

Association of Social Workers in Malawi (ASWiM) Reviews Social Work Practitioners Bill

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Background

Following the first successful National Professional Social Work Conference in May 2018, actions were taken to establish a national task force to drive forward the process of professionalizing social work in Malawi, with the plan to establish a professional association. In May 2020 the second National Professional Social Work Conference was marked by a vibrant and celebratory event to officially launch the Association of Social Workers in Malawi (ASWiM). This was supported by the (then) Minister of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare; UNICEF Country Representatives; the President of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) – Africa Region; representatives of Social Work Associations from Zimbabwe and Zambia; Supporting Social Work in Malawi (SSWiM) – UK; representatives of academic institutions from across Malawi and Africa; and social workers from across Malawi.

The launch of ASWiM coincided with the presentation of the draft Malawi Social Workers Practitioners Bill. This represented a clear and conscience way to professionalize social work in Malawi benefit from strong, responsive, ethical professional high-quality services from professional social workers.

On 15th August, 2025, the Association of Social Workers in Malawi (ASWiM), with support from UNICEF and in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) – Social Welfare Directorate, conducted a hybrid consultation (virtual and physical) for all social workers in Malawi, and those from the wider related diaspora, to solicit their views on the draft Social Work Practitioners Bill, aimed at supporting, developing and regulating the profession.

In his remarks Chisangalalo Ntonio, ASWiM President, said that there are high expectations that the Social Work Practitioners Bill, once passed by Parliament will help to support the development and regulation of the social work profession by ensuring that only licensed social work practitioners are allowed to practice across the country.

We will ensure that social work practitioners are properly certified. As a social work body we have noted and saddened by the practice where many individuals are practicing without the necessary qualifications in social work and this has the potential to endanger the clients, and some are currently establishing organizations and dealing with clients. These practices will be things of the past once the law is in place. without the required qualifications.

Joseph Kalero- Phiri, a renowned social worker in Malawi, lauded the consultations as a step in the right direction for social work in Malawi. He noted that the consultation process presented an opportunity for stakeholders to present their views on the Bill when he remarked that:

This is a step in the right direction towards a more inclusive way of developing a law that will affect many. Society will benefit from ethical and professionalised social work practice.

Kalero-Phiri noted that due to passage of time many things have changed in the progress of social work in Malawi, hence consultations are necessary. He lamented that the process needs wider consultations to ensure that diverse groups of service users and practitioners are consulted, including those working with people with disabilities, older people, children in Child Care Institutions, health settings, courts and wider bodies.

In his remarks Enock Bonongwe, Deputy Director of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW), said Government is committed to ensuring the Bill's passage so that social work in Malawi becomes ~~more~~ further recognized, organized and impactful.

The Social Work Practitioners Bill is being reviewed with support from UNICEF, with legal facilitation provided by renowned lawyer Chancy Gondwe.



Chisangalalo Ntonio – ASWiM President