

International Consortium for Social Development: Members' Views and Future Directions

Manohar Pawar and David Androff

This article aims to discuss members' views about the past and current engagements and activities of the International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD), and the future directions and strategies. A survey method was employed to collect data from the ICSD members by using the SurveyMonkey software. Quantitative data analysis was limited to frequency distributions, and responses to open-ended questions were analyzed by using the qualitative content analysis method. Further, these results were presented in a workshop to generate ideas for the future directions and strategies. Overall, the analysis showed that the members had positive perceptions of the ICSD in terms of meeting their expectations and conduct of activities according to its mission. Some of the critical issues and the future directions for the ICSD included relooking at the leadership, finance, membership, social development vision, and knowledge-building by research and scholarly activities and networking, education/curriculum programs, conferences and practice projects, and activism and increasing visibility. The article argues that addressing these and similar issues are critical in maintaining and sustaining consortiums/professional bodies such as the ICSD. The findings and analysis have implications for improving and strengthening the ICSD and similar professional bodies.

Keywords: *social development, membership survey, professional association, international social work, International Consortium for Social Development*

This article analyzes perceptions and opinions of the members of the International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD) with a view to identify strengths and issues, and initiate planning exercise for the future of the consortium. Although the idea of organizing a group of university scholars interested

Manohar Pawar is a Professor of Social Work, Charles Sturt University, Australia, and President, International Consortium for Social Development. David Androff is an Associate Professor, School of Social Work, Arizona State University, AZ, USA. Manohar Pawar can be contacted at mpawar@csu.edu.au.

in social development began in the early 1970s, the consortium in a formal shape came into effect in 1974 (Hollister, 2015) and it was originally named as Midwest University Consortium for International Social Development. To recognize the interest of other universities in the United States and to open the consortium there, in 1977, the name was changed to Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development (IUCISD) (Meinert 1991, cited in Raymond & Cowger, 2012). Almost all the pioneers had deep interest and experience in and commitment to international social development (Hollister, 2015). In 2005, the name was again changed to the International Consortium for Social Development to make it open to individual academics from social sciences, institutions, and development practitioners from all over the world. In its nearly 50 years' history, seven presidents with a team of committed scholars have led the consortium to realize its vision and mission of spreading worldwide the knowledge of social development, and toward achieving the goals of strengthening the knowledge base of social development, clarifying ethics, roles, and skills of social development practitioners, enabling participation of global north and south countries, sustaining cooperation among members, maintaining peace at all levels, and designing, implementing, and evaluating social development projects (Hollister, 2015; ICSD, 2015; Raymond & Cowger, 2012).

The first author's active participation in the ICSD began when he initially assumed the role of a co-convenor of the ICSD Asia-Pacific Branch in 2005 and later led the branch as its president till 2016. Having organized the branch's six biennial international conferences in the Asia Pacific region and developed the branch to some extent, a little over decade, he decided to relinquish this role so as to provide the same opportunity to other leaders (Pawar, 2017). Unexpectedly, in 2016, he was nominated and successfully elected to the position of President-elect of the ICSD, first time outside the United States. After a lot of contemplation and consultation he assumed this role only to serve the ICSD. As its historical base was in the United States and not knowing where to start from, he thought of conducting a survey of ICSD members to seek their input to further building the association. In early 2017, he invited the second author, at the time an elected member at large of the ICSD, to join the conduct of the survey.

The first author as president-elect was not familiar with the governance matters of the ICSD but was anticipating the task ahead. Through perceptive observations he had already noted the discontinuation of the ICSD newsletter, declining membership base, dated and problematic website, instructive remarks by a few members, and concerns about the quality and sustainability of the *Social Development Issues* (SDI) journal and the potential to do better in the context of changing professional and developmental global realities. Given these and similar concerns, it was critical to consult members to seek their views and inputs toward further building this consortium as per its vision, mission, and goals.

This is what the article does. In the first part, by referring to relevant literature, it states objectives and research methods employed to conduct the survey. In

the second part, the results relating to the members' association with, perception about, and engagement with the ICSD are presented. Further, their suggestions for the future planning relating to collaboration and network, increasing membership and communication, academic and research activities, practice projects, visibility and outreach, finance, vision and mission, and leadership are covered. It is heartening that most of the members are keen to contribute to the future of the ICSD. In its third part, these results are discussed to argue the potential future of the ICSD. We hope this exercise would be of some help to developing strategic plan for the future of the ICSD. As structured, the following is a brief literature review about international professional associations.

International Professional Associations

Professional associations are voluntary nonprofit organizations that advance the interests of their members and profession (Mazibuko & Gray, 2004; Wang & Ki, 2018). Representing and comprising members of a profession, they are evolved from craftsmen guilds (Hager, 2014). Today, professional associations exist across every profession, industry, and occupation. They vary significantly in their organization, regulation, and degree of influence on the profession.

Professional associations are central to a profession's identity (Hager, 2014). Their functions include professional development and education, sharing values and knowledge, developing ethical standards, networking, and advocating for common causes (Brown, Livermore, & Ball, 2015; Mazibuko & Gray, 2004). Professional associations have an important role to play in bridging the academic-practice gap (Borah & Aguiniga, 2013).

As nonprofits, professional associations are tax-exempt (Ki & Cho, 2020). They generate revenue to support the organization and its mission through membership dues, fees for meetings and conferences, charitable donations, advertisements, sponsorship, webinars, and related forms of fundraising. Owing to the increasing need for additional funds to cover expenses, professional associations have turned to charitable giving, a trend found throughout the nonprofit sector.

International nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) are voluntary non profit civil society organizations (Bello, 2012). They operate beyond national borders, with transnational membership drawn from diverse countries. They fulfill a broad array of international missions such as consulting with the United Nations (UN). INGOs' focus on human rights has shown to have a positive effect upon local contexts (Kim, 2013). The majority of INGO activities include publishing newsletters and organizing conferences (Kim, 2013).

Organizations that include members from the Global South must navigate inequities of power and neocolonialism to establish genuine partnerships. To overcome these and other divides with professional memberships, international professional associations can work toward unification through codes of ethics, alliances with other groups, professional dialogue, and collaborations (Mazibuko & Gray, 2004).

Membership Engagement

Individuals take membership in professional associations based on their identification with the profession, payment of dues, and volunteerism (Hager, 2014). Professional associations are mediators between individuals and institutions (Ki & Cho, 2020). Benefits to members range from the tangibles such as products and services to the intangibles of values and identity.

Professional associations are commonly challenged by lack of member engagement. Professional associations that do not engage members, do not offer opportunities for interaction, or do not raise member voices risk slipping into irrelevancy, with diminished civic or political impact (Hager, 2014).

A survey of over 13,000 members across 18 professional associations found that engagement, such as volunteering and donating, was driven by perceptions that organizations were fulfilling and supporting member needs (Wang & Ki, 2018). Also, members are more likely to donate and recommend membership if they see the professional associations as improving their professional field as a whole (Ki & Cho, 2020).

Professional associations can increase membership engagement by offering support, benefits, and responding to members' needs (Wang & Ki, 2018). Periodic membership surveys are recommended to understand member needs and preferences. Professional associations can also increase member support by promoting the value of their organization to the professional field (Ki & Cho, 2020). Strategic planning can be used to determine how to respond to members and advance professional goals. Drawing insights from these small number of studies, this research was conducted with the following objectives.

Objectives

The main purpose of this research project was to ascertain ICSD members' and friends' views on the ICSD, and in light of those views reflect on the ICSD as a multi-disciplinary professional body and its past/current engagements and activities; and to develop the future practical directions for the ICSD in order to enhance its relevance and contributions in the contemporary changing and challenging contexts.

Research Method

By employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, an online survey of ICSD members and friends was conducted using the SurveyMonkey software in April 2017. All members (74) and friends of the ICSD were invited to complete the online survey. The survey included 28 questions (instrument is available from the first author) asking respondents to assess the ICSD in terms of their views about and expectations from the ICSD, share ideas for the future plans, and inform their engagement with the ICSD and its regional branches. Altogether,

48 respondents completed the survey: 35 ICSD members (81%) and eight ICSD friends (19%) (no response = 5). Quantitative analysis was limited to frequency distribution and percentage values. As all the survey participants did not answer all questions, the total number of respondents differed from question to question. Responses to open-ended questions were analyzed by identifying themes and issues. To present, discuss, and reflect on the findings and to suggest strategies and plan for the future of the ICSD, a workshop was conducted in which 20 ICSD members participated (for details, see Appendix A). Relevant points noted from the workshop discussion are also reported in this article.

Regarding ethical considerations of the survey, a brief cover letter included the purpose of the survey, anonymity and confidentiality of responses, and stated that participation in the survey is voluntary and there are no adverse consequences if members do not participate or withdraw from the survey.

Results

Association with the ICSD

As presented in Table 1, of the 39 responses relating to the length of association with the ICSD, nearly half of them had association with the ICSD for more than 11 years and about one-third had less than 5 years. This suggests that the research participants had relatively long association with the ICSD, which adds credibility to their views and opinions, although this does not mean that others' views and suggestions are less important.

Most of the responses (36) indicated that they first heard of the ICSD through a personal friend or connection, professional colleague or contacts, or as students they were introduced to the ICSD by their research advisers or lecturers. Only a small number of them first heard of the ICSD via conference (6), internet (6), and the SDI journal (2).

As per a word (a graphical representation of word sizes suggesting greater the size of the word, greater the frequency and vice versa) depicted in Figure 1, for a question that asked to list three words that they associate with the ICSD, a large number of responses (31) stated International, including international social work, international social welfare, and global; followed by Social Development (28), including community, sustainable development, and development; conference, networking, collaborative, community, friendship, and unity (25); social change, cause, justice, human rights, assets, and anti-poverty (13); SDI journal,

Table 1 The length of membership with the ICSD

Year	0–1	2–5	6–10	11–20	21–30	31+	Total
Frequency	5	8	8	6	5	7	39
Percentage	13	20.5	20.5	15	13	18	100

Note: It appears that at the time of survey, four respondents were not paid members of the ICSD.



Figure 1 Three words that members associate with the ICSD

research, and academic (9); and social work, social policy, planning, and advocacy (8). Eleven other associated words included engaging, participation, interesting, relevant, accessible, authentic, involvement, diverse, inclusive, pragmatic, and capacity. (Please note that frequency indicated in parentheses do not add up to the total number of research participants because of multiple responses.)

Members’ perceptions about the ICSD

How do research participants perceive the ICSD in relation to meeting their expectations and performing its mission, and as an organization? Data presented in Table 2 show that 83% responded “very well,” “well,” and “acceptable,” indicating that the majority of them were of the view that the ICSD had met their expectations, about three-fourths stated that the way ICSD was performing its mission was acceptable, and 85% of them rated the organization from acceptable to very well. From 15 to 26% of respondents scored all the three rating items poor or very poor. From the point of view of improving the organization, it is critical to focus and reflect on these responses, particularly because over one-fourth of the members think that the ICSD is performing its mission poorly. It appears that some of those who think the ICSD is not performing its mission are, nonetheless, satisfied that it is meeting their expectations.

In the survey of participants’ opinion, the primary function of the ICSD was to hold conferences (R8), provide opportunities for academic collaboration, networking, and exchange (R17), promote social development (R11), conduct research on social development and disseminate (R8), and to lead matters relating to social

Table 2 Rating of the ICSD relating to meeting members' expectations, addressing its mission, and its strengths and weaknesses

Rating items	Very well		Well		Acceptable		Poor		Very poor		Total Percentage	
	f	Percentage	f	Percentage	f	Percentage	f	Percentage	f	Percentage		
How the ICSD has met your expectation as a member?	11	23	16	34	12	26	5	11	3	6	47	100
How you think that the ICSD is performing its stated mission?	5	11	11	24	18	39	12	26			46	100
All organizations have strengths and weaknesses. How do you rate the ICSD as an organization?	8	17	12	25	20	43	5	11	2	4	47	100

development and international social work (R2). A sample of responses under these themes is as follows:

- “Regret to say, I think the main purpose is for membership to enjoy a trip and gathering every two years.”
- “Holding biennial international conferences to discuss social development issues.”
- “To provide opportunities for academic colleagues in social development to collaborate.”
- “To bring together a group of international scholars with an interest in social development to learn and share and create community.”
- “To create a platform for engaging social workers globally and making international central to social work pedagogy in [the] US and Europe.”
- “Mostly [the] USA SW faculty increasing their global awareness and increasing their global networking.”
- “Provide a venue for practitioners, academics, and students who have an interest in social development.”
- “Awareness, education, promotion, and practice of international socio-economic development.”
- “Create social change through capacity building internationally.”
- “Provide a forum and outlet for research on, and engagement, in the development of social and economic programs.”
- “Encourage developmental activities to generate and disseminate knowledge.”
- “To further the knowledge in international development.”
- “Studies related to the output of efforts at social development—in the US and internationally.”

It is critical to reflect on the following other responses as they offer some clues for improvement and planning.

- “To be honest—I really don’t know. I’ve struggled to understand this.”
- “It’s unclear; the mission is not even listed on the website in ‘about us’.”
- “It appears to be still run by the founding members who are not open to new ideas.”

Further, the survey participants were asked to list three things that the ICSD is doing well according to their opinion and experience. The responses presented in Table 3 suggest that the ICSD is doing well mainly relating to organizing conferences, the SDI journal, research and scholarship, and networking and connections.

A sample of qualitative responses under these categories is as follows:

- “Organising conferences and connecting practitioners, educators, and policy makers during such conferences. Involving hosting countries in conferences—promoting social and economic development.”

Table 3 Members' opinions relating to certain aspects that the ICSD is doing well

Areas in which the ICSD is doing well	Response frequency
Conferences	25
Scholarship, research, and social development issues	17
Networking and connections	10
Partnerships with the Global South	5
Raising awareness	4
Leadership	3
Not so good	1
Do not know	5

Note: Owing to multiple responses, percentage values are not calculated.

"Hosting an outstanding conference biennially focused on social development."

"Publishing the journal (although not readily accessible)."

"Hosting a good journal, outlet for publication on social development."

"Keeping network of good people together."

"Creating a platform for people in international social development meet, engaging with CSWE [Council on Social Work Education], mentoring new folks with international social development interests."

"Having authentic global partnerships regarding the Global South (not being exploitative or professionally imperialistic)."

"Providing leadership to some incompetent people."

Along with positive responses, one opinion suggested that the ICSD is doing "not so good," and another remarked about incompetent leadership. The comments may need to be explored further.

Members' Engagement with the ICSD

Reasons for joining the ICSD

For the question, "Why did you join ICSD?," 52 responses were thematically organized into five reasons. The main reasons were to collaborate, network, and seek professional opportunities (R19), to support, advance, and learn about the ICSD's mission and vision (R19), followed by to attend or by attending the conference (R8), requested or introduced by professional colleagues (R5), and to receive the SDI journal (R1). A sample of their responses is as follows.

"Small group of enthusiastic scholars who had a vision for the organization."

"It benefits my academic and professional career, and I have the opportunity to contribute to course of social development perspective in social work education and practice."

"The timing of my work and the organizational focus match. Plus, I want to women central to the organization."

“To participate and promote its functions and to work with other people who share the same goals.”

“Wanted to know and be involved with colleagues from all over but most particularly from the developing world.”

“What ICSD stands for aligns with my professional interests.”

“To learn more about international social development.”

“International social work and social development are key interests.”

“Its international focus as well as macro focus appealed to me.”

“Global learning to enhance my professional work.”

“Because I believed that it could play an important role in peace making and just development.”

“Keen on global issues that included perspectives of the global south.”

“I have attended 1 conference.”

Renewing membership and introducing other members to the ICSD

The survey also tried to explore what the respondents liked most about their membership and whether they were likely to renew their membership and refer a colleague to join the ICSD. Being a member the respondents liked most were ICSD conferences (R11), followed by networking (R10), colleagues and professional community (R7), and research and SDI journal (R7). A sample of these responses is as follows:

“Colleagues are friendly and supportive.”

“The genuine quality of personal relationships with other members.”

“Relationships and networking with colleagues from around the globe.”

“Meeting and networking with other social development advocates at the symposia.”

“The symposium was one of the best conferences I ever attended.”

“Opportunity to travel to international conferences.”

“Opportunity to attend the global conferences.”

Five other responses included, “Participation in social development projects, supporting the organization with my membership, strengthening the cause of social development, and inspiring engagement with broad social development discourse.” Three responses indicated nothing much to desire.

The great majority (88%) of the survey respondents stated that they would renew their membership and the remaining declined to do so. Over half (56%) of the respondents stated that they were very likely to refer a colleague to join the ICSD, nearly one-third (32%) of them somewhat likely to do so, and the remaining (12%) were not likely to refer a colleague to join the ICSD. Those who declined to renew their membership stated that if the ICSD provided the following, such activities would make them renew their membership.

“Information about current/future activities.”

“Newsletters on international relations and global political issues.”

“More scholarly.”

“More participant-based.”

“If it was easier to renew and maintain membership, I do not even know how to renew my membership (which I never intended to let expire).”

“Outreach from current members with engagement and rapport building skills at booth.”

“Real connection with organization members.”

Participation in activities organized by the ICSD

The ICSD's main activities include organizing biannual conferences, publishing the SDI journal, publishing the newsletter, and maintaining its website. The survey tried to ascertain members' participation in these activities. Responses presented in Table 4 show the members' level of participation in these activities. Nearly 30% of respondents stated that they rarely or never participated in its biannual conferences. Nearly one-fourth of them rarely or never read the SDI journal. Two-fifths of the them said that they rarely or never read the newsletter. Nearly three-fifths (57%) rarely or never visited the ICSD website. It is important to reflect on these findings and consider them while planning for the organization.

Engagement with regional branches

The ICSD has attempted to develop four regional branches: European, Asia-Pacific, African, and Latin American. However, European and Asia-Pacific branches are relatively more active than other two branches. The survey data showed that only about one-third (32%) of the respondents have participated in regional branches. Eleven members have participated in the Asia-Pacific branch, six in the European branch, two in the African branch, and one in the Latin American branch. For the question, whether the regional branches have benefited them, only 34 research participants responded. Of these, over half of them (53%) stated that they have not benefited from the branches, followed by a great deal (18%), a moderate amount (12%), and a little (18%). These findings also need to be taken into consideration while planning further for the ICSD and its branches.

Suggestions for planning

The survey attempted to ascertain the research participants' views in their own words as to what direction would they like to see ICSD focus on in the future. They were also asked to list up to three things that the ICSD should improve or do differently. These responses are comparatively presented in Table 5, which shows consistency in their responses. Further, they were asked to express their opinion (in terms of strongly agree to strongly disagree) about the ICSD's five future directions relating to social development, knowledge-building, and scholarship; conferences, practice, and projects; educational programs and curriculum content; and international exchanges. The analysis of their responses to these questions is presented in Table 6, which shows consistency in their suggestions stemming from the earlier open-ended questions.

Table 4 Participation in the ICSD activities

ICSD activities participation	Always		Very often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total Percentage	
	f	Percentage	f	Percentage	f	Percentage	f	Percentage	f	Percentage		
How often do you attend the biannual symposia/conference?	4	10	11	28	13	33	7	17	5	12	40	100
How often do you read our SDI Journal?	9	21	14	33	10	23	8	19	2	4	43	100
How often do you read the ICSD newsletter?	7	16	5	12	13	31	9	21	8	19	42	100
How often do you visit the ICSD website?	0	0	10	23	9	20	19	43	6	14	44	100

Table 5 Suggestions for the future directions for the ICSD and improvement

In your own words, what direction would you like to see the ICSD focus on in the future?	FR	List up to three things that the ICSD should improve or do differently	FR
Increased collaboration, networking, and opportunities for members	15	Connect with other organizations and institutions	8
		Improve communication and services for new and current members	7
		Recruit more members	6
		More opportunities to build connections	5
		More connections with the global south	5
		More meetings and events	5
Increase academic and research activities	12	Improve the SDI journal	10
		More research opportunities	5
		Curriculum development	3
Increase practice, projects, and activism	9	Activism and taking positions	6
Increase visibility and outreach	7	Improve visibility of the organization	8
Continue on with current activities	8	Improve financial resources	4
Narrower focus	1	Improve the ICSD mission and vision	4
		Improve leadership	7

Note: FR is frequency of responses.

Collaboration and Networking

The research participants would like the ICSD to create more opportunities for collaboration and networking between individuals and organizations by recruiting more members, improving communication, and connecting to the global south and organizing more meetings and events (see Table 5). Consistent with this, nearly 80 of them opined that in the future, the ICSD should focus on international exchanges (see statement 5 in Table 6). Another avenue for developing collaborations and networks is ICSD biennial conferences, and 81% supported organizing them in the future (see statement 2 in Table 6). A sample of their responses is listed below.

About networking and collaboration, they stated the following:

“Convening colleagues who are passionate about social development.”

“Supporting new academics in developing countries for research.”

“Connect researchers with research opportunities.”

“To have regional office to work continuously in various regions. More membership-based, more connecting and networking.”

“Promote awareness of grassroots organizations and their work.”

“Promoting international collaborations among scholars.”

“Create forums for people with similar interests to connect.”

“Be more than just a conference. Increase international activities, offer networking opportunities.”

“Continued emphasis on working toward collaborative and sustainable social and economic development that engages all stakeholders.”

Table 6 Five future directions for the ICSD

Future direction/opinion	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	Percentage
	f	Percentage	f	Percentage	f	Percentage	f	Percentage	f	Percentage		
1. In the future, the ICSD should focus on building the knowledge base of social development through scholarship symposia/conferences	35	74	8	17	4	8					47	100
2. In the future, the ICSD should focus on development practice and projects	23	49	15	32	9	19					47	100
3. In the future, the ICSD should focus on social development education programs and curriculum content	26	55	16	34	3	7	2	4			47	100
4. In the future, the ICSD should focus on international exchanges	25	53	14	30	5	11	2	4	1	2	47	100
5. In the future, the ICSD should focus on international exchanges	21	45	15	32	8	17	3	6			47	100

Note: f is frequency of responses.

Particularly, they suggested connecting with institutions:

“Link with international, regional bodies working in similar fields to promote policy, education, and practice.”

“Connections to [with] international human rights organizations.”

“Connections to [with the] UN.”

Regarding recruiting members:

“Recruit more individual and institutional members.”

“Increase effort at recruiting government officials who may be interested in working with NGOs.”

Improve communication

To improve communication, their comments/suggestions were as follows:

“Maintain connections with old, retired members (like me) who may be out of date but represent its ties with its own past, and thus its measure of success at present.”

“Engage new members. When I first paid for my membership in 2014, I was not given a confirmation email or any welcome/confirmation into the organization. The Facebook page, at that time, was not active and I was not given access to a listserv. There was no way for me to connect with other members or organization leaders beyond attending the conference.”

“I would like more communication from the ICSD—upcoming conferences of interest, what members are doing, etc.”

“I’ve felt like an outsider—however, that may be my problem. [The] ICSD seems to be dominated by social workers and I’m not one of them...”

“I was an institutional representative for [the] ICSD for some years. I felt it was too controlled by a few people. As an institutional member, I was considered merely useful as a “money bag” and without respect to me as a serious policy analyst.”

“I was a member for decades. The last symposium I attended was in Uganda; after the symposium, [I] never heard or received a single communication from [the] ICSD. Very disappointing.”

Connecting to the global south

The research participants suggested having more connections with the global south:

“It would be good [for] ICSD [to] have more representation from the global south and informing social development practice more.”

“Have more representation of academics & practitioners from the Global South.”

“Strengthen partnerships and membership across the Global South.”

“Be more inclusive of international partners not so [the] USA focused.”

“Further strengthen [the] ICSD attention to the voices of the less developed world, and look for the ways in which the support for the advocates from there can be further strengthened, increased, etc., for example, enable them to be involved, exposed, and trained.”

“Engage in capacity-building of local constituents on social development initiatives.”

Meetings and events

Regarding organizing meetings and events, they suggested the following:

“Have structured AGMs—attended by members.”

“Cosponsor regional meetings/conferences with partners.”

“More local events.”

“Invite people to keynote meaningful issues.”

Academic and research activities

Quite a number of responses suggested to increasing academic research activities (see Table 5). In line with this, the great majority (91%) of opinions to statement 1 in Table 6 show that in the future, the ICSD should focus on building the knowledge base of social development through scholarship. In their own words they stated the following:

“Strengthening its academic mission.”

“Social development research.”

“More research projects and scholarly products.”

“Substantive work, higher academic quality, engagement of evidence in development.”

“Exchange of SD ideas and research.”

“Work may relate to consultancy, research, [and] training, apart from seminar.”

“Cross-country research.”

“Increase commitment to scholarship.”

“Strengthen the profile of the organization through increased quality and volume of scholarship.”

Improve the quality of SDI journal

As part of increasing academic and research activities, quite a number of responses related to improving the quality of SDI journal:

“Higher ranking and quality of the journal.”

“Improve journal quality and editorial board.”

- “Strengthen/improve the journal (or perhaps drop it).”
- “Focus on quality scholarship.”
- “Recruit more sponsors of SDI.”
- “The journal deserves more attention etc. than what it currently receives within mainstream social work/social development publications.”
- “Should have regional level journal.”
- “Get the impact factor of social development issues up.”

Increase research opportunities

Their suggestions to increase research opportunities included the following:

- “Explore/test social innovations.”
- “Help connect members with research opportunities.”
- “Active promotion and dialogue on sustainable development.”
- “Disseminate information on best practices.”

Curriculum development

In their own words, the research participants suggested to focus on curriculum development. Correspondingly, over 80% of them also opined that in the future, the ICSD should focus on social development education programs and curriculum content (see statement 4 in Table 6):

- “Develop curriculum to include social development into social work programs.”
- “Consult with developing social work programs to strengthen their macro/community focus.”
- “Leadership role in social work as a discipline and engaging with curriculum development.”

Engagement in practice, projects and activism

Several responses (see Table 5) suggested [and] the ICSD to engage in practice, projects, activism, and take positions on local/global critical issues such as “migration, refugees, human rights, climate change, regional conflict, women’s rights, children in crisis, and environment and ecological matters, generally.” This view is reinforced by their opinion that nearly 90% of them suggested engaging in social development practice and projects (see statement 3 in Table 6).

The following are the suggestions in their own words:

- “Encourage and engage in development projects/international social development.”
- “Focus more on promoting the welfare of social welfare workers. We talk of social development, but not so much about those in the trenches.”
- “Focus on bringing about international social changes by focusing on specific areas of interest of members such as environmental sustainability, financial capability, and so on.”

“Focused contributions to sustainable development; influencing policies; recognised as a voice for marginalised and vulnerable people.”

“Consultancy.”

“More and more community-focused direction for creating enabling communities where the individuals feel empowered, dignified, and capable of dealing with their own situations, and promoting the place of social policy which guide support services to further strengthen the disadvantaged people and communities.”

“More effective connections with women-focused and social justice advocates.”

“Become more outspoken about inequality.”

“Raise issues of power and generally be more activist.”

“Be more involved in advocacy for social development issues at the local and global levels.”

“Taking ‘positions’ on pressing global issues related to social development.”

“Begin to be viewed as a player in international policy.”

Increase visibility and outreach

A number of responses emphasized the need for the ICSD to improve and increase its visibility and outreach by “promoting social development and the organisation internationally,” clarifying the concept of social development, engaging with the sustainable development, updating the website, and messaging and branding. Some of their included responses are as follows:

“Promoting social development internationally.”

“[The] ICSD can lead in demystifying the concept of social development in a world that is moving more and more to consumerism.”

“Reaching out to the world.”

“More exposure. More visibility in the community and engagement on sustainable development.”

“Promotion of the organization.”

“Advertise its existence and current and future activities.”

“The website is outdated and needs updating. Have an engaging presence online.”

“Strengthen the profile of the organization through messaging/branding.”

“I think if you officially adopt tracks at SSWR [Society for Social Work and Research] & CSWE, it would help with visibility.”

Finance, vision and mission, and leadership

Other important suggestions included improving financial resources, vision and mission, and leadership, and accordingly respective responses in their own words are presented in Table 7. These suggestions would help to reflect upon these critical issues and enhance the capacity in respective areas.

Table 7 Responses relating to improving financial resources, vision and mission, and leadership

Finance	Vision and mission	Leadership
– “Build financial capacity.”	– “Articulate a mission/ vision.”	– “Strategically position itself around its vision and mission and then mobilize members across the globe to promote this mission.”
– “Develop funds for faculty from developing countries to do research and attend conferences.”	– Encourage ICSD members from all countries to participate in board meetings if not in person then via electronic resources.”	– “Be more self-reflective.”
– “Establish scholarships.”	– “Strengthen branches.”	– “Lead social development in social work.”
– “Seek funding for global developmental projects.”	– “Develop a strategic plan with a budget to achieve the mission.”	– “All those who hold responsible position should act.”
	– “The goals are quite diverse.”	– “Define and clarify the role and function of the ICSD president.”
		– “Problems with leadership alienate good people.”
		– “Develop younger leadership, so the organization continues and thrives.”

Although unsure, one response suggested that as “social development is so broad, perhaps a narrower focus is needed.” There were seven responses that suggested that the ICSD should continue with the current practices and “no change” is needed. Over four-fifths of them opined that the ICSD should continue organizing biennial conferences in the future (see statement 2 in Table 6). In their words, the responses were as follows:

“It should continue to serve its traditional functions, only more so.”

“I think, it is going well.”

“Continue the work and format of the past.”

“I am pleased with current practices.”

“Continue conferences.”

“Continue excellent symposia.”

There was another suggestion to consider the possibility of the ICSD merging with another professional body:

“At some point, we should have a serious discussion about merging with another professional body (actual name deleted). Their journals are distinct and clearly [the] ICSD has more international reach; however, it is worth a conversation.”

Members' contribution to the future of the ICSD

Research participants were asked to indicate the modes they want to contribute to the future of the ICSD. About 80% of the responses to this question suggested that members were interested in contributing to the future of the ICSD in

different ways. Some stated that they would recruit new members and promote the organization (R6), support special projects (R6), join committees (R5), contribute to scholarship, research, and the journal (R8), and attend and support conferences (R5). A sample of these responses is reproduced below:

- “Help connect people to [the] ICSD. Recruit more members.”
- “Strengthening North to South partnerships.”
- “Taking a small responsibility to promote its mission.”
- “Be involved in [the] ICSD’s social development practice and projects.”
- “Creating and disseminating social development curricula.”
- “With fiscal support from [the] ICSD, I could assume a more active role in developing international partnerships.”
- “I would consider serving on an appropriate committee to serve the ICSD.”
- “I would consider being on the editorial board to work toward improving the quality of the journal.”
- “Promoting scholarship and practice research that could influence inequalities and promote sustainable development.”
- “Attend and aid in the conference planning.”

Although nine responses did not commit to a specific task, these suggested that they are willing and available to contribute to the ICSD in whatever manner they are asked to do. For example, they stated:

- “I am available as needed, however I can.”
- “Offer[s] input and advise[s] ideas.”
- “Make the organisation more dynamic.”
- “I will continue to play any role the organization wants me to take on to.”

About a small number of responses (R8) suggested that some members were not able to contribute to the future of the ICSD as they did not know or did not have time or it depended upon the leadership and direction.

Room for improvement

Further, another comment in terms of room for improvement indicated that the ICSD is “ineffective, outdated, not engaging, low-profile.” Likewise, the following comments have some implications for the management and governance of the ICSD:

- “Stop hegemonic management by a few schools (and people!).”
- “HAHAHA!! That is exactly what I asked at the CSWE table, how I could become more involved and described my skill set. And NOTHING. The elitist males just stood there.”
- “If the leadership is fairly elected without giving weight to some schools, I would participate fully in developing the organization in whatever role I can be of use.”

Deliberation in a workshop

The main results were presented in the workshop to discuss with the workshop participants (see Appendix A) and generate ideas and plans for the future of the ICSD. The discussion in the workshop resulted in the following recommendations, which reinforced the results presented above: (1) Integrate qualitative and quantitative survey findings and look into constructive suggestions, which we have done in this article. (2) Resolve membership categories and issues and recruit members to ensure the sustainability of the organization. (3) Update the ICSD website to recruit members and promote the consortium. (4) Develop country chapters under regional branches and cast a net outside North America. (5) Raise the profile of the ICSD by taking positions on social development issues, collaborating with like-minded organizations, seeking the UN consultative status, (re)becoming more interdisciplinary, and developing more scholarly products (SDI's special issues) and edited books from ICSD conferences.

In order to facilitate the organizational development, a number of recommendations were included: (1) Spending available financial resources to advance the ICSD organizational goals. (2) Hiring a staff to handle the organizational infrastructure. (3) Funding research activities and innovative projects. (4) Reasserting interdisciplinary work. (5) Offering training programs. (6) Providing incentives to members.

Discussion

The results presented above are insightful, instructive, and provide relatively good evidence to identify strengths of the consortium and areas for improvement. Drawing ideas from these, it is critical to develop strategic plans for the future of the ICSD. Given the small size of the ICSD membership (74 at the time of survey, April 2017), the response rate (47%) of the survey was heartening. It is reassuring that most of the research participants identified the ICSD with "international," "global," and "social development." Hence, it has retained its identity (Hager, 2014) by engaging in such activities. Most respondents rated the ICSD positively in terms of meeting their expectations and addressing its mission and ICSD as an organization. Its activities are well reflected in members' opinions in terms of its biennial conferences, research and scholarship, and platform for networking and connections. These are also well connected to their reasons for joining the ICSD. They have made excellent suggestions to the ICSD for its future directions, and in our view, these suggestions are not outside the vision, mission, and goals of the ICSD.

Most of the respondents agreed that in the future, the ICSD should focus on social development, knowledge-creation, organizing biennial conferences, engaging in practice projects, designing educational programs and curriculum content, and international exchanges. Responses to open-ended questions also confirm these suggestions. Similar functions were suggested by Brown, Livermore, and Ball (2015) and Mazibuko and Gray (2004). In addition, they have suggested relooking at the leadership, vision and mission, and financial resources. They also

would like to have more opportunities for collaboration and networking, improved communication, regular meetings and events, connecting with global south, and academic and research activities, particularly improving the quality of SDI journal. Further, they would like to see the ICSD's activism, visibility, and outreach.

Although most of these results or positive views and constructive suggestions appear to be comforting *prima facie*, they should not cause any complacency as the organization is facing certain critical challenges, which must be addressed for the renewal of the ICSD and increasing its ever relevance. Toward this end, it is necessary to seriously consider some of these issues.

Leadership

A few critical comments relating to the leadership, factual or perceptual, in the consortium should be of genuine concern. Has the leadership been concentrated in a few schools and with a few individuals? Here, leadership does not mean name and fame, popularity, charisma, and glamour. It also does not mean one individual and one position. Although head of the organisation is ultimately responsible, it applies to all the elected and appointed positions, the board, the executive council, the SDI management board, and other appointed committees for specific purposes. Acknowledging that this leadership is voluntary, it needs to be underscored that every position has roles and responsibilities, and leaders in the consortium are accountable to those roles and responsibilities, to members, to themselves, and to the ICSD as a whole. While many have performed well and trying to do their best, it has been observed that some roles and functions have not been performed effectively and adequately or have been neglected inadvertently, at least for some time and to some extent. Just assuming positions and not acting for them can cause damage to the organization in the long term. Has this happened to the ICSD? All leaders and members need to critically reflect on this, and the results of this survey offer clues and suggestions to do so. This leadership issue in the consortium needs to be addressed. Members and leaders of the ICSD are capable of doing so, provided they are willing to do it.

Finance

For any organization, for its effective and efficient functioning, for stability and security, and to achieve its mission, vision, and goals, adequate financial and human resources are essential. Leadership in the organization also needs to ensure that they can generate required resources so that they can fund scholarships to participate in conferences and conduct research and projects, and publish scholarly material, including the SDI journal. In the past, the ICSD has done well in achieving these as they recruited members, raised funds during conferences, and sponsored and partnered with the journal and allocated funds as they held leadership positions (e.g., deans/directors) in universities in the United States that commanded some resources. Some leaders have donated their personal money and

established special memorial lectures. Most of the current leadership in the ICSD neither reflects such positions nor command such resources, although they may have the capability to generate resources through some other fair means. Consequently, the consortium's financial resources are gradually dwindling. If effective and adequate measures are not taken now, the current financial resources of the ICSD may not last long. Instead of looking for generosity or mercy of some schools or persons, it is time for the consortium to explore sustaining in a self-reliant way. One way of sustaining the consortium is by strengthening its stable and continuing membership base and professional financial planning.

Membership

The results of this survey are heartening as the great majority of research participants have expressed interest in renewing their membership. The others have stated that regular communication about the ICSD activities, more scholarly and research endeavors, user-friendly membership registration and renewal systems, and outreach and connection with members would motivate them to join the ICSD. In the past, most of the member recruitment has occurred through professional and personal contacts and teacher–student, research adviser, and research scholar relationships.

The ICSD is figuratively referred to as web of a small family of like-minded social development scholars. If the membership grows too big, there are concerns that the ICSD may not be able to maintain its unique character of small membership size and meaningful inter-personal and inter-professional relationships:

“The ICSD leaders have taken the position that the organisation should be as large as it needs to be. There is no interest among the leadership in growth for growths sake...” (Raymond & Cowger, 2012, p. 296).

These positions are understandable, as once its membership size was about 300, and there were 83 organizational members from 31 countries (see Raymond & Cowger, 2012, p. 293). Had the membership continued to grow like this, the consequence would have been the loss of its unique characteristic. Contrary to this anticipation, when the first author assumed the role of president-elect, surprisingly individual membership had dropped to double digits and institutional membership to a single digit. The discussion among some leaders had shifted from fee-paid membership-based consortium to nonmembership-based organization (ICSD Workshop, 2017). How and why did the consortium land at the present position? It calls for some soul-searching. This might not have occurred suddenly. Was it neglected for a long time? Has the global context and relevance of social development changed so radically that it impacted the ICSD membership? Did the leadership consistently perform its roles and functions? What makes or mars the organization is its membership, that is, where its leaders emerge from.

These and similar questions should help not only to reflect critically and learn from the ICSD's past but also to act to recruit new members and renew memberships from both global north and south (Mazibuko & Gray, 2004) and support their needs (Wang & Ki, 2018). As stated earlier, the survey suggests that members are willing to do so. Size of the membership needs to be determined based on the financial viability of the organization. The total cost of running the organization, including its journal, should be met by its membership fees and other sources of income (conferences and fund-raising events) it earns. This is one of the important options to make the ICSD self-reliant. It also may call for other austerity measures.

Vision, Mission, and Goals

No organization's vision, mission, and goals are static. They are always evolving according to the changing socioeconomic, political, and ecological and developmental conditions. Members and leaders of the ICSD need to relook and refine its vision, mission, and goals. It is critical to take note of the survey that over one-fourth of members think that the ICSD is poorly performing its mission. Is something wrong with the mission or its performance? Has it been effectively communicated as some people still do not get it? In the past, it was falsely opined and understood, even in the World Bank and other UN bodies, that the social development's vision, mission, and goals are more relevant to the global south (Pawar, 2014). One ICSD leader suggested to the first author to take the ICSD to developing countries. However, the current global developmental context, including the sustainable development goals, suggests that social development vision and goals are equally relevant to both global north and south (Midgley & Pawar, 2017; Pawar, 2014). Hence, today the vision and mission of social development are ever relevant than before globally. However, members and leaders of the ICSD need to re-examine and reconsolidate their thoughts on current local, national, and global realities and developments in theories, and practice of social development so as to refine, restate, and reassert ICSD's vision, mission, and goals.

Research and Scholarly Activities, and Professional Networks

The main and general purpose of the ICSD is to build knowledge for social development worldwide (ICSD, 2015). This cannot be achieved without research and scholarly activities. Research participants have repeatedly suggested increasing research and scholarly activities of the ICSD by creating more opportunities. Historically and currently, ICSD provides two solid platforms for promoting research and scholarly activities and professional networks. These are its biennial conferences and the SDI journal, although both are experiencing some challenges to sustain themselves in the future, like they have sustained in the past. The ICSD newsletter has been revived and it does provide another avenue for communication and professional networking. More importantly, it needs to focus on latest

theoretical and practice developments in the field of social development from interdisciplinary perspectives. Who and where are these scholars? Can ICSD attract them or not? The ICSD needs to continuously demonstrate leadership in this area. Its leaders and members need to think whether or not it has been doing so and what can they do to ensure it in the future? As part of the scholarship, equally important is development of curriculum in the field of social development and helping schools to incorporate social development perspectives in their curricula. To what extent has the ICSD facilitated this?

Social Development Issues

As part of research and scholarly activity, the SDI journal is ICSD's flagship product. Currently, it is running into its 43rd volume. Eminent scholars have fed and sustained this journal, and the ICSD has invested its significant resources into it toward realizing its vision and mission. However, the survey results suggest improving journal's quality in many respects—quality of articles, editorial board, impact factor, and dissemination. In spite of investing significant resources, why has the quality, impact, and academic status of the 43-year-old journal remained the way it is today? Both leaders and members of the ICSD need to critically reflect and take action to re-establish its credibility in the social development scholarly and practice community. A clear strategic action plan is needed without any delay. To enhance research and scholarly activities and professional networks, can the ICSD do any differently and better?

Engage in Practice Projects and Activism, and Increase Visibility

The survey results suggest the ICSD to engage in practice projects, activism, and increase its visibility. Clearly, there is a dire need to connect social development theory in terms of research and scholarly activities to practice projects. As suggested by Borah and Aguiniga (2013), the ICSD should play an important role in this. Social development is a practical endeavor and it must be seen and experienced in communities. How can the ICSD engage in practical practice projects through the works of government and NGO? How can it partner with some of their projects, whether it is implementation and evaluation? There is potential to do this in both global north and south by collaborating and partnering with agencies. The ICSD needs to engage in the field and make an impact, at least to show as an example. On critical issues, whether it is injustice, racism, discrimination or other violation of human rights, or the achievement of development goals, the ICSD needs to take a stand and disseminate it. To achieve this, all the points discussed above are relevant. Practice, activism, and visibility cannot occur in its own. Visibility should not be understood as a marketing trick. Its deeds should speak louder than words. Visibility needs to be achieved through its quality research and scholarly activities and by improving the quality and impact of the journal. The ICSD leadership, its members, branches, and collaborators/partners, all need to work together with

due respect to each other to achieve its vision, mission, and goals. It is possible to achieve these.

Conclusion

This article has discussed views and suggestions of the members of the ICSD and reflected on them with a view to suggest some clear strategies for now and into the future. The analysis has captured members' views on the strengths of the ICSD and areas for improvement relating its leadership, finance, membership, vision, mission and goals, research and scholarly activities and professional networks, the SDI, and projects, activism, and the visibility. These results and discussion need to be read by keeping in mind certain limitations of the study. First, there is a lag in the conduct of survey and reporting of the results, although the main results were presented in the two ICSD conferences held in 2017 and 2019. Second, limitations of close-ended questions apply to this study as respondents were forced to choose among the choices given, but the survey had allowed for open-ended responses to overcome this limitation, at least to some extent. Third, while the results have been presented as they are, others may reflect, interpret, and discuss the same results differently. Finally, all results have not been discussed, as some of them are obvious and self-explanatory, and also due to the paucity of space available for an article. These limitations notwithstanding, it is hoped that these views and suggestions of the members are of use to the ICSD leadership and similar professional bodies/organizations to develop effective strategic plans for the future or reflect on the state of their organizations to do better.

Author Contributions

M.P. initiated the survey, prepared draft questions and finalized the survey instrument, and categorized and analyzed the qualitative data, organized the quantitative data, and drafted the whole article, except the literature review section. D.A. created the survey, canvassed the survey to the members through SurveyMonkey, and analyzed the survey data and drafted the literature review.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Dr. Vijayan Pillai and Dr. Goutham Menon for their suggestions and comments on the survey instrument. Thanks to blind peer reviewers of the article and Profs. James Midgley and Shanti Khinduka for their comments and suggestions.

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Appendix A List of Participants Who Attended the Workshop

The Future of the International Consortium for Social Development—Board Workshop, July 7, 2017

Participants	University
Manohar Pawar	Charles Sturt University
Vikash Kumar	Queen Margaret University
Tejaswini Patil	Federation University
Colleen Fisher	University of Minnesota
Kim Moffett	Indiana University
Dheeshana Jayasundara	University of North Dakota
Antoinette Lombard	University of Pretoria
Mahasweta Banerjee	University of Kansas
Liljana Rihter	University of Ljubljana
Shanti Khinduka	Washington University of St. Louis
Goutham Menon	Loyola University, Chicago
Mubarak Rahamathulla	Flinders University
Barbara Shank	University of St. Thomas/St. Catherine
David Hollister	University of Minnesota
Tan Ngoh Tiong	Singapore University of Social Science
Caroline Cheng	Queen Margaret University
Belinda Bruster-Morgan	Florida Gulf Coast University
Jocelyn Hermoso	San Francisco State University
David Androff	Arizona State University
Gordana Berc	University of Zagreb