



International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)
1st sub-regional meeting of social worker associations
West African IFSW members
REPORT

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF DELEGATES OF WEST
AFRICAN ASSOCIATIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS
MEMBERS OF THE IFSW**

LOME, JUNE 28 AND 29, 2024



June 2024

Report presented by PDS-TOGO

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
I- REMINDER OF OBJECTIVES	4
II- PROGRESS OF ACTIVITIES	4
III- PREPARATION FOR THE IFSW AFRICA CONFERENCE IN DAKAR IN 2025	11
IV- RESULTS AND ARCHIEVEMENTS OF MEETING	1111

Introduction

Social workers are organizing around the world to strengthen professionalization and their interventions with a view to having a lasting positive impact on the lives of individuals, groups and communities. In this sense, several initiatives carried out by

national associations and regional and sub-regional federations of social workers are multiplying. On June 28 and 29, 2024, a meeting was held at the Saint Manick hotel in Lomé, bringing together West African social worker associations affiliated with *the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)*. The main objective of this meeting is to develop a strategic plan aimed at strengthening the institutional and organizational capacity of social worker associations in order to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations in the region.

This meeting brought together delegates from six countries, namely Benin, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.

This report describes the progress of the event, the results obtained and the recommendations made.

I- REMINDER OF OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this meeting is to contribute to the institutional and organizational strengthening of West African social worker associations that are members of the IFSW through the development of a strategic plan.

Specifically, these were:

- ✓ Facilitate mutual knowledge and exchanges of experiences between social worker associations in the region.

- ✓ Develop a strategic plan for strengthening the capacities of associations
- ✓ Contribute to good preparation for the IFSW Africa conference which will take place in November 2025 in Dakar, Senegal.

II- PROGRESS OF ACTIVITIES

In accordance with the program established for the two days, the meeting was furnished with an opening ceremony, presentations from the different associations present, the plenary session to develop the strategic plan, the next steps and the closing ceremony.

2.1- Opening ceremony

The opening ceremony was attended by delegations from 6 associations of social workers members of the IFSW, international organizations, CSOs, the town hall of Agoe-nyivé 1 and the Ministry in charge of Social Action.

- Speech by the President of the PDS-TOGO Association



The President of the PDS (Social Development Professionals) association, Mr. KOUTREMON Yao, extended a warm and cordial welcome to the participants from various countries. He underlined the primary objective of this meeting, namely the strengthening of institutional capacities and

organizational structures of social workers members of the IFSW in the West African region in order to contribute to improving the living conditions of vulnerable populations. He expressed his gratitude to the Minister of Social Action through his representative Mr. the Director General of Child Protection before thanking the various partners including UNDP, Plan International Togo, CREUSET- TOGO and the delegations from West African countries for their commitment and mobilization around the development of social work in Togo and in Africa. Finally, he expressed the hope that the Lomé meeting would be crowned with success.

- Intervention by the Representative of Plan International Togo

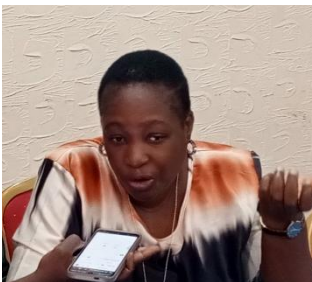
The representative of Plan International Togo welcomed the initiative of the meeting and congratulated the actions undertaken by Togo's NGOs and associations such as

the NGO CREUSET-TOGO with which he collaborates closely. He underlined the importance of this meeting to meet the challenges linked to the protection of the rights of children, young people, women and vulnerable groups, in order to promote harmonious development in West Africa. He concluded by wishing all participants a productive session.

- *Speech by the UNDP Representative*

The UNDP representative expressed his gratitude for this initiative and shared his experience of working with several associations in Togo on issues concerning youth, women and children. He stressed the importance of this meeting to encourage mutual learning and establish a basis of cooperation for sustainable and inclusive development.

- *Speech by Madam President of the International Federation of Social Workers (Africa Region)*



The IFSW Africa President expressed her gratitude to the participants for their commitment to improving the living conditions of individuals, families and communities in West Africa. In her talk, she introduced the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) as a global organization representing social work professionals in over 140 countries, providing a platform for advocating for social justice and promoting

best practices in social work. She hinted that as a regional organization, IFSW Africa focuses on social challenges specific to African countries, fostering collaboration and supporting social workers in driving meaningful change in the lives of populations in their diversity. on the continent. Finally, Madam President called for a synergy of actions between social worker associations in West Africa and other organizations to strengthen the network and have a lasting impact in the region.

- *Opening Address by the Representative of the Minister of Social Action*



The representative of the Minister of Social Action, the Promotion of Women and Literacy welcomed the holding of the conference and expressed the government's gratitude

to all the associations for this initiative. Highlighting the issues of vulnerability of children, young people, women, the environment and climate change in West Africa, he called on the associations present to intensify their efforts to

facing all these challenges. On behalf of the Minister, he officially declared the meeting open, wishing the work every success.

It should be noted that following the opening ceremony a press briefing was held before inviting the Director of the National School of Social Training (ENFS) and the representative of the Town Hall of Agoè Nyvé 1 to share their thoughts on the Lomé initiative.

- *Comments from the Director of ENFS*

Madam Director of the National School of Social Training (ENFS), welcomed the meeting and briefly presented the school she directs, highlighting its essential role in the training of social workers in Togo. She described the different profiles trained by the school and the importance of the different practical internships during the training period. She also discussed the challenges related to decentralization and future projects of ENFS, such as the construction of regional social training centers, the renovation of the current school and announced the ongoing reforms in the training system including which affects training curricula and the integration of the LMD system.etc.

- *Comments from the representative of the municipality of Agoè Nyvé 1*

The representative of the Agoè1 Town Hall expressed his gratitude to the initiative and promised that his municipality would be willing to welcome ENFS students for internships. He suggested the possibility of close collaboration between ENFS, associations of social workers and municipalities to help meet the challenges of social work in Togo.

2.2- Presentations of the associations

During this stage, the various delegates gathered took stock of the situation of social work, the actions and challenges encountered by the organizations in their respective countries.

BURKINA FASO

The National Association of Specialized Education Professionals (ANAPES) was represented by THIOMBIANO Richard, Specialized Education Inspector and Responsible for Training and professional issues. ANAPES plays a major role in promoting social work in Burkina Faso. Founded in 2006, it brings together specialized educators from the public and private sectors. Its current Executive Bureau is made up of 13 members elected for a three-year term.

The primary objectives of ANAPES include the following points: Promote permanent consultation between specialist education professionals in Burkina Faso; cultivate a spirit of cohesion, mutual aid and solidarity among its members; strengthen the skills of special education professionals in Burkina Faso; ensure respect for ethics and professional conduct in the field of special education; provide support on all issues related to specialized education in Burkina Faso and promote the socio-economic integration of disadvantaged segments of the Burkinabe population.

The association annually organizes renowned events such as World Social Work Day, aimed at honoring veterans of the profession. It also organizes forums for specialized educators, the "elder's café", international social worker days, humanitarian activities, and runs a virtual library to share and disseminate valuable knowledge.

Among its perspectives, we include the contribution to the development of a code of ethics and professional conduct for social workers, the creation of a National Federation of Social Workers; membership in international social work bodies.

GHANA

The Ghana National Association of Social Workers (GASGOW) was represented by Professor Kwadwo Ofori-Dua. He stressed that his association aims to bring together all social workers in Ghana for the common good of the members and the profession. He briefly shared the history of the association and its governance structure. He said every member of GASOW is issued a membership card as a form of identification. His

presentation highlighted the achievements and challenges of the association in Ghana. The major challenges include lack of regulation of social work practice in Ghana, insufficient funding of the association's activities and non-payment of membership fees among others. In the face of these challenges, the association remains committed to ensuring that social workers in Ghana practice their profession in a conducive environment, guided by social work ethics.

BENIN

The General Assembly of August 27, 2005 gave birth to the National Association of Social Workers of Benin (ANAS Benin), bringing together the Controllers of Social Action (CAS), the Senior Technicians of Social Action (TSAS) and the Social Action Inspectors (AAS). Created by former pupils and students, the association has around 500 members in Benin and its diaspora, divided into different categories of social workers. Its National Directorate, made up of 11 members, is elected for a 3-year term, renewable once. ANAS Benin aims to promote the profession of Social Worker, to defend the professional rights of its members and to encourage international cooperation. Among its achievements are professional integration projects, the publication of membership cards, solidarity actions, the promotion of scientific research, the development of partnerships and communication on social work issues. However, the association faces challenges such as internationalization, contemporary issues in social work, the visibility of the profession, the federation of all players in the sector and the mobilization of its own resources.

NIGERIA

The Nigerian Association of Social Workers was represented by Alhaji Mashood Mustapha. He presented the activities and challenges of the Nigerian Association of Social Workers. He highlighted some achievements, such as the creation of local and regional chapters across the country. He also mentioned the passing of the Profession Regulatory Bill, which means that the practice of social work in Nigeria is now regulated by law. This implies that ultimately, only social workers certified by the Nigerian Social Work Council will be able to practice in Nigeria.

SENEGAL

The Senegalese Federation of Social Workers (FSTS) currently brings together 8 associations and is headed by Mr. Abib NDIAYE. This federation engages in procedures aimed at obtaining official recognition and strengthening member associations. The main objective is to promote the profession of social workers in Senegal by developing advocacy for the creation of a professional order and the adoption of a code of ethics and professional conduct.

In 2016, the creation of the national union of social workers marked a turning point in the mobilization of social workers in Senegal. The union aims to defend the moral and material interests of social workers, to reposition social work in state policies and to strengthen cooperation between social worker associations.

Historically, the Collective of Associations of Social Workers (CATS) was created in 2020 with initially 5 member associations, and actions were carried out, particularly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in collaboration with the competent ministerial authorities. The main challenges and prospects for the sector include maintaining the federative dynamic, seeking official recognition, regularizing member contributions, increasing national and international visibility, advocating for the appointment of qualified professionals to key positions. of the social sector, the establishment of an Order of Social Workers, the adoption of a code of ethics and the organization of the next African conference in November 2025.

TOGO

Mrs. AYAYI was the first to speak to present the history of social work in Togo. She traced the creation of the school to 1963, the year the National School of Social Training was established. Initially dedicated to the training of Social Promotion Agents, the school then extended its program with the opening of cycle II. She stressed the importance of taking up the challenge of solving problems at the grassroots. She also proposed an upward revision of the ministries' budgets.

Returning to the association of Social Development Professionals of Togo, (PDS-TOGO) the National President, Mr. KOUTREMON Yao indicated that its official creation dates back to 2018 with the support of the “Libres Ensemble” incubator program of the Office Regional for West Africa (BRAO) of the OIF. PDS-TOGO brings together various social workers and aims to strengthen professionalism in the service

of grassroots populations, with emphasis on gender, the advancement of women, youth, and the protection of vulnerable groups and the environment. and community resilience.

2.3- Challenges for social worker organizations

Regarding the challenges faced by these organizations, it is crucial to emphasize that they are omnipresent and shared by all players in the sector. These challenges include the need to fully mobilize all stakeholders involved, to carry out effective internal restructuring, to guarantee adequate financial mobilization, to obtain legislation governing and protecting the profession and the profession of social work, to measure the impact actions undertaken and to ensure increased visibility of the initiatives implemented. Taking these major challenges into account is of capital importance for the strengthening and sustainability of actions undertaken by social workers in the West African region.

As a reminder, the initiative of the Lomé meeting is part of the steps taken between 2020 and 2021 by the Senegalese Federation of Social Workers (FSTS), PDS -TOGO and the Guinea Association of Social Workers (AGTS) with a view to implementing set up a French-speaking West African network in social work. The approach, initiated with the support of the General Secretariat of the FITS Africa Office Mr. Joseph KAYINGA from Tanzania, had the following objectives:

1. Develop a broad dynamic of consultation and information sharing for the establishment of the umbrella structure with all national associations of social workers in French-speaking countries, on the model of a National Federation of Social Workers (or national association) and carry out official recognition procedures with national administrative authorities;
2. Have these national umbrella entities (National Federation or National Association) join the FITS to take part in FITS activities.

The interest aroused by this dynamic led to its expansion beyond French-speaking countries to take into account all of West Africa. Thus, with the support of the President of FITS Africa Mrs. Oluwatoni ADELEKE, steps were taken to give substance to this sub-regional meeting.

2.3- Development of a road map for the strategic plan for West Africa

During this technical stage, significant consensus was reached to develop a roadmap to support the West Africa strategic plan. It was agreed to establish a West African network bringing together representatives of the 15 countries of the sub-region with the aim of harmonizing and formalizing collective efforts.

The delegates present began designing the roadmap for the strategic plan. Referring to a pre-established framework, they defined the responsibilities of the coordination committee, the vision consisting of establishing and leading a dynamic network actively promoting social work, social justice and community well-being in West Africa. , the missions to be accomplished to support and strengthen social workers through skills development, advocacy, collaboration and promotion of ethical and effective social work practices, as well as other key elements such as values, strategies, programs and resources . This iterative process made it possible to improve and clarify the objectives and actions planned in this roadmap, with the aim of effectively guiding the strategic plan for the West Africa region.

III- PREPARATION FOR THE IFSW AFRICA A CONFERENCE DAKAR IN 2025

Mr. Abib presented the progress of preparations for the Dakar conference, a priori scheduled for November 2025. Much progress should be noted, in particular the development of the TOR, the identification of the meeting locations and the logistical arrangements. currently being arranged. Proposals were made so that the choice of hotels and rooms could be accessible in terms of location but also in terms of costs to facilitate the mobilization of a larger number of participants. In addition, the president asked the organizers and to all participants to mobilize social workers on a large scale, starting with Senegal's neighboring countries. Regarding the search for funding, it is necessary to begin research and solicitations for sponsors in different countries, particularly in Senegal, with airlines, NGOs, United Nations agencies and telecommunications companies or other private companies.

IV- RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MEETING

The following results at the end of this activity were achieved:

- ✓ The associations of social workers from the 6 countries from West Africa got to know each other

- ✓ Exchanges of experiences and good social work practices were made
- ✓ A concrete strategic plan has been developed to ensure the organizational and institutional strengthening of social worker associations in the sub-region.
- ✓ A network of collaboration and support has been established between social worker associations, thus promoting more effective cooperation.
- ✓ The preparation for the IFSW Africa Dakar 2025 conference has seen improvements with the contribution of participants.

V- RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to achieve the various assigned objectives, the actions for the next steps and deadlines have been outlined:

Actions	Deadline	Responsible
Sharing the workshop report	3rd July	President IFSW Africa
Review and finalize the draft strategic plan	15th July	Pr KWADWO and Abib
Developing an implementation plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 30th^{July} : Objectives 1 and 2 - 31st August: Objectives 3 and 4 	Pr KWADWO and Abib
Sharing with members/partners	30 th September	President IFSW Africa
Review and adoption with members/partners	15th October	President IFSW Africa
Launch of the strategic plan document	30 th November	President IFSW Africa



Conclusion

The meeting of West African social worker delegates at the Saint Manick hotel in Lomé was characterized by a strong commitment from social worker associations in West Africa, highlighting the initiatives and challenges encountered in countries such as: Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana and Togo. Speeches from public authorities and international organizations highlighted the importance of collaboration and capacity building to help vulnerable populations in our space, particularly the most vulnerable layers. The development of the road map for the West Africa strategic plan

symbolized the unity and determination of the delegates to work together for a more united future. The future West African network promises increased coordination of actions and synergies of actions between associations and federations of the countries of the sub-region.

The Lomé meeting closed on a note of satisfaction from the various delegations with the closing remarks of the President of the IFSW after those of the President of PDS-TOGO who thanked and congratulated the participants for the collaborative work accomplished. Note that a hike was offered to visitors for discoveries in Lomé the capital and Aného, the first capital of Togo.