

Inaugural Launch of the Social Workers Association, South Africa

Date of Event: 20 November 2025

Time: 9:00 AM

Venue: Auditorium, Future Africa Campus, University of Pretoria

Submitted by: Oluwatoni Adeleke. President, IFSW Africa

The inaugural launch of the Social Workers Association in South Africa (SASWA) was successfully held on 20 November 2025 at the Auditorium, Future Africa Campus, University of Pretoria. The event marked a historic milestone in re-establishing a unified and nationally representative social work body, bringing together practitioners, academics, students, and key stakeholders committed to advancing the profession in South Africa.

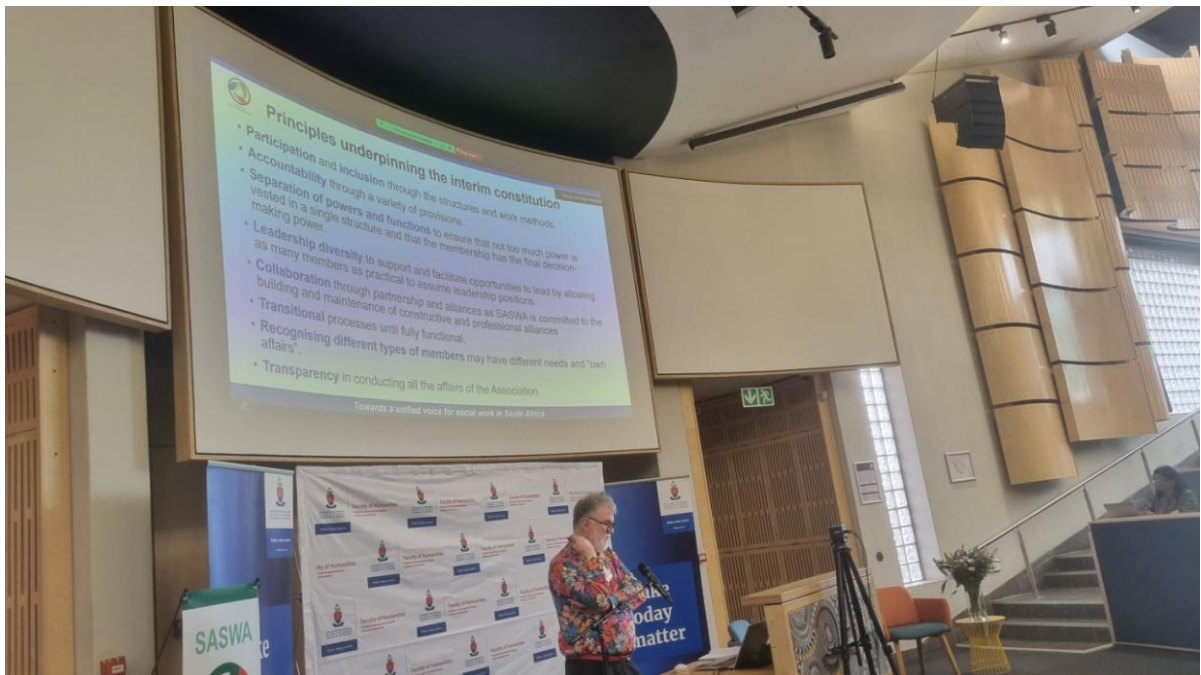
SASWA was originally established in 2007, but due to internal differences, the groups eventually fragmented and remained inactive for many years. Renewed advocacy by concerned social workers, supported by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), prompted Professor Antoinette Lombard to collaborate with representatives from the various groups to reconstitute the association. The successful launch represents the culmination of these efforts, establishing a unified platform for social workers across South Africa.

The launch received strong institutional support from the University of Pretoria. The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Professor Kevin Thomas, attended and reaffirmed the University's commitment to professional development, academic excellence, and the advancement of social work as a discipline.

A Steering Committee, chaired by Professor Antoinette Lombard, had been working since June 2024 to coordinate and prepare for the launch. Responsibilities included stakeholder consultations, drafting the interim constitution, planning the launch, and facilitating the reconstitution process. During the event, the Steering Committee officially handed over responsibilities to the newly elected executive leadership.



The Interim Constitution and Rules were presented and read by Mr. Andre Viviers. Participants were informed that the constitution remains in draft form and that members would continue to have opportunities to provide input. Constructive comments from attendees will be incorporated into future revisions, ensuring that the governance framework reflects the collective voice and aspirations of social workers across South Africa.



The election of the first national executive was conducted through an online voting system, which ran from 7 November to 17 November 2025.

Only verified registered voters were eligible to cast their votes. More than 1,000 social workers participated in the voting, and more than 100 additional social workers joined the launch online. The results of the election were announced during the launch.

The newly elected five-member executive team represents different regions of South Africa and combines young professionals with highly experienced practitioners, including individuals with over 40 years of service in social work. They will serve a one-year term up to the next Annual General Meeting (AGM). Following their election, the executives shared their priorities and commitments, pledging to work inclusively, transparently, and in the best interests of all members while ensuring representation of diverse perspectives across the country.



The event programme was professionally directed and coordinated by Professor Busisiwe Nkala-Damini, ensuring smooth proceedings and meaningful engagement throughout.

As President of IFSW Africa, I addressed the launch and highlighted the strategic benefits of affiliating with IFSW, including opportunities for regional and global partnerships, advocacy, policy influence, professional development, networking, and collaboration with organisations across Africa and internationally. Following my presentation, SASWA members expressed strong interest in joining IFSW, demonstrating eagerness to connect with the broader international social work community.

The inauguration of SASWA marks a significant step toward professional unity, strengthened governance, and active engagement of social workers at both national and international levels. The event demonstrated a renewed spirit of collaboration, commitment, and professional pride, providing a solid foundation for the association's growth and sustainability. The establishment of this unified body positions South African social workers to play a more influential role in shaping policies, advancing the profession, and contributing to the well-being of communities across the country.