refugees and internally displaces people around the world, the highest number since the Second World War. However, this sudden influx of huge masses of refugees who have been pouring into European countries in search of asylum and new opportunities was not widely anticipated before, precisely because of its suddenness and sheer numbers. Many of those migrants abandoned refugee camps in Jordan, Turkey or Lebanon in the hope of finding a better life in Europe. The visibility of the present crisis facilitated by instant communications has helped to recognise how serious the refugee crisis is: its humanitarian dimensions has become obvious to millions in Europe and elsewhere.

The movement of people on such scale cannot but have a monetary cost for the countries of their origin—economic activity simply cannot continue in the areas from which people flee. It also has significant costs for the host countries, as they must bear costs of sheltering and

feeding the newly arrived migrants. The annual cost of that displacement worldwide, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, has now reached almost $100 billion. However, the economic ramifications are not the only ones—studies have documented the profound and long-lasting effects that war and migration have on the mental health of people as well as the social fabric of countries. Nobody has a crystal ball able to predict what kind of changes the present surge of refuges has set in motion in Europe, but it is quite possible to assume that the changes will be profound and long-lasting. However, apart from the present, crisis-driven migration with its immediate challenges, the mass movement of people to Europe warrants exploration in its own right. It is also important for ICSW Europe when we formulate our long-term work programme for the period of 2016-2020.

The demographic dimensions cannot be ignored in this connection. The demographic trajectory in most European countries reflects a combination of low fertility and longer life expectancy, leading to population ageing. While a manifestation of social progress on the one hand, the ageing of the population also presents challenges for the sustainability of pension systems, and not only in the near future, but particularly in the longer run. In that sense, if everything is left as it is, the situation may threaten the sustainability of a decent life for the future generation. This may have unpredictable impacts on elder care, and in a broader sense, on solidarity between generations.

The present agenda of ICSW Europe covers such issues as poverty reduction, the plight of the working poor, the support of the poorest, including attention to existing pockets of poverty in some remote rural areas and especially in vulnerable population groups such as the Roma, refugees and homeless people. We also plan to pay deeper attention to social investments and to social entrepreneurship. In that light attention to migrants, who are often among the poorest groups, looks only logical.

Even before the recent sudden arrival in Europe of tens of thousands of refugees, the place of migrants and refugees in society became a “hot” and very emotional political topic touching the everyday life of many citizens. The discussion often starts with the question: “Who is a migrant?” Definitions of a “migrant” often vary, reflecting different national environments and different legal approaches. In day-to-day parlance, migrants may be defined as foreign-born, or foreign nationals, or people who have simple moved to another country. Sometimes, the most important defining feature is the country of origin—is it an internal EU migrant who has simply changed his or her country of birth using the possibility of the free movement of people

within the Union, or it could be a third-country immigrant coming from outside the Union. When the term "migrant" is used in public debates, it may be used in an extremely loose manner and often conflates the issues of immigration, race, ethnicity, and asylum. Legally speaking, the term "migrant worker" uses the UN definition of a person who is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.

We have to bear in mind that, from a historical point of view, all Europeans are migrants. By definition, migrants are human beings, and as such, they should have guaranteed social, economic, cultural rights. Unfortunately, that is not the case in reality—very few European countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Protection of Migrants. The European reality reflects a failure to promote multiculturalism, and that cannot be ignored when the issues of migrants are discussed. Socially oriented states are obviously in crisis mainly owing to the decreasing number of taxpayers as a result of a high unemployment rate, ageing, and the lack of solidarity, greed and unwillingness on the part of rich people to take responsibility for others. We often repeat that all humans (poor or rich) in all countries (small or great power) have a joint responsibility for their country, but that remains a lip service. Since 2008, when the economic and financial crisis hit many European countries hard, developments have reflected a high level of irresponsibility and selfishness. Strictly speaking, the best protection against the influx of refugees (who are the first to suffer from their displacement) is to avoid conflicts and wars that lead to such displacement. Wars and misery and the lack of security are the main drivers of the refugee crisis.

We believe that the adoption of legal norms based on ILO Recommendation 202 concerning national Floors of Social Protection by all EU member countries would be an important step, fully justified by the social situation in Europe. Nevertheless, so far, not all European citizens benefit from such social protection schemes on an equal scale, and that remains an important and acute social challenge. The EU bodies must be pressed to remind member states that they too have a commitment to support the social protection floor for all. In that light, we believe that each member state of the European Union should set a guaranteed minimum income level that is half of the median income observed in each country. ICSW Europe accepted this recommended threshold in Rennes in March 25, 2014.

While, in general, Europe remains the area with relatively high social standards and rights, there are numerous restrictions that prevent citizens from claiming their rights. The rise of that worrisome phenomenon should be noted. The rights are not being claimed owing to the

introduction of too many "targeting" conditions and requirements. Placing too much faith in "targeted assistance" can easily jeopardize solidarity, the principles of a rights-based social policy and social cohesion that are at the core of forward-looking social policy and form the basis of the European social agenda. Universal social provision is an essential element of Social Protection Floors, we must make sure those social guarantees of basic income and services are available to all in the EU.

We have to protect the right of free movement within the EU (and European Economic Area) as one of its core principles and the fundamental rights of citizens, and as a part of broader European aspirations. Special care must be taken to ensure that Europeans do not become the victims of "social dumping", and we must do our best to combat such negative trends where non-EU citizens are concerned. We believe that Social Protection Floors must also apply to all residents, no matter what their country of origin. However, people often encounter a large number of administrative barriers before they can really benefit from the social schemes to which they are entitled, and such barriers should be removed. We also think that illegal immigrants, who as such have no "a priori" rights to national systems, must have guaranteed access to social protection based on humanitarian considerations. Humanity and solidarity should not be dumped, even though that happens quite often on the ground level.

ICSW Europe is an active member of the Social Platform, which is the largest civil-society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. It consists of 48 pan-European networks of NGOs that have joined forces to ensure that social policies are developed in consultation and partnership with the people. Civil-society organisations are in a unique position to connect European and national policy-makers with the people.

Despite many achievements in the social field, Europe is not a problem-free zone. While the influx of migrants and the refugee crises have received prime attention at this time, they must not overshadow a broader picture, namely, that austerity-driven steps have led to numerous ad hoc discriminatory measures and decreases in social standards, as well as to violations of fundamental rights. Social protection must be recognised as an investment in human capital rather than as an expense. Investment across the life cycle has measurable benefits – both socially and economically.

ICSW Europe supports efforts within the framework of universally accessible social standards, which include:

- ✓ Adequate minimum income schemes.
- ✓ Adequate minimum wage in all of the EU, set higher than an adequate minimum income.
- ✓ Common standards for unemployment benefits set at a level above an adequate minimum income.
- ✓ Rights-based and non-discriminatory access to quality, inclusive and affordable social, health, education and lifelong learning services, recognising that investments in such services also have a high potential for job creation.

ICSW Europe is investigating how financial instruments can support a more ambitious social agenda, while also speaking out against budget cuts in the fields of social protection and services.
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- ➢ **Voting behaviour and the influence of social protection in South Africa**

By Leila Patel, Kim Baldy & Marianne S. Ulriksen

Social protection, particularly the provision of cash transfers, has expanded in many countries across the Global South. In South Africa, close to one third of the population benefits from a cash-transfer programme (called social grants). There is often an assumption that the receipt of grants affects people's electoral choice – even that grants can buy votes. However, there is little research on whether social protection, as widespread as it has become, actually plays a role in people's voting behaviour.

Consequently, the Centre for Social Development in Africa (CSDA) and the Department of Politics, both situated at the University of Johannesburg, did a survey study to investigate citizens' views on social protection policies and to study whether receiving a government grant affects their voting behaviour. The survey sought to assess people's knowledge of their rights, their views on social grants and their intended voting behaviour in the upcoming national election. The survey was conducted at three research sites (two urban and one rural) in South Africa and included 1,204 respondents. In the following, we briefly describe South Africa's social protection system and report on some of the findings from the study.

Social cash transfers in South Africa

In 1994, South Africans ushered in a new democracy under the leadership of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC). This came after apartheid, a system of racial

segregation enforced in South Africa through legislation, had persisted from 1948 to 1994. Under apartheid, the rights of the majority non-white South African's were curtailed, and the post-apartheid government of South Africa inherited a society with high levels of poverty and inequality, and social challenges that ran along the lines of race, class and gender.

Today, South Africa has a progressive Constitution that guarantees civil, political and socio-economic rights. The Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution, affords citizens the right to a minimum status and standard of living, including the right to education, health care, social assistance and housing. Those rights are envisaged to be realised progressively, so that priority is given to meeting the needs of the least advantaged persons. Thus, South Africa has a rights-based approach to social protection, and the expansion of non-contributory assistance for the poor and vulnerable groups in the form of social grants is an important tool in poverty reduction.

While the Constitution protects individual's rights to social security and specifically to social assistance, if a person is unable to support themselves and their dependents, it is subject to limitations such as the availability of resources and the gradual realisation of the right. That means that the types of grants, the nature of the benefit and/or the level of the benefit could change as long as the provision of social protection continues to be realised. In other words, a political party could make changes to the current social grant system.

The cash transfer programme in South Africa has its roots going back to the 1920s and 1930s when means-tested grants were introduced for the elderly, people with disabilities and for children. During most of the apartheid era, social grants were racially differentiated, such that whites received grants at higher values than other groups. When democracy was introduced, the value of grants was equalised across racial groups. However, the grants for children were in practice implemented in unfair ways, and the Child Support Grant (CSG) was introduced in order to reach the most vulnerable children. Currently, more than 16 million of the over 51 million South Africans benefit from social grants. The grant with by far the most extensive reach is the CSG, received by over 11 million grant recipients (the CSG is given to the adult caregiver of the child). Social grants are state funded, and spending on them is estimated to amount to 3.1% of GDP. Given that there are over 25 million registered voters, a significant number of South African voters are beneficiaries of social grants.

Of the 1204 South African citizens over the age of 18 who completed the survey, 38 percent reported that they received a social grant, most commonly the Child Support Grant (25 percent). Eighty-one percent indicated that they intended to vote in the next election, and just under two thirds of the respondents said that they intended to vote for the ruling ANC.

Views on social protection

Overall, the respondents were well aware of their socio-economic rights. More than 90 percent agreed or strongly agreed that one has a right to basic education (96 percent), access to health care, food and water (95 percent), and to social security such as grants (92 percent). The respondents also had quite positive perceptions on the role of social grants. In that connection, they overwhelmingly agreed that social grants 'help poor people to survive' (88 percent) and disagreed with the statement that social grants 'make people not want to work' (67 percent). Of course, the latter result also indicates that one-third actually thought that social grants discourage people from working, which reflects the ambivalence about the role of social grants in society. Grant recipients were somewhat more positive than non-recipients were, with 91 percent of the grant recipients indicating that grants help poor people survive, against 86 percent of the non-recipients.

Although the respondents viewed social grants positively and were aware of their socio-economic rights, they were less confident about the long-term continuation of the social grant system. Only 56 percent agreed (or strongly agreed) that 'you can get a grant no matter what political party you vote for'. Similarly, about half (51 percent) replied in the affirmative to the question whether 'social grants from the government will continue if another party came to power', whereas 25 percent said 'no' and 24 percent said 'don't know' to this question. Respondents who indicated that they did not intend to vote for the ruling party were statistically more likely to say that social protection policies would continue if another party came to power. Hence, 70 percent of respondents who intended to vote for an opposition party believed that social grants would continue under another party, while 48 percent of those who supported the ruling party believed the same. Together, these findings suggest a relationship between citizens' knowledge of their rights, their views on social grants and their intended voting behaviour. However, the results do not imply that social grant receipt is the main factor determining citizens' electoral choice, as we will discuss in the following.

Social protection and voting behaviour

In considering the possible relationship between receiving social grants and voting behaviour, the survey data was analysed in different ways. Initial analyses indicated that, whereas there was no statistical differences between grant recipients and non-recipients in their electoral choice (what party they would vote for), grant recipients were more likely than non-recipients to vote for a party that 'provides grants for households like theirs' (65 percent and 56 percent respectively).

Further analyses that compare many possible reasons for voting behaviour indicated that, although grant receipt had some influence in how people vote, it was not a driving factor. Instead, not surprisingly, a range of factors determined voting behaviour (i.e. the likelihood of voting for the ruling party). Given South Africa's racially segregated past, it was not surprising that race was a strong factor in predicting voting behaviour, as were the issues of whether respondents felt close to one political party (party loyalty) and had voted for that party before.

It also mattered whether respondents felt that their rights would be protected if another party came to power, just as the rating of the government's performance and perceptions of corruption affected respondents' electoral choice. Whether the respondents viewed social grants as a form of vote-buying was not found to be a significant predictor of their electoral choice. In general, the majority of respondents (76 percent) did not agree with (or were neutral about) the statement that 'giving social grants to people is a form of bribery so that they support the governing party'

Following from this survey, the Centre for Social Development in Africa embarked on a civic education pilot project titled 'Championing Democracy', which was conducted in the communities where this research was undertaken. The Civic Education Programme was conceptualised as a way of 'giving back' to the communities that participated in the study and simultaneously addressed citizens' concern that social grants may not continue, should another political party come to power. The purpose of the Championing Democracy program was, among other things, to educate citizens about South Africa's constitutional democracy and specifically on the right to social protection.

Citizens have a core role to play in a democratic society and are able to influence social policies. Consequently their knowledge and views on social protection matters for the future directions of social development. Research aimed at further understanding the relationship

between people's knowledge of their rights, their views on social protection and their intended voting behaviour is an important pursuit in itself and could inform civic and voter education initiatives.

This article is based on the report: Patel, L, Y Sadie, V Graham, A Delany & K Baldry (2014). Voting Behaviour and the Influence of Social Protection: A study of voting behaviour in three poor areas in South Africa. Centre for Social Development in Africa & University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

- **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development launched**

"Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"—an outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda – was made public in its final version in mid-August 2015. ICSW Global Cooperation has sought, in previous editions (see January, April and June issues of 2015), to inform our readers about the preparation process of this document of vital international significance and the progress made. The full text of the document is available at
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&Lang=E
We publish here the Preamble and a few abstracts from the Declaration of the Agenda. The Editor.

Preamble

This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets which we are announcing today demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda. They seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what they did not achieve. They seek to realize

the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.

The Goals and targets will stimulate action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet.

People

We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.

Planet

We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.

Prosperity

We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.

Peace

We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

Partnership

We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.

The inter linkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized. If we realize our ambitions across the full extent of the Agenda, the lives of all will be profoundly improved and our world will be transformed for the better.

Declaration

We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015 as the Organization celebrates its seventieth anniversary, have decided today on new global Sustainable Development Goals.

On behalf of the peoples we serve, we have adopted a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets. We commit ourselves to working tirelessly for the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

We are committed to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner. We will also build upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seek to address their unfinished business.

We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities…

As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first…

We reaffirm that every State has, and shall freely exercise, full permanent sovereignty over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activity. We will implement the Agenda for the full benefit of all, for today's generation and for future generations. In doing so, we reaffirm our commitment to international law and emphasize that the Agenda is to be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the rights and obligations of States under international law…

We reaffirm the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international instruments relating to human rights and international law. We emphasize the responsibilities of all States, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status….

All of us will work to implement the Agenda within our own countries and at the regional and global levels, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. We will respect national policy space for sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, in particular for developing States, while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments.

We acknowledge also the importance of the regional and sub-regional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development. Regional and sub regional frameworks can facilitate the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at the national level…

We are committed to ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including by eradicating extreme poverty by 2030. All people must enjoy a basic standard of living, including through social protection systems.

- **Useful resources and links**

1- What is the unique contribution of volunteering to international development?

IDS Bulletin 46.5

Editor Burns, D and Howard, J.

Institute of Developing Studies, Brighton, UK, 2015

This IDS Bulletin is entirely based on the global action-research project Valuing Volunteering, commissioned by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), a UK-based international volunteer cooperation organisation, and conducted by researchers at IDS in partnership with VSO.

The project explored how and why volunteering contributes to poverty reduction and sustainable positive change, and the factors that prevent it from doing so.

The research took a participatory and action-research approach and sought to inform the learning and practice of both VSO and the volunteer for development (VfD) sectors on how to

work effectively through volunteers to achieve sustainable change. This research was carried out by four international volunteer researchers, who spent two years in Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal and the Philippines and produced 12 rich and detailed case studies.

For more details: https://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/what-is-the-unique-contribution-of-volunteering-to-international-development

2 - The Sustainable Development Agenda: From Inspiration to Action (Beyond 2015 Brief No.6)

UNRISD, Geneva, September 2015

The authors of this UNRISD policy brief, Katja Hujo and Gabriele Köhler, pose a question regarding the newly-minted Sustainable Development Agenda: What needs to happen now to enable the new Agenda to deliver on its "transformative" promise? Drawing on a large body of research providing critical analysis of diverse country experiences and policy alternatives, the authors identify 10 areas for urgent and coordinated action.

For more details:

http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/search/80A9208115A80E1980257ECA00568522?OpenDocument

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