

# CODE OF ETHICS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN MALAWI

## 1.0 Introduction

This code of ethics is a guide to the everyday conduct of members of Social Work profession in Malawi. It mandates that Social Workers practice in areas in which they have competence. The professional ethics are at the core of Social Work practice. The primary mission of Social Work Profession in Malawi is to enhance human wellbeing and help meet basic human needs with particular attention to the needs of the people who are vulnerable. This mission is rooted in a set of core values such as social service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of the human relationships, integrity and competence. The principles that emanate from core values must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience. Social workers promote social justice and social change with, and on behalf of service users. “Service Users” is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

### *1.1 Definition of Social Work*

Social Work in Malawi is defined as:

*“A practice based profession and an academic discipline that promotes welfare of individuals, families, groups, communities, societies and organizations through the use of theories, skills, indigenous knowledge and adherence to practice principles and ethics<sup>1</sup>”.*

Social Work aims at:

- Working with and supporting people to achieve the best possible levels of personal and social wellbeing
- Working to address and redress inequity and injustice affecting the lives of clients, client groups and socially disadvantaged
- Working to achieve human rights and social justice through social development, social and systemic change, advocacy and the ethical conduct of research

### *1.2 Purpose of the NASWIM Code of Ethics*

- To articulate basic values, ethical principles, and standards of the profession to guide Social Workers conduct.
- To guide all social workers, social work educators, **social work schools** and Social Work students, regardless of their professional functions, **settings in which they work, or the populations they serve whenever there is an ethical dilemma.**

### *1.3 Intended users*

This Code of Ethics shall be used by:

- NASWIM, individuals, agencies, academic institutions, government and Non-Governmental organizations, Courts of Law and other bodies as a frame of reference in accordance with

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<sup>1</sup> Definition adapted from the National Social Welfare Policy (Malawi) and IFSW and IASSW

the NASWIM Constitution and relevant sections of the constitution of Malawi and other laws that deal with disciplinary and criminal matters in Malawi.

- The users may refer to the Code of Ethics when there is violation of standards or are conducting a peer review process or discipline of workers.

## 2.0 Legal and Policy Framework

This **Code of Ethics** recognizes the need for Social Work Practice to be conducted in conformity with the following international, regional and national legal and policy instruments among others:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- The International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the People
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children
- The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi
- The Child Care Protection and Justice Act
- The National Social Welfare Policy for Malawi

## 3.0 NASWIM Code of Ethics

### 3.1 Ethical Principles

The following broad ethical principles are based on set of social work core values of service: social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. These principles set forth ideals to which all social workers should aspire.

**3.1.1 *Social Justice:*** Social workers challenge social injustice. They pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to create awareness and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. They strive to ensure access to information, services, and resources; and promote participation in decision making for all people.

**3.1.2 *Dignity and Worth of the Person:*** Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person through recognition cultural and ethnic diversity. As change

agents social workers seek to build the capacity and opportunity to services users to adapt to prevailing social and economic conditions in the society.

**3.1.3 *Human Relationships:*** Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships. They help people to resolve their conflicts and strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities

**3.1.4 *Integrity:*** Social workers work in a way that is honest, reliable and open by continually being aware of the profession values, ethical principles, and standards and practice in a manner consistent with the social work profession.

**3.1.5 *Competence:*** Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise. They continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in practice; and aspire to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.

### **3.2 Ethical Standards**

The following ethical standards are relevant to the professional activities of all social workers responsibilities to:

- (1) Service users;
- (2) Colleagues;
- (3) in practice settings;
- (4) Other profession; and
- (5) The broader society.

All the standards are enforceable guidelines on professional conduct. The extent to which standards are enforceable is subject to of professional judgment and can be exercised by those responsible for reviewing alleged violations of ethical standards.

## **4.0 Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Service Users**

### ***4.1 Commitment***

Social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the wellbeing of marginalised and vulnerable individuals, families and communities. In general, the interests of the person(s) seeking the services are primary. However, social workers' responsibility to the larger society or specific legal obligations may on some occasions supersede the loyalty owed to service users, and they should be so advised.

### ***4.2 Self-Determination***

Social workers should respect and promote the right to self-determination and assist service users in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals. Social workers may limit the right to self-determination when, in the social workers' professional judgment, actions of the person(s)

seeking the service or potential actions pose a serious, foreseeable, and imminent risk to themselves or others.

#### *4.3 Informed Consent*

- (a) Social workers should provide services only in the context of a professional relationship based, when appropriate, on valid informed consent. Social workers should use clear and understandable language to inform the person(s) seeking the services of the purpose of the services, risks related to the services, limits to services and provide an opportunity for the person(s) seeking services to ask questions.
- (b) In instances when the person(s) seeking services are not literate or have difficulty understanding the language used in the practice setting, social workers should take steps to ensure that the person(s) seeking assistance understand the language. This may include providing a detailed verbal explanation or arranging for a qualified interpreter or translator whenever possible.
- (c) In instances when service users lack the capacity to provide informed consent, social workers should protect the interests of the service users by seeking permission from an appropriate third party. In such instances social workers should seek to ensure that the third party acts in a manner consistent with the wishes and interests of the person(s) seeking services. Social workers should take reasonable steps to enhance the ability of the service user to give informed consent.
- (d) In instances when a person(s) are receiving services involuntarily, social workers should provide information about the nature and extent of services; and about the extent of the person's right to refuse service.
- (e) Social workers who provide services via electronic media (such as computer, telephone, radio, and television) should inform recipients of the limitations and risks associated with such services.
- (f) Social workers should obtain the informed consent of the person(s) seeking services before recording, audio taping, photographing or videotaping or permitting observation of services; and ascertain that the service users understand the nature of the consent.

#### *4.4 Competence*

- (a) Social workers should provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience.
- (b) Social workers should provide services in substantive areas or use intervention techniques or approaches that are new to them only after engaging in appropriate study, training, consultation, and supervision from people who are competent in those interventions or techniques.

#### *4.5 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity*

- (a) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- (b) Social workers should have a knowledge base of the cultures of the person(s) seeking services and act to promote the positive aspects of culture which encourage respect for the sensitivity to the cultural differences among people and cultural groups.
- (c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.

#### *4.6 Conflicts of Interest*

- (a) Social workers should be alert to, and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment. Social workers should inform the service users when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that protects the interests of the service user to the greatest extent possible.
- (b) Social workers should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
- (c) Social workers should not engage in dual or multiple relationships with the person(s) they serve in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the service user. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, social workers should take steps to protect the service users and are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. Dual or multiple relationships may simultaneously or consecutively occur in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business.
- (d) When social workers provide services to two or more people who have a relationship with each other (for example, couples, family members), social workers should clarify with all parties which individuals will be considered as primary service users and the nature of social workers' professional obligations to the various individuals who are receiving services.

#### *4.7 Privacy and Confidentiality*

- (a) Social workers should respect the right to privacy of the service users. Once private information is shared, standards of confidentiality must apply. Social workers should inform the service users of the confidentiality restrictions in a given situation, such as the reasons why the information is required, and how it will be used and preserved.
- (b) Social workers may disclose confidential information when appropriate with valid consent from a client or a person legally authorized to consent on behalf of the service user.
- (c) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional service, except for compelling professional reasons. The general expectation that social workers will keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is

necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to the service user or other identifiable person.

- (d) Social workers should discuss with service users and other interested parties the nature of confidentiality and limitations of the right to confidentiality. Social workers should review with service users circumstances where confidential information may be requested and where disclosure of confidential information may be legally required. This discussion should occur as soon as possible in the social worker-client relationship and as needed throughout the course of the relationship.
- (e) When social workers provide counseling services to families, couples, or groups, social workers should seek agreement among the parties involved concerning each individual's right to confidentiality and obligation to preserve the confidentiality of information shared by others.
- (f) Social workers should inform services users involved in family, couples, marital, or group counseling of the social worker's, employer and agency's policy concerning the social worker's disclosure of confidential information among the parties involved in the counseling.
- (g) Social workers should not disclose confidential information to third-party unless such disclosure is authorized. Social workers should not discuss confidential information in any setting unless privacy can be ensured. Social workers should not discuss confidential information in public or semipublic areas such as hallways, waiting rooms, elevators, and restaurants.
- (h) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of service users during legal proceedings to the extent permitted by law. When a court of law or other legally authorized body orders social workers to disclose confidential or privileged information without the consent of the service user and such disclosure could cause harm, social workers should request that the court withdraw the order or limit the order as narrowly as possible or maintain the records under seal, unavailable for public inspection.
- (i) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of service users when responding to requests from members of the media.
- (j) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of service users' written and electronic records and other sensitive information.
- (k) Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that service users' records are stored in a secure location and that clients' records are not available to others who are not authorized to have access.
- (l) Social workers should take precautions to ensure and maintain the confidentiality of information transmitted to other parties through the use of computers, electronic mail, facsimile machines, telephones and telephone answering machines, and other electronic or computer technology.

- (m) Social workers should transfer or dispose of service users' records in a manner that protects the service users' confidentiality and is consistent with state statutes governing records and social work licensure.
- (n) Social workers should take reasonable precautions to protect the confidentiality of any information received during professional service in the event of the social worker's termination of practice, incapacitation, or death.
- (o) Social workers should not disclose identifying information of service users when discussing for teaching or training purposes unless consent to disclosure of confidential information has been obtained.

#### *4.8 Access to Records*

- (a) Social workers should provide reasonable access to records concerning the service user. Social workers who are concerned that access to records could cause serious misunderstanding or harm to the service users should provide assistance in interpreting the records. Social workers should limit service users access to their records, or portions of their records, only in exceptional circumstances when there is compelling evidence that such access would cause serious harm. Both the requests and the rationale for withholding some or all of the record should be documented in the service users' files.
- (b) When providing clients with access to their records, social workers should take steps to protect the confidentiality of other individuals identified or discussed in such records.

#### *4.9 Sexual Relationships*

- (a) Social workers should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with current service users, whether such contact is consensual or forced.
- (b) Social workers should not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with relatives or other individuals with whom the service users maintain a close personal relationship when there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm that may make it difficult for the social worker and service user to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Social workers must assume the full burden for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.
- (c) Social workers should not engage in sexual contact or relations with former service users and members of their families if the circumstances pose potential for harm to the service users.
- (d) Social workers should not provide clinical services to individuals with whom they have had a prior sexual relationship as this has the potential to be harmful to the individual and is likely to make it difficult for the social worker and individual to maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

#### *4.10 Physical Contact*

Social workers should not engage in physical contact with service users when there is a possibility of psychological harm as a result of the contact (such as cradling or caressing). Social workers who

engage in appropriate physical contact with service users are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern such physical contact.

#### **4.11 *Sexual Harassment***

Social workers should not sexually harass service users. Sexual harassment includes sexual advances, sexual solicitation, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

#### **4.12 *Derogatory Language***

Social workers should not use derogatory language in their written or verbal communications to or about service users. Social workers should use accurate and respectful language in all communications to and about service users.

#### **4.13 *Payment for Services***

- (a) When setting fees, social workers should ensure that the fees are fair, reasonable, and commensurate with the services performed.
- (b) Social workers should avoid accepting goods or services from service users as payment for professional services as this may create the potential for conflicts of interest, exploitation, and inappropriate boundaries in social workers' relationships with clients. Social workers who accept goods or services as payment for professional services assume the full burden of demonstrating that this arrangement will not be detrimental to the professional relationship.
- (c) Social workers should not solicit a private fee or other remuneration for providing services to person(s) who are entitled to such available services through the social workers' employer or agency.

#### **4.14 *Lack Decision-Making Capacity***

When social workers act on behalf of person(s) seeking services who lack the capacity to make informed decisions, social workers should take reasonable steps to safeguard the interests and rights of service users to ensure that the decisions made are accepted with understanding and discretion.

#### **4.15 *Interruption of Services***

Social workers should make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of services in the event that services are interrupted by factors such as unavailability, relocation, illness, disability, or death.

#### **4.16 *Termination of Services***

- (a) Social workers should terminate services to service users and professional relationships with them when such services and relationships are no longer required or no longer serve the clients needs or interests.
- (b) Social workers should take reasonable steps to avoid abandoning service users who are still in need of services. Social workers should assist in making appropriate arrangements for continuation of services when necessary.
- (c) Social workers in fee-for-service settings may terminate services to service users who are not paying an overdue balance if the financial contractual arrangements have been made clear,



and if the service user does not pose an imminent danger to self or others, and if the clinical and other consequences of the current nonpayment have been addressed and discussed.

- (d) Social workers should not terminate services to pursue a social, financial, or sexual relationship with the service users.
- (e) Social workers who anticipate the termination or interruption of services to service users should notify them promptly and seek the transfer, referral, or continuation of services in relation to the needs and preferences of service users.
- (f) Social workers who are leaving an employment setting should inform clients of appropriate options for the continuation of services and of the benefits and risks of the options.

## **5.0 Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues**

### ***5.1 Respect***

- (a) Social workers should treat colleagues with respect and should represent accurately and fairly the qualifications, views, and obligations of colleagues.
- (b) Social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in communications with clients or with other professionals.

### ***5.2 Referral for Services***

- (a) Social workers should refer clients to other professionals when the other professionals' specialized knowledge or expertise is needed to serve clients fully or when social workers believe that they are not being effective or making reasonable progress with clients and that additional service is required.
- (b) Social workers who refer clients to other professionals should take appropriate steps to facilitate an orderly transfer of responsibility. Social workers who refer clients to other professionals should disclose, with clients' consent, all pertinent information to the new service providers.
- (c) Social workers are prohibited from giving or receiving payment for a referral when no professional service is provided by the referring social worker.

### ***5.3 Sexual Relationships***

- (a) Social workers who function as supervisors or educators should not engage in sexual activities or contact with supervisees, students, trainees, or other colleagues over whom they exercise professional authority.
- (b) Social workers should avoid engaging in sexual relationships with colleagues when there is potential for a conflict of interest.
- (c) Social workers should not sexually harass supervisees, students, trainees, or colleagues. Sexual harassment includes sexual advances, sexual solicitation, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

#### *5.4 Impairment of Colleagues*

- (a) Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague's impairment that is due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties and that interferes with practice effectiveness should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.
- (b) Social workers who believe that a social work colleague's impairment interferes with practice effectiveness and that the colleague has not taken adequate steps to address the impairment should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASWIM, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

#### *5.5 Incompetence of Colleagues*

- (a) Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague's incompetence should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.
- (b) Social workers who believe that a social work colleague is incompetent and has not taken adequate steps to address the incompetence should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASWIM, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

#### *5.6 Unethical Conduct of Colleagues*

- (a) Social workers should take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose, and correct the unethical conduct of colleagues.
- (b) Social workers should be knowledgeable about established policies and procedures for handling concerns about colleagues' unethical behavior. Social workers should be familiar with national, state, and local procedures for handling ethics complaints. These include policies and procedures created by NASWIM, licensing and regulatory bodies, employers, agencies, and other professional organizations.
- (c) Social workers who believe that a colleague has acted unethically should seek resolution by discussing their concerns with the colleague when feasible and when such discussion is likely to be productive.
- (d) When necessary, social workers who believe that a colleague has acted unethically should take action through appropriate formal channels (such as contacting a state licensing board or regulatory body, an NASWIM committee on inquiry, or other professional ethics committees).
- (e) Social workers should defend and assist colleagues who are unjustly charged with unethical conduct.

## **6.0 Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities In Practice Settings**

### *6.1 Supervision and Consultation*

- (a) Social workers who provide supervision or consultation should have the necessary knowledge and skill to supervise or consult appropriately and should do so only within their areas of knowledge and competence.
- (b) Social workers who provide supervision or consultation are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.
- (c) Social workers should not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with supervisees in whom there is a risk of exploitation of or potential harm to the supervisee.
- (d) Social workers who provide supervision should evaluate supervisees' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful.

### *6.2 Education and Training*

- (a) Social workers who function as educators, field instructors for students, or trainers should provide instruction only within their areas of knowledge and competence and should provide instruction based on the most current information and knowledge available in the profession.
- (b) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should evaluate students' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful.
- (c) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients are routinely informed when services are being provided by students.
- (d) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with students in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the student. Social work educators and field instructors are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

### *6.3 Performance Evaluation*

Social workers who have responsibility for evaluating the performance of others should fulfill such responsibility in a fair and considerate manner and on the basis of clearly stated criteria.

### *6.4 Client Records*

- (a) Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that documentation in records is accurate and reflects the services provided.
- (b) Social workers should include sufficient and timely documentation in records to facilitate the delivery of services and to ensure continuity of services provided to clients in the future.

- (c) Social workers' documentation should protect clients' privacy to the extent that is possible and appropriate and should include only information that is directly relevant to the delivery of services.
- (d) Social workers should store records following the termination of services to ensure reasonable future access. Records should be maintained for the number of years required by state statutes or relevant contracts.

### *6.5 Billing*

Social workers should establish and maintain billing practices that accurately reflect the nature and extent of services provided and that identify who provided the service in the practice setting.

### *6.6 Client Transfer*

- (a) When an individual who is receiving services from another agency or colleague contacts a social worker for services, the social worker should carefully consider the client's needs before agreeing to provide services. To minimize possible confusion and conflict, social workers should discuss with potential clients the nature of the clients' current relationship with other service providers and the implications, including possible benefits or risks, of entering into a relationship with a new service provider.
- (b) If a new client has been served by another agency or colleague, social workers should discuss with the client whether consultation with the previous service provider is in the client's best interest.

### *6.7 Administration*

- (a) Social work administrators should advocate within and outside their agencies for adequate resources to meet clients' needs.
- (b) Social workers should advocate for resource allocation procedures that are open and fair. When not all clients' needs can be met, an allocation procedure should be developed that is nondiscriminatory and based on appropriate and consistently applied principles.
- (c) Social workers who are administrators should take reasonable steps to ensure that adequate agency or organizational resources are available to provide appropriate staff supervision.
- (d) Social work administrators should take reasonable steps to ensure that the working environment for which they are responsible is consistent with and encourages compliance with the NASWIM Code of Ethics. Social work administrators should take reasonable steps to eliminate any conditions in their organizations that violate, interfere with, or discourage compliance with the Code.

### *6.8 Continuing Education and Staff Development*

Social work administrators and supervisors should take reasonable steps to provide or arrange for continuing education and staff development for all staff for whom they are responsible. Continuing education and staff development should address current knowledge and emerging developments related to social work practice and ethics.

### *6.9 Commitments to Employers*

- (a) Social workers generally should adhere to commitments made to employers and employing organizations.
- (b) Social workers should work to improve employing agencies' policies and procedures and the efficiency and effectiveness of their services.
- (c) Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that employers are aware of social workers' ethical obligations as set forth in the NASWIM Code of Ethics and of the implications of those obligations for social work practice.
- (d) Social workers should not allow an employing organization's policies, procedures, regulations, or administrative orders to interfere with their ethical practice of social work. Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that their employing organizations' practices are consistent with the NASWIM Code of Ethics.
- (e) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination in the employing organization's work assignments and in its employment policies and practices.
- (f) Social workers should accept employment or arrange student field placements only in organizations that exercise fair personnel practices.
- (g) Social workers should be diligent stewards of the resources of their employing organizations, wisely conserving funds where appropriate and never misappropriating funds or using them for unintended purposes.

### *6.10 Labor Management Disputes*

- (a) Social workers may engage in organized action, including the formation of and participation in labor unions, to improve services to clients and working conditions.
- (b) The actions of social workers who are involved in labor management disputes, job actions, or labor strikes should be guided by the profession's values, ethical principles, and ethical standards. Reasonable differences of opinion exist among social workers concerning their primary obligation as professionals during an actual or threatened labor strike or job action. Social workers should carefully examine relevant issues and their possible impact on clients before deciding on a course of action.

## **7.0 Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities As Professionals**

### *7.1 Competence*

- (a) Social workers should accept responsibility or employment only on the basis of existing competence or the intention to acquire the necessary competence.
- (b) Social workers should strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions. Social workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work. Social workers should routinely review the professional literature and participate in continuing education relevant to social work practice and social work ethics.
- (c) Social workers should base practice on recognized knowledge, including empirically based knowledge, relevant to social work and social work ethics.

### *7.2 Discrimination*

Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.

### *7.3 Private Conduct*

Social workers should not permit their private conduct to interfere with their ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities.

### *7.4 Dishonesty, Fraud, and Deception*

Social workers should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception.

### *7.5 Impairment*

- (a) Social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility.
- (b) Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.

### *7.6 Misrepresentation*

- (a) Social workers should make clear distinctions between statements made and actions engaged in as a private individual and as a representative of the social work profession, a professional social work organization, or the social worker's employing agency.
- (b) Social workers who speak on behalf of professional social work organizations should accurately represent the official and authorized positions of the organizations.
- (c) Social workers should ensure that their representations to clients, agencies, and the public of professional qualifications, credentials, education, competence, affiliations, and services provided, or results to be achieved are accurate. Social workers should claim only those relevant professional credentials they actually possess and take steps to correct any inaccuracies or misrepresentations of their credentials by others.

### *7.7 Solicitations*

- (a) Social workers should not engage in uninvited solicitation of potential clients who, because of their circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence, manipulation, or coercion.
- (b) Social workers should not engage in solicitation of testimonial endorsements (including solicitation of consent to use a client's prior statement as a testimonial endorsement) from current clients or from other people who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence.

### *7.8 Acknowledging Credit*

- (a) Social workers should take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed and to which they have contributed.
- (b) Social workers should honestly acknowledge the work of and the contributions made by others.

## **8.0 Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities To The Social Work Profession**

### *8.1 Integrity of the Profession*

- (a) Social workers should work toward the maintenance and promotion of high standards of practice.
- (b) Social workers should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession. Social workers should protect, enhance, and improve the integrity of the profession through appropriate study and research, active discussion, and responsible criticism of the profession.
- (c) Social workers should contribute time and professional expertise to activities that promote respect for the value, integrity, and competence of the social work profession. These activities may include teaching, research, consultation, service, legislative

testimony, presentations in the community, and participation in their professional organizations.

- (d) Social workers should contribute to the knowledge base of social work and share with colleagues their knowledge related to practice, research, and ethics. Social workers should seek to contribute to the profession's literature and to share their knowledge at professional meetings and conferences.
- (e) Social workers should act to prevent the unauthorized and unqualified practice of social work.

### *8.2 Evaluation and Research*

- (a) Social workers should monitor and evaluate policies, the implementation of programs, and practice interventions.
- (b) Social workers should promote and facilitate evaluation and research to contribute to the development of knowledge.
- (c) Social workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work and fully use evaluation and research evidence in their professional practice.
- (d) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should carefully consider possible consequences and should follow guidelines developed for the protection of evaluation and research participants. Appropriate institutional review boards should be consulted.
- (e) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should obtain voluntary and written informed consent from participants, when appropriate, without any implied or actual deprivation or penalty for refusal to participate; without undue inducement to participate; and with due regard for participants' wellbeing, privacy, and dignity. Informed consent should include information about the nature, extent, and duration of the participation requested and disclosure of the risks and benefits of participation in the research.
- (f) When evaluation or research participants are incapable of giving informed consent, social workers should provide an appropriate explanation to the participants, obtain the participants' assent to the extent they are able, and obtain written consent from an appropriate proxy.
- (g) Social workers should never design or conduct evaluation or research that does not use consent procedures, such as certain forms of naturalistic observation and archival research, unless rigorous and responsible review of the research has found it to be justified because of its prospective scientific, educational, or applied value and unless equally effective alternative procedures that do not involve waiver of consent are not feasible.
- (h) Social workers should inform participants of their right to withdraw from evaluation and research at any time without penalty.



- (i) Social workers should take appropriate steps to ensure that participants in evaluation and research have access to appropriate supportive services.
- (j) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should protect participants from unwarranted physical or mental distress, harm, danger, or deprivation.
- (k) Social workers engaged in the evaluation of services should discuss collected information only for professional purposes and only with people professionally concerned with this information.
- (l) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should ensure the anonymity or confidentiality of participants and of the data obtained from them. Social workers should inform participants of any limits of confidentiality, the measures that will be taken to ensure confidentiality, and when any records containing research data will be destroyed.
- (m) Social workers who report evaluation and research results should protect participants' confidentiality by omitting identifying information unless proper consent has been obtained authorizing disclosure.
- (n) Social workers should report evaluation and research findings accurately. They should not fabricate or falsify results and should take steps to correct any errors later found in published data using standard publication methods.
- (o) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest and dual relationships with participants, should inform participants when a real or potential conflict of interest arises, and should take steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes participants' interests primary.
- (p) Social workers should educate themselves, their students, and their colleagues about responsible research practices.

## **9.0 Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities To The Broader Society**

### *9.1 Social Welfare*

Social workers should promote the general welfare of society, from local to global levels, and the development of people, their communities, and their environments. Social workers should advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs and should promote social, economic, political, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice.

### *9.2 Public Participation*

Social workers should facilitate informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions.

### *9.3 Public Emergencies*

Social workers should provide appropriate professional services in public emergencies to the greatest extent possible.

### *9.4 Social and Political Action*

- (a) Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.
- (b) Social workers should act to expand choice and opportunity for all people, with special regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and groups.
- (c) Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within Malawi and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for differences, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.
- (d) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.