



## **IFSW Africa Regional report to the 2018 General Meeting**

### **1. Brief Summary of the report**

Social work in the land of the sun remains troubling and troubled. Having largely been imported, the profession remains unknown, misunderstood and viewed with suspicion. Against this and other factors, IFSW Arica region has remained characterised by diversity, potential and opportunity. The region has the list number of members offering potential for growth and contribution of different social work voices to global debates.

### **2. 2016 – 2018 Regional Goals**

Social Work in this particular part of the continent has been not visibly manifested and hence need to be introduced formerly as a profession by bringing together few professionals who are working individually into some kind of groups and associations before bringing them together to form National Associations as first stage of mobilization.

### **3. Evaluation of the region's goals**

The Regional meeting held in Kampala Uganda on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014, identified a number of inadequacies. These included the lack of a facilitated regional structure, failure by members to pay dues and contributions and a lack of resources to effectively meet the regional demands. The same meeting recommended the establishment of a regional executive and selection of sub regional contact persons. The meeting argued that these developments would provide regional visibility and built regional capacity to face the challenges.

#### 4. Regional Achievements

We report a number of achievements in the region. With support from IFSW, an interim regional executive was instituted in January 2017. The regional representatives are Mr. Joseph Kayinga: Central Africa; Dr Ibrahim: North Africa; Ms Alice Mbiyu: East Africa; Mr. Fela Bright: West Africa and Dr Noel Muridzo: Southern Africa. The Regional meeting of June 2017 endorsed the Interim Executive and the 2019 election road map. The Regional executive is part of the strengthening the IFSW structures in Africa. In addition to sub regional roles the regional executives have different functions, with people being responsible for different roles. With such a structure, the region is in a much better position to follow up with regional and wider funding opportunities.

Zambia hosted a successful 2017 Regional conference. We are appreciative of the assistance received from IFSW Global. The Secretary General and the Regional president visited Zambia in January 2017 to support and help profile the conference. The region applied and was given assistance from IFSW. This funding was invested in social work practitioners and Regional members. The funds were used to ensure the participation of members. The seed money also brought down the conference fees ensuring the attendance of social workers who may have not afforded the conference.



The visit by the IFSW delegation strategically mobilised resources for the conference from civic and international partners. We are happy to report that our member benefited in terms of not realising a loss and profiling of the Association.



Other spinoff from the conference we are reliably inform include an increase in members, profiling of the professional and recognition by the National Government. The Global President was part of the Conference delegates. Again, the visit stimulated interest and exchange of experiences among social work students and social work practitioners. Below are pictures of the conference in pictures.





*IFSW supported conferences and photos*

Regional members also registered a number of achievements during the period under review. Up to now the engagement work with DR Congo is promising a lot. Currently there is an informal (not accredited by Government) Association of Social Workers predominantly available in Eastern part of DRC, The Association is receiving little support from Austria and running a project to help Women prone by wars meet some financial challenges through a self-support and revolving fund. Also the group is linked

to Bukavu Catholic University which has Social Work program. Together they have started to work for profession development in the Country. In addition, social workers in DRC have organised global conferences, we change leaders after four years in office and we have a new constitution that was adopted in 2013.

Our member Kenya, establishment of social work clubs to foster professionalism right from the schools as well as tap into the ideas and energy of young social workers. Social workers in Kenya were able to form task forces that will spearhead the activities of the association. These taskforces include: The Act- whose goal is to deliver the act; Fundraising-whose goal is to raise ksh 2.5m by December, 2018; Networking- whose goal is to forge vibrant collaborations; Programmes; whose goal is to develop integrated high impact programmes; and strategic plan-whose plan is to deliver a strategic plan by 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2018.

Social workers in republic of Guinea are making strides to popularize the profession in the country, volunteer social work teams organised community sensitization campaigns to educate the general public about the social work profession and how much the populace could benefit from their professional services. The relevance of the profession truly stood out during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. This prompted the association's membership to demonstrate patriotism as well as upholding the code of ethics in their service delivery venture. It was challenging though but yielded positive results by being part of the whole in kicking the Ebola virus out of West Africa.

The team has been grappling and continues to grapple with sensitization on the dangers of human trafficking, handling bereavements for those families receiving reports of losing their children and those already repatriated and handling cases of the few serving as slaves in such countries as Libya, Algeria and Morocco. The association's response had been and continues to be positive by restoring the hopes of the young people that all is not lost. The team is already working with other civil society organisations to provide alternative sources of livelihood for those desperate young people wanting to leave Africa for Europe and those that had been repatriated already. Documentation is been done and returnees are been used as true tellers of their stories to those desperate young people

wanting to take the risk. The association is playing a key role in setting the stage for VIOLNCE AGAINST WOMEN IS VIOLENCE AGAINST THE STATE campaign.

Sierra Leone experienced its first worst disaster on august 14<sup>th</sup>2017 resulting from torrential rainfall leading to mud slides and flooding which left thousands unaccounted for and homes buried under mother earth. With a formidable team of social workers standing as an association, some working with other national and international non-governmental organisations, stood up to the challenge rendering selfless service to cushion the plight of victims. Social workers handled bereavements, listened to the woes of victims and taking notes for documentation and doing referrals either for health care, psycho social care or some other form of therapy. The insistence of social workers in revealing the ills of the coordinating team with regards poor and corrupt handling of gift items and cash flows for victims spurred the opposition political parties call for their participation in the coordination effort to ensure for transparency and accountability As social workers, they took up the reunification of several kids to the interior for which support was been solicited from the coordinating.

Nigeria was able to deploy all social media tools in encouraging professionals to ensure they register as members and to also attend our quarterly members' meetings. This exercise and advocacy is a continuous one that is also part of the program for year 2018.



Social workers are engaged in a number of activities benefiting people and communities that they work with. Such activities include training of volunteers' and free pre-operation counselling. Social workers have also engaged politicians as a way to influence social policy.



*Meeting with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry*

Other notable achievements in the region include the membership of Egypt, Malawi, Sierra Leonean and Guinea. The Region is exploring ways of working with the South African Association. We also report sub regional cooperation and sharing of experiences among members. Following the conference international social work conference in Rwanda, from 19 to 22 March, 2018, with the theme: ‘ Professional social work and Sustainable development in Africa’, that was organized under the auspices of CRISOWO- the East Africa Centre for Research and Innovation in Social Work, Kenya organised for a talk titled “TOWARDS A UNITED SOCIAL WORK FRONT:LESSONS FROM RWANDA”,there was a hig appreciation of IFSW global as it sponsored the members of the African chapter Mr Joseph and Mr Fela representively.



*A group picture of Social Workers from DR Congo with kenyan social workers, Tanzania Social Workers Association-TASWO*

We learn of cooperation between Sierra Leonean and Guinea; DRC and Tanzania and study visits between Zambia and Zimbabwe.

## **5. World Social Work Day Activities 2017 and 2018**

World Social Work day is commemorated annually. Themes for the celebration have been informed by IFSW Global. The following pictures show some of the regional World Social Work day commemorations.





## **6. Regional Challenges**

Notwithstanding the above achievements, we recognise a number of challenges. Firstly, very few countries in Africa have legal frameworks that legalize their practice despite having formal studies. This therefore means that employment and practice for social workers remain at the mercy of politicians or institutional heads who have little or no idea of what social work entails. Policies guiding practice by social workers is also largely left to parties that assume a lot about social work. Resultantly, there are few employment opportunities for social workers. Other area of key concern is lack professional expertise in other vital fields such as clinical social work and psychiatric social work. The above challenges are compounded by lack of schools of social work and opportunities for continuous training.

Secondly, member associations face resources challenges. Apart from the common challenge of inadequate funds that still inhibits their work deeply. Thirdly, poor leadership has played a very big role in the failures of social workers to champion for their cause. In addition, lack of consistency, lack of commitment and self-interest more often supersedes the interest of the association has been the downfall associations. A Splinter group noncompliance to team up with the national association is another challenge among member association.

Fourthly, there seems to be a lack of awareness of the social work profession by practitioners and the general populations about social work. Lastly, members find it beyond their means to attend national, regional and international conferences and meetings

## **7. Aspirations of the region 2018 – 2020 and beyond**

Africa dares to dream. The land of the Sun considers the following a reality.

- 2019 Conference
- 2022 Global Conference
- Regional Capacity Building
- To share our practice experiences

## **8. Conclusion**

In a nutshell, the challenges we have are real. We've had them since the beginning of social work in African region in general and they continue even today. Nevertheless, we have decided to take them head on-to face our fears, push our limits and set aside our differences. What is needed is a little push and support because we cannot do it alone.