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## Empowering Communities Through Knowledge and Research



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By Haroon Rashid Qureshi | rki.news | Doha

### Lauren Graham of ICSD Highlights 50 Years of Global Social Development Efforts

During the Second World Summit for Social Development held in Doha, rki.news had the

opportunity to speak with Lauren Graham, Vice President for Special Projects at the International

Consortium for Social Development (ICSD)—a global network of academics and researchers

working to advance social progress through research, policy engagement, and knowledge sharing.

Lauren Graham explained that ICSD serves as a knowledge-building organization that connects professionals and institutions around the world. “We are a network of academics and researchers focused on the field of social development. Our main goal is to build and share knowledge through research and use that knowledge to influence effective policy and practice,” she said.

With regional branches across Asia-Pacific, Africa, Europe, and North America, ICSD maintains a strong global presence. The organization consists of both institutional and individual members who collaborate to address pressing social challenges. “We’re celebrating our 50th anniversary this year – five decades of promoting global dialogue and advancing research for development,” Graham noted proudly.

All ICSD members serve on a voluntary basis, a fact Graham attributes to their shared commitment to advancing human welfare. “It’s deeply rewarding to see research contribute to positive change at local, national, and international levels,” she emphasized.

When asked about accessibility for newcomers, Graham stressed that social development is not confined to academia. “People working on the ground – community workers, practitioners, and activists – hold valuable, experience-based knowledge. You don’t need to be a professor to

understand social development. Lived experience is equally vital,” she explained.

Highlighting the balance between theory and practice, she added, “Knowledge doesn’t come only from books. Experience, especially hands-on community work, is just as important. Social development thrives when researchers and practitioners learn from each other.”

Speaking about her personal motivation, Graham said she is passionate about helping people reach their full potential. “My work focuses on identifying and removing barriers that prevent individuals and communities from thriving. Seeing people overcome challenges is what inspires me most.”