

CARING SOCIETIES FOR ALL

Advancing Social Rights for Persons with Disabilities

Abstracts & Biographies



#WSWD2025
www.unrisd.org/wswwd2025



Magdalena Sepúlveda

Director, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona has been Director of UNRISD since November 2024. Previously, she was Executive Director of the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Senior Research Associate at UNRISD. With 22 years of experience in poverty, development, and human rights, she held roles at the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and UN University for Peace. She was UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty (2008-2014) and served on high-level UN panels. She holds a Ph.D. in International Law and speaks English, French, and Spanish.



Kira Kruglikova

Director of Administration, United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)

Kira Kruglikova is the Director of the Division of Administration of the United Nations Office at Geneva. She serves as UNOG's Focal Point for Disability Inclusion and Project Executive for the Strategic Heritage Plan (SHP), a multi-year, \$835 million construction and renovation project. Her previous positions include Director of the Division of Conference Management, Chief of the Production and Support Service, Executive Officer and Administrative Officer. Before joining the United Nations, she was a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State. Prior to her diplomatic service, she worked in manufacturing for a major pharmaceutical company in various locations in the United States.



Joël Gapany

Director, School of Social Work Fribourg (HETS-FR)

Joël Gapany has been director of the School of Social Work in Fribourg (HETS-FR) since May 1, 2016. In his public appearances, he regularly stresses the importance of social work, both as a professional field and as a discipline, for the development of a more just, egalitarian and inclusive society. Under his leadership, the HETS-FR has developed new areas of research and teaching, notably in the fields of sustainability and environmental justice, digitalization and socio-professional integration, with a special focus on vulnerable and marginalized populations. Joël Gapany is a member of the committee of the Swiss Association for the Promotion of Social Innovation.



Priska Fleischlin

Global Commissioner, International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)

Priska Fleischlin is IFSW's Global UN Commissioner, leading the 20-person team that represents the 153 national social workers' associations (IFSW members) and their approximately 5 million social workers to the United Nations. In her role as UN Commissioner, she focuses on the 2030 Agenda and building partnerships with UN agencies. In addition to this voluntary role, she is a Social Worker and works as CEO for WoBe AG in Bern, Switzerland. WoBe AG is a leading organisation in the field of green care, where social work and nature come together. She has an MSc in Social Work and is a trained mediator and trauma counsellor.



Shanti Raghavan

Founder EnAble India, Ashoka Fellow, Schwab Social Innovator

Keynote Speech 1

Unlocking Caring Societies via Purple Economy

How do caring societies get developed systemically? Did you know that after the 1800s, caring flourished when patients received better healthcare?

With the advent of goods, services and systems around patient care, an economy around healthcare developed and the narrative of diminished value due to low life expectancy changed for patients. We are at a pivotal moment in time where we can accelerate caring societies by applying the lens of goods, services and systems around persons with disability and people with difficulties. This will also result in jobs and businesses and the narrative of value will flourish around disability. We call this the purple economy – purple being the color for disability. With difficulties increasing thanks to longer life spans, decreased quality of life, climate change and more, we all need to focus on purple economy!

Shanti Raghavan is the Founder of EnAble India, a pioneering international organization that works on ecosystems around livelihoods for persons with disability. She has been recognized as a Schwab Social Innovator, an Ashoka Fellow and has been a speaker at the World Economic Forum. She has pioneered livelihoods across 21 disability types. This has resulted in a shift in narratives about persons with disability as valuable members of society, active citizens, change makers and nation builders. EnAble India has impacted 500'000 stakeholders across 28 states in India and more than 45 countries. Shanti now works for systems change at population scale.



Monica Pinilla-Roncancio

Assistant Professor Universidad de los Andes, Associate Research Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and Centre for Inclusive Policy

Keynote Speech 2

How to support a caring society and inclusion of persons with disabilities? Lessons from the Global South

In the last decade, the number of countries designing and implementing care systems or programmes has increased, particularly in Latin America. This trend has resulted from the pressure of feminist groups aiming to reduce the amount of care and unpaid work that women undertake. In the context of care systems, people with disabilities have been seen as dependent and reliant on care, ignoring that persons with disability are autonomous and not all people with disabilities need care or the same level of care. Indeed, most care systems have not included a human rights perspective that would lead to a more nuanced understanding of the links between disability and care. This presentation will focus on care dependency and autonomy, emphasizing that the inclusion of people with disabilities in care systems should prioritize recognizing their autonomy, as well as their roles in receiving and providing care. Examples from countries in the global South that have implemented care and disability policies promoting the autonomy of persons with disabilities will illustrate this approach.

Mónica Pinilla-Roncancio is a physiotherapist with a Master's degree in Economics from Universidad del Rosario and a Master's in Health Economics, Policy, and Law from Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands. She obtained her a PhD in Social Policy at the University of Birmingham, UK. From 2016 to 2018, she worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the Universidad de los Andes (Colombia), where she is now an Assistant Professor and Associate Researcher at the Sustainable Development Goals Research Centre. Since 2014, she has been associated with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. Mónica has over 15 years of experience analysing the relationship between disability and poverty in low- and middle-income countries.



Roundtable

Towards the Second World Summit for Social Development:
Promoting caring societies and inclusion for persons
with disabilities



Facundo Chavez Penillas

Human Rights and Disability Advisor, United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Facundo Chávez Penillas is the Human Rights and Disability Advisor at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, a position he has held since 2013. A trained lawyer, he completed graduate studies in business law and human rights law. Prior to joining the UN, Facundo worked in the Disability Department at the Ombudsperson Office in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and at a corporate law firm. He has also been actively involved with organizations representing persons with disabilities at national, regional, and international levels.



Wilaiporn (Kae) Kotbungkair

Associate Professor of Social Work, Thammasat University

Wilaiporn (Kae) Kotbungkair is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Thammasat University, Thailand. She holds a Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Counselor Education from Michigan State University and an M.Sc. in Rehabilitation Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Currently, she is the President of the Thailand Association of Social Workers and a Regional Commissioner for the IFSW-AP at the UN. Her work focuses on counseling, disability, social work competency development, and education. Dr. Kotbungkair has received a Fulbright Fellowship at Vanderbilt University and the Outstanding Professional Social Worker Award from the Prakorn Foundation.



Pradeep Bagival

Disability Inclusion & Social Protection Specialist
Handicap International – Humanity & Inclusion

Pradeep Bagival currently serves as the global Disability Inclusion and Social Protection Specialist with Handicap International. He is the former Assistant Commissioner for Disabilities in the Government of India and has served as a Disability Inclusion Advisor to various UN agencies, including UNDP, UNICEF, and WHO, as well as international NGOs. He has advised governments in India, Afghanistan, Cambodia, North Korea, and Lao PDR on mainstreaming disability into development policies and programmes. With 26 years of experience advocating for the human rights of persons with disabilities, he has influenced policy and legislative changes for disability-inclusive development.



Stefan Tromel

Senior Disability Specialist, International Labour Organization

Stefan Tromel has been a Senior Disability Specialist at the International Labour Organization (ILO) since August 2013. Previously, he served as the Executive Director of the International Disability Alliance from 2008 to 2013 and held the position of Director at the European Disability Forum (EDF) from 1999 to 2004. Tromel played an active role in the negotiation process of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from 2002 to 2006.

Reflections & Closing Remarks



Pierre Margot-Cattin

Professor, School of Social Work Valais (HETS-VS)

Pierre Margot-Cattin is a lawyer (LLM from McGill University and Neuchâtel University) and an ethnologist. He is currently an Associate Professor at the Valais School of Social Work at the University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland (Hes-so/Valais) and teaches in the Master's programme in Social Work (MATS/Hes-so). He served as chairperson of the Swiss Council for Equality and Disability for five years. An expert in disability issues, he focuses on the impact of social representations and the conceptualization of disability. Additionally, he has expertise in human rights related to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He is a user of an electric-powered wheelchair and is married with two sons.



Natasha Trotman

Researcher, Activist and Co-Chair of the Disabilities,
Intersectionalities and Eco-Social Contracts working group
(Global Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social
Contract, GRAN-ESC)

Natasha Trotman is a multi-award-winning Equalities Designer, researcher, activist, and co-chair of the Disabilities, Intersectionalities and Eco-Social Contracts working group of the GRAN-ESC, co-convened by UNRISD and GEC. Her cross-sector practice expands knowledge on neurodivergence and cognitive difference, including non-typical ways of being, eco-inclusion, and marginalized experiences, while reframing mainstream notions of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion. Previously, she worked as a Research Associate at The Royal College of Art's Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design and the Wellcome Collection Hub, contributing to projects like Wellcome's Social Justice Curriculum and serving on local government boards.



Jean-Félix Savary

Director, School of Social Work Geneva (HETS-GE)

Jean-Félix Savary holds degrees in political science and public administration and is a recognized expert in the field of addictions. He began his career at the University Institute for Development Studies (IUED, now IHEID) before serving as the Secretary General of the Groupement Romand d'Étude des Addictions (GREAA), an association that brings together professionals from the social, health, medical, and security sectors, as well as public authorities. With 20 years of management experience, extensive interdisciplinary expertise, and with a strong commitment to addressing grassroots challenges, he has been leading the Geneva School of Social Work since 2022.



Christos Panagiotopoulos

President of the European Association of Schools of
Social Work (EASSW) & Professor of Social Work,
University of Nicosia

Professor Christos Panagiotopoulos received his PhD in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Practice and Research, from The University of Manchester in 2002. He is currently teaching at the undergraduate and postgraduate level in Social Work at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Nicosia and an adjunct Professor at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki at a postgraduate level in the field of addiction and criminal Law. His research interests focus on mental health and well-being of children and families and child protection. He is a member of the Editorial board in the European Journal of Social Work, the Greek journal of addictions and a member in e-journal in educational research. Since 2019, he has been the President of the European Association of Schools of Social Work and vice president in the IASSW. He has published a series of articles in journals related to Social Work Education and Mental Health. He is also editor in the Greek book "School and Social Work; applied interdisciplinary practices" and "Financial Crisis and Social Work; Mediterranean vignettes".