

**CONCEPT PAPER ON**  
**INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC**  
**TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICA**

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social capital, and the empowerment and liberation of people. The profession utilizes principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities and underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge that engage people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2000). In other words, social work aims at supporting, assisting, empowering, protecting and preventing the abuse, harm, neglect, exploitation and vulnerability of all children and adults.

Experiences from Europe indicate that social welfare provision and social work profession helped to uphold and move forward the industrialization process and social order in the developed countries (Collier, 2006). The high quality social welfare services and status of social work profession in the Scandinavian countries is explained by the fact that welfarism and social work profession was an integral part of the initiatives to build industrial economy in these countries (Hildeng, 2001). The history and development of social welfare institutions and social work practice is not independent of the social economic development of a given country.

Therefore, the state and status of social work in Africa in general and Tanzania in particular is inseparable from what Vishanthie (2014) calls multiple and vexing reality that largely constitute poverty in Africa. Social work seeking to achieve wellbeing and justice should therefore be part

of the efforts to eradicate poverty with emphasis on the need to confront and challenge structural sources of poverty and inequality. Social work, according to Helmut (2014), has the potential to meaningfully contribute to the overall eradication of poverty, inequality and injustice which are the major challenges facing developing countries like Tanzania. Social Work should be part of the process of social development which Midgley (2009) defines to refer to a process of planned social change intended to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development.

In USA and Europe, Social Work developed as a response to address the negative side effects of industrialization, modernization and urbanization. It emerged as an indigenous response to the conditions and social problems of late 19<sup>th</sup>C. Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic transformation, economic growth and development, a country needs to have sound, relevant and practical social welfare enhancement initiatives. This is justified by the live experiences from the Scandinavian countries including Norway. Through inclusive and social welfare enhancement policies, the economic successes of Norway have been used to ensure that its people's welfare is maximized. No wonder the country tops the United Nations Human Development (UNDP) Index and is 6<sup>th</sup> on the United Nations composite index of gender equality (Leskinen, et al., 2012). In addition, Norway boasts of the lowest unemployment rate which was estimated to be only 3.4% (IMF, 2015).

Hence, recognizing the relevance of having sound, relevant and practical social welfare enhancement initiatives in the economy, the Institute of Social Work intends to conduct the International Social Work Conference on Social and Economic Transformation in Africa. The conference will respond to three questions on what, why and how social work/social welfare enhancement initiatives contribute to sustainable and inclusive socio-economic transformation in

Africa. Among others, the conference will direct its gaze on the state and status of social work and its role in fostering industrialization, achieving 2025 Tanzania Development Vision (TDV) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Both of which, are centered on developing human capital for sustainable social and economic development.

### **Objective of the Conference**

The general objective of the conference is to facilitate social and economic transformation in Africa through Social Work Profession.

### **Specific Objective**

- (a) To provide a forum for communities, researchers, academic and practitioners to constructively communicate i.e. discuss, and deliberate on social and transformation in Africa and Tanzania in particular.
- (b) To provide a scientific and practical contributions of social welfare institutions and social welfare services to inclusive and people-oriented development agenda in Africa generally and Tanzania in particular.
- (c) To inform African social policies on how to enhance social welfare institutions and social welfare services for the better future of the African population.
- (d) To inform future dialogues on relevant and practical social welfare enhancement initiatives.
- (e) To explore the indigenous knowledge and skills on social welfare enhancement and application of social work knowledge and skills in in social and economic transformation in Africa.

## **Main Theme of the Conference**

The conference theme will be "Social Work/Social Welfare Enhancement for People – Oriented Socio-economic Transformation in Africa".

## **Sub-Themes of the Conference**

Sub-themes have been categorized into four groups i.e. Human Development; Social Change and Policy Practice; Legal and Policy Framework for Social Work; Social Work Training, Research and Evidence Based Practice; Crosscutting issues.

### **Cluster 1: Human rights, social justice, social work with marginalized population**

- a) Social welfare programmes and services for vulnerable groups
- b) Social dialogue for community mindset change
- c) Socio-economic empowerment

### **Cluster 2: Social work, social development and environmental sustainability**

- (a) Developmental social work
- (b) Social work and environmental sustainability

### **Cluster 3: Social Protection/Security Systems**

- (a) Social protection for vulnerable groups: elderly people, children, youths, women, minority groups etc.

### **Cluster 4: Legal and Policy Framework for Social Work**

- (a) Social work legal status
- (b) Social Welfare Policies
- (c) Policy Practice

### **Cluster 5: Social Work Research, Training and Evidence based Practice**

- (a) Social policy research and research capacity for social workers.
- (b) Social policy training for social workers.
- (c) Evidence based Practice for social workers

**Cluster 6: Indigenous and innovative social work methods and models**

- (a) Social Case Work
- (b) Social Group Work
- (c) Community Work

**Cluster 7: Cross Cutting Issues**

The following are the cross-cutting issues that the proposed conference will focus on: -

- (a) Guidance and Counseling
- (b) Environmental Justice and Legal Environment
- (c) Decent Employment Promotion
- (d) Governance of Social Welfare Services and Accountability
- (e) Public Health
- (f) Ethical Considerations
- (g) Indigenous Knowledge Systems

**General information**

**Guest of Honor**

The guest of honor who will officiate the conference is expected to be her Excellency, “Mama” Samia Suluhu Hassan, the Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania. Official request will be submitted to her office for further processes and approval.

Location of the Conference: at institute of Social Work Campus, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Organizers: Institute of Social Work

Funding: financial support will be solicited from Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), Media companies i.e., ITV, TBC, Development Partners i.e., UNDP, USAID, Mobile phone companies i.e., VODACOM, AIRTEL, TiGO, HALOTEL etc.

### **Key Conference Stakeholders**

The following are the expected key stakeholders of the conference: community members, government officials and policy makers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and, community –based organizations (CBOs). Moreover, development partners; Association of Tanzania Employers (ATE); representatives from the judiciary system; business people, researchers and academicians, representatives from professional associations; and higher learning students will also be part of this conference. The conference will also include the media representatives. Generally, the conference is expected to attract participants from within and outside Tanzania and the expected number of participants is 500 people.

### **Conference Activities**

Tentatively, the conference will include keynote speech from the most reputable and recognized person on the areas of development in Africa. Furthermore, the conference will include presentations from professionals, practitioners, business communities, community members and representatives from professional associations. The conference will include live, relevant and practical experiences of social welfare enhancement initiatives. Further, sponsors will be given a chance to present their papers on what they have been doing to promote social welfare

enhancement among the local population. More emphasis will also be given on marketing, and communication of the conference activities whereby different media will be involved.

### **Conference Deliverables**

At the end of the conference, the following outputs are expected: -

- (a) Preparation of the conference proceedings
- (b) Identification of practical and relevant social welfare enhancement initiatives
- (c) Preparation of the policy-paper to inform social welfare enhancement initiatives in Africa.

### **Timing of the Conference**

The conference will be held from **8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> May 2019, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania** and it will be a three-day event. The conference will be officiated by her excellence, “Mama” Suluhu, the Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania and closed by Hon. Ummu Mwalimu (MP), the Minister for Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children.