

Social Work Conference 2017

THE STATUS OF SOCIAL WORK IN MALAWI

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INTRODUCTION

- ▶ The quest for an integrated and well coordinated social welfare delivery system in Malawi has gathered moment but more still need to be done to achieve the desired standards of practice. This presentation attempts to share progress and challenges in advancing professional social work education/training in Malawi.

BACKGROUND

- ▶ Malawi adheres to the definition of social work agreed by the IFSW and IASSW in 2001, that *“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change, social cohesion, and empowerment and liberation of people”*;
- ▶ But professional social work training in Malawi is relatively young and not well established having been introduced at the turn of the 21st century;
- ▶ Previously social workers only acquired a basic certificate in social work training.
- ▶ The Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) is responsible for overseeing the provision of social welfare services which presents overlaps and fragmentation of services between departments both within and outside the ministry resulting in no clear institutional role and responsibilities

PROGRESS

- ▶ Formulation of degree, diploma and certificate curriculums in social work relevant to the prevailing situations in Malawi.
- ▶ Upgrading of 120 social workers to degree level with support from USAID and UNICEF
- ▶ Development of the National Social Welfare Policy
- ▶ Formation of the National Association of Social Workers in Malawi (NASWIM)
- ▶ Adaption of the Code of ethics that is relevant to the social norms and values of modern society
- ▶ Legal and policy reforms that take into consideration the prevailing situations and emerging social problems (Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, Social Support Policy, etc)

CHALLENGES

Focus Area	Status
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="639 568 1765 694">▪ No proper coordinating structures and regulatory frameworks;<li data-bbox="639 733 1812 782">▪ Lack of government commitment and political will;<li data-bbox="639 815 1744 946">▪ Fragmentation of services in various social work associated sectors; and<li data-bbox="639 982 1605 1031">▪ Weak leadership and lack of political will.
Resources base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="639 1100 1387 1149">▪ High vacancy rates at all levels;<li data-bbox="639 1182 1474 1230">▪ Inadequate financial resources; and<li data-bbox="639 1263 1528 1312">▪ High dependence on external support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ The need to re-orient existing staff in new knowledge, skills and approaches (local and modern);
- ▶ Initiate the development of regulatory frameworks to ensure high standards of professional practice;
- ▶ Strengthen research on indigenous knowledge and develop interventions that are more appropriate to local situations;
- ▶ Advocate for increased resource allocation to social services;
- ▶ Increase public awareness of the emerging social problems;
- ▶ Strengthen partnership with government and other organisations/ institutions (state and non-state actors)
- ▶ Active involvement of social workers in the formulation of policies and laws that affect the lives of vulnerable population groups (not just as implementers)
- ▶ Maintain relations with social work associations in the region and abroad

CONCLUSION

- ▶ Malawi is lagging behind to have a functional National Association of Social Workers but has committed individuals to make things happen;
- ▶ There is also donor willingness to support the initiatives but the political environment is not very favorable;
- ▶ This calls for urgent need to take advantage of the prevailing good will to plan and develop proposals to respond to the challenges and effectively deal with the emerging social problems using indigenous /local knowledge.

THANK YOU

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