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## The Zimbabwean model of social work regulation: process and lessons for other countries

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### ABSTRACT

Zimbabwe is one of the few African countries that have put social work regulation mechanisms in place. This article gives an analysis of the 10-step Zimbabwean model of social work regulation, historical development of social work regulation in Zimbabwe, providing essential information to social work learners, academics, practitioners and policy makers on the journey which Zimbabwe went through to regulate social work. This information, we hope, will benefit social workers in Africa and outside. For countries working on regulation now and in future, we recommend having a stronger national association which then develops the idea and engages the government. The 10-step process from drafting to enactment requires non-stop lobbying, and the role of the main public employer of social workers is crucial. Besides, lobbying, research of other associations is crucial as well as legal services. Once the law has been put in place, it must be implemented, and funding becomes crucial at this stage. Besides, funding, leadership is also crucial. Leaders put strategies in place to mobilise members, and to seek funding and generally to build and sustain the institution. Funding and political support also comes from government but also non-government sector, so it is crucial to work with them closely without depending on aid, especially foreign aid. As we all know, aid can be a barrier to decolonization and indigenization. Leaders include the board, secretariat and committees and they play a crucial role with adequate support. Without support from members, regulation is unlikely to succeed because there will be less membership fees and less compliance. This study utilised documentary evidence and qualitative interviews with senior social workers and key informants from the Council of Social Workers (CSW) of Zimbabwe and the National Association of Social Workers of Zimbabwe (NASWZ).

**KEY TERMS:** Africa, regulation, social work, Social Workers Act, Zimbabwe

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## INTRODUCTION

The regulation of the social work profession remains a topical issue in Africa and across the globe. Zimbabwe is one of the few African countries that have put social work regulation mechanisms in place. To date, the country has enacted legislation, the Social Workers Act (Chapter 27:21) number 9 of 2001 to regulate the practice of social work. Part (iv) section 22 of the Act provides for the registration of practitioners and thereby ensuring the protection of service users. However, this legal framework remains embedded in obscurity as many social workers continue to practice without registration or practicing certificates. This article gives an analysis of the historical development of social work regulation in Zimbabwe, providing essential information to social work learners, academics, practitioners and policy makers on the journey which Zimbabwe went through to regulate social work.

## REGULATION IN AFRICA

There are different ways social workers are regulated in different countries, although some are not regulated at all. These ways include self-regulation, independent body regulation and government regulation. Self-regulation is when social workers set up rules and regulations to govern their affairs, often through an association. Independent body regulation is when social workers in country are registered and supervised by an independent organisation. Government regulation entails setting up of a regulatory law or body by the government. By 2014, Africa had 29 countries that had associations of social work (International Federation of Social Workers, IFSW, 2014). Out of these countries, only three countries were known to have laws to regulate social work and had public professional councils of social work, registering practicing professionals, regulating social work training standards and carrying out compliance measures (IFSW, 2014; Council of Social Work Zimbabwe). These were South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Social Service Professions Act, 1978, is South Africa's law regulating social work. It was initially known as the Social Work Act and it provides for the establishment of the South Africa Council for Social Work. The Act puts in place the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and professional boards for social service professions. The SACSSP (2017) managed to register social workers and related professionals in the region of twenty-nine thousand four hundred and ninety-five social workers (29 495) as of 30 November 2017. According to SACSSP (2017), South Africa has about 21 social work and social welfare workforce training institutions. Namibia's training is regulated through the Social Work and Psychology Act 6 of 2004. Namibia's law set regulations for registration, training, student registration, professional conduct and Social Work and Psychology Council of Namibia. Other SADC countries like Zambia and Malawi were in the process of drafting bills to regulate social work practice. Zimbabwe's regulatory system has attracted attention of other nations such as Zambia, Malawi, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo of late and as far as Liberia, who have expressed their interests to look and learn from the Zimbabwe case study (National Association Social Workers of Zimbabwe, NASWZ, 2017). NASWZ (2017) reported that Social Workers Association of Zambia (SWAZ) sent their 3-member delegation led by Dr L. Mukuka to Zimbabwe from 24 to 28 July 2017 for a learning visit. Later, Malawi sent their six-member delegation led by Mr Enock Bonongwe, who is the current Director responsible for Child Welfare to Zimbabwe to learn on a number of issues relating to social work regulation and standardization of social work curriculum.

## METHODOLOGY

The researchers utilized the multi-method approach in which two qualitative approaches to research were used namely documentary analysis and intensive interviews. Identified organisational documents of NASWZ and Council of Social Workers of Zimbabwe (thereafter CSWZ, CSW or Council) were reviewed and analyzed. These documents included both published and unpublished reports. Reviewed unpublished documents were minutes of various meetings such as Social Workers Annual General Meetings and Board meetings, prepared speeches and reports. Newsletters were identified as published documents. The researchers purposively selected key informants composed of senior social workers and representatives from CSWZ and NASWZ. Information from key informants was collected through focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews and meetings.

## RESULTS

The results of this research will be presented in two parts (1) the process of development of social work regulation in Zimbabwe (2) views of key informants.

### **The process of development of social work regulation in Zimbabwe**

#### ***Stage 1: Starting a national association***

According to memoirs from Mathe (2004), as from 1986, a group of three persons (founding elders) – Nigel Hall, now retired and residing in the United Kingdom, Roddie Mupedziswa, currently Head of the Social Work Department at the University of Botswana and Josphat Mathe (in memorial) – all then operating from the School of Social Work formed a Task Force, organized occasional lunch time as well as evening meetings that discussed matters pertaining to NASW Zimbabwe and the social work profession. Further, the Task Force managed to mobilize for an AGM, held in Harare in 1988, where a substantive committee was elected, with Usheunesu Matemavi as President and Nigel Hall as the Secretary General, but not much is known to have happened from then until 1990, when another AGM was held at the Forestry Commission Training Centre near Mutare. This stage marked the beginning of the NASWZ.

#### ***Stage 2: Conceptualizing the idea to regulate the profession***

The elected committee immediately brought to the fore, the earlier conceived idea of the Social Workers Act, and a crude draft was produced in 1991, and distributed to branches throughout the country, for comments and suggestions. By then (1990) social workers had started emigrating to the diaspora and a massive country-wide successful membership drive was launched. The committee realized full membership to IFSW and subscription was applied for and granted. The committee made proposals to IFSW to support the growth and regulation of social work in Zimbabwe. The dialogue culminated in several off-shot developments which saw NASWZ establishing a fully-fledged secretariat as early as 1996 to coordinate the legalization thrust and to mark Zimbabwe. The reasons for regulation included the need to define social work, to protect the profession from people practicing as social workers without training or experience, ensuring government recognizes the profession, ensuring standards and ethics relevant to Zimbabwe are maintained and sanctions are put in place in case of malpractice.

#### ***Stage 3: Drafting the law and engagement with the government for social work legislation***

The NASWZ executive sought support from a legal practitioner and worked with senior social workers from government to draft the first ever social workers' law principles. NASWZ approached senior public service social workers who assisted in the handling of protocol to get the document discussed at the highest level in the government's parent ministry of social workers, then the Department of Social Services. The Department of Social Services submitted the proposed draft to the Attorney General's Office which takes responsibility for legal drafting of all legislation in Zimbabwe.

#### ***Stage 4: Drafting of social work bill***

The draft law became a bill of parliament, meaning it was adopted as a draft law for discussion. The first Social Workers' Bill was a compromise between qualified social workers and other professionals who felt the definition of social work should be left loose to accommodate them as they still wanted to practice social work as most of them argued that they were experienced having pioneered social work practice in Zimbabwe. Hence the first Social Workers' Act: 27-21 had clauses that would permit the registration of a non-qualified person by training to be registered as a social worker, because clause three (iii) in the registration criteria allowed Council to register those people who did not have a professional qualification, but in their opinion had the necessary experience. It is observed that psychologists and sociologists were therefore eligible to register as a result of that clause if they had worked in the social work sector.

#### ***Stage 5: Enactment of the law (Social Workers Act)***

The Bill that was debated in parliament from 1999-2001. The result was the Social Workers Act (Chapter 27:21) number 9 of 2001 that was enacted in May of 2001 by the Parliament of Zimbabwe. Soon after, then President Robert Mugabe assented, meaning he signed the Act into law. After Presidential Assent, the Act is currently the social work legal framework and supreme law that governs the operations of social work in the country. The major provision of the Act is:

*To establish a Council of Social Workers and to provide for its functions; to provide for the registration of social workers and the regulation of the practice of social work.*

The functions of Council are:

- a) *to register social workers, that is to say, persons whose profession or occupation is described in the First Schedule; and*
- b) *to conduct examinations to qualify persons for registration as social workers; and*
- c) *to define and enforce ethical practice and discipline among registered persons; and*
- d) *to take such steps as the Council considers necessary or desirable to enhance the status and effectiveness of the profession of social work and to promote the interests of social workers; and*
- e) *to exercise any other function that may be conferred or imposed on the Council by or in terms of this Act or any other enactment.*

The Act defines social work under section 4(1) as follows:

*The profession of social work promotes the welfare of human beings and the betterment of human society through the development and systematic application of scientific knowledge of human and societal activities and social services. Professional social workers aim at satisfying the needs and aspirations of individuals and groups at national and international level, while constantly bearing in mind the need for promoting social policy. Their techniques include psychotherapeutic case-work, social-dynamic group-work and planned community intervention.*

The Act specifies who can register as a social work section 23 as follows:

1. *A person who—*
  - (a) *is of or over the age of twenty-one years; and*
  - (b) *is ordinarily resident in Zimbabwe; and*
  - (c) *has obtained—*
    - (i) *a Bachelor of Social Work degree from the University of Zimbabwe; or*
    - (ii) *a Diploma in Social Work from the University of Zimbabwe.*
2. *A person who—*
  - (a) *is of or over the age of twenty-one years; and*
  - (b) *is ordinarily resident in Zimbabwe; and*
  - (c) *has obtained a degree or diploma which, in the Council's opinion, is equivalent to a degree or diploma referred to in subparagraph (c) of paragraph 1; and*
  - (d) *has practised as a social worker—*
    - (i) *in Zimbabwe for not less than one year; or*
    - (ii) *outside Zimbabwe, for not less than two years.*
3. *A person who—*
  - (a) *is of or over the age of twenty-five years; and*
  - (b) *is ordinarily resident in Zimbabwe; and*
  - (c) *has practised as a social worker in Zimbabwe for not less than five years; and*
  - (d) *has undergone such training or gained such practical experience as, in the Council's opinion, qualifies the person for registration.*

Other provisions of the Act:

- Register and registration of social workers
- Registrar of social workers (secretariat)
- Committees
- Funding and accounts
- Meetings of members
- Cancellation of registration, disciplinary inquiries, penalties and appeals
- Provision for by-laws

The strength in the current law is that it recognizes people who have worked as social workers and have gained experience at a time the country did not have social workers because (1) before independence and soon after there were very few social workers being trained (2) in the 1990s upwards, there was massive brain drain to Britain, Australia and Canada that left social work in charge of non-social workers. Another strength is the recognition of African values as ubuntu in the ethics. However, there are some gaps in the current law as follows:

- The definition of social work does not provide an indigenous view of the profession. It depends more on western colonial definitions of social work.
- The Act recognizes social workers from the University of Zimbabwe only because when it was enacted, only the University of Zimbabwe was offering social work training. The principal of the School of Social Work is listed in the Act as a member of the board. The number of social work training institutions has increased over the years.
- The Act recognizes a Bachelor of Social Work and diploma in social work only but does not recognize those with Master of Social Work. While Master of Social Work may not be equivalent to a Bachelor of Social Work, other types of master qualifications, like the masters qualifying, are equivalent to a Bachelor of Social Work.
- Regulatory mechanisms are not strong as many social workers continue to practice without registration or practicing certificates.

After enactment, the implementation of the Act started with the formation of the board.

### ***Stage 6: Constituting the Council***

The first Council or board was constituted in 2002 as prescribed by the Social Workers Act in section 5 as follows: five members in the first case elected by social workers registered by NASWZ, four were appointed by the Minister and the composition of whom were the Director of the Social Services, Director of School of Social Work, a legal representative registered by the Law Society and a Senior Social Worker. The board was gazetted by the Minister of Social Services in 2002 and served for two terms of two years each under the leadership of the late Josphat Mathe (2006). In order to manage the legal framework and tenure of office, the Council of Social Workers drafted a new law, an Election Law called the CSW Board Election by-laws Statutory Instrument 141 of 2014 which specifies who can be elected and the term of office. The first Board 9 members of Council (2002 – 2006) were Josphat Mathe - Chairman, Mildred Sandi – vice Chair, Beauty Mushipe – social worker, Langton Makoni – social worker, N Sibanda – social worker, Edwel Kaseke – Principal of the School of Social Work (late), Stephen Mhishi – Director of DSS (now late), J. Musimbe – Legal Practitioner and Claudious Kasere – senior Social Worker. The second CSW board of 2006-2016 comprised of Phillip Bohwasi as Chairman, Mildred Sandy as Vice Chair, Jackson Nyoni representing Bulawayo, Mr. Masunga representing Masvingo, Langton Makoni representing Manicaland, Prof Edwel Kaseke (now late) – Director of School of Social Work (Minister appointee), Mrs Muzofa – Lawyer and current Judge of the High court (Minister appointee), Mr Mukaro – senior social work from DSS (Minister appointee) and Mr Mhishi (now late) – Director – Department of Social Welfare (Minister appointee). This Board was able to set up the first office of Council of Social Workers in Zimbabwe in 2010 after numerous fundraising efforts. The same board managed to promulgate a number of by-laws that today regulate and monitor compliance.

### ***Stage 7: Setting the secretariat and subcommittees***

The authors observe that in 2001, CSWZ was constrained financially to establish the Secretariat for the Council to be able to implement day to day activities and other related programs. It is of the same authors' view that for the entire ten years until 2010-11, CSWZ did not have substantive financial support to run Social Work Regulation Programs. It was difficult for CSW to raise funds. *After 2011*, a secretariat was put in place as provided for in the Act under *Section 20 (1) (a), (b) defining the appointment of a Registrar and other persons to carry-out the function of CSW*. The Council's secretariat has a position of Registrar with the key responsibility of running the day to day activities of Council including registering social workers, maintaining professional standards, regulating social work education among others. There was however a very high staff turnover of Council Registrars. The three substantive Registrars served for less than two years each. This high turnover of Registrars has affected the standing and sustainability of the council in executing its mandate as many stakeholders begin to lose confidence in it. The board has three subcommittees in place as required under Section 18, (1) and (2) whose function is to discuss and direct Council policy on behalf of the full board.

### ***Stage 8: Putting additional laws and instruments***

The CSWZ put additional laws in place to strengthen its work. These include by-laws like:

1. Statutory Instrument: Children's (Non – Public Service Probation (*Protection*) Officers) Regulations - Statutory Instrument 125 of 2013.

2. The first schedule, the Social Workers (Registration) by-laws, 2005 (S.1.179/2005), dealing with the registration of social workers, protection of the term social worker and compels registration of all practicing social workers by Council.
3. The Statutory Instrument 125 of 2013, the Children's (Non – Public Service Probation (Protection) Officers) which compels the Minister to appoint social workers outside public service as probation officers, hence assist the government which is running short of qualified and registered social workers.
4. The Council of Social Workers Board - Election by-laws S.I 141 of 2014, which clearly states the tenure of office, election procedures of members of Council and pronounces the mandate of the CSWZ Workers Board.
5. The Social Workers (Code of Ethics) by-law, 2015 Statutory Instrument (S.1.146/2012) to control and regulate social work professional behavior and practice, hence putting in place a binding code of ethics for the profession. The by-law distinguishes social work as one of the very few professions with a legally binding, publicly published code of ethics (S.1. 146 of 2012) in Zimbabwe, and, indeed the world. The by-law sets out the core values on which the profession of social work is based and helps registered persons identify the ethical principles that inform the standards and core values of the social work profession and their day to day practice ethos. Council developed this by-law that binds Social Workers to professional behavior with sanctions for offending social workers. This law was drafted in full participation and consultation of social workers.

Other instruments include standards like:

6. Minimum standards of social work training using the international social work standards. Council of Social Workers was able to coordinate all the Schools of social work in Zimbabwe then to come up with minimum standards for social work training. The Council takes responsibility to monitor the level of application of the standards as a measure for maintaining professional social work standards and practice.
7. Minimum Standards for Community Child Care Workers. The aim should be to provide the best care possible for the children and observing the standards is an essential part, but only a part, of the overall responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of each individual child.
8. The draft of the Social Workers Act 27:21 (Amendment) Bill of 2015 which is due for tabling and promulgation by parliament seeks to expand the range and scope of social welfare workforce.

#### *Snippets from the Code of ethics*

The code covers, core values and principles of social work, responsibilities and obligations of social workers., misconduct, disciplinary procedure, penalties and appeal. A few of these are shown below.

*The mission of social work includes -*

- a) *enhancing the well-being and sustainable empowerment of individuals, especially the vulnerable, weak, powerless and oppressed members of the community; and*
- b) *applying scientific and other validated knowledge for*
- c) *the betterment of the individuals and the community; and promoting social justice, unhu/ubuntu, human rights, positive change, problem solving and improvements in individual and community relationships and the development of society in general.*

*The core values of the profession of social work, which shared by all social workers include -*

- a) *service above self;*
- b) *social justice;*
- c) *unhu/ubuntu;*
- d) *professional integrity*
- e) *competence;*
- f) *importance of human relationships; respect of human rights;*
- g) *respect of diversity.*

*The principles, based on the core values, and which facilitate the accomplishment of the mission of social work and which set forth the ideas all social workers must aspire to, include the expectations that a social worker-*

- a) *has, as a primary goal of helping people in need and addressing societal problems. This entails, service to others above personal interests, prioritizing the needs of service users, and occasionally offering service pro deo, especially in times of natural calamity and all the time drawing on all acquired skills, knowledge and values of the profession of social work;*
- b) *promotes social justice. This includes being ready to challenge injustice in policies and practices discrimination, prejudice, promoting positive social change especially for the benefit of the vulnerable, weak and disadvantaged, encourage equity in opportunity and access to resources and full participation and empowerment of all;*
- c) *recognises and promotes unhu/ubuntu, and appreciates that inherent in each person is dignity and values, and that each person deserves respect and that person exists within a cultural setting and a community and that the individual and community shape, influence and benefit from each other;*
- d) *exhibits the highest standards of professional integrity and will thus act in a manner that is trustworthy, dependable and responsible and engenders public confidence in the profession of social work;*
- e) *practices within his or her area of expertise meaning that he or she will take necessary steps to enhance and develop his or her skills and use such skills and knowledge in the performance of his or her duties;*
- f) *recognizes the importance of human relationships and will thus purposefully strengthen and harness the relationships among people for positive social change and development, and in promoting the profession of social work.*

*A social worker shall be guilty of misconduct or improper or disgraceful conduct if he or she commits any of the following -*

- a) *provision of grossly inadequate professional service;*
- b) *serious criminal offence;*
- c) *theft or fraud;*
- d) *sexually impropriety;*
- e) *practices without being registered, or being registered, without a valid practising certificate or a temporary dispensation granted by the Council;*
- f) *disclosure without lawful authority or exercise, confidential information and/or records of a service user, to the potential or actual detriment of the service user;*
- g) *making malicious false, wrong and harmful allegations against a colleague or a service user;*
- h) *condoning or abetting any of the above misconduct;*
- i) *bringing the profession into disrepute or otherwise*

### ***Stage 9: Capacity building***

The initial funds to kick start operations of CSWZ was a US\$10 000 grant from UNICEF in 2009. It was a one-off grant to develop a statutory instrument to allow Social workers outside government to work or act or be appointed as probation officers. This became the basis of the second grant of GBP20 000 negotiated from the British Embassy which allowed Council to maintain visibility and began registering social workers in 2010. Other donations in-kind came from the Department of Social Welfare, other organisations employing social workers who took great efforts to mobilize their practicing social workers to register with Council and paid AGM transport and accommodation fees. A social work student, Penelope Chirambira was taken on board under the supervision of the Chairman, to open a quasi-office at the School of Social Work premises in 2010. CSW managed to hire a graduate intern to work in the capacity of Registrar in 2010.

### ***Stage 10: Engaging members through meetings, conferences and professional development***

CSWZ (2017) reports states that the Council convened four annual social work conferences or Annual General Meetings (AGM) of registered members to report and receive reports and provide an opportunity for professional growth through presentations of professional research papers on related social issues. These meetings were held as follows:

- 2011 - the first meeting was held in Harare under the theme Building a Confident Future Social Work Practice.
- 2012 - the second meeting was hosted by Bulawayo under the theme Consolidating Social Work, Professional Gains and Ethics.
- 2013 - the third meeting was hosted by Masvingo under the theme: Innovative Social Development for Strengthening Social Protection Systems in Zimbabwe.

- 2014 - the fourth meeting was hosted by Mutare under the theme Fostering Regulation, Commitment, Innovation and Opportunities in the Fields of Social Work practice in Zimbabwe.
- 2018 - annual conference symposium at the University of Zimbabwe where Professor Mupedziswa from the University of Botswana was the Guest Speaker.

This article was written in 2019, so other meetings could have taken place after that.

### Views of key informants

Four themes emanated from the views of social workers. These were lack of statutory budget (financial constraints); leadership crisis; donor dependency; and lack of political will. These themes are presented in turn.

#### *Lack of statutory budget (financial constraints)*

The study found out that regulation of the social work profession requires finances to which the CSW has deficits. One of the key informants from CSW commented that:

*All regulatory programs require financial injection, without meaningful funding there is no proper regulation.*

One of the social workers interviewed concurred with this view as he elaborated that:

*I am observing that the Council is facing financial difficulties. They moved from Rhodesville offices to come and squat at the School of Social Work, they used to have a number of officers but now it is left with only one and they used to implement a number of programs such as compliance visits and host conferences. With all these challenges, I think the Council is now bankrupt.*

#### *Leadership problems*

Social workers who were interviewed concurred that a leadership crisis stands in the Council's way in enforcing social work regulation. One of the key informants from the NASWZ noted that:

*CSW has a serious leadership crisis. If this crisis is left unresolved the council will fail to effectively regulate social work.*

Echoing the same sentiments, one of the participants cited that the Council's leadership is too politicized resulting in its leaders majoring on political interests at the expense of professional regulation. One of the senior social workers narrated that:

*CSW is dominated by politics where social workers engage in unnecessary fights over leadership. I remember in 2014 when social workers were at each other's throats competing for power during CSW elections. These power struggles derail primary efforts of regulating the social work profession in Zimbabwe. I observed that some individuals who failed to win elections blackmailed those who had won elections to the potential donors. This resulted in a number of donors shunning to fund CSW programs.*

#### *Donor dependency*

Interviews conducted with social workers and key informants concurred that the CSWZ has been incapacitated in carrying out its core mandate due to donor dependency. One of the social workers remarked that;

*CSW is struggling to effectively enforce compliance on social workers who are in the donor community due to fear of losing funding. It is compromised in its approach because of protecting conflicts of interests. CSW has been trapped in a comprising position to protect conflict of interests. CSW should liberate itself from these donor driven programs which are not sustainable. Further, CSW should find a way to motivate and mobilise social workers in the donor and NGO environment, who have the ability and potential to provide strategic and financial support. Social investors usually want to put their resources into strong and sustainable institutions.*

Buttressing on the same point, one of the key informants from the NASWZ remarked:

*CSW will only be able to effectively execute its core mandate of regulating social work when it becomes financially independent. Financial independence usually comes with having to nurture the current crop of social workers graduating from the new emerging universities. CSW must organize priceless orientation gatherings and meeting with under-graduate social workers, hence catching them young.*

#### *Lack of political will*

Interviews conducted with key informants revealed that enforcement of social work regulation is lacking support from the parent Minister of Labour and Social Welfare as the custodian of the Social Workers Act 27:21. One of the key informants revealed that:

*There is no political will towards implementing the Social Workers Act 27:21. There has been no support from the previous ministers towards effectively administering this Act. We have reasonably tried to engage responsible ministers through letters and booking meetings but to no avail.*

Stressing the same point one of the other social workers elaborated that;

*The government does not value social work practice as in most instances non-social workers are appointed as Ministers of Social Welfare. Our previous Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare was an Engineer. The rationale behind such appointments which has negative impacts towards quality service delivery in social welfare is highly questionable.*

### **DISCUSSION: LESSONS FOR OTHER COUNTRIES**

While the professional council in Zimbabwe has tried to regulate the profession, social work practice remains embedded in obscurity as many social workers continue to work without practicing certificates. Despite the inadequacy of social work regulations in Zimbabwe, national regulation of social workers has resulted in a wide array of benefits, which include among others, awareness on improved public protection and safety, higher standards of conduct and accountability within social work boards (NASWZ & CSWZ) and improved professional development. Although Zimbabwe is one of the few countries that are regulating social work profession in Southern Africa, the challenge of low turnout among social workers to initially register and renew their practicing certificates remains a baffling issue for the country (Muchanyerei, 2017). Since its establishment in 2001, the CSWZ has only managed to register about one thousand three hundred social workers with less than one hundred and fifty social workers managing to renew their practicing certificates as of December 2017 (CSWZ, 2017). In comparison with South Africa, the South African Council for Social Services Professions has managed to register 29,495 social workers as of 30 November 2017 (South African Council for Social Services Professions, 2017). South Africa has about 21 Social Work and Social Welfare Workforce training institutions around the country to train other social auxiliary workers who can be registered and are recognized by the respective regulatory authority.

As clearly observed by the key informant there is no possibility for regulation without a substantive financial base. The few social workers pay fifty dollars per year as a renewal fee meaning they are paying approximately four dollars per month. Comparing with other regulated professionals such as lawyers, doctors, nurses and pharmacists the researchers observed that social workers are paying very little compared to these other professions. The situation at CSW is exacerbated by massive non-compliance from the already diminished numbers of social workers leaving Council financially constrained to implement meaningful programs such as compliance visits and conducting member sensitization workshops.

The study findings clearly revealed that leadership is one of the key issues affecting the enforcement of social work regulation in Zimbabwe. Participants highlighted that Council as a regulatory board lack expertise in leadership to handle management issues which are indispensable in enforcing by-laws. Further the approach in engaging stakeholders has to be strategic in terms of both professional social workers and social investors, who have potential to contribute to the sustainability of CSW. As substantiated above, equipping the CSWZ with robust leadership can set the stage for the success of regulatory procedures and enable the profession to succeed in Zimbabwe.

This study discovered that the CSW regulatory enforcement programs have solely depended upon donor aid. This has been a norm with most of the civil society organizations in third world nations. Kabonga (2015) in his study with the Chegutu rural community observed that donor aid is antithetical to the sustainability of community projects. This study discovered that many programs patronized by donor aid perpetuated dependency. CSW compliance visit programs epitomized dependency as these heavily depended on the continued availability of funding from UNICEF. The study found out that when UNICEF ceased funding this project in 2015/2016, then, CSW ceased to enforce regulation through monitoring visits. Conferences and other professional programs as ways of educating stakeholders about regulation similarly demonstrated dependency on donor funding. Given the

situation that UNICEF ceased to aid these programmes, CSW has not been able to properly institute enforcement mechanisms on their own. Kabonga (2017) emphasized that donor aid is marred by lack of sustainability. The dependency on donor aid has become so pervasive that social workers always clamor for social aid. Donor aid has been subjected to criticism as it fails to appreciate local solutions to local problems and encourages dependency on flimsy imported ideas. The CSWZ needs to institute home grown social work regulatory enforcement mechanisms. It is therefore not over ambitious to argue that donor aid stifles coherence planning systems within the CSWZ.

The study discovered that the Social Workers Act 27:21 is lacking political will for its effective implementation. Lawyers, doctors and nurses are well regulated because their legislations are well supported by their parent Ministries. As indicated earlier on, other Ministries make grant contributions to raise the status of their own professions. The Ministry of Health is a case in point. Social workers have not taken up leadership in key and strategic locations, hence the diminishing political will. In other Ministries, professionals with relevant qualifications are appointed in their respective ministries. The researchers observed that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is always led by a teacher, the Ministry of Health and Child Care is always led by a medical practitioner and the Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs is always led by a lawyer. Given such arrangements, it is easier for relevant professional boards to get support from their ministers.

The growth of the social work profession continues to take the slow and painful approach that can be mirrored with the growth of the NASWZ. There are obviously challenges observed in the growth of the profession of social work globally and at continental level in Africa. There is a fact we highlighted earlier on, that out of the 120 countries globally that have sought affiliation to the IFSW, only 29 of the 54 African states have sought affiliation to the main global social work body. This is a 54% rate, a negative impact and a challenge at the continental level for Africa, that 46% of communities in Africa face challenges of un-regulated social work environments, un-regulated child protection measures and many other forms of social protection. Hall (1999) presenting a paper at the IFSW in 1999 Africa region meeting, observed African Associations of social work have been scarce in IFSW radar with on 11 members with IFSW affiliated association. He outlined 8 major reasons that have weighed down most of the Africans. One of the reasons highlighted was marginal status of most of the African Associations and the world over. Social work is often not accorded the importance and social relevance that the profession demands in society (Hall, 1999: 85). However, Zimbabwean social workers have developed a coherent and vibrant profession in 2001, which in the view of the research team is gradually gaining the recognition and respect from different sector of the Zimbabwean community. According to Hall (1999) regulation and status recognition has been more difficult for Africa as in other parts of the world due to the recent emergency of professional social work in Africa. In Zimbabwe before 1964 social workers were untrained, hence the use of the title “social worker”, by a range of volunteers and helpers, but always in good faith and motives. The historical connection of social work with philanthropic and missionary organizations, to whom the profession is highly indebted for its origins has reinforced the image in public opinion of a non-professional and voluntary “do-gooder” (Hall,1999: 85).

The current challenges being faced in the regulation of the profession in Zimbabwe relate very well to earlier observation by Hall (1990) of the need for strong social bodies if Africa region was to achieve a full indigenization of the profession and an effective regulatory framework. The research team make observations of the need for strong institutions of social work in Zimbabwe. Notwithstanding the relative successes and progress in the growth and visibility of the CSWZ, there are challenges in getting the CSWZ and NASWZ sustainable and continue to provide the necessary leadership and stewardship of the profession. Already, there is an observation that the CSWZ has flouted its own rules and mandate in accordance with Section 17, (1) of the Social Workers Act 27:21, a clause that demands that CSWZ should at least once in each year, convene a general meeting of registered social workers.

## CONCLUSION

The process of coming up with a regulatory law can be summarized as follows:

*Stage 1: Starting a national association*

*Stage 2: Conceptualizing the idea to regulate the profession*

*Stage 3: Drafting the law and engagement with the government for social work legislation*

*Stage 4: Drafting of social work bill*

*Stage 5: Enactment of the law (Social Workers Act)*

*Stage 6: Constituting the Council/board*

*Stage 7: Setting the secretariat and subcommittees*

*Stage 8: Putting additional laws and instruments*

*Stage 9: Capacity building*

*Stage 10: Engaging members through meetings, conferences and professional development*

This article gave an analysis of the historical development of social work regulation in Zimbabwe, providing essential information to social work learners, academics, practitioners and policy makers on the journey which Zimbabwe went through to regulate social work. This information, we hope, will benefit social workers in Africa and outside. For countries working on regulation now and in future, we recommend having a stronger national association which then develops the idea and engages the government. The process from drafting to enactment requires non-stop lobbying, and the role of the main public employer of social workers is crucial. Besides, lobbying, research of other associations is crucial as well as legal services. Once the law has been put in place, it has to be implemented, and funding becomes crucial at this stage. Besides, funding, leadership is also crucial. Leaders put strategies in place to mobilise members, and to seek funding and generally to build and sustain the institution. Funding and political support also comes from government but also non-government sector, so it is crucial to work with them closely without depending on aid, especially foreign aid. As we all know, aid can be a barrier to decolonization and indigenization. Leaders include the board, secretariat and committees and they play a crucial role with adequate support. Without support from members, regulation is unlikely to succeed because there will be less membership fees and less compliance. In conclusion, the regulation of the social work profession remains a topical issue in Africa and across the globe. Zimbabwe is one of the few African countries that have put social work regulation mechanisms in place. To date, the country has enacted legislation, the Social Workers Act (Chapter 27:21) number 9 of 2001 to regulate the practice of social work. Part (iv) section 22 of the Act provides for the registration of practitioners and thereby ensuring the protection of service users.

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