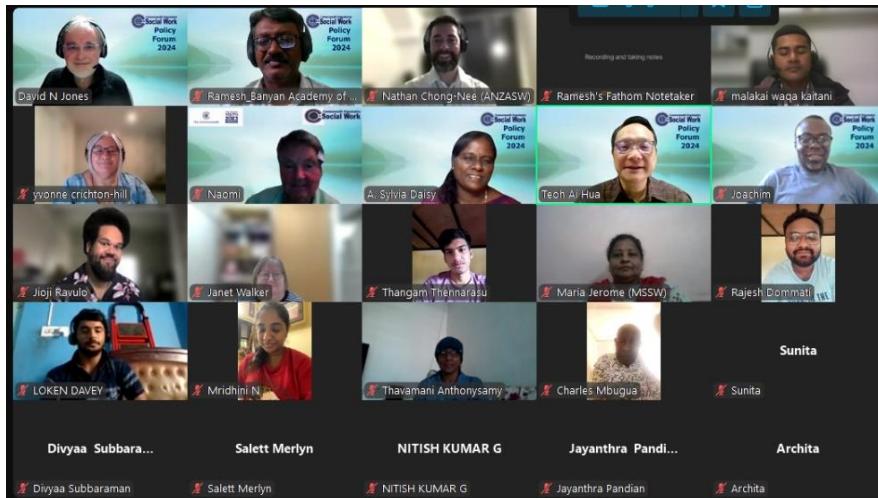


**SOCIAL WORK INFLUENCING THE COMMONWEALTH AGENDA
COSW POLICY FORUM 9 NOVEMBER 2024**

Social work's significant contribution to policy and practice in The Commonwealth was reported and celebrated in the third annual Policy Forum held over two online sessions on 9 November 2024. This statement is an overview of the presentations which can also be seen in a video of the event available on the [COSW website](#).



COSW President, Sylvia Daisy Romanus, welcomed the international participants.

The Commonwealth is home to 2.7 billion people, about one-third of the global population, and includes both advanced economies and developing countries. The Commonwealth is a network of peoples within a voluntary association of 56 independent countries, most of which have a shared colonial history. Civil society is the third pillar of The Commonwealth, alongside the member states and the inter-governmental institutions including the Secretariat. The Commonwealth's strengths in promoting prosperity, democracy, and peace through common language, economic, trade, educational, legal, and financial systems were highlighted.



Nicholas Watts, Chair of the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO) reflected on civil society within The Commonwealth in conversation with Board Member David N Jones. He welcomed the contribution of COSW to IFCO debates and strategies.

The formal status of COSW as an Accredited Commonwealth Organisation was described, enabling access to ministerial meetings and regular dialogue with the Secretary-General. The COSW contributions to Commonwealth advisory committees and reports, was highlighted, alongside participation in Commonwealth events and receptions.



COSW representatives at the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa reported on three high profile contributions: 1) the COSW side event in the People's Forum 'Indigenous values and knowledge - often integrated into social work practices - can build healthier and fairer communities'; 2) the presentation to the Youth Forum on the Commonwealth Charter for Young Carers; and 3) the COSW contribution to the CHOGM side event on activating the Kigali Declaration on Child Care and Safeguarding Reform', jointly convened by the Commonwealth Children Interest Group and the Commonwealth Secretariat. These themes will be pursued over the coming year.

COSW is invariably working in partnership with others. Some of these partnerships were explored, including the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO), the Commonwealth Children's Interest Group (ComCIG), the Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance (CHPA) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). The COSW flagship projects were mentioned, including the Young Carers Charter, developing social work in the South Pacific, exploring the history of social work across the Commonwealth, and contributing to the Commonwealth's focus on ageing well.

COSW communication channels were identified, including the website, social media and the periodic Newsletter. Over the past year, COSW has participated in webinars on topics such as regulating the social work profession, building resilience in healthcare systems, and addressing the rising burden of non-communicable diseases in the Commonwealth.

Thank you to all the young carers who sent their videos in support of the Commonwealth Charter for Young Carers.

Young carers from Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, England, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Tanzania, Uganda and New Zealand.

A [video](#) produced by COSW and the Young Carers Alliance, funded by the Commonwealth Year of Youth, featured young carers from 11 countries sharing their experiences and calling for support and recognition from decision-makers.

COSW has adopted a new governance framework to enable sustainable international growth and development. Progress was reported on identifying national representatives to sit on the new COSW Council.

"COSW activity is almost totally dependent on the voluntary commitment of Board members and others", concluded COSW President Sylvia Daisy Romanus. "It is hoped that the new COSW Council will expand the numbers involved and the scope for advocacy in the future. This Policy Forum has shown that the social work voice continues to resonate through Commonwealth spaces", she concluded.

NOTE TO EDITORS

COSW is an organisation for citizens of the Commonwealth who are interested in supporting social work and social development. It is supported by social work associations in the Commonwealth. It aims to promote and support communication and collaboration between social workers and social work associations of Commonwealth countries, and to uphold and promote the code of ethics of the International Federation of Social Workers. This statement can be found on the [COSW website](#).

The COSW team at CHOGM in Samoa included:

- **Associate Professor Yvonne Crichton-Hill** (Head of Delegation), University of Canterbury, Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand
- **Malakai Waqa**, Interim President of the Association of Fiji Social Workers, University of the South Pacific
- **Nathan Chong-Nee**, Chief Executive, Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW)
- **Naomi Spencer** (COSW Board Member, Australia)
- **Andrzej Frank** (young carer advocate, UK)
- **Professor Jioji Ravulo** (South Pacific policy analyst, Fiji/Australia)

Support by **David N Jones** (COSW Main Representative to the Commonwealth) liaising from the UK.

Commonwealth Heads of Government meet in a summit every two years alongside civil society representatives. As an Accredited Commonwealth Organisation, COSW can make submissions to CHOGM and send representatives to meetings, including observing the meeting of Foreign Ministers, attending the opening ceremony and reception and participating in the People's, Women's and Youth Forums. In the context of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(2015-2030\)](#), CHOGM reviews social policy, security, economic issues and the global situation.

A resilient future for children [briefing paper](#) is available at <https://cosw.info/cosw-news/>.

CHOGM 2024 website <https://samoachogm2024.ws/>

Commonwealth Charter for Young Carers <https://cosw.info/young-cares/>

Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations [submission](#) to CHOGM 2024.

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