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Dear Colleagues,

### **Happy New Year 2024 to All Social Workers in Malawi**

As we begin a New Year, this is a good opportunity to reflect back on all our achievements in 2023 – and to look forward to a productive 2024 as we continue to demonstrate our commitment to the development of our profession as social workers.

#### **1.0. Background**

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Association of Social Workers in Malawi (ASWIM) would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude and admiration to our all our members and partners for your continued dedication towards strengthening Social Work in Malawi. The year 2023 was a remarkable year for ASWIM as it continued to bring and work together with diverse stakeholders through fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange focusing on different domains of social work practice along the continuum of social protection and care.

As Social Workers we continue to provide essential support and respond to acute and challenging circumstances. We demonstrate great resolve and resilience in providing vital services to people, families, and communities. The operational context in Malawi was very tough for social work as 2023 will go down in history as the year when Malawi experienced one of the worst ever humanitarian crisis in form of Tropical Cyclone Freddy (TCF). This resulted in extensive loss of life and damage to infrastructures. ASWIM also noted with great concern the emerging and escalating social challenges such as the increased intensity and impact of climate change on vulnerable populations; escalation of HIV and AIDS with disproportionate effect on women, children and young people; continued violence against children and vulnerable people; the burden and stigma of mental illness on the lives of people; the impact of drug misuse by young people; the continuing burden of poverty and inequality; reports of corruption and human rights

abuse; increased numbers of cases of violence against older persons some of which has led to their murder; increased numbers of people committing suicide including children. As Social Workers we have continued to demonstrate our vital role and meet our responsibilities and find pathways to respond to complex, multi-dimensional social issues.

Looking ahead, we must continue to leverage our collective expertise, knowledge, skills and values to confront these social challenges of our time. We have to remain strong, be more resilient and remain committed to building a vibrant social work profession in Malawi that is able to tackle the most pressing issues facing our communities and our nation Malawi, as well as represent our profession in the international social work community.

## **2.0. The year 2023 achievements highlights**

- ASWIM experienced increased membership from a total of eighty (80) paid up members to three hundred (three hundred) in all membership categories (full membership, associate membership and student membership). Furthermore, ASWIM received membership fees from Magomero college, one of the social work teaching institutions. There are also many people that have expressed willingness to join the Association and become fully paid-up members from both government and Civil Society partner organizations.
- ASWIM conducted a meeting with Members of Parliament (MPs), including members from the Social Welfare and Development Committee and Budget and Finance Committee of Parliament at Linde Hotel in Mponela to lobby for their support in passing of the Social Workers Bill once it is bought forward to the House for consideration. The MPs from both committees are in full support of the Bill. It remains for the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) to finalise the administrative processes of submitting the bill to Cabinet through MoGCDSW before the Bill is bought to Parliament for deliberation and endorsement.
- ASWIM successfully entered into a partnership with Project Hope Namibia to implement the ANAPA project<sup>1</sup>. This five-year project (2024- 28) will act as a game changer for the professionalization of social work in Malawi. It will accelerate the implementation of the ASWIM workplan which is premised on four (4) critical thematic areas as follows; (i) Regulation; (ii) Social Work Education and Training for Social

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<sup>1</sup> The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) established the 95-95-95 targets calling for 95% of all people living with HIV to know their HIV status, 95% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection to receive sustained antiretroviral therapy, and 95% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy to have viral suppression by 2030. This ANAPA Project will contribute to the achievement of the 95-95-95 goals and reaching and sustaining epidemic control in Malawi by helping to reduce lifetime risk of HIV acquisition and achieve durable viral suppression among children, adolescents, and their families. ANAPA's goal is to improve the health, well-being, and protection of children and adolescents (and their families) living with, affected by, and vulnerable to HIV through high-impact service delivery and district-level social service system strengthening to sustain an effective response for children, adolescents, and their families through locally led solutions.

Workers and Paraprofessionals; (iii) Human Resources; and (iv) Resource Mobilization and Advocacy.

- ASWIM, with support from the French Embassy and in partnership with Valued Citizens of South Africa, successfully rolled out ISQALO II training on sexuality education to support ending of child marriages to two hundred social workers in Blantyre and Lilongwe. The training was conducted once a week across seven weeks. Each of the trained two hundred social workers have also been trained to cascade the same training to a further 25 practitioners, making the reach of the programme 5,000 beneficiaries.
- ASWIM with support from Supporting Social Workers in Malawi (SSWIM-UK) and contribution from well-wisher Social Workers, successfully offered Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services to a total of two thousand five hundred (2,500) survivors of Tropical Cyclone Freddy (TCF). Survivors were living as Internally Displaced Persons (IPDs) in Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Phalombe and Mulanje. What was encouraging, and to be commended as the demonstration of the commitment and compassion of social workers, was the large numbers of our social workers that came out to volunteer and render their services to all the affected people and those who were displaced.
- ASWIM successfully coordinated the mobilization of relief support from fellow social workers across Malawi (North, Central, Eastern and South) as well as SWIM- UK, which included blankets, clothes, dignity kits, maize to a total of six thousand (6000) beneficiaries in the following districts: Phalombe, Mulanje, Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Chikwawa and Zomba districts. This practical support helped to provide relief to the affected people who were in dire need of this support as a result of the impact of TCF.
- ASWIM successfully organized the building of two houses. One was in Blantyre for a child headed, unaccompanied and separated children household who had lost their house and property in Lunzu, Blantyre. The other was for a female headed household, whose household was swept away in Namchidwa in Mulanje. The construction and handover of these houses represented a great transformation in the families. Furthermore, for the Blantyre children headed household ASWIM managed to link them up with Islamic Relief for the unconditional cash transfer support which will help the children to continue with their education while building assets for future livelihood.
- We successfully organized a virtual training on Humanitarian Response to Disasters and Conflict as part of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The training which was timely as it came during the period of TCF response and recovery equipped social workers with ethical principles that guide humanitarian response to conflict and disaster. Facilitated by eminent trainers Professor Janet Walker from Lincoln University and British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and Shonshon Tama Sweet from Alliance for Children Everywhere (ACE), the training equipped the forty (40) social workers who attended with knowledge and skills on how to effectively

respond during disasters as well as provide Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to the survivors.

Fellow social workers, we look forward a successful 2024 as we aim to double our effort and strengthen our partnerships with various stakeholders in the making the social work profession in Malawi stronger. I implore you fellow social workers to double your efforts as we work together towards a progress and professionalized Social Work profession. As ever we are open to listening to your views and opinions in the support of the development of our social work profession.

Wishing you all a Happy New Year 2024.

**Chisangalalo Ntonio**

**President- Association of Social Workers in Malawi (ASWIM)**