

# President's Address, 22nd Biennial International Conference of the International Consortium for Social Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 13–16 July 2021

Manohar Pawar

*The president's address includes welcome and concluding speeches covering the main global issues of the time, the acknowledgment of organizers, Social Development Leadership awards, the summary of achievements in the first term, and vision for the International Consortium for Social Development in the second term*

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## Welcome Address

Thank you, Professor Lauren Graham, for inviting me to deliver the 22nd International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD) conference welcome address.

Distinguished participants of the 22nd ICSD conference, colleagues, and friends: Good morning, good afternoon and good evening! Depending upon whatever part of the world you are located.

It is an honor and privilege to serve this unique ICSD as its president. I extend a warm welcome to all the 22 ICSD conference participants from all over the world.

The years 2020 and 2021 have been challenging for most of us because of the Coronavirus pandemic and the consequent public health disaster. I know, our lives have been directly or indirectly affected by the pandemic. My sympathies to those colleagues who have been impacted by the pandemic. The good news is that many have successfully recovered, and there is hope.

In July 2019, during the 21st ICSD conference held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, when I suggested to Professor Leila Patel and Professor Lauren Graham to host the 22nd ICSD conference through their Centre for Social Development in Africa,

Manohar Pawar, BA, MASW, PhD, Professor of Social Work, Charles Sturt University Australia, President, ICSD and Editor-in-Chief, *The International Journal of Community and Social Development*. He can be contacted at mpawar@csu.edu.au

University of Johannesburg, South Africa, they kindly agreed and we enthusiastically announced in the concluding session of the 21st ICSD conference that 22nd ICSD conference will be hosted by the Centre for Social Development in Africa, the University of Johannesburg. That announcement was followed by a beautiful video play, seeing gravitating pictures of South Africa, the University of Johannesburg, and the city of Johannesburg. The conference will take place from 13 to 16 July 2021 but in a different form.

On this occasion, I would like to pay my due respect to Professor Tessa Hochfeld, who was a part of the initial discussion of this conference meeting. But unfortunately, she is not with us today. I am sure Professor Tessa Hochfeld is watching from heaven with pride that the Centre for Social Development in Africa, University of Johannesburg, is leading and organizing this conference.

Since that announcement in July 2019, like many of you, I dreamt of visiting the Centre for Social Development in Africa, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. I was/am highly motivated to travel to South Africa, because it is the soil on which the seeds of social justice, independence, democracy, people participation, equality, antidiscrimination, antiapartheid, anticolonialism, and social action were sowed by Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. These ideas have spread all over the world, and many nation-states have become independent over the years. Still, there is a need to expand and practice these ideas.

In this so-called civilized world, racism is rampant. Inequality and discrimination in many forms is a growing phenomenon that we are experiencing and observing in our lives. Security and conflict threats, destabilizing regional tensions are reappearing. Because of the pandemic, poverty and people's vulnerabilities have increased in many countries. Social development thoughts limited to developing countries have become increasingly globally relevant to all (Pawar, 2014). In a way, the Coronavirus pandemic showed that human life, health, environment, and peace are equally important as economic development (Pawar, 2020). In this context, organizations such as the ICSD and social development research centers have a significant role.

Despite challenges posed by the pandemic, under the leadership of Professor Leila Patel, Professor Lauren Graham, and Professor Antionette Lombard, and all the organizing committee members, the 22nd ICSD conference will discuss poverty, inequality, social development, and social innovations around the world.

In the nearly 50 years of ICSD history, this is the first full online conference, and you are all part of this history-making. In this 22nd ICSD conference, about 300 participants from 42 countries are participating and nearly 250 papers will be presented. I heartily welcome all participants!

In addition to paper presentations, the conference will also include keynote speeches, stimulating panel discussions, and poster presentations. Markedly, during this conference, that is tomorrow, the launch of ICSD Africa branch will happen. I welcome one and all to join this historic launch.

Apart from paper presentations and discussions, this online conference platform has a feature to network with conference participants. I hope you will take

advantage of this arrangement and expand your professional network with colleagues from 42 countries.

Before I conclude my welcome address, I would like to pay tribute to ICSD pioneers (Hollister, 2015), who have played a significant role in sustaining the ICSD. Without their vision, ideas, and efforts, we would not be conducting this 22nd ICSD conference today.

I also would like to thank the Centre for Social Development in Africa, the University of Johannesburg and their partners: —Centre for Social Development, Brown School at Washington University, St. Louis; Global Social Development Innovations, School of Social Work, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill; China Social Work Research Centre, Peking University; National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, South Africa; National Research Foundation, South Africa; Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy and Practice, the University of Chicago,—for organizing this conference.

I hope you will find the conference deliberations intellectually stimulating and personally and professionally rewarding.

Once again, a warm welcome to everyone!

### **Concluding Address**

Distinguished participants of the 22nd ICSD conference. Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening!

After hearing the critical analysis and propound observations by Professor Jimi Adesina, I feel there is little to add in this concluding reflection session.

As social work and social development thinkers and educators, it is critical to reflect and forelect. It is pivotal to look at what we did well and how we can do better in the future.

As the president of the ICSD, I would like to make three points in my concluding reflections and remarks. First, the conference theme, “Poverty, Inequality and Social Development: Innovations around the world,” is apt in the current circumstances. In 2019 and 2020, when we decided to go with this theme, we did not know that we would be caught in the Coronavirus pandemic. Right now, many countries, including South Africa, are reeling under the third and fourth wave of the pandemic with more infectious variants, which is devastating to all of us. We oscillated between in-person, hybrid, and fully online conferences. The circumstances forced us to opt for the fully online, which we are concluding today.

The pandemic has paused the progress we were making in addressing poverty and inequality and has increased them. The World Bank’s (2020a) analysis shows that the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflict, and climate change together have reversed the progress made in poverty reduction. The pandemic alone was estimated to push 150 million people into poverty in 2021 (World Bank, 2020b). The spread of the delta variant seems to suggest that the pandemic has increased poverty, fear, and grief. More poverty is seen among children, women, and in certain regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and the conflict, violence, and

disaster-affected region (World Bank, 2021). This situation has created the need for more social development practice and social innovations to facilitate it.

One good thing that has occurred during the pandemic is that it has exposed social determinates of health and hidden inequalities. Particularly about health infrastructure and access to health services and facilities. It has communicated that human life and ecology are more important than economic production and growth (Pawar, 2020), necessitating the comprehensive social development of communities. The conference deliberations have conveyed that increasing social protection measures buttressed by other necessary services, like measured cash transfer, caring arrangements for children, the elderly, and the sick, asset building, employment creation, will reduce poverty. I hope governments and policymakers heed this message.

The conference has brought together over 300 development scholars, practitioners, decision-makers, and development agents from 42 countries across six continents to share knowledge, policy, and practice solutions to address the issues of all times. Over the past 4 days, we have heard over 240 presentations and created over 80 hours of social development-focused content that you all have access to for the next year on this platform (Graham, personal communication, 20 July, 2021). During the conference, scholars have well deliberated on the eight sub-themes delineated by the organizers. It has created significant opportunities to discuss global challenges related to the pandemic, race, gender, inequality, human movements, digital divide, economic crisis, climate change, and vulnerabilities, particularly of children, youth, and families, and building capacity of institutions. Certainly, it has made me think about future directions in social development and I will be looking for social innovations in social development experiments and endeavours.

I also must admit that we have lost the great opportunity to meet in person and interact with each other in the wonderful land of South Africa. I hope our 23rd ICSD conference in Sweden, to be hosted by the Municipality of Gavle and Department of Social Work and Criminology, University of Gävle in 2023, will be in person.

Despite adverse circumstances, the conference organizers have done an outstanding job in organizing the 22nd ICSD conference. Although it is a fully online conference, it was not taken lightly. On the contrary, it has enabled social development scholars from 42 countries to participate.

About the conference, I would like to read a remark made by Professor Michael Sherraden (personal communication, 16 July, 2021).

... this ICSD Conference is setting a higher standard in planning, quality, and contributions. The Launches of ICSD Africa Regional Branch and FCAB (Financial Capability and Asset Building) Africa will be lasting contributions that continue for years, maybe decades. Overall, I think the sessions I have seen are of higher quality than we have generally had in the past.

Another conference participant, LE Ziqubu (2021) made an online remark at the end of conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to appreciate ICSD president and all the professors, Doctors and members that have made the conference a success.

I look forward to the future of ICSD South Africa and trust that it will make a great impact in changing the challenge that SA face. The presentations from this conference were thought provoking and intensively informative. Thank you so much.

These and similar remarks testify that the conference has achieved its objectives by creating an enabling platform for social development scholars to share their thoughts and gain from others'. The 22nd ICSD conference would not have been possible without the capable leadership of Professor Leila Patel and her team. She is a household in the social development field in South Africa and internationally and holds the prestigious South Africa Research Chair in Welfare and Social Development. Professor Leila has significantly contributed to social policy and practice and firmly believes in evidence-based policy practice. Her research and publications clearly demonstrate this. Professor Leila Patel kindly agreed to host the 22nd ICSD conference, and as you can see the conference has been steered so well.

Secondly, one of the pleasant jobs of the ICSD president is to recognize and confer Social Development Leadership awards to researchers, scholars, and practitioners to promoting further research, knowledge building, and innovative practice in the social development field and thereby enhancing the growth of the ICSD. and to thank all those who have helped to organize the conference. I was delighted to confer 10 awards to the following listed social development scholars at the 22nd ICSD conference (Table 1).

Due to the lack of time, I am not able to acknowledge all colleagues' who have significantly contributed to this conference. I thank the Co-Chair of the Conference, Professor Antoinette Lombard, and the lead organizer Professor Lauren Graham, Director of Centre for Social Development in Africa. She has chaired the local organizing committee and managed all day-to-day operational matters effectively and efficiently. I appreciate Professor Graham's leadership. She kindly and generously volunteered to do the groundwork for establishing the ICSD Africa branch as its inaugural chair. I welcome Ms. Lorraine Botha, a member of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament and Dr. Edson Munsaka, CSDA, and thank them for volunteering to join hands with Professor Graham to establish the ICSD Africa branch.

I would also like to thank Hanlie Delpont and her conference consultancy company and all staff members of the Centre for Social Development in Africa, who helped in organizing this conference.

I also acknowledge all conference sponsors and local and international organizing committee members who have worked hard to conduct this conference under adverse circumstances.

I also would like to thank Charles Sturt University, my head of the school, Professor Wendy Bowles, Dean, Professor John McDonald and the Senior Executive Officers, for allowing me to lead the ICSD and contribute to international professional development as part of Charles Sturt University's global social responsibility.

The third part of my concluding remarks relate to the ICSD leadership and its future direction. Today, I exactly complete my first 4-year term. My plan on this

**Table 1** Recipients of the ICSD Presidential Social Development Leadership awards at the 22nd ICSD conference

Name	Award	Session
Centre for Social Development in Africa Director, Professor Lauren Graham	<i>Leadership in Social Development—contributions to social development theory and practice</i>	Welcoming and opening of the conference
Department of Social Development & Welfare, UGM, Indonesia, Head, Krisdyatmiko	<i>Leadership in Social Development—contributions to social development theory and practice</i>	Welcoming and opening of the conference
Professor Gina Chowa	<i>Leadership in Social Development—the Dan Sanders Peace and Justice Memorial Lecture, The Future of Social Development</i>	Dan Sanders memorial lecture
Professor Lauren Graham	<i>Leadership in Social Development—Distinguished services as the Lead Organiser of the 22nd ICSD International Conference</i>	Closing address/conference reflections
Late Professor Tessa Hochfeld, Posthumous	<i>Leadership in Social Development—contributions to social development theory and practice</i>	Welcoming and opening of the conference
Professor Antoinette Lombard	<i>Leadership in Social Development—Distinguished Services as the Co-Chair (2020–2021) of the 22nd ICSD International Conference</i>	Closing address/conference reflections
Professor James Midgley	<i>Leadership in Social Development—the Shanti Khinduka Lecture on Social Development, Change and Social Progress</i>	Shanti Khinduka lecture
Professor Leila Patel	<i>Leadership in Social Development—Distinguished Services as the Co-Chair (2020–21) of the 22nd ICSD International Conference</i>	Closing address/conference reflections
Professor Chathapuram (Ram) Ramanathan	<i>James Billups International Social Development Leadership Award—be committed to peace, social justice, inclusiveness, and the transgression of national boundaries.</i>	Launch of the ICSD Africa branch
Professor Michael Sherraden	<i>James Billups International Social Development Leadership Award—be committed to peace, social justice, inclusiveness, and the transgression of national boundaries.</i>	Social Development Innovations panel

day was to thank the ICSD and its members for a rare opportunity to serve this organization and pass on the responsibility to the president-elect to further lead the ICSD.

This plan could not be executed because of certain organizational circumstances. It would have been irresponsible to leave the organization in such a state. Hence, this motivated me to seek another term and ICSD members demonstrated

their trust in me by re-electing me for another 4-year term that begins tomorrow. So, instead of a farewell and thanksgiving speech to the ICSD and conference participants, I briefly summarize the ICSD achievement in the last 4 years and the future commitments inline.

When I assumed the role of the president of the ICSD on 11 July 2017, in Zagreb, in my incoming address I stated:

... it is natural for the ICSD members and friends, scholars and intellectuals, universities and development organisations and social development practitioners to expect more from the ICSD. Equally, it is important to agree contribute to the ICSD so that it keeps meeting our rising expectations. (Pawar, 2018)

I also stated that we must walk our talk. Our talk is expressed through the ICSD Constitution and the roles and functions of all ICSD office bearers. We must walk these roles and functions.

As the president of the ICSD, I aimed to reduce the gap between our talk and walk. We have met the following promises we made in July 2017.

1. Updated and renewed the ICSD website. It is currently functional and working well.
2. The ICSD members' survey results are published in the *Social Development Issues* and the *International Journal of Community and Social Development* and uploaded on the ICSD website and shared with all members for developing the ICSD strategic plan. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FLE2o4CANfUv85MUxHn4lfFXarIzboGx/view?usp=sharing>
3. Statement of Ethics for the ICSD was developed and published in SDI, 43 (1). [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Qd7f1sgob4JmYEC0Y0e-fROJD\\_aLOBvR/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Qd7f1sgob4JmYEC0Y0e-fROJD_aLOBvR/view?usp=sharing)
4. Committed to continuing with the biennial conference and successfully organized two successful conferences in Indonesia and South Africa.
5. The ICSD continues to publish *Social Development Issues* journal
6. We have increased individual and institutional members and can do better.
7. Enhanced communication amongst members by regular publishing of ICSD newsletters and emailing announcements which can be accessed from <https://www.socialdevelopment.net/news-events/>

Two of the promises made in the first term remain unfulfilled in some respects. We wanted to enhance scholarly and research activities and conceptualize and implement visionary projects. Limited organizational resources did not allow us to progress these matters. Promises made relating to the Social Development Issues (SDI) have not been fulfilled because of a range of unexpected issues we experienced. However, we have a highly committed and experienced SDI board of managers and Editor-in-Chief, Professor Brij Mohan. Under their guidance and support, SDI has maintained quality articles and timely publication of all issues.



I am particularly grateful to Professor Brij Mohan for volunteering for the Chief Editor role with such short notice.

The ICSD board and the Executive Council will pursue these two matters in the next term. The future commitments include (1) Preparation of an application to the UN to seek the UN consultative status for the ICSD. (2) Planning to develop a strategic plan for the ICSD using members' survey results. (3) Completion of reforms initiated in the ICSD governance procedures and amend the constitution, which is overdue. (4) Expand and strengthen ICSD branches. (5) Completion of the digitalization of all SDI and uploading them on the ICSD website for free dissemination of social development knowledge to all countries. (6) An important goal is to develop a team of enthusiastic and committed colleagues who can take the responsibility to serve and lead the ICSD better once my second term is completed.

All these can only be achieved with the cooperation, commitment, voluntary time, and hard work of ICSD members and office-bearers. I hope you will make yourselves readily available to keep our promises and achieve our goals.

I welcome you to join and serve the ICSD.

I look forward to working with you and meeting you again.

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