



International Federation of Social Workers **Fédération**
Internationale des Travailleurs Sociaux **Federación**
Internacional de Trabajadores sociales



IFSW – AFRICA Regional Report (July 2018 - June 2020)

The 2020 IFSW Online General Meeting

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Contents

INTRODUCTION..... 3

1. MEMBERS..... 3

2. ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED AND ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE PERIOD IN THE REGION 3

3. CHALLENGES IN THE REGION 6

4. KEY PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS 6

CONCLUSION..... 6



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INTRODUCTION

The IFSW Africa region report is a summary of activities implemented in the during the period under reporting. The report gives a brief picture about membership to the federation in the region and also highlights achievements, good practices as well as challenges during the period July 2018 – June 2020. It also outlines a summary of strategic activities and initiatives the regions seek to prioritise between now and June 2022. The vision for IFSW African Leadership is to grow the profession through strengthening of National Associations, enhancing the visibility of African social workers within the region and at the global level as well as deliberate engagements with region political and economic blocs such as AU, ECOWAS, SADC, EAC etc. The report ends with a concluding statement.

1. MEMBERS

- The region now comprises of 27 IFSW members who are working toward ensuring that the profession is recognised. (14 active members i.e. Botswana, Burundi, Rwanda, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Guinea, Democratic Republic of Congo and Morocco)
- New Members: 01 Democratic Republic of Congo
- New Applications: there are no new applications yet except for Mozambique, the Gambia, Ethiopia, Togo and Ivory Coast who have expressed interest to join IFSW

2. ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED AND ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE PERIOD IN THE REGION

During the period under review, IFSW Africa Region galvanized national associations in the region to work in collaboration with their respective governments and other key stakeholders to respond to COVID-19 pandemic. Most national associations within the region mobilized social workers to work on voluntary basis to support families and children affected by COVID-19 pandemic. Some social workers were supported by respective national associations to effectively respond to the pandemic within the agency they practice through professional support on how to deal with ethical dilemmas amidst COVID-19 response as well as how to manage own stress and burnout. Individual country campaign and share social work stories in the media.

In collaboration with other stakeholders such as UNICEF, Global Social Service Workforce Alliance and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, IFSW Africa region contributed to the development of the Guidance note for care and protection of the social service workforce amid COVID-19. The guidance note was shared to all the member Associations.

The IFSW Africa Region embarked on a using social media to share best practices and experiences of difference countries social work responses to COVID 19. Respective National Associations were encouraged to share narrative reports about their activities, lessons and challenges in terms of social work response to COVID-19. In collaboration with Children and Families International Foundation, IFSW Africa Region hosted 6 zoom webinar conversation series dubbed Social workers responds to COVID-19.



International Federation of Social Workers
Internationale des Travailleurs Sociaux
Federación Internacional de Trabajadores sociales

The conversations which featured a number of social work practitioners selected from different member countries were streamed live on the IFSW global Facebook page with over 12,000 views globally. The Regional also initiated webinar series in French and was considering to initiate one for Portuguese speaking countries in Africa. It is evident from the feedback received so far that webinar conversations have yielded positive impact and contributed immensely in raising the voices of African social workers' whilst affording them platform to tell their social work practice stories.

As a response to COVID-19, members of the National Association of Social Workers in Uganda were incorporated in the national technical team that developed guidelines and tools for the operations research, sharing of new knowledge to influence policy and facilitate program learning and adaptation in regard to COVID-19 prevention and response. Our member in Uganda just as Tanzania, empowered frontline service providers that included social workers, para-social workers, volunteers and community gate keepers with information for on-going prevention and response to COVID-19 pandemic.

During the period under review, Kenya hosted the East African young careers conference which takes place every two years. The conference brought together a number of young careers from the East African communities namely Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania as well as Malawi. Young Careers from the UK and Canada joined in through live stream to share their experiences.

IFSW Africa Region notes that during the period under review, a number of national associations were involved with programmes in correctional facilities. Kenya for example worked on the ex-prisoner reunification and community awareness raising programmes with families and the community. This was done in collaboration with religious institutions and community awareness program. On the other hand, the association in the Democratic Republic of Congo provided food and counselling services to women and youth prisoners.

During the period under review, the Association in Zambia worked in partnership with UNICEF Zambia and the Government Ministry of Community Development and Social Services to implement a project dubbed "*Service Efficiency and Effectiveness for Vulnerable Children and Adolescents (SEEVCA)*". The project was aimed at supporting the Government in 15 Districts through secondment of Social Workers to strengthen local level case management system for Vulnerable Children and Adolescents through building capacities of community volunteers and para-social workers to identify vulnerable children and adolescents, assess their needs and link them to available services. On the other hand, the association in Burundi, embarked on a project to promote Zero tolerance for teen pregnancy in schools. NASW Burundi embarked on sensitization campaigns in selected schools to reduce school drop out of girls due to child pregnancies. In order to enhance sustainability and effectiveness of the project, small groups of peer educators were established in every target school.

The region also notes that a number of social workers in respective member countries took part in responding to poverty reduction initiatives and humanitarian crisis situations such as floods in Burundi, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Social workers have also responded to the effects of Cyclone Ida that hit the countries of Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. Due to the fact that most countries in Africa are resource constrained and that social workers are not adequately prepared to respond



**International Federation of Social Workers Fédération
Internationale des Travailleurs Sociaux Federación
Internacional de Trabajadores sociales**

to huge natural disaster such as floods, cyclones and pandemic, the regions appeals for cross learning and sharing of skills and knowledge with country members that have experience responding to such humanitarian disasters.

IFSW Africa Region has been encouraging its members to uphold constitutionalism and ensure they hold elections within national association. During the period under review, a number of National Associations reported to have democratically held elections for their respective national associations and these include, Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Ghana, Tanzania, Malawi and Uganda. As a strategy of strengthening national associations, IFSW Africa envisages to invest in building capacities of national associations in setting up Governance and financial management systems and the holding of elections is testimony for good governance as well as demonstration that national associations are moving on a self-sustaining and good governance trajectory.

It was evident across Africa that social work is not considered as a profession and given due recognition just as the legal profession, medical practitioners, teachers, engineers etc. during the period under review, there has been a big movement within our member associations to seek legal recognition of social work as a profession. A number of countries such as Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda and Kenya have initiated efforts of drafting pieces of legislation meant for the recognition of social work as a profession. It can be confirmed that at a time of reporting, there were only three countries in the region with laws recognizing social work as a profession i.e. South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Those countries that have commenced the process of pushing for the enactment of social work legislation currently at different stages. IFSW Africa is convinced that for as long as Governments in Africa do not recognize social work as a profession, social workers in the region will continue being subjected to low pay and that most countries will continue sidelining social workers even on issues where the skills of social workers matter and should be valued. As part of the efforts to “*Professionalize of Social Work in Malawi*”, the national association held its 2nd national conference with guest speakers from within the region and the UK.

IFSW Africa region commends national associations that have moved with the regional strategic direction of fostering partnerships within country settings. National Associations were being encouraged to work in close collaboration with their national governments, UN agencies, Non-Governmental organizations as well as other key stakeholders in social service provision. It was evident that the success of the IFSW Africa Region conference hosted by our member, National Association of Social Workers-Uganda was largely due to the creation of strategic partnerships with different role players. The successful hosting of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Africa Region Conference from 28th - 31st October 2019 in Kampala, Uganda is testimony that efforts to foster strategic alliances always yields better outcomes. The conference which saw the participation of well over 400 delegates from 23 countries from Africa and across the globe was held under the theme: “*Strengthening Human Relations for Social, Economic & Political Transformation*”. The conference commenced with a youth forum as a preconference activity with the view of not leaving anyone behind. Participants to the conference included the IFSW Global President – Dr. Silvana Martinez, Immediate past President for IFSW Global – Ruth Stark, Dr. Rory Truell – IFSW Secretary General and Dr. Angelo McClain - Chief Executive Officer for NASW – USA

During the period under review, national associations within the region commemorated World Social Work Day. IFSW Africa region, facilitated sharing of pictures and key messages for respective countries world



International Federation of Social Workers Fédération Internationale des Travailleurs Sociaux Federación Internacional de Trabajadores sociales

social work day commemoration through the Regional WhatsApp group and the IFSW Africa Facebook page. The idea was to encourage cross learning and collaboration within the region.

3. CHALLENGES IN THE REGION

- Most national associations in Africa face challenges of lack of office space and equipment
- Lack of financial resources (limited fundraising ventures with dependent on meagre membership subscription fees). This affects national Associations capacity to remit annual subscription fees to IFSW.
- Lack of legal recognise social work as a profession in most countries
- Lack of resources at Regional level to support strengthening of our member associations
- The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic destabilised most of the planned activities including commemoration of World Social Work day which is usually used as platform for advocacy and engagement with Government of policy influence.
- The changing face of social work as both as a profession and an integral part of civil society activism.
- Social Work is not recognized or respected as a profession in many countries in Africa and as such social workers are oftentimes looked at as volunteers only needed for distributing handouts.
- Lack of standardization of social work training curriculum in most countries in Africa remains a going concern and this negatively impacts on the quality of practice.

4. KEY PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

1. 2012 IFSW AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE to be hosted by Rwanda. The conference expectations are to enhance existing linkages, build new partnerships and collaborations as well as serve as a platform for sharing our social work practice stories and skills development for social work practitioners in Africa
2. Continue hosting webinars to activate the voices of social workers in the region to tell and document their practice stories
3. Provide capacity building support to national associations within the region for purposes of strengthening in the area of governance, setting up of organisational financial systems, resource mobilisation strategy and partnership creation strategy
4. Engage with Regional and national political and economic bodies such as the AU, ECOWAS, SADC, EAC etc for purposes of policy influence
5. Engage Portuguese and French Speaking Countries to Join the IFSW family

CONCLUSION

IFSW Africa region is indebted to its member associations for their commitment to the cause of growing the profession in Africa. We would also like to remember social workers who lost their lives whilst working on the frontline responding to COVID-19. Our hearts and prayers are with the family of STÉPHANE DIMOKIE SHABANTU from the Democratic Republic of Congo who died on June 7, 2020 to COVID-19. May his Soul Rest in Endless Peace.