

IFSW – AFRICA REGIONAL REPORT FOR 2016 GENERAL MEETING, SEOUL, KOREA

Regional Overview:

Social Work in Africa is in a new momentum towards creating a more visible and legally recognized profession. The political arena is opening and accommodating more social work initiatives as attempts are made to address developmental issues. There is still more to be done to address socio-economic ills and problems like diseases, hunger, unemployment, ethnic wars and migration.

During the period of review, the continent has remained prone to fatal diseases like Malaria, HIV-AIDS, Ebola and other non communicable diseases which call for increased social action. While this state of affairs is undesirable it provides an opportunity for new initiatives which social work profession needs to explore and utilize. We are happy to report that more Social Work Associations have reported continued engagement and collaborations with governments and political processes.

The Regional Secretariat:

The IFSW Africa Region is represented by its President, Daniel Opare Asiedu and Member- at- Large Noel Muridzo on the Global Executive Committee. The Secretariat of the Region is headed by Joseph Kayinga of the Tanzanian Association of social Workers (TASWO) who was appointed in 2014 to occupy the newly created office of Secretary-General. The period under review has seen tremendous improvement in the orientation and the modus operandi of the Regional Secretariat. Joseph has since his appointment been a great asset to the region by assisting the regional secretariat in its efforts at creating a functional framework.

We have managed to launch a number of activities using the present opportunities and alliances with other social welfare partners and organizations. It is our hope to accelerate the momentum in this move as we have seen the starting point.

The member at large in the person of Mr. Noel Muridzo, has been instrumental in helping out the secretariat to connect with Southern Africa Countries specifically in the preparation of the 2015 joint Conference in South Africa.

Professional recognition:

The Region has seen increased requests from National Social Work Associations and organizations for admission to membership of the Federation. .

Efforts at providing legal framework for Social Work practice and professionalism have paid off. We are pleased to inform the General Meeting that in Nigeria a bill to regulate the practice of Social Work has been passed into law by their Lower House of representatives. This step is a great milestone in our quest for professional recognition in Africa. In East Africa, Tanzania and Uganda have continued with consultations with their respective governments aimed at establishing a legal and regulatory framework for the practice of Social Work in those countries. Also efforts are being made to mainstream the Social Work Agenda through Regional and sub-regional political forums as Africa Union, ECOSOC, SADC and EAC

In East Africa there are efforts to promote the Social Work Agenda to the East Africa Community (EAC) secretariat which is instrumental to political decision makers in the region. To realize this attempt was made this year, after a successful PROSOWO project (which is embarking on social work education and research) to bring closer the East Africa Conference to Arusha for the aim of inspiring the Community on the work done by social workers in the region. This is meant to intensify efforts at forging a strong working relationship with EAC politicians and businessmen as a best strategy for social work recognition in the region..

Membership

The Region has embarked on new member recruitment by responding to applications and inquiries forwarded by Burundi, Angola, Malawi and Ethiopia. Correspondences are ongoing as the region has provided basic information towards acquiring IFSW membership. We can report that Liberia which has been dormant for a long time has expressed interest in renewing its membership and will soon become an active member. The Region and Global secretariats have worked together to assist Liberia to regain its active membership status.

The Regional Secretariat is making efforts to penetrate into other countries based on the specific social environment. This is being done strategically in two ways. The first is to motivate social Workers and social welfare structures within a country without a National Association to form and register one. The second is to work with the already established association to join IFSW. We have done it with Burundi and now we are working with Malawi. We hope to continue doing so for other countries.

Efforts to increase Visibility and Regional programming:

The need to strengthen the profession and the federation's activity in Africa is very high. Its contribution to the vulnerable population and development is critical. It is important to mention the federation's little achievement within two or three years as follows:

- Establishment of database of member Associations to facilitate correspondence among members and with Regional secretariat.
- Have in place a volunteering Regional Secretary devoted to serve the secretariat and help it with effective functioning.
- We have inspired non IFSW member countries and national associations to seek information about the activities of the Federation, the World Social Work Day themes and objectives thereby inspiring new applications for membership.
- The Secretariat has established a more working relationship with Association of Schools of Social Workers (ASSWA) and is working to engage ICSW in Africa.
- In East Africa, the secretariat has worked to identify its contribution in the activation of National Associations. The secretary has traveled to Kenya and Burundi for the purpose of motivating the reactivation of the KNASW in Kenya in mid May 2015 and actively participated in the launch of NASW Burundi on 18 March 2015.
- The secretariat is in correspondence with a partnership project for promoting Social Work in East Africa (PROSOWO) towards sustaining the East Africa sub region gatherings. The partnership has supported three conferences in Kampala, Bujumbura and Arusha as well as publication of books resulted from its research initiative.
- With correspondence and support from IFSW Global Office 3 participants from Cong DRC were sponsored to attend and share their experiences about being a social worker in war torn country during the Conference in Arusha Tanzania. Their testimonies left behind unforgettable lessons to others. Thanks to Global office commitment in that.
- The Region has established a working relationship with the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) and the International Council of Social Work (ICSW) specifically in Eastern and Southern Africa. We have worked together for the Joint Conference on Social Work and Social Development (SWSD) which took place in South Africa in 2015. We need to deepen our collaborations as it is important and cost effective in some ways when it comes to joint event organization.

Correspondence among members:

The period under review has seen an increased communication among members in sub-regions, particularly in East and Southern Africa sub regions. This has resulted in increased visibility of the profession in the region. Three events are the outcome of this new movement including Bujumbura International Conference, the Arusha 2016 Conference and the Joint Conference in East London in South Africa.

We have participated partly in coordination of these events as a strategy to keep the social work spirit momentum at growth as well as demonstrating the federation activity in the region. These efforts are done in collaboration with the present active national associations.

Social Concerns

Ebola: The outbreak of the Ebola disease in the West Africa sub-region posed a huge challenge to the Region; while the disease created social problems which required massive intervention, social workers were almost helpless because of the high health risk. In Liberia they did a bit of work. We are however happy to inform members that the affected countries have now been declared ebola free.

Terrorism: The killings of students in Garrisa University in Kenya by the Al shabaab insurgents and the failure to find and rescue the 200 girls kidnapped by Boko Haram have been a setback in the fight against Terror in Africa. The activities of the Boko Haram insurgents in Northern Nigeria have left the country with black spots and caused countless human sufferings and loss of lives. We urge local and international authorities to take for action to end these atrocities. In terror situations in Africa Social Workers have by and large remained helpless.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES AND CONFERENCES

The Region has continued to explore the possibility of development of humanitarian projects aiming also at capacity building for member Association, increasing the IFSW membership and providing a forum for member Associations to meet. We hope to see increased collaborative efforts among our sister organizations in the Region and beyond towards realization of this noble idea. It is expected the Global office will be engaged for consultations.

The Region is working in collaboration with Cristina Martins, President of the IFSW Europe to engage the Mozambique, Angola and Cape Verde Associations. There are efforts done to reach the far and most difficult to serve Country of Congo DRC. A group of Congolese born Social Work graduates is linked with our Secretariat via the Bujumbura Hope Africa University which trains individuals from Central Africa. These young and enthusiastic workers are willing to work towards establishing an

association albeit on a small scale due to the political situation in DRC. They need to be encouraged and supported for these aspirations so as to realize the dreams since the country is divided by the long standing ethnic conflicts.

Besides DRC, the Burundi is also taking steps to form a National Association of Social Workers. Mr. Kayinga has assisted to tie the boots for developing success strategies and motivating social workers in Burundi to come up together and form their professional forum as social Work professionals in the country..

Sub Regional Activities:

In the Southern Africa the Social Workers Association of Zambia (SWAZ) is pulling out well. In February 2014 they had a workshop on strategic and business planning. Currently they are organizing different activities supported by the American International Health Alliance which also supports Tanzania efforts in strengthening social Welfare workforce. Zambia is also intending to host the Southern Africa Regional Conference on Social Work in 2017.

Africa in summary has seen the followings events taking place since July 2014.

1. The Bujumbura International Conference on Social Work. This took place at Hope Africa University from 16th to 17th March 2015.
2. The 1st Joint Conference on Social Work and Social Development. The event took place from 4th to 7th October 2015 in East London, South Africa. This event marked a new significant spirit of collaboration of the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA), the Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW Africa).
3. The East Africa Regional Conference on Social Work and Social development which has taken place in Arusha, Tanzania from 15th to 17th March 2016.

Meetings of Members

National conferences usually present the opportunity for the executives to meet with member organization. But this was not possible over the period under review due to lack of funds. Botswana, Burundi, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe were able to organize their General Meetings and Conferences successfully. New Executives were elected in Botswana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Commemoration of World Social Work Days (WSWD)

There has been an increased participation of social workers in commemoration of the world Social Work days around the region since 2014. The Regional Secretariat has

recorded WSWDs in Botswana, Burundi, Liberia, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe to mention. Various activities have been organized including professional conferences and street matches.

This year in Tanzania, social workers from East and Central Africa met in Arusha for the Sub Regional Conference on Social Work and Social Development. On 15th March professionals marched in streets with demonstration in honour of World Social Work Day. This event marked the third in series following the 2014 Kampala International Conference and the Bujumbura Conference in 2015.

The aim for the conference was to bring on board the Social Work Agenda in the Region for the purpose of having a common forum with East Africa Community which is headquartered in Arusha. It is believed that by winning the political will, social work will find a room to flourish and contribute to the region by targeting sub regional political structures and commitment

Major Regional Challenges

1. The secretariat continues to work through e-mails exchanges. Executive meetings are still impossible to organize for the purpose of planning and implementation of concrete program and federation due to lack of funds
2. The Region continues to be veiled by the non-payment of dues by members to the IFSW. More than 70% of IFSW members in the region do not pay their dues. Among reasons for that is poor financial capacity of National associations.
3. The Region is highly affected by lack of funds to undertake program activities and absence of programs managing workforce for the federation.
4. The Region needs a start up financial backbone that will enhance a continual and strategic vitality of the Federation. To embark that, resource mobilization and linkage to business cadres as well as political organizations such as Africa Union, INGOs, Business Community and other developmental partners.
5. Inability to penetrate into continental political, economic and business networks which have financial resources. Inability to conduct advocacy, partnership dialogues for mutual understanding. The federation is not registered and also has no bank account. These together deny its legitimacy for legal operation in some of the countries.

FUTURE VISION

Our vision as stated in our last report remains the same. We aspire to do more and gradually for sustainability. Among things that the region has and still intend to do are the following.

1. Establish a Regional Secretariat manned by a paid Secretary.
2. Establish an African Peer review mechanisms and Centre of excellence for Social Workers to enable countries share best practices and experiences.
3. Embark on membership drive in bringing on board the remaining 31 countries in Africa who are not members of the Federation.
4. Creation of electronic forums like website and an e-newsletter to help in communication among members.
5. Invest in resource mobilization and sustainability. Strengthen relationship with Regional UN bodies and other Regional Organizations.
6. Continue to promote sub regional gathering. For example in 2017 and in collaboration with Southern Africa members to host a Conference that will cover SADC sub region. Zambia and Botswana have shown interest hosting the Conference.

DATED AT ACCRA GHANA THIS 9TH DAY OF JUNE 2016

Daniel Opere Asiedu
PRESIDENT, IFSW AFRICA.