

COMMUNIQUES ISSUED AT THE END OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE HELD FROM 22ND TO 24TH NOVEMBER 2023 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, NIGERIA.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Africa Region Conference was held from November 22nd – 24, 2023 at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The biannual conference brought together 550 participants from Africa and beyond- Burkina Faso, Canada, Ghana, Ireland, Israel, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom, the United States, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The theme of the conference was **Emerging Social Problems in Africa: The Response of social work Practice**. The sub themes discussed at the conference include:

1. Strengthening the social service workforce: global, regional, and national perspectives.
2. The role of the social service workforce in protecting children from neglect, abuse, violence, and exploitation in particular contexts: humanitarian, alternative care, migration, and public finance for children.
3. Towards the professionalisation of social work in Africa: need for a legal and policy framework
4. Promoting the rights, wellbeing, and care for older persons in Africa.
5. Protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence.
6. Building our future generations: prioritizing young people in social work practice.
7. Reimagining and reforming social work education to meet contemporary social challenges
8. Social work in practice: Innovative approaches to social problems in Africa
9. Social work and human rights
10. Social work and mental health

At the end of the three-day conference, the participants discussed the social problems facing the continent, reiterated the critical role of social workers in addressing these problems and proffered possible solutions which include but are not limited to:

- Strengthening the social service workforce to support vulnerable populations especially children with their families using the framework of planning, developing, and supporting and recognizing the important role of professional associations, government, development partners, civil society organisations, academia, and community actors in this regard.
- Developing innovative approaches, including the adoption of ethical, child safeguarding, technological advancements in the practice of social work.
- Support for the development of a distinct identity for social workers and ensuring the full professionalization of the workforce through registration, accreditation, and certification of social workers.
- Facilitate the development of normative legal and policy framework through the development of a model law for countries to review and adapt to suit their national

contexts for the regulation of the social service workforce, as well as a national strategy and capacity-building plans for social and auxiliary social workforce.

- In recognition of the large participation of social work students at the conference, it was agreed that aspiring social workers should be involved, encouraged, and supported through participation, guidance, mentorship, internships, and practicum opportunities for students.
- Resolved to undertake strategic advocacy to continental, regional and national governments, to sensitize them on the importance of social work practice and to demand for an increase in the current levels of budgetary allocation to social welfare services, particularly for vulnerable populations that include but not limited to children, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, older people, women and, girls.
- In preparation for the Social work Social Development (SWSD2024) Global Conference in Panama in 2024, Africa must demand for the recognition of its contribution to a holistic approach to international social work practice through the lens of 'UBUNTU' emphasizing our humanistic response in dealing with social issues in the community, respecting diversity and promoting inclusivity for sustainable wellbeing.
- To work towards the development a standardized scorecard template for the assessment of the status of countries in the region in terms of their progress towards strengthening the social service workforce with a view to undertaking a status update at future regional conferences to encourage national delegations to strive to improve on their ratings progressively.
- To work with international, regional and national partners including governments to further accelerate strengthening the Social Service Workforce in Africa.
- The conference also commended the Nigeria Association of Social Workers (NASoW), for hosting a conference worthy of emulation and UNICEF for its invaluable contributions and support to the organization of the conference. Lastly, University of Lagos (UNILAG), Government, Participants, and all Stakeholders involved.

Dated This 24th day of November 2023