

Side Event at CSocD64

Empowering Social Workers in a Changing World: New Competencies and Partnerships for Inclusive Social Development

Organizing Entity:

Qatar Foundation for Social Work

Partners:

UNICEF, UNESCO

Background and Rationale

In line with the Doha Declaration issued by the Second World Summit for Social Development, and with the Commission's theme for this year—

“Advancing social development and social justice through coordinated, equitable and inclusive policies”—

this side event highlights the pivotal role of social workers in translating global and national commitments into tangible outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.

With increasing digital risks, growing family vulnerabilities, rising mental health pressures, and expanding requirements for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, social workers today require new tools, stronger institutional support, and innovative methodologies to respond effectively to evolving challenges. Strengthening the social work workforce is therefore a core pillar for building inclusive, coordinated, and equitable social development systems.

Qatar Foundation for Social Work, representing eight specialized social centers, proposes convening a joint session in collaboration with UNICEF and UNESCO to explore future-oriented approaches that enhance the capacities, competencies, and well-being of social work professionals. The session will also highlight the **“Art Lab”** program—a collaboration between UNESCO and Qatar Foundation for Social Work—which demonstrates how creative, art-based approaches can support psychosocial services within social work practice.

This event directly aligns with the core theme of the Commission by positioning social workers as key drivers of the implementation of equitable and inclusive policies. Their role in child protection, disability inclusion, youth development, mental health promotion, and community empowerment makes them essential actors in coordinated social responses.

The event also responds to the call to action from the Second World Summit for Social Development, which urges Member States to invest in people-centered development, strengthen national social protection systems, and equip frontline workers with the capabilities required to

address emerging risks. By showcasing innovative models—such as the Art Lab initiative and UNICEF’s competency development programs—the event demonstrates how partnerships, creativity, and new skill sets can accelerate inclusive social development.

Objectives / Rationale

- Highlight the central role of social workers in advancing inclusive social development.
- Identify emerging competencies, digital tools, and innovative approaches needed to address new social challenges.
- Strengthen cooperation among governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations, and academic institutions to support the development of the social work workforce.
- Showcase how innovative approaches—such as art-based psychosocial support—enhance the effectiveness and well-being of social workers.

Key Discussion Questions

- What new competencies do social workers need in rapidly changing social environments?
- How can innovation and technology support social work practice without deepening inequalities?
- How can creative approaches such as the Art Lab program strengthen psychosocial support systems?

Proposed Speakers

- **Rashid Al Nuaimi** – Chief Executive Officer, Qatar Foundation for Social Work
- **Najla Al Thani** – Executive Director, Dreama Center
- **Ghanem Al Ali** – Executive Director, Nama Center
- **UNICEF** (TBC)
- **UNESCO Representative** (TBC)
- **Ghada Al Subaey** – Director of Advocacy and International Relations, Qatar Foundation for Social Work (*Moderator*)